

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

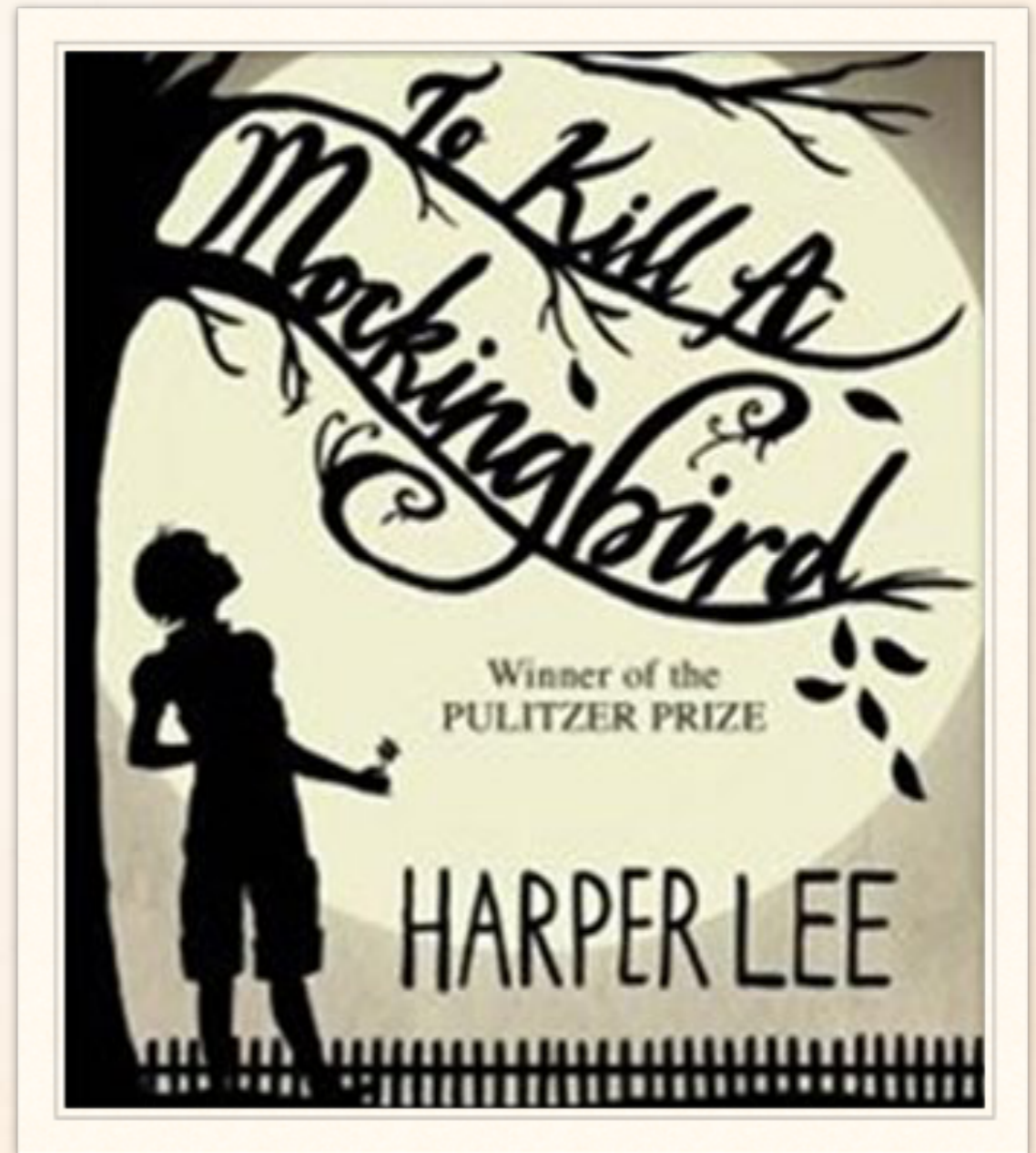


STORY OPENINGS

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FIVE WAYS AN OPENING CAN CATCH OR 'HOOK' THE READER'S ATTENTION

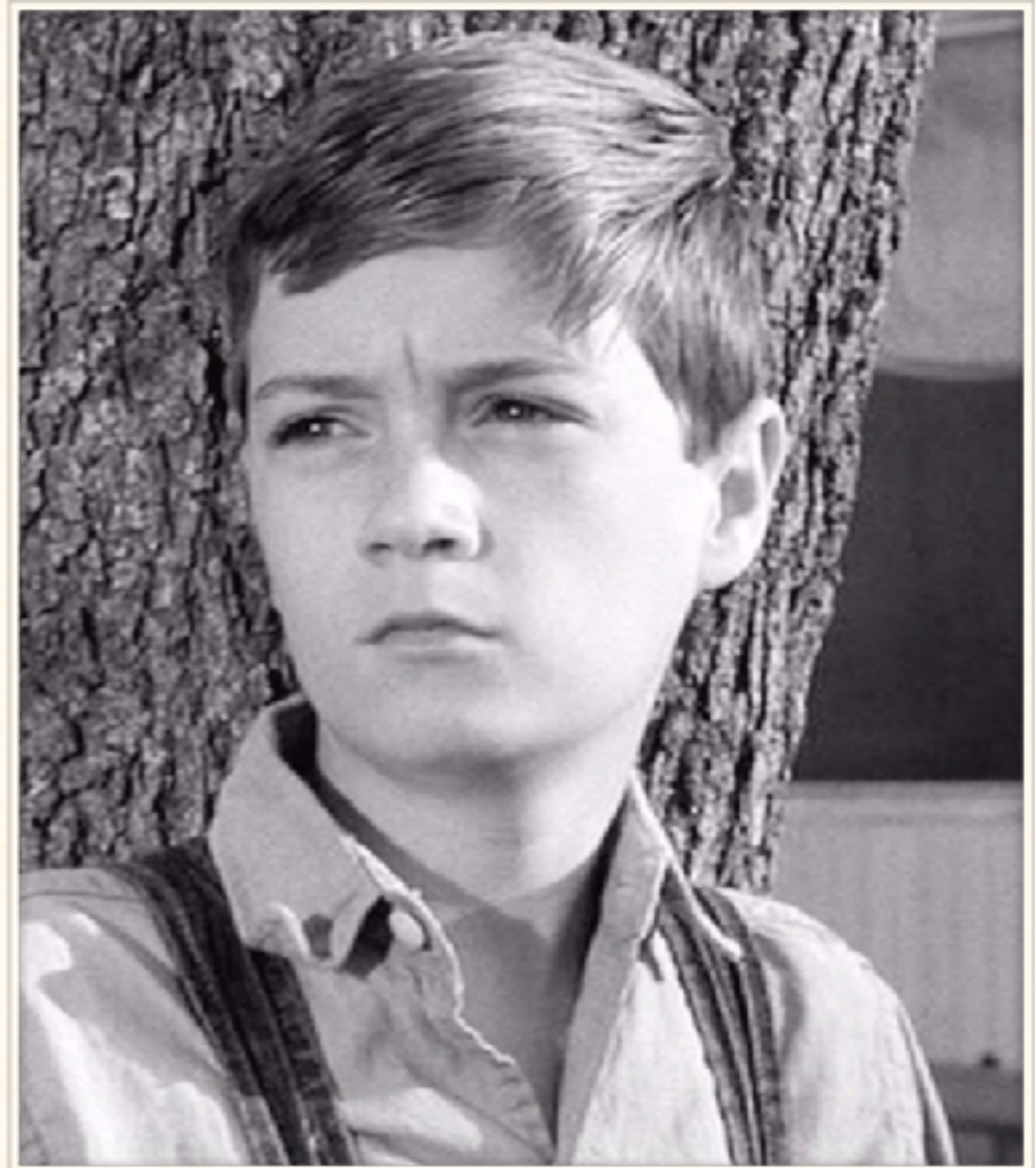
- ❖ Invite the reader in by leaving them with one or more **questions** to which they will want answers.
- ❖ Describe a **character or characters** in whom the reader will become interested.



- ❖ Describe the **setting** in such a way that the reader can visualise it and be drawn in.
- ❖ Engage the reader by dropping them straight into the **action** of the story.
- ❖ Use **dialogue** to engage the reader and create drama.

WHICH OF THE ELEMENTS OF A STORY OPENING ARE USED IN 'TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD'?

- ❖ *'When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow'... 'When enough years had passed by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading up to his accident'... 'I maintain that the Ewells started it all'... He said it began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out'.*



- ❖ We wonder how Jem broke his arm. He 'got his arm broken' which means someone else did it. Why did it take a long time before Scout and Jem could talk about the events leading up to the incident? Were they traumatic? Scout mentions the Ewells 'starting it all'. We wonder who the Ewells are and what 'it all' refers to. Who is Dill? Who is Boo Radley, and why would he need to be enticed to come out of his house? Straight away, we are intrigued and want to know the answers to these **questions**.

CHARACTER

- ❖ The stories of Simon Finch and Scout's father, Atticus, make us feel **involved in the characters' lives**. Scout does not provide us with a dry history of her family. For example, we learn that Simon Finch's 'piety was exceeded only by his stinginess', that he 'made a pile practising medicine' and that he 'would have regarded with impotent fury the disturbance between the North and South'. Immediately, we feel we know the man and have an insight into the Finch family.



- ❖ Similarly, we learn that Atticus is ‘Maycomb County born and bred’ and a generous man who ‘invested his earnings in his brother’s education’ for the first years of his working life.
- ❖ All of these details **help us to feel connected to Scout and her family. We understand their history and their values.** These are basically decent, upright people who have lived in Maycomb county for generations. Simon Finch was concerned with money far more than was his descendent Atticus, however. Atticus is a selfless man who turns Simon Finch’s trademark piety and stinginess into kindness and an ability to save money to help others. Atticus is not interested in becoming rich; he works hard so he can help his brother through college. This is an **interesting insight** into the man who will play an important role in ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’.

SETTING

- ❖ Maycomb is described as ‘a tired old town’. It is a quiet backwater in which there is ‘no hurry’ for there is ‘nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with’. We can easily **visualise the setting** for the story, based on Scout’s description.
- ❖ Maycomb seems an unlikely setting for a dramatic storyline. However, we sense that the calm and quiet of the town is likely to be shattered soon. Scout’s mention of an incident which led to her brother’s arm being broken and her loaded comment that the Ewells ‘started it all’ provide a contrast between the sleepy setting and the drama to come. This **adds tension** to the opening of the novel.

