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Hawker Brownlow Education

INTRODUCTION

Read through any curricular documents, and you will find that the work expected of students is expressed using such academic terminology as *describe*, *determine*, *develop*, *support* and *cite*. Requirements such as these cannot be met via the comprehension-question worksheets and culminating quizzes that have long been the staples of literature guides designed for classroom use. The primary objective of those traditional activities was to make sure that students were keeping track of what was happening in the section of the novel that they had just read. Very little rigour and synthesis was asked of students – and usually none until the entire novel was read.

From a teacher's standpoint, this style of classroom analysis misses multiple opportunities to delve deeply into the details that make a specific piece of literature a classic. From a student's standpoint, this way to reflect on literature is monotonous and inflexible, and it fails to nurture the momentum experienced when one is invested in a compelling work of art. That is why the guides in the *Rigorous Reading* series aim to do much more: they aim to transform the reading of a great novel into a journey of discovery for students.

Instead of merely asking students what happened in any given section, this resource asks questions that require closer reading and deeper analysis – questions such as, "Why did the author choose to include this information?" and "How does this information further the plot or offer more insight into the themes, characters, settings, etc.?" And instead of waiting until the end of the novel to put the pieces of the puzzle in place, students will learn to add to and alter their understanding of the novel *as they are reading it*. The various activities in this resource systematically prompt students to consider and appreciate the many ingredients the author has combined to form the novel as a whole.

A CUSTOM RESOURCE

This in-depth guide has been written specifically for Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The lessons and activities have been structured and scaffolded to maximise the experience of reading and teaching this novel.

To prepare your students for their reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, utilise the **novel information** and **pre-reading activities** included on pages 7–9 of this guide. Included in this section is information about the book and its author, along with activities designed to acclimate students to the themes and/or concepts present in the book they are about to read.

This resource provides activities that help foster comprehension and reinforce knowledge of literary elements as students read the novel. These section activities allow students the opportunity to process short sections of the novel individually, laying a strong foundation for their ability to engage more deeply with the chapters to come. For each section of the novel, students will complete individual and collaborative activities that encourage close reading, referencing textual evidence and drawing their own conclusions about the text.

Additionally, this resource provides students with another avenue through which they can reflect on recurring literary elements while also connecting personally with the novel. Each student maintains his or her own Interactive Novel Log, using it as a way to consider and then reconsider various aspects of the novel.

Upon completion of the entire novel, students can synthesise their ideas about the novel by completing several individual and/or collaborative post-reading activities (pages 58–73). This section of the resource includes such larger assignments as group projects and essay prompts.

On pages 74–75, several of the novel's richly worded sentences are provided for each section of the novel. This gives students an opportunity to learn the novel's **vocabulary** in context.

At the end of this guide, an **answer key** is provided for activities that require specific answers.

Teacher Tips

For a description of Interactive Novel Logs and how to use them in your classroom, see page 5 of this guide.

An ideal way to use this resource would be to follow the complete lesson plan given on page 6 of this guide. Special attention should be paid to the Important Note included in Lesson 1, which offers strategies for handling the novel's use of racial epithets.

The use of multiple texts can help build and extend knowledge about a theme or topic. It can also illustrate the similarities and differences in how multiple authors approach similar content or how an individual author approaches multiple novels. See the bottom of page 7 for suggestions about using this novel as part of a text set.

When teaching other novels in your classroom, consider using the specific ideas and also the general approach presented in this resource.

This guide is designed for use in years 6–8. This levelling has been determined through the consideration of various educational metrics. However, teacher discretion should be used to determine if the novel and guide are appropriate for lower or higher years, as well.

KEEPING NOVEL LOGS

Great works of literature are complex texts, and complex texts are multi-layered. They enrich and reveal as they go along. Successful readers are those who “go along” with the novel, too. Interactive Novel Logs give students a place and a space to record their thoughts and observations as they journey through the book. After each section of the novel is read, students use their Interactive Novel Logs to track the introduction and development of such literary elements as plot, setting, theme, characterisation, craft and structure, while also choosing their own ways to connect the novel to their own life experiences.

Materials needed for each student:

- ✦ a three-ring binder or presentation folder
- ✦ a sheet of plain paper for the title page
- ✦ two or three sheets of lined paper for a Table of Contents
- ✦ several extra sheets of paper (both lined and plain) for student’s responses to the “Ideas for Your Interactive Novel Log” prompts at the end of each section

Teacher Tip

One Interactive Novel Log can be kept for multiple novels, in which case a larger three-ring binder will be needed. If it will be used only for the activities included in this guide for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a smaller binder or presentation folder will be adequate.

Assembling the Interactive Novel Log:

1. On the plain paper, allow students to design and decorate their own title page. Have them write “Interactive Novel Log” and “*To Kill a Mockingbird*” in the middle of the page. They should include their name and class at the bottom.
2. Add blank lined paper for the Table of Contents. Have students write “Table of Contents” at the top. They will add to this list as they create new pages.
3. Before reading each section of the novel, photocopy and distribute new copies of the Interactive Novel Log worksheets (pages 12–20). Directions for completing these activities can be found in the “Teacher Instructions” on pages 10–11.
4. For the final activity in each section, photocopy and distribute the “Section Log-In” page for the section. Follow the directions given. Students begin by completing a copy of the “Checking In on Theme” and “I Predict” worksheets (pages 21–22). Students then select one or more of the four prompts in the “Ideas for Your Interactive Novel Log” section, and they create an Interactive Novel Log page that responds to that topic.
5. After the class has completed the entire novel and the post-reading activities, you may have students include the “Star Rating” worksheet (page 73) as a final entry in their Interactive Novel Logs.

Teacher Tip

Consider allowing your students to preview the “Ideas for Your Interactive Novel Log” prompts a day or two before they are asked to respond to them. When asking students to reflect on past experiences and articulate their personal connections to a work of art, give them the time and space they need to collect their thoughts. By allowing your students to sit with the ideas presented in these prompts, you will relieve the pressure an immediate response can cause.

NOVEL INFORMATION

Book Summary

To Kill a Mockingbird is told to us through the voice of a not-so-ladylike girl named Scout (as well as the woman she grew up to be) as she details three tumultuous years in the life of an Alabama town devastated by the Depression and caught between old ideas and modern times. Scout's view of the world is greatly influenced by her older brother, Jem, and by their father, Atticus, a noble man who does what is right and speaks to his children as if they were adults.

An instant classic that has been taught and beloved since its publication in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* tackles such timeless themes as race, gender, class, family, justice and the importance of empathy.

About the Author

The American author Harper Lee was born in Alabama in 1926 (as Nelle Harper Lee) and died in 2016. In 1957, she submitted her first manuscript, *Go Set a Watchman*. Her agent decided it was not fully formed, and so Lee continued to work on it. In 1960, the reworked manuscript was retitled *To Kill a Mockingbird* and published. This was Lee's first novel, and she did not know what to expect.

The novel was an instant success. It was an immediate best-seller, was greatly acclaimed by critics and even won the 1961 Pulitzer Prize for literature. Lee found this sudden success "frightening".

She spent some years afterward helping her friend Truman Capote work on his best-selling book *In Cold Blood*. Lee, however, never published another novel. Despite her stated wishes, a version of *Go Set a Watchman* was published in 2015, when she was declining. Many feel she would not have given consent for this publication if she were in better health.

Did You Know?

Best-selling author Truman Capote was a childhood friend of Lee's and was the inspiration for the character Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Make It a Text Set!

The following novels can form ideal text sets with *To Kill a Mockingbird*. (**Note:** Check books in advance to ensure they are appropriate for your students.)

- ◆ *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith (1943)
- ◆ *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis (1999)
- ◆ *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse (1997)
- ◆ *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (1999)
- ◆ *A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck (1998)
- ◆ *Moon Over Manifest* by Clare Vanderpool (2010)