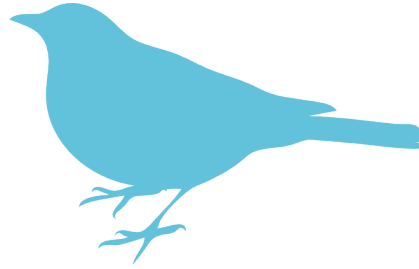


Questions for Understanding in TKAM, ch. 28—Key Lit Device: FOIL



These model questions address the literary device of the foil. A foil is a character whose traits directly contrast with that of another character in order to highlight important differences. Here, Cecil Jacobs, in his youthful innocence, serves as foil to Bob Ewell, a man set on true evil.

Thesis: In Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the author displays how two characters, Bob Ewell and Cecil Jacobs, foil each other in order to bring a false sense of security to readers and heighten the shock factor of the most pivotal event in chapter 28 of the novel.

Supporting quotations (with context and a lead-in) to guide the questions I create:

A) Scout and Jem, walking toward the school and Halloween Pageant, are surprise attacked by their school-mate, Cecil Jacobs. Cecil's attack is marked with brightness and juvenile fun, as Scout describes "a circle of light burst[ing] in [their] faces, and Cecil Jacobs jump[ing] in glee behind it" (343).

Note: This particular quotation helps shed some light into the character of Cecil Jacobs, someone innocent, even if annoying, who really doesn't mean any harm. He will stand in stark contrast later to the mysterious attacker seen in the second half of the chapter.

B) The circumstances surrounding the second—and real—attack on Jem and Scout are grave and different. Instead of giggles, laughter, and rolling eyes of annoyance, Scout describes the sounds created by the attacker, sounds of "scuffing, kicking sounds, sounds of shoes and flesh scraping dirt and roots" (351).

Note: While it seems that this quotation is meant to discuss imagery, it is only included because the attacker himself remains mysterious. These are clues, though, that can help us understand the character of Bob Ewell better, someone who is malicious and might kick individuals in the dirt and awful roots without even thinking twice. Remember when analyzing your quotations, to stay focused on the literary device you are discussing.

Questions to Prompt Thinking about Mood:

- 1) Describe Cecil's joking attack on Scout and Jem.
- 2) What kind of character is Cecil? Is he a malicious individual, or annoying and playful? How do we know?
- 3) What are Scout and Jem's reactions to Cecil?
- 4) Describe the details surrounding Cecil's "attack". This might be the physical circumstances, the obvious and intentional revealing of the attacker (Cecil), or the dialogue passed between all those involved.
- 5) How does Cecil's "attack" give Scout and Jem a false sense of security? MORE IMPORTANTLY, *how does this make readers feel?*
- 6) Contrast these with the details of the actual malicious "mysterious" attack. MORE IMPORTANTLY, *how do readers feel now, and why do you think the author chose to create a sudden change in mood?*
- 7) What are clues that Bob Ewell is the attacker? How might we know?
- 8) What kind of character is Bob Ewell? Is he a malicious individual, or annoyingly playful? How do we know?
- 9) What are Scout and Jem's reactions both before the weird spookiness before the attack and while it is occurring?
- 10) Why is Bob Ewell's attack on Scout and Jem so much worse?

Group Task:

- 1) As a group, decide on the two quotations you think best fit the literary device you are discussing that shapes the mood you've decided upon. Provide context for them, and a proper lead-in.
- 2) Then, form a clear thesis statement including these components:
 - TAG (title, author, genre)
 - the literary device and an adjective describing it
 - the particular mood it shapes
 - why readers are affected by this calmer mood/ false sense of security, etc., when the more intense events occur
- 3) Finally, create 10 questions that can fit with the ideas you will present in your eventual paragraph. These questions do not need to be answered, just formed and thought about. When forming them, think of various deeper thoughts you can form about your quotations, how you can connect them to the significance of the mood, and what bigger things they can teach readers.