

HEC-TV Live! Presents
Of Monroeville and Mockingbirds, Part 2: Themes of Social Justice

Date: December 16, 2008

Times: 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. CDT

Grade Levels: 7-10

Cost: NO CHARGE

Abstract:

Have your students explore the themes of social justice in Harper Lee's classic novel "To Kill A Mockingbird" as they interact in a student-to-student discussion of the novel facilitated by educators who have taught the novel and the director of a new production of the play.

Program Description:

Harper Lee's classic novel "To Kill A Mockingbird" seems just as relevant to a discussion of social justice today as it did when first published in 1960. Issues of race, gender, discrimination, tolerance, acceptance, poverty and community permeate the fabric of the novel and the fabric of students' everyday lives. If they had a chance to discuss these themes, what would your students want to say? What themes and issues raised in the novel resonate most with them? How are those themes and issues illustrated? How do they see those themes and issues being played out in their lives today? Have your students explore the themes of social justice in Harper Lee's classic novel "To Kill A Mockingbird" as they interact in a student-to-student discussion facilitated by educators who have taught the novel and the director of a new production of the play. Have your students read the book this year? Will you be reading it later? Are you interested in students expressing their interpretation of the novel and how it speaks to them? If so, then we hope you can join us for this program. Cost for the program is FREE.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will explore the concept of "theme" in a novel and offer their ideas on how the author's use of different themes influences their reaction as a reader..
2. The participant will engage in a discussion about "theme" with educators, fellow students, and theatrical professionals.
3. The participant will explore how the themes of the novel resonate in their life today and develop a point of view toward how those themes might need to be addressed today.

Program Format:

The videoconference program will consist of the following segments.

1. Welcome and Introduction—Student groups and experts will be introduced and welcomed to the program.
2. Student-to-Student Discussion—The thematic discussion of the novel and its application to life today will be lead by a combination of students and educators. Participating schools will receive, as part of the program's preparatory materials, the list of thematic ideas to be discussed,

the order in which they will be discussed, and leading or focus questions for each of those ideas that will be used to guide the discussion. Worksheets will also be included in the preparatory materials for students to use as they prepare their ideas for the discussion. The worksheet will provide space for student notes referencing specific events, quotes, characters, etc. of the novel and space for students to express their ideas in writing so they have that with them during the discussion. Space will also be included for students to jot down additional thoughts, revisions, etc. as they participate in the discussion.

3. Action Segment—Students will share ideas on how actions they feel have been taken to address the thematic issues of the novel since its publication and actions they feel still need to be taken today. These ideas may be developed by students as they prepare for the program and also may emerge for them as the student-to-student discussion proceeds.

4. Closing Segment--Including summary of topics discussed and final questions from students.

Featured National Standards:

English/Language Arts

Standards Developed by International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, and graphics).
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, and video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Featured State Standards (Missouri):

Schools from across the country are invited to join in the program. Missouri state standards are provided for Missouri schools since partial funding for this program comes from various Missouri organizations.

Communication Arts Grade Level Expectations

1H: Apply post-reading skills to comprehend and interpret text

- question to clarify
- reflect
- analyze

- draw conclusions
- summarize
- paraphrase

1I Compare, contrast, analyze and evaluate connections between

- information and relationships in various fiction and non-fiction works
- text ideas and own experiences
- text ideas and the world by analyzing the relationship between literature and its historical period and culture

2C Use details from text to analyze character, plot, setting, point of view and development of theme

Participant Preparation:

1. Participants should come to the program with an interest in and some degree of familiarity with the story of “To Kill A Mockingbird.” Participants do not need to have completed their reading of the novel.
2. Participants should utilize preparatory materials provided for the program and other resources of their own to better understand the context of the program’s subject and to think in advance of questions they wish to ask the experts. Any questions determined in advance, can be e-mailed to us prior to the program at live@hectv.org.
3. Participants should have pencil and paper ready to use during the program to jot down ideas and additional questions as they come to mind.

Pre-Program Activity Suggestions:

1. Utilize Lesson 9, “Themes of the Novel,” in the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read “To Kill A Mockingbird” Teacher’s Guide that is included on the CILC web exhibit for this program, available via from HEC-TV or available online at <http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/teachersguide02.php>.
2. Have students select one of the following concepts: race, gender, discrimination, tolerance, acceptance, poverty, or community. After making their selection, have students contemplate how their chosen concept plays out in our world today. In what ways have we moved forward since the 1930s of the story and the 1960s of the book’s publication. How is the issue seen in the news today and/or in the student’s life today? Is there an insight from the book that deals with their concept that they think would be good for all people to hear today? If so, what would it be and how would they choose to get that insight to others?
3. Have students learn more about the story of “To Kill A Mockingbird” via the excellent resources provided by the National Endowment of the Arts Big Read project at <http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/>.
4. View the DVD “A Teacher’s View of ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’ that will be sent to you once you have enrolled for the program.

Post-Program Activity Suggestions:

1. Have each student journal about how their experience in the videoconference has influenced their ideas about the themes of the novel. What new things have they learned? What new questions do they have? What new insights into the novel have they developed?
2. Have students develop a public service poster, power point presentation, or short video that illustrates their chosen concept and how they'd like people to address that issue to make it better in today's world.
2. If they have not yet completed reading the novel, have students complete reading the novel and notice when information and insights they have learned through the videoconference influence their understanding and/or appreciation of the novel. Have them record these insights in a student journal, and/or share them with peers or with the class as a whole.

Vocabulary:

Theme—a broad idea in a story or literary work or a message or lesson conveyed by a written text. This message is usually about life, society or human nature. Themes often explore timeless and universal ideas. Most themes are implied rather than explicitly stated. The theme is different from the superficial outlay of the text; it is normally the meaning of the text on a deeper, more abstract level.