**WEEK ONE**

**INTRODUCTION TO *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* BY HARPER LEE**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Harper Lee was an American novelist, best known for her only published novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, released in 1960. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize and has become a classic of modern American literature. It was inspied by events in her hometown of Monroevile, Alabama.

**PLOT OVERVIEW**

*To Kill a Mockingbird* centers around a young girl named Scout Finch, her brother Jem, and their father Atticus Finch, a principled lawyer. Atticus defends a Black man, Tom Robinson, who is wrongly accused of raping a White girl. The novel is narrated from Scout’s point of view as she grows and learns about justice, morality, and racism.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The novel reflects the social and racial issues in America during the 1930s, particularly in the Southern states. During this time, segregation was leg al, and African-Americans were often victims of false accusations and unfair treatment.

**WEEK TWO**

**Introduction**

In literature, a **theme** is the main idea or underlying message of a story. Themes are not always stated directly; they are often revealed through the actions, experiences, and thoughts of characters in a literary work. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee explores several powerful themes that remain relevant in society today.

### ****Setting of the Novel****

The story is set in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Great Depression (1930s). The setting reflects the deeply rooted racial prejudices and social inequalities of the time.

**Major Themes in the Novel**

1. **Racial Injustice**
   * This is one of the most prominent themes in the novel.
   * It is reflected in the trial of **Tom Robinson**, a Black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman.
   * The theme shows the deep-seated racism in Maycomb and America during the 1930s.
2. **Moral Growth and Education**
   * The children, **Scout** and **Jem**, mature as they experience and learn from the events around them.
   * Their father, **Atticus Finch**, teaches them about justice, empathy, and integrity.
   * The novel emphasizes that moral education is just as important as formal schooling.
3. **Courage and Integrity**
   * True courage is shown through Atticus’s willingness to defend Tom Robinson, even when the odds are against him.
   * Courage also appears in characters like **Mrs. Dubose**, who battles a drug addiction.
4. **Compassion and Understanding**
   * Atticus advises Scout to learn to understand people by “climbing into their skin and walking around in it.”
   * The reclusive character **Boo Radley**, who is judged unfairly by the townspeople, is later revealed to be kind-hearted.
   * The novel teaches readers not to judge others based on fear, ignorance, or gossip.

**Relevance of These Themes Today**

* Issues of **racism**, **inequality**, **justice**, and **moral integrity** are still relevant in today’s world.
* The novel encourages readers to stand up for what is right and to treat others with empathy and fairness.

**WEEK THREE**

**Major Characters and Their Analysis**

1. **Atticus Finch**
   * A lawyer and the father of Scout and Jem.
   * Wise, moral, and courageous; he represents justice and integrity.
   * He defends Tom Robinson, showing his strong commitment to doing what is right, even when it’s unpopular.
2. **Jean Louise "Scout" Finch**
   * The narrator and protagonist of the novel.
   * A curious, intelligent, and outspoken young girl.
   * Through Scout’s eyes, we experience the harsh realities of prejudice and learn about empathy and understanding.
3. **Jeremy "Jem" Finch**
   * Scout’s older brother.
   * He matures significantly throughout the novel.
   * Jem is deeply affected by the injustices he witnesses, especially during the trial of Tom Robinson.
4. **Tom Robinson**
   * A Black man falsely accused of raping a white woman.
   * Symbolizes the victims of racial injustice.
   * His trial and unjust conviction highlight the deep-seated racism in society.
5. **Boo Radley (Arthur Radley)**
   * A reclusive neighbor rumored to be dangerous.
   * Initially seen as a mysterious figure, he later turns out to be gentle and protective.
   * Boo saves Scout and Jem, proving the importance of not judging others based on appearances or gossip.
6. **Calpurnia**
   * The Finch family's Black housekeeper and caretaker.
   * Acts as a bridge between the white and Black communities.
   * She plays a motherly role in Scout and Jem’s lives.
7. **Bob Ewell**
   * The antagonist of the story.
   * A racist, abusive man who falsely accuses Tom Robinson.
   * Represents ignorance and hatred.

**WEEK FOUR**

**About the Author**

**J.B. Priestley** (1894–1984) was a British novelist, playwright, and broadcaster. He was known for his strong social messages and interest in the effects of time on human life. One of his most famous plays is *An Inspector Calls*.

**Background and Setting**

* *An Inspector Calls* was written in **1945**, shortly after World War II, but it is set in **1912**, two years before World War I.
* The play reflects a time when **British society was strongly divided by class**. Wealthy families had significant power, while the working class had few rights.
* Priestley wrote the play to **criticize social inequality** and to encourage people to care for one another, especially after the tragedies of two world wars.

**Plot Summary**

The Birling family is celebrating the engagement of their daughter, Sheila, to Gerald Croft. Their celebration is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of **Inspector Goole**, who is investigating the suicide of a young working-class woman named **Eva Smith**. As the inspector questions each family member, secrets are revealed, and it becomes clear that they all had a role to play in Eva's tragic death.

**WEEK FIVE**

### ****Major Themes in**** An Inspector Calls

#### 1. **Social Responsibility**

* This is the most important theme of the play.
* Priestley emphasizes the need for individuals to take responsibility for how their actions affect others.
* The Inspector’s message is clear: “We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other.”
* Sheila and Eric begin to understand this message, while Mr. and Mrs. Birling ignore it.

#### 2. **Class and Social Inequality**

* The play exposes how the upper class treats the working class unfairly.
* Eva Smith represents the lower class who suffer under the control of the rich.
* Mr. Birling refuses to give Eva a raise, and Mrs. Birling denies her charity help, showing their lack of concern for the poor.

#### 3. **Guilt and Conscience**

* The characters’ reactions to the Inspector’s questioning reveal their level of guilt.
* Sheila and Eric feel guilty and accept their part in Eva’s death.
* Mr. and Mrs. Birling deny responsibility and try to protect their reputation instead.

#### 4. **Age and Generational Divide**

* The younger generation (Sheila and Eric) are more open to change and willing to accept their mistakes.
* The older generation (Mr. and Mrs. Birling) are stubborn, proud, and unwilling to change.
* Priestley uses this to show hope for a better future through the youth.

#### 5. **Hypocrisy**

* Many characters try to appear respectable but behave selfishly and cruelly.
* Gerald, for example, pretends to be noble but hides his relationship with Eva.
* The play shows that appearances can be misleading.

**WEEK SIX**

### ****Introduction to Character Analysis****

In literature, **character analysis** involves examining the traits, roles, and development of individuals in a story. In An Inspector Calls, J.B. Priestley uses a range of characters to explore themes such as social responsibility, class, and morality.

### ****Main Characters in**** An Inspector Calls

1. **Inspector Goole**
   * A mysterious figure who interrogates the Birling family.
   * Acts as Priestley’s voice of reason and social conscience.
   * Symbolizes justice and moral responsibility.
2. **Arthur Birling**
   * A wealthy businessman and father.
   * Represents capitalism and self-interest.
   * Dismisses social responsibility and shows no remorse.
3. **Sybil Birling**
   * Arthur’s wife, proud and prejudiced.
   * Believes in maintaining social status.
   * Denies any wrongdoing and lacks empathy.
4. **Sheila Birling**
   * Daughter of Arthur and Sybil.
   * Starts as naive but becomes aware of her privilege.
   * Shows growth and a sense of guilt.
5. **Eric Birling**
   * Sheila’s brother, troubled and irresponsible.
   * Feels guilt and accepts his faults.
   * Represents youth capable of change.
6. **Gerald Croft**
   * Sheila’s fiancé.
   * Upper class and charming, yet evasive.
   * Tries to justify his actions and avoids responsibility.

### ****Dramatic Devices in the Play****

1. **Dramatic Irony**
   * The audience knows more than the characters.
   * E.g., Mr. Birling’s confident statements about the Titanic and war, which we know to be false.
2. **Foreshadowing**
   * Hints at future events.
   * E.g., the Inspector’s final speech warns of “fire and blood and anguish.”
3. **Stage Directions and Lighting**
   * Priestley uses lighting to control mood and focus.
   * The shift to “brighter and harder” lighting signals the Inspector’s arrival and the uncovering of truth.
4. **Symbolism**
   * The Inspector symbolizes justice, conscience, and social responsibility.
   * Eva Smith represents the oppressed working class.
5. **Cliffhangers**
   * The end of Act One ends on suspenseful moments, keeping the audience engaged.
   * Each revelation builds tension and encourages reflection.

**WEEK SEVEN**

**About the Poet – Gabriel Okara**

Gabriel Okara (1921–2019) was a renowned Nigerian poet and novelist. He is known for blending traditional African culture with modern themes. His works often explore identity, loss, and the effects of colonialism on African society.

**Background of the Poem**

*“Once Upon a Time”* is one of Okara’s most famous poems. It is written as a dramatic monologue in which a father speaks to his son. The poem reflects the disillusionment of an adult who feels he has lost his true self and sincerity due to societal expectations and cultural changes. It highlights the contrast between the natural honesty of the past and the artificiality of modern social interactions.

**Summary of the Poem**

The speaker laments how people used to be genuine and warm but have now become insincere and fake. He talks about how smiles, greetings, and expressions are no longer heartfelt. The poem reflects nostalgia for the innocence and honesty of the past. The speaker regrets becoming like those around him and expresses a desire to relearn honesty and sincerity from his son.

**WEEK EIGHT**

### ****Major Themes****

1. **Loss of Innocence**
   * The speaker reminisces about a time when people were genuine, honest, and emotionally open.
   * He regrets how adulthood and societal norms have made him adopt a false personality.
2. **Hypocrisy and Pretense in Modern Society**
   * The poem criticizes how people now smile with their mouths but not with their hearts.
   * It reveals the insincerity in modern-day relationships and interactions.
3. **Desire for Redemption and Change**
   * The speaker wishes to unlearn the pretentious behaviors he has adopted.
   * He looks to his son as a symbol of truthfulness and simplicity.
4. **Cultural Conflict**
   * There is an implied contrast between African traditional values (honesty, warmth) and Western influence (artificial behavior).
   * The poem hints at the erosion of indigenous values due to colonial and modern influences.
5. **Parent-Child Relationship**
   * The speaker’s relationship with his son shows respect and admiration.
   * It is a rare reversal where the adult seeks guidance from the child.

### ****Poetic Devices Supporting the Themes****

* **Imagery**: "They used to laugh with their hearts..."
* **Repetition**: "I want to be what I used to be..."
* **Metaphor**: "They shake hands without hearts"
* **Tone**: Regretful, nostalgic, and hopeful
* **Personification and Irony**: People’s smiles that "reach only as far as their teeth"

### ****Conclusion****

“Once Upon a Time” is a profound and emotional critique of societal change. Through simple yet effective language, Gabriel Okara conveys the importance of remaining sincere and emotionally connected in a world increasingly dominated by artificiality and pretense.

**WEEK NINE**

### ****Introduction****

Gabriel Okara’s “Once Upon a Time” is a reflective poem that expresses the speaker’s disappointment in how people’s behavior has changed over time. The poem uses several **poetic devices** to convey its tone, mood, and message effectively.

### ****Definition of Poetic Devices****

Poetic devices are techniques or tools used by poets to enhance the meaning, sound, and emotional impact of their poems.

### ****Common Poetic Devices in “Once Upon a Time”****

1. **Metaphor**
   * A comparison without using “like” or “as.”
   * Example: “They only laugh with their teeth” – this suggests fake laughter.
2. **Imagery**
   * Descriptive language that appeals to the senses.
   * Example: “Shake hands without hearts” – creates a picture of insincere friendliness.
3. **Repetition**
   * Repeating words or phrases for emphasis.
   * Example: “I want to be what I used to be” – emphasizes the speaker’s longing for his innocent past.
4. **Tone**
   * The poet’s attitude or mood.
   * The tone of the poem is nostalgic, regretful, and sincere.
5. **Irony**
   * Saying the opposite of what one means or what is expected.
   * Example: The poem ironically describes modern behavior as polite but fake.
6. **Symbolism**
   * Using symbols to represent deeper meanings.
   * Example: “face like a mask” symbolizes false appearances and deceit.

### ****Importance of Poetic Devices in the Poem****

* They help the poet express his feelings more clearly.
* They make the poem more emotional and relatable.
* They help readers understand the message deeply.

### ****Conclusion****

Poetic devices are essential in understanding and appreciating poetry. In “Once Upon a Time,” Gabriel Okara uses these tools to highlight the loss of innocence and sincerity in modern human relationships.