



Lights, Camera, Civics!

Discussion Guide



Discussion Guide: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

I. First Evening/First Half of the Program

1. Introductions. Who is in attendance? If a smaller group, each person is invited to share their first name, hometown/city, and occupation. Keep it very short; for example: “I’m Ken and I’m a freshman at UNH in Durham,” or “I’m Maria and I am a retired history teacher.” If a larger group, ask people to raise hands and identify if they are students, educators, or lawyers, and which county/communities they are from. Ask people to sign in. Mention food options.

(Approximately 7 minutes).

2. Welcome and purpose. Welcome the audience and thank the participants for carving out time to have these important and civil discussions. The New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education (with generous financial support from NH Humanities) has initiated *Lights, Camera, Civics!* to create intergenerational civil conversations about concepts of justice in New Hampshire, to improve civic knowledge through film, and to foster relationships between youth, educators, and lawyers, and the public. Its goal is to have film discussions like this one in each county of New Hampshire annually. Share and read aloud the collective commitments with thanks to NH Listens for its inspiration. Ask for consent from the group.

(Approximately 8 minutes).

3. Provide context for the film. Identify the time and place: the story takes place in the mid-1930s (during the Great Depression) in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama (the “Deep South.”). Discuss the legal context in which the events occurred (consult the legal back-up materials).

(Approximately 12 minutes).

4. Pose and post introductory questions. Consider these questions as you watch this film:

- What civic, legal, and social issues -- including that of discrimination -- addressed in the film still confront us today?
- How is justice portrayed in this film? How does it relate to your own understanding of justice?
- Consider issues of socioeconomic class tension and bias against certain demographics.

(Approximately 12 minutes).

5. Watch the first portion of film. Stop at approximately 1 hour and 12 minutes, immediately after the completion of Sheriff Tate's testimony.

(Approximately 80 minutes).

6. Discuss introductory questions. If people know they will not be able to participate in the second day, ask them to complete the evaluation form.

(Approximately 15 minutes).

First half should run no longer than 2 1/4 hours.

II. Second Evening, or After a Break (if event is planned for a single day)

1. **Repeat welcome and purpose above** (see Section I(2), above). Sign in. Pose and post the same or different questions.

(Approximately 7 minutes).

2. **Show the last hour of the film.**

(Approximately 50 minutes).

3. **Post-film discussion questions.**

- What can we do when we believe the legal system or legal process is unjust?
- How do time and place affect the way justice is carried out?
- How does personal morality affect legal decision-making? Should personal morality be kept completely separate from legal decision-making? What is the relationship between the personal definitions of justice and legal definitions of justice?
- At what point/s should adults talk about these hard issues of justice with children and expose them to examples of injustice? Is middle school the “right” time?
- Other questions more specific to the film being shown. Legal and civics questions.

(Approximately 45 minutes).

4. **Closing.** Each participant talks with a partner not previously known to that person about what s/he has learned from this experience and what s/he will take away from this experience. *(1 minute to think. 4 minutes to talk. 2 minutes each.)*

If there is time, individuals may choose to share reflections with the larger group -- posted on easel paper or out loud.

(Approximately 6 minutes).

5. **Evaluations completed.**

(Approximately 7 minutes).

Second half should run no longer than 2 1/4 hours.

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