# TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Watchman in the Classroom*  
1

*Setting the Context for Watchmen*  
2

**LESSON 1:** Exploring the Relationship between Scout/Jean Louise and Calpurnia  
3

**LESSON 2:** Race and Social Change:  
Atticus and His Historical Contemporaries  
11

Extensions  
22

---

## ABOUT FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. For more information about Facing History and Ourselves, please visit our website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

Copyright © 2015 by Facing History and Ourselves. All rights reserved.

Credits: “The Mask,” by Maya Angelou. Used with permission from Caged Bird Legacy, LLC. MayaAngelou.com. Excerpts from *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South*, by Robert Penn Warren. Used with permission from WME Entertainment, Inc.
Watchman in the Classroom

How can Harper Lee’s newly published novel *Go Set a Watchman* deepen students’ engagement with *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

*Watchman* is not a sequel to *Mockingbird*, but it is a companion work that can shed light on the characters, context, and themes that Lee explores in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and that Facing History examines in the *Teaching Mockingbird* study guide.

Through two lessons that follow, we offer two approaches for integrating *Go Set a Watchman* into the teaching of *Mockingbird*. Each lesson features excerpts of both novels, historical sources, poetry, discussion questions, and activities that connect the two books, the world of the novels, and our own world today.
Setting the Context for Watchman

Any approach to examining *Go Set a Watchman* in the classroom should begin with an understanding of how the new novel relates to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. *Watchman* has been described as a first draft, a “parent,” and a “practice run” for *Mockingbird*. Lee’s publishers have said that *Watchman* is not an “early version” of *Mockingbird* but rather a separate, independent work, albeit with the same characters. Inconsistencies in plot also suggest that the world of the two stories is not quite the same: Henry Clinton, a pivotal figure in *Watchman* who is presented as a childhood friend of Scout’s, appears nowhere in *Mockingbird*, and the trial of a black man accused of raping a white woman, which is at the heart of *Mockingbird*, is mentioned only peripherally in *Watchman*, where it results in an acquittal, not a conviction. Some critics have also questioned whether we should read the characters in the two novels as continuous: Did Harper Lee intend for us to see the 26-year-old Jean Louise and 72-year-old Atticus of *Watchman* as older versions of Scout and her father, or are they independent, distinct fictional creations?

Despite these complexities, we believe that students can learn a great deal from putting the two novels in conversation. Among many possible avenues, we’ve selected two issues to explore through novel excerpts and primary source documents:

- **Lesson 1**: Exploring the Relationship between Scout/Jean Louise and Calpurnia
- **Lesson 2**: Race and Social Change: Atticus and His Historical Contemporaries
Lesson 1
Exploring the Relationship between Scout/Jean Louise and Calpurnia

Note: We recommend that teachers using Mockingbird and Watchman in the classroom acknowledge and set guidelines for how to approach the racial epithets that appear in both novels. The section “Discussing Sensitive Topics in the Classroom” from Teaching Mockingbird provides useful guidance, including links to additional readings and resources. Also review the section “Fostering a Reflective Classroom” for suggestions for creating classroom contracts that include guidelines for respectful, reflective classroom discussions.

Overview

As Go Set a Watchman opens, 26-year-old Jean Louise Finch travels from New York City to her hometown of Maycomb, Alabama, to visit her aging, ailing father, Atticus. It is the mid-1950s, and many in Maycomb are resisting the advances of the civil rights movement—including, to Jean Louise’s shock, her own father. As she struggles with these revelations, she reaches out to Calpurnia, who has retired from the Finch household but remains an important figure in Jean Louise’s life.

In this lesson, we pair Chapter 12 of To Kill a Mockingbird, in which Scout and Jem attend church with Calpurnia, with an excerpt from Chapter 12 of Go Set a Watchman, in which Jean Louise goes to Calpurnia’s home after Cal’s grandson Frank has been charged with manslaughter. We then provide a historical source, “You Worked Long Hours,” (Reading 1.1) which features domestic worker Essie Favrot’s recollections of the white families she worked for, and Maya Angelou’s poem “The Mask,” (Reading 1.2) which raises questions about how African Americans concealed their true identities and emotions to survive in a segregated world.

The accompanying discussion questions and activities can be used to guide writing and conversation about these readings in your classroom. (In these activities, we use “Jean Louise” to indicate the character in Go Set a Watchman and “Scout” to refer to To Kill a Mockingbird.)

This lesson can be used to augment Section 3 or Section 4 of Teaching Mockingbird.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the periods when *Mockingbird* and *Watchman* are set, the social world of the South was governed by rigid rules of racial segregation, and the lives of blacks and whites were shaped by racial power dynamics. Blacks were often only able to find employment serving white families as domestic workers and nannies. Both jobs involved long hours of labor, encompassed much of the household and parenting work, and were often characterized by real affection, leading some to even describe black maids as surrogate mothers to the white children they cared for.

In *Mockingbird*, Calpurnia is a “tyrannical presence” in the Finch house and a respected partner to Atticus in raising the children, yet she sleeps on a cot in the kitchen when she stays overnight and respectfully calls Jem “Mister Jem” when he reaches adolescence. In *Watchman*, the elderly Calpurnia has retired from the Finch household, but she’s still regarded with respect and affection by Jean Louise, who seeks out Calpurnia during her fraught visit to Maycomb.

MATERIALS

- **Novel Excerpt**: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Chapter 12
- **Novel Excerpt**: *Go Set a Watchman*, Chapter 12, starting at the bottom of page 157 (“Calpurnia was sitting in a wooden rocking chair in a corner of the room . . .”) and ending at the section break on page 160 (“Finally, Calpurnia shook her head.”).¹
- **Reading 1.1**: “You Worked Long Hours”
- **Reading 1.2**: “The Mask”

¹ *Go Set a Watchman* page numbers correspond to 2015 edition by HarperCollins, 978-0-06-240985-0.
I. The following questions can guide classroom reflection and discussion in a variety of ways.

One approach is to have students spend time independently with the much longer excerpt from *Mockingbird*. For example, ask students to read Chapter 12 of *Mockingbird* and respond to question 1 in their journals, supporting their answers with evidence from the text. Review *Journals in a Facing History Classroom*, for suggestions for using journaling as a teaching strategy. Then read the *Watchman* excerpt aloud and use the next two questions to compare the excerpts. Questions 4 and 5 can serve as effective writing prompts, or you might use the *Think, Pair, Share* teaching strategy to provide opportunities for students to both thoughtfully respond in writing and engage in meaningful dialogue with a peer and ultimately with the whole class.

1. After going to Calpurnia’s church, Scout says, “That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me.” In what sense does Calpurnia lead a double life? What does Scout learn when she accompanies Calpurnia to church? What does she learn about Calpurnia? About Maycomb? About herself?

2. What details in the scene from *Go Set a Watchman* reveal the nature of Jean Louise’s childhood relationship with Calpurnia? What clues suggest that there is now distance between the two women?

3. How is Scout’s visit to Calpurnia’s church similar to Jean Louise’s visit to Calpurnia in *Go Set a Watchman*? How are the two visits different?

4. What does Calpurnia mean when she asks Jean Louise, “What are you all doing to us?” What factors might account for Calpurnia’s treatment of Jean Louise in this scene? How does Jean Louise respond to Calpurnia?

5. In what sense might the visit to Calpurnia’s church be a pivotal moment for Scout? How do you think the visit to Calpurnia’s home is a pivotal moment for Jean Louise? What new perspectives does Scout/Jean Louise gain from these experiences?
II. Broaden students’ context for the relationship between Scout/Jean Louise and Calpurnia by following up your comparison of the two novel excerpts with southern domestic worker Essie Favrot’s recollections in *Reading 1.1*, “You Worked Long Hours.”

1. How does Harper Lee’s portrayal of Calpurnia in the two novels connect to Essie Favrot’s account of working for white families? What are the similarities and differences? How does Favrot’s story extend your thinking about Calpurnia?

III. Another way to deepen students’ understanding of Calpurnia is by reading and discussing Maya Angelou’s poem “The Mask” (*Reading 1.2*).

1. Who is the speaker in “The Mask”? What kind of “mask” does the speaker wear and why? In what context might you or someone you know wear a “mask”?

2. Does Calpurnia wear a “mask” in *Mockingbird* or *Watchman*? Cite evidence from the text. What does the poem add to your thinking about the character and behavior of Calpurnia in each of these novels?

IV. In addition to digging into the relationship between Calpurnia and Scout/Jean Louise, students can focus on the larger impact these scenes have on Scout/Jean Louise and look for parallels in their own lives. Students can respond to the following question in discussion or in their journals, or, if you have done the “Memory Maps” activity included on page 5 of *Teaching Mockingbird*, they may want to add this reflection to their maps.

1. In the scenes from both books, Scout/Jean Louise enters an unfamiliar social world. How does that experience affect her in each scene? What experiences have you had in unfamiliar environments? What can we learn from such experiences?
“You Worked Long Hours”

Born in 1910, Essie Favrot worked several decades for southern white families as a domestic worker. In an interview, she described some of the situations in which she worked:

I finished out the eighth grade in the country. But by then my very oldest sister had come to stay with my aunt, and she decided it was time I came, too.

The onliest thing then was for a black girl to do was to get domestic work. So, I worked. First it was just about a two-hour job per day, five days a week for this lady that just had come up to me and asked me to work. I’d go down there to her house, clean up the house, do a little washing, and that was it. Fifty cent a day was what I made. They were poor people. They were probably just about as poor as I was, but the lady worked for a department store!

Then, I think, my brother’s mother-in-law told me that this lady needed somebody to keep her kids. So I went there and worked. I was living on the place, and that’s when I met my husband. This was in ‘39, and I remember the salary had gone up to a dollar a day. I was making seven dollars [a week] because I was living on the place. And I worked every day from seven to seven. You worked long hours, but you were making a dollar a day.

I slept up in the bedroom with the little boy. There was a servant house in the backyard, but it was occupied by the cook, which was a male. It was considered his house, but I used the bathroom there.

They were rich people. I guess they owned stock. And when my mother-in-law decided to sell half her land, I don’t know why but it came for me to borrow the money. My husband had been working for his people much longer than I had. Anyway I asked them for fifty dollars to pay for the property, and they readily gave it to me. But they said they wouldn’t help me to build a house. They had got stung with another maid borrowing from them. We paid the money back right quick, and they were surprised.

After that, I worked thirteen years for the Elliots. Now they weren’t rich people. They both worked, and they had six children. I took over the running of the house. I did everything for them—the groceries, the cleaning up, the kids. I did all for the kids—took them to the park, to school, bought their clothes, saw that they wore the right clothes to were parties, all that. My neighbors used to laugh because those Elliots were such poor people. Everyone knew they were. I mean not poor white trash—no. Just working people like myself. I was fond of those kids. I still am.
worked for them until my son was born. We still keep in touch. One of the girls just died. She had cancer; that was very sad. And their mother, I worry about her. She’s had a hard time. Working for them—since they had all those kids, it was more like family for me there. I feel still sort of protective and maternal towards them. Not like I do my own family, no, but like I would any children I’d cared for that much, watched grow up. I’d help them still anyway I could. I would . . . not go back to work, but I’d help them any other way I could.

After that, I worked days till my son got old enough to go to school. Then I worked for the Helms. I worked there for a while. And they had four kids. Two were up in age, school-age children. And they had two little kids. And I just figured, since I was taking care of her kids and cooking for them, I’d have supper done when they got there and the kids fed and clean. They both worked. And they were so congenial at first. So, when my son started school not far from where they lived, I figured they wouldn’t mind him coming down there after school and then going home with me.

But the first day after I did it, Mr. Helms say, “What happened, Essie? Did your son miss his bus?” I say, “No, he didn’t miss his bus. It’s nobody at home in the evening, so I just took your two children, and when we were on our way back from the park, we picked him up.”

“I don’t think it’s going to be such a good idea, him coming down here. That lady next door . . . . Mind you now, it’s not us,” he said. “But that lady next door don’t want him playing down here.”

So his wife she thought she could come home early so I could go home early, too. And the next evening she said, “I think I might enjoy coming on home, getting here early.” I didn’t say a word, because I knew I wasn’t going to work for nobody who had two that were not toilet trained and I had to clean both of them up and I had to cook dinner for the whole family and clean the apartment and wash their clothes. I felt if I was doing all of that for her children and her, and mine couldn’t come there in the evening, that they could have their job. After she paid me, I said, “Now you be sure and get you somebody.” I was headed to my car when I said it. And I left there and never went back. . . .

---

Reading 1.2

“The Mask”

Maya Angelou adapted the 1896 poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask,” in the following spoken-word poem.

We wear the mask that grins and lies.
It shades our cheeks and hides our eyes.
This debt we pay to human guile
With torn and bleeding hearts . . .
We smile and mouth the myriad subtleties.
Why should the world think otherwise
In counting all our tears and sighs.
Nay let them only see us while
We wear the mask.

We smile but oh my God
Our tears to thee from tortured souls arise
And we sing Oh Baby doll, now we sing . . .
The clay is vile beneath our feet
And long the mile
But let the world think otherwise.
We wear the mask.

When I think about myself
I almost laugh myself to death.
My life has been one great big joke!
A dance that’s walked a song that’s spoke.
I laugh so hard HA! HA! I almos’ choke
When I think about myself.

Seventy years in these folks’ world
The child I works for calls me girl
I say “HA! HA! HA! Yes ma’am!”
For workin’s sake
I’m too proud to bend and
Too poor to break
So . . . I laugh! Until my stomach ache
When I think about myself.
My folks can make me split my side
I laugh so hard, HA! HA! I nearly died
The tales they tell sound just like lying
They grow the fruit but eat the rind.
Hmm huh! I laugh uhuh huh huh . . .
Until I start to cry when I think about myself
And my folks and the children.

My fathers sit on benches,
Their flesh count every plank,
The slats leave dents of darkness
Deep in their withered flank.
And they gnarled like broken candles,
All waxed and burned profound.
They say, but sugar, it was our submission
that made your world go round.

There in those pleated faces
I see the auction block
The chains and slavery’s coffles
The whip and lash and stock.

My fathers speak in voices
That shred my fact and sound
They say, but sugar, it was our submission
that made your world go round.

They laugh to conceal their crying,
They shuffle through their dreams
They stepped ’n fetched a country
And wrote the blues in screams.
I understand their meaning,
It could an did derive
From living on the edge of death
They kept my race alive
By wearing the mask! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

---

1 Spoken-word poem adapted from “We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1896).
LESSON 2

Race and Social Change: Atticus and His Historical Contemporaries

Note: We recommend that teachers using Mockingbird and Watchman in the classroom acknowledge and set guidelines for how to approach the racial epithets that appear in both novels. The section “Discussing Sensitive Topics in the Classroom” from Teaching Mockingbird provides useful guidance, including links to additional readings and resources. Also review the section “Fostering a Reflective Classroom” for suggestions for creating classroom contracts that include guidelines for respectful, reflective classroom discussions.

OVERVIEW

The plot of Go Set a Watchman turns on Jean Louise’s discovery that Atticus is a leader of the Maycomb County Citizens’ Council. Mockingbird and Watchman are independent creations, but the father and “gentleman” Jean Louise describes in Watchman is in many ways consistent with Harper Lee’s portrayal of Atticus in To Kill a Mockingbird. And yet, readers who come to Watchman familiar with the upright Atticus at the moral center of Mockingbird may share Jean Louise’s sense of confusion, anger, and betrayal.

The readings in this collection bring us into the world of the South in the 1950s (when Lee wrote both novels and where she situated Watchman). Excerpts from David Halberstam’s Commentary article on White Citizens’ Councils (Reading 2.1) and from Robert Penn Warren’s book Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South (Reading 2.2), both published in 1956, illuminate the ways in which many white southerners reacted to the prospect of social change. Martin Luther King’s 1963 “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Reading 2.3) responds to criticisms, like those voiced by characters in Go Set a Watchman, that African Americans were too impatient in their demands for civil rights. By putting a key scene from Go Set a Watchman in conversation with these historical documents, we can examine the complexities of Atticus’s character and explore the challenges of social change both in the 1950s and in our world today.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Harper Lee wrote *Go Set a Watchman* in the mid-1950s and set the novel in her contemporary world. In this pivotal era for civil rights, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, campaigned to end racial discrimination, and the Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in schools in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In the South, these events met with tremendous resistance, including the development of White Citizens’ Councils, an associated network of white-supremacist organizations. The novel reflects this time of social turmoil. Aunt Alexandra remarks on the transformation of Maycomb’s black population, saying, “Besides being shiftless now they look at you sometimes with open insolence, and as far as depending on them goes, why that’s out. . . . That NAACP’s come down here and filled ’em with poison till it runs out of their ears.”

This lesson can be used to augment Section 6 or 7 of *Teaching Mockingbird*.

MATERIALS

- **Novel Excerpt**: *Go Set a Watchman*, Chapter 17, starting at the bottom of page 244 (“Then what are you, a snob or something?”) and ending in the middle of page 251 (“You deny that they’re human.”)

- **Reading 2.1**: “The White Citizens’ Councils: Respectable Means for Unrespectable Ends”

- **Reading 2.2**: *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South*

- **Reading 2.3**: “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

I. Use the following questions to explore the featured excerpt from *Go Set a Watchman*. The first two questions can be used for journaling before a class discussion to help students collect their thoughts. You might also want to consider using a Close Reading Protocol to help students purposefully reread the text to deepen comprehension. If you plan to begin by reading the text aloud, you may want to use the audiobook, since the excerpt is fairly long.

1 In this scene from *Go Set a Watchman*, Jean Louise confronts Atticus about his participation in the Maycomb County Citizens’ Council. How would you describe the tone of this scene? What words in the text reveal Jean Louise’s feelings about her father’s involvement?

2 How does Atticus explain his participation in the Maycomb Citizens’ Council? What arguments does he make to justify his choice? Do his arguments have merit?

3 How is the Atticus of *Go Set a Watchman* different from the Atticus of *To Kill a Mockingbird*? How are the two versions of the character similar? What evidence can you find in *Mockingbird* to support the idea that the Atticus of *Watchman* is the same man? What evidence might you use to argue that these are two different characters?

4 Jean Louise tells Atticus, “I’ve never in my life seen you give that insolent, back-of-the-hand treatment half the white people down here give to Negroes just when they’re talking to them . . . Yet you put your hand in front of them as a people and say ‘Stop here. This is as far as you can go!’” What problem is Jean Louise voicing? How might you account for this seeming contradiction in Atticus’s attitudes and beliefs?

5 Both Jean Louise and Atticus repeatedly use the words “they” and “them” as they argue about race relations in the South. What do these words denote? What is their connotation? What might Jean Louise’s use of the word “them” suggest about her attitude toward African Americans?

II. Have students read and discuss the excerpts from texts by David Halberstam and Robert Penn Warren (Reading 2.1 and Reading 2.2) to provide historical context for the character of Atticus in *Watchman*.

1 What range of reactions to desegregation do you see in the Halberstam and Warren excerpts? Do these sources connect to or extend your thinking about Atticus?
III. Reading Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Reading 2.3) provides a different perspective on race relations and civil rights during this period.

1 In Watchman, Jean Louise’s friend Henry Clinton says that the Maycomb Citizens’ Council is “a sort of warning to the Negroes for them not to be in such a hurry.” How does Martin Luther King respond to a similar criticism about civil rights advocates being too impatient in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail”? What new perspective on the struggle for civil rights does this document offer?

2 How does King describe “the white moderate” in his letter? Do any characters in Mockingbird or Watchman fit this description?

IV. Section 6 of Teaching Mockingbird focuses on justice and what citizens must do to create a just and democratic society. Use the readings in this lesson to develop a broader and deeper perspective on ideas about justice. These questions can be used for discussion or reflective writing.

1 What ideas about justice are conveyed by the speakers in these texts? How might you compare and contrast the ideas put forth by Atticus, Jean Louise, Robert Penn Warren’s interviewees, and Martin Luther King? What do these perspectives add to your thinking about justice?

2 What do these sources suggest about the challenges of making social change? What is the role of laws? What is the role of the hearts and minds of citizens?
In the following passages, historian David Halberstam describes the White Citizens’ Councils, an associated network of white-supremacist organizations. The full article appeared in 1956 in the American magazine *Commentary*.

. . . The White Citizens Councils, a loosely connected series of local groups which have arisen throughout the South in protest against the Supreme Court’s May 17, 1954 desegregation decision, undoubtedly constitute a very significant political phenomenon. Individually, the Councils can be either powerful or frail, at times the sincere expression of confusion and desperation, at other times the vehicle for personal frustration. But the single thread connecting all the Councils, strong and weak, is the determination not just to oppose integration in the public schools but to stop or at least postpone it. In most of the Deep South, where hostility to integration is nearly universal, it is this militancy and dedication that make the Council member stand out.

Despite occasional efforts by supporters to build the Councils up into a movement of broad conservatism, their only serious purpose is to fight the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Not only do they contest the NAACP’s desegregation suits, but they seek to cancel much else that the Negro has gained over the last half-century by keeping him out of the polling booth. The exact strength of the Councils is difficult to determine: in Mississippi, their cradle, 100,000 members are claimed, but sober estimates would run closer to 55,000. Yet nowhere in the Deep South is their strength to be scoffed at—it is a product of crisis and as more law suits are filed it will mount.

The Council movement has been compared frequently to two earlier organizations that originated in the South, the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction times, and the new Klan that appeared on the scene after World War I. And indeed there are, at least for the moment, certain parallels between the Klans—especially the original one—and the Council movement. The differences are nonetheless crucial. The Councils have an almost self-conscious desire for respectability. They struggle to achieve a constitutionally illegal purpose by “all legal means.” They shun both the
Klans’ reputation for violence, and their haberdashery; their members are respectable citizens of the community, the quintessence of the civic luncheon club. At their meetings there is emphasis on speakers from the ministry and the universities....

First published in 1956, *Segregation* is a collection of informal conversations with southerners in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Robert Warren Penn traveled through the South to talk with scores of individuals—taxi drivers, NAACP leaders, members of White Citizens groups, college students, preachers—to report on their responses to the Court’s decision. The following are excerpts.

**EXCERPT 1**

There is the very handsome lady of forty-five, charming and witty and gay, full of dramatic mimicry, a wonderful range of phrase, a quick sympathy, a totally captivating talker of the kind you still occasionally find among women of the Deep South. . . . She has been talking about the Negroes on her plantation, and at last, about integration, but that only in one phrase, tossed off as gaily and casually as any other of the evening, so casual as to permit no discussion: “But of course we have to keep the white race intact."

But the husband, much her senior, who had said almost nothing all evening, lifts his strong, grizzled old face, and in a kind of *sotto voce* growl, not to her, not to me, not to anybody, utters: “In power—in power—you mean the white race in power.”

And I think of another Southerner, an integrationist saying to me: “You simply have to recognize a fact. In no county where the Negroes are two to one is the white man going to surrender political power, not with Negroes in those countries in their present condition. It’s not a question of being Southern. You put the same number of Yankee liberals in the same county and in a week they’d be behaving the same way. Living with something and talking about it are two very different things, and living with something is always the slow way.”

And another, not an integrationist, from a black county, saying: “Yeah, let ’em take over and in six months you’d be paying the taxes but a black sheriff would be collecting ’em. You couldn’t walk down the sidewalk. You’d be communized, all right.”

---

EXCERPT 2

The following excerpt is Warren’s response after a white lawyer shows him some segregationist literature.

I look at it. The stuff is not new. I have seen it before, elsewhere. It was used in the last gubernatorial campaign in Tennessee, it was used in the march on the Capitol at Nashville, a few weeks ago. There are the handbills showing “Harlem Negro and White Wife,” lying abed, showing “Crooner Roy Hamilton & Teenage Fans,” who are white girls, showing a school yard in Baltimore with Negro and white children, “the new look in education.” On the back of one of the handbills is a crudely drawn valentine-like heart, and in it the head of a white woman who (with feelings not indicated by the artist) is about to be kissed by a black man of the primitive physiognomy. On the heart two vultures perch. Beneath it is the caption: “The Kiss of Death.”

Below are the “reasons”: “While Russia makes laws to protect her own race she continues to prod us to accept 14,000,000 Negroes as social equals and we are doing everything possible to please her. . . . Segregation is the law of God, not man. . . . Continue to rob the white race in order to bribe the Asiatic and Negro and these people will overwhelm the white race and destroy all progress, religion, invention, art, and return us to the jungle. . . . Negro blood destroyed the civilization of Egypt, India, Phoenicia, Carthage, Greece, and it will destroy America!”

EXCERPT 3

“Yes, it’s our own fault,” the rich businessman, active in segregation, says. “If we’d ever managed to bring ourselves to what we ought to have done for the Negro, it would be different now, if we’d managed to educate them, get them decent housing, decent jobs.”

So I tell him what a Southern Negro professor had said to me. He had said that the future now would be different, would be hopeful, if there could just be “one gesture of graciousness” from the white man—even if the white man didn’t like the Supreme Court Decision, he might try to understand the Negro’s view, not heap insult on him.

And the segregationist, who is a gracious man, seizes on the word. “Graciousness,” he says, “that’s it, if we could just have managed some graciousness to the race. Sure, some of us, a lot of us, could manage some graciousness to individual Negroes, some of us were grateful to individuals for being gracious to us. But you know, we couldn’t manage it for the race.” He thinks a moment, then says: “There’s a Negro woman buried in the family burial place. We loved her.”

---

2 Ibid., 24–25.
3 Ibid., 56.
Reading 2.3

“Letter from Birmingham Jail”

In 1963 a group of clergymen published an open letter to Martin Luther King Jr. calling nonviolent demonstrations against segregation “unwise and untimely.” From the Birmingham jail where he was imprisoned for his participation in demonstrations, King wrote a letter in reply. Below is an excerpted version of the letter.

16 April 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

. . . We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was “well timed” in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word “Wait!” It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This “Wait” has almost always meant “Never.” We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.”

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, “Wait.” But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million
Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: “Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?”; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading “white” and “colored”; when your first name becomes “nigger,” your middle name becomes “boy” (however old you are) and your last name becomes “John,” and your wife and mother are never given the respected title “Mrs.”; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of “nobodiness”—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

. . . I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive
peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured. . . .

1 Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, (accessed October 19, 2015).
1. *Go Set a Watchman* created a literary sensation when it was published in July 2015. Explore the varied reactions to *Watchman* by reading these four reviews. Then consider the questions below. (You may also want to revisit the critical response to *Mockingbird* in 1960, from a then-unknown author, included in *Teaching Mockingbird*, Handout 7.1.)

*Boston Globe review* by Joni Rodgers

*Guardian review* by Sarah Churchwell

*The Atlantic review* by Sophie Gilbert

*New York Times op-ed* by Isabel Wilkerson

1. *Go Set a Watchman* was reviewed in dozens of publications around the world and inspired thousands of tweets, blog posts, and conversations. How do you account for the passionate response to this novel by readers and critics?

2. What range of opinions is presented here? How do the reviewers understand the connection between *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Watchman*? How do they connect *Watchman* to our world today?

3. If you have read all of *Watchman*, which reviews connect to your own thinking about the novel? Which reviews extend your thinking? Do any of the perspectives in these reviews challenge your ideas or lead you to reconsider your initial reactions to the book?

2. Although *Go Set a Watchman* is not a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the two novels share the setting of Maycomb, characters like Jean Louise and Atticus, and overlapping themes. Students who read both novels in their entirety can compare the character and experiences of Scout/Jean Louise in the two books using these questions.

1. How does Scout “come of age” in *Mockingbird*, and how do her experiences in *Watchman* extend your thinking about what it means to come of age?

2. In *Mockingbird*, Scout is portrayed as a “tomboy” who defies expectations about how girls should dress and act. In *Watchman*, how does the adult Jean Louise continue to negotiate unwritten rules about gender and what it means to be a woman?

3. How do you respond to the assumptions and expectations people have about your gender? To what extent do you embrace and reflect them? To what extent do you reject them?