

A Unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Note: The following paper contains excerpts from a twenty-day unit on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to be taught in an eleventh-grade English classroom. A unit is the instructional plan for a set space of time. It contains plans for each daily class period, as well as goals and assessments for the unit, rationales for why the unit should be taught, and various resources needed to carry out the lessons. The goals of this unit are aligned with the Michigan Department of Education's High School Content Expectations (HSCE).

The excerpts below contain the rationales, the assessment chart, and the daily lesson plans for days 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8. These five days have been selected to represent the kinds of learning activities the students will be engaged in. In the first column of the assessment chart, "CE" stands for Content Expectation. Content Expectations may be found at the Michigan Department of Education's official website. Finally, the special needs and accommodations section of the 15-component lesson plan has been left temporarily undetermined, as it will need to be designed with a particular classroom in mind.

Rationale for "A Unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird*"

Why is it important to students at their developmental level?

Students are aware of racial tensions, whether they have heard about them or have personally experienced them. Teenagers are almost always outraged by injustices they see and will sympathize with Tom Robinson, who is unfairly accused. They will admire how Atticus stands up to the bigoted bullies and will be able to discover how they can emulate his peaceful yet steady and unapologetic resistance in their own lives. Students will then see that these situations are not unique to literature; they are also found in real life. Students will examine the Scottsboro Trials and see that Tom Robinson's situation mirrors real life injustices. They will also examine the "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., and see that nonviolent resistance, as Atticus practiced, is a real, powerful force. These connections to real life will stir students to be more aware of injustices and more active in standing against them.

Why is the unit important for U.S. citizenship? (Why does your neighbor need to know this information?)

Students need to become aware of the prejudices that are still very prevalent in U.S. society and learn how to stand up to them, knowing what to say and how to say it. Whether it is distrust of those of Middle Eastern descent, a belief that Hispanics must learn English or get out of the country, or the assumption that an African American man in the convenience store at night is a threat, students must and will confront prejudices and learn how to counter them. Students will see how nonviolent resistance has the power to change small counties and large nations, in the form of Atticus' defense of an innocent black man in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Martin Luther King's steady, nonviolent resistance represented by his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. As the students complete a journal entry, they will reflect on how they have or can stand up to prejudice and negative social pressure as these men did.

Why is the unit important for Global Citizenship? (Global or multicultural)

The United States is composed of many different racial and ethnic, religious, and cultural groups, all of which should be respected and treated with equality. Students of the current generation need to be reminded of the history of racism in this country in order to gain a new perspective on the racism and prejudice we still see today. The students will see prejudice through the eyes of the victims of prejudice. The students will examine both how authors treat members of minority groups and how members of minority groups communicate their experience in their own words. The focus of this unit will be on the experiences of African Americans.

Assessment Chart

Note: *TKAM* = *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Source	Goal	Assignment (A) with how it will be assessed (B, C, D)	Formative Assessment Days	Summative Assessment Day
Teacher	The students will be able to critically examine a novel, recognize the heroes in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> , and explain what makes those characters heroes.	The students (A) identify a hero from the novel and explain why he or she is a hero (and why that character's hero status might be contested, if applicable) (B) in a written long essay question (approx. 10 sentences) using evidence from the text and material from class discussion (C) scoring 80%+ on the Final Assessment Long Essay on a <i>TKAM</i> Hero Checklist (D).	5, 11	20
CE 1.3.2, CE 3.1.2	The students will be able to successfully write a character analysis.	The students (A) will successfully demonstrate their understanding of an author's use of characterization (B) by composing a character analysis (C) and scoring 85%+ on the <i>TKAM</i> Character Analysis Rubric (D).	12, 14	16
CE 3.1.8	The students will have an increased understanding of the injustices that African Americans have suffered over the course of America's history.	The students (A) will demonstrate an increased understanding of African Americans' struggle for justice in the U.S.A (B) through a journal entry completed individually, (C) scoring 85%+ on the Journal Entry on African Americans' Historical Struggles Rubric (D).	17, 18	19
CE 2.3.4	The students will understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.	The students (A) will differentiate between primary and secondary sources (B) on a multiple choice section of the final assessment that will include definitions and examples of the two types of sources (C) with 85%+ proficiency (D).	16	20

Daily Lesson Plans

Day 1

1. Grade / Subject / Content Focus / HSCE: 11th Grade / English Language Arts / Novel Study / Students will read and analyze classic and contemporary works of literature (American, British, world) representing a variety of genres and traditions and consider their significance in their own time period as well as how they may be relevant to contemporary society (CE 3.3.2).

2. Purpose / Relevancy: Students will become familiar with the background of *To Kill a Mockingbird*: its author, its setting, its publication date (how it fits in with history), and its reception both in its own time and today. Students will benefit from this because it will prepare them for the reading and will help them understand how this novel is relevant. Students will want to learn about the background of *To Kill a Mockingbird* because they will be able to offer their own ideas about how this novel could fit in with today's society.

3. Special Needs Considerations / Accommodations

4. Resources: Day 1 Introduction to *To Kill a Mockingbird* PowerPoint – will include information on Harper Lee, setting of novel, publication timing and context of novel, and reception of novel at time of publication and today; 24 copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

5. Performance Objective: The students (A) will be able to demonstrate increased familiarity with the background of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (B) through a KWLS chart (C) with 85%+ proficiency (D).

6. Method(s): KWLS, Numbered Heads Together

7. Bell Work: (00:05) Students will copy the KWLS chart on a sheet of paper and record 2 things in “K” and 2 things in “W” about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They will be instructed to leave the “L” and “S” for later in the discussion. Students will then take a minute to discuss what they “Know” and “Wonder” with a classmate.

8. Opening: (00:03) The teacher will ask for volunteers to share something they know about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The teacher will then say, *“For the next couple of weeks, we will be reading and studying To Kill a Mockingbird. By the end of the unit, you will see how this novel applies to our theme of heroes and will understand more about African Americans’ struggle for equality in this nation.”*

9. Instructional Method:

- a. (00:20) Using Day 1 Introduction to *To Kill a Mockingbird* PowerPoint, the teacher will provide the students with background information on *To Kill a Mockingbird*: its author, setting, publication date (how it fits in with history), and reception both in its own time and today.
- b. During the lecture, the students will add information to the “L” portion of their KWLS chart every 5-10 minutes.

10. Guided Practice:

- a. (00:01) The students will gather into 4-person groups (Numbered Heads Together). The groups will consist of the four people already at each table. Each student will receive a number 1-4.
- b. (00:08) The groups will discuss how *To Kill a Mockingbird* could resonate with or resemble contemporary society, based on any background information they already possess or the information they received from lecture.
- c. (00:12) During large group discussion, the teacher will call on a group and a number 1-4. The student from that group assigned that number will offer an idea from the group for how *To Kill a Mockingbird* could resonate with or resemble contemporary society.

11. Lesson Closure: (00:01) The teacher will say, *“We will now dive into this book that we have been talking about all hour. Tonight’s reading is chapters 1-3. You will be learning about Scout, the main character, as well as her family and her adventures. Please fill out the “S” portion of your KWLS chart and hand your charts to me on your way out.”*

12. Formative Assessment:

- a. The teacher will ask students to complete the “L” portion of the KWLS chart.
- b. Students will demonstrate their understanding during large group discussion.

13. Re-Teaching / Independent Practice / Extension Activity

14. Summative Assessment: On day 20, the students will be completing a long essay question on a hero of the novel, what makes him or her a hero, and how his or her hero status might be contested.

15. Teacher Reflection Notes (to be completed at the close of every lesson)

Day 2

1. Grade / Subject / Content Focus / HSCE: 11th Grade / English Language Arts / Novel Study / Students will respond by participating actively and appropriately in small and large group discussions about literature (e.g., posing questions, listening to others, contributing ideas, reflecting on and revising initial responses). (CE 3.2.4).

2. Purpose / Relevancy: Students will participate in large group discussion about the first three chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, focusing on Lee’s development of characters. Students will also learn a strategy for holding thinking while reading—the double-entry journal. Students will benefit from this because it will cause them to gain new perspectives on the reading. Each student brings different insight and background to the text, and these insights should be shared, debated, and expounded upon in class discussion. Students will also benefit from learning the double-entry journal because it is a skill that can help them monitor and increase their own understanding while reading any text. Students will want to learn about and discuss the beginning of *To Kill a Mockingbird* because they will be able to work in groups and will be able to talk themselves instead of listening to lecture.

3. Special Needs Considerations / Accommodations

4. Resources: TKAM Day 2 Discussion Questions List – will include discussion questions the teacher has developed from the first few chapters, to be used only if student discussion struggles or students do not hit on key points; a spiral notebook for each student (to keep a double-entry journal).

5. Performance Objective: The students (A) will be able to demonstrate increased familiarity with the first three chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (B) through large group discussion (C) with all members staying focused on the discussion (D).

6. Method(s): KWLS, Double-Entry Journal

7. Bell Work: (00:04) The whiteboard will have instructions to pick up a spiral notebook from the teacher’s desk. Students will copy the KWLS chart on a sheet of paper and record 2 things in “K” and 2 things in “W” about the first three chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They will be instructed to leave the “L” and “S” for later in the discussion. Students will then take a minute to discuss what they “Know” and “Wonder” (what confused them or caused them to question) with a classmate.

8. Opening: (00:04) The teacher will say, “*Someone please raise your hand and summarize for me what has happened in To Kill a Mockingbird so far.*” (Students respond.) The teacher will then say, “*Today we are going to discuss what you have read as a large group. I want everyone to contribute something you got out of the reading or provide a positive, constructive comment about something someone else got out of the reading. I’ll start us off. What do you think of Scout?*”

9. Instructional Method:

a. (00:10) The students will discuss the first three chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The teacher will monitor and guide the discussion.

The students will add information to the “L” portion of their KWLS chart during discussion.

b. (00:01) After sufficient discussion, the teacher will say, “*From today on, you will be keeping a double-entry journal to jot down parts of the novel you think are important or that are interesting to you. After reading the novel, you will be writing a character analysis, so be sure to mark down quotes that you think really define a character—things that make characters who they are.*”

c. (00:05) The teacher will demonstrate how to use a double-entry journal. She will fold the page in half (lengthwise). She will mark the left column “Quotes or Passages” and the right column “Reflection.” She will then model the strategy. She will say, “*Turn to the last page of chapter 3. Now, let’s say I was reading along, and I came to this sentence: ‘Jem and I were used to our father’s last-will-and-testament diction, and we were at all times free to interrupt Atticus for a translation when it was beyond our understanding.’ I would think, ‘Hmm, that quote is interesting. It definitely says something about Atticus.’ I would write the quote and the page number on the left column, and I would write something like this in the right column next to it: ‘Atticus’ lawyer talk is part of his non-work life too, but he is very fair to his kids and treats them with respect.’*” The teacher will write into her double-entry journal.

10. Guided Practice:

a. (00:02) The students will prepare the first page of their own journals by folding the page and writing in the headings.

b. (00:02) The students will be instructed to find a passage that they liked from the first three chapters.

- c. (00:05) The students will then be instructed to write an interesting quote from that passage into the left column of their journal and a reflection on it in the right column.
- d. (00:12) The students will add several more quotes to practice using the double-entry journal.

11. Lesson Closure:

- a. (00:04) The teacher will ask, “**Does everyone understand how to use a double-entry journal?**” (Students respond.) The teacher will provide more instruction if needed.
- b. (00:01) The teacher will say, “**Please write at least three entries in your journal as you are reading tonight’s chapters: chapters 4-7. You do not have to read chapter 6, but do read the summary I provided you with in your reading list. In tonight’s reading, Jem and Scout are going to be on summer vacation, and they are going to get into some dangerous trouble! Please fill in the “S” on your KWLS chart and hand it to me on your way out. See you tomorrow!**”

12. Formative Assessment:

- a. The teacher will ask students to complete the “L” portion of the KWLS chart.
- b. Students will demonstrate their understanding during large group discussion.

13. Re-Teaching / Independent Practice / Extension Activity

14. Summative Assessment: On day 20, the students will be completing a long essay question on a hero of the novel, what makes him or her a hero, and how his or her hero status might be contested.

15. Teacher Reflection Notes (to be completed at the close of every lesson)

Day 6

1. Grade / Subject / Content Focus / HSCE: 11th Grade / English Language Arts / Novel Study / Students will demonstrate understanding of written, spoken, or visual information by restating, paraphrasing, summarizing, critiquing, or composing a personal response; distinguish between a summary and a critique (CE 2.1.7)

2. Purpose / Relevancy: Students will compose a personal response to the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students will benefit from this because they will learn how to organize and articulate their responses to difficult subject matter. Students will want to learn about this because they will be able to watch part of the film and because they will likely feel strong emotional responses to the content.

3. Special Needs Considerations / Accommodations

4. Resources: *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Dir. Robert Mulligan. Perf. Gregory Peck. Universal International Pictures, 1962. Videocassette (film is also available on YouTube without copyright violation); Television and VCR; Notebook paper and writing utensils; Whiteboard and markers.

5. Performance Objective: The students (A) will be able to compose their responses to the important trial scene of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (B) through a Quick Write completed individually, (C) writing at least 10 lines and staying on topic (D).

6. Method(s): The students will complete the Quick Write (Type 1) of the Collins Writing Program (Collins, John. *The Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance through Writing and Thinking across the Curriculum*. West Newbury, MA: Collins Education Associates, 2007).

7. Bell Work: (00:02) The whiteboard will read: “Please have a piece of paper out and ready. We will be using it at the end of the class. Talk to one other person at your table about what happened in the chapters you read last weekend. Be ready to provide a summary of the chapters if I call on you.”

8. Opening: (00:05) The teacher will ask, “**I would like someone to raise their hand and tell me what happened in the reading from the weekend.**” (Students respond.) The teacher will then ask, “**Was anyone confused about what was going on?**” (Students respond.) The teacher will say, “**I wanted to add to your understanding today, so we are going to watch a little of the film version of To Kill a Mockingbird. I will begin playing the tape at the point where Atticus begins questioning Bob Ewell. We’ll finish up the day with a Quick Write.**”

9. Instructional Method: (00:30) The students will watch a portion of the trial scene from the 1962 film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

10. Guided Practice:

- a. (00:01) The teacher will instruct the students to get out their sheet of paper while he or she says, “I want you to write about how you feel and what you think about the trial and its outcome. You will get full credit for the assignment as long as you write at least 10 lines and stay on topic. You have 10 minutes. Please begin.” (The teacher will write the two requirements on

the whiteboard as they begin.)

b. (00:10) The students will complete the Quick Write.

11. Lesson Closure: (00:02) The teacher will say, *“Please finish the sentence you are working on. Tonight’s reading is chapters 22-24. The trial may be over, but the horrible events are far from being over. Please give me your Quick Write on your way out. Also, be sure to keep writing in your Double-Entry Journals.”*

12. Formative Assessment: The teacher will assign either a check (completed minimum number of lines and stayed on topic) or a minus (did not complete minimum number of lines and / or did not focus on topic) for the students’ Quick Write.

13. Re-Teaching / Independent Practice / Extension Activity

14. Summative Assessment: On day 20, the students will be completing a paper-and-pencil test answering questions about the novel.

15. Teacher Reflection Notes (to be completed at the close of every lesson)

Day 7

1. Grade / Subject / Content Focus / HSCE: 11th Grade / English Language Arts / Novel Study / Students will demonstrate an understanding of literary characterization, character development, the function of major and minor characters, motives and causes for action, and moral dilemmas that characters encounter by describing their function in a specific work (CE 3.1.2)

2. Purpose / Relevancy: Students will understand Harper Lee’s use of characterization by predicting what different characters would say in response to the question, “How do you feel about the outcome of the trial?” Students will benefit from this because they will see how one’s values influence one’s responses. Students will want to learn about this because the methodology requires that they talk in groups.

3. Special Needs Considerations / Accommodations

4. Resources: Students’ Double-Entry Journals and copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

5. Performance Objective: The students (A) will be able to demonstrate increased understanding of the characterization and values of different characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (B) by taking on the role of a character and participating in a Three-Way Interview (C), being able to write down at least one quote and corresponding page number for content that supports their behavior / responses as that character (D).

6. Method(s): Three-Way Interview (Also, students will write down quotes and page numbers that contain evidence from the text that supports their choice of behavior and responses when being interviewed as a character from *To Kill a Mockingbird*.)

7. Bell Work: (00:03) Students will write a short summary of what happened in chapters 22-24 onto a piece of paper that will be used again later in the class.

8. Opening: (00:05) The teacher will say, *“Someone please raise your hand and tell me what happened to Tom Robinson.”* (Students respond.) The teacher will then ask, *“Why did he try to run away?”* (Students respond.)

9. Instructional Method:

a. (00:07) The teacher will explain how to use the Three-Way Interview (The rest of the points in this section are within the 00:07 minutes.)

b. The students will group into fours by staying at their tables.

c. The teacher will number off the students 1-4 at each table.

d. The teacher will tell the 1’s they are Atticus, the 2’s Bob Ewell, the 3’s Jem, and the 4’s Aunt Alexandra.

e. The teacher will tell the students that they will each pretend to be the character they are assigned. The 1’s will answer as if they are Atticus when the other three group members ask them questions. The same procedure should follow for each character.

f. The teacher will write the main question the interviewers should ask on the whiteboard: “How do you feel about the outcome of the trial?”

g. The teacher will say: “You’ll have roughly 5 minutes for each interview. First, interview Atticus, the number 1’s. When I say, ‘Switch,’ interview the 2’s. When I say, ‘Switch,’ again, interview the 3’s and so on. Any questions? Begin.”

10. Guided Practice:

a. (00:20) Every student will behave and answer as their assigned character when asked ques-

tions by the interviewers in the group.

b. (00:12) The students will be instructed to search through their book (mostly chapters 22-24) to find a quote that supports what they chose to say or how they chose to act as their character. They will be instructed to write down the page number and the quote on the sheet of paper they used for Bell Work.

c. If the students have additional time after finding one quote, they should search for another and write it down.

11. Lesson Closure: (00:03) The teacher will say, *“Please finish up the quote you are writing. Hand your papers to me on the way out. Tonight’s reading is chapters 25-27. Keep up on those Double-Entry Journals. I’ll be looking over them during next Monday’s quiz!”*

12. Formative Assessment:

a. The teacher will examine the students’ summaries of chapters 22-24.

b. The teacher will examine the quotes students provided as the basis for their behavior / answers during the Three-Way Interview.

13. Re-Teaching / Independent Practice / Extension Activity

14. Summative Assessment: On day 20, the students will be completing a paper-and-pencil test answering questions about the novel. Also, on day 16, the students will be handing in their character analyses, which may contain some material from today’s work.

15. Teacher Reflection Notes (to be completed at the close of every lesson)

Day 8

1. Grade / Subject / Content Focus / HSCE: 11th Grade / English Language Arts / Novel Study / Students will demonstrate an understanding of literary characterization, character development, the function of major and minor characters, motives and causes for action, and moral dilemmas that characters encounter, by describing their function in a specific work (CE 3.1.2).

2. Purpose / Relevancy: Students will understand Harper Lee’s use of characterization by completing a variation of the Memory Box, determining which objects represent or would be important to a character from the novel. Students will benefit from this because they will be able to see how what a person values can tell one something about that person. Students will want to learn about this because they will be able to demonstrate their creativity and draw. Students will also want to learn this because they will be able to choose what character they would like to work with.

3. Special Needs Considerations / Accommodations

4. Resources: Knothole Activity Worksheet

5. Performance Objective: The students (A) will be able to demonstrate increased understanding of the characterization and values of different characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (B) by completing the Knothole Activity Worksheet (a variation of the Memory Box) individually (C) being able to draw at least three important items and describe their connection to the character (D).

6. Method: A variation of Memory Box (a teacher-created “Knothole Activity Worksheet”)

7. Bell Work: (00:04) Students will write two things that happened in chapters 25-27 onto a piece of paper that will be collected at the end of class.

8. Opening: (00:02) The teacher will say, *“Can someone tell me where Jem and Scout find the objects from Boo Radley?”* (Students respond.) The teacher will then say, *“Today, you are going to fill your own knothole with objects that you think a character would have or value, or objects that you think represent a character.”*

9. Instructional Method:

a. (00:02) The teacher will pass out the Knothole Activity Worksheet. On this worksheet will be a drawing of a tree knothole with plenty of space to draw in.

b. (00:02) The teacher will tell the students to select a character from the book and write his or her name above the tree knothole. The teacher will tell them to draw at least three objects in the space in the knothole that they think represent the character or that they think the character would have or value.

c. (00:05) The teacher will tell them that when they have finished, they should explain beneath the knothole how each object is related to the character. The teacher will model the strategy by selecting a character, writing his or her name above the knothole, quickly drawing several objects in the knothole, and explaining verbally what he or she would write beneath the knothole.

10. Guided Practice:

- a. (00:32) The students will fill out the Knothole Activity Worksheet individually.
- b. The teacher will walk around the room to be available for questions.

11. Lesson Closure: (00:03) The teacher will say, *“Please finish up what you are writing. Pass forward your Knothole Activity and the paper on which you wrote two things that happened in last night’s chapters. Please keep them in two separate piles. Tonight you’ll be finishing up the book! Keep up on those Double-Entry Journals. I’ll be looking over them during next Monday’s quiz over the content of the novel! Enjoy your evening!”*

12. Formative Assessment:

- a. The teacher will examine the students’ papers on which they wrote two things that happened in chapters 25-27.
- b. The teacher will grade the Knothole Activity Worksheet, making sure the students drew at least three objects and connected each to the character.

13. Re-Teaching / Independent Practice / Extension Activity

14. Summative Assessment: On day 20, the students will be completing a paper-and-pencil test answering questions about the novel. Also, on day 16, the students will be handing in their character analyses, which may contain some material from today’s work.

15. Teacher Reflection Notes (to be completed at the close of every lesson)