

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Reference Guide for Comprehension

To Kill a Mockingbird | Harper Lee

Directions: Throughout this novel, there are several allusions and idioms inherent in Lee's writing. To help you make sense of all of the allusions, this handout can act as a reference guide to you. While many of these will be covered in class, it will help when you are heading outside of class.

Allusions

Chapter 1 - Allusions

Andrew Jackson: 7th President of the United States (1829-1837).

Battle of Hastings: a decisive battle in the Norman Conquests of England in 1066.

Cornwall: a country at the southwest tip of England.

disturbance between the North and the South: The Civil War (1861-1865)

Dracula: the 1931 film version of the famous vampire story.

flivver: another name for a Model-T Ford.

Jamaica: an island country in the West Indies, south of Cuba.

John Wesley: (1702-1791) Founder of the Methodist Church.

Meridian, Mississippi: Meridian is a city in east Mississippi.

Merlin: King Arthur's adviser, prophet and magician.

Mobile: a city in southwest Alabama.

no money to buy it with: an allusion to the Great Depression.

nothing to fear but fear itself: an allusion to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Inaugural Address.

Pensacola: a city in northwest Florida.

Philadelphia: a city in southeast Pennsylvania.

stumphole whiskey: illegally made and sold whiskey that would be hidden in the holes of tree stumps.

Tuscaloosa: a city in central Alabama.

Chapter 2 - Allusions

Bullfinch: an allusion to *Bulfinch's Mythology*, a famous collection of Greek myths. Jem is kidding, of course, but his reference to *Bulfinch's Mythology* is another indication of how much of a reader Scout has always been.

Dewey Decimal System: A system for organizing books in libraries devised by Melvil Dewey. Contrary to what Jem tells Scout, this Dewey has nothing to do with John Dewey, a theorist of progressive education.

diaries of Lorenzo Dow: Lorenzo Dow (1777 - 1834) was a Methodist preacher who traveled throughout the country, including the state of Alabama.

Here's a quarter: If a quarter doesn't seem like enough, remember that, during this portion of the Great Depression, a nickel bought a loaf of bread, a movie was a dime, and gasoline could be had for sixteen cents a gallon.

the crash: the Stock Market Crash of 1929 which led to the Great Depression.

union suit: a one-piece garment of underwear with a buttoned flap in the back.

Union: one side in the Civil War (the North)

Chapter 3 - Allusions

man who sat on a flagpole: Flagpole sitting was one of the stranger fads of the 1930s.

Chapter 4 - Allusions

Indian-heads: Before the Lincoln penny, there were Indian-head pennies.

One Man's Family: a radio serial (like a soap opera) which began in 1932 and proved to be enormously popular for almost thirty years. By acting out their version of the Radley story, the children are playing in their own version of the drama.

Chapter 5 - Allusions

Old Testament pestilence: Pestilence refers to a condition or disease that causes massive damage or death. One example of pestilence in the Old Testament of the Bible is a plague of locusts, such as the one described in Exodus 10.

Second Battle of the Marne: a battle in World War I.

Chapter 7 - Allusions

Egyptians walked that way: Jem's assumptions as to how Egyptians would have walked is probably based on pictures of Egyptian art.

Chapter 8 - Allusions

Appomattox: a former village in central Virginia. On April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House, ending the Civil War.

Bellingraths: Miss Maudie is referring to Walter and Bessie Bellingrath who, in 1932, opened their large, beautiful gardens to the public. The Bellingrath Gardens are located in Mobile, Alabama.

Lane cake: a rich white cake.

Rosetta Stone: Discovered in Egypt in 1799, the Rosetta Stone is a large block of basalt inscribed with a report of a decree passed in 196 BC. Written in three languages, the stone gave historians many clues as to the meaning of Egyptian Hieroglyphs.

Chapter 9 – Allusions

Confederate veteran: a veteran of the Civil War who fought for the South.

General Hood: Lieutenant-General John B. Hood, a Confederate officer.

House of Commons: the lower branch of the legislature in Great Britain

Let the cup pass from you: On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed to the Lord: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done [Luke 22:42]." By asking the Lord to "take this cup from me" he was praying that he might avoid his fate (in Greek, one of the figurative meanings for "cup" is "fate"). Uncle Jack's comment to Atticus calls upon this reference because he understands that his brother was not looking forward to his fate, which was having to defend Tom Robinson.

Lord Melbourne: (1779-1848) Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister, Melbourne also had the reputation for being something of a ladies' man.

Missouri Compromise: The Missouri Compromise (1820) allowed Missouri to be admitted to the Union as a slave state but stipulated no more slave states would be allowed above the southern border of Missouri.

Mount Everest: The highest known mountain in the world (29,028 feet), *Everest* is part of the Himalayas, on the border of Nepal and Tibet.

Ol' Blue Light: a reference to Stonewall Jackson.

Prime Minister: the head of a parliamentary government, such as Great Britain's.

Stonewall Jackson: a Confederate lieutenant-general.

Chapter 10 - Allusions

mockingbird: a North American bird known for its vocal imitations.

Chapter 11 – Allusions

Confederate Army: the Southern army in the Civil War.

CSA: Confederate States of America - the Southern side of the Civil War.

Dixie Howell: Millard "Dixie" Howell was a popular University of Alabama football player during the 1930s.

Ivanhoe: a novel written in 1819 by Sir Walter Scott set in the Middle Ages during the time of the Crusades.

Sir Walter Scott: author of *Ivanhoe* .

Chapter 12 – Allusions

Blackstone's *Commentaries*: One of the most important books ever written on British law.

Bootleggers: people who make and/or sell illegal liquor.

bread lines: During the Great Depression, thousands of people relied on charitable organizations for meals and would line up for simple meals often of bread and soup.

Brown's Mule: a brand of chewing tobacco.

castile: a type of soap, originally made in Spain

Garden of Gethsemane: the place where Jesus went to pray on the night before his crucifixion.

Hoyt's Cologne: a strong, lasting cologne, originally made in Germany and popular during the first part of the 20th century.

Hunt's *The Light of the World*: a well-known painting of Jesus Christ.

Octagon soap: a very harsh, strong soap.

Shadrach: One of the three men whom King Nebuchadnezzar threw into a blazing furnace, as told in Daniel 3 of the Bible. Because of their faith in God, all three men escaped unharmed.

sit-down strikes: During the Great Depression, sit-down strikes became a real force in labor relations in the United States. Unlike "regular" strikes, workers in a sit-down strike would literally "sit down on the job;" that is, they would refuse to leave the building until their demands were met. One of the most famous sit-down strikes of this era was the Flint sit-down strike at the General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan.

Chapter 13 - Allusions

Lydia E. Pinkham: a maker and manufacturer of patent medicines in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of Pinkham's medical concoctions were aimed at women, and the majority of them contained liberal amounts of alcohol.

Reconstruction: the period of time, roughly between 1867-1877, when the Southern states were reorganized and reestablished after the Civil War.

Rice Christians: Christian converts from third-world nations, especially those in parts of Asia.

War Between the States: the Civil War.

Chapter 15 - Allusions

battlement: a low wall with open spaces built on top of a castle wall or fort.

flying buttresses: a buttress (support) connected to a building by an arch.

Gothic: a style of architecture developed in Western Europe between the 12th and 16th century.

Jitney Jungle: a supermarket chain. Supermarkets were still relatively new to America in the 1930s. Most shoppers did business at smaller grocery stores.

snipe hunt: a practical joke. The "victim" is taken on a hunt deep into a forest at night and told to look for and capture "snipes," small, flightless birds that, in actuality, don't exist. While the hunter searches, the rest of the party leaves.

Chapter 16 - Allusions

Braxton Bragg: The commander of the Western Confederate Army during the Civil War, Bragg led a less-than-distinguished career in the military, and his army unit was eventually defeated.

Ethiopia: During the time of the Old Testament, Ethiopia was a kingdom in Northeast Africa. Today, Ethiopia is a country in Eastern Africa.

Greek revival columns: a form of architectural columns.

straight Prohibition ticket: Prohibition was a period in U.S. history (1920-1933) when the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages was against the law. By voting the straight Prohibition ticket, Mr. Jones always votes for those political candidates who support Prohibition and were likely members of the Prohibition Party.

William Jennings Bryan: (1860-1925) Bryan was a lawyer, a politician (he ran for the Presidency three times), and a famous orator. His speeches were major events, especially in the South and along the Bible Belt, and would draw huge crowds.

Chapter 17 - Allusions

fountain pen: a pen with a special nib at the end that allowed the pen to be refilled with ink from a bottle.

icebox: Before refrigerators, people used iceboxes, large wood cabinets kept cold on the inside by blocks of ice that would be delivered to the home.

Model-T Ford (on blocks): The Model-T (also known as a "tin Lizzie" or a "flivver") was Henry Ford's first popular success. Originally produced in 1909, it was affordable and relatively reliable. A car is put up on blocks for two main reasons: either it no longer has any tires, or the owner can't afford to drive it and putting it on blocks saves the tires from the damage caused by having to carry the weight of the car.

shotgun hall: A hallway that leads directly from the front door to the back door.

Chapter 18 - Allusions

cotton gin: a machine used to separate seed and other debris from cotton.

Mr. Jingle: A character in Charles Dicken's novel *The Pickwick Papers*, Mr. Jingle usually expresses himself in sentence fragments. Got some extra time?

Chapter 20 - Allusions

all men are created equal: A phrase from *The Declaration of Independence*.

distaff side of the Executive branch: a reference to Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (the Executive branch is the President, and distaff, in this case, means wife). Eleanor Roosevelt often came in for much criticism, especially in the South, for her views on civil rights.

Einstein: Albert Einstein (1879-1955), German-born physicist.

Rockefeller: John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), one of the richest men in America at the time.

Thomas Jefferson: 3rd President of the United States (1801-1809) and author of *The Declaration of Independence*.

Chapter 24 - Allusions

Birmingham: a city in Central Alabama.

Mrs. Roosevelt: First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

People up there set 'em free: in other words: the Northerners are responsible for the fact that the slaves were freed

tryin' to sit with 'em: in 1939, Eleanor Roosevelt attended a meeting for the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in Birmingham, Alabama where she defied state authorities by sitting in the center aisle, between whites and blacks, after police told her she was violating segregation laws by sitting with black people.

Chapter 25 - Allusions

English Channel: The English Channel is the waterway that separates Great Britain from France. It is also the avenue by which much trade is carried on between Great Britain and the European continent. According to Scout, Miss Stephanie is the avenue of gossip for much of Maycomb.

Chapter 26 - Allusions

Adolf Hitler has been after all the Jews: a reference to the Nazi anti-Jewish policy.

Adolf Hitler: (1889-1945) Nazi dictator of Germany from 1933 to 1945.

Elmer Davis: a journalist and CBS radio commentator who went on to head the Office of War Information.

holy-roller: a member of a small religious sect that expresses devotion by shouting and moving around during worship services.

Uncle Natchell Story: Uncle Natchell (along with his sidekick, Sonny Boy) was the cartoon mascot for a fertilizer product called Natural Chilean Nitrate of Soda. Many of the advertisements for this product were in comic strip or story form. Little Chuck Little has mistaken one of these advertising "stories" for an actual current event.

Chapter 27 - Allusions

Bob Taylor: Robert Love Taylor, late 19th Century orator and politician.

Ad Astra Per Aspera: Latin for "To the stars through difficulties"

Cotton Tom Heflin: J. Thomas "Cotton Tom" Heflin was an orator and Republican politician. Heflin was Secretary of State in Alabama at the beginning of the century and served in the U.S. Congress (1905-1920) and the Senate (1921-1931). Heflin's political support was drawn chiefly from rural voters and members of the Ku Klux Klan.

dog Victrolas: a reference to the advertising symbol of RCA/Victor; a dog, known as "Nipper," looking into the horn of a gramophone or Victrola.

Ladies' Law: From the Criminal Code of Alabama, Vol. III, 1907: "Any person who enters into, or goes sufficiently near to the dwelling house of another, and, in the presence or hearing of the family of the occupant thereof, or any member of his family, or any person who, in the presence or hearing of any girl or woman, uses abusive, insulting or obscene language must, on conviction, be fined not more than two hundred dollars, and may also be imprisoned in the county jail, or sentenced to hard labour for the county for not more than six months."

National Recovery Act: better known as the National Recovery Administration or the NRA. The NRA was a series of programs set up to help the nation, especially the nation's businesses, recover from the effects of the Great Depression. It was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935.

nine old men: the members of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional in 1935.

NRA-WE DO OUR PART: the motto of the National Recovery Administration (NRA).

Syrians: People from Syria, a country at the northwest part of the Mediterranean region, south of Turkey.

WPA: During the Great Depression, when millions of Americans were out of work, the government instituted the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and employed over eight million people.

Chapter 28 - Allusions

three-corner hats, confederate caps, Spanish-American War hats, and World War helmets: all references to the headgear of various soldiers from different wars.

Idioms

Chapter 5 - Idioms

acid tongue in her head: Acid is very bitter in taste. Someone with an acid tongue is someone who tends to speak bitterly or sharply.

get Miss Maudie's goat: To get one's goat is to make a person disgusted or angry.

Chapter 7 - Idioms

walked on eggs: To walk on eggs is to walk very carefully.

Chapter 9 - Idioms

as sure as eggs: Something that is as sure as eggs is a sure thing; it's bound to happen; just as chickens are sure to lay eggs.

bowed to the inevitable: An event or occurrence that is inevitable is one that cannot be stopped from occurring. To bow to the inevitable is to realize this fact and resist fighting it. Atticus realizes that, sooner or later, Scout and Jem would be given guns and be taught how to shoot, so he doesn't try to fight it.

drew a bead on him: To draw a bead on someone is to aim at or focus on that person.

on tenterhooks: To be on tenterhooks is to be filled with suspense or anxiety.

set my teeth permanently on edge: To set one's teeth on edge is to annoy someone or make them feel nervous the way in which Aunt Alexandra tends to annoy Scout

Chapter 10 - Idioms

break camp: pack up; move on. In Scout's case, Atticus is telling her to put her gun away and quit her game.

tooth and nail: To fight someone tooth and nail is to fight that person as fiercely as possible (literally with teeth and fingernails if necessary).

tribal curse: a family curse or, more aptly, an affliction shared by members of a family. Apparently, many members of the Finch family have had problems with their left eyes.

Chapter 11 – Idioms

'druthers: a contraction of the phrase "I'd rather." Your 'druthers is your choice or preference; it's what you'd rather do or have.

slow fuse: A person with a slow fuse is someone who is not easily upset or angered.

stood as much guff: Guff is foolish or brash talk. Jem has had enough of all the foolish, rude talk about Atticus.

when the chips are down: at the most important time. [In gambling games, a person puts chips or money down in front of him to show that he is willing to risk an amount in a bet.]

Chapter 12 - Idioms

to scrape a few barnacles off the ship of state: Barnacles are a form of shellfish that attach themselves to stationary items such as ships that have been standing still in the water for a long time. In order to maintain a boat or a ship, the barnacles must be scraped off. The ship of state, in this case, refers to the state government. The governor is saying that it is necessary to maintain and update (scrape a few barnacles off) the workings of the government (the ship of state).

Chapter 13 - Idioms

traveled in state: To travel in state is to do so in the position of a person of great wealth and rank.

Chapter 15 - Idioms

he had seen the light: In this case to have seen the light means to have become religious.

Chapter 16 - Idioms

blind spots: a prejudice or area of ignorance that someone has but is unaware of. Mr. Cunningham's blind spot is his prejudice against Tom Robinson.

Chapter 17 – Idioms

counting his chickens: Scout is referring to the first half of the proverb: "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," which means "don't be too sure that something will happen before it does." Although Jem seems to be certain that Atticus has won his case, Scout thinks he is counting his chickens, that is, he is too sure of something that may not happen.

guests of the county: on public assistance or welfare

Chapter 18 - Idioms

took advantage of me: In this instance, the phrase to take advantage of means to have sexual intercourse with.

Chapter 19 - Idioms

looked daggers: A dagger is a type of knife. To look daggers at someone is to look sharply at that person.

Chapter 22 - Idioms

give the lie: To give the lie to something is to prove that thing to be false or untrue. Scout is saying that the way in which Miss Stephanie and Miss Rachel are acting proves that Dill's statements about them are not untrue.

runner: chicken leg

Chapter 24 - Idioms

blue in the face: angry and upset; excited and emotional

fighting the good fight: In the case of the ladies of the missionary circle, the good fight would be their work to aid missionaries around the world in their cause of converting people to Christianity.

their time came: Although this could be a reference to childbirth, it is more likely a reference to a woman's menstrual cycle.

wool: Mrs. Merriweather is referring to her maid's head or, more specifically, her hair. "It's never entered that wool of hers" is Mrs. Merriweather's way of saying, "It's never entered that head of hers."

Chapter 30 – Idioms

into the limelight: In the theater, the limelight is an intense light thrown on stage in order to highlight an actor, etc. To be in the limelight is to be put in a prominent position before the public.