

Title of Session: Social Studies Forum - To Kill A Mockingbird

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Title of File: 20040324ssf

Date: March 24, 2004

Room: After School Online Room

MichaelH has been frantically searching for baseboard and moulding for his new bathroom... just 15 minutes ago at Lowe's

MichaelH: So, as you can tell, I know where my priorities lie!

MichaelH: Welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum

MichaelH: tonight's topic will be one that should be of great interest to many...

MichaelH: but, before I begin, let's introduce ourselves to one another

JeffC: the baseboard of American education?

MichaelH: no, Jeff, the moulding of American education

JeffC: ah... I shoulda thought

AmericaB: My name is America Barrera. I live in Houston, Texas. I am pre-service teacher at the University of Houston

LauraLI: Hi. My name is Laura and I am a pre-service teacher at the University of Houston.

AshleighS: Same here

AshleighS: PUMA students?

JeffC: Your name is Laura too Ashleigh?

AshleighS: ha ha

MichaelH: My name is Michael Hutchison, and I am NOT a preservice teacher at the University of Houston

RubyK: I am Ruby. I am a teacher and a librarian.

MichaelH: I am a technology curriculum facilitator in a school district in southwestern Indiana

LauraLI: yes Ashleigh we are PUMA students

MichaelH: . o O (Indiana)

JeffC: My name is Jeff Cooper... and it's been one hour since my last login to Tapped In. I'm on Helpdesk here... and have been an Education Technology Specialist for three years (laid off).

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

MichaelH: tonight's topic is a little change of pace... and of special interest to you secondary teachers out there

MichaelH: I don't think it works so well with elementary, because of the subject matter involved

MichaelH: I don't know if your community does this... but we celebrate "One Book, One Community" yearly

MichaelH: we take a book and discuss it , analyze it, and celebrate it

MichaelH: Last year's book was "Tuesdays With Morrie". We even had Mitch Alblom (I think that's right on spelling) locally to discuss it

LauraLI: That's great

MichaelH: This year's book is a real classic, and it's the focus of our discussion tonight, because it touches social studies as well as literature

MichaelH: This year's book is "To Kill A Mockingbird"

MichaelH: Is anyone familiar with it?

RubyK: Yes.

AshleighS: I love that book!

LauraLl: I have not read it

MichaelH: Laura, you need to make time to read it...

MichaelH: It's a wonderful study of life in the south in the 1930s, and of course, with a racial tension story built in.

LauraLl: My sister loves that book...I WILL read it soon

JeffC: taught it

MichaelH will sit and let Jeff take over

JeffC: dream on macduff

MichaelH . o O (it WAS a nice try though!)

MichaelH: anyway, let's discuss some basics about the book (and the film)

MichaelH: has anyone seen the film?

AshleighS: yes

MichaelH . o O (Jeff has taught it)

JeffC nods

RubyK: I have seen the film, too.

LauraLl: sorry, haven't

MichaelH: Laura, you'll have to do that too...

MichaelH: do you get Turner Classic Movies on your cable?

MichaelH: TCM shows it regularly

JeffC: only the black and white version though... I missed the updated version with Sylvester Stallone as Atticus.

MichaelH giggles

MichaelH . o O ("Yo, Scout, Yo Jem")

LauraLl: I do not

MichaelH: go rent it then. You might be able to get it at the public library as well

MichaelH: EVERYONE knows who played Atticus Finch in the film...

MichaelH . o O (besides "Rocky")

JeffC: Besides Stallone? Hmm... Gurgling Pecks>

MichaelH listens for an answer from his Lit 101 class...

AshleighS: Gregory Peck?

MichaelH: yep

MichaelH: And, of course, the American Film Institute, last summer, named Peck as Atticus Finch as the #1 of the top 100 movie heroes

MichaelH: ahead of Indiana Jones, Rocky, Rambo, etc.

MichaelH: ok, how is the book, or the film, a social studies lesson?

MichaelH: besides the 1930s angle

RubyK: It deals with racial prejudices.

AshleighS: Who played Boo?

MichaelH: Robert Duvall

AshleighS) good

MichaelH: Frank Overton played the sheriff
AshleighS: you're fast
MichaelH: ok, how does it deal with racial prejudice?
MollyZ joined the room.
JeffC: Yeah... here's a trivia question for you then... what famous novelist was one of the kids patterned after?
MichaelH: Truman Capote
MichaelH: Dill
MichaelH: Dill Harris
MichaelH: from Meridian Mississippi
JeffC: correct... name the novelist
JeffC: oops... you did
MichaelH: Harper Lee
JeffC: Michael is too good for Mockingbird trivia... back to racism...
MichaelH: is Alex Trebec here?
RubyK: Harper Lee
MichaelH looks for the Daily Double
MichaelH: Capote grew up with Harper Lee in Monroeville
RubyK: Sorry. I got behind.
MichaelH: it's ok...
JeffC: I think the way it deals with prejudice (a larger issue than racism) is key to quite a few of the plot lines... prejudice regarding Boo, etc.
MichaelH: that's interesting, Jeff, and a good take on it...
MichaelH: also how the Cunninghams are portrayed in the film (country folk), etc.
JeffC: bumpkins
MichaelH: I wonder, though, if that's the novel, or the times that the film was made in ?
MichaelH: if that film were made today, could they be as "politically incorrect" as they were in 1962?
AshleighS: I don't think so.
MichaelH: would you like to see a "home grown" resource site on the book and film?
JeffC: you mean in their portrayal of the Cunningham's as bumpkins? maybe not if they got Ron Howard to reprise his role as Ritchie.
MollyZ: The Cunningham's were portrayed more as simple folks in the novel. The movie exaggerated their notions and made them into caricatures.
MichaelH: well, it is a dichotomy... Walter's dad was so nice in the start of the film, but he was one who wanted to lynch Tom Robinson
JeffC: shows how prejudice corrupts
MichaelH: It has been a while since I've ready the book, Molly... do you mind if I ask how the film exaggerates?
MichaelH: while we ponder that question for a bit... how about looking at a resource with me for a few minutes?
MichaelH: everyone ready?
AshleighS: yes
LauraLl: yes
RubyK: ready
MichaelH: ok...first of all...this is home grown..

MichaelH: I put it together...

MichaelH: so if you have any suggestions for more resources, please feel free to e-mail me with them.

LauraLl: ok

MichaelH: what I will do is type the URL here... you can click on the blue link...

MichaelH: and the page will open in another window...

MichaelH: take just a couple of minutes to look, and then scurry back here quick so we can discuss some things

MichaelH: . o O (the link will be in the transcript)

MichaelH: here's the link

MichaelH: <http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/tcr/mockingbird/mockingbird.htm>

MichaelH: you all will note that there are relatively few lessons here... but a lot of resources you can use to build your own lessons

MollyZ: Took me a while to type - my fingers aren't functioning well tonight. This is only an opinion, but I never got the sense when reading the book that the Cunninghams were "bumpkins". They had simple notions of life and simple language that they used to describe life. The movie had them using what I would call "countrified" language that was not simple, but unintelligent. Does this answer the question? As previously stated, it's only my opinion.

MichaelH: I don't know if the movie really focuses on the "bumpkin" aspect, but it does sort of imply that they were different... like the scene where Walter pours maple syrup on his roast...

MichaelH: did everyone see the resource page...?

MichaelH: remember, it loads in a different window...

MichaelH: when you click the link

LauraLl: I was able to take a glance at it

AmericaB: yes

MollyZ: Great resources. As for the maple syrup, I told my instructors that I thought it would be better on ham.

MichaelH: If I may say, I like the yellow color... it's light, and it highlights the text better... I try to do a lot of pages in this yellow

LauraLl: I agree

MichaelH: I think it's a very gentle color...

MichaelH: that's very pleasing to the eye... and hopefully in some ways it also summarizes some of the book as well..

LauraLl -)

MichaelH: a different time... less stressful, more simple

AmericaB smiles

MichaelH: let's maybe look at a couple of the resources

AmericaB: great

MichaelH: this is a GREAT resource

MichaelH: take a minute to look at it, and then we'll come back here. Just remember, EVERYTHING is in tonight's transcript

MichaelH: http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/

MichaelH: you'll love this one

JeffC: here's a list of "To Kill a Mockingbird" webquests: <http://snipurl.com/5atc>

MichaelH: thanks, Jeff... I'm not familiar with that one... I'll add it to the site

MichaelH: did everyone see that one

MichaelH: and see Jeff's

MichaelH: ?

RubyK: Yes

AshleighS: yes

LauraLl: It's a great site Michael!

AmericaB: Yes

JeffC: mine's just a google search redirect

MichaelH: I wish I made it

AshleighS: It's very easy to navigate.

MichaelH: The yellow one is mine

MichaelH: this is another cool site

MichaelH: if you like the music from the film, some of it is here

MichaelH: <http://www.educeth.ch/english/readinglist/leeh/mockingbird.html#teaching>

MichaelH: composer of the musical score for the film?

MollyZ: I found a neat site for integrating ELA and SS.

MichaelH: have you got that URL handy, Molly

MollyZ: Working on it - my cut and paste refuses to work. Hold one, please

MichaelH: . o O (the composer was Elmer Bernstein...)

MichaelH: While we wait... did you know that the girl who played Scout never acted in another movie?

MichaelH: And the boy who played Jem acted in only one more...

MichaelH: and that film was...?

MollyZ: www.jimcrowhistory.org/resources/lessonplans/amlit_lp_lee1.htm

JeffC: Mary Badham <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000825/>

MichaelH: yes, I link to that one... I think... I've got one from The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow on the site

RubyK: It is a nice site, Molly.

MichaelH: played scout

JeffC: Philip Alford <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0019221/>

MichaelH: the only other movie that Phillip Alford, who played Jem was in was...

MichaelH: c'mon Jeff, you can do it!!!

MichaelH: if I recall, the only other claim to fame the boy who played Dill had was that he was in an episode of Star Trek

JeffC: Fearful Symmetry... about the movie

MichaelH: hint, Jeff... the movie starred Jimmy Stewart, and I think John Wayne's son was in it, too

MichaelH: . o O (Shenandoah)

MichaelH: ok, what sorts of pitfalls are there to using a book like TKAM in the classroom?

MollyZ: mockingbird.chebucto.org/alford.htm

MollyZ: Tells you all of Philip Alford's movies

MollyZ: www.mockingbird.chebucto.org/alford.htm

MollyZ: Sorry, should have linked it.

AshleighS: I guess some students would be offended by the racism in the book.

JeffC: Fearful Symmetry... I saw it a few years ago... definitely something to consider if teaching it now... about the making of Mockingbird movie.

MichaelH: oh, there also is a good featurette if you buy Mockingbird on DVD... wonder if that is the same film?

MichaelH: I think the use of the "N" word is probably something that some may shy away from

JeffC: back to the original thread of this meeting... other social studies issues... obviously how messed up the south is... indeed... America is... (the south can be considered an allegorical microcosm for how we've treated blacks, etc.)... poverty... rural America...

JeffC: I wouldn't not teach something because I feared it would upset someone...

MichaelH looks to his Texas friends on a reply to that one

AshleighS: <~~~~~

JeffC: of course we're prejudiced in the north (or west) against the south... again... something to look at... get us to understand our own biases.

SusanR joined the room.

RubyK: And you shouldn't because TKAM is a classic novel, which means it has universal truths, just as Huckleberry Finn.

MichaelH is right in the middle

MichaelH: I used the movie... more as a "time killer" than anything else last year with a class that was not my "finest" bunch, and they seemed to be interested and enlightened by it

MollyZ: In US History, much of the focus of the 1930s is the Depression. It seems that a good time to use this novel or show the movie would be once you hit the 1950s and start discussing Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement. Start with segregation as writing in TKAM, go to Truman's desegregation of the military, and go from there.

RubyK: Good idea to keep it in context.

MollyZ: It also connects the time periods and shows cause/effect.

MichaelH: Molly, how do we put this in context with the 50s?

MollyZ: Thread your way from the 1930s through the 1940s when jobs and position for African-Americans increased. Move to post-war and the decline of opportunity as white soldiers came back from Europe and the Pacific. It's then that you can show that the prosperity of the 1950s was not equal, therefore leading into the Civil Rights protests and actions of the 50s and 60s. Does that make sense?

JeffC: I think we should conclude by saying that we should not present anything controversial in classrooms anymore... to avoid hurt feelings, lawsuits and... controversy.

MichaelH: Aw, Jeff, that's no fun

JeffC: ok... well... and then... no critical thinking... just the facts m'am

JeffC . o O (we need sarcasm emoticons around here.)

LauraLl: I think that by avoiding this in higher grades in my opinion keeps them away from reality

JeffC: how about comparing the plight of Tom Robinson to the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay?

MollyZ: I love Dragnet! Bring it on! As for reality... it's a fantasy concocted by the networks to garner ratings.

MichaelH . o O (apparently Molly is a TV survivor...)

JeffC: compare student feelings... and indeed American sentiment (or lack of it... really... how much concern do we give) to the "Al-Qaeda" prisoners... note that you could have an entire discussion on how to sway public opinion... prejudices... scapegoats. Remember Tom was accused of the worst possible crime of the time: a black man raping a white woman. Now... being a terrorist is as bad as it gets. Do we have any sympathy?

MichaelH: well, anyway, be sure to bookmark the resource page to look at at your leisure

BJ: Thanks, Michael.

MichaelH waves goodnight to everyone... he's tired

AshleighS: Goodnight everyone. Thanks for the chat Michael! Good luck with your moulding.

BJ waves goodnight

MollyZ: Good night all. This was fun.