

Mapping the Mockingbird with Deductive Reasoning

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines 'deductive reasoning' as "the act or process of. . .reasoning from the general to the specific, or from premises to a logically valid conclusion." To perform this act successfully, one must use care and consideration when observing events that might lead us to understand other events.

To Kill A Mockingbird is a great vehicle for students to use to hone their deductive reasoning skills, in many ways. For this assignment we have the opportunity to practice this power of deductive reasoning, individually and as part of a group effort. I call it "Mapping the Mockingbird."

If you read *To Kill A Mockingbird* carefully, you will notice that Harper Lee has done a very nice job of creating a setting from the past. It is part factual and part mythical, probably based upon her own experiences and tidbits of her imagination. In this project we will not try to weed out the factual from the fantasy, but we will try to draw a detailed map of the immediate surroundings in which the story unfolds through a careful examination of the story's setting. To do this the reader must read with an observant eye. Since this can be very difficult for some students to do individually, we will work in pairs or small groups to examine the novel's details.

The novel is very large and for one person to do a detailed examination would take a considerable amount of time. To make the job easier and your work more efficient, I have split the examination over several classes. You and your partner(s) will only have a small fragment of the entire story to dissect, therefore, it will be expected that you will do a very thorough job. Of course, this project will be in addition to your regular assignment, which is to read the entire story for class discussion.

Now, let's consider what our ultimate goal is and just what you are going to be looking for in your detailed examination. We will want to construct a map of Maycomb, the town in which the story takes place, but it will not be the entire county. We will be looking for details about the main street where Atticus Finch lives, the adjoining town square and even the junk yard, where the Ewell's live. We will want to document as many of the town structures as possible. We will not be recording anything living or anything that moves in the town. Most of the structures and town features will be observed as they are mentioned in the text, but some can only be identified through deductive reasoning, and these will be very important to this assignment.

Now let me give you an example of what you will be looking for and how you might present it. You have been given a notebook to keep all of your documentation in. Keep careful records in your journal. This will be collected for a grade when the project is completed. What are the requirements?

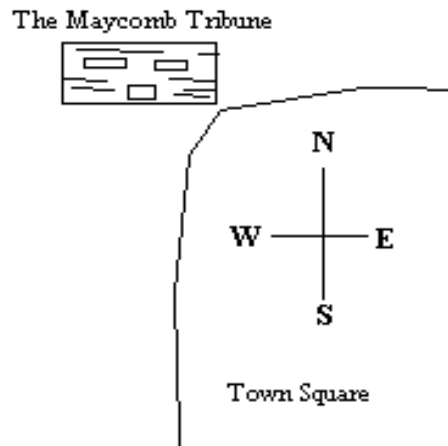
- On the cover write the title: Mapping the Mockingbird
 Print your name and class period
 Print the number of your book
 Print the Chapters you and your partner(s) are responsible for
- You will record each discovery you make in the following format:

A keyword or phrase that describes the object
 The exact sentence from the story in quotation marks that describes the object
 The chapter and page number in your book where this information can be found

All of your work must be printed **neatly** in order to get credit. In the case of objects or setting locations, you might want to include rough sketches indicating how this object or place might be placed on a map.

Here are two examples from the text. The first is a direct and clear observation. It includes the entry that would be found in your journal and a rough sketch of how the object (in this case The Maycomb Tribune newspaper office) might be placed on the map.

Keyword: The Maycomb Tribune
Quote: “Mr. Underwood not only ran *The Maycomb Tribune* office, he lived in it. That is above it. . .The office building was on the northwest corner of the square, and to reach it we had to pass the jail.”
Location: Chapter 15; page 152 (in my version of the text)



Now that was a simple one. After reading the section, you could easily tell that you are going to have to include The Maycomb Tribune in the ‘northwest’ corner of the square when you draw it. The sketch represents that small portion of the map. Of course it does not include other things you might discover as you read the story. For example, you might not be able to tell exactly where to draw the ‘jail’ from this passage, but other descriptions of the town might eventually lead you to the proper location.

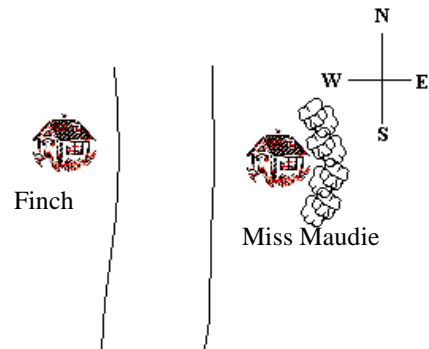
Sometimes you will have to draw upon ‘deductive reasoning’ to come up with a proper location. We can use this to decide a very important characteristic of our map. It is mentioned in the text that Miss Maudie’s house is across the street from the Finch’s house. This is clearly stated. But is the Finch house on the North, South, East, or West side of the street. Hmmmm. This could determine whether or not any location we place on the map as correct or incorrect. Fortunately, Harper Lee has included a very important clue in the setting. From it we can deduce the exact placement of the Finch and Miss Maudie’s house, two very important reference points for our map. Here’s the journal entry:

Keyword: Miss Maudie’s House Reference Location

Quote: “We leaped over the low wall that separated Miss Rachel’s yard from our driveway. . . .[Jem] pointed to the east. A gigantic moon was rising behind Miss Maudie’s pecan trees.”

Location: Chapter 6; pages 54 - 55

From this information we can deduce that since Miss Maudie lives across the street from the Finch residence, Miss Rachel lives next door to Atticus Finch, there is a low wall separating the houses and that Miss Maudie’s house is on the eastern side of the street and the Finch residence is on the western side of the street.



Of course you will find other clues that indicate which side of the Finch house is the location for Miss Rachel’s house and even the more important Radley house.

You will only be doing a small portion of the mapping, but your information will be very important to the construction of our map. The other students and other classes will all present their findings, and each class will create a final map using these findings.