

To Kill A Mockingbird
Characterization
Week 4: October 8, 2013



F404: TA-1

Tuesday 11:50-1:15

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Week 4 Agenda

1. Announcements: Class Liaison
2. Icebreaker: A Word About Characterization: **Greg Toppo**
USA Today 11/4/2013: “Want to Understand Others? Read Literature”
3. Instructor Notes: Chapter 6-10
Literary Techniques: Characterization
 - Discursive Method
 - Dramatic Method
 - Character Appraisal Method
4. Small Group Discussion Chapters 6-10
5. Viewing: Film To Kill A Mockingbird
6. Wrap-Up

Benefits of Reading Literary Fiction

- Research out Thursday [Oct. 3, 2013] finds that reading literary fiction, instead of popular or commercial fiction:

1. “Better equips people to sense and understand others’ mental states”
2. “May change [the] how, not just [the] what people think about others.”

- [Theory of the Mind researchers] Emanuele Castano, a psychology professor and David Comer Kidd, a doctoral candidate in social psychology at The New York School for Social Research say that [the reason] is:

“Due in large part to the fact that literary novelists tend to make readers work harder to understand characters.”

“Literary fiction often leaves more to the imagination encouraging readers to make inferences about characters and be sensitive to emotional nuance and complexity.”

Mind Reading Skills

According to Castano:

“A book like Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice gives [the reader] contradictory information.

It shows the person behaving in ways that are not easily interpretable, or at least interpretable in many different ways.

By doing so, and not giving [the reader] the whole picture, the [book and or author] forces [the reader] to contribute [their] own interpretations, to reconstruct the mind of the character.”

Mind Reading Skills

Literary Fiction vs Popular Fiction

- **Research also suggests that reading literary fiction asks readers to:**

- “Not only challenge their view of the world but to assume the role of writer, in some cases, filling in gaps and searching for “meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings.”

- **In contrast reading popular fiction:**

- “Often lays out characters in a more complete, straightforward way, leaving little doubt, for instance, that a hard-boiled detective is a tough guy with a heart of gold.

According to Kidd, one of the researchers, in popular fiction:

1. “The author is in control, and the reader has a more passive role; popular fiction seems to be more focused on the plot.”

2. “Characters can be interchangeable and usually more stereotypical in the way they are described.” (New York Times)



Notes on Chapters 6-10



- **Chapters 6-10 serve to:**

- **Record the transformation of Boo Radley from an anonymous phantom to a “malevolent” phantom**

“The following week the knot-hole yielded a tarnished medal. Jem showed it to Atticus, who said it was a spelling medal...Atticus said someone must have lost it...Our biggest prize appeared four days later. It was a pocket watch that wouldn't run, on a chain with an aluminum knife.” (Chapter 6)

- **Be a backdrop for further development of gothic elements with the unnatural snowfall, Miss Maudie's fire and the mad dog incident i.e.,**

“In front of the Radley gate, Tim Johnson had made up what was left of his mind. He had finally turned himself around, to pursue his original course up our street. He made two steps forward, then stopped and raised his head. We saw his body go rigid. With movements so swift they seemed simultaneous Atticus's hand yanked a ball-tipped lever as he brought the gun to his shoulder.”



Notes on Chapters 6-10

- **Introduce the idea of guilty until proven innocent when**
 - Scout defends Atticus against Francis' accusation that Atticus is a 'n...lover'; without hearing Scout's side of the story Uncle Jack spansks her
 - Atticus tells him later; 'You've a lot to learn, Jack.'
 - 'I know. Your daughter gave me my first lessons this afternoon. She said I didn't understand children much and told me why. She was quite right. Atticus, she told me how I should have treated her-oh dear, I'm so sorry I romped on her.'"
- **Introduce the main symbol is the novel**



"Atticus said to Jem one day, 'I'd rather you shoot at tin cans in the back yard, but I know you'll go after birds. Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.'

Methods of Characterization

1. **Discursive Method**: In a straightforward manner Scout feeds the reader information about a character

Example: Scout tells the reader(Chapter 5):

“Miss Maudie hated her house: time spent indoors was time wasted. She was a widow, a chameleon lady who worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men’s coveralls, but after five o’clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in magisterial beauty”

Methods of Characterization

Cont'd

2. Dramatic Method: Characters reveal themselves through actions and words

Example: Scout asks Atticus: (Chapter 8)

“If you shouldn’t be defendin’ him, then why are you doin’ it?”

“For a number of reason, said Atticus, “The main one is if I didn’t I couldn’t hold up my head in town, I couldn’t represent this county in the legislature, I couldn’t even tell you or Jem not to do something again.”

Methods of Characterization

Cont'd

3. Character Appraisal Method: Characters comment about another character

Example: Scout's appraisal: Aunt Alexandra(Chapter 9)

“Aunt Alexandra was Atticus’s sister, but when Jem told me about changelings and siblings, I decided that she had been swapped at birth, that my grandparents had perhaps received a Crawford instead of a Finch.

Had I ever harbored the mystical notions about mountains that seem to obsess lawyers and judges, Aunt Alexandra would have been analogous to Mount Everest: throughout my life she was cold and there.”

Literary Devices of Characterization

- Specific Detail are used inclusive of:
 - Actions
 - Thoughts
 - Physical Appearance
 - Events
 - Character's immediate surroundings
- Authentic Dialogue such as:
 - unemotional speeches of Atticus
 - emotional taunts of the children

Literary Devices of Characterization: Juxtaposition:

Dissimilar characters (foils) are placed side by side, highlighting differences for the reader; reader is able to come to their own conclusions minus the judgment of the author.



Literary Foils

- Characters whose values differ are placed side by side to make differences more visible:
 - Calpurnia/Aunt Alexandra
 - Jem/Dill
 - Calpurnia/Lulu
 - Ewells/Cunninghams
 - Nathan Radley/Atticus
 - Scout/Mayella
 - Mrs. Dubose/Bob Ewell
 - Miss Maudie/Miss Stephanie
 - Bob Ewell/Tom Robinson

A Final Word About Characterization in TKM James McBride Interview from: Hey Boo

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/harper-lee-hey-boo/outtakes-james-mcbride/2001/>