



OUR MOCKINGBIRD

Discussion Guide



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Introduction

Our Mockingbird: About the Film

In 2005, two very different high schools in Birmingham, Alabama—one black, one white—came together to put on a production of a play based on the classic coming-of-age novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Directed by Pat Yates, the drama teacher at Mountain Brook High School, in collaboration with Patzy Howze, choir director at Fairfield High Preparatory School, the play not only brought together black and white students, it became, as Yates later characterized it, “an exercise in empathy.”

Although the schools are only separated by fifteen miles, their profiles could not be more different. Fairfield High, serving the city of Fairfield, consists of about 855 students in grades 9–12. Its student body is 98% African American. About 82% of Fairfield’s students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Mountain Brook, located on 25 acres of land, consists of about 1,000 students in grades 10–12, and serves the wealthy town of Mountain Brook, which according to the 2010 census, is about 97% white.

In their demographic profiles, these schools represent the persistent class and racial segregation that characterizes schooling across the U.S.—and not just in the South. In fact, many schools in the northeast are also increasingly segregated. The implications for inequality, civic discourse, and social justice affect educators, students, and families.

Filmmaker Sandra Jaffe, who grew up in Birmingham, had just begun a documentary about the influence of *To Kill a Mockingbird* when she heard that Mountain Brook, her old high school, was collaborating with Fairfield on a play based on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Jaffe’s original intention had been to examine how the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*—and the issues that it explores—had managed to stay relevant all these years. How much had changed? How much had remained the same? She decided to weave the story of the two schools into her documentary. In the film, we hear not only the voices of the students, but those of prominent scholars, writers, lawyers, and civil rights activists as well. The documentary also includes a meeting between the students and Harper Lee, who has rarely been seen on film. The result is a film that examines how *To Kill a Mockingbird* still resonates in our national discourse.

Two versions of the documentary are available: a feature-length, 65-minute version, as well as a 37-minute version that can be more easily used during one classroom period. The DVD, as well as the website, features bonus “extras” that include interviews with civil rights leaders, historians, writers, and others who offer commentary on life under segregation in the Jim Crow south, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, marching for voting rights in Selma, and the advent of mass incarceration.

Jaffe describes *Our Mockingbird* as a lens to look at the issues of race, class, gender and justice—then and now. How the students from each school reacted when they got together reveals the challenges we continue to face today. As Fairfield student Stephanie says, “How many white people get with black people? How many come together on a regular basis? We see each other just about every day. It was like an introduction to a new culture.”

About this Guide

Our Mockingbird can be a powerful catalyst for dialogue—just as the play was for the students of Mountain Brook and Fairfield. Although the documentary, like the book itself, deals with difficult subjects, it can facilitate conversations to bring us together.

There is an abundance of material available from many sources about every aspect of the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the related issues of civil rights, history, racism, segregation, gender roles, and justice. The aim of this guide is to help educators and others use the *Our Mockingbird* documentary to stimulate discussions around these topics.

The guide provides historical and literary context as well as discussion questions and programming tips to help explore the issues that the book, play, and documentary raise. Primarily aimed at educators, a brief section at the end offers tips for librarians, as well as youth, community, and religious leaders who would like to use *Our Mockingbird* in their programming. The guide also offers suggestions on creating a similar collaboration in your community between diverse schools or populations.

In the classroom, ELA, social studies, history, and drama teachers will find that using *Our Mockingbird* after studying the novel and/or watching the Academy Award-winning movie, will enrich and enhance their examination of the book. Not only does *Our Mockingbird* help to provide important context for the book, it also helps to make the issues more personal and relevant.

To Kill a Mockingbird: About the Book

Since it was published in 1960, Harper Lee’s classic novel has sold over 40 million copies and been translated into over 40 different languages. The 1962 movie adaptation featured Gregory Peck, who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Atticus, and Mary Badham (seen in *Our Mockingbird*), who was nominated for an Oscar for her portrayal of Scout. The book has also been adapted as a play by Christopher Sergel; it is that play adaptation that is featured in *Our Mockingbird*.

To Kill a Mockingbird is many things at once: an examination of the corrosive nature of racism and prejudice; a coming-of-age story about a young girl who refuses to conform to the gender roles of her time; the story of life in a small town where, for better or worse, everyone knows everyone else’s business; a searing portrait of poverty and ignorance; a cautionary tale of judging people by their appearance and excluding them based on assumptions; and the story of what it means to stand up for justice despite the odds.

Although Harper Lee wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird* during the 1950s, the story is set in fictional Maycomb, Alabama between 1933-35 during the Great Depression. The story is told through the eyes of Scout Finch, a precocious yet innocent child with the additional perspective of the more mature Scout’s point of view. Scout and her older brother, Jem, make a game of spying on their reclusive and mysterious neighbor Arthur “Boo” Radley. When newcomer Dill arrives, he fuels their obsession and they embark on schemes to entice Boo out of his house. Atticus Finch, a respected lawyer and father of Scout and Jem, demands that the kids cease and desist their behavior adding one more reason to consider him the world’s most boring father.

The children's beliefs about Atticus change when Judge Taylor appoints Atticus to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a white woman. The case becomes the focus of the racially divided town, still living under the oppressive Jim Crow laws that mandated segregation and unfair treatment of African Americans. The vicious reaction to Atticus's decision, and the subsequent trial, reveals the best and the worst about people. Atticus stands up to the town's mob violence, only to lose the case in court—despite Tom's innocence—due to a racist, all-white jury. Tom is shot trying to escape from jail. Boo turns out to be a hero, saving Scout and Jem from being killed by Mayella's father, Bob Ewell. By the end of the novel, Scout realizes that justice doesn't always win, that doing the right thing is hard but necessary, and that you can't judge someone without first “walking in their shoes.”

The book has garnered legions of fans throughout the years, including former President Barack Obama, who referenced Atticus Finch in his 2017 farewell speech to the nation:

“But laws alone won't be enough. Hearts must change,” he said. “They won't change overnight...social attitudes oftentimes take generations to change. But If our democracy is to work in this increasingly diverse nation, each one of us need to try to heed the advice of one of the great characters in American fiction, Atticus Finch, who said, ‘You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.’”

The book has also had its share of detractors. The character of Atticus Finch has been criticized as a stereotypical “lone white savior” who tries to rescue a “helpless” black victim. The racial imbalance throughout the story is also considerable. Aside from Tom Robinson and the Finch's housekeeper, Calpurnia, we get to know very few other African Americans in the town.

To Kill a Mockingbird has also been the target of censors, who object to reading it in school for a variety of reasons, including use of the N-word as inappropriate in today's classroom, and concern that rape is not only mentioned but is central to the plot.

To Kill a Mockingbird and Harper Lee made headlines in recent years with the 2015 publication of *Go Set a Watchman*, written by Lee *before To Kill a Mockingbird*. Now widely regarded as a first draft rather than a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book is set 20 years later, with Scout returning home as an adult. Atticus is no longer the hero. Instead, he is portrayed as a product of his time—a bigot who opposes desegregation, rejects the NAACP, and has attended a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan. Fans of the book were dismayed that this view of Atticus might have been Lee's original intention.

Despite the controversies—or perhaps because of them—*To Kill a Mockingbird* is still astonishingly popular and relevant today. The novel's power—in its writing, plot, and the issues it raises—continues to capture the hearts and minds of young people. As each generation confronts America's troubled past and grapples with today's problems, *To Kill a Mockingbird* remains a touchpoint and a guide to examining who we were, who we are, and where we are headed.

Themes

As you prepare to use the documentary in the classroom, consider the following topics.

IDENTITY

One of the central ideas in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Our Mockingbird* is the classic adolescent task of understanding ourselves as individuals: who we are, what we believe in, and how we treat others. This is the journey that Scout embarks on. It's also the journey that the students from Mountain Brook and Fairfield High explore as they meet one another and work on the play together.

In the documentary, the students' understanding of themselves, their backgrounds, and their preconceived notions of the "other" are all challenged. The students are asked to consider important questions, including: Who belongs? Who is an outsider? What are my rights and responsibilities as a member of society—in my classroom, my school, my community, and my country?

As David, the Mountain Brook student who plays Atticus says, "There's not that much evidence of prejudice [here]. Maybe because there's no one to be prejudiced against." Reed, also from Mountain Brook, acknowledges, "We don't have an understanding of anything outside of ourselves. We live a sheltered life." Roman, the Fairfield High student who plays Tom, says that he was "skeptical" that the kids from both schools would be able to find common ground. And Kim, the Fairfield High student who plays Calpurnia, says, "Before *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I would always feel kind of awkward on introducing myself to another race."

The reaction to Boo is another indication of students' understanding of themselves and others. Andrew, the Mountain Brook student who plays Jem, says, "Before...doing this play, I never really understood the point of Boo Radley...I didn't see how that fit into the idea of racism." Connor, the Mountain Brook student who plays Boo on stage, provides this insight, "I think that Boo could apply to any number of individuals and groups who have been discriminated against...I think he is the poster child for the disadvantaged minority." Understanding and treating the "other" or the "outsider" with respect and empathy is a key developmental process in defining ourselves and our values.

RACE

Race and racism are obviously central issues in both the book and the documentary. Regan, the Mountain Brook student who plays Scout, acknowledges it at the beginning of *Our Mockingbird*: "I think the whole black and white issue was really at the forefront of everybody's minds going into it." Throughout the documentary, students reveal their fears and concerns about race. *Our Mockingbird* is particularly thought-provoking when it shows how much has changed and yet how much has stayed the same. The degrading and horrific Jim Crow laws that John Lewis and others remember are gone. As Fairfield High student Stephanie observes, "We are not a segregated school. But there are no white kids here and no black kids there [at Mountain Brook]." Although the students today are more open to one another, there are still ways in which society has reverted to a world that is separated by race. Fairfield High student Candace says, "I guess it was kind of awkward when we met in the library. You know, they were observing us just like we were observing them."

CLASS

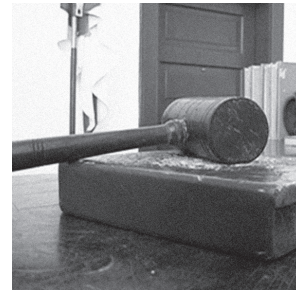
Students in *Our Mockingbird* are aware of class issues, just as the characters are in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the book, Scout is taught by her father and Calpurnia to not be judgmental about others, whatever their circumstances. Mountain Brook is not just a nearly all-white school. It's also a wealthy school, in an affluent neighborhood. Fairfield High student Kevin says, "I really thought they [Mountain Brook students] were gonna be bougie [bourgeois] because they lived in big houses, parents had all this money." Mountain Brook student Gena says, "Everyone thinks that we're rich, we're stuck up, we are materialistic." In spite of class differences the students from the two schools were able to find common ground. Still, the resources at each school – one with a state of the art theatre and the other with no theatre department (at the time of filming) are reflective of the intersection between race and class. The tension between the "haves" and the "have-nots" continues today, as does the desire by young people not to be stereotyped.

GENDER

The topic of gender is prominent in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Scout hangs out with the boys, is outspoken, and rejects the expectations and trappings of Southern femininity. As Mary Badham, who played Scout in the 1962 feature film, comments, "A lot of women, especially in the South, identified with Scout." Playwright Rebecca Gilman says that having Scout as a protagonist who is "strong and active and has opinions and is a reader was just hugely important." In *Our Mockingbird*, students more easily accept Scout as she is—a "firecracker" as Regan, the Mountain Brook student who plays her on stage, calls her. It's interesting to compare the relative lack of conflict around Scout's "unconventional" behavior today with her significance for women who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s.

JUSTICE

Tom Robinson was an innocent black man falsely accused of rape and sentenced to death by an all white jury. In *Our Mockingbird*, Harvard Law Professor Charles Ogletree comments: "It's not ironic that Tom Robinson would run away even though he was clearly innocent of the crime, because it wasn't whether you were innocent or guilty, it was whether you were black and your victim was white." Tom Robinson's narrative resonates today. As Bryan Stevenson offers in *Our Mockingbird*, "We frequently in today's society presume guilt when poor people or people of color are arrested. There is no presumption of innocence there is a presumption of guilt." The development of movements such as Black Lives Matter and SURJ reflects the critical need to address these issues in what often feels like an increasingly divided society.



In the Classroom

Preparation for Educators

Here are some tips to help you prepare to use *Our Mockingbird* in the classroom.

- Decide on a format: discussion, debate, roundtable, and so on. You may want students to work in pairs or small groups. You may also want to change the arrangement of the room to facilitate greater participation.
- Determine your time frame. You may want to spend one class period preparing to watch the documentary and another one viewing it. You'll also need to allow for sufficient time to discuss the film afterwards. You can choose between the shorter (37 minutes) and longer version (65 minutes) of the film.
- Create a safe space in which students feel comfortable talking about sensitive subjects, as well as expressing their own opinions. (See below.)
- The documentary provides an ideal opportunity for team teaching. Consider partnering with another teacher to provide more in-depth explorations of the issues and ideas.
- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird* again. Even if you have read it recently, treat yourself to another look. Take notes with your program, audience, or students in mind.
- Watch or rewatch the 1962 Academy award winning feature film *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- Read through this guide beforehand so that you can adapt the questions and activities for your particular group.

CREATING A SAFE SPACE

A classroom must rely on an atmosphere of openness, tolerance, and respect. You probably have already established rules about listening to one another, being nonjudgmental, using wait time to encourage participation, and so on.

Since classroom discussions on difficult topics such as racism and inequality are challenging, you may find this Teaching Tolerance learning plan helpful:

www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk

Additionally, Beverly Tatum's article in the ATLANTIC magazine "Do Conversations About Race Belong In the Classroom" is a helpful guide to encourage these discussions.

www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/09/beverly-daniel-tatum-classroom-conversations-race/538758



DEFINING TERMS

The terms identity, empathy, racism, and segregation are used throughout this Guide. With the class, discuss what these terms mean and try to develop a shared understanding. You can use the definitions below to guide you.

Identity: the various aspects of who you are which help define yourself

Empathy: being aware of and sensitive to another person’s feelings, thoughts, and experiences

Racism: a system of advantage based on race

Structural racism: On a systemic basis, the use of institutions, customs, and laws to treat a particular race as inferior and unequal.

Implicit bias: unconscious feelings and thoughts of prejudice, discrimination, or hatred against another others.

Segregation: de facto segregation is racial segregation that happens “by fact” not by law (de jure). For example, residential segregation often results in schools that are predominantly one race.

Before Viewing: Discussion Topics and Activities

Note that students will get the most out of the documentary if they have already (and recently) read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and have some knowledge of the historical context.

Use activities and questions to orient students before viewing *Our Mockingbird*.

- In order to assess students’ prior knowledge and understanding of the book, create a Story Map or similar literary graphic organizer on the board. Ask students to list what they know about the setting, characters, plot, and so on. Provide important information that students may have missed or do not recall.
- Brainstorm a list of themes that were raised in the book. You may want to organize students’ ideas into categories.

- Evaluate students’ knowledge of the era in which the book is set, including:
 - racism, segregation, lynching, Jim Crow laws, the civil rights movement
 - gender stereotypes
 - the Great Depression
 - class divisions

You may find the *Our Mockingbird* bonus features helpful.



After Viewing: Discussion Topics and Activities

Like the book, the documentary raises many complex issues and ideas. You may want to take more than one class period to allow students time to fully reflect and respond. If time is limited, choose among these discussion questions and activities.

- To capture students’ initial reactions, give students 3–5 minutes to do a “quick write” immediately after viewing the film. Have them note their feelings, thoughts, and opinions without stopping to polish their thoughts or sentences. Ask for volunteers to share some their responses.
- Explore with students how watching *Our Mockingbird* added to their understanding of the novel, its characters, and its themes.
- Pat Yates, the drama teacher at Mountain Brook says at the beginning of the film that because the students come from two different communities that their “experiences are entirely different.” By the end of the film, do you think that that the students would agree with her statement? Why or why not?
- Have students discuss how the perceptions of the two groups of students changed over the course of the play. Ask, “What were students’ initial ideas about one another based on? What happened to those ideas by the end?”

- Ask students to think about a time in their life when a similar experience happened to them. Ask, “What happened? How did you or your ideas change?”
- What does the film show about how prejudices or stereotypes develop and what we can do to prevent them?”
- Have students discuss the choices that the play’s co-directors made to infuse the play with a richer sense of the African American community’s involvement in the narrative. Did students find these choices effective?
- Ask students, “If you were adapting *To Kill a Mockingbird* today, what changes, if any, would you make?” Would you change the setting? The casting? Students may want to discuss this in small groups and present their “pitch” for a new version to the class.
- Much of the richness of *Our Mockingbird* can be found in the students’ own commentary. Post a selection of quotations or one statement per page on chart paper (see Appendix). There are several options for this activity:
 - After you read a statement, have students turn and talk to a neighbor about the statement for 2–3 minutes. Ask them to each discuss the meaning of the statement and their own reactions. Come back together and hold a whole class activity. Ask: “What did the statement reveal about the situation between the two schools in Birmingham? What did it reveal about *To Kill a Mockingbird*? How do you think you would have felt in the same situation?”
 - Organize the class into small groups. Assign a statement to each group or ask groups to choose the statement they want to discuss. Have students write a short summary (one to two sentences) of their conclusions underneath the statement. Together, discuss the range of thoughts and reactions.
- Discuss the images, incidents, and information that were offered by the original footage and the commentary by historians, writers, and others. What was surprising, unsettling or disturbing? Note: If you are teaching the film as part of a social studies unit on Civil Rights, you may want to assign students topics to research and report on at a later date, such as:
 - Jim Crow laws
 - 16th Street Baptist Church bombing
 - Emmett Till
 - Scottsboro boys



CONTEMPORARY RESONANCE

- Discuss with students how *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Our Mockingbird* each reflect problems of racism, injustice, sexism, and class divisions today. Ask:
 - What issue did you most relate to in either *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *Our Mockingbird*? Why?
 - How would you describe your school and your community? Is the population diverse? Why or why not?

- What tensions are you aware of in your school and your community? Are there activists working on these problems? If so, what are they doing? If not, why do you think that is?
- Does your school or community seem to have a particular political, religious, class, or gender “norm”? What happens if someone challenges that norm? Have you ever done that? What happened?
- Who are the Tom Robinsons and Boo Radleys of today?

TAKING ACTION

John Lewis, a veteran of the Civil Rights movement who risked his life to fight for equality and justice, is optimistic at the end of the documentary. He says, “We still have a distance to go. But we will do it. You’ve got to give people hope.” Yet it’s clear that although the students are willing and eager to learn from each other, that they are still very much separated by race and class.

In the documentary, Mountain Brook student David says, “This was a chapter in the history, especially of the South, that you can’t escape. I mean, a lot of us would just rather not remember, but it did happen and we have to face it so that we can move forward.” Have students think about their school and their community. Is it cohesive and unified or divisive and fractured? What are some ways that your students can “move forward” and help bring people together, as producing *To Kill a Mockingbird* did for Mountain Brook and Fairfield High?

Using *Our Mockingbird* as an inspiration, brainstorm a list of programs, activities, campaigns, and projects that students can do to tackle a problem in their own school and/or community. Work together to make your plan actionable. Ideas might include:

- Hold a whole-school Read-a-Thon of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (or excerpts). Reflect on its impact afterwards.
- Create a Readers Theater script of *To Kill a Mockingbird* to perform at a whole-school assembly. Diversify the performers by having different people take turns playing the parts.
- Start a book/movie club at school to talk about social justice issues at the local, national, or global level. You will find book and film suggestions for young people in Primary Source’s online Resource Guides: <https://www.primarysource.org/for-teachers/guides>
- Arrange a visit to local museums, memorials, and other places that were significant in the Civil Rights movement. Have students write reflections and publish them on the class or school website.
- Contact a school from a different neighborhood (see also “Walk in Their Shoes” below). Come together to:
 - Screen *Our Mockingbird* and talk about it.
 - Join together for a walk-a-thon (or similar activity) to raise money for a common cause.
 - Advocate for an issue of racial justice that is relevant for people in your area or region. Ex: criminal justice reform on a state level or green spaces in urban environments.
 - Register people to vote.

WALK IN THEIR SHOES

Part of the power of *Our Mockingbird* is that the students develop bonds and deeper understanding over time through working together on a mutual project. How might you connect your students to others whose lives or cultures are significantly different? How might you and your students engage in a sustained project or action that allows friendships and sensitive discussions to occur over time?



Organize your own collaboration in the spirit of *Our Mockingbird*. Here is a brief how-to with various choices for partnering with another community.

1. Identify what your version of “the bubble” is in your school or community. If your school is comprised of a diverse population, are various groups comfortable crossing boundaries of race, class, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.?
 - If not, ask students to create their own ideas about getting to know each other.
 - Ask your class to participate in one of the activities from this guide that allows them to understand another group with whom they currently don’t interact.
 - Allow students to develop an ongoing project that they can do with the “other” group.
2. Identify a group outside your “bubble” that you don’t know very well and screen the film together. Afterwards, discuss how your two communities might benefit from collaborating. It could be having monthly pot luck suppers together and discussing a subject of mutual interest, forming a book or club, etc. If possible, alternate who picks the subject and where you meet. Ask people to commit to a certain number of meetings to keep the interactions consistent and be able to build on them.
3. Find another school in a community that is different from your own and join together for a theatrical production.
 - Determine the scale of the collaboration—a one-act play or a full-blown production?
 - Choose a process to select (or create) a theater piece to perform. How will your choice reflect relevant issues in the two communities, and those significant to students? How will the performance shed light on issues of power, exclusion, identity or justice?

- Decide on the timing. Sometimes summer is an easier time for two schools to collaborate.
- Find the money! Reach out to sponsors in your communities who would support this type of effort.
- Share your results with local media and on social media.



In the Community

Although this guide has been written with classroom educators in mind, the ideas can also be used for an event or program organized by librarians, youth workers, academics, museum educators, and religious and community leaders.

Depending on your audience, consider developing your program in partnership with another local group or organization. Not only will this add diversity, it will help you brainstorm ideas and share resources. Here are some additional ideas to consider:

- Choose *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a book that everyone in the community will read. This type of “community reads” or “one book” event has become increasingly popular around the country. (For more, check out the Library of Congress site at <http://www.read.gov/resources/>.) Afterwards, use *Our Mockingbird* to launch discussion groups and other programming.
- On a smaller scale, offer a program for existing book clubs, where participants read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, watch the 1962 feature film, and then watch *Our Mockingbird*. Help by providing discussion questions and/or background information.
- Screen *Our Mockingbird* and invite an expert panel to discuss the book and the documentary. Contact your local college, university, or chapters of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) or National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) for speakers.
- Churches, synagogues, mosques, or other religious centers often offer interfaith programming. Use *Our Mockingbird* to launch a series of talks on race, tolerance, diversity, and unity. If possible, team up with a religious institution from another part of your town or city to add new voices and new perspectives.
- Community theaters can perform a play version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as students did in *Our Mockingbird*. Hold discussions before, during, and after the performance to address issues that arise. Be prepared by reaching out to groups that deal with diversity issues.
- Lawyers and law students have a particular interest in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. What would the trial of Tom Robinson be like today? What defense would Atticus Finch use? How would the judge instruct the jury? Use *Our Mockingbird* to launch a discussion and/or a re-imagining of the trial.

Appendix

Student Statements from *Our Mockingbird*

I think the whole black and white issue was really at the forefront of everybody's minds going into it, because just looking at where the cast came from. You know, that was (sort of) the idea, black and white kids coming together. —Regan, Mountain Brook

How many white people get with black people? How many come together on a regular basis? We see each other just about every day. It was like an introduction to a new culture. —Stephanie, Fairfield High

There's not that much evidence of prejudice [here]. Maybe because there's no one to be prejudiced against. —David, Mountain Brook

I was a little skeptical. If you come from a predominately white school and you come to a black school, you're gonna have a perception on people. —Roman, Fairfield High

We are not a segregated school. But there are no white kids here and no black kids there [at Mountain Brook]. —Stephanie, Fairfield High

I guess it was kind of awkward when we met in the library. You know, they were observing us just like we were observing them. —Candace, Fairfield High

We don't have an understanding of anything outside of ourselves. We live a sheltered life. We live a life where we aren't forced to understand or comprehend what we don't have to. —Reed, Mountain Brook

*Before *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I would always feel kind of awkward on introducing myself to another race. —Kim, Fairfield High*

Before...doing this play, I never really understood the point of Boo Radley...I didn't see how that fit into the idea of racism. —Andrew, Mountain Brook

This was a chapter in the history, especially of the South, that we can't escape. I mean a lot of us would rather just not remember, but it did happen, and we have to face it so that we can move forward. —David, Mountain Brook

Every emotion that Tom would feel, I feel, when I'm on stage...And I'm listening to her lying and saying that I took advantage of her when I know deep down in my heart I didn't...it has a very profound effect on me...I believe Harper Lee, when she wrote the book, she wanted Tom to be a man of great pride. —Roman, Fairfield High

Every time we go through the courtroom scene, and...it's time for my scene, sometimes I just want to break down and cry because of what's being portrayed.—Brittney, Mountain Brook

We're not there, we're not to the full equality yet, and I think this show will expose that more and bring us one step closer.—Glenn, Mountain Brook

Additional Resources

There are many resources available to help educators teach the book and the historical context. Below is a selected list to help you get started, which also includes websites that provide tools to fight bias and build inclusive communities in classrooms.

BOOKS AND WEBSITES

Bloom, Harold. *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*. Chelsea House, 2010.

Facing History and Ourselves. *Teaching To Kill a Mockingbird: A Facing History and Ourselves Study Guide*. FHAO, 2014.

McWhorter, Diane. *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement From 1954 to 1968*. Scholastic, 2004.

Meyer, Michael, ed. *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird: New Essays*. Scarecrow Press, 2010.

Madden, Kerry. *Up Close (Harper Lee)*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2009.

Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. Spiegel & Grau, 2015.

www.tolerance.org

www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/no-place-for-hate

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Documentary Educational Resources

Bullfrog Films

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Bonus Features

The bonus features on the DVD and *Our Mockingbird* website provide a wealth of primary sources for educators as they develop lessons on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Our Mockingbird*, the Civil Rights movement, and social justice issues. Featuring articulate and insightful commentary, each speaker shares his or her remarkable expertise and experiences, and offers a personal view of historical events.

You can use these narratives to enrich your teaching in a variety of ways, including:

- Assign small groups to listen to one or more of the videos and then discuss it. Have each group present a summary of the speaker's remarks and the group's reactions.
- Have students research the topic that is being discussed in one or more of the videos (e.g., the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, the march in Selma). After, have students watch the video. What did hearing about the event first-hand add to their knowledge and understanding of what happened?
- What do primary sources offer that secondary sources cannot? Have students compare and contrast one of the videos with a textbook or online entry about the event or topic. What viewpoint, perspective, or impact does each type of source bring?

EXTRAS INCLUDE:

John Lewis on Selma: Congressman John Lewis discusses marching for the right to vote.

Doug Jones on the Fifth Little Girl: Former U.S. Attorney, Doug Jones talks about prosecuting the bombers of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Bryan Stevenson on Advocacy: Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Institute speaks about how Atticus Finch could have done more to represent Tom Robinson.

On Race, Class and Justice: Four attorneys discuss the state of criminal justice in the U.S.

Morris Dees on Bias: Morris Dees, co-founder of and chief trial counsel for Southern Poverty Law Center discusses combating biases.

Mary Badham on Riding the Bus: Mary Badham who played Scout in the movie, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, recalls a childhood experience in segregated Birmingham.

Translations: Scholars Wayne Flynt and Nancy G. Anderson discuss how the title TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD translates across the world.

