

To Kill A Mockingbird Symbolism

Week 6: October 22, 2013



F404: TA-1

Tuesday 11:50-1:15

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Week 6: The Trial Agenda

1. Announcements: Class Liaison
A word about Entailments
2. Icebreaker: Chapter 16 (Pre-Trial)
3. Instructor Notes: Chapter 16-20
Literary Techniques: Symbolism
Focus on Mockingbird
4. Small Group Discussion Chapters 16-20
5. Viewing: Film To Kill A Mockingbird (The Trial)
6. Wrap-Up

Reader Response: Chapter 16

Following the night's events in Chapter 15 when Scout confronts the mob, Scout and Jem make their way home.

Upon their arrival Scout tells the reader:

“Jem took me to his room and put me in bed beside him. “Try to go to sleep he said. “It'll be all over after tomorrow, maybe.”

We had come in quietly, so as not to wake Aunty. Atticus killed the engine in the driveway and coasted to the carhouse; we went in the back door and to our rooms without a word. I was very tired, and was drifting into sleep when the memory of Atticus calmly folding his newspaper and pushing back his hat became Atticus standing in the middle of an empty waiting street, pushing up his glasses.

The full meaning of the night's events hit me and I began crying.”

Reader Response: Chapter 16

Later on in the scene Scout questions Atticus about Mr. Cunningham and her surprise at seeing him as part of the mob.

‘I thought Mr. Cunningham was a friend of ours. You told me a long time ago he was.’ Scout says.

‘He still is’. Atticus responded

‘But last night he wanted to hurt you.’ Scout added.

Atticus placed his fork beside his knife and pushed his plate aside.’ Mr. Cunningham’s basically a good man”, he said, “he just had his blind spots along with the rest of us.”

Jem spoke. “Don’t call that a blind spot. He’da killed you last night when he first went there.”

‘He might have hurt me a little, Atticus conceded, “but son....a mob’s always made up of people no matter what. Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man.”

Reader Response ?'s

1. Why does Scout cry after returning home from the jail?
2. How does Jem's treatment of Scout, and his response to Atticus about Mr. Cunningham reflect his maturity?
3. What is Scout remembering? At what other point in the novel does Atticus "stand in the middle of an empty street."?
4. What does Atticus mean when he tell Scout "Mr. Cunningham along with the rest of us has blind spots" ?
5. What lessons about human nature does Atticus want Scout and Jem to take away from the jail scene?

Notes on Chapters 16-20

1. Chronicle the events leading up to the Tom Robinson's trial

(Chapter 16)

“It was a gala occasion. There was no room at the public hitching rail for another animal, mules and wagons were parked under every available tree. The courthouse square was covered with picnic parties sitting on newspapers, washing down biscuit and syrup with warm milk from fruit jars. Some people were gnawing on cold chicken and cold fried pork chops. The more affluent chased their food with drugstore Coca-Cola in bulb-shaped soda glasses. Greasy faced children popped the whip through the crowd, and babies lunched at their mothers' breasts.

In a far corner of the square the Negroes sat quietly in the sun, dining on sardines, crackers, and the more vivid flavors of Nehi Cola. Mr. Dolphus Raymond sat with them.

“Jem,” said Dill, “he's drinkin' out of a sack.”

Mr. Dolphus Raymond seemed to be so doing: two yellow drugstore straws ran from his mouth to the depths of a brown paper bag.

“Ain't ever seen anybody do that murmured Dill. “How does he keep what's in it in it?”

Jem giggled. “He's got a Co-Cola bottle full of whiskey in there. “ You'll see him sip it all afternoon, he'll step out for a while and fill it back up.”

Notes on Chapters 16-20

2. Chronicle the events of the trial inside the courtroom

Testimony of: Heck Tate

“I asked her who hurt her and she said it was Tom Robinson....[I] asked her if he beat her like that, she said yes he had. Asked her if he took advantage of her and she said yes he did....So I went down to Robinson’s house and brought him back. She identified him as the one, so I took him in. That’s all there was to it.

Testimony of: Bob Ewell (Chapter 17)

“Mr. Ewell,” Atticus began, “folks were doing a lot of running that night...you say you ran into the house, you ran to the window, you ran inside, you ran to Mayella, you ran for Mr. Tate. Did you, during all this running, run for the doctor?”

“Wadn’t no need to. I seen what happened.

Testimony of: Mayella Ewell (Chapter 18)

“I said come here n...and bust up this chiffarobe for me. I gotta nickel for you. He coulda done it easy enough, he could. So he come in the yard an’ I went in the house to get him the nickel and I turned around an’ fore I knew it he was on me. Just run up behind me, he, did. I fought n’hollered but he had me round the neck. He hit me agin an’ agin.”

“Then what happened?” Mr. Gilmore interrupted.

“I don’t remember too good, but the next thing I knew Papa was in the room..”

Notes on Chapters 16-20

Testimony of: Tom Robinson (Chapter 19)

“Mr. Finch, it was this way last spring. I remember it because it was choppin’ time and I had my hoe with me. I said I didn’t have nothin’ but this hoe, but she said she had a hatchet. She gave me the hatchet and I broke up the chiffarobe. She said, “I reckon I’ll hafta give you a nickel, won’t I? an’ I said, “No ma’am there ain’t no charge.’ Then I went home. Mr. Finch that was way last spring, way over a year ago.”

“Did you ever go on the place again?” Atticus asked.

“Yes suh.” Tom responded

“When?” Atticus countered.

“Well lots of times.” Tom added

“Under what circumstances?” Atticus asked.

“She’d call me in, suh. Seemed like every time I passed by yonder she’d have some little somethin’ for me to do choppin, kindlin, totin water for her. “ Tom said.

“Were you paid for your services?” Atticus questioned.

“ No suh, not after she offered me a nickel the first time. I was glad to do it, Mr. Ewell didn’t seem to help her none, and neither did the chillun, and I knowed she didn’t have no nickel to spare.”



Symbolism: The Mockingbird

Mockingbird Symbol occurs 4 times in the novel



1st reference occurs when Atticus reminds the children “ you can kill all the blue jays you want but it is a sin to kill a mockingbird.”

2nd reference takes place when Tom Robinson is shot in an attempt to escape; Mr. Underwood compares his death to “the senseless slaughter of songbirds.”

3rd reference takes place as Jem and Scout pass the Radley place on their way to the Halloween pageant; “high above us a solitary mocker poured out his repertoire in blissful unawareness.”

4th and final reference occurs when Heck Tate attempts to suppress the fact of who is responsible for saving the lives of Jem and Scout; Scout says “hurting Boo would be like shootin’ a Mockingbird.”

Symbolic Value of the Mockingbird

“**Mockingbird**” comes to represent the idea of innocence; to kill a mockingbird is to destroy innocence.

Note: A number of characters can be described as Mockingbirds i.e., innocents who have been injured or destroyed through contact with evil.

Characters who fit the description of a mockingbird are:

- Jem
- Tom Robinson
- Dill
- Boo Radley
- Mr. Dolphus Raymond

Symbolism Using Allusion: Character's Names

- **Atticus** or “Attikos” (English/Greek)
 - Used by an Athenian poet and legal reformer Solon
 - Solon responsible for democratic law in Athens (559 BC)
- **Robert E. Lee Ewell**
 - Robert E. Lee: Civil War general on the Confederate side.
 - Confederates represented southern slave states i.e., Ewell's name is reflective of the racism that Bob Ewell embraces
- **Jean Louise “Scout” Finch** (“one who is dispatched from the main body to gather information..to observe/judge”)
- **Jeremy Atticus “Jem” Finch** (“a beloved or highly prized person”)
- **“Arthur” Boo Radley** (Historical allusion to King Arthur)
- **Mayella ‘Violet’ Ewell** – (Connection to Nature)
- **Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose** (aligned with French General Marquis de Lafayette)

Animals/Objects/Incidents as Symbols

- Mad dog “a liver-colored bird dog, the pet of Maycomb”
- The Camellia “Snow-on-the-Mountain”
- The hole in the tree/Cemented hole in the tree
- Tom’s crippled arm
- The red geraniums
- Miss Maudie’s Fire
- The Snowman
- The Pocket Watch
- Pearl Necklace

