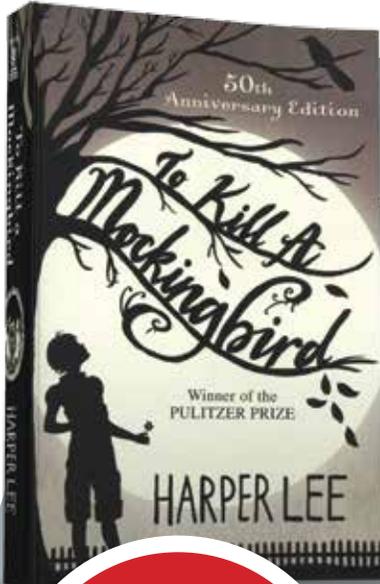


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*To Kill A Mockingbird*  
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*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *To Kill a Mockinbird*

*by Harper Lee*

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*To Kill A Mockingbird*

## **Chapter 1**

1. In 1934, in Maycomb, Alabama, things seemed to move quite slowly. As you read the description of Maycomb on page 5, how do you think you'd feel about living and growing up in that town at that time?
2. What do you find interesting about this first chapter?

## **Chapter 2**

3. What is your opinion of the scene in which Scout is trying to tell her teacher something, but the teacher won't listen to her? Has anything like this ever happened to you? Explain.
4. Scout explains the Cunningham philosophy of life, which is, "If you don't have it, you do without." What is your opinion of the Cunninghams and their philosophy?

## **Chapter 3**

5. Atticus tells Scout, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view." Think of someone you were upset with or argued with recently, and try to write down the incident that upset you from the other person's point of view.

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## *Response Journal*

6. Understanding a person's point of view, however, doesn't mean you have to agree with it. Having explained the other person's perspective, has it changed your thinking or feelings? If you still disagree with that point of view, tell why you do.
  
7. Atticus explains to Scout that in regard to the Ewells, it is sometimes "better to bend the law a little in special cases." Some people would agree, and some would disagree with this statement. Do you think it's a good or bad idea? Relate an incident in which you saw this done in a school situation.
  
8. What is your initial opinion of Atticus as a father?

## **Chapter 4**

9. Scout feels that at school, she is being cheated out of something. Apparently, she feels she should be learning more than she is, or learning something different than what she is being taught. Have you ever felt cheated in this fashion? If so, what did you do, or, what might you have done about it?
  
10. At the end of this chapter, Scout says that she had heard someone inside the house laughing. Who do you think was laughing? Why was he or she laughing? What inferences might you draw from the laughing?

## Chapter 5

11. Miss Maudie says, "...sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of [someone else]." Try to explain her meaning to a classmate who doesn't understand.

## Chapter 6

12. Imagine you are new in Maycomb and had recently met Scout, Jem, and Dill. In a letter to a friend in your old hometown, describe the three of them.
13. Jem has to go back for his pants. Respond in the dialogue below, and explain his actions to a friend who says,

**Friend:** It was stupid of Jem to go back for his pants; he could have been killed.

**You:**

## Chapter 7

14. Jem is crying at the end of this chapter. Explain the reason to a classmate who hasn't a clue.
15. Why do you suppose Mr. Walter Radley fills the knothole with cement? Write down the conversation that might have taken place between Walter Radley and Arthur Radley before the cementing of the knothole was done.

## **Chapter 8**

16. The first eight chapters are part of what we could call plot line #1. Summarize the action of this plot line and give it a name.
  
17. A number of things happen in this chapter and some questions could be raised. For example, where does the blanket come from that is put around Scout's shoulders? What is snow like to someone who has never experienced it? Respond to these or any other points in this chapter that interest you.

## **Chapter 9**

18. Plot line #2 begins with this chapter. From the clues that have been given, what do you suppose this plot line will follow. What name could we give to plot line #2?
  
19. Atticus tells his sister that he's doing the best he can in raising two young children without a mother. How do you suppose that you'd do as a single parent raising two children? Is there anything you'd try to do or avoid doing in this situation?
  
20. Aunt Alexandra believes that Scout doesn't behave as a proper young woman should. Do you have any thoughts on how a proper young woman should behave?

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*To Kill A Mockingbird*

21. Atticus says using bad language is a stage all young people go through and then outgrow. Would you agree with that? Today, you hear bad language so often that you get used to it, and you almost stop noticing it. What's your opinion about bad language?
22. Consider the social climate in Alabama and other Southern states at this point in history; to a classmate who doesn't understand try to explain why Atticus defending Tom Robinson is as important as it is.

## **Chapter 10**

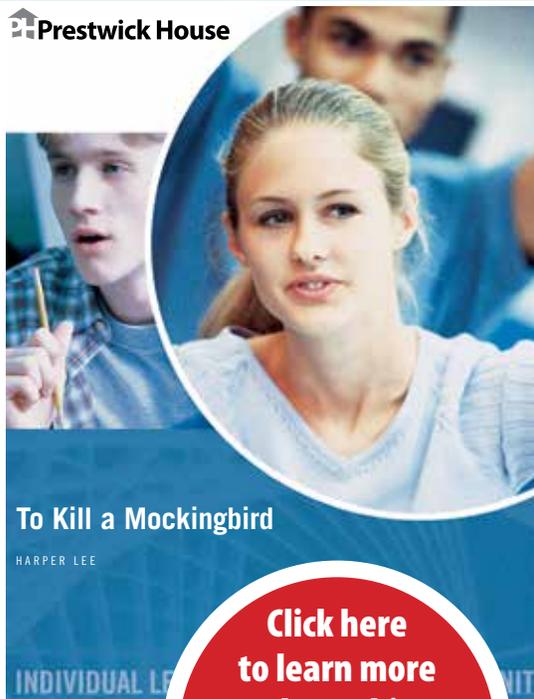
23. Miss Maudie says, "People in their right minds never take pride in their talents." Why does she say that? Do you agree with her?
24. Jem says of his father, "Atticus is a gentleman just like me!" Given the context of the story how do you suppose Jem means the word "gentleman"? How would you define the word "gentleman"?
25. Jem has gone from feeling ashamed of his father because of his apparent lack of athletic ability, to feeling very proud of him. Atticus is the embodiment of what a man should be—Atticus is the man Jem wishes to become. In your mind, what would the model embodiment of a man be?
26. Is Jem correct in his changed opinion of Atticus, simply because of the shooting of the mad dog? What ability do you have that no one knows about; if your friends knew of it, how differently would they treat you?



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# Sample

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by Harper Lee

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## Notes

Nelle Harper Lee was born to Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Cunningham Finch Lee in 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama, a small Southern town similar in many ways to Maycomb, the fictional setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. After graduating from high school in 1944, Lee attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama, for one year before enrolling at the University of Alabama to study law. In 1949, she left law school for New York City, in hopes of pursuing a writing career. After many years working as an airline reservation clerk, she finally began writing full time in 1956. Four years later, in July of 1960, she published *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a coming of age novel set against the backdrop of one small town's struggles with racism, classism, ignorance, and injustice.

Although Lee has stated that her goal was not to depict her own childhood specifically, *To Kill a Mockingbird* contains several autobiographical elements. Like Scout, the fictional protagonist of the story, Lee witnessed firsthand the damaging effects of racism and intolerance in her hometown of Monroeville. Also like Scout, her father was a lawyer and served in the Alabama State Legislature. He once defended two black men accused of killing a white store clerk. Despite his defense, the men were found guilty and sentenced to death. Many scholars suggest, however, that the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird* was inspired by the well-known Scottsboro Boys trial. In Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931, two white women accused nine young black men of rape. Several of the young men were convicted and sent to prison, where they remained until it was revealed that the women had made up the story. The trial of Tom Robinson and its aftermath contains many similarities to that of the Scottsboro Boys.

Published at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in America, *To Kill a Mockingbird* became a critical success and an instant bestseller, winning for Lee the Pulitzer Prize in 1961.

In July 2015, *Go Set a Watchman* was published, a novel she had written before *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It, too, became a bestseller, but its depiction of an older, racially prejudiced Atticus caused a great deal of controversy.

Nelle Harper Lee died on February 19, 2016 in Monroeville, Alabama.

In this Teaching Unit, we have used the terms “black” and “African American” when referring to race, based on their usage in the book and appropriateness in context.

All references come from the Grand Central Publishing edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, copyright 2010.

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to*

1. discuss the use of first-person narration in the novel, explain its advantages and/or disadvantages, and note how the story may have been different had the author chosen to use an alternate form of narration.
2. identify the setting of the story, discuss how Scout describes her hometown, and explain the effects of the Great Depression on the town.
3. describe how education is presented in the novel, noting the relationship between education and class, as well as education and home life.
4. discuss Atticus Finch as a father, explaining how he acts as a role model for Jem and Scout; identify the moral lessons he teaches his children over the course of the novel, and point out the ways in which many of these lessons relate to the novel's major themes.
5. explain how Calpurnia acts as a substitute mother for Jem and Scout, and trace how Scout's perception of her transforms over the course of the novel.
6. discuss how classism is presented in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, describing the social hierarchy that exists in Maycomb and pointing out its damaging effects.
7. identify examples of both hidden and overt racism in Maycomb County, taking into account the trial of Tom Robinson, the gossip among the ladies of the missionary circle, and the racial segregation apparent in the county.
8. summarize the trial of Tom Robinson, including the testimony of each witness, the evidence brought forth in the case, Atticus's defense of Tom, and the verdict and its aftermath.
9. explain how the trial of Tom Robinson exposes the deep-rooted racism in Maycomb County, as well as certain problems inherent in the American justice system; state an opinion on whether such problems can be solved.
10. trace how Scout's perception of Boo Radley changes over the course of the novel, pointing out the important lesson she learns as she stands on the Radley porch at the end of the story.
11. discuss the role of Atticus as Maycomb's savior, defender, and moral representative; identify both literal and symbolic examples within the text that support this idea.
12. track Jem's maturation over the course of the novel; explain how he deals with the disillusionment and loss of innocence that accompanies growing up. Discuss how his character, in particular, makes *To Kill a Mockingbird* a classic coming-of-age novel.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is narrated in the first person. Explain the advantages and/or disadvantages of this type of narration. How might the story have been different if Harper Lee had chosen a different form of narration?
2. As the novel begins, Scout tells the reader about her hometown of Maycomb, Alabama. How does she describe the town? In what ways has the Great Depression affected the citizens of Maycomb? How has it affected different classes of people in different ways?
3. How is the relationship between education and class presented in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? For example, consider the different educational levels of Scout, Walter Cunningham, and Burris Ewell. How is a child's education affected by both class and home life?
4. How would you describe Atticus as a father? Give examples of his interactions with Jem and Scout. What type of role model does he provide for them? What lessons does he teach the children over the course of the novel, and how do these lessons relate to some of the novel's major themes?
5. Describe Calpurnia. How does she function as a substitute mother for Jem and Scout? How does Scout's view of her change over the course of the novel? For example, consider Scout and Jem's visit to Calpurnia's church. In what ways does this experience alter the way they view Calpurnia?
6. Discuss the incident with Mrs. Dubose. What lesson does Jem learn from his experience with her? Which of the novel's major themes does Mrs. Dubose seem to embody?
7. Describe the scene in which the rabid dog stalks down the street. How might the rabid dog be interpreted as a symbol of the evil in Maycomb, specifically the racism that pervades the town? Who ultimately destroys the mad dog? How does this fit with the symbolic nature of the incident?
8. What role does Aunt Alexandra play in the story? Why does she come to stay with the Finches? Discuss her views on class and race. In what ways does she change over the course of the novel?
9. Discuss how Harper Lee presents class in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. How does Scout describe the "caste system" in Maycomb? Do you think classism can be just as damaging as racism? Give reasons for your opinion.

# To Kill a Mockingbird

## Chapter 1

### VOCABULARY

apothecary – a pharmacist  
assuaged – eased, relieved  
brethren – brothers  
chattels – slaves  
dictum – a rule or command  
flivver – an old, cheap car  
foray – a raid or attack  
impotent – powerless  
imprudent – bold  
malevolent – evil  
morbid – gruesome, horrific  
nebulous – cloudy; vague  
piety – religious devotion  
predilection – tendency  
strictures – restrictions  
synonymous – meaning the same thing  
taciturn – quiet  
tyrannical – harsh; domineering  
unsullied – clean; pure  
vapid – dull

1. Who is the narrator of the novel? What type of narration is used? How does the reader know that the narrator is an older person looking back on her youth?

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2. The narrator begins her story by giving the reader some background information. What does the narrator reveal about her family history in the first several pages?

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5. What causes Scout to question “pulpit Gospel”? How does her questioning relate to Miss Maudie?

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6. As Scout and Miss Maudie talk about religion, Scout tells her how Atticus defines God. What is God, according to Atticus?

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7. When Miss Maudie says, “but sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of—oh, of your father.” What person is she criticizing, and what is the point of her criticism?

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8. The children view Boo Radley as a strange and frightening figure. How do Miss Maudie and Atticus view him? What do they say about him?

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9. How do Jem and Dill plan to send a note to Boo Radley? What does the note say? According to Dill, what is their reason for sending the note?

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**Chapter 10**

## VOCABULARY

**alist** – leaning to one side  
**articulate** – able to express oneself clearly  
**attributes** – qualities; characteristics  
**breastworks** – a low wall constructed for defense  
**foliage** – leaves; plants  
**inconspicuous** – unnoticeable  
**jubilantly** – joyfully  
**mausoleum** – a tomb  
**rudiments** – the basics  
**tartly** – sharply  
**vehemently** – passionately; forcefully

1. Scout compares Atticus to other fathers. What is different about Atticus, and how do Scout and Jem seem to feel about the difference?

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2. The novel's title, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is referenced in this chapter. In what context is it presented?

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3. How might the killing of a mockingbird be a metaphor for one of the novel's major themes? For example, what might mockingbirds symbolize?

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**Chapter 17**

VOCABULARY

**acrimonious** – angry; hostile  
**ambidextrous** – equally capable with each hand  
**bantam** – a small chicken  
**complacently** – in a smug or self-satisfied way  
**congenital** – inborn, hereditary  
**convened** – assembled; came together  
**corroborating** – confirming; supporting  
**crepey** – wrinkled  
**dogged** – determined; strong-willed  
**fluctuations** – changes, variations  
**genially** – in a warm and friendly manner  
**pantomime** – the act of expressing oneself with gestures rather than words  
**refuse** – garbage  
**skewed** – tilted  
**tenet** – a principle  
**turbulent** – violent; chaotic

1. Who is the first person to take the stand? Briefly summarize his testimony.

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2. What does Atticus spend much of his time asking Mr. Tate?

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3. To what animal does Scout compare Mr. Ewell? How is the comparison fitting?

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**Chapter 24**

## VOCABULARY

**adjourned** – broke up; took a break  
**apprehension** – anxiety  
**bovine** – relating to cattle; cow-like  
**brevity** – briefness; shortness  
**commenced** – started  
**duress** – pressure to do something against one's will; force  
**humility** – the state of being humble or selfless  
**impertinence** – rudeness; disrespect  
**largo** – a slow tempo  
**martyred** – sacrificed for a cause  
**sibilant** – like a hissing sound  
**squalid** – filthy  
**undelectable** – unpleasant; unappealing  
**vocation** – occupation

1. Aunt Alexandra is entertaining her missionary circle. Who are the Mrunas, and why is the missionary circle interested in them?

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2. Mrs. Merriweather says, "If we just let them know we forgive' em, that we've forgotten it, then this whole thing'll blow over." Who and what is she talking about? What is ironic about her statement?

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3. The theme of hypocrisy plays a major role in this chapter. What is hypocritical about the concern the ladies of the missionary circle have for the Mrunas?

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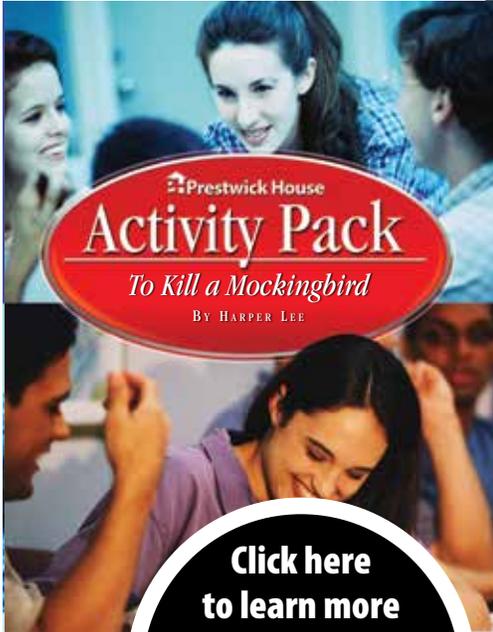
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BY HARPER LEE



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Edited by Paul Moliken

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Reading

### Identifying Allusions

**Objective:** Identifying allusions and recognizing the function they can serve

#### Activity I

While Harper Lee's allusion to Roosevelt's speech lets us set the time of the story, allusions also perform other functions. Frequently, they are used as metaphors simply to make a more dramatic or important statement, while at other times they can be used as a concise way to convey information. Some allusions you may recognize and quickly get the point. For example: "More than one friend referred to him as *Lincolnesque*." Immediately, you know the reference is to Abraham Lincoln and, in context, you get the image of a tall, gaunt man.

If you do not know the object/person/place alluded to, however, you missed the point the author was making. For example: "At the last moment, he changed his mind, and the captain would never know of the *auto-da-fé* that had been prepared for him." Additional context may or may not allow you to figure out the meaning of "*auto-da-fé*," but if it does not, you would need to check a dictionary, encyclopedia or the Internet, which would tell you something similar to the following:

*auto-da-fé*—During the Spanish Inquisition, this was the term that referred to the official ceremony of pronouncing judgment upon a heretic and executing him or her. Today, it is used to refer to metaphorical executions, as in personal or business relationships.

By knowing and understanding the allusion in the example about the captain, you would immediately realize that his career or life was in danger.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 1

### Geographic Location

**Objective:** Reading for detail and for an appreciation of the relationship of geographic locations to plot

#### Activity I

1. On the following maps, identify Alabama and shade in the other Southern states.
2. From the narrative in Chapter 1 and a map, locate the real city of Mobile and the actual Alabama River.
3. Mark the spot on the map where you think Finch's Landing might be. Harper Lee sets it on the banks of the Alabama River, some forty miles northeast of Saint Stephens, which is located on the Tombigbee River.
4. Locate where the fictional town of Maycomb would be. Lee places it some twenty miles east of Finch's Landing.
5. Speculate how this specific geographic location might affect the plot of *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 3****Characterization**

**Objective:** Actively involving students in considering aspects of plot and characterization

**Activity**

Because Chapters 2 and 3 offer great dramatic opportunities, imagine sections of these two chapters combined in one short dramatic scene.

1. Write a description of the schoolroom set.
2. Select those incidents that took place in the schoolroom that you wish to dramatize.
3. Combine the multiple school incidents into one scene. Write the dialogue for this scene.
4. In addition to dialogue, be sure to include stage directions. (e.g., Miss Caroline walks down the aisle)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 4 – 6****Main Idea**

**Objective:** Reading to find the main idea

**Activity**

If you were to give one title and combine Chapters 4, 5, and 6 based on what seems to be the most important incident in these chapters, what would you entitle it? Be prepared to defend your choice of title by citing points from the chapters.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 11****Poetry**

Objective: Writing a found poem

**Activity**

1. In the poem below, *If We Must Die*, the tone of the piece is clearly one of a willingness to fight until the last breath against any odds or any enemy.

Identify those words and phrases that indicate the poem's tone by circling them.

**IF WE MUST DIE**

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an unglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
Oh, Kinsmen! we must meet the common foe;  
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!  
What though before us lies the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 12 – 15****Setting**

**Objective:** Understanding the importance of setting (place and time) and how it may affect characterization

**Activity**

*To Kill A Mockingbird*, although first published in 1960, is set in the early 1930s in Alabama. Because of the harsh conditions black people had to live in that time and place, some critics object to Harper Lee's portrayal of Calpurnia as a happy, well-loved, member of the Finch family. Speculate on how she truly feels. Write a letter from Calpurnia to her son discussing her life, hopes, and dreams for his future.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 16 – 18****Perspective I****Objective:** Relating literature to one's life**Activity**

While, thankfully, lynch mobs are a thing of the past, we still frequently see many demonstrations of mob mentality.

1. Describe some incident of a mob you witnessed, participated in, or something you saw in the media. These can be positive or negative examples.
2. Because getting caught up in a mob mentality act can have very serious and unfortunate consequences, write down some ways people can avoid becoming involved in something like this.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 19 – 22****Satire II****Objective:** Writing a satire using an innocent as the narrator**Activity**

Imagine you are having a conversation with a visitor from outer space, who knows nothing about Earth, its people, its customs, practices, or behaviors. The visitor comes from a more advanced society in which unemployment, poverty, prejudice, and crime have been eradicated, and people work happily at jobs they enjoy. What do you suppose the visitor may find odd about our society? Write a dialogue in which this innocent makes comments about some aspect of our society. The idea is to try to write a satire attacking something in our society that you think is in need of change. For example, the alien might be confused about road rage, television shows, ethnic or racial prejudice, teenage fads, adult behavior, or other elements of society.