



English I - ELL
Week 4

English I, Week 4

The Bias of the First-Person Narrator

Activities 4.10 and 4.11

Week 4 Task 1: Activity 4.10 p. 492-496 (~55 min)

- Complete the “Opening Writing Prompt” on p. 492 (5 min)
- Read the “About Author” on p. 492 (2-3 min)- conduct on the spot research to learn more about Heidi W. Durrow
- Using the “As You Read” prompt on p. 492, read the excerpt *from The Girl Who Fell from the Sky on pg. 493-494* (15 min)
- Complete the “Making Observations” box on p. 494 (5 min).
- Do the “Working from the Text” graphic organizer on p. 495 (15 min).
- Answer the questions for “Appreciating the Author’s Craft” & “Check your Understanding” on p. 496 (10 min)

Week 4 Task 2: Activity 4.11 p. 497-499 (~55 min)

- Complete the “Opening Writing Prompt” on p. 497 (5 min)
- Read the “About Author” on p. 497 (2-3 min)- conduct on the spot research to learn more about Harper Lee
- Read the Historical Background box on p. 498 (5 min)
- Read the first 13 paragraphs of *To Kill a Mocking Bird* provided after Activity 4.11 (15 min)
- Answer the two “Reading Chapter 1: Scout’s Voice” Questions on p. 498 (5 min)
- Do the “Working from the Text” sequencing activity on p. 499 (10 min)
- Complete the “Appreciating the Author’s Craft” & “Checking your Understanding” questions on p. 499 (10 min)

Learning Strategies

Close Reading
Graphic Organizer

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze a character from a novel based on the opening paragraphs.
- Take part in a collaborative discussion.
- Understand how an author's use of present-tense or past-tense narration affects readers' understanding of the events of a story.

Past-tense: happened before, not now.

Present Tense: happening now

Preview

In this activity, you will read and discuss the opening of the novel *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, which introduces readers to two of the novel's main characters.

 Opening Writing Prompt

Read the opening section from Heidi Durrow's novel *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*. As the narrator Rachel tells us, the setting is "fall 1982 in Portland." A narrator is the person telling the story, could be a character or might not be.

How did Rachel end up in Portland in 1982? How do you know?

As You Read

- Underline telling details about Rachel's grandmother.
- Circle words or groups of words you do not know. If you need too, search for them on Google or in a dictionary to help find out what they mean.

About the Author



Although Heidi W. Durrow (b. 1969) is now a novelist, public speaker, blogger, and podcast host, she did not always have a career in the arts. For a time, she left behind her studies in English literature and journalism to be a life skills trainer for NFL and NBA athletes and, later, a corporate lawyer. Durrow spent the last 12 years of her career as a business professional working on what later would become her award-winning debut novel, *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*. Durrow uses a variety of writing and speaking platforms to celebrate and create community for people who identify as biracial or bicultural. For *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, whose protagonist has a Danish mother and an African American father, Durrow received the

Pen/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction and the NAACP Award for Outstanding Literary Debut.

Novel

My Notes

from **The Girl Who Fell from the Sky**

by Heidi W. Durrow

Rachel

- 1 “You my lucky piece,” Grandma says.
- 2 Grandma has walked me the half block from the hospital lobby to the bus stop. Her hand is wrapped around mine like a leash.
- 3 It is fall 1982 in Portland and it is raining. Puddle water has splashed up on my new shoes. My girl-in-a-new-dress feeling has faded. My new-girl feeling has disappeared.
- 4 My hand is in Grandma’s until she reaches into a black patent leather clutch for change.
- 5 “Well, aren’t those the prettiest blue eyes on the prettiest little girl,” the bus driver says as we climb aboard. The new-girl feeling comes back and I smile.
- 6 “This my grandbaby. Come to live with me,” Grandma can’t lose Texas.
- 7 “Thank you, ma’am,” I say. I mind my manners around strangers. Grandma is still a stranger to me.
- 8 I know only a few things about Grandma. She’s a gardener. She has soft hands, and she smells like lavender.
- 9 For Christmas, Grandma always sent Robbie and me a card with a new ten-dollar bill wrapped in aluminum foil. On the back of the envelope where she pressed extra hard there’d be a small smudge. The card smelled like the lavender lotion she uses to keep her hands soft.
- 10 Grandma doesn’t have a single wrinkle on her anywhere. She has eggplant brown skin as smooth as a plate all because of the lotion she sends for special from the South. “They got better roots down there—better dirt for making a root strong.” Her body is a bullet. She is thick and short. Her dark hair is pulled back and is covered by a plastic bonnet.
- 11 “Well, aren’t you lucky to have a special grandma,” the bus driver says. “Pretty and lucky.”
- 12 This is the picture I want to remember: Grandma looks something like pride. Like a whistle about to blow.
- 13 Grandma puts the change in for my fare. She wipes the rain off my face, “We almost home.”
- 14 When we find our seats, she says something more, but I cannot hear it. She is leaning across me like a seat belt and speaks into my bad ear—it is the only lasting injury from the accident. Her hands are on me the whole ride,

Working from the Text

For the character of Grandma, write a statement that uses one or two describing words that shows what kind of person she is through Rachel's eyes. Is she a good person or not? How do you know? Show evidence of your descriptions with a quote from the text.

Character	Description	Quotes from Text
Grandma	Rachel's grandma is lucky and happy to have Rachel with her.	"You my lucky piece," Grandma says.

Appreciating the Author's Craft

- Imagine Durrow had started the novel with a sentence like this: "I remember when I was a little girl and went to live with my grandmother." What would have been different about Rachel's voice?

- How does Durrow's use of the present tense in her story's narration change your experience as a reader? Check on the first page for reminder of what "present tense" and "past tense" are.

Check Your Understanding

Why do you think Durrow chose to tell Rachel's story in the present tense?

The Voice of Scout Finch

Learning Targets

- Analyze the narration of a novel.
- Understand how the use of flashback can create certain effects in a story.

*Flashback: seeing an event in the past when the rest of the story is in the present.

Preview

In this activity, you will read the first 13 paragraphs of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then you will compare its narration to the narration of *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* and discuss why Harper Lee chose to write her novel as she did.

Opening Writing Prompt

Read the first two paragraphs from the opening of Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then answer the following question.

What can you learn about the narrator based on only these two paragraphs? The narrator is the person telling the story.

About the Author

Harper Lee is the pen name for Nelle Harper Lee (1926–2016), whose novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* became a classic of American literature almost immediately upon its publication in 1960. Not only did it earn Lee the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961, but its screen adaptation became an Academy Award-winning film in 1962, and the novel remains a *New York Times* Best Seller to this day. It is for this reason that many readers were incredulous when Lee chose, for many years, not to follow up this novel with another. It wasn’t until 2015, shortly before her death, that Lee published her second novel, *Go Set a Watchman*. At first thought to be the sequel of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, this novel is now widely believed to be Lee’s first draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which started out as a series of short stories based loosely on people and events from her own life. Like its predecessor, *Go Set a Watchman* became an instant bestseller and is now appreciated for the insights it gives Lee’s fans into her process as a writer.



Learning Strategies

- Close Reading
- Marking the Text

My Notes



In the 1962 film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Phillip Alford (left) and Mary Badham (right) played the roles of Jem and Scout.

VOCABULARY

ACADEMIC

When people analyze events in their past, they are being **retrospective**, which means “looking back.” Often people do this to learn from their mistakes or understand something from their past. The term comes from the Latin *retro* (meaning *back*, *behind*, or *backward*) and *specere* (meaning *to look at*).

Historical Background

As Scout tells the story of her family’s background, she alludes to a number of people and events from English and American history. For example, Andrew Jackson was an American general who led an army of soldiers against the Creeks, a nation of Native Americans, in the Creek War of 1813–1814. Jackson’s defeat of the Creeks resulted in a treaty that forced the Creeks to give up more than 21 million acres of land in the states of Georgia and Alabama. The Battle of Hastings is the name of a battle fought in England in 1066. In this battle, William the Conqueror’s Norman-French army defeated King Harold II’s Anglo-Saxon army, beginning the 88-year Norman occupation of England. John Wesley was a clergyman of the Church of England in the 1700s. He is credited with founding Methodism, a system of beliefs practiced within the Christian religion. “The disturbance between the North and the South” refers to the American Civil War of 1861–1865. The phrase “nothing to fear but fear itself” comes from a speech President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave when he was inaugurated on March 4, 1933.

Reading Chapter 1: Scout’s Voice

1. Like Rachel from *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, Scout is a first-person narrator, and she has a story from her childhood to tell. But Scout’s narration of the events of her life differ from that of Rachel. How is it different?

2. How is Scout’s **retrospective** point of view shown in her voice? What words or phrases let us know she is no longer a child?

Working from the Text

Here are nine events mentioned in the first 13 paragraphs of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, written in the order in which they appear in the text. But in what order did they really happen? _____ number the events chronologically. Two of the events are referenced in the Historical Background feature earlier in this activity.

- _____ Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow.
- _____ Dill gave Scout and Jem the idea of making Boo Radley come out.
- _____ In England, Simon Finch was irritated by the persecution of those who called themselves Methodists.
- _____ Simon Finch worked his way across the Atlantic to Philadelphia, thence to Jamaica, thence to Mobile, and up the Saint Stephens.
- _____ There was a disturbance between the North and the South
- _____ Atticus Finch went to Montgomery to read law.
- _____ Atticus Finch returned to Maycomb and began his law practice.
- _____ Maycomb County (and the United States) had recently been told that it had “nothing to fear but fear itself.”
- _____ Scout and Jem’s mother died.

Appreciating the Author’s Craft

- Why do you think Lee starts *To Kill a Mockingbird* by talking about Jem’s accident in the 1930s and then flashing back to events taking place before the Civil War?

- What does Lee gain by telling readers who Simon Finch was and how Scout’s immediate family is connected to him?

My Notes

Check Your Understanding

What is one reason an author might use flashbacks in a story?

Part One

Chapter 1

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being able to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right; when he stood or walked, the back of his hand was at right angles to his body, his thumb parallel to his thigh. He couldn't have cared less, so long as he could pass and punt.

When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. I maintain that the Ewells started it all, but Jem, who was four years my senior, said it started long before that. He said it began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.

I said if he wanted to take a broad view of the thing, it really began with Andrew Jackson. If General Jackson hadn't run the Creeks up the creek, Simon Finch would never have paddled up the Alabama, and where would we be if he hadn't? We were far too old to settle an argument with a fist-fight, so we consulted Atticus. Our father said we were both right.

Being Southerners, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of the Battle of Hastings. All we had was Simon Finch, a fur-trapping apothecary from Cornwall whose piety was exceeded only by his stinginess. In England, Simon was irritated by the persecution of those who called themselves Methodists at the hands of their more liberal brethren, and as Simon called himself a Methodist, he worked his way across the Atlantic to Philadelphia, thence to Jamaica, thence to Mobile, and up the Saint Stephens. Mindful of John Wesley's strictures on the use of many words in buying and selling, Simon made a pile practicing medicine, but in this pursuit he was unhappy lest he be tempted into doing what he knew was not for the glory of God, as the putting on of gold and costly apparel. So Simon, having forgotten his teacher's dictum on the possession of human chattels, bought three slaves and with their aid established a homestead on the banks of the Alabama River some forty miles above Saint Stephens. He returned to Saint Stephens only once, to find a wife, and with her established a line that ran high to daughters. Simon lived to an impressive age and died rich.

It was customary for the men in the family to remain on Simon's homestead, Finch's Landing, and make their living from cotton. The place was self-sufficient: modest in comparison with the empires around it, the Landing nevertheless produced everything required to sustain life except ice, wheat flour, and articles of clothing, supplied by river-boats from Mobile.

Simon would have regarded with impotent fury the disturbance between the North and the South, as it left his descendants stripped of everything but their land, yet the tradition of living on the land remained unbroken until well into the twentieth century, when my father, Atticus Finch, went to Montgomery to read law, and his younger brother went to Boston to study medicine. Their sister Alexandra was the Finch who remained at the Landing: she married a taciturn man who spent most of his time lying in a hammock by the river wondering if his trot-lines were full.

When my father was admitted to the bar, he returned to Maycomb and began his practice. Maycomb, some twenty miles east of Finch's Landing, was the county seat of Maycomb County. Atticus's office in the courthouse contained little more than a hat rack, a spittoon, a checkerboard and an unsullied Code of Alabama. His first two clients were the last two persons hanged in the Maycomb County jail. Atticus had urged them to accept the state's generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty to second-degree murder and escape with their lives, but they were Haverfords, in Maycomb County a name synonymous with jackass. The Haverfords had dispatched Maycomb's leading

blacksmith in a misunderstanding arising from the alleged wrongful detention of a mare, were imprudent enough to do it in the presence of three witnesses, and insisted that the son-of-a-bitch-had-it-coming-to-him was a good enough defense for anybody. They persisted in pleading Not Guilty to first-degree murder, so there was nothing much Atticus could do for his clients except be present at their departure, an occasion that was probably the beginning of my father's profound distaste for the practice of criminal law.

During his first five years in Maycomb, Atticus practiced economy more than anything; for several years thereafter he invested his earnings in his brother's education. John Hale Finch was ten years younger than my father, and chose to study medicine at a time when cotton was not worth growing; but after getting Uncle Jack started, Atticus derived a reasonable income from the law. He liked Maycomb, he was Maycomb County born and bred; he knew his people, they knew him, and because of Simon Finch's industry, Atticus was related by blood or marriage to nearly every family in the town. 8

Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. 9

People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself. 10

We lived on the main residential street in town—Atticus, Jem and I, plus Calpurnia our cook. Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment. 11

Calpurnia was something else again. She was all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard. She was always ordering me out of the kitchen, asking me why I couldn't behave as well as Jem when she knew he was older, and calling me home when I wasn't ready to come. Our battles were epic and one-sided. Calpurnia always won, mainly because Atticus always took her side. She had been with us ever since Jem was born, and I had felt her tyrannical presence as long as I could remember. 12

Our mother died when I was two, so I never felt her absence. She was a Graham from Montgomery; Atticus met her when he was first elected to the state legislature. He was middle-aged then, she was fifteen years his junior. Jem was the product of their first year of marriage; four years later I was born, and two years later our mother died from a sudden heart attack. They said it ran in her family. I did not miss her, but I think Jem did. He remembered her clearly, and sometimes in the middle of a game he would sigh at length, then go off and play by himself behind the car-house. When he was like that, I knew better than to bother him. 13