

# To Kill A Mockingbird: Lighting

## TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD: SEEING THE FILM THROUGH THE LENS OF MEDIA LITERACY

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"Lighting can be hard, soft, or any gradation in between. Hard lighting creates strong shadows, while soft lighting is shadowless. The type of lighting depends on the type of story to be told. Lighting can be manipulated to achieve a desired dramatic effect....Depending on its context, lighting can signify truth and wisdom.....Dark or harshly lit pictures can trigger feelings of fear, tension and a sense of impending evil in the audience." 1

"Lighting creates atmosphere. A mixture of dark shadows and pools of light may create a sense of unease, as in a thriller; if the lighting makes everything bright, the atmosphere may seem more relaxed. The filmmaker can use lighting to draw our attention to, or hide, a person or object." 2

"Soft lighting and a low level of color contrast (many gray tones) help give many of the shots in *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1963) a soft, romantic, nostalgic feeling." 3

DVD Chapter 10 "A Look At Boo" Running time ( 23:44)



Consider this scene in regards to lighting. Have students consider the following:

– what time of day is portrayed in the scene?

- where (from what direction) does the lighting emanate?
- what might be generating this kind of light? (i.e. moonlight; streetlight)
- notice how half of Jem's face is in the light, the other half in the dark
- notice the shadows on the wall created by the column on the porch and by the rocking chair on which Scout is perched
- notice the other shadows, for example, running along the length of the house wall, perhaps generated by trees in the distance
- in what ways does the “dark or harshly lit pictures (in this scene) ...trigger feelings of fear, tension and a sense of impending evil ” ?

### **Recommended links**

[Lighting As Storytelling](#)

(full chapter from the text: *Cinematography: Theory Into Practice*)

[Film Language: Use of Lighting](#)

### **Recommended book**

[Painting With Light](#) by John Alton

### **Recommended VHS/DVD**

[Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography](#)

For a list of recommended books about using motion pictures in the classroom, go [here](#).