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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2015 Volume IV: Using Film in the Classroom/How to Read a Film

"You Should Be in a Dress and Camisole": Reading Gender in the Novel and Film Adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* Through Setting, Character, and Event

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.04.05, published September 2015
by Molly Myers

At one point in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the character Ms. Dubose yells from her porch to a young Scout Finch, "you should be in a dress and camisole!" There are many such gendered moments in both the novel and film adaptation. These moments create many opportunities and points of access for students to read and analyze "texts" in terms of how the author or filmmaker make specific choices to establish setting, create character, and present important events. This unit will serve as the baseline for a women's studies course taught as an elective to 11th and 12th grade students. The purpose of the unit is to introduce and pre-assess the skills of close reading and analyzing various texts (fiction, non-fiction, and film) in order to examine the concepts of "reading gender" and to introduce the necessary intersectional awareness in text and film to prepare students for the kind of analytical thinking we will be developing throughout the year.

(Developed for Women's Studies, grades 11-12; recommended for English and Reading, grades 9-12, and Sociology and Film Studies, grades 11-12)

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