Building Background Knowledge

To Kill a Mockingbird

WebQuest
To Kill a Mockingbird
WebQuest

Introduction

You are about to read the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The story is set in the sleepy town of Maycomb, Alabama. Atticus Finch is asked to defend a black man charged with the rape of a white woman. Through the eyes of Atticus' children, Scout and Jem, *Mockingbird* tells the story of adult attitudes toward race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. The consciousness of a town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy is challenged by the quiet heroism of one man’s struggle for justice. To best understand the lessons of this great novel, you must first understand the author, the times, and the place in which the story is set.

Task

Your task for this WebQuest is to visit various websites (provided for you) to learn background information before starting the novel. To ensure that you are finding the important material at each site, you will also have a few questions to answer for each category. This WebQuest will give you a good feel for the 1930s and a good understanding of the historical context of the story, so you will be better able to understand and enjoy the novel.

The Process

You will work with a partner for this assignment. One of you should be in charge of finding the appropriate websites, while the other writes the answers. However, both of you should observe the websites and both of you should provide input on the answers.

Conclusion

After completing this activity, you should have learned the following:

- Background information about the author, Harper Lee
- Historical background of the times
- Insight into some of the events in the novel
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WebQuest Questions

This assessment is worth 75 Points

Category #1 – Segregation – 19 points

1. Where did the term, "Jim Crow," originate?

2. After the year 1900, what did the term, "Jim Crow," become identified with?

3. What Supreme Court case upheld segregation, or "separate but equal?"

4. What was the name of the new literary movement, based in Harlem, New York, which featured "New Negro" poetry and literature that emphasized self-respect and defiance under the Jim Crow laws?

6. How did some southern black people try to resist and escape the Jim Crow laws?

7. Who were The Scottsboro Boys? What crime were they charged with?
   A. The Scottsboro Boys’ attorneys were extremely incompetent. How did the defense attorneys show their lack of experience?
   B. Explain two of the inconsistencies in testimony by prosecution witnesses.
   C. Were the Scottsboro Boys ever pardoned of their wrongful convictions?

8. Look at the different images portraying segregation. Select one that speaks to you and print it out. Write a brief description of the image and analyze why this image affects you. (This is a mini-paragraph)

Category #2 – The Great Depression - 14 points

1. What is “Black Thursday”?

2. How did the Wall Street Crash lead to The Great Depression?

3. What percentage of the work force was unemployed during the worst part of the Depression?

4. How were farmers and their families affected by the Depression?

5. What did the “New Deal” do for the country?

6. What were two of the programs created by the federal government to help out? Name them and explain what they provided.
7. Look at the different images from The Great Depression. Select one that speaks to you and print it out. Write a brief description of the image and analyze why this image affects you. (This is a mini-paragraph)

Category #3—Harper Lee – 12 points

1. What connections are evident between Harper Lee’s life and the novel?
2. When and where was Harper Lee born?
3. What type of education did Harper Lee receive?
4. What other famous writer was Harper Lee connected with? What did this other author write? How is this person connected to TKAM?
5. How has Harper Lee interacted with the media since the publication of TKAM?
6. What awards and honors has Harper Lee received?

Category #4 – Lifestyle of the 1930’s – 30 points

1. Create a graphic organizer showing the similarities and differences between the life of a black woman and a white woman growing up in the 1930’s South.
2. Review the sites provided, paying attention to images, entertainment, and the lives of people in the 1930’s. Create a character living in the 1930’s. Write a journal entry about a day-in-the-life of this person. It should include details about their social and economic status as well as their daily activities. Once you are finished with this journal entry, post it on the 1930’s Lifestyle Blog.
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Web Quest – Analysis & Reflection

1. What prior knowledge did you have about The Great Depression, Jim Crow laws, Harper Lee and the Scottsboro Boys? Where did you acquire this knowledge?

2. What new information did you gain from completing the Web Quest?

3. Think about all the information you explored today. Which facts will you remember and think about even after this unit is over? Why will you convert this information into knowledge?

5. Talk to an adult about the Web Quest you participated in today. Share your new understandings and ask them about their knowledge of any or all of our topics: The Great Depression, Jim Crow laws, Harper Lee and the Scottsboro Boys. Write about the conversation you had with an adult. You may want to discuss their reaction to your request for a conversation, their opinions and emotions concerning the topics, the sources of their knowledge, and any new information they provided. If the adult you talk to is from another country, ask if there were any similar events in their home country.
Works Cited


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<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/facts.html>.

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