

Name _____

Date _____

Author's Craft: Symbolism

Symbolism uses objects, characters, or events to represent larger ideas. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee uses the mockingbird as a symbol of innocence and vulnerability. Through the unjust treatment of Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, Lee emphasizes societal prejudice and the destruction of innocence.

Read the excerpt from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and answer the questions about symbolism and its impact on the story.

Excerpt:

"Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they only sing their hearts out for us. That's why your father told you to never shoot a mockingbird in the yard, Scout. These birds are harmless, and their only purpose is to bring beauty to the world. So when you see someone who doesn't harm others but is still treated unfairly, you'll know they're like a mockingbird."

Meet the Author:

Harper Lee (1926–2016) was an American novelist best known for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Her work explores themes of racial injustice, morality, and human empathy in the segregated South. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and remains a cornerstone of American literature.

Name _____

Date _____

Author's Craft: Symbolism

1. How does the mockingbird symbolize innocence in the story? Provide examples from the excerpt.

2. What does the phrase "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird" suggest about how society should treat vulnerable individuals?

3. How does Lee's upbringing in the South influence her exploration of racial prejudice and morality in the novel?

Write a short paragraph using symbolism to represent an idea, like kindness or justice, in your own writing.

Name _____

Date _____

Author's Craft: Symbolism – Answer Key

1. How does the mockingbird symbolize innocence in the story? Provide examples from the excerpt.

The mockingbird symbolizes innocence because it “only sings their hearts out” and harms no one. This reflects characters like Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, who are innocent but face unjust treatment.

2. What does the phrase “it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” suggest about how society should treat vulnerable individuals?

The phrase suggests that society has a moral obligation to protect the innocent and vulnerable rather than harm them. It highlights the cruelty of prejudice and injustice.

3. How does Lee’s upbringing in the South influence her exploration of racial prejudice and morality in the novel?

Lee’s upbringing in the segregated South exposed her to racial inequality, shaping her portrayal of societal prejudice and moral struggles in the novel.

Write a short paragraph using symbolism to represent an idea, like kindness or justice, in your own writing.
