

Grade 8: **Unit 2**

To Kill a Mockingbird: **Whole Class Novel Seminars**

Seminar 2: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars envision the Finch family, their neighbors, and the novel's setting of Maycomb, Alabama. They begin to understand Maycomb's social norms, values, and levels of society.

Seminar 2:

To Kill a Mockingbird: Chapters 1–3 (pages 3–42)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Tell scholars that today, they will begin reading an unforgettable novel about the disruption of childhood innocence in a sleepy Southern town.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read:

- **Read Aloud (15 minutes):** Chapter 1, pages 3–19

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What do we learn about the Finch family in Chapter 1? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What do we learn about the novel's setting in Chapter 1?

Read:

- **Read Aloud (10 minutes):** Chapter 2, pages 20–29

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: What does Miss Caroline misunderstand about Walter Cunningham? What does this incident reveal about the different types of people who live in Maycomb? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why are the children intrigued by the Radleys? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (15 minutes):

- Chapter 3, pages 30–42

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: What “simple trick” does Atticus want Scout to learn? (page 39). Why? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Based on Chapters 1–3, what does Atticus Finch value?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What does Scout’s first day of school teach readers about Maycomb County? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 4–8 (pages 43–98).

Seminar 3: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze Boo Radley’s role in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Scholars understand the lessons Atticus teaches Scout and Jem as a result of their interest in Boo Radley.

Seminar 3:

To Kill a Mockingbird: Chapters 4–8 (pages 43–98)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What does Scout’s first day of school teach readers about Maycomb County? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (01:45:43–01:53:44):** Chapter 5, pages 57–61 (“In summertime, twilights are long and peaceful...” to page break)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: What is Miss Maudie’s point of view on Arthur Radley? How does her point of view on Arthur compare to the children’s? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How is Miss Maudie different from Miss Stephanie Crawford?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - What does the game reveal about the children’s point of view on the Radley family?
 - What is Atticus’s rationale for why the children should not play the Boo Radley game?
 - Why does Jem go back to the Radley house for his pants?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why does Atticus disapprove of the Boo Radley game? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (02:30:43–02:37:32):** Chapter 7, pages 81–84 (“The following week...” to the end of Chapter 7)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: How do Jem and Scout react differently to Mr. Nathan Radley filling the knot-hole? What does this difference reveal about their understanding of the situation? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does Scout’s narration impact the way readers experience the story?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Atticus react to the snowman? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - How does Lee characterize the relationship between Atticus and Miss Maudie?
 - What does Miss Maudie’s reaction to the fire reveal about her character?
 - What is the significance of the brown woolen blanket?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What role does Boo Radley play in Chapters 4–8? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 9–11 (pages 99–149).

Seminar 4: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the controversy surrounding Atticus’s upcoming defense of Tom Robinson. They understand why Atticus feels he must defend Tom, as well as the potential impact of the trial on the Finch family.

Seminar 4:

To Kill a Mockingbird: Chapters 9–11 (pages 99–149)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: What role does Boo Radley play in Chapters 4–8? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (03:38:43–03:44:07)**: Chapter 9, pages 115–117 (“Later, when I was supposed to be in bed...” to the end of Chapter 9)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does the upcoming trial worry Atticus? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Atticus want Scout to overhear his conversation with Jack?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - What is “Maycomb’s usual disease”? (page 117)
 - Why is Aunt Alexandra “fanatical on the subject of [Scout’s] attire”? (page 108)

- Based on Chapter 9, what lessons does Atticus want his children to learn?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How do the residents of Maycomb react to Atticus’s decision to defend Tom Robinson? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (04:40:30–04:46:38):** Chapter 11, pages 146–149 (“At last the day came...” to the end of Chapter 11)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Atticus consider Mrs. Dubose “the bravest person [he] ever knew”? (page 149). Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How do both Mrs. Dubose’s death and Tom Robinson’s trial show “real courage”? (page 149).

Discuss 2 — 15 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does the incident with the mad dog change Scout and Jem’s perception of their father? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why is it “a sin to kill a mockingbird”? (page 119)
 - Why is killing the dog a noble act?
 - According to Miss Maudie, why did Atticus stop shooting and conceal his talent for marksmanship?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why does Atticus believe he must defend Tom Robinson? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 12–15 (pages 153–207).

Seminar 5: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars continue to analyze the roles of racism, innocence, and loyalty in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They discuss Scout and Jem’s experience at Calpurnia’s church as well as the incident outside the jailhouse.

Seminar 5:

To Kill a Mockingbird: Chapters 12–15 (pages 153–207)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: Why does Atticus believe he must defend Tom Robinson? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play audiobook (04:55:03–05:05:20):** Chapter 12, pages 157–161

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Scout think, “Calpurnia led a modest double life”? (page 167). Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What do Lula’s remarks outside the church reveal about her point of view on race?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why does Aunt Alexandra come to Maycomb?
 - What does Harper Lee mean when she writes, “Aunt Alexandra was one of the last of her kind”? (page 172)
 - How are Aunt Alexandra’s values different from Atticus’s values?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What does Aunt Alexandra value? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (06:21:48–06:34:41):** Chapter 15, pages 201–207 (“We were taking a short cut across the square...” to the end of Chapter 15)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Scout diffuse the situation in front of the jailhouse? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is the scene outside the jailhouse significant?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What causes Scout to think about Boo Radley again at the end of Chapter 14? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why did Dill run away from home?
 - What does Scout realize as Dill talks about his family?
 - How does Harper Lee characterize Dill in Chapter 14?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Explain how the scene outside the jailhouse develops one of the novel’s central themes. Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 16–19 (pages 208–266).

Seminar 6: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze Bob Ewell, Mayella Ewell, and Tom Robinson’s testimonies in order to understand the facts of the trial, as well as the impact of race and social status on Tom Robinson’s fate.

Seminar 6:

***To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 16–19 (pages 208–266)**

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: Explain how the scene outside the jailhouse develops one of the novel’s central themes. Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (06:46:45–06:57:43):** Chapter 16, pages 214–219

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: Why does Harper Lee call the trial “a gala occasion”? (page 214). How does this word choice convey her tone? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Harper Lee seat Scout, Jem, and Dill in the Negro section of the courthouse?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - What does the children’s conversation about “mixed children” in Chapter 16 reveal about Maycomb? (page 215)
 - How does Harper Lee characterize the Ewell family in Chapter 17?
 - Why does Harper Lee contrast the Ewell residence with the nearby Negro residences? (pages 228–229)
 - Why is Jem convinced “we’ve got him” after Bob Ewell’s testimony? (page 238) What does this reveal about Jem?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What does Mr. Ewell’s testimony reveal about him? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (08:04:22–08:19:43):** Chapter 19, pages 254–261 (stop after “...you’d be scared, too” on page 261)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What important information does Tom Robinson’s testimony reveal? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is Tom Robinson’s testimony critical to the plot?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: Why does Mayella Ewell think Atticus is mocking her? What does this misunderstanding reveal about Mayella? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why is it significant that Tom Robinson has a crippled arm?
 - Why is Mayella so angry after Atticus questions her in Chapter 18?
 - Why does Scout think Mayella was “the loneliest person in the world”? (page 256)

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why does Dill cry and feel sick at the end of Chapter 19? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 20–25 (pages 267–323).

Seminar 7: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars discuss the outcome of the trial. They understand how the trial reveals Maycomb's dominant attitudes about race and social class. As Scout and Jem grapple with the verdict, scholars understand these characters' maturing perceptions of justice and equality.

Seminar 7:

***To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 20–25 (pages 267–323)**

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday's reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: Why does Dill cry and feel sick at the end of Chapter 19? Then, build excitement for today's reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (08:37:30–08:50:06):** Chapter 20, pages 270–275 (“We looked down again...” to the end of Chapter 20)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What is the central idea of Atticus's speech to the jury? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What moves does Atticus make to persuade the jury to vote in Tom's favor?

Discuss 1 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - What does Mr. Dolphus see as a key difference between children and adults?
 - Why is the length of the jury's deliberation significant?
 - Why does Lee include mockingbirds in Scout's thoughts as she waits for the verdict?

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Is the verdict shocking? Why or why not? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 15 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (09:43:27–09:47:33):** Chapter 23, pages 302–304 (“Jem kicked off his shoes...” to the end of Chapter 23)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: According to Scout and Jem, what “kinds of folks” are there in the world? (page 302). Why do Scout and Jem disagree on this subject? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Jem think Boo Radley “wants to stay inside”? (page 304).

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: According to Atticus and Miss Maudie, what does the verdict reveal about Maycomb? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - Why does Miss Maudie think Maycomb made “a baby-step”? (page 289)
 - According to Atticus, what “makes men lose their heads”? (page 295)
 - How does Atticus explain the jury’s actions to Jem?
 - Why does Aunt Alexandra disapprove of Scout spending time with Walter Cunningham?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Why was Tom Robinson “a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed”? (page 323) Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 26–31 (pages 324–376).

Seminar 8: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the conclusion of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They discuss how the protagonists have matured, and the significance of ending the story with Boo Radley emerging. Scholars understand the meaning of the novel's title.

Seminar 8:

***To Kill a Mockingbird*: Chapters 26–31 (pages 324–376)**

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday's reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: Why was Tom Robinson "a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed"? (page 323). Then, build excitement for today's reading and discussion.

Close Read 1 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (11:50:23–12:04:38):** Chapter 30, pages 364–370 ("Well, Heck, ' Atticus was saying..." to the end of Chapter 30)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Heck Tate insist that Bob Ewell fell on his knife? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What is the "curious contest" between Heck Tate and Atticus? (page 365).

Discuss 1 — 5 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - What are the similarities between the Boo Radley plotline and the Tom Robinson plotline? Why do these stories belong in the same novel?
 - Why does Scout say, "Well it'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it"? (page 370)

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How does Scout react to meeting Boo Radley? What does her reaction reveal about her character? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Close Read 2 — 20 minutes

Close Read:

- **Play Audiobook (12:04:43–12:17:00):** Chapter 31, pages 371–376

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Why does Harper Lee include the scene in which Scout looks at the neighborhood from the Radley porch? (pages 373–374). Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What lessons has Scout learned since the beginning of the novel? How does Harper Lee show readers that Scout has matured?

Discuss 2 — 10 minutes

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Harper Lee characterize Boo Radley in the novel's final chapters? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- Scholars discuss the following questions as a whole class:
 - How does Harper Lee create a sense of closure?
 - How does Chapter 31 relate to Chapter 1?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Harper Lee writes, “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” (page 119). Who is a “mockingbird” in this novel? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

You Did It!

Congratulations! You’ve reached the end of Literature Unit 2: *To Kill a Mockingbird!*

As a result of teaching this unit, you as the teacher have:

- Built your scholars’ passion for great literature by helping them trace the coming of age of characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

- Built your scholars' ability to articulate their understanding of texts both orally and in writing.

Your scholars can:

- Envision the setting, characters, and plot in a fiction text.
- Notice interesting language and structures used by authors and explain how these choices support big ideas in texts.
- Write and revise arguments of 200 words to demonstrate their understanding of texts.

Celebrate your scholars' successes by acknowledging what they can now do as readers as a result of their work during this unit. Invite scholars to share how much fun they had reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Reflect on your successes and stretches, as well as those of your scholars. Have your scholars grown as readers over the last month? Do you have any readers who are not reading at Level Z? If so, create a plan to target those scholars during the independent reading portions of each lesson. Additionally, you must enlist parents to help get scholars over this hump!

Scholars must read at home, as well as in school. Do you have 100% of your kids reading nightly at home? Make sure at-home reading is happening, and meet with families who are falling short to recommit them to this team effort.

Do you have 100% of your scholars reading fluently? Using all of the tools at their disposal to figure out the meaning of what they are reading?

Do you have 100% doing their literacy homework? You must insist that 100% of scholars complete their homework nightly.

Going into the next unit, make specific reading goals for yourself. Set a percentage goal for how many scholars you will move in the next 15 days. Set a goal for scholars who are not reading at home. Who will you get to consistently read at home? Set a goal for moving any scholars stuck below Level Z. Why are they stuck? Do they read fluently? Do they understand what they're reading? Do they understand the big idea? How will you partner with parents to support their growth?

If you are having trouble meeting your goals, do not wait until you have NOT succeeded. Consult your colleagues. Consult your leaders. ASK FOR HELP so you can meet your goals!