

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

By Harper Lee

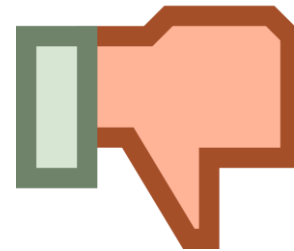
Introductory Presentation



Do You Agree?

Stand up if you agree when I read the following statements

1. If you are innocent, you have no need to fear the judicial system
1. Adults understand things more accurately than children do.
1. All people are generally good
1. If you know you will fail at something, it is pointless to even try
1. If you kill a person you should always be punished.



Novel Genre

It is called a bildungsroman or coming of age novel. This genre concentrates on the spiritual, moral, psychological, or social development and growth of the protagonist, usually from childhood to maturity.

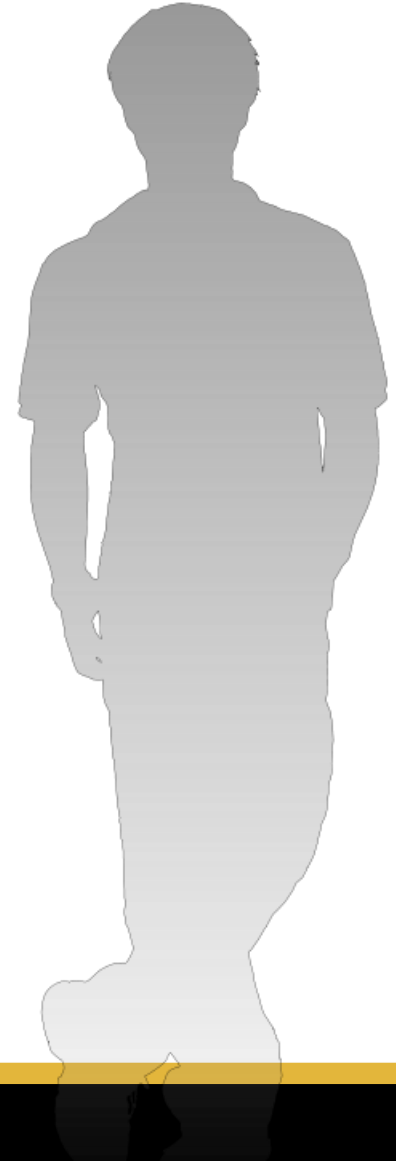


Novel Genre

The character usually undergoes adventures, inner turmoil, and growth and development as a human being.

Some characters come to grips with the reality of the cruelty in the world - with war, violence, death, racism, and hatred.

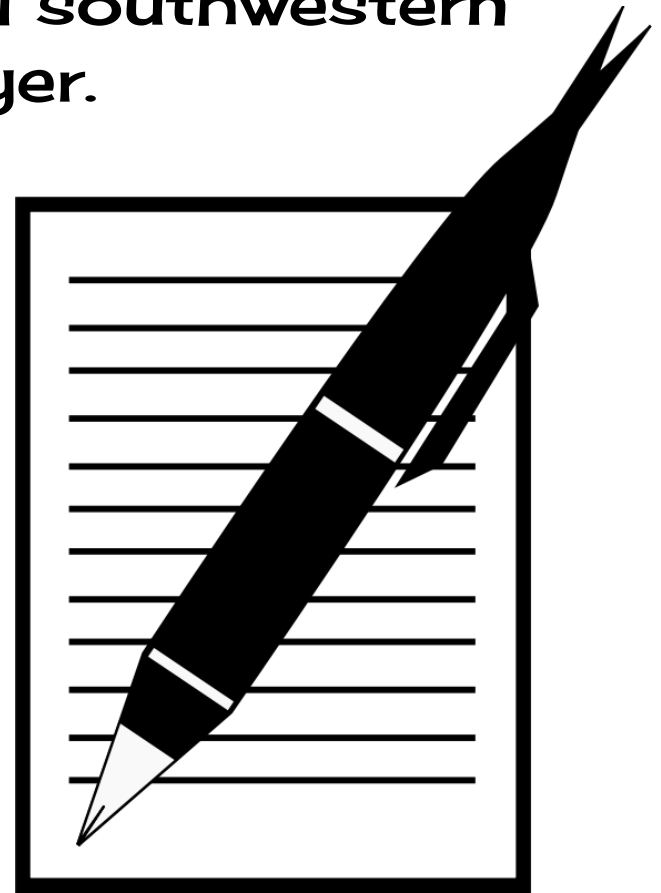
While others deal with family, friends, or community issues.



(Nelle) Harper Lee

Harper Lee was born on April 28th 1926 in Monroeville Alabama (a small southwestern town). Lee's father was a lawyer.

As a child, Lee was a tomboy and loved to read. She enjoyed the friendship of her schoolmate and neighbor, the young Truman Capote (who some say the character of "Dill" is based on).



(Nelle) Harper Lee

Lee studied first at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama (1944-45), and then pursued a law degree at the University of Alabama (1945-49), spending one year abroad at Oxford University, England. She published her first and only novel, To Kill a Mockingbird. The novel won the 1961 Pulitzer Prize. The novel was highly popular, selling more than fifteen million copies.



Predictions

From the title of the novel, predict what the plot will be about:



Historical Context

The Great Depression

The novel is set in Maycomb, Alabama during the Great Depression in the mid 1930s, when millions lost their jobs and more than 750,000 farmers lost their land. Even professionals, like lawyers, had a hard time because the people who hired them could often not afford to pay. The per capita income for families in Alabama was \$125 - \$250 a year!

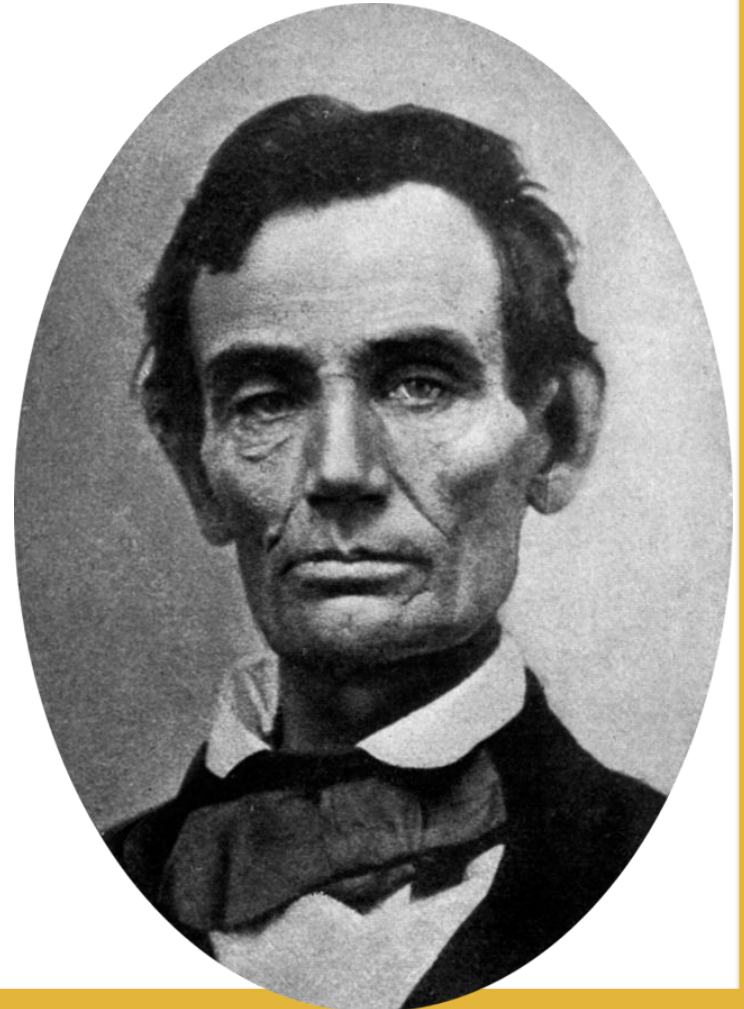


Historical Context

Racism In The South

Even though Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in 1863, Blacks were still not treated equally. By 1932, approximately half of black Americans were out of work.

In some northern cities, whites called for blacks to be fired from jobs as long as there were whites out of work. Racial violence became more common, especially in the south.



Historical Context

Jim Crow Laws (1890s-1960s)

From the 1880s to the 1960s, most of the states used the Jim Crow laws to enforce segregation. Some of the laws included:

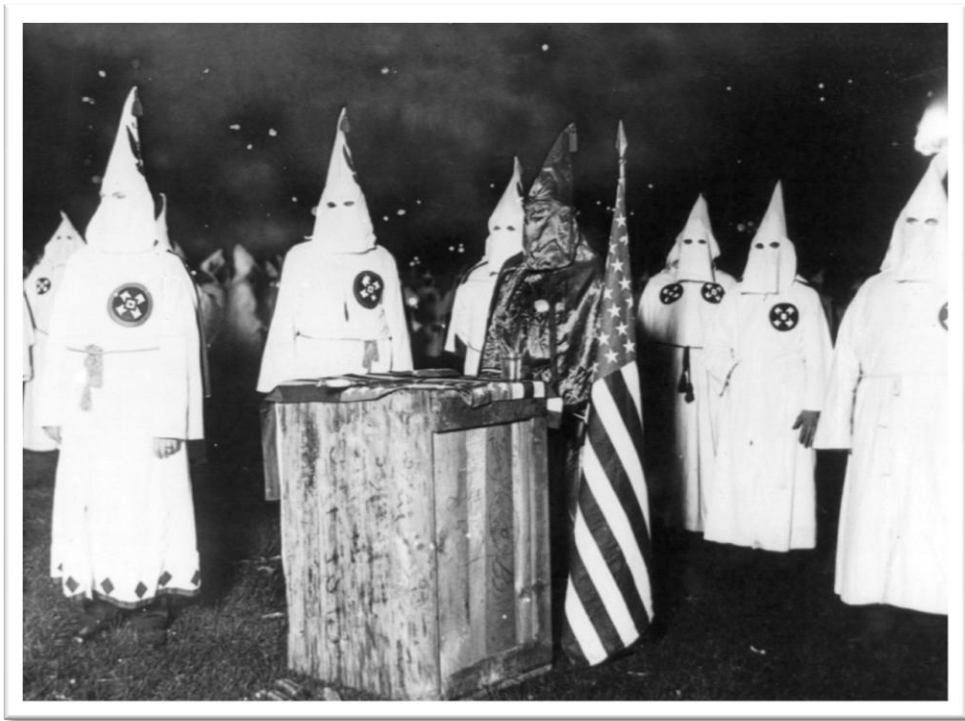
1. Blacks and whites are not suppose to eat together
2. Blacks were introduced to whites, never Whites to Blacks
3. If a Black person rode in a car driven by a White person, they must sit in the back seat.
4. White motorists had the right-of-way at all intersections
5. A Black man could not offer to shake the hand of a White male or female.

Historical Context

Ku Klux Klan

After the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan was formed to promote white supremacy using violent actions against Black people.

After the 1920s the KKK was no longer secretive about their work, and lynch mobs against black people became a common occurrence.



Historical Context

The Scottsboro Trials

Lee was only five years old in when, in April 1931 in Scottsboro, the first trials began about the rape of two white women by nine young black men. The defendants, who were nearly lynched before being brought to court, were not provided with the services of a lawyer until the first day of trial.



Historical Context

The Scottsboro Trials

Despite medical testimony that the women had not been raped, the all-white jury found the men guilty of the crime and sentenced all but the youngest, a twelve-year-old boy, to death. Six years of trials saw all but one of the men freed or paroled. The Scottsboro case left a deep impression on the young Lee, who would use it later as the rough basis for the events in To Kill A Mockingbird.



Historical Context

The "N" Word

In the United States, the word "nigger" was first used as derogatory in the early nineteenth century. The term was initially used in front of the first name of a black slave to distinguish them from a white person.

Although the word is still used in some forms of expression today (song lyrics for example), the term is an abusive slur that is offensive and harmful.



To Kill A Mockingbird

In 1960, in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, Harper Lee published her novel To Kill A Mockingbird. It immediately shot to the top of the New York Times best-seller list. This showed that the US was finally ready to read a story about segregation and racism and to open their minds about the possibility of equality between Whites and Blacks.



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