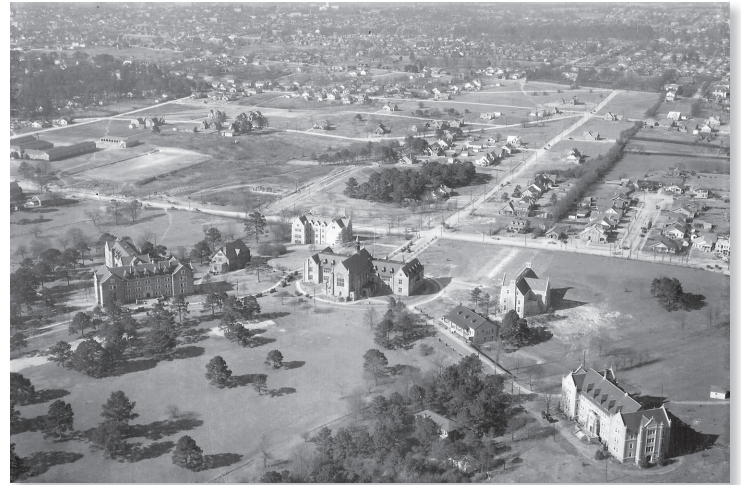




# Activity One

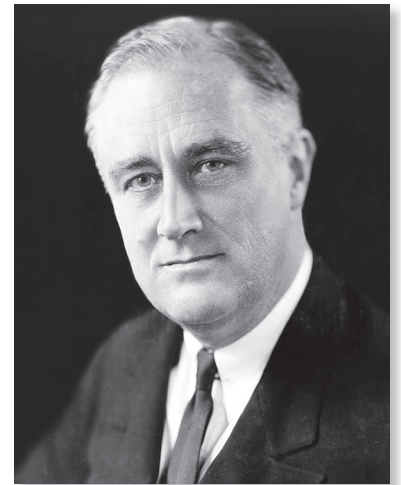
## Maycomb in the Depression

Scout describes Maycomb saying "Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it." She goes on to describe the Depression era, stating that "People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was 24 hours long but it seemed longer. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County." Scout also says that "it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself."



*A typical 1930s US farming town.*

The 1920s had been a time of economic prosperity, with the stock market and housing industries both booming. However, this boom came crashing down spectacularly in October of 1929, when the stock market famously crashed. Millions of people lost their jobs and their savings and unemployment rose to over 25% in some areas. The initial years of the Depression coincided with the presidency of President Hoover (1929–1932). Hoover believed that the economy would sort itself out and did not believe in interfering with the economy. He was defeated in the 1932 election by the man who said "we have nothing to fear but fear itself."



*President of the United States 1933–1945.*

Research who said "we have nothing to fear but fear itself." This President also introduced the New Deal and many economic reforms to try to help stimulate the economy. The National Recovery Act was one of these reforms. Atticus says it was defeated by nine old men; he is referring to the Supreme Court. Research the President who made the famous quote, the New Deal, the National Recovery Act, and anything else about the economy in America at the time.



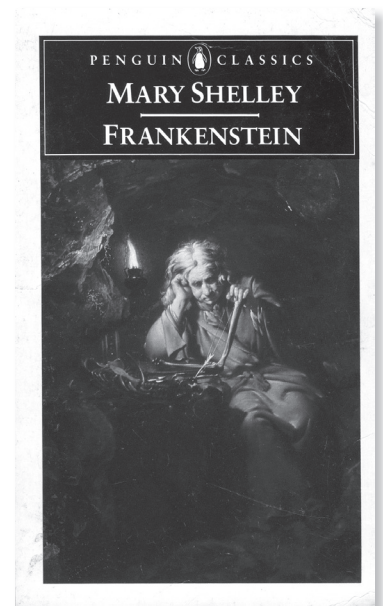
# Activity Two

## Boo Radley and Frankenstein

In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there is an ongoing battle between good and evil. Atticus believes that people are inherently good and raises his children to believe this. When Tom Robinson is found guilty simply because of his color, the children have a hard time accepting that the townspeople they love would convict him of a crime for which he is clearly innocent.

At the beginning of the novel, Boo Radley represents evil. Jem describes him as “about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging by his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that’s why his hands were blood-stained; if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off. There was a long jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped and he drooled most of the time.”

Boo is similar to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in that he is a creation of the minds of others. Dr. Victor Frankenstein states “How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath: his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips”. Future generations have shaped Frankenstein to become an even more grotesque monster.



Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

The children are not the only ones to show prejudice towards Boo. We learn that “inside the house lived a malevolent phantom.” The townspeople blame Boo for various things including when their “azaleas froze in a cold snap.” Scout tells us that “Any stealthy crimes committed in Maycomb were his work.” Indeed the fear of Boo led children not to eat the pecans, which fell from the fruit tree as “Radley pecans would surely kill you.”

Describe how the relationship between Boo and the children changes over time. Your answer should include specific references from the text and illustrate Boo’s transformation from evil monster to innocent mockingbird.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity Three

## Write a Review

Movies and books about miscarriages of justice and persecution are very popular. They invoke strong feelings in those who read these books or watch these movies.

Your task is to write a one-page review of one of these books or movies and compare it to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You must describe the movie or book, but do not give away too much information. Often when reviewers write about a movie or book, they will give it a mark out of ten or use pictorial cues to show their opinion. Siskel and Ebert were well known for their 2 thumbs up or down, and other writers use a star system to evaluate the film or book.

### Movies

Shawshank Redemption

Cry Freedom

In the Name of the Father

Amistad

The Man in the Iron Mask

The Hurricane

### Books

*Roots* by Alex Hayley

*Proved Innocent* by Gerry Conlon

*The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

*The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boybe

*Atonement* by Ian McEwan

*Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity Four

## Racism and Use of Language

“Atticus,” I said one evening, “what exactly is a nigger-lover?”

I tried to explain to Atticus that it wasn’t so much what Francis had said that infuriated me as the way he had said it. “It was like he’d said snot-nosed or somethin’.”

“Scout,” said Atticus, “nigger-lover is just one of those terms that don’t mean anything — like snot-nose. It’s hard to explain — ignorant, trashy people use it when they think somebody’s favoring Negroes over and above themselves. It’s slipped into usage with some people like ourselves, when they want a common, ugly term to label somebody.”

“You aren’t really a nigger-lover, then, are you?”

“I certainly am. I do my best to love everybody... I’m hard put, sometimes — baby, it’s never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn’t hurt you. So don’t let Mrs. Dubose get you down she has enough problems of her own.”

The above conversation tells us a lot about Atticus and his beliefs. Fill in the chart below and then write a paragraph explaining everything we can learn from this conversation with Atticus.

Point	Evidence

What does Scout’s use of the term “nigger” tell us about her?



# Activity Five

## Emmett Till and Tom Robinson

Harper Lee grew up in Alabama in the 1930s. She would have experienced racism first hand on many levels and in many ways; some of these ways would have been covert, while many would have been overt. In the novel, we see many examples of overt racism, which include but are not limited to segregation. The courthouse is segregated as are the churches. When Scout visits the church, Lee goes to great lengths to point out the similarities between the two churches. The importance of this point is highlighted at the meeting of the Missionary Ladies Society, where one of the ladies states that “We can educate ‘em until we’re blue in the face, we can try until we drop to make Christians out of ‘em, but there’s no lady safe in her bed these nights.”

There are also examples of covert racism, which occur in the novel. One example of such racism is when Calpurnia plays a starring role in saving the town from the rabid dog. Her fast thinking and course of action allow Atticus to be the hero of the piece; yet her heroics go unmentioned by all. This shows how the black community worked quietly behind the scenes to help the white community succeed. Harper Lee herself has been accused of covert racism in her writing of this novel. Some claim that the black characters in the novel are weak and do not stand up for themselves. This is with the exception of one woman at the black church, but she is dismissed by the group and it is suggested that she is an unsavory character.

Of course the greatest tragedy and most obvious form of racism occurs when Tom Robinson is convicted of a crime he clearly did not commit, simply due to the color of his skin. The fact that the jury took a long time to return a verdict is seen by many as a small victory and a baby step towards equality.



*Emmett Till*

Research certain aspects of the South and attitudes towards race in the 1930s and beyond. Look into lynching, segregation and Jim Crow laws. Then watch the movie “The Murder of Emmett Till.” Compare the treatment of Emmett Till with the treatment of Tom Robinson. Include details about their capture, their trials and their treatment by the community.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity Six

## Mock Trial

At the beginning of the novel we learn that Atticus's first case involved two men who refused to plead guilty to first degree murder and were subsequently hanged. Scout tells us "thus began my father's distaste for the law." Atticus discusses with Jem that too many people are put to death as a result of circumstantial evidence. Jem feels that juries should be abolished and Scout is indignant that women are not allowed to serve on juries. In his closing remarks to the jury, Atticus eloquently reveals his beliefs in equality and justice.

Research the civil rights movement in order to get an appreciation of the historic background to the trial. In particular examine the Jim Crow laws and write about how they affected culture as a whole. For example, discuss the laws regarding "White Only" seats on buses or in restaurants. List at least 5 important ideas or examples from your research.

Students will choose various characters and conduct a mock trial. Everyone will participate as a juror and make notes. Follow the format below to help you with your note taking.

Main points the character made:
Strengths of testimony:
Weaknesses of testimony:
My decision:
Reason: