

Emmett Till, Trayvon Martin and *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Lesson objective: Students will use the descriptions of race based social rules and the justice system as described in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to analyze two historical events.

Students will compose an essay on the concept of being a “mockingbird” using characters from the book as well as from historical events.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Day One-Emmett Till: After reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, students will watch the first portion of the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize* which details the murder of Emmett Till. Students will view photos and documents from the case taken by the instructor in the summer of 2015 while in Money, MS.

Students will identify which social norms Emmett broke based on what they have learned from Harper Lee’s descriptions in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Students will predict the outcome of the case against Till’s murderers based on what they have learned about the justice system in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Students will compare their predictions to the actual verdict in the case after reading a short article.

Homework-Students will respond to the following in paragraph form:

The Emmett Till case made an impression upon Harper Lee. In what ways do you think that these historical events shaped her writing? Use specific evidence from TKAM and the Till case to support your ideas.

Day Two- Trayvon Martin: Students will read a timeline of events from Trayvon Martin’s suspension from school through the trial of George Zimmerman.

Students will watch a video with interviews from Trayvon Martin's parents and George Zimmerman.

Students will be asked to identify the social norms that Trayvon was considered to be breaking on the day of his death. Students will compare this to those experienced by Emmett Till and Tom Robinson.

Students will write a prediction about the verdict in the Trayvon Martin case based on the descriptions of the justice system in *TKAM* and the Emmett Till case.

Day Three-Essay

Students will compose an essay that responds to the following prompt:

"Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

In an essay, explain what it means "to kill a mockingbird". Provide examples of "mockingbirds" from the book, history, and current events to explain your thinking.