

WebQuest: The Trials of Our Times: Fact and Fiction

By Courtney Lubs

Introduction

Imagine you are a well-respected investigative journalist. You have just been hired by a cable television network called *Trial Television* to research one of the most famous court cases of all time, the Scottsboro case. You have just read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and you cannot help but notice similarities between the two. When you mention this to your boss, she says that you should write a piece for *Trial Television Magazine* comparing and contrasting the case in *To Kill a Mockingbird* with the Scottsboro case. Challenged by this idea, you accept the job.

Task

In order to write your article, you will need to conduct research using pre-selected Web Sites. You will complete an activity for each Web Site, which will provide you with important information. You will need all of your notes and journal entries from our reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in order to help you compare what happened in the Scottsboro case and the trial in Harper Lee's novel. You will look at actual photographs taken during the Scottsboro trial, create a cover for the magazine in which your article will appear, and write an essay which will be published in the *Trial Television* magazine.

Process

1. Familiarize yourself with the Scottsboro case by reading the brief description from the jimcrowhistory.org **Encyclopedia**. Keep notes of important information (facts, names, and places). You will hand these in, so be neat and save them.
2. Check out the timeline on the **Literature in Context** at [<http://www.litincontext.com/mockingbird/timeline.htm>]. Here you will find out what happened and when. You can use this alongside the **Civil Rights Movement timeline** at [<http://www.litincontext.com/mockingbird/timeline2.htm>] for comparison. After reading the timelines, complete **Activity 1**.
3. After completing the first activity, refresh your memory about the town of Maycomb. Skim the first two chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You may use your journals, or you may want to take a look at the *To Kill a Mockingbird* Student **Survival Guide** at [http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/index.html]. After re-familiarizing yourself with Harper Lee's fictional town of Maycomb, explore the real town of **Monroeville, Alabama** at [<http://www.igc.org/africanam/archives/eh2/eh3/monroeville.htm>].
4. Using the table in **Activity 2**, create a chart that compares Maycomb to Monroeville. You may use your notes or the Web Sites listed above to help you.
5. Images are very important in Maycomb. Many characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are consumed by maintaining a certain image, or reputation. Aunt Alexandra wants to keep the Finch name respectable; Mr. Ewell does not want his image to be tainted by the trial; Mrs. Dubose wants to overcome her addiction so that she will die honorably. Images are also pictures. Take a look at pictures of the Scottsboro boys and complete **Activity 3**.
6. Collect information to begin writing your article. You have information already from activities one, two, and three, but you will want to expand your knowledge using the **Famous American Trials** at [<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/scottsb.htm>] as well as the site for **CourtTV** at [<http://www.courtTV.com/greatesttrials/scottsboro/>]. You may use any link provided by these sites. See **Article Information** page for details on this activity.

7. Your final task is to create a cover for the issue of ***Trial Television Magazine*** in which your article will appear. You may use any mediums you choose--crayons, markers, computer programs--to complete this activity. The only stipulation is that the cover must correspond to the content of your article. This activity is worth 15 points.

Evaluation

WebQuest is worth a total of 100 points. All activities should be placed in your folder. You may use this as a checklist. Rubrics are included with each activity:

- **Activity 1**
- **Activity 2**
- **Activity 3**
- **Article Information**
- **Cover Page**

Conclusion

Congratulations! You are a successful investigative reporter. Submit your folder to your teacher by the deadline, and your duties are done. Your boss is very pleased with your work for *Trial Television Magazine*.