

American Literature Semester 1 Model Common Assessment

“One-Shot Finch” from To Kill A Mockingbird (pp. 392-398 in *Reading Literature*)

Young children often judge adults by what they can or can't do. In this passage, Scout tells about an incident from her childhood. As a result of this experience, both she and Jem learn something new about their father...

Multiple Choice: Place the letter of the correct answer on the line. (Answers are marked.)

____ 1. Why does Atticus have to kill Tim Johnson?

- a. He is sick and perhaps dangerous*
- b. He belongs to the sheriff
- c. He has fleas
- d. He bites

____ 2. Which of the following is NOT a reason that Scout is embarrassed by her father:

- a. He does not play football
- b. He is an expert marksman*
- c. He does not hunt, fish, or play poker
- d. He wears glasses

____ 3. Why is a sin to kill a mockingbird?

- a. They are the state bird of Alabama
- b. They are an endangered species
- c. They help pollinate the flowers
- d. Their only purpose is to make beautiful music*

____ 4. Why doesn't the sheriff shoot the dog himself?

- a. He forgot his glasses
- b. He doesn't have any bullets in the gun
- c. He knows that Atticus is a better marksman*
- d. He is the owner of the dog

____ 5. What is Jem's immediate reaction after Tim Johnson is shot?

- a. Weeping with sadness
- b. Paralyzed with shock*
- c. Angry at Atticus
- d. Fear that the dog is not dead

_____6. Why does Atticus keep his shooting ability a secret?

- a. He is more proud of being a gentleman than a sharp shooter
- b. He does not want his own children to use guns
- c. He is opposed to killing living beings*
- d. He accidentally killed someone

Words to Know: Use context clues in the selection to answer the questions that follow.

7. When Atticus warns Miss Maudie that she is in “considerable *peril*” (393), he means that she is in
- a. Danger*
 - b. luck
 - c. safety
 - d. darkness
8. Zeebo gingerly lifts Tim Johnson into the truck. *Gingerly* means
- a. Roughly
 - b. Carefully*
 - c. Angrily
 - d. Aggressively
9. With movements so swift they seemed simultaneous, Atticus’s hand ranked a ball-tipped lever as he brought the gun to his shoulder. *Simultaneous* means
- a. Occurring similarly but at different times
 - b. Occurring occasionally
 - c. Occurring at the same time*
 - d. Occurring at different times
10. In paragraph 6 the word *rudiments* means
- a. Fundamentals*
 - b. manners
 - c. completion
 - d. materials

Short Answers: In three to five sentences, answer the following questions. Cite specific evidence from the text. (Student answers follow. The actual assessment will include more than three questions.)

1. The climax is the turning point of action in a story. What is the climax in “One-Shot Finch”? How does the event create a turning point in the children’s relationship with their father?

The climax in this excerpt is when Atticus takes aim and shoots Tim Johnson. This is the most exciting part of the reading, but the climax is not always the most exciting part. The reason this moment is the climax is that this is the point at which the two children see their father differently. Previously the narrator and her brother have seen their father as old and incapable of doing anything heroic or brave. They discuss this with Miss Maudie, saying that their father is “old” and “can’t do anything.” Miss Maudie lists the things that Atticus can do, such as playing a Jew’s Harp, but the children aren’t impressed. The author describes the threat that the dog poses as it walks crazily down the street, and the neighbors are not sure what to do until Atticus arrives. Even the sheriff is not up to the job. When Atticus shoots the dog, the author says his “hand yanked a ball-tipped lever as he brought the gun to his shoulder,” showing that she wants the reader to pay careful attention to his abilities. After the dog falls, each character responds in a different way, also showing that the shooting is the central part of this excerpt.

2. Discuss the relationship between Atticus and his children.

What is most obvious is the fact that the narrator and her brother refer to their father by his first name. This does not seem to indicate disrespect, however, for although they do not think he is admirable in an exciting way, they do hold him in a place of honor. The selection opens with the narrator describing her father as “feeble” and “old,” and incapable of matching the accomplishments of her classmates’ fathers, but neither child ever talks back to the father. Instead, they discuss their questions about him with their neighbor Miss Maudie and their maid Calpurnia. Towards the end of the selection, Jem tells his sister to keep the incident quiet and says, “Atticus is a real gentleman, just like me!” This seems to show that at least the brother has shifted in his views and now sees Atticus as completely worthy of their respect, despite his “uninteresting” life.

3. In “One-Shot Finch,” Scout says, “Atticus can’t do anything.” What observations do the children make which at first seem to prove this statement? What observations do they make later in the story that disprove Scout’s statement?

The narrator observes that her father is “feeble; he was nearly fifty” and “much older than the parents of [their] school contemporaries.” Although he will play keep-away with Jem, he says he is too old for tackle football. Furthermore, he does not “do anything” like work in a drugstore or drive a dump truck or do anything that could “arouse the admiration of anyone.” At the end of the selection, Scout “meekly” admits to Miss Maudie with one word that she is no longer ashamed of her father: “Nome.” Jem is more verbose, at first stunned by his father’s shooting Tim Johnson and then says, “Atticus is real old, but I wouldn’t care if he couldn’t do anything – I wouldn’t care if he couldn’t do a blessed thing.”