

Maycomb Graveyard Quiz: A Review of the Deep South Historical Context

By Paul Horton

Overview

The Maycomb Graveyard Project reviews pertinent historical context for understanding *To Kill a Mockingbird*. One class day should be devoted to covering the elements of the definition and evolution of the Jim Crow system as presented in the supplemental essay by David Pilgrim, "What Was Jim Crow?" at the following site: <http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/what.htm>. Further information about the Jim Crow System is included for discussion in student-produced narratives of individuals who represent the histories of the Ewell, Robinson, and Finch families. Students are to use notes and consult Internet sources to produce three one-page, typed narratives that provide insight into each family history.

Student Objectives

Students will:

- Define and apply key historical components of the Jim Crow system
- Read and analyze relevant documentary texts
- Write three separate one page narratives that describe episodes of family history

Skills attained:

- Close reading of historical documents
- Characterization of family's class or caste position within Maycomb history
- Write three separate one page narratives that describe episodes of family history
- Creative writing that applies historical terms

Materials Needed

- Computers or hardcopies of written materials posted at:
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/28/>
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/81/>
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/63/>
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/anderso1.html>
<http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/what.htm>
- African-American Voices excerpts
- Maycomb Graveyard Project

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Lead students in a discussion of how we know ourselves. Steer them toward a discussion of family history and background.

Procedures

1. Transition to a discussion of knowing the Finch, Robinson, and Ewell families. Discuss the relative class and caste position of each family within the Maycomb County social structure. Stress that each family played a part in the development of the 1930s social structure. While it may be obvious that the Robinsons may have resisted the imposition of Jim Crow, what role may the Ewells or the Finches played in the historical construction of the Jim Crow system? Ask the students to speculate using some of the terms recently covered.
2. Hand out The Maycomb Graveyard and explain the assignment.
3. Explain the nature of the material of supplementary materials that will be made available by accessing Web Sites or by consulting hardcopies.
4. Allow students the rest of the class period and the next class period to write drafts of three one-page narratives.
5. Students will edit their narratives for homework.
6. Have Students do a peer edit of drafts the following day.
7. Students complete a final draft following the peer edit exercise.

Assessment

- ___ Five historical terms accurately used in each narrative (15pts.)
- ___ Narratives are internally consistent and represent realistic portrayal of each family history (15pts.)
- ___ Narratives are creative: they provide important glimpses and insights into family history (15pts.)
- ___ Total (45pts.)

Other Historical Connections

For clearly articulated histories of the evolution of the Jim Crow system see, Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, and Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. Important images of the Jim Crow South can be found in Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *Have You Seen Their Faces*, and at the Library of Congress's American Memory Collection Web Site. For an important analysis of documentary images see, William Stott, *Documentary Expression in Thirties America*.

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African-American Voices from the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives: The KKK

These are excerpts from public domain documents that can be accessed at the Library of Congress's American Memory Collection: <http://memory.loc.gov>

Georgia Willis Cofer

"Ku Kluxers went 'round wid dem doughfaces on heaps after de War. De Niggers got more beatin's from'em dan dey had ever got from deir old Marsters. If a Nigger sassed white folkses or kilt a hoss, dem Kluxers sho' did evermore beat him up. Dey never touched me for I stayed out of deir way, but dey whipped my pa one time for bein' off his place atter dark. When dey turned him loose, he couldn't hardly stand up. De Yankees jus' about broke up da Ku Kluxers, but dey sho' wuz bad on Niggers while dey lasted."

Sarah H. Locke

She remembers a night the slaves were having a dance in one of the cabins. A band of Ku Kluxers came, took all firearms they could find, but no one was hurt. All wondered why; however, it did not take long for them to find out why. Another night when the Kluxers were riding, the slaves recognized the voice of their young master.

Ben Johnson

"De most dat I can tell yo' 'bout am de Ku Klux. I neber will fergit when dey hung Cy Guy. Dey hung him for a scandelous insult ter a white 'oman an' dey comed atter him a hundert strong.

"Dey tries him dar in de woods, an' dey scratches Cy's arm ter git some blood, an' wid dat blood dey rites dat he shall hang 'tween de heavens an' de yearth till he am daid, daid, daid, an' dat any nigger what takes down de body shall be hunged too.

"Well sar, de nex' mornin' dar he hung, right ober de road an' de sentence hangin' ober his haid. Nobody'ud bother wid dat body fer four days an' dar hit hung, swingin' in de wind, but de fou'th day de sheriff comes an' takes hit down.

"Dar wuz Ed an' Cindy, who 'fore de war belonged ter Mr. Lynch an' atter de war he told 'em ter move. He gives 'em a month an' dey ain't gone, so de Ku Kluxes gits 'em.

"Hit wuz on a cold night when dey comed an' drugged de niggers out'n bed. Dey carried 'em down in de woods an' whup dem, den dey throws 'em in de pond, dere bodies breaking' de ice. Ed come out an' come ter our house, but Cindy ain't been seed since.

"Sam Allen in Caswell County wuz tol' ter move an' atter a month de hundret Ku Klux come a-totin' his casket an' dey tells him dat his time has come an' if'en he want ter tell his wife good bye an' say his prayers hurry up.

"Dey set de coffin on two cheers an' Sam kisses his ole oman who am a-cryin', den he kneels down side of his bed wid his haid on de pillar an' his arms throwed out front of him.

"He sets dar fer a minute an' when he riz he had a long knife in his hand. "Fore he could be grabbed he done kill two of de Ku Kluxes wid de knife, an' he done gone out'n de do'. Dey ain't ketch him nother, an' de nex' night when dey comed back, 'termined ter git him dey shot ano'her nigger by accident.

"I members seein' Joe Turner, another nigger hung at Hillsboro in '69 but I plumb forgot why it wuz."

Ann May

"No, the White Caps never bothered me but they sure got some of the negroes. You know the negroes had a hard time making a crop and every year some of the merchants would take all the negroes would make, and then they would steal, then the White Caps rode at night and whipped them for stealing and made some of them move. But they never got me."

"I saw the Ku Klux riding but i always hid out so they never got me either. I was mighty scared of them. I tried to live right."

William R. Mays

"My mother related some experiences she had with the Paddy-Rollers, later called the Kuklux, these Paddy-Rollers were a constant dread to the Negroes. They would whip the poor darkboys unmercifully without any cause. One night while the Negroes were gathering for a big party and dance they got wind of the approaching Paddy-Rollers in large numbers on horseback. The Negro men did not know what to do for protection, they became desperate and decided to gather a quantity of grapevines and tied them fast at a dark place in the road. When the Paddy-Rollers came thundering down the road bent on deviltry and unaware of the trap set for them, plunged head-on into these strong grapevines and three of their number were killed and a score was badly injured. Several horses had to be shot following injuries.

"When the news of this happening spread it was many months before Paddy-Rollers were again heard of."

Charity McAllister

"Yes sir, I seed de patterollers. I seed a plenty of dem scoundrels. Oh! Ho, de Ku Klux, Ha!, Ha! Dey were real scandals, and I jest caint tell you all de mean things dey done right after the war. Reubin Matthew's slave, George Matthews, killed two Ku Klux. Dey double teamed him and shot him, and he cut 'em wid de ax, and dey died."

George Washington Miller

"I can tell you this about the Ku Klux. There was a notice put on my Mother's gate. There was a white man from Indiana, Glen Valley, 12 miles from Indianapolis, boarding with my mother and teaching the negroes. On the notice was a red heart and a sword run through it, showing that he must quit teaching or his life was in danger. He left and went back to Indiana. He wrote me a letter a few years ago."

Lizzie Williams

"Den dey was de Ku Klux Klan. Dey war frightful lookin' critters. My pappy say deygo out in de country an' tie pore niggahs to de tree and beat 'em to death. Dey dress all kin's of fashions. Most of dem look lik' ghosts. Dey nebber go lik' de paddyrollers, dey jes sneak 'round at night when de poor niggahs in bed. Den 'bout twelve o'clock dey tie up all de niggahs dey ketch and atter dey through beatin' dem dey leaves dem wif dey han's tied in de air and de blood astreamin' outten de backs."

Jane Wilson

"After the war, a colored man named Amos Baxter was killed by the Ku Klux at the old courthouse. My father was on Judge Johnstone's farm a few miles away. He was sent for and came with another colored man to town, and prayed and preached over the body of Baxter. The Ku Klux came to kill my father for doing this, but they never caught him..."

"...The Ku Klux wanted to kill any white people who was Republicans. They killed some negroes. A white an named Murtishaw killed Lee Nance, a store keeper. I was a little girl and saw it. Some little children was standing out in front. Murtishaw came up and said he wanted to buy something

or pretended he wanted to; then, he went up to Nance, pulled his pistol quick and shot him through the throat and head."

Maycomb Graveyard Project

Through your background reading, you have learned why Maycomb is segregated and why African Americans are oppressed in 1933. You will show what you have learned about the history of the South after the Civil War and to apply it to life descriptions of the relatives of Atticus, Tom (Robinson), and Mr. Ewell who reside in their respective family cemeteries. In other words, choose one deceased relative from each family and allow them to tell the general history of their respective families through their own experiences. You are creating these narratives based on the history that you have learned. Additional sources will be provided for your use as you prepare to write. Atticus's relative's story should be the story of the educated white landowner. Tom's relative's story should be the story of a family that experienced slavery, and is currently living under Jim Crow. The Ewell's story is the story of the poor white farmer. Look back over your notes, read over the supplementary materials provided, and write a one page narrative that tells the history of each family from the perspective of one graveyard resident of each family. You must use at least five of the following terms in each of your family histories:

Emancipation Proclamation
3th Amendment
14th Amendment
15th Amendment
Black Codes
Congressional Reconstruction
Union Leagues
Freedmen's Bureau
Ku Klux Klan
Scalawags
Carpetbaggers
Compromise of 1876
Jim Crow laws
Lynching
Ida B. Wells
Disfranchisement
Poll taxes
Literacy tests
Grandfather clauses
tenant farming
Sharecropping
Lien laws

Finch Cemetery: _____ (name of deceased relative)

Robinson Cemetery: _____ (name of deceased relative)

Ewell Cemetery: _____ (name of deceased relative) Attach stories