

Harry Jackson: Blaine High School, Blaine, MN:
Activities for To Kill a Mockingbird, referred to on page 182

To Kill A Mockingbird: Looking At The Novel
Through “Different Lenses” – The Feminist Lens

“First of all . . . if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. 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.”

— Atticus Finch

1. Imagine yourself as each of the people listed below. You are driving through Maycomb, Alabama and your car breaks down. You are forced to spend a couple days in Maycomb while your car is being fixed. How would you describe “life in Maycomb” from your perspective? (Consider the physical town, the people who live there, lifestyle, etc.)

- a. multi-millionaire → _____:
- b. famous politician → _____:
- c. an “idealist” → _____:
- d. rock star → _____:
- e. civil rights activist → _____:
- f. sports figure → _____:
- g. historical figure → _____:
- h. you → _____:

2. Looking at Mockingbird from a different perspective: the “Feminist Lens”

Characteristics of the feminist perspective:

3. How would the following objects/ideas be interpreted through two different “lenses”?

Object / Idea	Traditional Perspective	Feminist Perspective
a. Mount Rushmore		
b. The Miss America Pageant		
c. Coverage of the Olympic Women’s hockey team		
d. The sex scandal in the White House		
e. Anchors of network news shows		

4. Now, apply the “Traditional” vs. “Feminist” lens to characters in *Mockingbird*.

Female Characters	Traditional Perspective	Feminist Perspective
a. Scout		
b. Miss Caroline		
c. Miss Maudie		
d. Calpurnia		
e. Stephanie Crawford		

Male Characters	Traditional Perspective	Feminist Perspective
a. Jem		
b. Burris Ewell		
c. Atticus		
d. Boo Radley		

5. Finally, how does being a female or a male affect your reading of the novel? How might the opposite sex approach the reading of this novel differently?

To Kill A Mockingbird: Looking At The Novel
Through “Different Lenses” – The Marxist Lens

“No book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.”

— George Orwell

1. Blaine High School, like all communities, operates under a variety of beliefs called ideologies. An ideology is a view of the world, a set of beliefs by which we live in order to reach our goals and desires. NOTE: Not everyone’s ideologies are identical.

a.

In America, typical ideologies are:

“Freedom,” “Equality,” “Democracy,”

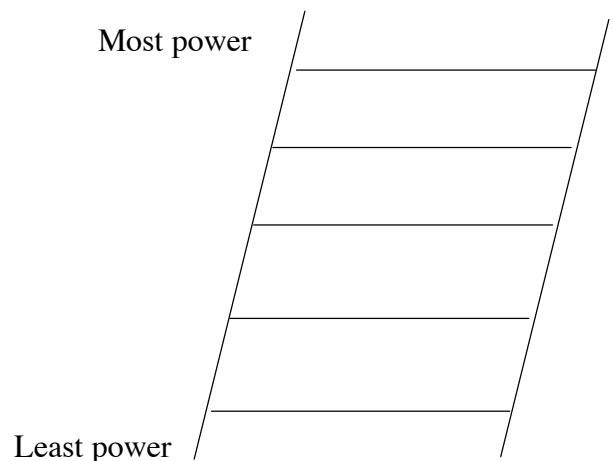
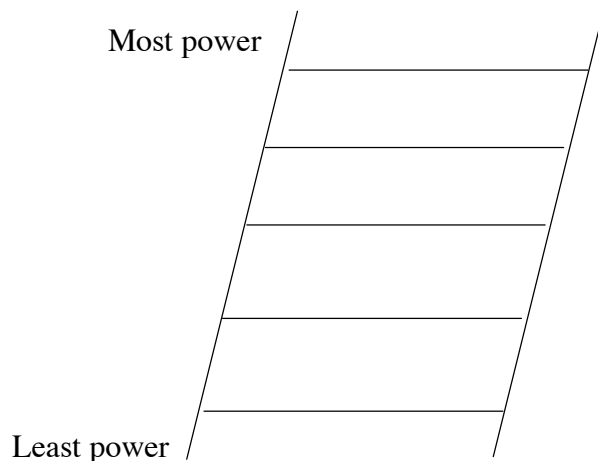
“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

2. In addition, Blaine High School, like all communities, operates in a particular social structure. This refers to different social groups that possess different levels of power in a community. Those groups with the most power are at the top of the “social ladder.” Those with the least power are at the bottom. Try plotting some groups from the following communities/societies on the social ladder graphs below.

AMERICAN SOCIETY

BHS COMMUNITY



3. Looking at Mockingbird from another perspective: the “Marxist Lens.”

When we look at literature through this lens, we analyze the ideology and the social structure of the community/society in the story.

Characteristics of the “Marxist Lens”:

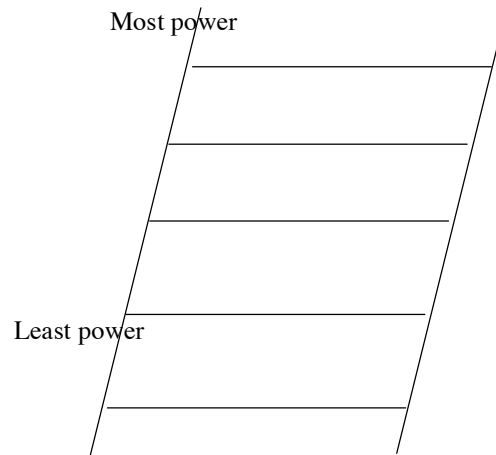
Now let’s look at some important events in Mockingbird through the “Marxist Lens.”

4. In order to understand Mockingbird from a Marxist perspective, we need to know something about life in the South during the 1930s. Based on your study of that time period, and on our class discussions of life in Maycomb, summarize what you know.
5. Remember, an ideology is a set of beliefs by which individuals or groups of people live their lives. Think of some of the major events that have occurred in Mockingbird so far. Then, identify some ideologies that are represented in the novel, and give an example of an event in the story that illustrates that ideology.

Example	Ideology in Mockingbird
a. _____	a. _____
b. _____	b. _____
c. _____	c. _____
d. _____	d. _____

Are there any other differing views of the world that are “at odds” with the beliefs listed above? Explain.

6. The Marxist perspective pays a lot of attention to the social structures that give power to different groups in a community. Identify some of the “social groups” that are represented in *Mockingbird*. Plot some of the characters (who represent these groups) on the social ladder graph below.



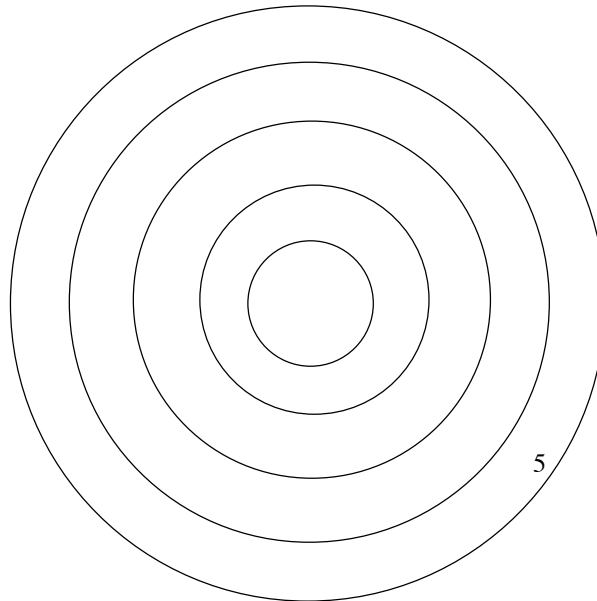
7. In *Mockingbird*, there are many “power struggles” between pairs of characters. Identify some of these characters in conflict. What has the power and who doesn’t?

Conflict between:		Is this a <i>class</i> conflict?
Has Power	Has No Power	
a.	a.	
b.	b.	

c.	c.	
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8.

When we look at a story through the “Marxist Lens,” we pay attention to class conflicts, power struggles, and where we see ourselves in a particular social structure. On the diagram below, place an “X” where you see yourself in relation to the center of power and money. (#1 is the closest to the center of power and money; #5 is the most distant.)



9. To what degree do you think the location you cited above may have affected your reading of *Mockingbird*? Explain.