

To Kill A Mockingbird
Theme/Motif
Week 8: November 5, 2013



F404: TA-1

Tuesday 11:50-1:15

Instructor: Donna Carducci Macurdy

dfmacurdy@verizon.net

Week 8: The Closing Chapters Agenda

1. Announcements: Class Liaison
2. Icebreaker: Video (American Film Institute)
Focus: Atticus Finch: Hero or Villian?
3. Instructor Notes: Chapter 21-25
Literary Techniques: Theme/Motif
4. Small Group Discussion Chapters 26-31
5. Viewing: Film To Kill A Mockingbird (The End)
6. Wrap-Up – Classic Novel? TKM?

That's All Folks

Atticus Finch: Hero or Villian?

Session #8



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqmnI4qtiGM>

READER RESPONSE ?'S

Atticus Finch: Hero or Villian?

1. Is Atticus Finch too passive, as the video suggests, or is he just “waiting for people to express the good in themselves”?
2. Does Atticus Finch believe too much in the ‘goodness of men’? When?
3. Is it possible that Atticus’ belief only ‘in the goodness of men’ be considered a ‘blind spot’?
4. Did Atticus’ ‘blind spot’ lead to the attack on the children in the final moments of the novel?
5. In the closing chapters of the novel what was Harper Lee trying to tell the reader?

Notes on Chapters 26-31

Chapters 26 – Chapter 27: Backdrop for after effects of Trial.

Juxtaposition of Incidents/Characters

1. Miss Gates remark to her class with regard to Hitler and the difference between a “dictatorship” and a democracy :

“ Over here [America] we don’t believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced. There are no better people than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn’t think so is a mystery to me.”

2. Miss Gates remark to Miss Stephanie as she leaves the courthouse

Scout tells Jem: “I heard her say it’s time somebody taught ‘em a lesson, they were getting’ way above themselves, an the next thing they think they can do is marry us. Jem how can you hate Hitler so bad an’ then turn around and be ugly about folks at home...?”

Significance: Miss Gates paradoxical remarks in the classroom remind the reader of Mrs. Merriweather’s comments at Aunt Alexandra’s missionary tea with regard to the Mrunas and her subsequents comments regarding the black community in Maycomb.



Notes on the Chapters 26-31



Chapters 26 – Chapter 27

Juxtaposition of Incidents/Characters (Cont'd)

3. In contrast to Boo Radley's 'shadowy presence' in Part 1 Ewell's 'shadowy' presence in Part II is pushed to the forefront of the novel when:

Scout recounts for the reader the fact that:

“ Bob Ewell acquired and lost a job in a matter of days and probably made himself unique in the annals of nineteen-thirties; he was the only man who was fired from the WPA for laziness.”

“Judge Taylor clumped to the back porch to let Ann out and found the screen door swinging open. A shadow on the corner of the house caught his eye, and that was all he saw of his visitor.”

Link Deas stops at Bob Ewell's gates and shouts: “If I hear one more peep outa my girl Helen about not bein able to walk this road I'll have you in jail before sundown.”

Significance: Ewell's unpredictable behavior in the community builds tension and foreshadows danger and violence to come; Ewell's actions also highlight the presence of evil i.e., those who act without a conscience in the novel.

Notes on the Chapters 26-31

Chapters Chapter 28



Juxtaposition of Incidents/Gothic Motif

Agricultural Pageant – depiction of Maycomb County Pride

“I soon learned, that my services would be required on stage that evening. Mrs. Grace Meriwether had composed an original pageant entitled Maycomb County and I was to be a ham. She thought it would be adorable if some of the children were costumed to represent the county’s agricultural products.”

Gothic Motif – Jem and Scout’s walk home sensing a shadowy figure in the background followed by an attack; Scout recalls the details for Atticus/Heck Tate:

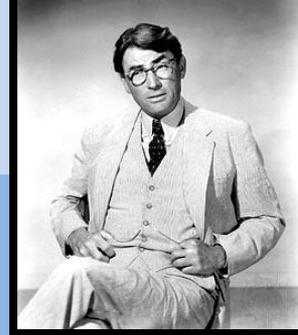
“ Something crushed the chicken wire around me. Metal ripped on metal, and I fell to the ground and rolled as far as I could, floundering to escape my wire prison. From somewhere near by came scuffling, kicking sounds, sound of shoes and flesh scraping dirt and roots. Someone rolled against me and I felt Jem. “

Irony: Ewell attacks the children not Atticus; it is implied that Ewell doesn’t have the courage to attack the ‘best shot’ in Maycomb County.

Also ironic Ewell saying “he’d get Atticus if it took him the rest of his life.” It did!



Notes on the Chapters 26-31



Chapters Chapter 29

Juxtaposition of Characters: Heck Tate/Atticus

Discussion between Heck Tate and Atticus with regard to who was responsible for the attack on Scout and Jem after the pageant and who was responsible for Ewell's death

“ I never heard tell that it's against the law for a citizen to do his utmost to prevent a crime from being committed, which is exactly what he did, but maybe you'll say it's my duty to tell the town all about it and not hush it up. “

“Mr. Finch, taking the one man who's done you and this town a great service an'draggin him with his shy ways into the limelight – to me that's a sin.”

Significance: Use of term 'sin' as well as the mockingbird imagery implies moral and or spiritual value; the image as well as the word is woven into the fabric of the novel which makes the reader aware that this is a story with a lesson i.e., an allegorical tale in which a hidden message is conveyed through the writer's use of symbolic fictional figures, actions, imagery and or events that express truths and or generalizations about human existence.

Example: Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter



Notes on the Chapter 26-31



Chapters Chapter 29-31: Scout's Maturation

Scout's Response to Boo's Presence: (Chapter 29)

1. As Scout turns and sees Arthur Radley Scout's 'childhood phantom' becomes, a human being

"He was leaning against the wall. He had been leaning against the wall when I came into the room, his arms folded against his chest. As I pointed he brought his arms down and pressed the palms of his hands against the wall...."

"Hey Boo." [Scout] said.

2. When Scout acknowledges Atticus' words:

Atticus was right, One time he said 'You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.' (Chapter 30)

Significance: Scout looks at the world for the first time with a grown-up moral perspective; Atticus' words become real for her as she walks Boo home.

3. When Scout returns home and finds Atticus in Jem's room reading one of Jem's books, The Grey Ghost, Scout tells the reader:

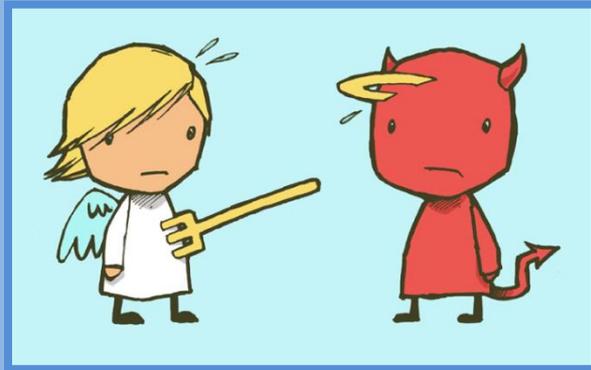
"I willed myself to stay awake, but the rain was so soft and the room so warm and his voice so deep . . . that I slept."

Significance: Scout returns, in dreams, to the carefree world of childish habits and pursuits; Boo saves her from Bob Ewell & the intrusion of the adult world. (Chapter 31)

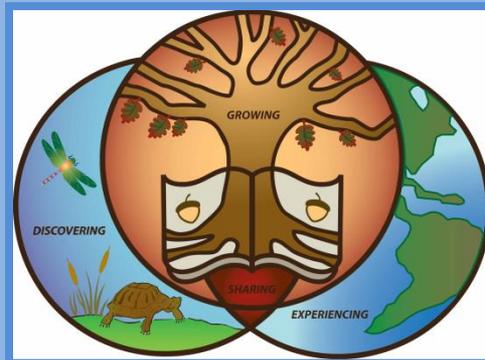
Themes in TKM

1. Loss of Innocence/Maturation

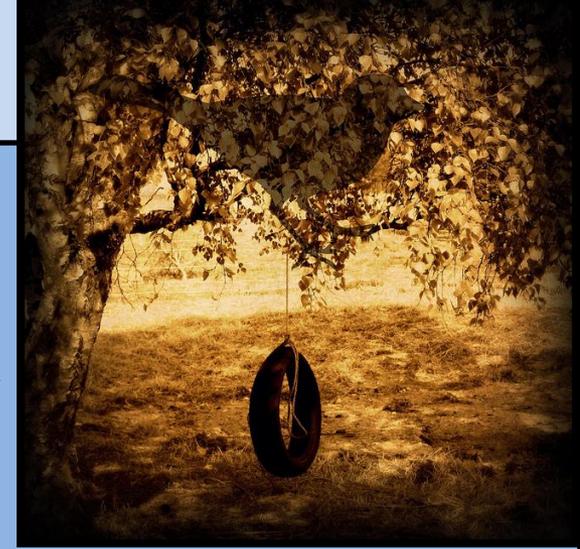
2. The Coexistence of Good and Evil



3. Southern Life/Racial Injustice



4. Education



courage

I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what.



Gothic Motif: Harper Lee and Romanticism

- Rumors, Gossip, Innuendo – Hawthorne (“Minister’s Black Veil”)
- Forebodings of Evil –Poe (“Fall of House of Usher”)
- Secrets – Hawthorne (The Scarlet Letter)
- Eccentricity – Poe (“Masque of Red Death”); Hawthorne (“Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”)
- Insanity Poe (“The Fall of House of Usher”) and (“The Black Cat”)
- The Lure of Terror – Melville (Moby Dick)
- Imprisonment, Barriers, Boundaries- Poe (“The Cask of Amontillado”)
- Stereotypes, prejudice, bias Hawthorne (The Scarlet Letter)
- Social Taboos - Hawthorne (“Minister’s Black Veil”)
- Violence in an attempt to break boundaries – Poe (“The Black Cat”)
- Ghosts, Shadows, haunted houses – Poe (“The Fall of the House of Usher”)

Romanticism consisted of two groups i.e., the Transcendentalists (Emerson/Thoreau) who believed in the goodness of mankind and the Anti-Transcendentalists (Hawthorne/Melville/Poe who shared the belief that if man were given a choice he would choose evil.