

Activity 1. Trial Plaintiffs Compared: Teacher’s Version

Identify words and phrases that describe each plaintiff in each case and enter them in the space provided. [Note: Vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar to students are highlighted and their definitions are provided in parenthesis at the end of the sentence.]

Scottsboro Trial (1931) observation:

To Kill a Mockingbird observation:

Ms. Hollace Ransdall’s report

Tom Robinson trial; chapters 17–18

Description of each plaintiff

<p>Victoria Price</p> <p>“the type that welcomes attention and publicity at any price”</p> <p>“no shame”</p> <p>“bubbling, pert personality” (<i>lively</i>)</p> <p>“quicker and garrulous” (<i>talkative</i>)</p> <p>“shrewd young woman ” “got the point at once of what was needed to hurry the trial through” (<i>smart</i>)</p> <p>“flip retorts” (<i>smooth-talking</i>)</p>	<p>Mayella Ewell</p> <p>“looked as if she tried to keep clean”</p> <p>“a thick-bodied girl accustomed to strenuous labor.”</p> <p>“enough sense to get the judge sorry for her”</p> <p>“something stealthy about hers, like a steady-eyed cat with a twitchy tail” (<i>sly</i>)</p> <p>“she took offense to routine courtesy”</p> <p>“As Tom Robinson gave his testimony, it came to me that Mayella Ewell must have been the loneliest person in the world.”</p>
<p>Ruby Bates</p> <p>“pushed into the background”</p> <p>“followed the lead of Victoria”</p> <p>“slow and stupid” “words came hard”</p> <p>“weak witness”</p> <p>“mixed up”</p> <p>“large, fresh, good-looking girl”</p> <p>“spits snuff on the floor continually” (<i>tobacco in the form of powder</i>)</p>	

To Kill a Mockingbird and the Scottsboro Boys

Identify words and phrases that describe each plaintiff in each case and enter them in the space provided.

Scottsboro Trial (1931) observation:

To Kill a Mockingbird observation:

Ms. Hollace Ransdall’s report

Tom Robinson trial; chapters 17–18

Description of each plaintiff’s family

<p>Victoria Price’s Family</p> <p>“little unpainted shack”</p> <p>“separated from her husband”</p> <p>“professes flamboyant devotion” (<i>showy</i>)</p> <p>Mill workers “every other week laid off”</p> <p>“running a speakeasy on the side with a married man” (<i>place to sell and drink illegal alcohol</i>)</p>	<p>Mayella Ewell’s Family</p> <p>“lived as guests of the county”</p> <p>“numerous offspring” (<i>children</i>)</p> <p>“congenital defects” (<i>hereditary</i>)</p> <p>“diseases indigenous to the filthy surroundings” (<i>native</i>)</p> <p>“their relief check was far from enough to feed the family” (<i>welfare</i>)</p> <p>“the younger children had perpetual colds and suffered from chronic ground-itch”</p>
<p>Ruby Bates’ Family</p> <p>“no father”</p> <p>“bare unpainted shack”</p> <p>“lived among the Negroes...mixed with them”</p> <p>“neither mother nor daughter showed signs of regarding the alleged experience as anything to be deplored” (<i>unproven</i>)</p> <p>“discussed the case matter-of-factly”</p> <p>“publicity...impressed them greatly”</p>	<p>(<i>The itching eruption caused by hookworm disease, a condition where larvae enter the body through the skin or in contaminated food or water and migrate to the small intestine where, as adults, they attach to the mucosa and ingest blood; symptoms may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, colic or nausea, and anemia.</i>)</p> <p>“No friends”</p>

Engage in a discussion comparing the plaintiffs and their families. Answer the following discussion questions using the words and phrases gathered as evidence to support your responses. (Answers will vary.):

To Kill a Mockingbird and the Scottsboro Boys

- **What similarities in personality are evident in the plaintiffs in both the fiction and the historical trials as described in these observations?**
- **Atticus takes up valuable court time and narrative space, “quietly building up before the jury a picture of the Ewell’s home life.” Why would it be important for an attorney to identify the kind of homes and family a plaintiff came from?**
- **What are the similarities in family background and life experience of the plaintiffs? Are there any differences?**
- **How might a reader of the Ransdall report be influenced by reading it? How do Scout’s descriptions affect the reader’s understanding of Tom Robinson’s case in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?**