FILM STUDY GUIDE FOR TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
SEEING THE FILM THROUGH THE LENS OF MEDIA LITERACY

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING FILM 1

Before students can begin to study film, they must be provided with a focus. There are many ways to look at a film. Posted below is a suggestion for teachers. Throughout this teacher guide for *To Kill A Mockingbird*, you will find numerous resources which touch on many of the characteristics listed below.

Students might be assigned different elements in which to research and study.

Literary Aspects	Dramatic Aspects	Cinematic Aspects	Language Work
Narrative Characters Setting Theme Signs Genre	Acting Costumes Make-up	Camera angles Sound and vision Lighting	Integrated skills with a greater focus on speaking and writing.

* Narrative (the story, story line, what the story line is based on; binary oppositions; disruption of an equilibrium and how a new equilibrium sets in).

* Characters (heroes, villains, helpers, main characters, supporting characters, and how characters function and contribute to our understanding of the story).

* Setting (physical environment in which filming occurs, indoor or outdoor setting, its significance).

* Theme (general statement about the subject).

* Signs (anything perceptible that has significance beyond its usual function or meaning; an object, a sound, a person, an act, a color).

* Genre (romance, comedy, suspense, a combination of different genres).

* Acting (the performance of actors, whether it is convincing or not).

* Costumes (formal clothes, informal clothes, their color, and their contribution to the film).

* Make-up (style, color, whether it is exaggerated or plain, the effects it creates, colors).

* Camera angles, movements, and positions (low camera angle, high camera angle, dose-up, extreme close-up, tilted camera, and how these affect our understanding).

* Sound and vision (sound effects, soundtrack music, visual effects).

* Lighting (illumination in a scene).1

Another Approach2

Questions to consider while introducing, studying and analyzing film:

1. **Who is telling the story? Why is it being told? Does it appear to have a purpose?**
(media agencies, authorial voice, writers and 'auteurs', marketing, economics, ideology)

2. **How is it experienced? Who 'consumes' it, where and in what way?**
(readers and media audiences- private and public experience, narrative structures)

3. **How is it made?**
(film technology, publishing and episodic publishing-the differences they make to the production process as well as to the finished product)

4. **How does it construct meaning?**
(film language and written language-expectations of audiences and readers, codes and conventions, narrative structures)

5. **How does it represent its subject- especially with reference to period?**
(representation, use of stereotypes, representation of the past)

Three Ways of Thinking & Talking About Films 3		
Literary Aspects	**Dramatic Aspects**	**Cinematic Aspects**
Who are the characters in the film?	Did the actors make you forget they were acting? How?	What vivid visual images did you note? What did they make you feel or think about?
What is the film's setting?	Were costumes, make-up, and set equally important to the success of the film?	What sounds or music do you remember? What did they make you feel

		or think about?
What are the main plot elements?	In what scene was an actor's voice (pitch, volume, expression) particularly effective?	What scenes can you understand even without dialogue? Why?
From whose point of view is the story told?	Select a scene that must have been difficult to act. How did the actor make his or her body movements appropriate and convincing?	What scene has very effective or unusual editing?
What is the theme of the film?	Describe a scene in which facial expression was important. What feelings were developed? Were words necessary?	If the film uses special effects, do they add to or detract from your enjoyment of the film?
What is the mood of the film?	Did the actors establish their characters more through dialogue or through movement and facial expressions?	.
What symbols did you notice?	How is this film like or unlike other films by the director? Does this director have a recognizable "style"?	.
.	Was there anything about the acting, set, or costumes that bothered you or interfered with your watching of the film?	.

See bibliography for all source material cited here

Recommended Reading

The World In A Fresh Light, To Kill A Mockingbird, Film As Text, Australian Screen Education, No. 35, Winter 2004

Using Film to Increase Literacy Skills, English Journal, Vol. 93. NO. 3. January 2004

How to Organize a Film As Literature Class
http://www.englishjournal.colostate.edu/images/filmclass.pdf