

To Kill A Mockingbird
Mockingbird Symbolism/Allusion
Week 7: May 5, 2015



F404: TA-1

Tuesday 11:50-1:15

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Week 7: The Verdict Agenda

1. Announcements: Class Liaison
2. Icebreaker: Reader Response (Chapter 20)
Atticus' Closing Arguments to the Jury
3. Instructor Notes: Chapter 21-25
Literary Techniques: Symbolism
Focus: Who is the Mockingbird?
4. Small Group Discussion Chapters 21-25
5. Viewing: Film To Kill A Mockingbird (The Trial)
6. Wrap-Up Discussion: Poetry as Background for Mockingbird
Dunbar's "Sympathy" & "Douglass" (Realism) (1865-1915)

Atticus' Closing Arguments: Chapter 20



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8TgqenWW0I>

READER RESPONSE ?'S

Atticus' Closing Arguments

1. What social code is Atticus referring to in his closing remarks to the jury?
2. What societal assumptions does Atticus challenge in his final arguments ?
3. Atticus condemns the denying of the one source of equality through the presence of prejudice; what is that source of 'in' equality?
4. Who literally is the focus of Atticus' final plea?

Notes: Chapters 21-25

- **Chaper 21 & 22**

- Juxtaposition of Scene i.e.,

- Dolphus Raymond pretends whiskey; creates impression he is what he is not; outcast in society by choice
- Bob Ewell – town drunk; creates impression that Tom Robinson raped Mayella; outcast in society by lifestyle; cries rape for attention

- Juxtaposition of Characters i.e.,

- Jem/Dill (Children's Impression of Robinson Verdict)
- Miss Maudie/Miss Stephanie (Townspeople's contrasting Impressions of Robinson Verdict)

- **Chapter 23**

Atticus Reviews verdict with Scout and Jem prompting Jem to conclude about the town and citizens of Maycomb County:

- “I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo stayed shut up in the house all this time...it's because he wants to.

Notes: Chapters 21-25

Chapter 24

Juxtaposition of Characters:

- Paints an ironic picture of the citizens of Maycomb w/Aunt Alexandra's Missionary Tea

Response of Mrs. Merriweather to the plight of Mrunas

"Oh child those poor Mruna," Mrs. Merriweather said.

Mrs. Merriweather's large brown eyes always filled with tears when she considered the oppressed.

"Living in that jungle, with nobody but J. Grimes Everett, she said. "Not a white person'll go near 'em but that saintly J. Grimes Everett."

Response of Aunt Alexandra to the missionary ladies condemnation of Atticus

[Mrs. Merriweather's] voice soared over the clink of coffee cups..."Gertrude, she said, "I tell you there are some good but misguided people in this town. Folks who think they're doing right, I mean. Now far be it from me to say who, but some of 'em in this town thought they were doing the right thing a while back, but all they did was stir 'em up. That's all they did."

Response of Aunt Alexandra to news of Tom's death

"What's the matter?" Aunt Alexandra asked.

"Tom's dead." Atticus responded.

"They shot him...He was running. It was during their exercise period. They said he just broke into a blind raving charge at the fence and started climbing over. Right in front of them..."

"Didn't they try to stop him? Didn't they give him any warning?" Aunt Alexandra's voice shook.

Notes: Chapters 21-25

Chapter 25 :

Juxtaposition of Scene:

Tom Robinson's Wife: News of Tom's Death

"Scout, said Dill, "she just fell down in the dirt. Just fell down in the dirt, like a giant with a big foot just came along and stepped on her.

Dill said Calpurnia and Atticus lifted Helen to her feet and half carried, half walked her to the cabin. They stayed inside a long time, and Atticus came out alone."

People of Maycomb: News of Tom's Death

Maycomb was interested by the news of Tom's death for perhaps two days; two days was enough for the information to spread through the county. To Maycomb, Tom's death was typical of a n...to cut and run. Typical of a n...mentality to have no plan, no thought for the future, just run blind first chance he saw."

Note: One rational voice: Mr. Underwood's editorial likening Tom's death "to the senseless slaughter of songbirds." Mr. Underwood simply figured that it was a sin to kill cripples, be they standing, sitting, or escaping.



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 reference takes place in chapter 21 with Scout’s observation about the courtroom prior to the verdict

“ The feeling grew until the atmosphere in the courtroom was exactly the same as a cold February morning, when the mockingbirds were still....A deserted waiting empty street and the courtroom was packed with people.”

5th 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

Animals/Objects/Incidents as Symbol



Mayella's Geraniums



Mad dog "a liver-colored bird dog, the pet of Maycomb"



Mended Pants



Boo's Gifts in Knothole



Maudie's Fire



Mrs. Dubose's Camellias
"Snow-on-the-Mountain"



Scout's gift
From her
mother



Jem's
Gift from
Atticus



Snowman



Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) « Sympathy »

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!

When the sun is bright on the
upland slopes;

When the wind stirs soft through the
springing grass,

And the river flows like a stream of
glass;

When the first bird sings and
the first bud opens,

And the faint perfume from its chalice
steals —

I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing

Till its blood is red on the cruel
cruel bars;

For he must fly back to his perch and
cling

When he fain would be on the bough a-
swing;

And a pain still throbs in the old,
old scars

And they pulse again with a keener sting

I know why he beats his wing!

**Paul Laurence Dunbar
(1872-1906)
« Sympathy »**



I know why the caged bird sings, ah
me,

When his wing is bruised and his
bosom sore,—

When he beats his bars and he would
be free;

It is not a carol of joy or glee,

But a prayer that he sends from his
heart's deep core,

But a plea, that upward to Heaven he
flings —

I know why the caged bird sings!

(1899) Dunbar's "Sympathy" inspired the title of Maya Angelou's autobiography Caged Bird

Poem "Sympathy" also cited as a reflection of the metaphorically 'caged' birds in Lee's novel i.e.,

Boo Radley imprisoned by his father as well as by the gossip and or rumor of Maycomb

Tom Robinson imprisoned literally for an alleged rape of Mayella Ewell as well as figuratively imprisoned in a world of prejudice/bigotry.

Douglass (1818-1895)

Paul Laurence Dunbar



Ah, Douglass, we have fall'n on evil days,
Such days as thou, not even thou didst know,
When thee, the eyes of that harsh long ago
Saw, salient, at the cross of devious ways,
And all the country heard thee with amaze.
Not ended then, the passionate ebb and flow,
The awful tide that battled to and fro;
We ride amid a tempest of dispraise.

Now, when the waves of swift dissension
swarm,
And Honour, the strong pilot, lieth stark,
Oh, for thy voice high-sounding o'er the storm,
For thy strong arm to guide the shivering bark,
The blast-defying power of thy form,
To give us comfort through the lonely dark.

* This is the 1st of two poems written by Dunbar about Douglass; the second Frederick Douglass referred to Douglass as a “no soft-tongued apologist; His hearts, his hands were truly free/To all who needed truly aught of him.”

Poem expresses Dunbar's belief that:

During reconstruction, African Americans had “fall'n on evil days/such days as (Douglass) didst [not] even know.”

Dunbar is looking “for [Douglass's] strong arm to guide...and give comfort through the dark.”

Frederick Douglass: aware of Dunbar; he once remarked with regard to the poet:

“He is very young but there is no doubt that he is a poet.”

Douglass 80 and commissioner in charge of the Haitian Pavilion at the World's Fair in Chicago 'hired Dunbar to be a clerk, paying him out of his own pocket'; also introduced Dunbar to other writers active in the pursuit of the arts as well as the civil rights of the time period.

American Literary Period Timeline Overview

