To Kill a Mockingbird Background Knowledge Web Quest

Group 1 - Banned Books & About the Author

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert about Harper Lee and banned books. Research banned books on the internet and click on the link below to read her biography. When you are finished, be prepared to share your findings with your classmates.

**Resources:**

<http://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021>

<http://www.famousauthors.org/harper-lee>

**Questions:**

1. Where does the novel To Kill a Mockingbird appear on the 100 Most Frequently Challenged book list?
2. A challenge occurs when someone attempts to remove a book from school curriculums and libraries; if the material is removed, it is considered banned. Why has To Kill a Mockingbird been challenged? Why do others disagree with this challenge?
3. Do you agree or disagree with this challenge?  Support your point of view.
4. Name three other titles that you were surprised to find on this list and explain why each of them has been challenged. Do you agree or disagree with these decisions?  Support your point of view.
5. When and where was Harper Lee born? What was her family like?
6. What did she study in college? Did she participate in any extra-curricular activities? Why might this be important to consider while reading *To Kill A Mockingbird?*
7. How did her decision to move to New York make *To Kill A Mockingbird* a reality?

Group 2 - Great Depression

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert on the Great Depression. Read through the links provided, and then answer the questions below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about the Great Depression.

**Resources:**

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/depression/depression.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression>

[http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Memories+of+the+dust+bowl:+for+people+of+the+Southern+Plains,+the+...-a0144296833](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Memories%2Bof%2Bthe%2Bdust%2Bbowl%3A%2Bfor%2Bpeople%2Bof%2Bthe%2BSouthern%2BPlains%2C%2Bthe%2B...-a0144296833)

**Questions:**

1. What was the Dust Bowl? How did the Dust Bowl affect the Southern Plains? What affect did the Dust Bowl have on agriculture? How would this affect farmers and their employers?
2. What was life like during the Great Depression?
3. Given what you learned about the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, make a prediction about what you think the setting of *To Kill A Mockingbird* will look like. What will the houses look like? What will the characters be wearing? How will the characters act towards each other? How will Scout's classmates act toward Scout knowing that her father is a lawyer?
4. Look at some photographs from the Great Depression. Describe one and explain why it has an impact on you.
5. How might the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* affect the story and the characters?

Group 3 - Jim Crow Laws

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert about the history of Jim Crow laws. Please read the link below. When you are finished, answer the questions provided to you. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about Jim Crow Laws.

**Resources:**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>

<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>

**Questions:**

1. How did the term "Jim Crow" become synonymous with the segregation laws in the South? What are some examples?
2. Legally, African-Americans had the right to vote. How was their right to suffrage compromised? Please list 3 ways whites made it nearly impossible for blacks to vote.
3. How did the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896) uphold Jim Crow laws? What effect did this case have on the lives (transportation, education, social implications, etc.) of southern blacks?
4. Go to <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>. Choose one person to read about and explain the role they played during the time of Jim Crow
5. Look at the personal narratives on <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>. Read and listen to a first-hand account of someone who lived during the time of Jim Crow.

Group 4 - Scottsboro Trials

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert on the Scottsboro Boys. Click on the link below to start learning about them. When you are finished, answer the questions below. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about The Scottsboro Boys and their trials.

**Resources:**

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/SB_acct.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/scottsboro/timeline/>

**Questions:**

1. Who were the Scottsboro Boys? How did they get into so much trouble?
2. Where and when did the Scottsboro Boys' original trial take place? How do you think this affected the outcome of their trial?
3. The Scottsboro Boy were not provided with adequate defense lawyers. Please list at least 3 ways in which the defense lawyers were inadequate.
4. Describe the trials. Were they fair or unfair? Please include at least 3 supporting facts to back up your description.
5. Were the Scottsboro Boys ever pardoned of their convictions?

Group 5 - Emmett Till

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert on Emmett Till. Click on the links below to start reading about him. When you are finished, answer the questions below. Read and answer the questions carefully as you will be teaching your classmates your information.

**Resources:**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/filmmore/index.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmett_Till>

**Questions:**

1. Who was Emmett Till? How did he get into trouble?
2. Describe Emmett Till’s trial? Was it fair? Provide supporting facts and details to support your opinion.
3. What was unique about Emmett Till’s funeral? How did this impact the response from the townspeople?
4. What happened to Emmett Till’s murderers?
5. What is Emmett Till’s connection to current events? How has this event lived on throughout history?

Group 6 - Growing Up Black in the 1930s

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert on what it was like to grow up black in the South in the 1930s. Please read the links below and answer the questions. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about what it was like to be black in the South.

**Resources:**

<http://fsd79.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/IL01001571/Centricity/Domain/262/Black%20in%201930s.pdf>

**Questions:**

1. What does Mrs. Barge know about her ancestry? How does she talk about her family?
2. What were her and her family's living conditions like?
3. When was the first time she noticed a difference between the lives of black people and the lives of white people? From Mrs. Barge's account, what do you think is the most astounding difference?
4. What was school like for Mrs. Barge?
5. What kind of jobs were available to black people in the South?
6. Were black people allowed to vote?
7. Mrs. Barge clearly has a different opinion of white people than her father does. What does she say that proves this? How does her perception of white people differ from her father's? Why do you think that is?

Group 7 - Growing up White in the 1930s

**Directions:** Your job is to become an expert on what it was like to grow up white in the South in the 1930s. Please read the links below and answer the questions. Be sure to read carefully because you will be teaching your classmates everything you know about what it was like to be white in the South.

**Resources:**

<http://teachfreespeech.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Growing-up-white-in-the-1930s.pdf>

**Questions:**

1. What do these three ladies have in common about their ancestry? How do they talk about their families?
2. What were the three ladies living conditions like?
3. What were these ladies' first experiences with black people?
4. Did these white ladies ever play with their black peers?
5. The ladies in "Growing up White in the 1930s" talk about what made a "good family" in the South. What do they say makes a "good family"?
6. How did these occupations available to black people influence the perception of black people according to the three ladies' accounts?