

Excerpt from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

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“...in your own words, Mr. Tate,” Mr. Gilmer was saying.

“Well,” said Mr. Tate, touching his glasses and speaking to his knees, “I was called—”

“Could you say it to the jury, Mr. Tate? Thank you. Who called you?”

Mr. Tate said, “I was fetched by Bob—by Mr. Bob Ewell yonder, one night—”

“What night, sir?”

Mr. Tate said, “It was the night of November twenty-first. I was just leaving my office to go home when B—Mr. Ewell came in, very excited he was, and said get out to his house quick...

“Did you go?”

“Certainly. Got in the car and went out as fast as I could.”

“And what did you find?”

“Found her lying on the floor in the middle of the front room, one on the right as you go in. She was pretty well beat up, but I heaved her to her feet and she washed her face in a bucket in the corner and said she was all right. I asked her who hurt her and she said it was Tom Robinson—”

Judge Taylor, who had been concentrating on his fingernails, looked up as if he were expecting an objection, but Atticus was quiet.

“—asked her if he beat her like that, she said yes he had. Asked her if he took advantage of her and she said yes he did. So I went down to Robinson’s house and brought him back. She identified him as the one, so I took him in. That’s all there was to it.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Gilmer.

Judge Taylor said, “Any questions, Atticus?”

“Yes,” said my father. He was sitting behind his table; his chair was skewed to one side, his legs were crossed and one arm was resting on the back of his chair. “Did you call a doctor, Sheriff? Did anybody call a doctor?” asked Atticus.

“No sir,” said Mr. Tate.

“Didn’t call a doctor?”

“No sir,” repeated Mr. Tate.

“Why not?” There was an edge to Atticus’s voice.

“Well I can tell you why I didn’t. It wasn’t necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho’ happened, it was obvious.”

“But you didn’t call a doctor? While you were there did anyone send for one, fetch one, carry her to one?”

“No sir—”

Judge Taylor broke in. “He’s answered the question three times, Atticus. He didn’t call a doctor.”

Atticus said, “I just wanted to make sure, Judge,” and the judge smiled.

Jem’s hand, which was resting on the balcony rail, tightened around it. He drew in his breath suddenly. Glancing below, I saw no corresponding reaction, and wondered if Jem was trying to be dramatic. Dill was watching peacefully, and so was Reverend Sykes beside him.

“What is it?” I whispered, and got a terse,

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“Sheriff,” Atticus was saying, “you say she was mighty banged up. In what way?”

“Well—”

“Just describe her injuries, Heck.”

“Well, she was beaten around the head. There was already bruises comin’ on her arms, and it happened about thirty minutes before—”

“How do you know?”

Mr. Tate grinned. “Sorry, that’s what they said. Anyway, she was pretty bruised up when I got there, and she had a black eye comin’.”

“Which eye?”

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“Let’s see,” he said softly, then he looked at Atticus as if he considered the question childish.

“Can’t you remember?” Atticus asked.

Mr. Tate pointed to an invisible person five inches in front of him and said,

“Her left.”

“Wait a minute, Sheriff,” said Atticus. “Was it her left facing you or her left looking the same way you were?”

Mr. Tate said, “Oh yes, that’d make it her right. It was her right eye, Mr. Finch. I remember now, she was banged up on that side of her face...” Mr. Tate blinked again, as if something had suddenly been made plain to him. Then he turned his head and looked around at Tom Robinson. As if by instinct, Tom Robinson raised his head. Something had been made plain to Atticus also, and it brought him to his feet.

“Sheriff, please repeat what you said.”

“It was her right eye, I said.”

“No...” Atticus walked to the court reporter’s desk and bent down to the furiously scribbling hand. It stopped, flipped back the shorthand pad, and the court reporter said,

“Mr. Finch. I remember now she was banged up on that side of the face.” Atticus looked up at Mr. Tate.

“Which side again, Heck?”

“The right side, Mr. Finch.”

- 1) In one sentence, summarize what is happening in the passage.
- 2) Share your sentence with a neighbor. Are your summaries similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of your summaries? Based on your conversation, revise your summary to make it even better.

- 3) Why do you think the author included the following exchange? What was she trying to communicate?

“Anyway, she was pretty bruised up when I got there, and she had a black eye comin’.” “Which eye?” Mr. Tate blinked and ran his hands through his hair. “Let’s see,” he said softly, then he looked at Atticus as if he considered the question childish. “Can’t you remember?” Atticus asked. Mr. Tate pointed to an invisible person five inches in front of him and said, “Her left.” “Wait a minute, Sheriff,” said Atticus. “Was it her left facing you or her left looking the same way you were?” Mr. Tate said, “Oh yes, that’d make it her right. It was her right eye, Mr. Finch. I remember now...”

- 4) Do you think that the information in the passage suggests that Tom Robinson is guilty or not guilty? Provide one piece of text-based evidence for your answer.

Scottsboro Boys: Clarence Norris' Statement, 1976

The information in this passage is about a historical event and contains a first-hand account from one of the individuals involved. In 1931, nine black teenagers, called the Scottsboro Boys, were accused of attacking two white women on a train. One of the accused, Clarence Norris, was wrongly convicted in 1937. On October 25, 1976, Clarence Norris was pardoned.

The passage below is his account of his experience. Harper Lee is said to have drawn on the real-life experiences of the Scottsboro Boys in writing *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

“I never thought I’d see the day that I would go back to Alabama for any reason whatsoever. And as far as I was concerned I could have skipped that, and they could have mailed the pardon to me. But plans were made for the pardons and paroles board to give me the pardon personally in the Capitol building in Montgomery. On November 29, 1976, I returned to Alabama a free man, nearly forty-six years after being taken off that freight train. There were a few hundred people waiting at the airport, and to be frank I was scared to get off the plane. I thought there might be some crazy cracker in the crowd who would take a shot at me. But Meyerson convinced me they were all well-wishers out there. I didn’t believe that but when he told me security had been arranged for, I got out of the airplane. The people were pushing and shoving, the reporters were there and the TV cameras, men were shaking my hand and women were kissing on me. I was rushed to a car. It was all a blur, although I know I was answering questions and everything. I was in a daze. I’d never seen the like and I couldn’t believe it was happening in Alabama. We got to the Capitol building about eleven o’clock that morning, and there was a mob there too. Everybody was smiling and telling me how happy they were that I was free. The reporters kept asking me how it felt to be free.

We all packed into the pardons and paroles board’s office, and Norman Ussery made a little speech of welcome. He shook my hand and gave me the pardon. The other board members congratulated me and wished me well. Lots of pictures were being taken. We left there and went directly to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for a press conference. The same church where Martin Luther King Jr., started the civil rights movement. The church was full with wall-to-wall people, black and white. [NAACP Director] Roy Wilkins made a speech and several others who were involved in the case. I told the reporters I was glad to be free, that I had no hard feelings against Alabama and that the past was buried as far as my concern. I said I wanted my pardon because it was due me and because of my kids, my family. I expressed my feeling that the thing I wished for more than anything in the world was for Haywood, Ozie, Andy, Roy, Olen, Eugene, Willie and Charlie to be there with me, and that they deserved the same pardon as myself.”

- 5) In one or two sentences, summarize what happened in the passage.
- 6) What do you think Clarence was trying to communicate in the following sentence? Why do you think he included it in his account?

“I never thought I’d see the day that I would go back to Alabama for any reason whatsoever.”

- 7) How do you think this passage relates to the passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird*? In what ways does the information in this passage help you understand Tom Robinson’s experiences?
- 8) Share your explanation with a neighbor. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of your explanations? Based on your conversation, revise your explanation to make it even better.

DNA evidence in forensic science: A continuing debate

We leave DNA evidence behind everywhere we go without even realizing it. Flakes of skin, drops of blood, hair, and saliva all contain DNA that can be used to identify us. In fact, the study of forensics, commonly used by police departments and prosecutors around the world, frequently relies upon these small bits of shed DNA to link criminals to the crimes they commit. This fascinating science is often portrayed on popular television shows as a simple, exact, and infallible method of finding a perpetrator and bringing him or her to justice. In truth, however, teasing out a DNA fingerprint and determining the likelihood of a match between a suspect and a crime scene is a complicated process that relies upon probability to a greater extent than most people realize. Government-administered DNA databases help speed the process, but they also bring to light complex ethical issues involving the rights of victims and suspects alike.

With modern technology, the amount of DNA required for analysis can be obtained from even a minuscule biological sample, which allows police to match crime scene evidence with suspects. However, because forensics is a science largely rooted in probabilities, even a confirmed “match” does not supply concrete proof of guilt. In addition, DNA databases designed to simplify the process of connecting past offenders to recent crimes are fraught with concerns involving individual genetic rights. For example, a DNA sample can reveal an individual’s ethnicity or how susceptible they are to particular diseases. These databases are also flawed because there can be a delay in entering a sample into the database, which introduces the possibility of human error or tampering. These issues call into question the ultimate usefulness of these databases. As a result, even though forensics is undeniably important to the modern justice system, its personal ramifications and ethical questions are topics of continuing discussion within the scientific, law enforcement, and legal communities.

Excerpt from Norrgard, K. (2008). Forensics, DNA fingerprinting, and CODIS. *Nature Education* 1(1): 35.

- 9) In the first paragraph, what does the author’s use of the word “infallible” tell us about DNA science? If you didn’t know this word, how might you use context clues from the passage to understand its meaning?
- 10) Based on the article, do you think DNA evidence should or should not be used to convict or pardon criminals? Why? Provide one piece of evidence from the text to support your argument.
- 11) Share your argument and evidence with a neighbor. Do you and your neighbor agree or disagree? Discuss whether you are convinced by the arguments that each of you wrote. Revise your argument to make it even more convincing.
- 12) Based on the information in this passage, how might trials, like Tom Robinson’s, have been different if DNA evidence had been available during that time?

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1) In one sentence, summarize what is happening in the passage.

In this passage, one character (Atticus) questions a witness (Mr. Tate) during the trial of a black man accused of raping a white woman.

2) Share your sentence with a neighbor. Are your summaries similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of your summaries? Based on your conversation, revise your summary to make it even better.

My summary includes what happens overall in the passage, and my neighbor's summary also includes the passage's main point. I could improve my summary to include the passage's main point:

In this passage, one character (Atticus) questions a witness (Mr. Tate) during the trial of a black man accused of raping a white woman, eventually revealing an important piece of evidence.

3) Why do you think the author included the following exchange? What was she trying to communicate?

“Anyway, she was pretty bruised up when I got there, and she had a black eye comin’.” “Which eye?” Mr. Tate blinked and ran his hands through his hair. “Let’s see,” he said softly, then he looked at Atticus as if he considered the question childish. “Can’t you remember?” Atticus asked. Mr. Tate pointed to an invisible person five inches in front of him and said, “Her left.” “Wait a minute, Sheriff,” said Atticus. “Was it her left facing you or her left looking the same way you were?” Mr. Tate said, “Oh yes, that’d make it her right. It was her right eye, Mr. Finch. I remember now...”

I think the author included this exchange to show how effective Atticus’s questioning is. The exchange is what leads to an important piece of evidence being revealed. It seems significant that it was the victim’s right eye that had a black eye.

4) Do you think that the information in the passage suggests that Tom Robinson is guilty or not guilty? Provide one piece of text-based evidence for your answer.

I think the passage suggests that Tom Robinson is not guilty. After Mr. Tate remembers that the victim had a black eye in her right eye, Mr. Tate, Tom Robinson, and Atticus all become aware of something that seems important to the trial: “Mr. Tate blinked again, as if something had suddenly been made plain to him. Then he turned his head and looked around at Tom Robinson. As if by instinct, Tom Robinson raised his head. Something had been made plain to Atticus also, and it brought him to his feet.”

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5) In one or two sentences, summarize what happened in the passage.

This passage is a first-hand account of Clarence Norris’s experience going to receive a pardon after being wrongfully convicted of a violent crime more than forty years before.

6) What do you think Clarence was trying to communicate in the following sentence? Why do you think he included it in his account?

“I never thought I’d see the day that I would go back to Alabama for any reason whatsoever.”

I think Clarence was trying to communicate that he had left his past negative experiences in Alabama behind, and that he did not want to go there to relive those memories. Later in the passage, Clarence tells the press that he has “no hard feelings against Alabama,” but this sentence suggests that he does still have some hard feelings about Alabama.

7) How do you think this passage relates to the passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird*? In what ways does the information in this passage help you understand Tom Robinson’s experiences?

Both passages involve black men being wrongfully accused of committing violent crimes against white women. In the *To Kill a Mockingbird* passage, we do not get Tom Robinson’s perspective during the trial. Clarence Norris’s statement adds the perspective of a wrongfully accused black man (though it is in the future, after he is pardoned, and we don’t know from the first passage what Tom Robinson’s fate is).

8) Share your explanation with a neighbor. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of your explanations? Based on your conversation, revise your explanation to make it even better.

A weakness of my explanation is that it could be more specific about how Clarence Norris’s statement helps me understand Tom Robinson’s experience. For example, it is clear that Norris’s experience had a lasting impact in his life. Tom Robinson’s trial will probably also have a lasting impact on his own life.

DNA evidence in forensic science: A continuing debate

We leave DNA evidence behind everywhere we go without even realizing it. Flakes of skin, drops of blood, hair, and saliva all contain DNA that can be used to identify us. In fact, the study of forensics, commonly used by police departments and prosecutors around the world, frequently relies upon these small bits of shed DNA to link criminals to the crimes they commit. This fascinating science is often portrayed on popular television shows as a simple, exact, and infallible method of finding a perpetrator and bringing him or her to justice. In truth, however, teasing out a DNA fingerprint and determining the likelihood of a match between a suspect and a crime scene is a complicated process that relies upon probability to a greater extent than most people realize. Government-administered DNA databases help speed the process, but they also bring to light complex ethical issues involving the rights of victims and suspects alike.

With modern technology, the amount of DNA required for analysis can be obtained from even a minuscule biological sample, which allows police to match crime scene evidence with suspects. However, because forensics is a science largely rooted in probabilities, even a confirmed “match” does not supply concrete proof of guilt. In addition, DNA databases designed to simplify the process of connecting past offenders to recent crimes are fraught with concerns involving individual genetic rights. For example, a DNA sample can reveal an individual’s ethnicity or how susceptible they are to particular diseases. These databases are also flawed because there can be a delay in entering a sample into the database, which introduces the possibility of human error or tampering. These issues call into question the ultimate usefulness of these databases. As a result, even though forensics is undeniably important to the modern justice system, its personal ramifications and ethical questions are topics of continuing discussion within the scientific, law enforcement, and legal communities.

Excerpt from Norrgard, K. (2008). Forensics, DNA fingerprinting, and CODIS. *Nature Education* 1(1): 35.

- 9) In the first paragraph, what does the author’s use of the word “infallible” tell us about DNA science? If you didn’t know this word, how might you use context clues from the passage to understand its meaning?

In the sentence, the author is stating that people consider DNA evidence to be extremely accurate based on what they see on TV. In the next sentence, though, the author goes on to say that using DNA evidence “relies on probability to a greater extent than people realize.” If DNA evidence relies on probability, then it may not be as accurate as people think it is.

- 10) Based on the article, do you think DNA evidence should or should not be used to convict or pardon criminals? Why? Provide one piece of evidence from the text to defend your view.

I do not think DNA evidence should be used to convict or pardon criminals because this type of evidence is not as “infallible” as people think it is. The passage states that “because forensics is a science largely rooted in probabilities, even a confirmed “match” does not supply concrete proof of guilt.” It is difficult to convict a criminal without concrete proof.

- 11) Share your argument and evidence with a neighbor. Do you and your neighbor agree or disagree? Discuss whether you are convinced by the arguments that each of you wrote. Revise your argument to make it even more convincing.

My neighbor and I both argued that DNA evidence should not be used to convict or pardon criminals, but we focused on different points. I focused on whether or not DNA evidence is reliable, and my neighbor focused on the ethics of using it. We could combine our supporting points to make our shared argument against using DNA evidence more convincing.

- 12) Based on the information in this passage, how might trials, like Tom Robinson’s, have been different if DNA evidence had been available during that time?

If the events in *To Kill a Mockingbird* occurred as Mr. Tate describes them, then there would be DNA evidence with the victim. Based on the current passage, even a tiny bit of evidence could be enough to “match a crime scene with a suspect.” Similarly, the absence of Tom Robinson’s DNA at the crime scene could be enough to eliminate him as a suspect.

***To Kill a Mockingbird* - Lesson Planning Information and Standards Mapping**

This close reading and writing task includes an excerpt from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and two additional passages designed to connect with and build upon the themes present in the book. These materials were developed to engage students in the level of rigor and types of skills and practices they will encounter on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) section of the SAT. Like the EBRW section of the SAT, this activity involves close reading of complex literary, historical, and scientific passages. Based on the rigor of the passages, these materials are targeted towards a 9th grade level.

The questions that follow each passage are aligned with relevant standards from Common Core State Standards (CCSS), ACT College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), and SAT Domains and Dimensions. Each of these questions is mapped to one or more relevant standards below to illustrate the relevant types of thinking and reasoning targeted by each question.

Questions 1, 2, & 5:

- The student will identify a reasonable summary of a text or of key information and ideas in text. (SAT IISM.01: Summarizing)
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2)
- Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2)
- Summarize key supporting ideas and details in somewhat challenging passages. (CCRS IDT 403)

Question 3:

- The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text. (SAT RPU.01: Analyzing purpose)
- Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6)
- Understand point of view in somewhat challenging passages. (CCRS PPV 402)

Questions 4, 10, & 11:

- The student will identify claims and counterclaims explicitly stated in text or determine implicit claims and counterclaims from text. (SAT RAG.01: Analyzing claims and counterclaims)
- Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both... (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1B)
- Analyze how one or more sentences in somewhat challenging passages offer reasons for or support a claim. (CCRS ARG 401)
- The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point. (SAT IIITE.01: Citing textual evidence)
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1)

Question 6:

- The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text. (SAT RPU.01: Analyzing purpose)
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6)

- Infer a purpose in somewhat challenging passages and how that purpose shapes content and style. (CCRS PPV 501)

Questions 7, 8, & 12:

- The student will synthesize information and ideas from paired texts. (SAT SMT.01: Analyzing multiple texts)
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9)
- Make straightforward comparisons between two passages. (CCRS SYN 301)

Question 9:

- The student will determine the meaning of words and phrases in context. (SAT IIWD.01: Interpreting words and phrases in context)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4)
- Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in somewhat challenging passages. (CCRS WME 401)