

AICE English Literature Summer Assignment 2026



1. Choose one of the following novels to read:

The Yield by Tara June Winch

A Handful of Dust by Evelyn Waugh

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

2. Complete the following 'Approach Paper' assignment on the novel. Try to keep it on one page, if you can.

An Approach Paper consists of several sections:

I. **Proper heading:** at top left with your name, the date, the course, and the novel title.

II. **Summary paragraph:** a three- or four-sentence paragraph that explains the *entire* novel using as much description and detail as you can manage. To vary your writing style, you may *not* use semi-colons or colons in this paragraph, and every sentence *must* start out in a different way. Prepositional phrases, gerund phrases, normal word order clauses, participial phrases, and infinitive phrases are some of the different ways you might choose to start these sentences. This variety makes your writing more interesting to read.

This is often the most difficult section of the approach paper to write. It will take time to condense the happenings of the novel into these few sentences which all start in a different way.

III. **Character descriptions:** choose *four* main characters from the novel. By each of the characters' names, list four or five words which describe the character distinctly. This is a good time to think about vivid vocabulary words; check a dictionary or thesaurus for ideas. If you use a particular word to describe one character, you may *not* use that same word to describe another character.

III. **Character connections:** pick a character that shares characteristics as you. Choose a scene from the novel where the character is similar to you and explain the connection. How are you similar to the character? Give evidence from the text in this section.

IV **Image stand out:** what image from the novel left an impression on you while you were reading? Think about the significance of the image. In your explanation, you could explore its impact on a character's development or the theme of the novel. Describe the image and offer an insightful explanation as to why you chose it. Please include the chapter that it came from as well.

V. **Discussion/essay questions:** write three questions about the novel that a teacher might ask you, either in class or for an essay. These questions should be thought-provoking and almost always take more than one line to type because they ask readers to combine more than one idea. Just writing these types of questions helps you anticipate what questions might be asked of you in class discussion or on a test and encourages you to think more insightfully about the book (inference-type questions). Do not write yes/no questions.

VI. Key passage: choose the most important passage in the novel (in your opinion). Type it up word-for-word and include quotation marks. Make sure to identify the narrator(s)/speaker(s) and page number.

VII. Key passage explanation: in a fully-developed paragraph, explain why your chosen passage is important to understanding the novel. In your explanation, make sure you *integrate quotes* (actual words or phrases) from the key passage to strengthen your explanation. Often this selected passage will offer clues to the novel's *themes*. Explain any mentioned or inferred themes connected to the key passage (*connect your chosen quotes to a theme or themes in the novel*).

VIII: Thematic connections: what other works can your novel be thematically connected to? Don't merely think about similar plot points or moments between your chosen novel and another work. Instead, how are the lessons, the purpose of the novel connected to another work? The work can be a play, a musical, another novel, a poem, or even a song, but it has to be something that is written down; don't think about movies or television shows. Describe how these two works connect in detail.

See the next page for a sample approach paper. Your paper must be formatted exactly like the sample paper for full credit consideration. You may also be required to turn in your paper to turnitin.com to verify authorship.

The due date for the paper will be given you the first day of class. Be prepared to turn it in that week.

Email the course teachers, Mrs. Marcie Hagan or Mr. James Crimmins, with any questions:
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Joe Shmoe
August 10, 2026
AICE Eng Lit: Mrs. Hagan or Mr. Crimmins
To Kill a Mockingbird Approach Paper

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the story of three years in the childhood of Scout and her older brother Jem. As an adult narrator, Scout recalls a series of loosely connected episodes which occur in Maycomb, Alabama, in the 1930s, a time of racial segregation and extreme prejudice. Weaving two strands of narrative, Lee presents Boo Radley, the mysterious and reclusive neighbor whom the children find both intriguing and frightening, with the trial of Tom Robinson, a hardworking, innocent black man who is being defended by Scout and Jem's just and courageous father, Atticus Finch. The two strands of narrative tie together in the end when Boo Radley emerges from his seclusion to save Scout and Jem from a cowardly attack on them by Bob Ewell, who vowed vengeance on Atticus after the trial.

Scout Finch: strong-willed, intelligent, tomboyish, loyal, quick-tempered

Jem Finch: thoughtful, steadfast, imaginative, maturing

Atticus Finch: just, courageous, insightful, determined

Boo Radley: reclusive, lonely, simple, protective

The character I connect with most is Scout. When she witnesses what happens to Tom Robinson, she sees the world in a different way. In chapter 25, page 244, she says, "Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the *secret courts of men's hearts* Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the *minute* Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed." She understands the scope of the prejudice of the town and has to take her "rose colored glasses" off. I had to take my glasses off when my parents got divorced. I realized that love doesn't always work out. Like Scout, I looked at the world in a different way.

The image that stood out to me was when, in chapter 22, Atticus came home to a kitchen full of food, left by the black families who didn't have much to begin with. They dropped off food as a thank you to him for defending Tom Robinson. The narrator describes Atticus's eyes filling with tears, and he couldn't speak for a moment when he saw what they did for him. Atticus was a man who didn't show emotion in the novel, so when he was described in this way, I knew how remarkable Atticus was because of how he did what was morally right without asking for anything in return. The black community recognized this and knew how much he risked to defend Tom. This scene reinforced the integrity and moral courage of Atticus.

1. **To Kill a Mockingbird** deals with the issue of racial equality, but Harper Lee also includes the strong story line of Boo Radley. How does the Tom Robinson trial combine with the Boo Radley story thread to make a novel that speaks powerfully of more than just racial equality?
2. What do Jem and Scout finally understand about their father: what he stands for in their own lives and in the lives of many of the townspeople?
3. Discuss the three different views of Tom Robinson's trial and its outcome as seen by Atticus, Jem and Scout, and the townspeople.

From Chapter 3, page 30:

Atticus: "First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Atticus' entire philosophy of life seems to be summed up in his words to Scout. To be an objective and just community member, one must be able to "climb into" another person's "skin" and "walk around in it" or be able to see issues from another person's perspective. Atticus offers these words to Scout after her first day of formal schooling in the first grade when she is upset that the teacher doesn't understand her efforts to explain Walter Cunningham's financial situation. These words from Atticus begin her first lessons in life. Through the course of the novel, Atticus will show the children his compassion for people different from their family, his

attempts to “climb into someone’s skin and walk around in it” when he defends an innocent black man, Tom Robinson, against a town’s wishes, and when he instructs the children to be respectful and compassionate toward Boo Radley, a neighborhood recluse. One of the main themes of the novel is the understanding and accepting of people different from oneself.

After much consideration, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* is thematically similar to John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*. In Lee’s novel, we witness from Scout’s perspective how an innocent person, like Tom Robinson, can lose their life and freedom at the hands of those like Mr. Ewell, who are simply vengeful and cruel. Similarly, Steinbeck explores good and evil through the eyes of Adam and Catherine Trask, members of the Trask family who are split between the good and the evil they see in others. Adam’s virtuous soul is what allows Catherine to abuse his kindness, while Catherine’s innate evil helps her become successful at first but leaves her feeble and destitute by the end of the novel. In the end, both novels demonstrate that good and evil are two sides of the same coin, but it is important to emphasize good while dismissing evil.