



*To Kill a
Mockingbird*
and
24 More
Videos

Language Arts
Activities
for Middle School

Randy Larson



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— To the Teacher —

I remember sitting in science class in junior high and getting excited as the lights dimmed and the movie projector began to chatter. A grandfatherly scientist from Bell Laboratories loomed large on the three-legged screen and began to tell about the neat workings of our universe and the role that the sun played in it all. When it was over, someone snapped on the light, shut off the projector, and totally shattered the dream. I remember looking around, while I collected my books, at all the sad and lonely friends of Mr. Sun who had to get ready for Phys. Ed. within a few minutes of the next bell. It was a shock that I felt deeply, and could do nothing about—until now.

I've written this book because I've learned that shutting off a video machine doesn't shut off the emotions and imaginings of the audience, and that the best opportunity for teaching is right after the words *THE END* appear; it's where real learning can start, if we know how to seize the moment. The activities included in this text give you some effective ways to move kids from the world they've encountered on film to the realities of curriculum requirements in the classroom. I've included essays, projects, speeches, interviews, self-studies, word games, multiple choice and true/false quizzes, vocabulary and spelling exercises, and more, in order to bring variety to the task of learning from film. By using the teaching tips listed on the following page, and by selecting exercises appropriate to students of various ability levels, you can help create a meaningful experience for every student.

There are many good English teachers who resist this experience out of hand. Their position is that too much time is already spent by today's youth in front of a television screen. Why provide even more viewing time in school? For those earnest souls I offer the following evidence on behalf of video use in the English/Language Arts classroom:

- First—Let's be practical. Videos are cheap. A classroom set of novels might run \$90–\$180,

while a video costs \$2–\$4 to rent. If you're short of funds, videos are one answer.

- Second—Videos are time-savers. You can show a video in three days, while a novel may take three weeks. In a packed curriculum, videos allow time to teach more skills at a greater depth.
- Third—Videos provide a springboard into all sorts of other genres and media—poetry, plays, essays, biographies, novels, screenplays, research, and journalism. After a video many students ask for more; I immediately suggest a book, a poem, an essay, or a news feature that expands on the topic or relates to the film in some important way.
- Fourth—Videos are democratic in their range and depth. All students can get to the core of most films, not just the literati who are sensitive to the rhythm and nuance of language. This makes for more inclusive class discussions, and more success on written assignments.
- Fifth—Videos provide variety. In a curriculum that looks dolefully out upon 180 days of school, one must reach for new ways to teach kids. Videos can be a handy solution to the doldrums.
- Finally—Videos are powerful expressions of great artists' and directors' visions. They bring a dimension to a piece of literature that cannot be found on the stage or in a book. Since it is an English teacher's task to make as many literary experiences available to kids as possible, videos should be used in the classroom whenever the opportunity strikes.

And there's one more reason for teaching literature through videos—this book. The many activities within its covers give you a wide range of exercises to offer students in this engaging approach to the study of literature. It is my hope that by using this text, my colleagues will be better able to give students what can be rightfully called a good education.

— Teaching Tips —

Preview, Preview, Preview

The films in this book were chosen to include a wide range of interests, abilities, and school climates. Some contain nudity (*Romeo and Juliet*) while others have some profanity in them (*When the Legends Die*, *West Side Story*, *Raisin in the Sun*, et al.) while still others contain suggestive scenes (*Fahrenheit 451*) that you may not want your students to see. *Preview* each film before showing, to determine whether the film is appropriate for your classes.

Choose Wisely

Finding the right film for the right group of students is critical. If the film is too complex for sixth graders (*Raisin in the Sun*, for example), you could spend more time stopping horseplay than anything else. If the video is too simplistic for, say, an advanced group of freshmen, boredom wins out and the exercise is a disaster. The best way to solve this problem is to imagine the average student from a particular class watching the film with you as you preview it. Try to internalize his or her reaction to the dialogue, action (or lack of it), theme, and tone of the film.

Prepare The Way

Read the plot summary provided here, then preview the film and make a few notes about key points or scenes that you want the students to notice. Bypass the credits and start the tape with the action. Set the tape counter to zero and keep track of where you finish for that day on a 3 x 5 card for each class. Set the VCR in a convenient place for optimum viewing by all students, preferably up on a stand or cart at the front of the room.

Stop Often—Lights On!

Pause the film whenever you need to make a brief, important point, and turn the lights on if you feel it will help the students focus their attention. In fact, some teachers keep the lights on during the entire film. Have short discussions as the movie progresses. Even a short quiz would work in some cases.

Quit Early

Try not to end a tape when the bell rings. Shutting things down about 10–15 minutes before class ends gives you a chance to hold a brief discussion on one or two major points in the film. Letting the kids drift out the door as the bell rings gives them 24 hours to forget what they saw.

Make a Viewing Guide

Jot down some key points and questions about scenes from the film on slips of paper and photocopy them for the students' reference as the tape rolls. They will be more apt to stay "on task" if they have to respond, even if briefly in one-word answers, to some short, to-the-point questions.

Subscribe

One of the best publication aids for teachers using video in their classes is *Learning Enrichment*, published by Learning Enrichment, Inc., Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 5530, New York, N.Y. 10163-5530. This newsletter/magazine gives tips on how to use television and video more effectively in the classroom; explains the "fair use" laws for teachers who want to tape certain programs off the major networks for use in the classroom; and lists "coming attractions" (movies, series, news programs, specials) that might appeal to teachers of all disciplines.

1. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Author: Harper Lee
Novel Title: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Director: Robert Mulligan

Running Time: 131 minutes
Year: 1962
Format: black and white

Summary

Atticus Finch is a middle-aged, widowed lawyer raising two children in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, in 1932. He is a man of great integrity who can't quite keep up with the energies of his six-year-old daughter, Scout (Jean Louise), who is about to start school. Jem, Atticus' eleven-year-old son, wants a gun, but Atticus won't let him have one and warns Jem about shooting innocent mockingbirds.

The film is narrated by Scout, who is looking back on a dramatic time in her childhood that began when she and her brother met a boy named Dill, who was visiting for the summer from Meridian, Mississippi. He dares them into trying to get the mysterious character named Boo Radley (Arthur Radley) to come out of his house, where he's been kept since he was a teenager. Legends abound: Boo is tall, fierce, and blood-thirsty. The children run up on the porch, or peek in the windows, or slap the side of the house and run off. It's all a great, dangerous game.

But the frivolous nature of things diminishes as Jem keeps finding small gifts in the hollow of a tree outside of the Finch home: a pocket knife, spelling medals, carved dolls, and bits of chewing gum. Boo is trying to communicate with Jem and Scout, trying to touch some human life outside of his dark, stifling world.

In the midst of this, Atticus is caught up in the trial of Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman, MayElla Ewell. Her father, Bob Ewell, is a violent, poor, ignorant man who is clearly racist in his mind, and wicked at heart. He testifies that he caught Tom with his daughter and chased him off. But Atticus proves that MayElla's bruises and wounds were administered by someone who was left-handed (Bob Ewell). Tom Robinson lost the use of his left arm in a farm accident when he was a child. But Tom is found guilty anyway, and on his way to being

transported to another jail, is killed by a deputy who said Tom tried to run away.

The shock of Tom's death puts an end to any childish behavior on Jem's and Scout's part until Halloween, when they attend a costume party. Scout, who has lost her dress, must walk home enconced in a papier-mâché ham costume. On the way home she and Jem are frightened by noises and then attacked by someone they can't identify. Jem's arm is broken and he's knocked unconscious, then the attacker goes for Scout. Before he can touch her, another figure appears, stabs Bob Ewell with his own kitchen knife, and carries Jem off into the night to the Finch's home, where Atticus immediately calls the doctor and Sheriff Heck Tate.

Sheriff Tate asks Jean Louise if she can tell him who carried Jem home and she points to a shadowed corner of the room, where Boo (Arthur) Radley is standing. "That's him, Mr. Tate," she says, and then says, "Hey, Boo." "Meet Mr. Arthur Radley," Atticus says, and instantly all the mystery and illusion vanish. Scout takes Boo's hand and they walk out onto the porch.

Atticus and Heck Tate are discussing what to do. "You don't think Jem killed Bob Ewell, do you, Mr. Finch?" Heck says. Both men look at Boo. "A black man's dead for no reason and now the man responsible for it is dead. Let the dead bury the dead this time, Mr. Finch," Heck pleads. "I ain't much, but I'm still the Sheriff of Maycomb County, and I say Bob Ewell *fell* on his knife."

Atticus is stunned and confused. Scout says, "Atticus, Mr. Tate is right. It would be like shooting a mockingbird, wouldn't it?" Atticus thanks Boo for saving his children, then Scout walks him home, stands on his porch, and in a moment of revelation, understands and knows Boo in a way she never thought possible. She goes back home and waits in Jem's room with Atticus.

1. To Kill a Mockingbird

Plot Sequence

The plot of a book or movie is made up of the events that happen to the characters. If the events are interesting and challenging to the characters, then the story will probably be interesting to the reader/audience as well.

Below are some of the events that make up the plot of the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Number the events according to which happened first, which happened second, third, fourth, and so on. Numbers one, two, and three are done for you.

1. _____ Jem's arm is broken.
2. _____ Boo is standing behind the door of Jem's room.
3. 1 Jem is sitting in his tree house refusing to come down until Atticus agrees to play football for the Methodists.
4. 2 Mr. Cunningham delivers a bag of nuts to Atticus in payment for legal services.
5. 3 Dill introduces himself as Charles Baker Harris.
6. _____ Scout puts on a dress for school.
7. _____ Scout takes Boo home.
8. _____ Scout meets Boo face to face.
9. _____ Jem almost gets shot in Mr. Radley's garden.
10. _____ Tom Robinson testifies at his own trial.
11. _____ Tom is convicted of attacking MayElla Ewell.
12. _____ Tom is shot to death.
13. _____ The entire courtroom stands as Atticus walks out.
14. _____ Heck Tate decides not to arrest Boo because it would be like killing a mockingbird, which is a sin.
15. _____ Atticus tells Tom's wife that Tom has been killed.



1. To Kill a Mockingbird

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound the same but are spelled differently:

piece—peace
principal—principle
break—brake
alter—altar

Circle the correct word from the pair of homonyms in each sentence below.

Example: Jem (lead, **led**) the way through the crowd to the front, where Atticus stood.

1. Tom Robinson testified that MayElla Ewell had said, “Come (hear, here), boy, and bust up this chifforobe for me.”
2. When the verdict was given it seemed that Tom was almost too stunned to really (here, hear).
3. Jem was (already, all ready) home when Scout arrived to tell Atticus about being attacked.
4. When Scout got up to prepare for school, her breakfast was (all ready, already).
5. Atticus knew that telling Tom’s wife about her husband’s death would (brake, break) her heart.
6. Scout probably wished that the tire she was riding in had a (brake, break) on it.
7. Every day Mr. Radley walked (to, too, two) the store.
8. Calpurnia served (plane, plain) but hearty meals every day.
9. The (principal, principle) reason that Atticus defended Tom was that he believed “All men are created equal.”
10. The children tried (their, there) best to help Atticus when he was in trouble.



1. To Kill a Mockingbird

Vocabulary

The courtroom scene is an important event in the story. To better understand it you should know some basic information about the legal process. Look up the terms listed below and write their definitions on the lines provided.

Compare your answers with three or four classmates, and discuss any differences with your teacher.

1. jury: _____

2. bailiff: _____

3. court stenographer: _____

4. defending attorney: _____

5. prosecuting attorney: _____

6. judge: _____

7. indictment: _____

8. sentence: _____

9. due process of law: _____

10. self-incrimination: _____

11. testimony: _____

12. evidence: _____



1. To Kill a Mockingbird

Answers

Plot Sequence

- | | | | | |
|-------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1. 11 | 4. 2 | 7. 15 | 10. 6 | 13. 8 |
| 2. 12 | 5. 3 | 8. 13 | 11. 7 | 14. 14 |
| 3. 1 | 6. 4 | 9. 5 | 12. 9 | 15. 10 |

Homonyms

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. here | 6. brake |
| 2. hear | 7. to |
| 3. already | 8. plain |
| 4. all ready | 9. principal |
| 5. break | 10. their |

Vocabulary

1. jury: people who hear a case in court and render a decision
2. bailiff: a person who keeps order in the court
3. court stenographer: a person who records all that is said in the courtroom
4. defending attorney: a lawyer who prepares a case for the person accused
5. prosecuting attorney: a lawyer who brings a case against someone in a court of law
6. judge: a person who hears a case and makes decisions in a court of law
7. indict: to charge with a crime
8. sentence: the punishment for a crime
9. due process of law: the required procedure for arresting, charging, and trying a person in a court of law. Due process is guaranteed to all citizens.
10. self-incrimination: testimony against oneself
11. testimony: statements made under oath to establish facts
12. evidence: a statement or object bearing on a point in question in a court of law

Letter

Answers will vary.

15. FAHRENHEIT 451

Author: Ray Bradbury
Novel Title: *Fahrenheit 451*
Director: François Truffaut

Running Time: 112 minutes
Year: 1966
Format: color

Summary

A team of firemen dressed in black and riding a fire truck race to the home of a person who owns books. A little boy watching the action says to his mother, "Look, Mommy! There's going to be a fire!" The firemen confiscate all the books they find in the home, pile them on the sidewalk, and set them ablaze with a flamethrower. This is how the movie *Fahrenheit 451* begins and ends, with books as the subject of interest.

In *Fahrenheit 451* society, books are illegal. People who own them or even read them are imprisoned. The protagonist in the film, Montag, is a middle-aged fireman who is about to be promoted for his allegiance to his job and to his commander. But he meets a young girl, whose name is never given, and the beginning of the end of his career is set in motion.

Montag's marriage is disintegrating because his wife is so addicted to the telescreen that she's losing her personality. She watches infantile game shows in which the host turns to the viewers, calls their names, and waits for those called upon to phone in an answer or suggestion. This "interaction" is what *Fahrenheit 451* society tries to promote, using everything from stimulants to violence to achieve its aim.

One day Montag comes home from work to find his wife unconscious from an overdose of the government's stimulant. He calls the medical people, who pump out Linda's old blood and put in new. These impromptu transfusions are commonplace, and Montag is not to worry. That night Montag stays up late to read a book—his first.

The next day, on the way to work, the unnamed girl "accidentally" bumps into Montag and she's crying. She tells him she's been fired. He agrees to go to the school where she teaches and talk for her. The girl calls in "sick" for

Montag, then the two travel to the school where she is shunned by the children for being unique—for being a book person. That night Montag confesses to his wife that he reads books and she insists that either the books go, or she goes. The next morning at the fire station Montag reaches for the firepole, but it will not pull him up to his work station; he has lost spiritual contact with *Fahrenheit* society.

On that day's assignment the young girl's house is plundered by the firemen, but the firemen never get the chance to burn the books. Before Montag's eyes, a woman, the young girl's friend, lights herself on fire, consuming the books and herself in the flames. Montag is never the same after this. He breaks into the captain's office the following day looking for information about the girl, is discovered, and finds that she has not been arrested but is under investigation.

Montag's wife, Linda, leaves him and drops his photo into one of the red information boxes which stand at every street corner in the city. She has betrayed him as a reader of books, and now the scene is set for the climax.

The captain asks Montag to accompany him to a book-burning at Montag's house. Montag is handed the flamethrower, whereupon he burns his wife's bed, and then turns the flamethrower on the captain, who falls onto a pile of burning books and is consumed in flames. Montag runs to the woods, where the book people live, and there finds the girl and hundreds of other people who have taken titles of famous books for their personal names. These people become books and spend their days chanting their contents so as not to let the ideas die in the flames of the firemen's torches, which ignite to the temperature of burning paper: 451 degrees Fahrenheit.

15. Fahrenheit 451

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the correct answer to each question below.

1. Montag's job title is: (a) secret police (b) book burner (c) fireman (d) librarian
2. In his daily work, Montag: (a) arrests book sellers (b) burns encyclopedias and dictionaries (c) burns all books he can find (d) interrogates prisoners
3. The movie opens with (a) the police burning a man at the stake (b) a book raid by the firemen (c) a firemen's picnic (d) a firemen's rally (e) both a and b
4. Which reason for avoiding books does Montag *not* give to the girl: (a) it is illegal (b) he's not interested (c) it's too expensive (d) Montag has better things to do
5. What is the government's stated main purpose, or goal? (a) to burn all books (b) to keep people afraid of the police (c) to keep people equal and "happy" (d) to find and prosecute criminals
6. What is a "wall screen"? (a) a painting (b) a living mural (c) a living photograph (d) a huge television screen (e) none of the above
7. What does the wall screen do? (a) controls people's minds (b) gives people something to do besides read (c) makes people feel like they belong to a family (d) spies on people who hide books (e) both a and b (f) both a and d (g) all but d (h) none of the above
8. The captain thinks people should stay active in sports because: (a) it keeps citizens busy and happy (b) sports keep people away from books (c) sports give the firemen extra income (d) both a and c (e) both a and b (f) all of the above (g) none of the above
9. The person who betrayed Montag was: (a) Fabian (b) the captain (c) his wife (d) a friend
10. In order to escape, Montag burns: (a) his wife (b) his wife's bed (c) the wall screen (d) the captain (e) Fabian (f) a, b, and c (g) a, d, and e (h) none of the above



15. Fahrenheit 451

Short Answers

On the lines provided beneath each quotation, tell what the quote means; explain in your own words what it has to say about the people and the quality of life in *Fahrenheit 451* society.

1. The voice on the wall screen says, "Come play with us, cousins!"

2. Linda says, "They say [owning] another wall screen makes you feel your family has grown out around you."

3. Montag says, "Behind each of these books is a man!"

4. A little boy says, "Look, Mommy! There's going to be a fire!"

5. The captain says, "The books have nothing to say!"

6. Montag says, "You are not living. You are all killing time!"

7. The girl says, "The people *are* the books!"

8. The book people leader says, "Come and watch your [Montag's] capture on the screen."



15. Fahrenheit 451

Terms to Understand

The words, concepts, and phrases listed below are used exclusively in the strange society of *Fahrenheit 451*. Read each term or phrase and then draw a line to the definition or explanation of that term or phrase.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Fahrenheit 451 | a pill that keeps you alert |
| 2. blood transfusion | a book of fiction |
| 3. information box | a mindless, empty person |
| 4. zombie | a person who loves fire |
| 5. pyromaniac | an oppressive, book-burning society; the temperature at which paper burns |
| 6. novel | replaces drug-overdosed blood with fresh supply |
| 7. stimulant | a photo receptacle on the street corner |
| 8. book people | a person who has books |
| 9. kerosene | book-lovers who memorize a book, then burn it |
| 10. fireman | the state of being without emotion; drugged |
| 11. wall screen | a person who burns books on command |
| 12. happiness | the "perfume" of the firemen |
| 13. criminal | a huge, mind-controlling television |
| 14. rocking chair | to say the words in a book aloud from memory |
| 15. to "recite oneself" | where people used to sit and visit before the wall screen took over |



15. Fahrenheit 451

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is one that is made of two or more separate sentences (called “independent clauses”) joined by a conjunction such as *yet, or, for, but, and*.

Example: The firemen ransacked people’s houses,
 for they knew there were books hidden inside.

The first sentence “The firemen ransacked people’s houses” and the second sentence “they knew there were books hidden inside” are joined by the word “for,” which is a conjunction.

Make each pair of independent clauses below into one compound sentence by using one of the conjunctions listed above.

1. Firemen piled the books on the front lawn.
 They burned them with a flamethrower.

2. The woman burned herself and her books.
 She didn’t want to risk being interrogated.

3. Montag was about to get a promotion.
 His captain didn’t know that Montag was reading books.

4. Montag knew of the risks involved.
 He let the young teacher lie for him about being sick.

5. Montag grabbed onto the pole.
 It would not take him upstairs.

6. Most firemen put out fires.
 These start fires.

7. In Montag’s world, people can avoid reading books.
 They can go to jail.



15. Fahrenheit 451

Answers

Multiple Choice

(1) c (2) c (3) b (4) c (5) c (6) d (7) g (8) e (9) c (10) d

Short Answers

1. The announcer is asking the viewers to come participate in the program. Society treats its citizens like children who have no friends or family and need guidance.
2. The wall screen is society's family: people talk to it and interact with it. Another wall screen brings more contact with game show hosts.
3. The books are individual ideas from real people's minds, something illegal in the strange society of *Fahrenheit 451*.
4. The firemen in *451* society start fires rather than put them out. They find books and burn them so people can't get any independent ideas.
5. The society, exemplified by the captain, believes that books and ideas breed confusion and unrest; people ask questions of politicians, teachers, and preachers, and that is not allowed.
6. Montag believes that to be fully alive one must think lively thoughts, original thoughts. The people of *451* society simply absorb nonsense from the game shows on the wall screen.
7. The book people memorize their favorite book, then burn it. They recite the book word for word, and the book becomes the only life they have.
8. *451* society makes media events out of everything to keep people watching. Here, *451* police have killed an innocent man, rather than Montag, just to have something to show on the wall screen.

Terms to Understand

1. Fahrenheit 451—an oppressive, book-burning society; the temperature at which paper burns
2. blood transfusion—replaces drug-overdosed blood with fresh supply
3. information box—a photo receptacle on the street corner
4. zombie—a mindless, empty person
5. pyromaniac—a person who loves fire
6. novel—a book of fiction
7. stimulant—a pill that keeps you alert
8. book people—book-lovers who memorize a book, then burn it
9. kerosene—the “perfume” of the firemen
10. fireman—a person who burns books on command
11. wall screen—a huge, mind-controlling television
12. happiness—the state of being without emotion; drugged
13. criminal—a person who has books
14. rocking chair—where people used to sit and visit before the wall screen took over
15. to “recite oneself”—to say the words in a book aloud from memory

Compound Sentences

Answers may vary. (1) and (2) for (3) but (4) yet (5) yet (6) but (7) or