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# Characterization Chart

A writer uses four main ways to tell about characters: what they say, how they look (including mannerisms, habits, etc.), what they do, and what others say about them. Have the students complete this characterization chart individually or in small groups for the main characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then as a class, transfer the information to a large poster to display on the classroom wall. Refer to the chart and change it as the class reads the book. Consider as a class: Do first impressions stay the same throughout the book?

	Scout	Jem	Atticus	Dill
<b>Self Descriptions</b>				
<b>Typical Sayings</b>				
<b>Appearances</b>				
<b>Favorite Pastimes</b>				
<b>Important Actions</b>				
<b>Treatment of Others</b>				
<b>Beliefs</b>				
<b>What Others Think/Say</b>				

# Symbols in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Several things are symbolic in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The most obvious symbol is the mockingbird itself. Scout asks Miss Maudie why Atticus told her it is a sin to kill a mockingbird. She has never known of her father to call anything a sin before. Miss Maudie tells her it is because a mockingbird never hurts anything and spends its whole life giving pleasure with its singing. It is wrong to kill something which does that.

This concept is important in several ways. It provides the title of the book, and the mockingbird symbolizes certain people in the book who give pleasure and do good for others. The primary person symbolized by the mockingbird is Tom Robinson. After he helps a poor, ignorant girl, she turns on him and, with her father, causes his death. In a symbolic sense, the Ewells and the jury who find Tom guilty kill the mockingbird.

The mockingbird also symbolizes Boo Radley who, in his own quiet, reclusive way, gives pleasure to the children by leaving small surprises for them. Boo is not killed; however, society is cruel to him, which Atticus considers almost as bad.

Finally, the mockingbird symbolizes Scout. As narrator of the story she “sings a song,” and she is almost killed by the same person who caused Tom Robinson’s death. Both Boo and Tom Robinson are at the mercy of the society in which they live, just as a wild bird is at the mercy of hunters and a child is at the mercy of adults.

Most good pieces of literature have such symbols to enhance the story’s meaning. Birds are among the list of common symbols in stories and poems; others include colors, flowers, trees, snakes, and more.

## Activity

Answer or respond to the following.

1. How do these serve as symbols in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

the mad dog: \_\_\_\_\_

the tree house: \_\_\_\_\_

the gun: \_\_\_\_\_

the jury: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you have ever heard a mockingbird sing, you will probably never forget its song. Research the mockingbird. Write a paragraph on the back of this paper, telling about it and its many voices.
3. How would you feel if you found a mockingbird which had been shot by a hunter?

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