

A Prejudiced Society

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

I am an English teacher at Jack Yates High School and I will be exploring the topic, “A Prejudiced Society,” with my tenth graders. According to the *Macmillan School Dictionary*, prejudice is an opinion or judgment, especially an unfavorable one, formed beforehand or without knowing all the facts. Prejudiced individuals tend to twist, distort, misinterpret, or even ignore facts that conflict with their predetermined opinions. It is all too easy to prejudice someone without getting to know them. How well do students understand prejudice? How can pre-judging someone affect either party in a negative way? Is prejudice causing people to lose their humor? Should everything be taken so seriously? These questions as well as others will be analyzed meticulously. Once the students identify the injustices in the story we can begin to analyze then and the issue of prejudice.

During my five year career, I have noticed that students tend to prejudice and stereotype others based on one’s race, dress, appearance, or the fact that someone is not in the “in-crowd.” A prejudiced person may also believe that all individuals of a certain age, national origin, religion, sex, or region of the country are lazy, violent, stupid, emotionally unstable, or greedy.

Because of prejudice, millions of people have been denied equal chances for jobs, housing, education, and participation in government. A number of elements contribute to prejudice. These elements may include competition, religious ideas, fear of strangers, and extreme nationalism. For example, prejudice may develop when a person or a group fears that competition from another person or group will deprive them of prestige, privilege, political power, or economic opportunities. Religious ideas – especially a lack of tolerance for religions other than one’s own have contributed to prejudice against certain races and religious groups. Some people have suggested that prejudice arises from a natural fear of strangers. Extreme nationalism may cause prejudice by encouraging people to regard foreign characteristics as inferior.

Prejudice may also be passed from generation to generation. Many children learn prejudice from their parents and teachers. The degree of prejudice, however, depends on variations in individual experiences and background. The question, then, is: How can we as a society help reduce prejudice? Education, in my opinion, can help correct false generalizations that form on the basis of prejudice. Having contact between groups is a likely way to reduce prejudice when the groups work together for a common cause. Changes in institutions, laws, and customs to reduce discrimination might eliminate some prejudice.

All students as well as people in general need to be more reserved when it comes to these issues. Some students prejudge intentionally. Some, however, some prejudge out of ignorance. Those who judge intentionally have either learned this behavior from someone, or enjoy making others feel miserable and unaccepted. Those who prejudge out of ignorance have no idea how their comments could be devastating to that person(s) and is very cruel to others. Some may think they're just telling the truth and others may actually think it's funny to prejudge and stereotype others.

This unit will explore the traits of the characters, their customs, mood, and their violent convulsions. First of all, students must know about the social and economic issues during this era. Having a historical background will give students a stronger foundation and help students gain a better understanding of the setting and various situations throughout the story.

The unit is intended to teach students how prejudice, which includes discrimination and stereotyping, has affected and still affects people's lives today. It will also teach students how to face and come to terms with reality. Students need to know how far we have come as a society. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there will be a thematic focus on the topics: "Injustices Seen through the Eyes of Children" and "Innocence." There were many injustices that were seen through the eyes of children. Some of these injustices deal with civil rights, respect for others, respect for oneself, the environment, and freedom. All of these categories will be the main focuses of this theme. "Innocence" is another theme that we will analyze. It refers to the immaturity of growing up from a child not knowing or understanding the realities of the world to becoming mature by experiencing some of the frailties in life and being able to comprehend, cope with, and sympathize with others. Taking a closer look at this theme is very important because students will be able to use their prior experiences to identify their innocence when they were younger and how they have matured over the years. Throughout this story, students will become familiar with some of the inhumane gestures and comments that took place among all races.

The unit will be taught to tenth grade English classes. It will take approximately six weeks at one hour, five days a week. Students will be introduced to a brief synopsis of the historical context of the era, which was during the Great Depression, to gain a better understanding of the setting. Students must understand why certain circumstances were like they were during this time period. For instance, the depression shattered many people's beliefs about how they treated others. The depression changed public attitudes. Everyone was for him/herself. Money was limited and so were jobs and food. A perfect example is what happened in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Jem and Scout invited their friend Walter Cunningham for dinner. One could tell that he wasn't use to eating the kinds of food that Jem and Scout ate. Another example is how Atticus would pay for the work that Mr. Cunningham did for him with food instead of money. These two examples demonstrated how hard times were for some people.

The unit will also cover other readings such as *The Apology*, *Hobbes*, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, and *The Prince*. There will also be interviews and critiques to assist students in understanding the novel and learn to critique various situations and events in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students will also view the film. The unit asks them to think and write critically and thoughtfully about readings, discussions, and the film. It will educate students about the injustices and prejudices of the 1930s. Students will then be able to connect some of the prejudice actions with those today. For instance, has prejudice and/or the injustices become more subtle or more profound? By the end of this unit, the student will be able to: (Harper Lee, 1988)

1. Identify and trace events in the main plot and the two subplots. Main plot: Jem, Scout, and Dill try to get Boo Radley to come out. Subplot 1: The trial of Tom Robinson. Subplot 2: Jem grows up.
2. Make a general statement that identifies one of the themes of the novel as representative of “coming of age,” and support this generalization by referring to incidents and comments from the novel.
3. Make a general statement that identifies a second theme of this novel as having to do with “Man’s Inhumanities to Man.” In supporting this generalization refer to the events involving Tom Robinson, African Americans, and Boo Radley.
4. Discuss the significance of the title of this novel and relate it to a major theme in the book.
5. Identify and discuss those reasons that this novel is able to move most readers both emotionally and intellectually.
6. Identify and discuss those words and images the author uses to create mood.
7. Prove by citing comments and incidents from the novel that another theme of the novel is that we cannot really understand others until we walk in their shoes.

PURPOSE

In explaining what the unit is about, I have already begun to elaborate on why it is important to study this subject. This unit will help students appreciate where they’ve come from and where they are today. We will take a look at previous readings such as *Marigolds*. *Marigolds* is about a little girl named Lizabeth who is very immature. She hurts people’s feelings, especially one lady by the name of Miss Lottie. Lizabeth could never seem to understand how others felt and really didn’t care. She talked about the lady, called her names, and destroyed her marigolds, which meant the world to her. It finally took Lizabeth overhearing her parents discuss the hard struggles they were going through in trying to support the family for her to comprehend the trials and tribulations of others. This story definitely demonstrates how Lizabeth went from innocence to maturity. This will be a great story to introduce this theme.

Also, as we read, I will ask the students to compare and contrast discrimination then and now. I teach minority students (about 90% black, and 10% Hispanic). Most of these students come from low-income families and are not cognizant of many societal issues.

The only type of discrimination that they're used to hearing and discussing is pertaining to race. Race is a major type of discrimination, but there are some many other types of discrimination that my students need recognize. This will really help stimulate their minds about the ways of life. This can be done in so many ways. One way is listening to the media, such as the news, newspaper, and radio. Also, asking family members, teachers, classmates, or friends can be helpful. The media is very good about demonstrating and/or discussing various incidents about this subject matter. Students can look at this subject from different aspects:

- 1) Job discrimination
- 2) Family discrimination
- 3) Discrimination of one's culture
- 4) Discrimination among religions
- 5) Discrimination of appearance

These examples will really help stimulate their minds about ways of life. Students need to be able to use what they have seen, heard or read in the past to what is seen, heard, and read now. Students tend to only think about race when the term discrimination is presented. Having students to compare and contrast viewpoints on various issues is imperative.

“Man's Inhumanities to Man” is very obvious and evident in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There were so many instances where evil and cruelty are demonstrated throughout the story. A question that should be raised to help stimulate students' minds is: Why are people stereotyped and treated unfairly? Perhaps this question will enable students to think about the causes of discrimination against others, whether or not racism and discrimination has improved, and the effects of it. Each generation must learn about the struggles that took place. Knowing about these struggles can motivate students to continue to strive to make this society a better one. Also, this generation must be able to deal with the injustices and problems of today's society. Therefore, this unit will help students learn more about prejudices and injustices, by comparing it to situations and events that have occurred in the 1930s until now. Most students do not know about the injustices of society and do not know how to react or respond to certain circumstances that may take place. Learning more about these issues, however, will enable students to better control or handle these situations.

STRATEGY

Before beginning the unit, I always like to familiarize the students with the author. Therefore, I will inform the students of Harper Lee's background. In teaching this unit, we will look at the types of prejudice such as discrimination and stereotyping that people have burdened on each other. We will discuss, first, the causes and the effects that the Great Depression had on the people of this era. To further students' understanding of the story's historical context, I will have the students read excerpts from D. Wecter's *The*

Age of the Great Depression (1948, reprinted in 1956). This book gives a deeper insight of what people had to cope with during this era. We will then discuss how the Great Depression affected many people's lives. Reading excerpts from this book will help students visualize and imagine how oppressed society was during this time period. *Marigolds* is also a wonderful text to discuss the Great Depression. After discussing the historical context, I will then have them do a K-W-L chart (What they Know; What they Want to know; and What they have Learned). This activity is a good strategy to use, because it helps students develop and maintain focus on the topic. I find that students are more stimulated and interested when this activity is used. This chart will help trigger students' minds on the topic. (Below is a sample of the chart.)

K-W-L Chart

What do you **K**now?

What do you
Want to know?

What have you
Learned?

Students will jot down what they already know about prejudice. As students read they will fill in what they want to know about the story or certain characters in the story, what they want to know more about, and what they have learned as a result of reading the story. After discussing what they know about prejudice, we will discuss why and how prejudice (including discrimination and stereotyping) has such profound effects on people.

Students will also read excerpts from Plato's *The Apology* to introduce the terms of justice and injustice. It is very important to introduce these issues so that students can relate to the theme, "Injustices Seen through the Eyes of Children." Once we begin reading the novel, students will have to write journal entries daily relating to an event or situation that was read in the story. (I will formulate the journal entries.) Students will also keep reading logs to write down and explain various quotes, to discuss characters' traits, and to write personal comments for each chapter.

During my teaching career, I have learned that high school students love for me to read aloud to them from time to time. Because of this, I read the first couple of chapters to them. As I read to them, I stop and explain certain quotes and sentences that may be confusing. Not only am I reading to them, but I am also training them on how to be critical readers. While I am reading, students are to place question marks by the parts that are confusing to them and exclamation marks by points that interest them. As I stop periodically and ask for questions and comments, this will be an opportunity for students to ask questions or make comments on parts of the text that I have read. Critical readers must be able to formulate hypotheses, analyze various portions of the text, as well as review and critique material. Students will also take turns and enhance their desire to read more. Students will be asked to read certain chapters at home and be prepared to get into cooperative groups to discuss what they have read. (Students will remain with the same group during the reading of this novel.) While reading this novel, students will have to

complete an independent project. The purpose of this project is to make sure students understand the text. Students will be able to make suggestions on the types of activities for the project.

At the beginning of every class period, students will write in their journals which will relate to the story. Some sample journal entries are:

1. Who is your favorite character in the novel so far? And why?
2. Scout recalls some major events in her childhood. Tell about your most memorable moment. Explain why this moment is unforgettable.
3. Scout was so embarrassed on her first day of school that she did not want to return. Tell about your first day of school. Explain.
4. Jem so very frightened after seeing Boo Radley's shadow on the footsteps. What was your most frightening experience? Explain.
5. Think of a particular incident in which your understanding and way of seeing things were immature. What eventually changed your perception and you realized your "coming of age?"

Students will also set up a reading response log that will include quotes from the story. Students will have to find evidence for the quote and comment on the quote. The purpose of the reading logs is to have students actively search for evidence and responding to its importance as they read. It provides one way to turn our "preaching into teaching" and to transform our discussions from being teacher-centered to being text-centered.

Evidence

Most students acquire the ability to locate answers to questions, because within the questions we develop, we are pointing them in the direction of the important evidence and details. Higher-level students, however, should also begin recognizing significant words, images, details, and themes independently from their instructor. Acquiring this ability, students will move from the role of regurgitator to the role of creator.

When teaching students to select evidence, teachers should identify the general task. For instance, as students read, have them find details that describe the characters: physical description, what the character says and does, what other characters say about and say to that character, and also what the author says about the character. Themes of a novel can also be discussed prior to reading, so that students can find significant details that reveal a particular theme. Details should always be recorded as quotes rather than being paraphrased because they create credibility and accuracy. The term "significant quotes" is of primary importance because it stresses the need for students to be a discriminating reader.

The goals for selecting significant evidence are as follows:

1. To become proficient in selecting the best evidence that reveals characterization, plot, foreshadowing, theme, irony, symbolism, motifs, etc.
2. To move away from “picking apart” a passage in search of specific answers and to work toward “constructing” meaning in regards to the text as a whole.
3. To learn how to find quotes that will provide information for students’ own writing and that will provide excellent study materials

Commentary

As students select the pieces of evidence, they should also provide commentary.

Commentary can be thought of as any of the following: the relevance to the overall text, and emotional response, the relationship between the quote and another element (such as foreshadowing), and, my favorite, the “so what—what’s so.” (When I read a significant quote, I then ask the question “so what?” and the student’s commentary should tell me what’s so important about this quote that it deserved to be included.)

The goals for providing commentary are as follows:

1. To help students find quotes that are indeed significant. (If a student cannot justify it with a commentary, it is probably not the best choice of evidence.)
2. To show students the need to master “inference since this is the basis for commentary.
3. To help students link a quote with the type of detail it reveals.
4. To encourage students to move beyond merely understanding the literal to drawing accurate and insightful conclusions on both figurative and symbolic levels.

Students will be allowed to work on their response logs while working in their cooperative groups. While working in their cooperative groups, not only will students give comments to the story, at times students will be asked to respond to questions such as:

- How does the title of this novel relate to the theme of this book?
- Give examples of incidents that represented a character’s “Coming of Age” and another example of “Man’s Inhumanities to Man.”

The following is a model of the evidence and commentary:

Chapter Twelve

Quote 2: “I wants to know why you bringin’ white chillum to our church.” (121)

Page#	Character Speaking:	Character Spoken to:	Character Spoken about	Situation	Commentary:
121	Lula	Calpurnia	Jem, Scout	Cal takes children to her church	theme of discrimination

*Students must have at least two quotes per chapter.

Students will also receive their six weeks exam, which will be an independent project. The project will be given in week one, giving students a sufficient amount of time to work on it. (An example of the six weeks project is attached.)

LESSON PLAN

Lesson Plan One

Weeks 1-6 will consist of three strategies that I will use in reading this novel. We will discuss as a class and in groups. As explained earlier, we will discuss the themes of innocence and the justices and injustices in this novel. Students will also act out various scenes. The film will also be shown as a compare/contrast instructional strategy.

I will read the first two chapters aloud to the class. I have found that this method helps involve students in reading stories. Students will read six chapters per week and they will also be assigned two chapters to read each night for homework. Students will also have a vocabulary list that will be divided by chapters. Students will be required to define and write a sentence using the vocabulary words for homework. Vocabulary quizzes will be given on every two chapters in each class session.

In addition, students will also be given excerpts from other various readings that will help them to better understand this story. The excerpts will be part of the class discussions as well as group discussions.

Discussions

After each reading, students will discuss and answer study guide questions in their cooperative groups. Students will do this for approximately thirty minutes. Afterwards, the class will engage in a class discussion to ensure that students understand what they have read. This will be the question-answer period.

Acting

Students will also act out various scenes, which will help involve the students while reading this novel. Students love drama, therefore, acting will be an activity that I know they will enjoy. As a group, I will allow them to choose the most interesting part in the act for demonstration. Students must present a brief outline of their skit.

Film

I will show the film, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to students. I believe that showing a movie can be very powerful and productive for students, if it is done appropriately. The film will be shown in the following fashion. Students will read, for example, chapters 1-6 and then view the film up to that point. Each time the film is viewed, students will note and discuss the differences observed in the novel from what was observed on film. This is another great opportunity to expand their knowledge of the subject matter. However, before showing students the film, students will have study questions that will have to be answered and discussed.

Writing

Students will be required to complete all journals and writing assignments. Samples of various writing questions are given throughout this curriculum.

Lesson Plan Two

(This will take approximately three weeks)

In week one, I will introduce the novel and discuss the author's background with the class. I will then ask the students to write down what do they think *To Kill a Mockingbird* is going to be about based on its title. After I listen to some comments, we will begin reading the novel. After I read the first two chapters of the novel aloud, we will have a whole class discussion about the chapters. The purpose is to make sure that the students understand what is going on from the very beginning of the story. If a student is lost at the beginning of the story, most likely he/she will not be interested in reading the book in its entirety.

Agenda: (Weeks 1-3)

1. Journal writing
2. Discuss chapters that were read for homework (cooperative groups)
3. Whole-class discussions on chapters read for homework
4. Question and answer period

*Students would have read chapters 1-20 by the end of week three.

Lesson Plan Three

(This will take approximately two weeks)

In weeks four and five, students should be on chapter 21. Students will continue writing in their journals at the beginning of each class period. Students will also continue discussing the chapters that they have read the night before in cooperative groups.

Class discussions will continue to take place. Also, within these two weeks, groups will act out a scene that was most eye-catching and interesting to them. For example, a group might choose to act out the court scene where Mayella Ewell testified. I find that students especially love this scene because of her sporadic outbursts and her perceived insanity. Other suggestions for acting scenes include:

- Court trial (focusing on Bob Ewell's testimony)
- Incidents with Mrs. Dubose (focusing on her behavior and personality)
- Scene displaying the mysteriousness of Boo Radley

Students can be very helpful in choosing interesting acting scenes, or creating a list to choose from is also a good idea.

Agenda: (Weeks 4- 5)

1. Journal writing
2. Continue to discuss the chapters read in cooperative groups
3. Whole-class discussion
4. Question/Answer Period
5. Students will act out a scene that interest them the most (group activity)

*Students would have read chapters 1-26 by the end of week five.

Lesson Plan Four

(This will take approximately one week)

This week students will complete reading the novel and complete study guides as well as reading logs. We will also discuss the conclusion of the story, as well as answering all questions that need to be answered. After reading this novel, students should have a good understanding of this novel and students should be able to explain the two themes, "Coming of Age," and "Man's Inhumanities to Man." Students will also complete their Six Weeks Project, which will be due on the last day of week six. I will be the facilitator during this week.

Agenda: (Week 6)

1. Journal writing
2. Group discussion/class discussion about the conclusion of the story
3. Make sure all writing assignments are complete
4. Work on six weeks project

To Kill a Mockingbird Six Weeks Exam – Project

For this project, students will be able to contract for a grade. Keep in mind, however, that this grade will count three times and has a major effect on their six weeks grade. The grade that students will receive is based upon the amount of work they choose to do and the quality of that work. Since much of the work will be completed outside of class, part of the students' success will depend upon their ability to budget their time responsibly and effectively.

“A” (90-100) = Complete one activity from each of components I, II, III, IV.
Complete components V and VI. Six components total.

“B” (80-89) = Complete one activity from any three of components I, II, III, IV.
Complete components V and VI. Five components total.

“C” (75-79) = Complete one activity from components I, II, III, IV. Three components total.

“D” (70-74) = Complete one activity from components I, II, III, IV. Three components total (Did not complete components V or VI).

“F” (50-69) = Complete components V and VI. Two components total.
(Remember the unit will count three times).

The following components contain a variety of activities. Students will only choose one activity from each component, and they will choose the number of components based on the grad they want.

I. Book cover

You are to design a book cover by completing the following:

1. Choose a significant scene to illustrate the cover.
2. On the cover, include the title and the author's name.
3. On the inside front jacket, give a very brief summary of the book.
4. On the inside back jacket, briefly tell about the author. You may create the book cover out of white paper or construction paper.

II. The Artistic

Activity 1: Create a mobile. Choose a focus such as characters, themes, or scenes from the book. Use at least three main ideas and two details for each one. (You need at least three mobiles).

Activity 2: Make an illustrated map showing the town and marking the special locations referred to in the novel.

Activity 3: Draw a timeline and detail the events which lead to Scout's and Jem's progression from childhood to maturity. Illustrate.

III. Character Sketch

Complete one character sketch. Look for quotes that reveal something about the character's personality. For example, look for quotes that show if a character is kind of cruel, generous, selfish, intelligent, or ignorant, etc. Be sure to quote directly and list the page number. You need a minimum of 15 quotes by the novel's end. (Choose A, B, C, D, or E)

Name of selected character:

- A. Significant things the character says
Quote and page number
- B. Significant things the character does.
- C. Significant things the narrator reveals about the character. In this case, through the process of flashback, does the adult Scout reveal things about herself as a child?
- D. Significant things other characters say about your selected character (Keep in mind that other characters may be biased).
- E. In addition, sometimes authors reveal significant insight into a character by the way that character looks. What is the physical description of your character?

IV. Writing

Activity 1: Write two poems from the point of view of about any of the following two characters: Tom Robinson, his wife, Boo Radley, Mayella Ewell, Mrs. Dubose.

Activity 2: Write a humorous essay, narrative, or poem on "being a lady" from Scout's point of view.

Activity 3: Write a "Dear Abbey" letter and response that fits a situation in the novel: for example, advice to Aunt Alexandria on how to manage Scout, or advice to Scout on how to get along with the now-teenaged Jem.

V. The Reaction Paragraphs [required]

In no less than fifty words, respond to the following:

1. Tell about a time when you wished that people could see things from your point of view.
2. Describe prejudice as you have experience it or seen it. This is not limited to race.
3. Tell about a time when someone's conscience was swayed by majority rule.
4. Define "dignity." Discuss characteristics of a person who has dignity (in speech, dress, action, attitudes). Discuss how Mrs. Dubose exhibits dignity.
5. Identify and describe 3-4 social classes in school and describe the characteristics that define them. Do you consider yourself belonging to a particular group? Do you think other people perceive you as belonging to a particular group?

VI. Chapter Summaries [required].

Complete a summary for each chapter – Chapters 1-31.

Examples of Study Guide Questions

1. What is the setting of the story?
2. Who are the Ewells, and why are they allowed special privileges?
3. Why is Atticus having doubts about winning Tom Robinson's case?
4. What happened to Tom Robinson after the trial?
5. Who really stabbed Bob Radley? Why was this information kept a secret?

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bloom, Harold. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In *Modern Critical Interpretations*: Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999.

This book offers a series of essays by different authors on various aspects of the novel and film.

Capote, Truman. *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. New York: Random House, 1948.

This is another story that takes place in the South. Lee and Capote were childhood friends. She based the character Dill on Capote; he based the character of Idabel on Lee.

Johnson, Durst Claudia. *Understanding to Kill a Mockingbird*. Greenwood Press, 1994.

This book provides an explanation of the issues surrounding the novel, complete with supporting historical documents.

Sergel, Christopher. *To Kill a Mockingbird: A Full-Length Play*. Woodstock, Ill.: Dramatic Publishing, 1970.

This book is an adaptation of Lee's novel for stage. This book can be a great aid when having students to act out the scenes.

Schuster, Edgar. "Discovering Theme and Structure in *To Kill a Mockingbird*." In *The English Journal*. The National Council of Teachers of English, 1963.

This journal explains how to find the novel's main focus and development.

Internet Resources

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/

To Kill a Mockingbird: The Student Survival Guide

This website offers over 400 definitions and explanations for colloquialisms and allusions in the novel.

www.slc.k12.ut.us/webweavers/jillc/mbird.html

To Kill a Mockingbird: Growing up in the 1930s.

This is a fun and thought provoking website that gives readers an excellent understanding of life in the Southern United States during the 1930s. The Web page also includes exercises to help students put this new understanding to use.