

Name:

Hour:

Group 1 — About the Author

Your job is to become an expert about Harper Lee. Click on the links below to read her biography. You will need to read each link to answer the questions. When you are finished reading, write the answers to each question. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you learn about the author.

<http://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021>

<http://www.fsd79.org/cms/lib/IL01001571/Centricity/Domain/262/mockingbirdhandout01.pdf>

<http://www.famousauthors.org/harper-lee>

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/opinion/joe-nocera-the-watchman-fraud.html?_r=0

Questions:

- When and where was Harper Lee born? What was her family like?
- Who was her childhood best friend?
- What did she study in college? Did she participate in any extra-curricular activities? Why might this be important to consider while reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
- How did her decision to move to New York make *To Kill a Mockingbird* a reality?
- What year was *To Kill a Mockingbird* published? When was it adapted to screen?
- Was Harper Lee honored in any way following the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
- Harper Lee's real life influenced many of the characters and events in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Given what you have learned about her life (including personality traits, friends, family, experiences) make a prediction about what kinds of issues might surface in the book. Do you think that your knowledge about Harper Lee will influence your reading of the book? Should it influence your reading of the book? Why or why not?
- In the summer of 2015, the book, *Go Set a Watchman* was published by Harper Lee. Why has the release of this book been controversial? (Note: use the last link for this question)

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Group 2 — The Scottsboro Boys

Your job is to become an expert on the Scottsboro Boys. Click on the links below to start learning about them. When you are finished, answer the questions listed below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about The Scottsboro Boys and their trials.

[The Trials of The Scottsboro Boys](#)
[The Scottsboro Case](#)

Questions:

- Who were the Scottsboro Boys? How did they get into so much trouble?
- Where and when did the Scottsboro Boys' original trial take place? How do you think this affected the outcome of their trial?
- What does the NAACP acronym stand for? Why did the NAACP decide not to help the Scottsboro Boys?
- The Communist Party came to the aid of the Scottsboro Boys. How did the South perceive the Communist Party, and how was it similar to the perception of blacks? What was the Communist Party's hidden agenda in providing aid to the Scottsboro Boys?
- The Scottsboro Boys were not provided with adequate defense lawyers. Please list at least three ways in which the defense lawyers were inadequate.
- Describe the trials. Were they fair or unfair? Please include at least three supporting facts to back up your description.
- Were the Scottsboro Boys ever pardoned of their convictions?
- The Scottsboro Boys' trial took place during the childhood of *To Kill a Mockingbird's* author, Harper Lee. Make a prediction about how this trial might be an important to the book.

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Group 3 — Jim Crow Laws

Your job is to become an expert about the history of Jim Crow laws. Please read the links below. When you are finished, answer the questions provided to you. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about Jim Crow Laws.

[History of Jim Crow Laws](#)

[The Civil Rights Movement](#)

[Jim Crow & Plessy Vs. Ferguson](#)

Questions:

- Imagine that you were born black in 1860 and lived until 1920. Would you have any faith in the U.S. legal system? In the “American way of life”? Why or why not?
- How did Jim Crow laws affect the American image abroad? How did our foreign policy impact racial equality at home?
- Most laws are meant to promote the general welfare or protect society from an evil. Did Jim Crow laws serve these purposes? If so, how? What was their purpose?
- Under Jim Crow, black facilities were often of far poorer quality than those reserved for whites. Separate rarely meant equal. If blacks and whites had received equal treatment, would Jim Crow laws have been fair?
- “I don’t believe you can change the hearts of men with laws or decisions,” said one person who opposed court ordered desegregation. Do you agree with the statement? Is it a valid reason to continue segregation?
- Read the 14th Amendment and explain how the Supreme Court used it to disallow segregation in the Brown decision. Why didn’t the Court use it for the same purpose in Plessy v. Ferguson?
- How did the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896) uphold Jim Crow laws? What effect did this case have on the lives (transportation, education, social implications, etc.) of southern blacks?

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Group 4 — African American Lives in the 1930s

Your main focus is to develop a general idea of what the “average” life was like for African Americans in the 1930s based on the interview provided below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about what it was like to be black in the South during this time period.

"Growing up Black in the 1930s"

Questions:

- What does Mrs. Barge know about her ancestry? How does she talk about her family? How do you think Mrs. Barge would describe a "good family"? Hypothesize how you think a white person would describe a "good family."
- What were Mrs. Barge and her family's living conditions like?
- When was the first time she noticed a difference between the lives of black people and the lives of white people? From Mrs. Barge's account, what do you think is the most astounding difference?
- What was school like for Mrs. Barge?
- What kind of jobs were available to black people in the South? How did these occupations influence Mrs. Barge's perception of white people?
- Were black people allowed to vote?
- Mrs. Barge clearly has a different opinion of white people than her father does. What does she say that proves this? How does her perception of white people differ from her father's? Why do you think that is?
- How would you generalize the overall life of a black child growing up in the 1930s?

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Group 5 -- White American Lives in the 1930s

Your main focus is to develop a general idea of what the average life was like for white people in the 1930s based on the interview provided below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about what it was like to be white in the South.

"Growing up White in the 1930s"

Questions:

- What do these three ladies have in common about their ancestry? How do they talk about their families?
- How do the three ladies describe a *good family*? Hypothesize how you think a black person would describe a *good family*.
- What were the three ladies living conditions like?
- How do the ladies describe their interactions with poor whites? Were there many poor white people in the thirties? How do you know - What things did the women say that help you come to this conclusion?"
- What were these ladies' first experiences with black people?
- How did the occupations of black people influence the perception of black people according to the three ladies?
- Did these white ladies ever play with their black peers?
- If you were to look closely at their experiences, what attitudes do they display which were shaped by their parents? Their nurses? Their status in white society?
- How would you generalize the overall life of a white child growing up in the 1930s?

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Group 6 — The Great Depression

Your job is to become an expert on the Great Depression. Read through the links provided, and then answer the questions below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about the Great Depression.

[The Great Depression](#)

[The Great Depression II](#)

[Memories of the Dust Bowl](#) - Use this website for the last question only.

Questions:

- What is "Black Tuesday" and why does it mark the beginning of the Great Depression?
- Many people believe that WWII marked the end of the Great Depression. How did the war affect the economy?
- What president was inaugurated in 1933? What were some of the changes made by this administration?
- What was the New Deal? How did the New Deal affect American citizens?
- What was the Dust Bowl?
- How did the Dust Bowl affect the Southern Plains?
- What affect did the Dust Bowl have on agriculture? How would this affect farmers and their employers?
- Given what you learned about the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, make a prediction about what you think the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* will look like. What will the houses look like? What will the characters be wearing? How will the characters act towards each other? How will Scout's classmates act toward Scout knowing that her father is a lawyer?