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To Kill a Mockingbird Study Guide

Taking a Stand

Have you ever spoken out against injustice, even when it angered others? This image from the 1962 movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* shows Atticus Finch, played by Gregory Peck, when he takes a stand against racism, even though it makes him very unpopular in his community.



Be a Better Reader

As you work through the study guide for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you'll also practice these skills, which will help you when you read novels in the future, for school assignments or just for fun.

1. Describe the development of the main character.
2. Discuss how the plot develops throughout the novel.
3. Describe themes in the novel and trace their development throughout the text.
4. Cite textual evidence to support discussion of the novel.
5. Discuss how point of view affects the content of the novel.

Behind the Scenes

When she wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960, Harper Lee, a young female writer from Monroeville, Alabama, created a work that cut to the heart of American racism and prejudice. The novel, published after Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat but before Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech in Washington, DC, created a firestorm of its own by using racially derogatory language as it commented on racism.

Get This!

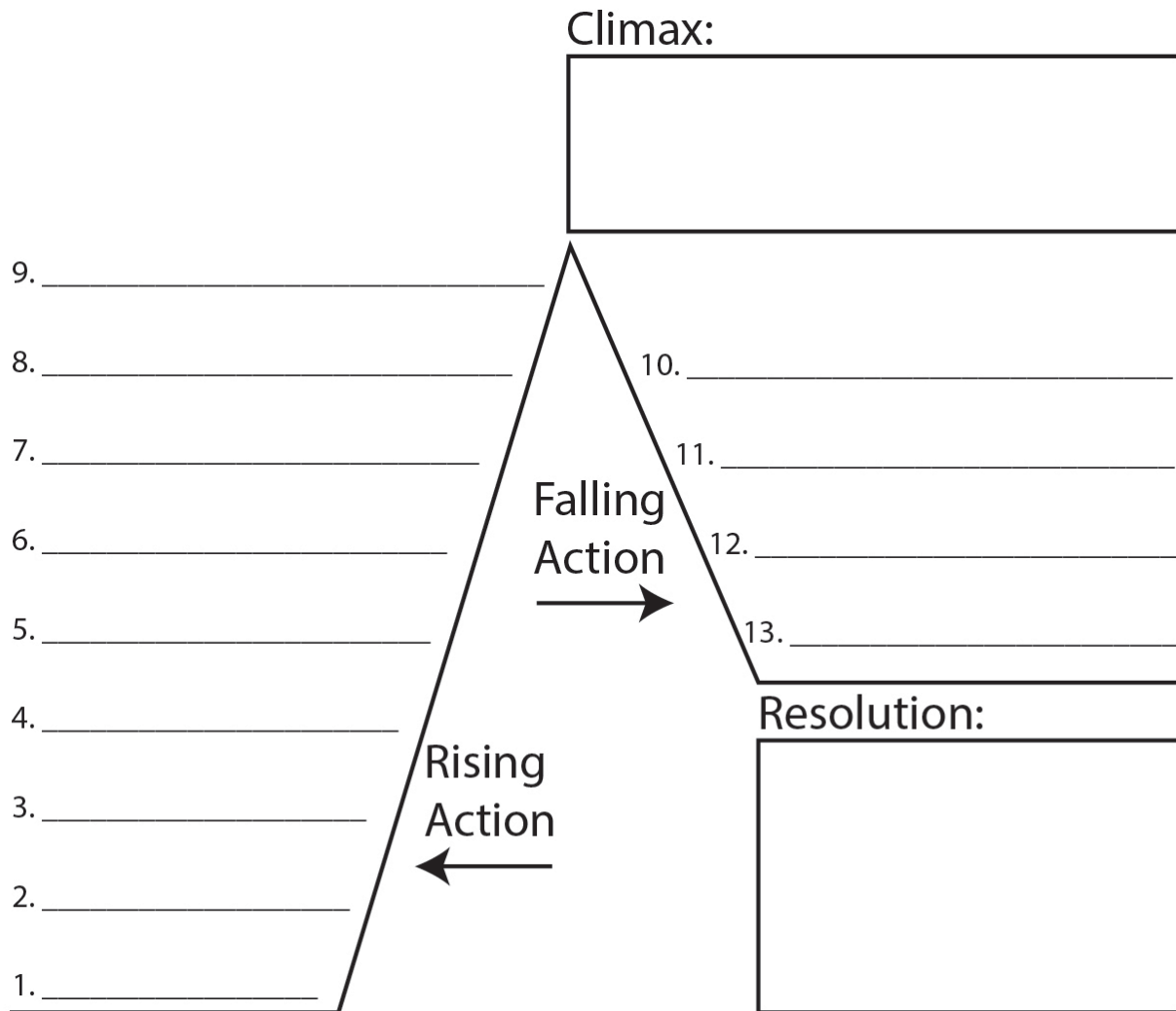
1. Harper Lee does not shy away from addressing challenging issues. Look for issues, besides racism, that the novel takes on. Think about these issues in the context of the 1960s America in which the novel was published.
2. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is told from the point of view of a young girl. Think about how the story would differ if told from the viewpoint of Atticus, Jem, or Boo Radley.

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The Plot

As Scout reflects back on her childhood, the reader learns how the Finch family confronts racism in their small town, as they unravel the mystery of Boo Radley. As you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, fill in the boxes for each element of the novel's plot.



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Harper Lee so masterfully twines the stories of Boo Radley and Tom Robinson together that it is difficult to separate the plot from the subplots. List the four key moments in the plot involving Scout's friendship with Boo Radley.

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graph LR; A[ ] --> B[ ]; B --> C[ ]; C --> D[ ]
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List four key moments in the plot involving Tom Robinson.

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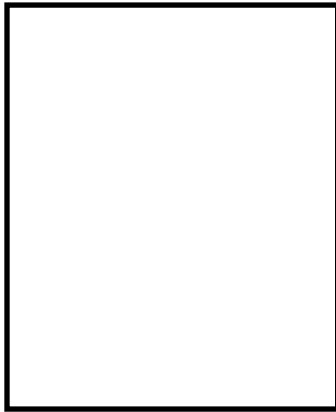
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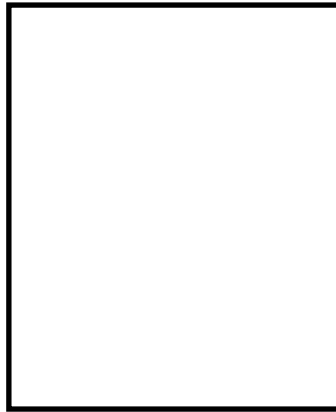
The Characters

It seems that Harper Lee uses almost all of Maycomb to tell her story. Draw a picture of each character listed. Then describe the importance of each character's role in the box beneath each picture.

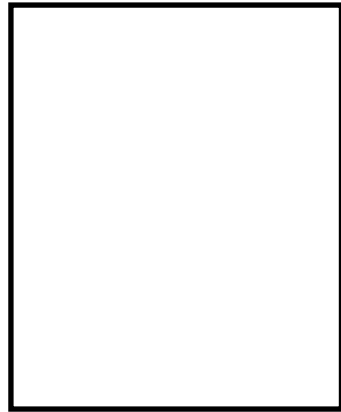
Scout Finch



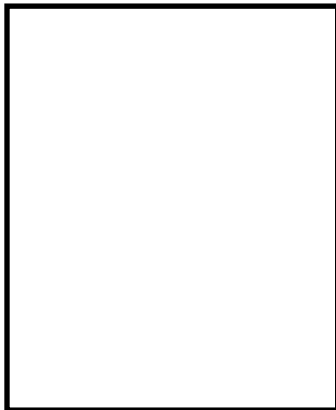
Atticus Finch



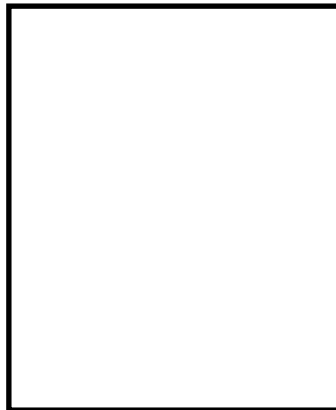
Jem Finch



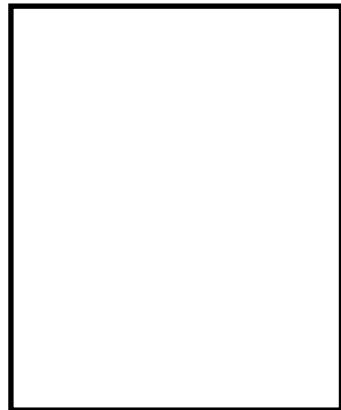
Boo Radley



Calpurnia



Bob Ewell



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The Setting

The setting of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* focuses on a small town in Alabama, as viewed through the eyes of Scout Finch.

Use the spaces below to describe some of the settings in the novel. In the first column, type or write direct quotes from the book—phrases and sentences that are used to show what it's like in that time and location. In the second column, explain in your own words the scene and what can be inferred from the description. An example has been completed for you.

Location in Text	Direct Quotation from Text	Scene Conveyed
1. The town of Maycomb (Chapter 1)	"Maycomb was an old town . . . had nothing to fear but fear itself." (p. 6)	Maycomb is a small, sleepy Southern town. The novel begins in the 1930s.
2. The Radley Place (Chapter 1)		
3. Miss Maudie's house catches on fire (Chapter 8)		
4. Calpurnia's church (Chapter 12)		
5. The Ewell home (Chapter 17)		

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Tracking Themes

What message is Harper Lee trying to communicate in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? The main themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are related to social inequality. See if you can identify and analyze those themes.

Step 1: What parts of the plot seem related to a possible theme in the novel? (Think about the main conflict and how it got resolved or worked out.)

Step 2: Which characters seem related to a possible theme? Which characters change, and what do those changes suggest about finding one's own voice and personal growth?

Step 3: How does Harper Lee use symbols to hint at the novel's themes? What objects, people, or places stand for something "bigger" in the story?

Step 4: What does the novel's title suggest about the novel's theme? Why do you think Lee named her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

Step 5: Write one or two of the novel's main themes in your own words.

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Talk About It

What do you think about *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Could you identify with Scout and Jem as they learned about morals while noticing injustices and inequalities in Maycomb? What did you think of Atticus telling his children to not judge someone until you put yourself in their place? In the space below each question, write an answer based on your own experiences and your own understanding of the novel. Include some textual evidence or examples that helped you arrive at your answer.

1. While *To Kill a Mockingbird* bluntly addresses racism, it provides a more subtle discussion of Scout and Jem's moral education. Provide some examples of how Scout and Jem learn about morals through the course of the novel.

Textual Evidence or Examples:

2. Atticus tells Scout not to judge someone else "until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." (39) How does comment replay throughout the novel? How could you employ this maxim in your own life?

Textual Evidence or Examples:

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Represent!

Show what you know about *To Kill a Mockingbird* and its relevance to your life. Choose one of these projects to complete and share with your teacher, classmates, and others.

Choice 1: 21st Century Scout

While the themes of racism and prejudice echo throughout society, some of the specific issues addressed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are firmly rooted in 1950s and '60s America. Thankfully the segregation in the novel no longer occurs in modern-day America. If Harper Lee wrote a sequel set in today's world, what issues would she address? What would Scout be doing today?

Create a modern-day version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You may create a written or a video version. Be sure to think about where Scout would be today and what she would be doing. What the pertinent injustice in our society that you think the updated version should address, and how would you accomplish this?

Choice 2: Institutionalized Racism

Examples of racism abound throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While many of these examples occur in individuals' beliefs and actions, the society of 1960s Alabama creates and legalizes many of them, such as separate seating for blacks and whites in the courthouse.

Create a Powerpoint presentation which discusses the ways that the society in the novel legalized and reinforced racism in the novel. Additionally, include what American events and laws overturned this institutionalized racism and assess American society today in how it deals with all types of racism and injustice.