

One hot summer ...



To *Kill a Mockingbird* takes place in 1935 in Maycomb, Alabama. In the play we meet Miss Stephanie and Miss Maudie, who tell us a story that begins with their nine-year-old neighbor, a tomboy named 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. 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."



Harper Lee:

(top) with Mary Badham, who played Scout in the movie;
(above) in the balcony of the Monroe County Courthouse, 1961;
(below right) today.

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.

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. In 1931, when Nelle was five years old, the trials of the Scottsboro Boys took place. 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

Harper Lee American Author

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 one Christmas some friends gave her enough money to take a year off 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 and two discarded titles—*Go Set a Watchman* and *Atticus*—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 signifi-

cant 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. Today she lives in relative seclusion, splitting her time between New York and Monroeville, where people support her desire for privacy.

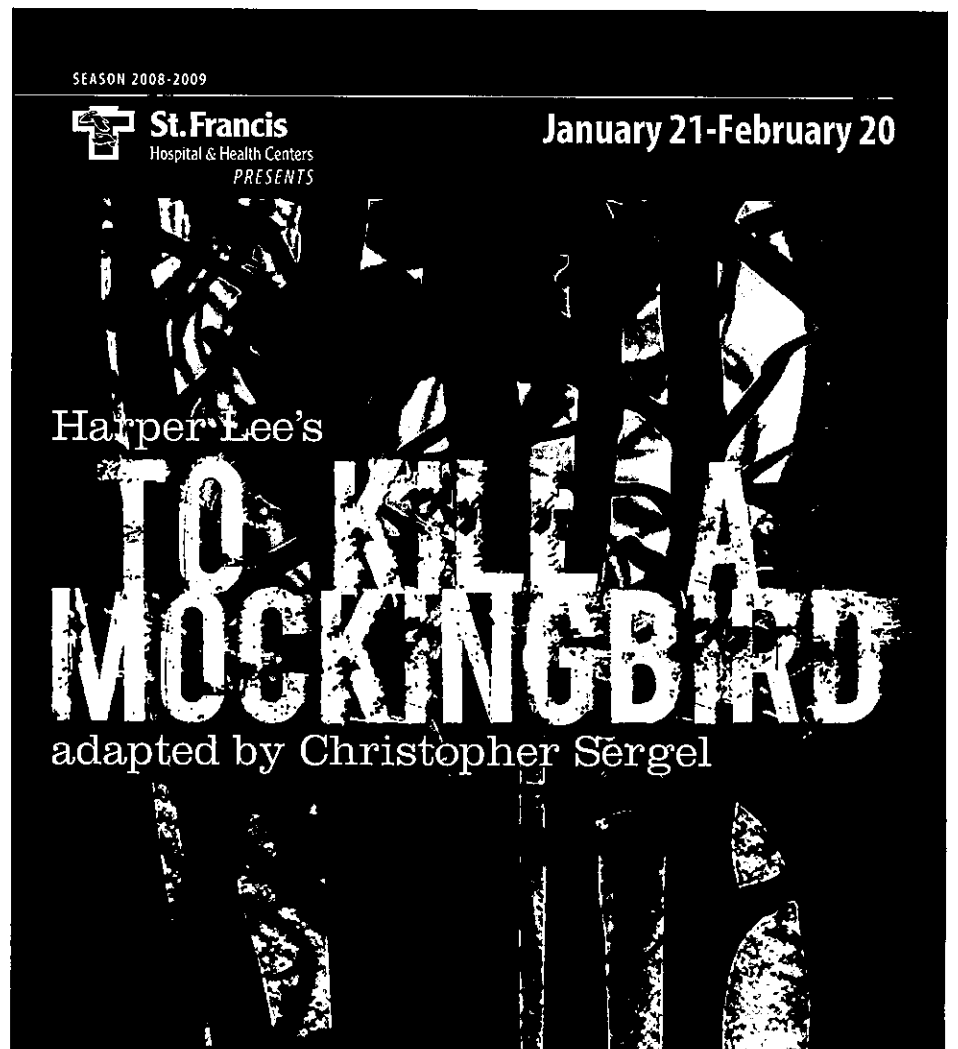
Harper Lee's quiet and private life in some ways reflects how the character, Boo Radley, chose to live his life. She has never released a second novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* has shaped Lee's later life, just as her early life shaped it.

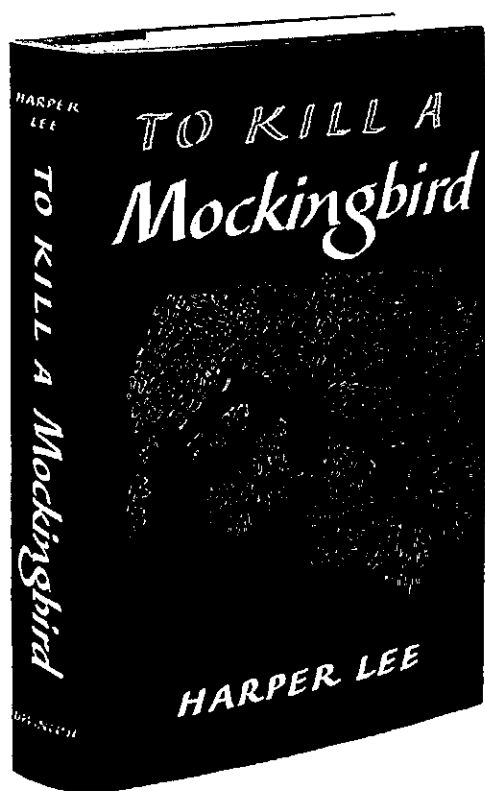


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Exploring...





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 book was an immediate success and has received significant praise over the years, there have also been attempts to ban the book 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 30 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.

Civil Rights in America

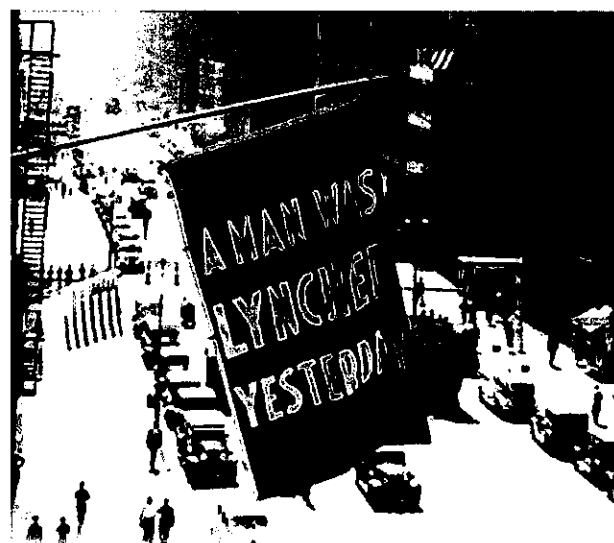
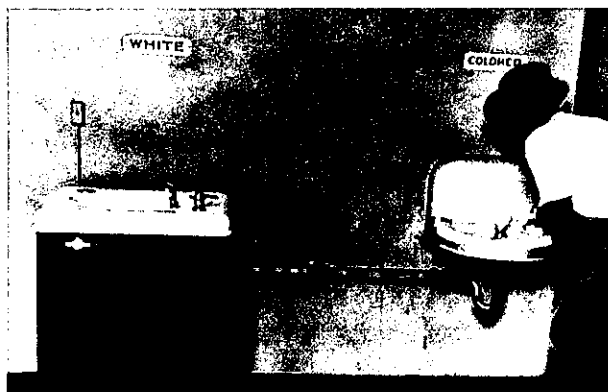
When the Civil War ended in 1865, slavery was no longer legal and African Americans became official citizens of the United States. The 14th Amendment certified African Americans had the same rights as every other American citizen. At first they were able to take advantage of these new rights and became very active in government. But many white Southerners did not like the changes that were happening and used tactics of fear and segregation to systematically oppress the African American population.

Southern states wrote new constitutions with provisions that included literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses that effectively disenfranchised black voters. African Americans were segregated through Jim Crow laws. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court heard the case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, questioning the legality of these laws. The Court ruled that as long as each group was given equal accommodations, it was perfectly legal for these accommodations to be separate. This policy of separate but equal continued to be the defense of Jim Crow laws until the 1950s.

In 1905, W. E. B. Du Bois and other influential African Americans formed the Niagara Movement, which sought to end disenfranchisement and racial segregation. The movement was a reaction against the policies of accommodation and conciliation that had been promoted by Booker T. Washington. The group wanted more public confrontation and refused to be satisfied by freedom without equality.

In 1911 the group evolved into the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), with both white and black members who worked together. The group tried to change conditions for African Americans through lawsuits, legislation, and education. In the 1920s, the organization tried to enact anti-lynching laws. Later, lawsuits were the main course of action in fighting for civil rights, and in the 1950s the fight to end segregation in public schools was the focus of many cases. In the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that the

Even simple public facilities such as drinking fountains were segregated, serving as constant reminders of inequality.



The NAACP flew this flag outside its offices in New York City every time a lynching took place in the South.

idea of separate but equal was unconstitutional since separate accommodations were inherently unequal.

From 1955 to 1968, the Civil Rights Movement focused on a strategy of direct action through non-violent resistance. This included marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and freedom rides. Rosa Parks became the spearhead for action in 1955 when she refused to move to the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, beginning a boycott of that city's segregated bus system. This boycott and other protests were successful in drawing the nation's attention to the oppression of African Americans. Public schools and universities in the South were integrated despite hostile and violent resistance to these changes. President Eisenhower had to send U.S. Army troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1954 to enforce the desegregation of the local high school.

In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. led a march on Washington and delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. He had already established himself as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement, but this now-famous speech raised the national consciousness of the issue and established him as one of the great orators of all time. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by Lyndon Johnson to secure equality in employment and public accommodations. In 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.

All of these legal advancements were significant to the growth of a free America, but there was still much left to do. Busing to desegregate schools became a controversial issue in the 1970s. In 1995, the Million Man March drew both praise and criticism for its attempt to draw attention to lingering remnants of racism. The recent election of Barack Obama is certainly a milestone, but it is only another step on the long journey toward equality for all.

The 1920s were a time of prosperity in the United States of America, but in 1929 Wall Street crashed, 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 went from 3 percent to 25 percent. Many 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.

The Great Depression



During the Great Depression, Americans who had lost their jobs and their homes lived in shacks they built from trash clustered in "Hoovervilles."

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.

Yesterday and Today

Themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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—just like the original readers almost 50 years ago—cannot help but notice not only those issues which have changed for the better, but also those challenges which still need to be faced.

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 will not approach a neighbor’s front 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.

Also important in the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the idea of what it is like to be an outsider. Although all the characters in the story (except Dill) are citizens of Maycomb, 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. Tom Robinson, a black man, is an outsider because of the extreme racism of the white community. 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.

Other themes that not only illustrate the past but also relate to contemporary life 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. These are just a few of the serious issues touched on in this powerful story. What others do you see? 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.

Activities

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

Atticus teaches Scout 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.

Discussion Questions

To Kill a Mockingbird is about Maycomb, Alabama, in 1935, but the novel has been translated into 18 languages and has sold 30 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 and the hardship it brought to this country 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 them differently? Is he just?

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?

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

What does Scout learn by looking at the world from other people’s perspectives as her father tells her?

Why does Dill want to stay with the Finches? Why does he look up to Atticus? What does he see in Atticus that his own children 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?

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 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.

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.

Research laws that are still on the books in Indiana from the 1930s and the 1960s. Share your findings with the class. Did any laws surprise you or cause outrage?

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

Research laws that are still on the books in Indiana from the 1930s and the 1960s. Share your findings with the class. Did any laws surprise you or cause outrage?

Resources

Websites:

<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.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/
annotations and notes on the novel

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070626065457/library.advanced.org/12111/index.html>
information on the novel and historical context

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/history/history.htm>
information on Jim Crow laws throughout history

Books:

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

On Harper Lee: Essays and Reflections
edited by Alice Hall Petry

Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird
by Claudia Durst Johnson

Speaking Out: the Civil Rights Movement, 1950-1964
by Kevin Supplies
a children’s book from *National Geographic* about the Civil Rights Movement in America

Rosa by Nikki Giovanni
a children’s book about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement

Souder by William H. Armstrong
a short novel about a boy’s reaction to the unjust treatment of his sharecropper father

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor
the story of a black family in the South whose children try to come to terms with the prejudice and racism they must face in their society

Films:

To Kill a Mockingbird (1962)

The Diary of Anne Frank (1959)
the story of another girl growing up in an oppressive environment of racism

Scottsboro: An American Tragedy (2000)
a documentary on the Scottsboro trials, a real-life example of injustice similar to Tom Robinson’s story

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?

Word Search

PULITZER			MOCKINGBIRD				MAYCOMB			ATTICUS			LAWYER		
BOO RADLEY			ONE SHOT				JUSTICE			POVERTY			COURTROOM		
MOB			SEGREGATION				BALCONY			SCOUT			CALPURNIA		
NEGRO			TRUTH				SOUTH			CHIFFAROBE			DEPRESSION		
D	H	R	J	C	S	R	P	M	A	Y	C	O	M	B	E
S	Q	B	A	I	N	R	U	P	L	A	C	F	H	K	B
E	B	K	G	Z	W	W	L	D	S	J	V	A	H	R	O
G	M	O	M	O	C	K	I	N	G	B	I	R	D	H	R
R	W	O	O	Y	D	Y	T	C	U	I	E	A	E	Z	A
E	B	M	O	R	N	M	Z	R	P	Y	I	N	P	K	F
G	V	Y	R	U	A	H	E	F	W	H	T	U	R	T	F
A	F	E	T	B	E	D	R	A	O	Y	A	T	E	J	I
T	N	J	R	D	I	L	L	G	B	T	J	W	S	K	H
I	J	U	U	B	N	L	R	E	D	R	G	H	S	A	C
O	F	S	O	A	S	H	F	S	Y	E	E	F	I	T	O
N	C	T	C	L	T	T	E	V	C	V	S	H	O	T	M
M	A	I	B	C	E	U	D	L	D	O	J	N	N	I	C
A	G	C	T	O	I	O	K	P	F	P	U	G	N	C	D
D	L	E	O	N	E	S	H	O	T	C	R	T	L	U	J
S	W	J	H	Y	N	J	U	M	O	R	G	E	N	S	K

Going to the Theatre

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. 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 CD players, mp3 players, cameras, cell phones, beepers, 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 message in the theatre.
- Food and drink must stay in the lobby.
- The house lights 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 or during intermission (a 10-minute break half-way through the play).
- Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue, and look at the set, 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.

To Kill a Mockingbird



costume rendering by Linda Pisano



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Outreach to underserved students has been made possible in part through grants from The Indianapolis Foundation, a CICF affiliate; The Elba L. and Gene Portteus Branigin Foundation; and Teachers Credit Union.
Study Guide edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright
Contributors: Rachel Bennett, Katie Norton

- UPCOMING STUDENT MATINEES
- Crime and Punishment* • February 17-19, 24, 25
 - The Ladies Man* • March 13, 17, 18
 - Crowns* • April 15, 16, 22, 23
 - Rabbit Hole* • May 8, 12, 13
 - Interpreting William* • May 14, 20, 26

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To Kill a Mockingbird is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA believes that a great nation deserves great art; we at the IRT believe that *To Kill a Mockingbird* brings great theatre to a great Indiana audience.

A Word in Controversy

The word *nigger* may be found in the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* and also in the stage version. Its presence reflects the word's usage at the time of the story. The word 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. Today, the use of the word is still controversial. While it may be heard frequently in rap songs and in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by this use. Even within generations, not everyone agrees on whether or not the word should be used within the African American community. Society at large, however, has condemned the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against Blacks demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.