

Unit of Study: Literature That Confronts Racial Injustice and Discrimination

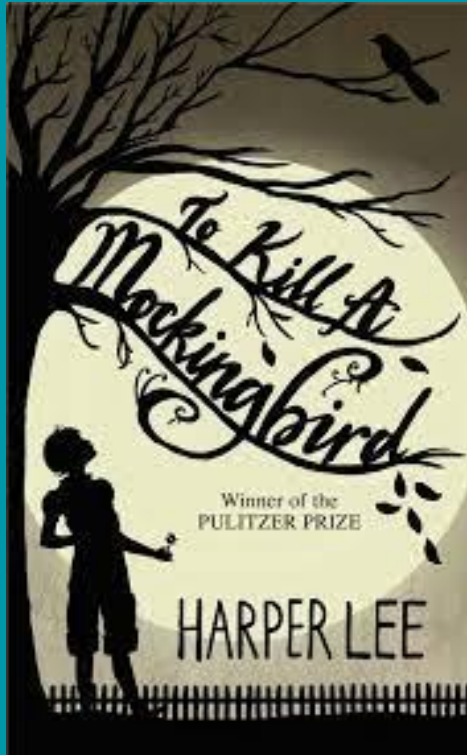
By Monique Perez-Durand



Rational:

- There have been countless incidents of racial injustice at a social and institutional level.
- Many students in classrooms witness or experience racial discrimination and injustice, so it is important to give them the opportunity to learn, reflect, and discuss this injustice so they may be able to support themselves inside and outside of the classroom.
- The curriculum should be open to discussing the issues of students affected by social and institutional racism.
- This can help to validate students' experiences.
- This unit promotes critical thinking, compassion, and antiracism.

Canonical Centerpiece Text: *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee



- This book is set in the 1930s and discusses racial prejudices, the violence that often comes with it, and the consequences for the people involved.
- The novel is set against the backdrop of Atticus Finch's case in which he defends a young Black man accused of raping a white woman.
- It is told from the perspective of a young White girl,

Introducing The Unit: Listen To Their Song

I would introduce this unit with music from several different songs including



Black Rage
by Lauryn Hill



No Es Mi Presidente
by Taina Asili



In The River
by Raye Zaragoza

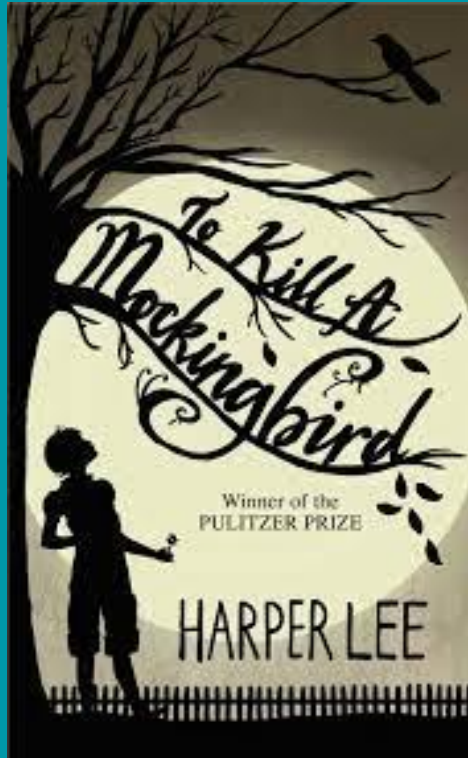
- Music and poetry from people who experience the firsthand marginalization and oppression of today's American society can introduce the oppression described in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- I would present these videos with lyrics, (the translation for Taina Asili's song) from these women who are speaking from personal experiences and pain.
- It is important to listen to first the perspectives and struggles of people.
- Contemporary music can help connect students to the topic.
- I would ask students to choose which song most interests them.

Introducing The Unit: The Danger of A Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.



- TED Talk would act as a transition into the introduction of *To Kill A Mockingbird*.
- Draws attention to the negative impact of stories told from a single narrative.
- Acknowledges the importance of diverse stories being told from diverse voices.
- It is important to consider “how [stories] are told, who tells them, when they're told, [and] how many stories are told” (Adichie 9:25) to determine the validity of the stories and who is being affected by them.
- Points to media's use of stories to define entire groups of people, perpetuating institutional and social racism.
- *To Kill A Mockingbird* addresses racial injustice and discrimination but it does so from the narrative of a White woman.

Introducing the Text: *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee



- I will introduce the central text with historical background of the period it is set in as well as when it was written.
- The novel is a work of fiction, but is based on the realities of American history and the treatment of disenfranchised communities
- I can include new articles from the time period as well as news articles of current events
- Students will write a compare and contrast response to what we discuss in class.

YA Companion Texts

