

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

by **HARPER LEE**



A Unit of Work for Intensive English Centre Senior Students

by

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- **Target Group**

Intensive English Centre Senior students preparing to exit to High School.
ESL Scales 4 – 6
IEP Level 3



- **Rationale**

The teaching and learning activities in the *To Kill A Mockingbird* unit aim to develop students' understanding and use of a metalanguage to describe the language structures and features of film. The activities focus on exploring how various film techniques work together to create meaning in film. The writing task requires students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding of film through a personal response to the film *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

- **Outcomes**

1. Students respond to texts using their developing language skills with increasing independence and effectiveness
2. Students reflect upon the different ways meaning is shaped.
3. Students use and critically assess a range of processes for responding and composing.
4. A students questions, challenges and evaluates cultural assumptions in texts and their effects on meaning.

- **Timeframe**

A four week program taught over two 60 minute lessons per week as part of the IEC Level 3, Exiting Program. This includes time for viewing the complete film prior to close study of particular scenes.

- **Background Information**

It will be necessary to provide some information to students regarding the social and historical context of the film. African/American slavery, the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Movement all provide a cultural framework that will enhance students understanding of the film.





To Kill a Mockingbird by Bosley Crowther

There is so much feeling for children in the film that has been made from Harper Lee's best-selling novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*...so much delightful observation of their spirit, energy, and charm as depicted by two superb discoveries, Mary Badham and Philip Alford—that it comes as a bit of a letdown at the end to realize that, for all the picture's feeling for children, it doesn't tell us very much of how they feel.

This is the one adult omission that is regretful in this fine film that Alan J. Pakula and Universal delivered to the Music Hall yesterday.

At the outset, it plops us down serenely in the comfort of a grubby Southern town at the time of the Great Depression. Here we are brought into contact with Scout Finch, a six-year-old girl who is a thoroughly enchanting tomboy; her ten-year-old brother, Jem, and their widowed father, Atticus, who is clearly the kindest man in town.

And for a short time it looks as though maybe we are going to be squeezed inside the skin of Scout and Jem as they go racing and tumbling around the neighborhood, shouting with childish defiance at old Mrs. Dubose, skirting around the dark house where the mysterious Boo Radley lives.

It is when a social crisis in the community develops —the charging of an African-American (Negro) with the rape of a white woman—that the children are switched to the roles of on-lookers. They become observers in the gallery as their father, played superbly by Gregory Peck, defends the Negro in court and gives a strong adult lesson of justice and humanity at work.

And their roles are still those of bystanders in a subsequent episode when they are attacked by a vengeful man and brought to realise that the strange Boo Radley is not a monster but a friend.





It is, in short, on the level of adult awareness of right and wrong, of good and evil, that most of the action in the picture occurs. And this detracts from the camera's observation of the point of view of the child.

While this still permits vivid melodrama and some touching observations of the children, especially in their relations with their father, which is the crucial relationship in the film, it leaves the viewer wondering precisely how the children feel. How have they really reacted to the things that affect our grown-up minds?

Rosemary Murphy as a neighbor, Brock Peters as the Negro on trial, and Frank Overton as a troubled sheriff are good as locality characters, too. James Anderson and Collin Wilcox as Southern bigots are almost caricatures. But those are minor shortcomings in a rewarding film.

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Directed by Robert Mulligan; written by Horton Foote, based on the novel by Harper Lee; cinematographer, Russell Harlan; edited by Aaron Stell; music by Elmer Bernstein; art designers, Alexander Golitzen and Henry Bumstead; produced by Alan J. Pakula; released by Universal Pictures. Black and white. Running time: 129 minutes.



READING AND RESPONDING
7. Can read and respond to a review

Read the attached Review and answer the following questions in your English book.

1. Who wrote the movie review?
2. Where did it appear?
3. Who directed the film?
4. Who wrote the original novel?
5. Where and when is the film set?
6. Who are the three key characters?
7. What is the central drama of the film?
8. List two adjectives used to describe Atticus.
9. How is Scout described?
10. How is Jem described?
11. What is the reviewer's overall opinion of the film? Provide evidence from the text to support your response.





READING AND RESPONDING

6. Can read and respond to a NARRATIVE Narrative

CAMERA SHOTS / CINEMATOGRAPHY

The cinematographer on To Kill a Mockingbird, Russell Harlan, uses the camera to communicate many things to the audience. Different size shots, camera angles and camera movements tell us about the characters and their relationships.

SHOT SIZE	EXAMPLE FROM THE FILM	FUNCTION OF THE SHOT
<p>Long Shot/Establishing Shot Includes a full length human figure and some surroundings. Used to show the link between the character and the environment.</p>		
<p>Medium Shot Shows a person from the waist up. Used to show us facial expressions and body language and to let us know a character more closely.</p>		
<p>Close Up Focuses on a characters face or hands or a particular feature or object up close. It allows us to focus on a character's feelings or thoughts.</p>		



Resources for Camera Shots / Cinematography worksheets



Resources for Camera Shots / Cinematography worksheets





CAMERA ANGLES

The angle of the camera helps to tell the viewer about the characters. High and low angles may be used to influence our impressions of a particular character.

SHOT SIZE	EXAMPLE FROM THE FILM	FUNCTION OF THE SHOT
<p>High angle or overhead shot</p> <p>The camera is above the person to make them appear small, weak or powerless.</p>		<p>Briefly explain this scene.</p> <p>Where is the camera positioned?</p> <p>What impact does it have on the audience?</p> <p>Whose perspective is being communicated?</p>
<p>Eye level shot</p> <p>The camera shows the character at eye level. This makes the character appear to be equal to other characters.</p>		<p>Briefly explain this scene.</p> <p>Where is the camera positioned?</p> <p>What impact does it have on the audience?</p> <p>Whose perspective is being communicated?</p>
<p>Low angle shot</p> <p>The camera is below the person it is filming. This makes the person seem large and powerful or important.</p>		<p>Briefly explain this scene.</p> <p>Where is the camera positioned?</p> <p>What impact does it have on the audience?</p> <p>Whose perspective is being communicated?</p>





Symbolism

Symbolism is where the director uses words or images to convey other meanings to the audience. For example, a director may use objects from a particular period in time to show the historical context.

Items seen in opening credits of film

Describe the scene in which the item is seen / heard

Meaning / Symbolism

Pocket Watch		
Harmonica		
Pearl necklace		
Whistle		
Marbles		
Drawing of a bird		





Resources for Symbolism Worksheet



Lighting

The lighting of a film creates atmosphere or gives emphasis to a particular element of the scene.



What time of the day is portrayed in this scene?

Where (from what direction) does the lighting come?

How do you know?

What might be generating this kind of light? (moonlight / streetlight)

What feelings do this lighting trigger?



Sound / Music

One function of the music in a film is to reveal the character's emotions. In the opening scenes of To Kill A Mockingbird the composer of the music uses instruments and other sounds to evoke a real sense that the film is told from the point of view of a child.

Go to www.jefflangonline.com/peck/home/index.htm

Sounds	List the instruments you can hear	Describe other sounds	What do you feel as the listener?
Main title			
Remember Mama			
Peek-A-Boo			
Lynch mob			

Listen to the **'Main Title'** again. Listen to 'Peek-A-Boo' again.
Compare these two pieces of music. How are they similar/different? How does the music enhance the scenes?





WRITING

12. Can write a description

THE CHARACTERS

Scout

Write a physical description of Scout.
Describe Scout's relationship with her family members, including Cal.

Jem

Write a physical description of Jem.
Describe Jem's relationship with his family members and Dill.

Atticus

Write a physical description of Atticus.
Describe Atticus' relationships with his family and the community.

Complete the timeline Activity on page 119.
Through the Lens, Kellie Heintz and Mark Stracey, Cambridge Press



Resource Sheet for Description Writing

- 1 Draw up the following timeline in your workbook.
- 2 Plot on it the most significant moments of growth for Scout. You may use key events or key quotes to support your views. Some have been completed to get you started. Remember to include the context of each one and what your observation is about Scout.

Scout

1 Key event: When Mr Cunningham comes over to deliver the hickory nuts to Atticus and Scout does not recognise how ill at ease and embarrassed he is.

Observation: Scout is too young to understand that Mr Cunningham is a proud man who wants to drop off his payment for Atticus' services without a fuss.

2 Key quote: 'He made me start off on the wrong foot. I was trying to explain to that darn lady teacher why he didn't have no money for his lunch, and he got sore at me.'

Observation:

3 Key quote: 'He's gone and drown-ded his dinner in syrup and then he's pourin' it all over.'

Observation:

4 Key event: Scout gets into a fight with Cecil Jacobs at school.

Observation:

5 Key quote: Hey, Mr Cunningham. How's your entailment getting along?'

Observation:

6 Key quote: 'Miss Jean Louis, stand up, your father's passin.'

Observation:

7 Key quote: 'I feel like a fool walking home in this.'

Observation:

8 Key quote: 'Hey Boo.'

Observation:

9 Key quote: 'Well, it could sort of like shooting a mockingbird, wouldn't it?'

Observation:

10 Key quote: 'Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.'

Observation:

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

WRITING

15. Can write a Personal Response.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

1. Read the attached review of the movie "Babe" as a class.
2. Highlight new vocab etc.
3. Annotate identifying structural features
4. Complete the table using information from the review

Positive adjectives	Negative adjectives	Neutral/Factual adjectives

5. Rewrite the paragraph 3 removing ALL adjectives. Comment on effect.
6. Discuss how the reviewer's use of language reflects their overall opinion of the film.
7. A writing activity _ What is the reviewer's opinion of the film? Use examples from the review to support your answer.
8. As a class complete the scaffold based on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. (attached)
9. Independent writing task – Using the completed scaffold, students write their personal response to the film.

10. EXTENSION ACITIVITY:

Essay – The director uses key film elements to explore the main themes presented in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Explain how he does this. Provide evidence from the film to support your answer.

