

# "to kill a mockingbird" studying the novel

[Literature](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

This term we have been studying the play of " To kill a Mockingbird" in our drama lessons. We have been looking at the text and doing various tasks/scenes taken directly from the play and others based on what we think could've happened in the play. In this essay I will focus on my initial response to the play and examine the explorative strategies used and needed to make the play successful. Apart from that, I will be analysing which of those were particularly effective and why that is so. I will also be commenting on the tasks that helped me understand the characters and themes of the Play better.

The tasks we have done so far, and the Explorative Strategies used are listed below:

Scenes/Tasks done so far

- \* Introducing characters scene
- \* Pair work on racism- Scout being bad mouthed by a boy
- \* Knocking on Boo Radley's door scene
- \* Rabid Dog Scene
- \* Jem thrashing the porch scene
- \* Jem says sorry scene
- \* Atticus protecting Tom Robinson from Farmers
- \* Court Scene Flashbacks- work on Mayella's, Bob Ewell's and Heck Tate's versions of events that took place on the night of the alleged rape.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird-studying-the-novel/>

## Explorative Strategies used so far

- \* Improvisation (Spontaneous, planned)
  
- \* Narration
  
- \* Thought-tracking
  
- \* Mime
  
- \* Script Work

A lot of the tasks listed worked really well and had the desired effect on the audience, in conveying the right picture about characters and themes in the play.

One of those was the pair scene involving Scout and a Boy. Scout was being abused by some boy, because her Dad is defending a black man. The short scene was a prime example of what would happen to Atticus's kids everyday and also revealed information about Scout's character and the whole theme that the Play is based on. Scout stood up to the boy and when he refused to take back what he said, she physically challenged him.

This demonstrated that not only Scout is a Tomboy, but that she respects what her father does, even if she might not understand the concept of it as a child. In addition to that, the scene enabled me to have a perfect picture on the racial attitudes that were present at the time. It shows that the situation was so bad, that even children of a young age picked up racist language from their parents at home and heard adults talking about the inferiority of

the black race. I learnt that Spontaneous Improvisation was very effective here as it brought out what was needed to be shown.

A task that really enhanced my understanding of characters in the play was the Rabid Dog Scene. The scene was about a mad dog coming towards the Finch house, and Atticus ending up having to shoot it instead of the Sherrif. Later on in the scene, Scout and Jem, who are happy about their Dad, get put down by Mrs. Dubose for no apparent reason. This acted as trigger for Jem, who had enough of the insults about his Dad and thrashed Mrs Dubose's front porch. The scene gave me an insight to two characters: Atticus and Jem. Atticus hadn't told his kids that he was once the deadshot of Maycomb county which implies that he might be keeping other secrets from his children because he wants to let the past rest.

Jem had to this point in the play been portrayed as the more mature, calmer out of him and his sister Scout. The outbreak revealed that Jem was actually the more emotional one who lost his head. The thing that really made the scene work was the explorative strategy which was Thought-tracking. As Jem was thrashing the porch, another person offstage said what was going through his mind at that point. This gave all the reasons behind the emotional outbreak and really allowed me to put myself in his shoes and understand him better. Although Mrs Dubose was involved in the scene, it still didn't give me a better understanding of her character, as there was no sensible explanation to justify her actions.

On top of those, there was one other task that really stood out in helping me understand the characters, but mainly the themes of the play. In this task,

we acted out the beginning of the Tom Robinson Trial. Mayella Ewell, Bob Ewell and Heck Tate each gave their own account of what happened on the night of the alleged rape, and we acted out what each of them said in the style of flashbacks. Bob Ewell was what would be considered white trash in the county. He was uneducated, dirty, he swore on every occasion and was very racist.

This helped me with the understanding of the theme once again; even though Bob Ewell was the lowest rank possible in the white society, he still took pleasure in letting black people know that he was better off than them no matter how bad his status was. This also leads onto the point that whatever he said in court could not really be trusted as he was prejudice and racist against the black race anyway. Mayella being his daughter was under his influence, and so one might have thought that as the whole world was against Tom Robinson, so the Sherrif would be too, as there would be pressure and expectations from the public.

However, the Sherrif, although being torn apart here between the truth and what was expected of him, stayed neutral in the whole trial and did not take the prejudice side. This revealed a great deal about his character, but more importantly the themes surrounding that: even if you part of the minority that wasn't racist, you had to show some kind of dislike against black people, otherwise you were in danger of being excluded of the white society and been made the subject of gossip.

Those were the tasks that were the most successful. However, not all were like that. There were a few tasks that didn't really work out as planned.

The task I wasn't too pleased with was the scene where Jem says sorry to Mrs Dubose for thrashing her porch. It didn't enhance my understanding of the themes or character at all because there were no clues as to what reasons there were for Mrs Dubose's behaviour, and Jem was only doing it because Atticus told him to. A theme wasn't present either. However, when I saw other groups performing, I saw what went wrong in our one. In our scene not much was said, whilst in others there were arguments erupting, one group even incorporated a slap, and there were lots of different interpretations of Mrs Dubose's character. So the thing that seemed to have gone wrong is that we didn't get the characters to say what was actually going on in their minds, like the other groups did.

At this point I would also like to mention an explorative strategy that enhanced my understanding of the themes and characters all the way through the play; narration. Jean-Louise was narrating everything that went on, so that if I was confused this really helped to clear things up.

Taking all this into account, I would say that the various explorative strategies helped a lot by helping me understand the whole concept of the play, and by enabling me to put myself in various character's positions and act as them knowing what was going through their minds. In effect, the explorative strategies even boosted my acting abilities by giving me the necessary background needed to convey the characters emotions and feelings. My initial response to the play in those terms is quite good I would think.

If I had the choice, I would have added some more explorative strategies at various places in order to enhance the understanding of themes and characters even more. For example, as we didn't get much information on why Mrs Dubose was being so harsh on the kids, I think we could have maybe included some thought-tracking there as this would have really helped to clear things up. I would have also had a frozen image when Atticus shoots the dog so we could see the shock and surprise in the children's faces at their dad. Hotseating is another major strategy that would have really helped with the understanding of characters. Hotseating the characters at either the beginning or the end of the scene would have really helped the audience understand them better.