 Intertextuality and adaptation

Intertextuality refers to those interrelationships among texts that shape a text’s meaning. The recognisable echoes of other texts in a text intensify the experience of the text by adding layers of meaning.

[Intertexuality, English Textual Concepts.](http://www.englishtextualconcepts.nsw.edu.au/content/intertextuality)

Jasper Jones makes references to a wide range of texts from the 1960s or earlier, such as:

* ‘The Wizard of Oz’
* DC Comics (Batman, Superman)
* ‘Romeo and Juliet’
* The novels of Mark Twain
* ‘Breakfast at Tiffany’s’
* Films starring Audrey Hepburn (a famous actress from the 1960s)
* ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’

Activity One: Superheroes

Look at these quotes:

‘A fever of panic against an unseen evil, as though Perth were Gotham City itself.’ Page 106

‘Every instance of my life, I’ve felt the exact opposite of Superman… I don’t give a shit if I’m not Superman. I kissed Eliza Wishart.’ Page 252.

1. Batman and Superman. Charlie and Jeffrey Lu. In what way are they similar, and who is who?

Activity 2 – ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’

The most significant textual allusion is to the novel ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’, which shares several key similarities with Jasper Jones. Silvey even goes as far as to invite the reader to make such comparisons by mentioning this novel and its characters at several points.

Both stories deal with racism in small country towns, both explore ideas of right and wrong, and both examine the way that close-minded societies deal with justice.

There are several character parallels between the two books, such as Mad Jack Lionel/Boo Radley.

Mad Jack Lionel:

Mad Jack is a character of much speculation and intrigue for the kids of Corrigan. No child has actually laid eyes on him. There are full-chested claimants of sightings and encounters, but they’re quickly exposed as liars. But the tall stories and rumours all weave wispily around one single irrefutable fact: that Jack Lionel killed a young woman some years ago and he’s never been seen outside his house since...A popular test in Corrigan is to steal something from the property of Mad Jack Lionel. Rocks and flowers and assorted debris are all rushed back proudly from the high dry-grass sprawl of his front yard to be examined with wonder. But the rarest and most revered feat is to snatch a peach from the large tree that grows by the flank of the cottage like a zombie’s hand bursting from a grave. To pilfer and eat a peach from the property of Mad Jack Lionel assures you instant royalty. – Page 3-4.

Boo Radley:

Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom. People said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was high, and peeped in windows. When people’s azaleas froze in a cold snap, it was because he had breathed on them. Any stealthy crimes committed in Maycomb were his work. Once the town was terrorized by a series of morbid nocturnal events: people’s chickens and household pets were found mutilated; although the culprit was Crazy Addie, people still looked at the Radley Place, unwilling to discard their initial suspicions - Page 15

1. What purpose do the Boo Radleys and Mad Jack Lionels of the world fulfil?

In To Kill a Mockingbird Scout and Jem are obsessed with the idea of touching the Radley place and passing a note to Boo; just as in Jasper Jones the children are obsessed with stealing peach pits from Mad Jack Lionel.

1. In what way is Jasper Jones a Boo Radley parallel too?

The hero of To Kill a Mockingbird is Atticus Finch, a small-town lawyer who stands up for the rights of an African-American in an extremely racist town. Charlie alludes to his father being an Atticus-like character.

I had to be critical and even-handed, like Atticus, like my dad. – Page 259

1. In what way is Charlie a better comparison for Atticus than his dad?