



INDIANA  
REPERTORY  
THEATRE

Harper Lee's  
**To Kill a Mockingbird**

adapted by  
**Christopher Sergel**



January 29 – February 28, 2016, on the OneAmerica Mainstage

## STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright

with contributions by Janet Allen

Bill Clarke, Linda Pisano, Betsy Coopridier-Bernstein, Austin Yoder

Indiana Repertory Theatre

140 West Washington Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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# Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* adapted by Christopher Sergel

Harper Lee's coming-of-age story is an integral part of American literature and one of the most celebrated representations of American history to date.

Estimated length: 2 hours, 15 minutes, including 1 intermission

Recommended for grades 7 through 12 due to strong language and mature themes.

## Themes & Topics

Family and Community, Race and Social Status, the Great Depression, Judgement and Belief, Hope and Change, Mob Mentality, Childhood and Friendship, Civil Rights and Liberties, Private vs. Public Lives

Student Matinees at 10:00 A.M. between January 26 and February 26, 2016

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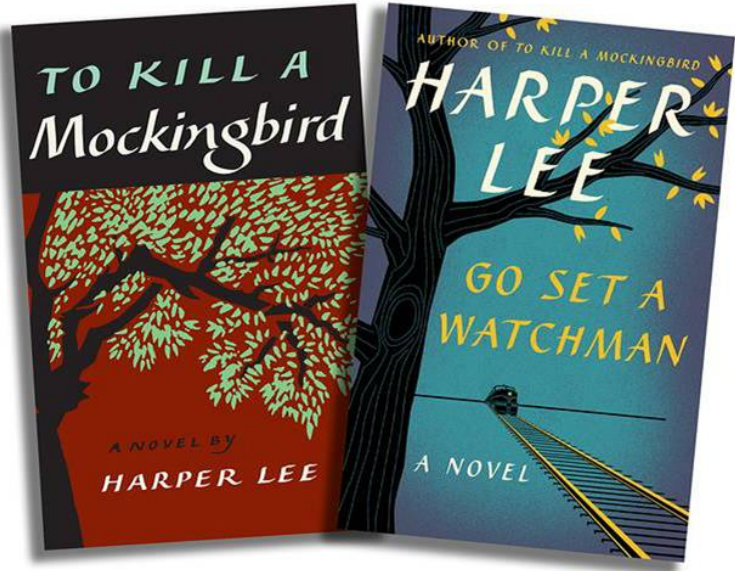
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# Questions

by Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director

*To Kill a Mockingbird* doesn't need a particular cultural event to warrant revival. Its status as an iconic American novel of racial inequality—and core curriculum reading—is indisputable. But last winter, when the publishing world began to trumpet the appearance of a second Harper Lee novel depicting Atticus and Scout, we here at the IRT decided to jump on the bandwagon and re-explore the original text. When *Go Set a Watchman* finally came out in the summer, there was an avalanche of purchasing, reading, and commentary. I hope that many of you took the plunge, despite the reviews and the many questions of provenance. I found the opportunity to submerge myself in a fresh experience of reading Lee's gorgeous prose to be enormously fulfilling, even while noting some significant differences between the narratives of the two books.



*a Watchman* finally came out in the summer, there was an avalanche of purchasing, reading, and commentary. I hope that many of you took the plunge, despite the reviews and the many questions of provenance. I found the opportunity to submerge myself in a fresh experience of reading Lee's gorgeous prose to be enormously fulfilling, even while noting some significant differences between the narratives of the two books.

In particular, experiencing the viewpoint of an adult Jean Louise in *Watchman* was a real catalyst in selecting which stage adaptation of *Mockingbird* we would produce for you in 2016. To follow the adult Jean Louise remembering this pivotal moment in her childhood, much as she does in *Go Set a Watchman*, seemed an unmissable opportunity to connect this uniquely American classic more deeply into the current zeitgeist.

The title of the “new” book, also written when Lee was a young woman, is touched upon in a passage in the novel: “Every man’s island, Jean Louise, every man’s watchman is his conscience.” This wisdom is spoken in *Go Set a Watchman* not by Atticus, but by Atticus’s brother, Jack, a small-town doctor and practical observer of society to whom the 26-year-old Jean Louise goes for very needed perspective and counsel.

Suffice it to say that the new book continues Lee’s obsession with looking deeply into the abyss of race in America—whether in the 1930s, the 1950s, or, dare we admit, today. Despite her deep love for the South, the home of her birth and rearing, Lee pulls no punches. The tough questions she poses have a profound impact, regardless of where we live in this complex and divided country. They invite us to review our own beliefs, and to expand them beyond the narrow confines of history. They are questions that are still difficult to answer. Who are society’s haves and have-nots? Does the American justice system actually treat all people as equals? Why do we so often find our conscience struggling with our instincts, particularly when we encounter people who are different from us?

*To Kill a Mockingbird* invites us into many innately American conversations—very important ones to have with our children and grandchildren. I hope our artistry gives each of you the opportunity for those discussions, and for being moved by Scout’s childhood actions and her adult reflections.

# Childhood Memories

**Bill Clarke** Scenic Designer

Our primary goal in designing *To Kill a Mockingbird* was to allow us to see the world through Scout's eyes. In other words, we sought to depict not an exact replica of Maycomb in all its detail, but to emphasize the aspects of the town that are most important to Scout: her front porch, the Radley house, and the Radley oak tree. Adults revisiting their childhood homes often recall iconic features having loomed larger and, sometimes, spookier, than they now appear. This idea guided our decisions about how things should look for our audience. Bringing a sprawling novel to life onstage involves skillful cutting and streamlining to tell the main story without leaving anything important out. Likewise, the scenery must be designed so the action of the play moves swiftly, without any long pauses for scene changes. We hope to help you you experience Scout's world in an exciting theatrical way.

*Preliminary sketch by scenic designer Bill Clarke.*





**Linda Pisano** Costume Designer

Although this is the second time I've designed costumes for this story, I continue to be struck by the depth of the characters and the profound impact time and place have on the way they live their lives; these impressions are reflected in their clothing. Director Janet Allen asked me to approach the characters with a sense of honesty and realism regarding their condition, but also to view the play a bit through the eyes of Jean Louise—the adult Scout. I've explored some of the nuances of silhouette and details that would stick with her as she recalls this time in her childhood. Despite the horrible events that take place in the play, through her memories, I've given a warmth and simplicity to the overall look of the costumes

*Preliminary costume renderings for  
(top to bottom) Dill, Jem, & Scout  
by designer Linda Pisano.*

**Betsy Coopridier-Bernstein** Lighting Designer

Lighting a play written about a childhood memory prompts me to reflect on what I remember most about important places in my childhood. It's those summer days spent on porches with my Grandma Myrtle ... before the days of air-conditioning. Early in the day, we perched on the tiny back porch where the "light was good" for hand work. The hot sun, floating on the haze of dust whipped up from cars moving along the alley, would smack you in the eyes if you weren't careful. To this day, just the soulful call of a mourning dove takes me back to that very place. But my favorite time of the day was late in the afternoon, when chores were done, lolling across the big glider on the front porch, begging my Grandma to fill my insatiable appetite for drama with "stories" from her childhood. I remember it as an easy time of day, marked by the see-saw sound of cicadas and the dappled patterns of sunlight changing shapes in the breeze ... if you were lucky enough to catch a breeze.



# The Story of the Play

*To Kill a Mockingbird* takes place in 1935 in Maycomb, Alabama. In the play we meet Jean Louise Finch, who tells us a story about the summer when she was a nine-year-old tomboy called Scout. Scout lives with her father, Atticus Finch, a lawyer; her twelve-year-old brother, Jem; and their cook, Calpurnia. The children's mother died seven years before.

The Finches live next door to Mr. Radley and his son, who is known as "Boo." Boo has been kept inside the house for years, and the air of mystery surrounding him is the source of endless fascination for Scout, Jem, and Dill, a ten-year-old boy who is spending the summer in Maycomb with his aunt. Although Jem and Scout view their father as old and dull because he is not like other fathers with more physical occupations and interests, this idea is challenged when Atticus deals with a dangerous rabid dog who threatens the neighborhood. The children's attitude is further complicated when Atticus accepts an assignment to represent Tom Robinson, a black man who is accused of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell. As the trial draws near, Scout and Jem notice the townspeople treating them differently, and they are further confused when they interrupt a midnight confrontation between their father and some angry townsmen.

On the day of the trial, people from all over the county arrive at the courthouse. Against Atticus's wishes, Jem, Scout, and Dill sneak off to the courthouse and watch the trial. Although they have seen their father in court before, the children come to realize that this case is unique. As the trial unfolds, the truth of the situation seems clear to the children, especially after Atticus's moving and powerful closing speech to the jury. But the outcome of the trial is not what the children expect. Outside the courtroom, Mayella's father, Bob Ewell, threatens to kill Atticus for standing against him.

Scout and Jem start school again, and the trial is almost forgotten until an attack in the darkness brings the events of the summer to a terrifying conclusion. Mysteries are resolved, and the play ends as Scout finally begins to understand what it means, as her father says, "to walk in another man's shoes."



# Life in Maycomb, 1935

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, inspired by Harper Lee's hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, which had a population of around 1,500 in 1935.

## **Abbottsville**

A fictional town in Alabama near Maycomb where the Cunninghams go to church.

## **Alabama**

The University of Alabama has a particularly successful and well-known football team.

## **“Angel bright, life-in-death, get off the road, don’t suck my breath”**

According to Jem, if one walks through a Hot Steam, the only way to keep from later becoming one yourself is to immediately say this rhyme.

## **azaleas**

A deciduous flowering shrub with clusters of brightly colored, sometimes fragrant flowers; related to but smaller than rhododendrons.

## **camellia bush**

A group of flowering plants native to Asia. These plants have large flowers that range in color from white to pink and red; some species even have yellow flowers.

## **the colored side of the balcony**

From the late 19th century until the 1960s, much of the American South was racially segregated. The “colored side” refers to the area reserved for non-white people.

## **chiffarobe**

A southern term for a large piece of furniture with both drawers and a long space for hanging.

## **Confederate veteran**

A southern veteran of the Civil War. At the time of the play, he would be at least 80 years old.

## **corncrib**

A container for storing ears of corn.

## **Enfield Prison Farm**

A prison farm is a type of correctional institute that puts prisoners to work on a farm. Proceeds from the farm go to the state to support the prison. Enfield is a small town in Alabama.

**field beans**

A type of bean also known as broad bean, fava bean, faba bean, horse bean, or tic bean. It is native to North Africa and Southeast Asia, but is cultivated many other areas.

**frog-sticking**

Hunting for frogs with a stick.

**haints**

A Southern colloquialism for a ghost, apparition, or lost soul.

**hickory nuts**

The hickory is a North American tree that produces nutlike edible fruit. The hickory nut is 1-2" long with a thick, bony shell that splits open at maturity.

**holly**

Shrubs or trees with spikey leaves and red or purple berries. Holly is a traditional Christmas decoration, and the wood is used as firewood and for finer woodwork.

**hot steams**

In Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Jem explains, "A hot steam's somebody who can't get to heaven, just wallows around on lonesome roads an' if you walk through him, when you die you'll be one too, an' you'll go around at night suckin' people's breath."

**Johnson Grass**

A type of tall grass originally from the Mediterranean that grows in warm climates and often becomes a weed over time.

**The Maycomb Tribune**

The fictional newspaper of Maycomb. *Tribune* is a common name for a newspaper. The word tribune means a platform from which an assembly is addressed.

**Meridian**

A city in Mississippi, located about 154 miles west of Birmingham, Alabama. It has a rich history in railroads.

**mockingbird**

A gray bird common in North America, remarkable for its imitations of other birds' songs.

**Old Sarum**

A neighborhood in Maycomb where poor white families live. The name might come from an old settlement in England near Stonehenge, an abandoned military town.



**pecan trees**

A tree of the southern United States and Mexico cultivated for its nuts.

**rabbit-tobacco**

Also known as Everlasting, Catfoot, or Old Field Balsam; it has drooping leaves and small round white flowers. It commonly grows in thin woods, pinewoods, old fields, and roadsides.

**red slop**

The streets of Maycomb were probably not paved, but instead consisted of red dirt or clay that would turn to mud when it rained.

**scuppernong**

A type of yellowish-green plum-flavored fruit, somewhat larger than a grape.

**smilax**

Climbing flowering plants native to tropical and warm temperate regions; also known as Sarsaparilla. Some varieties are used to make root beer or other herbal drinks.

**“Somebody just walked over my grave”**

This is a common saying in the South, particularly in the Appalachian Mountains, that people use when they shiver for no reason.

**stove wood**

Wood that is used to burn in a stove for heating or cooking.

**streaming into town like it was Saturday**

In rural America, Saturday was the traditional market day, when farm families would come to town to do their weekly shopping and trading.

**turnip greens**

The leaves of the turnip, a root vegetable, which resemble mustard greens in flavor.

**Yankees**

A term used in the American South for Americans from the North. It is also the term used for Union soldiers during the Civil War.

**“White Only”**

From the late 1800s until the 1960s, most public areas in the South were racially segregated.

# Harper Lee, Author

by Richard J Roberts,  
Resident Dramaturg

Author Harper Lee has been an enigmatic figure since the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* brought her instant fame in 1960. Although the book is not truly a memoir, there are many elements of the novel that were influenced by the author's life.



*Harper Lee sitting in the "colored balcony"  
of the Monroeville courthouse, 1961.*

Nelle Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama, a small town about 75 miles north of Mobile. Like the character Scout, Nelle was an unruly tomboy. Her father, Amasa Coleman Lee, was a liberal-minded country lawyer, a newspaper editor, and a state legislator who ingrained a sense of justice in his daughter. From the balcony of the county courthouse, the young writer-to-be spent many afternoons watching her father at work. Early in his career, Mr. Lee defended two black men, a father and son, accused of killing a white store clerk; both were hanged. Nelle was five years old when the infamous trials of the Scottsboro Boys took place in 1931. The case drew international attention to the unjust environment of the American South during that time.

After graduating from Monroeville's public school system, Lee attended Huntington Women's College in Alabama for one year before transferring to the University of Alabama. In college, she was the editor of and a frequent contributor to the school's humor magazine. She spent a year at Oxford University in England as an exchange student. She went on to enroll in law school at the University of Alabama, but left six months before receiving her degree and moved to New York City to become a writer.

Lee worked as a reservations agent for an airline until some friends gave her enough money to quit her job and write full-time. In 1958, Lee met an editor who felt that she could turn some of her short stories into a novel. She did not find it an easy process. One winter night, when she was particularly frustrated, Lee opened the window of her New York City apartment and threw the pages of her manuscript out into the street below. Her agent convinced her to retrieve it. After two and a half years, Lee finished her book.

Lee's hometown of Monroeville, Alabama served as inspiration for the book's Maycomb. Truman Capote, who would later write *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, was a childhood friend and neighbor of Lee's, and the character Dill was based on him. Both Lee and Capote were interested in reading and writing as children; finding themselves different from other children their age, they spent time together pursuing their common interests. In later years, Lee accompanied Capote to Kansas to help him research a murder case for his book *In Cold Blood*. Capote immortalized Lee as the tomboyish Idabel in his novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Boo Radley and other characters in the story were also inspired by people in Monroeville. Lee's early experiences had a significant impact on her first novel.

Not only did Monroeville affect Lee and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but the novel has had an effect on Lee's hometown as well. The town of 7,000 has approximately 30,000 visitors each year who come to see the real-life Maycomb. Before the Civil Rights Movement took hold in Monroeville, the townspeople did not particularly care for the novel or the film; but since then the town has embraced the story. Each spring the citizens perform the stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the county courthouse. Very proud of the success of Harper Lee and Truman Capote, Monroeville sees itself as one of the literary capitals of the South.

A few years after the book's publication, Harper Lee stopped granting interviews. She published two magazine essays in the 1960s. She was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Alabama in 1990 and the University of Notre Dame in 2006. During the Notre Dame ceremony, the entire graduating class held up copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* to honor her. In 2007, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In 2015, after many years of literary silence, a second Harper Lee novel was published. *Go Set a Watchman* has been variously described by Lee's representatives as a sequel to or an early draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The publication has raised questions about Lee's mental competence at age 89 and the appropriateness of publishing the book at this time. Some readers have been shocked and dismayed by a different view of beloved characters, while others have celebrated a surprising new opportunity to enjoy Lee's distinctive voice. The controversy surrounding *Go Set a Watchman*, however, should not in any way diminish our admiration for Harper Lee's masterwork, the great American classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

*Harper Lee in 2007, when she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.*



# The Novel and Its Impact

*To Kill a Mockingbird* was published in 1960. It was an immediate success. A review published in the *Washington Post* began, “A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance, or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it, will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of new fiction bearing the title *To Kill a Mockingbird*.” The book remained a *New York Times* bestseller for over a year and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. The next year, the novel was turned into an overwhelmingly successful film starring Gregory Peck and winning three Academy Awards.

Although the novel was an immediate success and has received significant praise over the years, it has rarely been off the banned book list because of its profanity, racial slurs, and frank discussion of rape. In 1968 the National Education Association placed it second on a list of books receiving the most complaints from private organizations. During the 1990s, the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick removed the book from their teaching curricula.

Despite these naysayers, over the years the novel has sold more than 40 million copies and has been translated into 40 languages. A 2008 survey showed it to be the most-read book by high school students in the United States. Many lawyers cite the book as a significant influence and Atticus Finch as an important role model. In 1999, a poll by the *Library Journal* voted it best novel of the century. In the nearly fifty years since it was first published, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has changed how generations of readers view the world they live in.





# How You Talk!

*In To Kill a Mockingbird you will find a lot of colloquial expressions—casual terms that are not typically found in formal speech or writing. Some of them are common southern, rural, or small-town expressions; others are unique to Harper Lee’s characters.*

## **“dim organization”**

a seedy bar or club

## **“Don’t count your chickens”**

The beginning of the common phrase “Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched.” It means don’t depend on something until it has actually happened.

## **“how in the Sam Hill”**

A euphemism for “what the hell” or “what the devil.” Its origin is unknown.

## **“if I had my druthers”**

if I had my preference. “Druthers” is a contraction of “I’d rather.”

## **“licked”**

defeated

## **“like a stuck hog”**

screaming or squealing in pain

## **“run-of-the-mill”**

Not special, average. The phrase refers to manufactured goods with no special upgrades.

## **“slow fuse”**

someone who is not easily upset or angered

## **“shinnied up”**

drunk and causing a ruckus

## **“slung about”**

in disorder; furniture and other objects out of place

## **“this year of grace”**

refers to a year in the Christian era

## **“tooth and nail”**

to fight violently with everything you have

# Courtroom Terms

**abusive and profane language**

Coarse and insulting language that shows disrespect and is improper.

**acquittal**

The declaration that the defendant is not guilty.

**assault and battery**

The crime of threatening a person together with the act of making physical contact with them.

**browbeat**

To intimidate with stern looks or words.

**charge the jury**

To give the jury instructions.

**contempt**

Disrespect shown to a court.

**counsel for the defense**

Counsel for the defense is the lawyer working for the defendant.

**cross-examination**

In law, cross-examination is the interrogation of a witness called by one's opponent.

**disorderly conduct**

A small crime against public order and decency. It is a general charge often used when someone is drunk or simply misbehaving. It is often labeled a misdemeanor.

**disturbing the peace**

A crime of disturbing public order generally through loud noise, offensive actions, or using words to incite violence. It is often labeled a misdemeanor.

**go to the chair**

Electrocution in an electric chair was a common method of execution practiced in the United States during the late 19th and 20th centuries.

**irrelevant and immaterial**

Legal objections that can be raised in court. Irrelevant means something is not applicable to the matter being discussed. Immaterial means it is not important for the case.

**majority rule**

A process in which decisions are made by a vote, and the side with the most votes wins.

**misdemeanor**

A crime that is not considered to be as bad as a felony, so it generally incurs a lighter punishment.

**obscene**

Offensive and disgusting with no artistic, scientific, or social value.

**overruled**

Set aside by exercising a superior authority.

**prosecutor**

The lawyer who presents the case against a defendant in court.

**speculation**

Thinking about the many aspects of a given subject; guessing.

**testimony**

A statement made by a witness under oath in a court, often in response to questioning.

**truant officer**

A person employed by a public-school system to investigate the continued absences of pupils.

**verdict**

The decision in a civil or criminal court case.

**warranted**

To justify or necessitate.

*The  
Monroeville, Alabama,  
courthouse.*



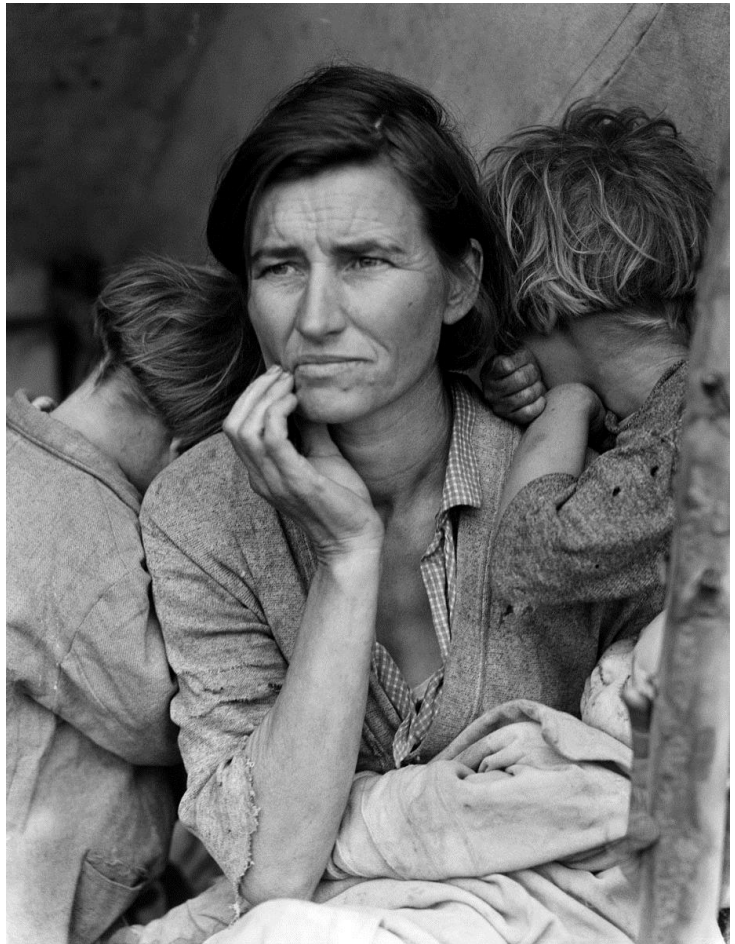
# The Depression

The 1920s were a time of prosperity in the United States of America, but in 1929 there was a sudden dramatic drop in stock prices, marking the beginning of a worldwide financial crisis known as the Great Depression. The causes of the Depression may be uncertain, but the poverty, unemployment, low profits, and lost opportunities for growth and advancement caused by the Depression are well documented. In the four years following the stock market crash, unemployment in the United States went from 3 percent to 25 percent. A large number of businesses and banks closed. Many people lost their life savings. In the Heartland, there was a drought. Crops died and the once rich soil turned to dust. Violent winds created dust storms that

destroyed the land even further. This catastrophe was known as the Dust Bowl. Stress over employment and financial security heightened racial tensions. Competition for jobs heightened tensions between Blacks and Whites, leading to increased violence.

Herbert Hoover was President at the start of the Great Depression. He believed that relief should come from the private sector, not government programs. Relief often did not come, and many shanty towns came to be known as Hoovervilles in “honor” of the President’s policies.

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States. FDR began the New Deal, which was a series of government programs—such as Social Security and the Works Progress Administration—meant to increase employment and help relieve the burden of the American public. The New Deal helped, but these measures still did not end the Depression. The start of World War II and an increased demand for war products is what finally pulled the United States out of the Depression. Although as much as 40 percent of the population was not significantly affected by the Depression, the economic crisis came to define a generation.



*(above) Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother (1936) has become an icon of the Great Depression.*

*(opposite above) Soup kitchens tried to feed the homeless.*

*(opposite below) As people lost their homes, shanty towns such as this developed.*



## Vocabulary

### running a still

A still is an apparatus used for distilling or purifying a liquid—often used in making alcohol.

### Lydia E. Pinkham bottles

Lydia Pinkham (1819-1883) and her family manufactured medicinal tonics, a common source of alcohol during Prohibition, and the source of many humorous songs.



### relief checks

During the Depression the government gave money to poor people to help provide some relief from financial hardship. Today Welfare is still sometimes referred to as Relief.

### WPA

During the Depression, the Works Progress Administration employed millions of unskilled laborers to learn a trade and construct public buildings and roads.

### lye soap

A type of soap made from lye, a strong alkaline made from wood ashes.



### operator

When telephones were first introduced, an operator had to connect the telephone lines for all calls, local and long-distance.

# Controversial Words

Since humans learned to speak, various words have been considered inappropriate in certain contexts. Ancient Roman documents discuss offensive language. In Ancient Egypt, legal documents were sealed with an obscene hieroglyph—a reminder that “to swear an oath” could mean either “to affirm a truth” or “to use profane language.” Shakespeare’s plays are considered the finest literature of the English language; perhaps their mixture of exquisite poetry and bawdy language—the sacred and the profane—is part of their eternal appeal.

It is interesting to note how language changes over time. With the rise of mass media in the twentieth century, rules and regulations were established to determine what words were inappropriate for use in radio, movies, and television. Over time, these rules have evolved in response to societal change, and sometimes such regulations can be confusing. On some television channels certain words are consistently bleeped or dubbed during one part of the day, yet acceptable at other times; on other channels, such words might always—or never—be acceptable. Over the last 50 years or so, language once considered obscene has become much more widespread. Other words, once commonplace, have been banished because they now are considered to be “politically incorrect.”

How are we, as a society or as individuals, to determine what language is appropriate in different situations? Drama, by definition, shows people in intense situations; and playwrights, in their attempt to show the truth of how people speak under such conditions, may use extreme language. Some audience members may find this language offensive, and prefer that such words not be used. Other audience members may be offended at the idea that freedom of expression might be curtailed. As language evolves, so, too, do our perceptions of language.

## The “N” Word

The word *nigger* is spoken by some characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This usage reflects an accurate representation of the play’s setting in America during the 1930s, dramatizing themes of race, class, and hatred.

The word *nigger* was not originally used for verbal assault. It first appears in historical documents in 1587 as *negar*, an alternate spelling of *Negro*. *Nigger* was a common word in both England and America by the seventeenth century; it was considered nothing more than an alternate pronunciation of *Negro*. By 1825, however, both abolitionists and Blacks found the word offensive and began to object to its use.

Often when a word is employed as a slur against a certain group, members of the group will use that word among themselves to rob it of its negative power. Today, this casual, non-pejorative use of the word *nigger* within the African American community is still controversial.

Although it may often be heard in rap songs, films, and stand-up comedy performances, as well as in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by it. Even within generations, not everyone agrees on this issue. Society at large, however, condemns the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against black people demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.

## Activity for Before Seeing the Show

In preparing to talk about the use of controversial language in the play, have the students look into linguistics and etymology. Here are two sites of interest:

<http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/studying-linguistics>

<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/Etymologywords.htm>

An additional helpful resource is *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language* by David Crystal.

Assign your students some vocabulary words to research—perhaps words from the play, such as *begrudge*, *impudent*, or *temerity*, or words from your other teaching units—and then report their findings to the class. This is a good bridge to use in letting students know that all language is teachable. All words have roots and history to be explored. From what is the word derived? When was it first used? What is its social background? Discuss the purpose of language.

Why are certain words categorized as profane, vulgar, or taboo? What does the use of this language say about the person using it? How does society view and/or judge people who use (or object to) these words? When is profanity inappropriate? When might it be considered acceptable? How do we determine such situations? How and why have society's views of this type of language changed in the last 20 years?

Ask the students to note in the play when taboo words are used. What effect do they believe the writer is seeking with such language? Is the attempt successful? In what ways would the play be different if the writer had chosen other language? What does such language reveal about the emotions, background, and point of view of the characters? What affect, if any, did such language have on the mood and point of view of the audience?

Perhaps you as a teacher will want to offer your students a summary of this topic that might include your observations of taboo language in literature and other media formats (past, present, and future), the rules of conduct of your school, and/or your personal views about improper language.

# Themes

*To Kill a Mockingbird* was written at the dawn of the turbulent 1960s. The story looks back to the 1930s, offering an accurate picture of life as it had been. Watching the play today in the 21st century, we cannot help but notice—just like the original readers almost 50 years ago—not only those issues which have changed for the better, but also those challenges that we still face.

At the heart of the book is the issue of racism and how it affects each individual and the community at large. In the 1930s, the South was segregated by race in both public and private life—evinced in the book and the play by the “colored” balcony in the courtroom, the separate churches for Blacks and Whites, even the expectation that Calpurnia should not approach a neighbor’s front door but must use the back door. Atticus, in his final speech to the jury, says, “There’s one human institution that makes the pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal to an Einstein. That institution, gentlemen, is a court of law.” A court of law is supposed to provide a jury of peers, but Tom Robinson’s jury is composed completely of white men. Even the law is tarnished by racism in this story, as it has been in countless trials of both the past and the present. But the story offers a glimmer of hope. Even though he knows he will lose this case, Atticus continues to fight for the truth.

Beyond the issues of race and legal discrimination, *To Kill a Mockingbird* looks at what it is like to be an outsider. All the characters in the story (except Dill) are citizens of Maycomb, but within that community are numerous divisions, not only by race, but also by age, gender, ability, education, income, and more. The closeness of small-town life makes it easy for one misstep to lead to separation from the entire community. Gossip is partly responsible for the ostracizing of Boo Radley. The Ewells are outsiders in part because they do not follow community standards of education, cleanliness, or personal responsibility. Even Atticus Finch, a man highly respected in most aspects of his life, separates himself from his community when his integrity leads him to support a cause that it condemns.

Many other themes are explored in the play. Atticus and Bob Ewell offer contrasting images of fatherhood. Our perceptions about mental illness are examined in the treatment of Boo Radley. In Mayella Ewell, we see how women are abused emotionally, economically, and physically, as well as how those who are pushed to extremes may themselves lash out. Scout, Jem, and Dill face coming-of-age challenges that confront every generation. The lessons Atticus teaches the children about courtesy and respect are timeless. Economic issues that emerged in the Great Depression are once again timely in our current troubled economy. What other themes do you glean from the play? Like any great work of art, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not only a unique vision of life in a specific time and place, but also offers timeless lessons for all of us.



# Discussion

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is about Maycomb, Alabama, in 1935, but the novel has been translated into 40 languages and has sold 40 million copies since its release. What makes this story so universally and timelessly relevant and popular?

How might the events of the late 1950s, when the novel was written, have shaped this novel? How did this novel affect and shape history in the early 1960s when it was first published?

How does the Great Depression affect the events of the play?

Discuss the concept of justice, our justice system, and how it applies to the lives of Tom Robinson, Boo Radley, Atticus, and Mayella. Heck Tate is the most prominent officer of the law in the story. Does he treat these characters differently from others in the town? Is he just?

Compare the treatment of Tom Robinson with recent controversies involving racial tensions in Ferguson, Missouri; Charleston, South Carolina; Sanford, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; and other locations across the nation. How have race relations improved in America in the last 100 years? How have they worsened?

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Boo Radley hides little treasures in a knothole for Scout and Jem to discover. What small items have you collected that are of real value to you? How might you share them with others so they might learn something about you and perhaps see them as treasures?

What do you believe is the significance of the mockingbird in this story? How is the mockingbird connected to the characters? Which character best fits the mockingbird metaphor? Why?

Discuss the different kinds of prejudice depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. How is prejudice evident where you live? In our nation? Globally?

Atticus says, "You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What does Scout learn by looking at the world from other people's perspectives?

What kind of father is Atticus Finch? Discuss the values he seeks to instill in his children through the lessons he teaches them directly and those he teaches by example.

Why does Dill want to stay with the Finches? Why does he look up to Atticus? What does he see in Atticus that Scout and Jem do not?

Discuss Atticus's closing argument to the jury. What do you believe is his strategy? What is the significance of each point he lays out for them?

Both the play and the novel give us polar views of education, poverty, and class in the world of Maycomb, Alabama. Cite examples of each. Relate these issues to today's society and its socio-economic struggles.

Discuss how Harper Lee uses children in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to encourage readers to evaluate some aspects of society from a new perspective.

Why do you think Harper Lee chose Scout to tell this story instead of using an omniscient or "all-knowing" narrator, or another character? What is achieved by her narrating the story from the point of view of an adult looking back on her childhood, rather than telling the story in present tense?

Compare the Great Depression of the 1930s with more recent economic recessions. Explore such issues as employment, education, gender, race, age, region, etc.

(from Janet Allen's director's note, p. 3) Who are society's haves and have-nots? Does the American justice system actually treat all people as equals? Why do we so often find our conscience struggling with our instincts, particularly when we encounter people who are different from us?

## Writing Prompts

Research an important figure, black or white, from the Civil Rights Movement, past or present. Write about his or her importance in the movement and how those actions have affected the world we live in today.

Atticus teaches Scout, Jem, and Dill some important lessons in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Write about an important lesson you have learned from a parent or other adult and how you have put this lesson into practice.

What is the significance of the Negro citizens of Maycomb standing for Atticus as he leaves the courtroom? Write about what people stand for today and the significance of such gestures. How do we show respect in today's culture? What people or principals do we revere? What events or figures in today's society perhaps receive more attention and honor than they might deserve?

In 2015, 55 years after the original publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee released *Go Set a Watchman*, a sequel of sorts to her classic novel. Try your hand at writing a scene from your own sequel or prequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Where would you set it? Which characters would you keep? Who would be your new characters? From whose point of view are you going to tell your version of the story?

A grown up Jean Louise Finch serves as the narrator of this version of the play, offering insights to the audience. Choose one of the other characters in the play and try your hand at writing a scene from his or her point of view.

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the actors' performances not only bring the text to life but add layers of meaning? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound help to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? To share your reviews with others, send to: [education.irt@gmail.com](mailto:education.irt@gmail.com)

Choose one of the following issues. Write a "point-counterpoint" essay or dialogue, writing from your point and view and then from the point of view of a person that sees and lives differently than you. (*Teachers: please add to this list if there are topics you want your students to explore.*)

- Barack Obama's presidency
- Donald Trump's presidential candidacy
- Police shootings of black male youths
- recent Supreme Court rulings on gay rights
- appointment of Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court
- racial profiling
- immigration
- taxation – equal or income based
- voting restrictions and/or voter apathy
- the glass ceiling

Scout lost her mother when she was two, but the book and play present several surrogate figures for her. Write about Scout's relationships with two to three of the other women in her life. How do they function in her upbringing? How might she later understand their impact on who she has become? Who are the mentors and surrogate family members in your life, and what impact do they have on your character?

# Activities

As with any piece of literature, plays contain words that are not part of our everyday vocabulary. In an effort to increase both your students' reading and spoken vocabulary, have them review the meanings of these words found in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

begrudge	gala	impudent	incantations	iota	mussed
pauper	riled	temerity	tyrannical	unmitigated	

Play and film adaptations of books cannot include everything the author originally included because the movie or play would be too long. As a group, create a skit showing a scene from the book that is not included in the play.

In groups, talk about the manners and courtesies that are portrayed in the play and how they are present, absent, or transformed in our current society. Look at classic etiquette books such as *Emily Post's Etiquette* or *Miss Manner's Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior* and share with your class some customs that you find amusing and some that perhaps should be restored.

Since its publication, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been controversial. It remains one of the most challenged books to this day, despite the fact that it is a part of nearly every school curriculum in the country. Look at your school's reading list. How do those books compare to the content in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? Do you agree with those who believe it should be banned? Why or why not? Investigate the books on your school's reading list or books you have read personally to see if they have ever been challenged somewhere in the United States. To aid you in this we are providing the link to the American Library Association's website:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned>

Research what law(s) protect our intellectual freedoms.

There are frequent references to age and aging in the book and play. Research issues of age and aging from an individual, state, national, and global aspect. Report your findings to the class. Are there notable improvements, regressions, differences, and/or similarities in aging in 1935 and 2015? Discuss if our attitudes on aging have changed. Discuss the impact an increased population of older citizens has on society.

Read aloud on your feet the scene in the play or the section in the book where the mob descends upon the jailhouse to do harm to Tom Robinson. Add additional shouts and jeers to capture the mob consciousness. After this activity talk about what might have happened if the mob had prevailed. How similar is this scene to what happened in Marion, Indiana, in August of 1930? What is meant by the phrase "mob mentality"? When, if ever, are mobs a positive force?





# Resources

## Books

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee  
Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee  
On Harper Lee: Essays and Reflections edited by Alice Hall Petry  
Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird by Claudia Durst Johnson  
On Harper Lee: Essays and Reflections, edited by Alice Hall Petry  
Scout, Atticus, and Boo: A Celebration of To Kill a Mockingbird by [Mary McDonagh Murphy](#)  
The Mockingbird Next Door: Life with Harper Lee by Marja Mills  
Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee by Charles J. Shields  
I Am Scout: The Biography of Harper Lee by Charles J. Shields  
Monroeville: The Search for Harper Lee's Maycomb by [Monroe County Heritage Museums](#)  
Monroeville: Literary Capital of Alabama (Images of America)  
by Kathy McCoy and Monroe County Heritage Museums  
Truman Capote's Southern Years: Stories from a Monroeville Cousin by Marianne M. Moates  
A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry  
Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe  
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain  
The Store (Library Alabama Classics) by Thomas S. Stribling  
Sunder by William H. Armstrong  
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

## Films

To Kill a Mockingbird (1962) with Gregory Peck  
The Diary of Anne Frank (1959)  
Hey, Boo: Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird (2011 documentary)  
Capote (2005) with Phillip Seymour Hoffman  
Infamous (2006) with Toby Jones, Sandra Bullock, and Daniel Craig  
Heavens Fall (2006) with David Strathairn, Timothy Hutton, and Anthony Mackie  
The Hurricane (1999)  
Gentleman's Agreement (1947) with Gregory Peck  
Twelve Angry Men (1957) with Henry Fonda  
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967)  
with Spencer Tracey, Katherine Hepburn, and Sidney Poitier  
A Time to Kill (1996) with Matthew McConaughey, Sandra Bullock, and Samuel L. Jackson  
Scottsboro: An American Tragedy (2000)  
The Help (2011) with Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer, and Emma Stone

## Websites

<http://www.harperlee.com/>

Find out more about Harper Lee

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070626182320/www.chebucto.ns.ca/culture/HarperLee/index.html>

an extensive resource for information on Harper Lee and *To Kill a Mockingbird*

<http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/index.php>

the NEA online resource of information on the novel for its national Big Read initiative

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0601/feature8/>

a National Geographic article about Monroeville, Alabama, and the novel

<http://www.bard.org/about-the-author-and-playwright-to-kill-a-mockingbird/>

Find out more about the playwright, Christopher Sergel:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2358008/The-Deep-South-1930s-Remarkable-color-photographs-capture-daily-life-African-American-laborers.html>

Images of the Deep South in 1930

## YouTube

Harper Lee's Alabama

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRaQ6pMTe1Y>

Inside the life of the Harper Lee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eGriS2w5HQ>

Race, Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination - What are they?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt0f5WyAoGU>

Shelby Foote on William Faulkner and the American South

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBFMFTxylx0>

Prejudice and Discrimination Chapter 1 and 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGUKh2I7kEU>

Prejudice and Discrimination Chapters 3 and 4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YUoim6MDIo>

The Great Depression 5 - Mean things happening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4RRf5T-bMM>

# Glossary

## **“all men being created equal”**

paraphrased from the Declaration of Independence

## **arbor**

An archway or shelter of latticework used to support vines or other climbing plants.

## **Atticus**

The ancient Roman orator Titus Pomponius Atticus was known for being neutral in political struggles. Attic means Athenian, referring to the famous Greek center of philosophy and art.

## **bird dog**

A type of dog used to hunt or retrieve birds. Some common breeds that are used as bird dogs include the pointer, English setter, Red setter, German shorthair pointer, and Brittany.

## **Calpurnia**

Calpurnia was the name of the third and last wife of Julius Caesar, emperor of ancient Rome. Calpurnia had a premonition of Julius Caesar's murder and tried to warn him.

## **cotton gin**

A machine for separating cotton fibers from the seeds.

## **Einstein**

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was a theoretical physicist, best known for his theory of relativity and the equation  $E=mc^2$ . His name has become synonymous with genius.

## **entailment**

A legal restriction requiring that land be transferred to one's begotten heirs upon one's death, disallowing any other transfer of ownership by will or by sale. Today, the practice has been abolished in all but four states.

## **Ivanhoe**

An 1819 novel by Sir Walter Scott, set in 12th century England and featuring Robin Hood and King Richard as minor characters. Heroism, tolerance, and honor are its important themes.

## **Jefferson**

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), third President of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence, which championed the rights of men and the idea of liberty.

**limelight**

The glare of publicity. This term comes from the intense white light formerly used in theatres by directing an oxyhydrogen flame at a cylinder of lime (calcium oxide).

**mad dog ... the twitchin' stage**

A rabid dog; Calpurnia has deduced from the dog's behavior that it is infected with rabies.

Rabies is usually caused by a bite from an infected animal. It attacks the nervous system and causes brain inflammation; it is fatal to humans. The first stage of rabies features nervousness, solitude, and fever ("the twitchin' stage"). In the second phase, the dog is excitable, overreacts to external stimuli, and bites at anything near. The final stage involves paralysis, drooling, and difficulty swallowing. (Scout's comment "I thought mad dogs foamed at the mouth and jumped at your throat" refers to the final stage.)

**Merlin**

Merlin is a legendary figure best known as the wizard of Arthurian legend.

**minute**

as an adjective (my-*noot*) Marked by close attention to detail.

**missionary teas**

A get-together for members of a missionary society. A missionary society is a group of women who raise funds to support missionaries.

**mortgage**

The pledging of property to a creditor, such as a bank, as security for a debt. Many people must mortgage a new home purchase in order to get the money to buy it. If they do not repay the loan on time, the bank can take possession of the house as payment for the loan.

**pageant**

In this context, an elaborate parade or spectacle; not a contest such as a beauty pageant.

**Rockefeller**

As one of the founders of Standard Oil, John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) was America's first billionaire and is often regarded as the richest man in history.

**snipe hunt**

A practical joke in which someone is sent off with an impossible task, such as a ridiculous method of catching an imaginary bird. (Incidentally, the real snipe is so difficult to catch that the word *sniper* is derived from it, referring to anyone skilled enough to shoot one.)



# Going to the Theatre: Audience Role & Responsibility



You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.