

Gifted and Talented English  
Grades 7 and 8  
Theme: Tolerance

**First Six Weeks**

**Literature**

- Novel  
*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- Short Stories and Poetry to accompany *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Literary Analysis  
Plot, characterization, setting, theme, tone, diction, connotation and denotation, point of view, symbolism

**Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

**Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Literary Analysis

**Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

**Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary
- Literary Analysis Vocabulary
- Tone Vocabulary

## **Second Six Weeks**

### **Literature**

- Continue Novel  
*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- Short Stories and Poetry to accompany *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Literary Analysis  
Plot, characterization, setting, theme, tone, diction, connotation and denotation, point of view, symbolism
- Novel  
*I Heard the Owl Call My Name* by Margaret Craven
- Poems, “I Heard the Owl Call My Name”, “Owl Flight”
- Literary Analysis  
Theme, point of view, setting, characterization, figurative language, abstract language, imagery, metaphor, simile, symbolism, antithesis, tone, mood, style

### **Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

#### **Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Literary Analysis
- Personal Reflection

#### **Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

#### **Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary
- Literary Analysis Vocabulary

## **Third Six Weeks**

### **Literature**

- Novel  
*I Heard the Owl Call My Name* by Margaret Craven
- Poems, “I Heard the Owl Call My Name”, “Owl Flight”
- Literary Analysis  
Theme, point of view, setting, characterization, figurative language, abstract language, imagery, metaphor, simile, symbolism, antithesis, tone, mood, style

### **Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

### **Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Literary Analysis
- Personal Reflection

### **Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

### **Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary
- Literary Analysis Vocabulary

## **Fourth Six Weeks**

### **Literature**

- Novel  
*The Giver* by Lois Lowry

### **Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

### **Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Compositions

### **Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

### **Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary
- Literary Analysis Vocabulary

## **Fifth Six Weeks**

### **Literature**

- Play  
*The Diary of Anne Frank*

### **Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

### **Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Compositions (TAAS focus)

### **Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

### **Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary

## **Sixth Six Weeks**

### **Literature**

- Reflection on Literature Studied/Year's Theme of Tolerance
- Class Scrapbook as Culminating Activity Covering Literature Studied in Middle School Years (8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Inner/Outer Circle on Literature Studied under Theme of Tolerance
- Poetry Unit with Focus on Advanced Placement Terms (7<sup>th</sup> grade)

### **Grammar (on a prescriptive basis)**

### **Writing**

- The Writing Process
- Literary Analysis
- Personal Reflection

### **Mechanics (through writing assignments)**

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Usage

### **Vocabulary**

- Dewar Smith Vocabulary

*To Kill a Mockingbird*

By Harper Lee

6-9 Weeks

**Introduction**

Begin the *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit with an introduction to the theme for the year: Tolerance. Lead a class discussion about stereotyping, prejudice and race relations today. How do the students feel about these issues? What can an individual do to promote a society that is accepting of others despite their differences? Pass out the essential questions for Tolerance, and ask students to choose one question to answer in one paragraph to a page. Have the students use examples from the class discussion as well as the novel.

Students should have read the novel for summer reading and kept a reading journal of quotes and commentary. Have students turn in reading journals by the end of the first full week and administer a check test.

For the check test, select a passage from the novel for students to review. Choose a passage which portrays a situation resolved later in the novel. For the test students should review the selected passage and then explain in a full paragraph how the situation is later resolved in the story. An example of a passage would be in Chapter 7 when Jem and Scout find the various items in the Radley tree. An alternative check test is included with the unit.

Upon completion of the theme activity and the check test, “hook” the students into the study of the novel with a connection to the movie. This activity can serve as an additional check test for summer reading. Show only the opening footage of the movie with the music and the scenes of a child drawing and the contents of a child’s box of toys, etc. Lead a discussion of these images and the music used by the filmmakers. Ask students to explain how the tone of the music and the visuals reflect the tone of the novel. What important symbols are used? How do the images and music affect the audience? Does the tone of the opening to the movie mirror the tone of the novel? Explain why or why not? Do the visuals and the sound draw the audience into the story in an appropriate mood/mindset? How might the students have opened the movie? Possibly have students sketch a storyboard of the scenes they would have used with selected music referenced.

Share a list of literary elements of focus with students:

1. setting
2. theme
3. point of view
4. characterization

5. plot
6. symbolism
7. tone
8. diction, connotation and denotation

How are some of these elements seen in the opening for the movie? Throughout the study of the unit, references can be made back to this discussion. Teachers should closely guide the students through discussion of each element as this unit is the first literary unit of the school year. A source of questions covering these literary elements can be located at <http://pwnetwork.pwcs.edu/wshs/tkamb/novel.html>.

### **Focus on the Background of the Novel (Setting) and Author**

In order to more fully understand the events of the novel, a background study of the setting is important for students. Additionally, provide information on Harper Lee via Internet articles or other materials.

The teacher may wish to have students briefly research for background information. Assign each student one of the following topics:

- U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- NAACP
- Segregation
- The Role of Women in the 1930s
- Ku Klux Klan
- Scottsboro Trial
- Lynching Laws
- The Great Depression
- Roosevelt's New Deal
- Works Progress Administration
- National Recovery Administration
- Jesse Owens

Require the student to find an article on the assigned topic and summarize it in written form to share with the class. After each student has shared his/her article, have students complete the setting chart on page 39 in the *Literature Connections Sourcebook* published by McDougal Littell for the screenplay based on the novel and provided to all GT English teachers in Irving.

An invaluable source to teachers is *Latitudes Resources to Integrate Language Arts and Social Studies* published by the Perfection Learning Corporation, Logan, Iowa. An additional source is the *Literature Connections Sourcebook*.

### **Focus on Close Reading Practice**

To prepare for Advanced Placement testing, assign students passages for close reading with AP style multiple-choice questions. Choose passages rich in detail and imagery and create questions in the AP format.

Advanced Placement practice for the novel can be purchased from *Applied Practice* at the email address, [info@appliedpractice.com](mailto:info@appliedpractice.com).

### **Focus on Plot**

Define plot and conflict in terms of conflict creating and driving plot. Brainstorm with students the important conflicts in the novel. How do these conflicts (internal and external) relate to the essential questions for the theme of Tolerance? Remind students to continually use textual support. Some students might view the book as having two parts, one focusing on Boo and one focusing on Tom Robinson. How do these two parts contribute to the message/theme of the novel? How does the author tie the two story lines together at the end of the novel? To further check for student understanding of the plot, the teacher may wish to require students to create a graphic timeline for the events of the novel.

### **Focus on Characterization**

Define characterization and discuss with students the importance of minor (Mrs. Dubose and Mayella) as well as major characters.

Discuss the three methods of characterization: a) through what the character says, b) through what the character does, and c) through what others say about the character.

Also discuss the types of characters: a) the protagonist, b) the antagonist, c) a static character, d) a dynamic character, e) a flat character, and f) a round character.

Assign students to create a body biography using the methods of characterization. Have students choose a character from the novel. Students will draw the outline of a body to represent the character selected. The body should fill up the entire space provided on a regular piece of construction or computer paper. Students fill in each body part according to the following list:

Head: examples of what the character says  
Left Arm: examples of what the character does  
Right Arm: what others say about the character  
Chest: what the character holds close to his/her heart  
Left Leg: what holds the character back  
Right Leg: what motivates the character

Encourage students to be creative in completing their body biographies and to use visuals as well as words. Textual support is important.

### **Focus on Symbolism**

Give students the following list of symbols. Have students join small groups to discuss the symbols and what the group believes the symbols represent. Students must provide support from the text in their discussion. They must also discuss how the symbols help in developing the theme(s) of the novel. Monitor the groups as they discuss. Then have a representative from each group share the results of the discussion with the class.

The Mockingbird  
The Mad Dog  
Atticus' Pocket Watch  
The Cemented Hole in the Tree  
The Treehouse  
The Gun  
Camellias

### **Focus on Tone and Diction**

Review the definitions of tone, diction, connotation and denotation. Pass out a list of tone vocabulary words for students to keep throughout the school year. Pass out cartoons or comic strips from the newspaper for students to study. Have students label the cartoons with a tone word from the vocabulary list. Discuss to check for understanding of the term. Have students explain what lead them to select a specific tone word.

Choose a passage from the novel rich in description and diction which contributes to an overall tone. Read the passage orally. After reading the passage, have students give examples of words in the passage that seem to make an impact. Students may choose adjectives, verbs, nouns, etc. Make a list of the words as a class. Use the list of words to then determine the tone of the passage. (For example, a passage including the words gloomy, creepy, mournful, etc. would lead the reader to a tone choice such as “melancholy”) The teacher may wish to repeat this exercise with additional passages.

The teacher may also assign the students to take one of the passages and rewrite it, using synonyms for the words listed by the class as having impact in the passage. Have the students discuss how the new words change the tone of the passage as a result of differing connotations.

Assign students to create a tone chart for a passage/passages in the novel. Examples of a tone chart are included in the unit.

Lead a class discussion in which students relate how the author's tone helps develop the themes of the novel.

### **Focus on Point of View**

Define first person point of view and discuss Scout as the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Utilize the following questions for discussion.

1. The novel begins as the voice of an adult telling the story of her childhood but sometimes shifts to that of a young girl. Some critics have called this aspect of the novel distracting. Were you aware of the shifts, and did you find them distracting? Explain.
2. How was the first person point of view an effective means of telling the stories of the novel?
3. Scout's point of view of certain other characters changes throughout the novel. How does this change impact the view of the reader?

4. Scout has to learn to understand others by “standing in their shoes” (seeing their points of view) and by not stereotyping. She must also often behave according to how others believe she should. To what extent are people stereotyped today? To what degree do you feel you are forced to behave according to how others believe you should? How do you learn to see others’ points of view?

Assign students to write a letter from Boo Radley’s point of view. The letter should be one page in length and should explain, from Boo’s perspective, why he chooses to stay inside his home.

### **Focus on Theme**

Discuss with students how all of the other literary elements combine to create a theme or themes of a novel. Some questions for students to consider include:

1. How can the themes of the novel be seen as universal?
2. How does the work reflect the human condition?
3. What connection does this novel have to you, to your life, to your beliefs/ideas, to people you know?
4. How does this novel challenge, stretch or violate your usual ways of thinking?

Also apply the essential questions to the discussion of theme. The teacher might also wish to connect writing the theme of a work to the RAD strategy for main idea.

Assign students to create a One-Pager or a theme poster to show understanding of the theme. Directions are included with the unit. The teacher might also want to use the *Literature Connections Sourcebook* page 40 handout.

### **Focus on Literary Analysis Writing**

The teacher should require the students to use the Jane Schaffer style of composition on the literary analysis paper. The students should engage in the complete writing process from prewriting to editing and revisions prior to the final copy.

Because this will most likely be the students’ first literary analysis for the year, the teacher may wish to take a team approach to writing the composition. This will review the students on how to write a Jane Schaffer style composition using commentary and concrete details. After assigning the topic for the paper (sample ideas are included in the unit), divide the class into literary writing circles. Write the introduction and conclusion as a whole class. Assign each literary writing circle to write one paragraph working together. Have groups exchange paragraphs for peer editing. Have students complete the editing in the groups and monitor their discussions. Groups should then proceed to the final copy stage of the process. Have each group select a member to read the group’s paper to the class upon completion.

Students should also complete an Advanced Placement Book Report form to keep in their writing portfolios. Encourage students to use textual support in completing answers on the form.

### **Focus on Making Real World Connections**

Choose one of the following as a culminating activity for the novel unit:

- Students create a Compact Disc project capturing the theme and tone of the novel
- Students create a Movie Poster Package project capturing the theme and tone of the novel

Instructions for each of the culminating assignments are included in the unit.

### **Focus on Making Connections to Other Literature**

Other reading to consider in the study of *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

- “Ku Klux” by Langston Hughes
- “Incident” by Countee Cullen
- “We Wear the Mask” by Paul Lawrence Dunbar
- “A Christmas Story” by Truman Capote (a childhood friend of Harper Lee)
- “The Gold Cadillac” by Mildred Taylor
- “Daybreak in Alabama” by Langston Hughes
- “Words Like Freedom” by Langston Hughes
- “When Children Discover America” by Harper Lee

Additionally, the teacher may choose to require the Outside Reading for the grading period to connect to the theme of prejudice/tolerance.

### **Focus on Critical Writing**

View the entire movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Have students write a critique of the movie in comparison to the novel.

**Additional materials are included with the unit to expand teacher choices.**