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ABSTRACT

THE MAIN SECTION OF THIS 10TH-GRADE TEACHING UNIT ON HARPER LEE'S "TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD" CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF SAMPLE DIALOGUE, BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS, WHICH ATTEMPTS TO LEAD THE STUDENTS TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT VALUES. OTHER SECTIONS LIST QUESTIONS ON THE NOVEL, MAJOR EVENTS OF THE PLOT, AND PAGE REFERENCES FOR DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE AND THE MAIN CHARACTERS. BRIEF FACTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR, QUOTATIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION, AND WORDS WHICH MIGHT BE TROUBLESOME FOR STUDENTS ARE POINTED OUT. A FIVE-PAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON TEACHING AND VALUES IS PROVIDED. (LH)

THE DISCOVERY ROUTE TO VALUES, VIA LITERATURE

The synopsis of a conviction and a theory
and a sample unit of that theory
applied to a tenth-grade literature unit.

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD and The Importance of Individuals

by

Virginia T. LeSueur

PROLOGUE

Barbara Tuchman was discussing the writer of history when she listed as vital to his success a belief in the "grandeur" of his theme and a sense of addressing an audience whom he would like to stir into sharing that belief. (Tuchman, 1967, p. 30)

This writing is not history, but if it were, this writer would meet at least these qualifications for success. For I do believe in the grandeur of my theme. I do feel that I am speaking to an audience, and to a specific one. And I do want that audience to feel as I do about this theme.

The theme for which I allow so mighty a descriptive noun? That teachers of English have a unique opportunity--and hence a unique responsibility--to help shape Tomorrow by their influence on the values of Today's students. And the audience? Teachers of English whose choice it is to ignore, use, or misuse that opportunity.

SYNOPSIS OF THESIS*

As the Prologue forewarns, this writer holds training in "valuing" to be an integral part of a teacher's responsibility, and measures the significance of the teacher's "partnership in creation" not by his proficiency in transferring facts but by his commitment to and skill in implementing wisely-considered judgments--that is, by his allegiance not to Knowledge but to Wisdom by means of knowledge.

*Chapter I, "Why and Who?" begins "Everybody agrees that somebody ought to do something about young people's values!", oppugns the generality, and then offers evidence to support that statement's refinement to "In the light of America's contemporary social conditions it is the opinion of many psychologists, philosophers, educators, and laymen that unless value-instruction is incorporated into the teaching-process, not only will individuals fail to live successfully but democracy itself will fail.

Chapter II seeks an answer to "In General, How?" and finds evidence to support a hypothesis: that a sound plan for value-instruction would evolve if one built on opinions that values are derived from reflective thinking and critical investigation; considered and broadly exposed the humanities, as sources of insight and creative imagination; and at the same time focused on the "process of valuing," during the consideration of these humanities, by providing as many opportunities as possible for thinking critically about values--always, however, with total freedom of choice, by means of the Discovery Process; thereby creating the climate considered ideal for intuition--for "reason in a hurry"--which has been called "the most valuable coin of all."

Chapter III is a sober consideration of the influence of a teacher's own values: of what a teacher <u>is</u> or <u>is becoming</u>. Chapter IV points to the

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*Chapter indications refer to the entire thesis, by Virginia T. LeSueur and and titled <u>"Valuing," Literature, and the Teacher of Secondary English</u> (1968), which is available on Library Loan through Reis Library of Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania 16335.

possibility of unique implications for teachers of English. And Part Two then presents a series of tenth-grade literature presentations which follow the Discovery route and which integrate the process of valuing. (Examples from these nine units follow this preamble.) The work closes with a quotation:

> Instead of giving young people the impression that their task is to stand a dreary watch over ancient values, we should be telling them the grim but bracing truth that it is their task to re-create those values continuously in their own time. . . . The moral order is not something static . . . it is a living, changing thing . . . and never any better than the generation which holds it in trust. . . . A society is continuously re-created, for good or ill, by its members. This will strike some as a burdensome responsibility, but it will summon others to greatness. (Gardner, 1963, pp. 126-127)

Added is the comment that in the hands of teachers--perhaps particularly in the hands of teachers of English--may lie the influence which will decide whether this continuous re-creation now moves toward good or toward ill. And, following the units, is an Epilogue which speaks for itself.

Pages 46-59, 118-124, and Appendix B of Virginia T. LeSueur's thesis, "Valuing," Literature, and the Teacher of Secondary English, comprise this report.

CHAPTER VIII

A NOVEL AND VALUING

In Values and Teaching (Raths, 1966, p. 137) open-ended questions are suggested as one means of clarifying values. One such being "People can hurt my feelings most by . . . ." The teacher interested in valuing, by means of a novel, might preface the teaching of To Kill a Mockingbird with a look at what does most hurt students, by assigning the completion of this sentence--to be submitted anonymously, as an inducement to the description of specific situation and behavior. Is there any doubt that each answer will in some way involve trespass of the human spirit, some demeaning of individual dignity, some insult to the sanctity of human worth? It seems unlikely, and even a brief consideration of the root cause of such hurts could lend immediacy to this story of the disregard of human dignity and to the consequences of such disregard.

For Harper Lee's novel is not just a tale of disregard for the dignity of Negroes. Its secondary plot is of disregard for Boo Radley's worth as a human being. And its hero's recipe for getting along with any kind of person--climbing into his skin and walking around in it (p. 34)--is really an invitation to see whether one's own feeling of worth can survive in that skin. Respect for selfhood, acceptance by others, and the feeling of having measured up--all basic needs as defined by Inlow (1963, p. 208)--are each impossible if those around one deny him membership in the human race by thinking of him impersonally or by thinking of him not at all. Can To Kill a Mockingbird help to impress on students the ultimate value of each human being and the vital difference between what Martin Buber terms I-Thou and I-It? It is worth a try. Discovering what most hurts students themselves could be a good beginning. But then what?

Though the preceding exposition of The Old Man and the Sea may have given the impression that valuing took precedence over literary appreciation, it was not intended to. And such precedence is in no way necessary. Values may be an "addition" to a mathematics class, but they are an integral part of literature; one can enrich the other.

For example, recognition of the Elements of the Novel are probably prescribed by the curriculum, and they should not be neglected. (A guide for their consideration, taken from one tenth-grade curriculum, appears as pages two and three of Appendix B.) To Kill a Mockingbird could contribute to their recognition and at the same time contribute to valuing. After the book has been read through, a consideration of this novel could begin, appropriately enough, with its BEGINNING.

> T: "When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow." And in just four pages we have what?

S: A backflash to Dill's first suggestion that they try to make Boo Radley come out [a neat tie to the novel's final episode]; a farther backflash all the way to the Finch's beginnings; then a chronological glide forward to the present and the town of Maycomb and a description of SETTING, including its setting in time ["nothing to fear but fear itself," on page 10]; and then, back to the collard patch and Dill's first "Hey," which actually begins the story. [So quickly--and so smoothly.]

> T: From the title, I gather this story is about a mockingbird? No? My word but studying literature is confusing. Why pick this title, then?

S: Mockingbird Tom will be identified with no trouble, since he was the only one killed. Should Boo also be suggested now, one may just postpone consideration of the possibility.

> T: Oh. How did you learn that? Have you any evidence that this is what the author intended?

S: Miss Maudie said, "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us . . . . That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird" [p. 94]. Braxton Underwood's editorial, in which he likened Tom's death to the "senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children" [p. 243].

> T: We have, then, the story of the death of an innocent. Yet this tragic story of adult cruelty is related by a child! Why this POINT OF VIEW, I wonder? Wouldn't it have been better to let an older person tell it--one who could explain as he went along? Miss Maudie, perhaps? As a matter of fact, why do we have children in it at all?

Perhaps the last question will inspire an answer to the first. Students will not want to give up the children's participation or their natural, uninterpretive reaction to events; so they will be eager to discover that this is undoubtedly why Miss Lee used their eyes and speech. Contrasted with George Eliot's explicit style (if students have been required to experience it) and omniscient observing, the advantage speaks for itself. Children see without bias, they question, and they are free of prejudices which blind reason. Also, children in the plot validate explanations and incidents which highlight the author's thesis: for example, the "whiteness" point made by the schoolroom Current Event involving Hitler's treatment of the Jews (p. 249).

> I: Okay. I guess we're all set to look at PLOT. Let's see. If this is a story to show the tragedy of killing an innocent man (a mockingbird), it seems to me that just the trial--with perhaps a little background explanation thrown in at the beginning--would be enough. Why bother with all these other happenings? Wouldn't you have liked that just as well?

S: No, obviously.

It should not be difficult to have students explain to the teacher that if they are to be made to care what happens--if people are to come alive for them--they must know little things about them, homely things--not just cold facts and statistics. A court record would see participants as names; a novel pictures them as living people and in a way which helps the reader to understand (not merely know) the causes as well as the results.

> I: Right, I couldn't agree with you more. We may assume, I'm certain, that Miss Lee planned both the incidents and the characterizations in this story with this in mind. I wonder if we couldn't almost prove this? Let's look at the incidents of the plot and see if they do help us to feel and to understand something connected with the killing of an innocent. Take a look at the list of incidents I have given you (Appendix B, page 4) and see if we can recognize why they were included. How about the school episode?

S: We meet Burris Ewell, and we learn how minimal is the education of many in Maycomb. Lack of education could be one cause.

> I: The tree items and the Radley story?

S: Apparently no connection.

I: Hm. That's strange. What about the fire at Miss Maudie's?

S: None here, either, it seems!

I: And Christmas at Finch's landing?

S: The "nigger-lover" friction pictures prejudice and what ensues. The chapter also builds MOOD and ends with the opportunity for Atticus to wonder why it is that people go "stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up [p. 93]. [Foreshadowing?]

I: The shooting of Tim Johnson?

S: Another seemingly unconnected incident.

I: What about the Mrs. DuBose incident?

S: Her hate for Negroes is apparent in her scorn that Atticus is "lawing" for one. The rest of the incident does not seem to be connected to the mockingbird theme, however.

I: And what does the visit to First Purchase Church add?

S: It lets us see Negroes as individuals and it creates sympathy because the imagery shows their individual humanity and their handicaps—and Scout's interest and total lack of prejudice helps the reader to see them that way, too. Their reaction to Lula's racial prejudice makes the shame of white intolerance seem even worse.

I: And then there's Aunt Alexandra's arrival?

S: She just makes matters worse. Her prejudice and narrow-mindedness put new pressures on the Finch family. Keeps suspense taut.

I: And what about Dill's arrival?

S: There's apparently no connection here, either! Of all things!

I: The visit of "friends"?

S: Shows the fear and the temper of the townspeople. It creates suspense, too.

I: Then there's the visit by a mob. How about that?

S: This <u>really</u> shows prejudice crowding out reason. And it shows the least-educated group as the most easily roused to act from emotion alone.

I: There's really no need to ask about the trial. Both it and its verdict speak for themselves. But what about the missionary meeting?

S: This brands some of the townswomen as either idiotic, totally thoughtless, or hypocritical. Any one of which adjectives helps explain why prejudice persists. Their real concerns are gossip and "goodness" toward unloveliness--at a good safe distance.

I: The pageant?

S: No help to the mockingbird theme, but a nice way to contrast what comes next. [Dramatic contrast.]

I: The attack, of course, is the DÉNOUEMENT of our mocking-story. But how does Boo fit in?

S: He doesn't seem to!

I: My word, but we have a lot left over! Yet, as I have told you, in a fine piece of literature nothing just "happens" to be there; everything is there by design. Is Miss Lee just a careless workman (this _is_ her first novel, by the way), or could there be another explanation?

S: She probably has something more in mind to describe than just the tragedy of Tom and what may have caused it.

I: What is it, then? What is in these "leftovers"? What is their _essence_? Their "common denominator"? Let's look again. And harder. Is anything "left over" in the school episode?

S: The Walter story. He has been hurt because (1) a teacher thought of all students as being the same and (2) because Scout's explanation didn't get across. [Note the vital importance of verbalization--which conveys _all_ it was meant to.]

I: Can _you_ tell the difference when someone is speaking to _you_ rather than to just "a" person?

S: That's easy. [Especially for students, unfortunately.]

I: Yes, anybody can. This is what a famous Jewish philosopher named Martin Buber describes as the difference between and _I-Thou_ feeling and an _I-It_ feeling--or an _I-He_ or _I-She_ feeling. (I've put a quotation of his at the bottom of your page of incidents, you'll note.) The difference is a matter of TONE and attitude and is a reflection of whether or not you _care_--whether or not you give a hoot about that other person. _I-Thou_ says, "You're Bill Adams and only Bill Adams to me: a one-of-a-kind person." _It_ says, "I really don't think of you as a person at all." Even _He_ or _She_ says, "I know you're a male or a female but I couldn't care less about how you feel."

Now how about the tree items and the Radley story?

S: Here's another human being who is being treated as an _It_--as "malevolent phantom." Eventually, Scout "climbs into his skin" and begins to understand; but only after human contact has changed him to _Thou_.

I: And the fire at Miss Maudie's?

S: Funny. This seems to show what _nice_ people live in Maycomb County. Yet we know that most of them despised Negroes and were potential mockingbird killers. Why would she put _this_ in?

I: All right. Why?

S: Perhaps to show that they _are_, basically, nice people. Except when prejudice blinds them.

T: Yes, they are basically good people, but, as Atticus said, "Reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up" (p. 93). This is connected, after all, with the killing of an innocent mockingbird.

And what about the shooting of Tim Johnson?

S: Perhaps this is to show that even a protector of mockingbirds must do battle with madness that can spread and kill?

I: Could be. Then there's vitriolic, spiteful, malicious, Mrs. Dubose. Speaking of It and Thou, what does her story make possible?

S: Before it is over, she, too, becomes a Thou. Atticus has always seen her this way, and he arranges that his children, too, shall see it. He makes it unavoidable that they look beyond appearances.

I: The visit to the First Purchase Church, too, is a matter of seeing Thous we would normally only see as Its. Sympathy is created and leads to "empathy." We can feel a little as they must have felt.

Now think about why Dill ran away from home. Why did he say he left?

S: "They just wasn't interested in me," and "they just didn't want me with 'em." [p. 145]

I: Here is still another version of a human being hurt because he seems to be It rather than Thou to his family. He runs away to those who value him as a special human being.

Most of these "leftovers," then, would seem to place a spotlight on what hurts people; and mostly what is it?

S: Not "belonging." Being cut off from people--by poverty--by a father's selfish pride--by color--by parents' preoccupation.

T: In all these cases, though, getting to know them well enough so that they are no longer Its--i. e. by "getting into their skins" was what was needed to prevent their being hurt.

You said it was "not belonging"--isolation--that hurt people most. Isolation because of poverty or color or lack of understanding--because "no one put on their skins." Isn't this Tom, too? Isn't this the cause of our mockingbird's death? There seems to be a connection here; can you now relate the "leftovers" to the items clearly a part of Tom's story?

S: There are other mockingbirds in the story. People who were wounded but not killed.

I: I think Scout thought so. At least she said, of exposing Boo, "It'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?" (p. 279) The feelings of people are gentle, helpless things. I hope you'll give a little thought to

this matter of Thou or It. What you decide could make a heck of a lot of difference to those around you.

And now, how about CHARACTERS? What kinds of people has Miss Lee created to help us feel and understand--and "get into other people's skins"? To empathize? What kinds of people has she created to make us feel and understand the tragedy of mistreated human beings--of people treated as Its rather than Thous?

Talk to me first about Miss Stephanie and Miss Maudie.

S: Miss Stephanie was "an "English Channel" of gossip [p. 244] who went about the neighborhood "doing good" [p. 49] but whom no one trusted. To her, people were Its. [pp. 49, 50, 71, 162, 244]

Miss Maudie "did not go around the neighborhood doing good" [p. 49]. She loved flowers and baked cakes to show people she cared--and children trusted her. She scorned "foot-washing" Baptists who considered pleasure a sin and who, worrying about the next world, failed to live in this one. When her house burned, she looked ahead to a larger garden rather than back to the loss of her home. She saw in the trial at least a "baby step" [p. 219] toward a more just future, and she recognized where the credit lay. To her, people were Thous. [pp. 46, 49, 70, 72, 77, 161, 162, 217, 218, 239]

I: These two are very different indeed. They were, I'm certain, intended to "foil" one another; and each one's characteristics become more vivid by their contrast. One does "the right thing," but the other does what her reason and heart tells her is right. One appears concerned about other human beings; the other is concerned.

And what sort of person lives three doors the other way, on a curve so that the windows of the house watch the Finch children playing?

S: Mr. Radley. A "foot-washing Baptist" like those Miss Maudie despised for failing to live in this world because of concern for the next. He had cut off both himself and his son from other people, either for the sake of pride or for religious reasons. Even his own son seems to have been an It to him. [pp.13, 67]

I: What did you think of him when he filled the hole with cement? To me the act was "symbolic." Symbolic of what?

S: Symbolic of his desire to cut off even this last, tiny, touching-point which Boo had left. To be human was forbidden Boo. Instead he was treated like a thing.

I: You know there are two Boo Radleys in this novel, don't you? Tell me about each.

S: There's Boo "the malevolent phantom"--the It--what people thought he was. [pp. 13, 17, 28] Then there's Boo the lonely prisoner--the Thou--what he really was. [pp. 38-40, 43-45, 52, 58, 63, 64, 66, 76, 273]

I: We mentioned as the theme of this novel the tragedy of isolation; of not being wanted; of being left out; of being regarded as It rather than Thou. It is not hard to see why Miss Lee created Boo. Look at what people thought he was, contrasted to what he turned out to be! What does this illustrate?

S: The danger of trusting appearances-and the vicious potential of gossip and guessing.

T: Another neighbor, Mrs. DuBose, we have already mentioned. She hated blindly, but she did have courage. Read what Atticus says on page 116 about her courage.

S: "It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what."

I: Remind you of someone else you've met in literature?

S: Santiago, in The Old Man and the Sea.

I: Does it remind you of someone else in this novel?

S: Atticus. He knew he would probably lose the case, but he vowed that at least the truth would be told. [p. 148]

I: That seems to be all the neighbors. But in the courtroom we meet some other people. And they, too, help us to understand what caused this tragedy. Let me summarize them for you:

Judge Taylor--Concerned, or he would not have appointed Atticus as Tom's counsel. But he was bound to serve the law and the people who made it. Without a change in both he was helpless.

Heck Tate--Well-intended, but not far-sighted (Tom's life might have been spared had he taken Mayella for an examination). He, too, was a servant of the people; but he did his own thinking, finally, on Boo's behalf.

Mayella Ewell (pp. 172, 181, 184, 185, 190, 194, 197)--Isolated by ugliness, poverty, and brutality; so lonely she felt that a question about her having friends was mockery; so lowly she felt that to be addressed as "ma'am" was also mockery; yet still making an effort to be clean; and defying sordidness with six geraniums in chipped-enamel slop jars (note the power of the specific). Could she have been as much a victim of circumstance as Tom? Is she, too, a mockingbird? Had she lost her "whiteness," she would have been even more isolated, impossible as that seems. She so wanted to be a Thou, to someone.

Tom Robinson (pp. 197, 198, 200, 237)--Misunderstood and misunderstanding. Caught in the trap of prejudice. To strike Mayella would be fatal; and to run acted as a confession. Possessing a jail record because he had not had bail money. Kindly, yet that very kindliness probably sealed his fate--for that black should pity white was an intolerable reversal of the established social order and posed a threat to the tradition of white superiority.

Reason left, prejudice took over, and the mockingbird's fate was sealed when he said he "felt right sorry" (p. 200) for Mayella. He knew it, and he gave up all hope. "Good-bye, Mr. Finch . . . there ain't no use tryin'" (p. 237). He believed he would always be an It. As Atticus said of those who shot him, "He wasn't Tom to them, he was an escaping prisoner" (p. 238).

Bob Ewell (pp. 25, 172, 174, 177, 219, 220, 250)--Another mad dog? It almost seems so. Because of his own inadequacies, the only superiority he had was to look down on Negroes. Yet Atticus asks Jem to stand in Bob Ewell's shoes a minute and realize how it would feel to have his "last shred of credibility" destroyed (p. 220). The jury's reaction was "Okay, we'll convict the Negro but get back to your dump." There is tragedy and isolation here, too. I wonder why we don't feel much sympathy for him?

S: Much of the isolation seems to be his own fault. He didn't have to be such a miserable character. He could have decided to behave differently.

T: Yes. We might all keep that in mind, on a lesser scale. We can decide what kind of persons we will be.

But to get back to characters, we must also reckon with the townspeople in Miss Lee's novel, for she has painted them as a background to every incident. We see two of them briefly, in closeup:

Sr. and Jr. Walter Cunningham (pp. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 155)--Proud, honest, loving land and independence. Yet Walter Sr. led a mob which might have become a lynch mob! And yet he was kept from violence by a child who thought of both him and his boy as Thous. She assumed his goodness and could speak to him as Walter Cunningham, Sr., rather than as just "the leader of the mob."

Atticus said of this, "You children last night made Walter Cunningham stand in my shoes for a minute. That was enough." And he said, too, that "a mob's always made up of people." (p. 160) I wonder if we might "hypothesize (i. e. make a logical assumption) from this evidence, on the subject of group conflicts?

S: Perhaps if a way could be found to personalize relationships between the individuals within and between groups of people, they would join hands instead of battle.

I: It does seem a possibility, doesn't it? Perhaps you will be able to help find a way to do this. Once again it would be the difference between I-Thou and I-It--the difference between receiving help from a friend and receiving a government handout for the "underprivileged." Remember "The Happiest Man on Earth"?

The townspeople in Maycomb, incidentally, sound pretty representative of townspeople anywhere, and Miss Lee has subtly told us quite a lot about them. You have a sheet

(Appendix B, page 5) quoting some of Miss Lee's words about them. Skipping the trial and the missionary meeting, call off the page numbers around the room; then look up the number you call and tell me what you learn about the townspeople from these situations. You who do not have a number, thumb through the trial scene (p. 168) or the missionary-meeting scene (p. 238) and see if you can learn something not covered in the other pages.

The analysis at the bottom of page 5 of Appendix B will guide the teacher here. The findings show the townspeople as helpful, as worried. A few do care and are striving. They instinctively believe in Atticus--of whom they apparently disapprove--for they continue to reelect him. Found here, also, are their prejudices, their crudeness, their superficial thinking, and their faulty rationalization. Given as explanation is their in-breeding, the "Streak" caste system, the influence of religion, the Negroes' automatic acceptance of "their place," and the horrifying, cumulative effect of eighty years of considering them as Its.

I: Incidentally, you may be wondering why I skipped some of the neighbors and townspeople in these summaries. I did it for a purpose: those I skipped are the ones who did not appear in the film version of this novel. Among the missing are Miss Rachel, Mr. Avery, Uncle Jack Finch, Francis--and Aunt Alexandra! What do we lose with her?

S: Nagging emphasis on "our kind of folks," that breeder of dehumanization of "other" kind of folks whom she turned into Its.

I: Without Aunt Alexandra, of course, we have no missionary meeting and no Mrs. Merriweather. What do we lose with Her? After all, she was "the most devout woman in Maycomb" (p. 233)!

Lost is a closeup of Maycomb reasoning and ranking of values: reasoning which considers missionary J. Grimes Everett a martyr for trying to change conditions in a tribe where a child had as many fathers as the tribe had men. Lost is a close look at people who say they are concerned about sin and squalor--but prove it only by attending missionary teas. Lost is the comment that one should "forgive" Helen Robinson--though Mrs. Merriweather couldn't remember her name. (p. 234)

I: These seem serious losses, don't they? Braxton Underwood was omitted, too. And Link Deas. And schoolteacher Caroline Fisher. And Dolphus Raymond. I hate to lose his words: "Cry about the simple hell people give other people--

without even thinking" (p. 204). But, even worse, I hate to lose all the asterisked incidents on your list! You might keep them in mind the next time you think that when you have seen the film version of a story you know what's in a book!

Of course the movie still has Dill and Scout (These two are foils, too: one who feels unwanted and the other who feels certain her household could not get along without her), Jem, Atticus, and Calpurnia. I wonder if Calpurnia might not also be a foil? If so, for whom?

S: For Tom, who misunderstands and will not adjust. Calpurnia understands, and she adjusts to the inevitable with dignity, affection, and intelligence.

I: Well, now. Perhaps we should summarize what we have been saying about plot incidents and characterization. We said that the incidents were chosen not only to make us feel and see that there is hurt--and sometimes tragedy--whenever one person treats another as an It, whatever the reason. What would you say Miss Lee's characters have provided for this THEME?

S: There are people who harm; people who object to changing the comfortable tradition of using people like things; people who talk about concern for people, but go right on "using" them. But there is also one character in particular who has thought about all this, decided it was wrong, and who acts on his decision by taking a very unpopular stand.

I: Yes, the novel has a hero who does not harm, but who tries to heal, instead--not just with words but with deeds. I just called Atticus the hero of this novel. What has Miss Lee's novel done to make me so sure he's the hero?

S: We like him. We admire him.

I: Do you know why? Because Miss Lee has so skillfully created, just with words, events and people that the reader is hurt and angry, too. Naturally, then, the character who acts as the reader feels is right will be for him the hero.

Or do you feel that what Atticus did was right?

S: What chance do students have, here?

I: Even though he was muttered at on the street, scorned by his neighbors, and threatened?

S: There seems little choice here, either.

I: I wonder what you would do if you wanted to sell your house and a Negro wanted to buy it. . . (No answer desired, here.)

Yes, Atticus was quite a person. We should certainly take a close look at him. There's such a lot to be said, though, I think we had better prepare a bit for that look. There are some page numbers on the board (see both page numbers and the relevant quotations on pages 6 and 7 of Appendix B),

and on each of these pages is something that may show the kind of person Atticus is, either as direct or indirect characterization. This half of the class check into the first twelve tonight, and the rest of you be martyrs and take the other twelve-plus-one. Make some notes and let me know tomorrow what you find.

I: Okay, what kind of character are you prepared to give Atticus? I'll sort out the evidence on the board, as we go--by page number--so let's see if we can decide what heads the columns. First, page 50. What evidence did you find, if any?

(The list should sort out somewhat as it appears on page 8 of Appendix B.)

I: His qualities are pretty impressive, aren't they? And of which quality does there seem to be the most evidence?

S: Regard for and empathy with human beings.

I: Why do you suppose I put both these qualities in the same column?

S: They are related. The second fosters the first. Empathy leads to understanding, and that understanding leads to forgiveness and a kind of affection--to I-Thou.

I: In other words, as Atticus said when he closed this story, most people are good "when you finally see them."

You can't help but have noticed, by the way, that the character of Atticus is developed far more fully than any other character--that there are many more opportunities created for us to understand him than for any other character. Why, do you think?

S: She must have felt he was the most important for us to understand.

I: Why? He could only take a "baby-step": what good was it? Why in the world would she feel that was important enough to write a whole book about?

S: Maybe she thought it would inspire her readers to join Atticus in his concern for human dignity, his integrity, his empathy, his courage, and his commitment beyond self. Maybe she thought that if her book was good enough, her readers would take their own "baby-steps" and that they might add up to a "giant step."

By this time, in the consideration of To Kill a Mockingbird, it would certainly be time for another change of pace. The screenplay script is available in paperback (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962) should students be interested in using it. Or the missionary-meeting chapter beginning on

page 230 is easily used as a briefer dramatization, by having an interlocutor read the unquoted portions. There are ample other possibilities. Appendix B, page 9, lists references for descriptive sections which are superbly convincing arguments for specific support, and samples of particularly effective diction. The next page lists references which are probably unfamiliar and vocabulary which has probably been skidded over, Page B-11 gives a useful trio of invitations to the consideration of tone and connotation, and brief facts about Harper Lee. Perhaps, too, some of the completions of "People can hurt my feelings most by . . . ." would have been so parallel that reading them now would contribute immediacy to the theme. Sooner or later, though, one must finalize. Meaning (i. e., theme) has been considered via mechanics; but an invitation to estimate the book's VALUE, the element listed last on the students' guide sheets (Appendix B, pp. 2-3), has a happy rightness as a closing, as well as the virtue of subtle review.

The list of quotations on pages 12 and 13 of Appendix B might provide pivots for this look at Value, as well as circumvent inanities. The session could begin with the differing opinions which reviewers expressed about this first novel--opinions which range from passable to unsurpassable (Appendix B, p. 14). Thus encouraged to be honest, students will, it is hoped, be just that. However varied the conclusions, though, the process will inevitably provide one final opportunity to see that students remind themselves of the causes and the effects of alienation--and of the crying need for the empathy, the respect for human dignity, the integrity, and the commitment beyond self which were the attributes of Atticus. Atticus, a low-income, middle-aged lawyer in a dead-end town few people ever heard of. Yet Edwin Markham might have been speaking for him when he said, in "Outwitted":

> He drew a circle that shut me out
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
> But love and I had the wit to win:
> We drew a circle that took him in.

As for evaluation of this unit, a number of possible questions are included as page 15 of Appendix B, but their appropriateness would depend on how class time had been spent--on where student-interest had focused attention. Once again, though, students would have questions in advance so that they might plan their answers (and think some more); and once again they would be permitted books and student-sheets during the writing. Their answers may not always be what one wants to read--but often they will be--and always they will evidence valuing. Even "baby-steps" are steps.

EPILOGUE

I once had as a student-teacher a twenty-seven-year-old veteran, father of two, with close to an A-average in all his course work. He could (and did) quote, almost verbatim, such authorities as Plato or Pope or Descartes or Dewey whenever an opinion was requested.

Yet when asked for an opinion of his own, he was at a loss to respond.

And he had planned, for tenth-grade English students, daily lectures spiced with examinations.

In an effort to stir him to a new concept of the word teacher (and in lieu of shaking him physically), I one day asked whether it had ever occurred to him that what he this day did, or said--or failed to do, or say--could influence the world's future.

Though he accused me of sending chills up his spine, I somehow felt he hadn't really "heard" me.

One day much later, after my own students had been exploring the possibility that each man is morally obligated to contribute to the future of all men, I asked him whether he was planning to make such a contribution. He answered with a question.

"Isn't it a contribution just to be a teacher?"

Is it?

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APPENDIX B

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

To Kill a Mockingbird
CONSIDERATION OF THE NOVEL AND ITS ELEMENTS*

ITS TYPE

Is it Romantic, or is it Realistic?

ITS TITLE

Does this satisfy the requirements of brevity, originality, appeal? What is its significance?

ITS BEGINNING

Does it begin with description, narration, conversation, or exposition? What does it accomplish?
Do you think it could be improved? If so, how?

ITS POINT OF VIEW

Is the story told in the same person throughout? If not, can you see why not?
Is the story written in the first person? If so, is the writer a character in the plot or merely an observer? Can you see why?
Is the story written in the third person? If so, is it written objectively (relating only what might have been seen) or by an omniscient observer (who knows all and even sees into the characters' minds?) Is the reason for this evident?
Do you feel the point(s) of view chosen are the most effective possible? Why or why not?

ITS PLOT

Do you admire the author's selection of incidents? Does each contribute? If so, what?
In what order are the incidents? (Sequential? Flashbacks?) Can you see why?
What is the climax or turning point of the plot? Is the falling action rapid or slow?
Is the struggle moral, physical, mental, or a combination of these?
Point out some minor crises; point out why there are crises but not the climax of the book.
Is there more than one plot? If so, how are the plots joined?

ITS CHARACTERS

Are they real people, idealized people, or caricatured people? Support.
Are they credible and consistent? Support.
How do you get acquainted with them? (Direct or indirect characterization?)
Which are the principal characters? Are they Static or Kinetic? Who is the hero?
Which are the subordinate characters? Are they Static or Kinetic?
Why have they been included? (Humor? Philosophy? Information? Local Color? Realism?)
Is the character the most important element of the story?

To Kill a Mockingbird

CONSIDERATION OF THE NOVEL AND ITS ELEMENTS*

ITS SETTING AND MOOD

What is the story's setting in place? Its setting in time?
Is setting essential to the story? (Has it an irreplaceable influence on plot or character?)
Cite examples of setting as revealed by one or more of the following: description, occupation, dress, speech, historical scenes, places, people, customs.
Is the book in any way a study of environment?
Has the book a distinctive atmosphere or mood? If so, can you tell how it is created?
Is setting the most important element of the story?

ITS STYLE

What is there about the way the author writes (his style) that you might be able to recognize in the future? (Quality and/or kind of description? Many words or as few as possible? Explicit or implicit? Effective use of nouns and verbs? Impressive vocabulary?)
Does the style resemble or contrast with that of another author you know? If so, who?
Has the book humor? If so, what kind? (Exaggerated? Quaint? Sly? Whimsical? Absurd? Ironical? Sympathetic? Coarse? Subtle?)
Can the author arouse the reader's emotions? (Can he create pity, fear, terror, compassion, awe, resentment, anger, etc.?) If so, what kind of emotion does he handle best?
Does the author use figurative language to any degree? Does it contribute, if so? Give an example or two.
Do you feel the author has ever been sentimental in this story? Hackneyed? Sordid? Support, and state how this contributes or weakens.
Does the author use irony? Symbolism?
Wherein do you think the chief strength of his style lies?

ITS THEME

Has the book any significance apart from its value as a story?
What do you feel was the purpose of the author? (To entertain? To reveal character? To reveal the author's point of view about some aspect of life? To illustrate a theory? To exemplify moral principles? To effect reform? To indulge the fancy or imagination of the author? To present a historical picture? To stress local color? To suggest or to solve a problem? A combination of purposes?)
State the theme of the book.

ITS VALUE

Has the book value for you? If so, what kind? (Escape? Relaxation? Reinforcement of belief? Teaching value? Ethical value?)

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*Adapted from the Curriculum Guide supplied to teachers of Track 2 English by the Meadville /Pa./ Area School District (in use during 1964).

Page

To Kill a Mockingbird
MAJOR INCIDENTS IN PLOT

20 School episode. Leading to Walter's lunch at Finch's.

37 Tree items and Radley story, followed by dramatizations, the effort to deliver the note, the effort to peek in the window, the pants episode--then the filling of the hole.

**68 Fire at Miss Maudie's.

* 84 Christmas at Finch's landing.

100 Shooting of Tim Johnson.

*107 Mrs. DuBose incident.

*120 Visit to First Purchase Church.

*129 Arrival of Alexandra.

141 Arrival of Dill.

*147 Visit by "friends."

152 Visit by a mob.

168 Trial.

*230 Missionary meeting.

257 Pageant.

263 Attack.

*Not in script for movie.

Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 3.

> To man the world is two-fold, in accordance with his two-fold attitude . . . . The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination I-Thou. The other primary word is the combination I-It; wherein without a change in the primary word, one of the words He and She can replace It.

To Kill a Mockingbird

QUOTATIONS from THE TOWNSPEOPLE

Page

15 The sheriff hadn't the heart to put him in jail alongside negroes.

73 The old fire truck, killed by the cold, was being pushed from town by a crowd of men.

133 The same families married the same families until the members of the community looked faintly alike.

There was indeed a caste system in Maycomb . . . . The older citizens . . . were utterly predictable to one another.

137 "There's his chillun"; "Yonder's some Finches."

147 A crowd of men was standing around Atticus.

161 (Townspeople are pictured on the way to the trial.)

164 They waited patiently at the doors behind the white families.

165 Yeah, but Atticus aims to defend him. (The Idlers Club.)

168 (The townspeople at the trial.)

200 The witness realized his mistake and shifted uncomfortably in his chair. But the damage was done.

216 "They--they aren't oversteppin' themselves, are they?"

218 "Who in this town did one thing to help Tom Robinson, just who?"

238 (The missionary meeting.)

240 "Yes sir, Mrs. Perkins, that J. Grimes Everett is a martyred saint."

243 Maycomb was interested etc. (to the end of the paragraph).

244 Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella opened her mouth and screamed.

TRAIT-ANALYSIS OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE (for the teacher only)

Good points: pp. 15, 73, 218.

Faults: pp. 15, 137, 147, 161, 164, 165, 200, 216, 238, 240, 243,244.

Explanations: pp. 15, 133, 161.

QUOTATIONS from *To Kill a Mockingbird*
CHARACTER EVIDENCE: ATTICUS

Page

50 "Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the street.

74 I saw Atticus carrying Miss Maudie's heavy oak rocking chair and thought it sensible of him to save what she valued most.

75 He might have been watching a football game.

80 "If I didn't, I couldn't hold my head up in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again."

"Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win."

81 "This time we aren't fighting the Yankees, we're fighting our friends. But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they're still our friends."

92 "When a child asks you something, answer him . . . . but don't make a production of it. Children . . . can spot an evasion quicker than adults."

102 "People in their right minds never take pride in their talents."

104 "You just hold your head high and be a gentleman. Whatever she says to you, it's your job not to let her make you mad."

109 "I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man."

"Before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

118 A cartoon . . . . shows Atticus . . . chained to a desk.

148 "You've got everything to lose from this, Atticus. I mean everything."

"Link, that boy might go to the chair, but he's not going till the truth's told. . . . And you know what the truth is."

153 Atticus was sitting propped against the front door . . . . and he was reading.

QUOTATIONS from *To Kill a Mockingbird*
CHARACTER EVIDENCE: ATTICUS

Page

160 "Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man."

"I don't want either of you bearing a grudge about this thing, no matter what happens."

184 "Maa'm."

216 "Tell them--tell them they must never do this again. Times are too hard."

218 "We're so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we've got men like Atticus to go for us."

"He's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that."

220 "I wish Bob Ewell wouldn't chew tobacco."

"Jem, see if you can stand in Bob Ewell's shoes a minute. . . . He had to take it out on somebody and I'd rather it be me than that houseful of children out there."

222 "Before a man is sentenced for murder, say, there should be one or two eye-witnesses."

223 "There's nothing more sickening to me than a white man who'll take advantage of a Negro's ignorance."

224 "You might like to know there was one fellow who took considerable wearing down."

238 "He wasn't Tom to them, he was an escaping prisoner."

246 In spite of Atticus' shortcomings. . . people were content to re-elect him.

248 "It's not okay to hate"--even Hitler .

253 "All he got was . . . get back to your dump."

284 "Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them."

He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning.

HIS REGARD FOR AND EMPATHY WITH HUMAN BEINGS--
pages 74, 81, 92, 104, 160, 184, 216, 220, 222, 238, 248, 253.

HIS FAITH IN MAN AND IN THE FUTURE--
pages 81, 160, 224, 284.

HIS ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY--

to demand of himself
integrity--pages 50, 223, 246.
self-control--pages 75, 220.
humility--page 102.
courage--page 153.
skill--page 218.

to commitment beyond self-interest--pages 80, 109, 118, 148, 284.

to seek Truth--pages 109, 148.

to resist what he believed to be evil--pages 80, 153, 218.

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Description:

Page 9 Maycomb
10 Calpurnia
13 The Radley Place
110 Mrs. Dubose's Room
120 First Purchase Church and Cemetery
131 Aunt Alexandra
172 The Ewell's Abode

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Effective diction:

Page 10 A day was 24 hours long but seemed longer.
12 pocket Merlin
16 the house died
46 a chameleon lady
85 Talking with Francis gave me the sensation of settling slowly to the bottom of the ocean.
131 she was born in the objective case
230 August was on the brink of September

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Probably unfamiliar references:

Page	37	Dewey, Unit, Group Dynamics
	64	toilet paper and perpetual embalming
	93	"Let this cup pass from you."
	150	seen the light
	167	pilot fish
	179	frog sticking without a light

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Vocabulary:

Page	8	stricture	131 Amanuensis
	10	collards	180 ambidextrous
	40	scuppernongs	198 ex cathedra
	106	philippic	217 feral
	107	interdict	221 furtive
	107	palliation	
	131	shinny	

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

For consideration of tone and connotation:

Page 41 nigger talk
121 Calpurnia calls Lula nigger
159 Don't talk like that in front of "them"

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Author:

Novel may be autobiographic. Born 1926; father Frances Finch Lee an attorney in Monroeville, Alabama. Harper to U. of Ala., with year at Oxford (Eng.)--studied law. Did not finish, but to NYC to become writer (her wish since age 7). Worked as reservation clerk Eastern, and then for BOAC. When she had expanded short story for this novel, it was criticized as a series of short stories, but she was encouraged to rewrite. And she did--for TWO YEARS! This novel the result.

Phenomenal success: Literary Guild; B-of-M; RD condensed; movie; Pulitzer 1961.
Now in Monroeville, writing. Perhaps a page or two in a whole day!

QUOTATIONS from

Page

15 The sheriff hadn't the heart to put him in jail alongside Negroes, so Boo was locked in the courthouse basement.

16 Atticus said . . . there were other ways of making people into ghosts.

29 "That boy's yo' company and if he wants to eat up the tablecloth you let him, you hear?"

34 "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

49 "Sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of--oh, of your father."

104 "Just hold your head high and be a gentleman."

109 "The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

116 "It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win but sometimes you do."

121 "Stop right there, nigger."

128 "Cal, why do you talk nigger-talk to the--to your folks when you know it's not right?"

132 I had received the impression that Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had.

159 "Maybe if we didn't give them so much to talk about they'd be quiet.

164 "Around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black.

200 "<u>You</u> felt sorry for <u>her</u>?"

201 "It was the way he said it that made me sick, plain sick."

203 "I do say I don't care if they don't like it--but I don't say the hell with 'em, see?"

215 "They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it--seems that only children weep."

QUOTATIONS from

Page

216 "They--they aren't oversteppin' themselves, are they?

218 "We're so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we've got men like Atticus to go for us."

219 "It's just a baby-step, but it's a step."

223 "You saw something come between them and reason. . . . there's something in our world that makes men lose their heads."

"Whenever a white man does that . . . no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash."

"Don't fool yourselves--it's all adding up and one of these days we're going to pay the bill for it."

224 "We generally get the juries we deserve."

"Serving on a jury forces a man to make up his mind and declare himself about something. Men don't like to do that. Sometimes it's unpleasant."

"Miss Rachel would. Miss Maudie wouldn't."

244 In the secret court of men's hearts, Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.

246 There was one odd thing, though, that I never understood: in spite of Atticus's shortcomings . . . people were content to re-elect him to the state legislature . . . without opposition.

281 I slipped my hand into the crook of his arm.

We had given him nothing, and it made me sad.

284 "Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them."

He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning.

Phoebe Adams, Atlantic, CCVI, No. 2 (August, 1960), p. 98.

Booklist, LVII, (September, 1960), p23.

Richard Sullivan, Chicago Sunday Tribune (July 17, 1960), p. 1.

Times London Literary Supplement (October 28, 1960), p 697.

L. R. Ward, Commonwealth, LXXIII (December 9, 1960), p 289.

Granville Hicks, Saturday Review, XLIII (July 23, 1960), p. 15.

(See also quotations from reviews, on the first two pages of this edition of the novel.)

To Kill a Mockingbird
EVALUATION POSSIBILITIES

For either brief or essay answers:

In your opinion, what caused prejudice in the following: Mrs. Merriweather; Walter Cunningham, Sr.; Mr. Underwood; Alexandra; Miss Stephanie.

or

In your opinion, what do you think Miss Lee hoped we would learn from the following: Mr. Radley; Alexandra; Mrs. Merriweather; Mr. Cunningham, Sr.; Atticus; Miss Stephanie.

For an essay answer only:

Compare and contrast the religions of Mr. Radley, Mrs. Merriweather, and Atticus.

Was Atticus a Success? Why or why not?

Just something to think about:

Which character in To Kill a Mockingbird do you most resemble? Why? Are you pleased about the resemblance?