

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

by Harper Lee

- The story is about a young girl who witnesses a town's mistreatment of people.
- The story is told from the young girl's point of view.
- The MAIN characters are good people witnessing prejudice.
- The young girl describes the prejudice honestly and at times descriptively.
- The language of the novel is at times vernacular – meaning that the language includes slang words and even derogatory words which were used by prejudiced people.
- Some of the prejudice described in the story includes:

white against black
rich against poor

black against white
girls against boys

poor against rich
boys against girls

- The story includes some great advice for how to live a good life. These are found in such quotes as “mobs are made of people.”
- The story describes the lifestyle of southern America in the post-Depression era of the late 1930s.
- The story describes the judicial system of Alabama and the country in the 1930s.
- One character is described as a hero.

Through our study of this novel, we will explore our views regarding:

- the power of language and “loaded” words in particular
- the causes and dangers of prejudice
- the causes and dangers of gender stereotyping
- the qualities of a hero
- the definition of and effects of using symbolism in a work of literature
- the current judicial system operating in the United States

The Author and the Book

Nelle Harper Lee, the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, had many childhood experiences which are similar to those of her narrator, Scout Finch.

Harper Lee's Childhood

Grew up in 1930s -
rural southern Alabama
town

Father - Amasa Lee -
attorney who served in
state legislature in
Alabama

Older brother and
young neighbor (Truman
Capote) are playmates

Harper Lee - an avid
reader

Six years old when
Scottsboro trials were
meticulously covered
in state and local
newspapers

Scout Finch's Childhood

Grew up in 1930s -
rural southern
Alabama town

Father - Atticus
Finch - attorney who
served in state
legislature in
Alabama

Older brother and
young neighbor (Dill)
are playmates

Scout reads before
she enters school;
reads *Mobile Register*
newspaper in first
grade

Six years old when
the trial of Tom
Robinson takes place

THE SETTING OF T.K.A.M.

-novel set in the fictitious town of Maycomb, Alabama

-takes place in the 1930's during The Great Depression.

-this was a time of massive poverty and hunger

-in 1931, more than 20,000 Americans committed suicide.

-by 1932, one quarter of the U.S.A.'s labour force was out of work.

-hourly wages dropped by 30%