

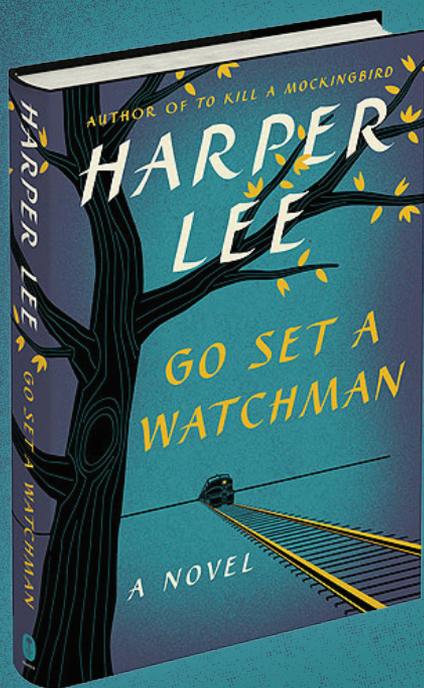
The second novel from the
Pulitzer Prize-winning author of

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

HARPER LEE

GO SET A WATCHMAN

Available in Hardcover, Audio (Digital & CD), Large Print, and E-Book



Set during the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* features many of the characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird* some twenty years later. When Scout (Jean Louise Finch) returns to Maycomb to visit her father, Atticus, she is forced to grapple with issues both personal and political. *Go Set a Watchman* is a powerful and moving novel from one of the greatest literary voices of our time.

ON SALE JULY 14, 2015

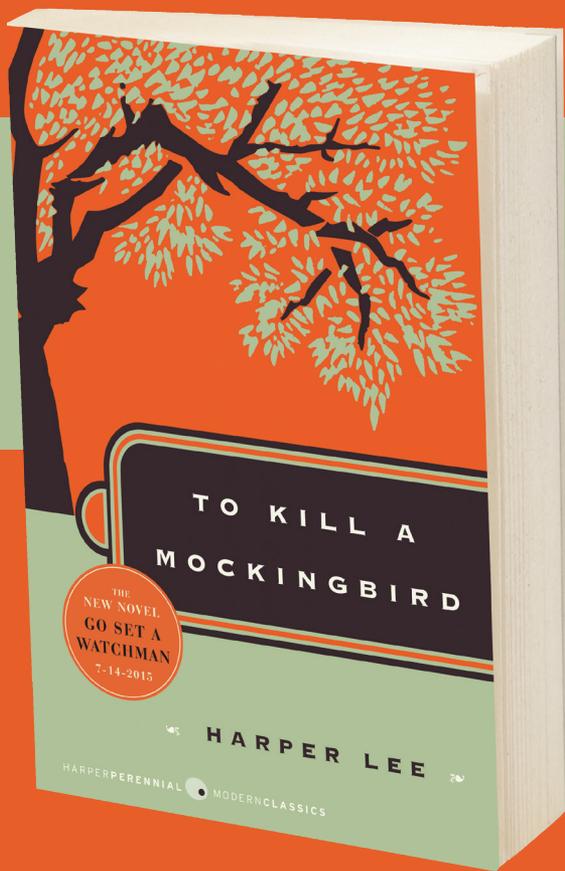
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DISCUSSION
GUIDE TO



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ABOUT THE BOOK

With gentle beauty and unwavering honesty, Harper Lee takes readers back to the Deep South of the 1930s to illuminate a close-knit small Alabama town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy, the quiet heroism of one man who struggles for justice in an unjust world, and two young siblings—Scout and Jem Finch—who try to make sense of the irrationality of adult attitudes toward race and class.

General Discussion Questions

1. How does Harper Lee introduce the novel's major issues of race and class in the novel? In addition to its social commentary, the novel is also a coming-of-age story and a tale about childhood memories. How does Harper Lee combine both?
2. The book is narrated by Scout looking back to her childhood self between the ages of six and nine. How does a narrator influence how a story is told? If Jem were telling the story, how might it compare to Scout's version? What if it were told from an adult's point of view—from that of Atticus or their neighbor Miss Claudia? What kind of a story would Boo or Calpurnia tell?
3. Describe Scout, Jem, and their friend Dill. Would you say they are ordinary children? If not, what sets them apart from other children? How does being raised by a single father affect who they are and how they are growing up? What role does their housekeeper, Calpurnia, play in their lives?
4. What do the adult women in Scout's life—Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, Miss Maudie, and even Mrs. Dubose—teach her about being a lady? How does she contend with others' expectations of her because of her gender? Are there fewer strictures on young girls today?
5. How do Scout and Jem change over the course of the novel? Are these changes inevitable, or are they shaped by the people around them and the events they are both witness to and participants in?
6. How do Scout and Jem view their father, Atticus? How does the town regard him? What do they learn about their father over the course of the novel? What lessons does he teach his children both directly and indirectly about life, community, duty, decency, and courage?

- 7.** What draws the children to the Radley place? What are their perceptions of the Radley family, and especially the mysterious Boo? What hints does Harper Lee give us about Boo Radley's character and how do they contrast with what the children believe about him?
- 8.** Scout explains, "The misery of that house began many years before Jem and I were born. The Radleys, welcome anywhere in town, kept to themselves, a predilection unforgivable in Maycomb." Why does she call their behavior a "predilection" and why was it unforgivable? Why do people value privacy? Why do others often not trust people who choose not to be sociable or socialize?
- 9.** Jem tells Scout that there are four kinds of folks in Maycomb County, "our kind of folks don't like the Cunninghams, the Cunninghams don't like the Ewells, and the Ewells hate and despise the colored folks." Is this a good description of Maycomb? Does it describe American society itself during the 1930s? What about our society today? Why does Scout see everyone as "folks" without divisions?
- 10.** How do Scout and Jem learn about the Tom Robinson case? Why does Atticus defend Tom? What does Scout understand about race when we first meet her and what does she learn as the story unfolds? What about Jem?
- 11.** One of the most famous lines in literature comes from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." Explain Atticus's meaning. Who is the "mockingbird" in the novel? Is it an allusion to the notion of innocence itself?
- 12.** Would children be allowed to witness such a trial today? What do the children discover about their town, their father, and themselves by attending the trial? Are adults today too protective of children? What are they trying to protect them from—and what happens when those children grow up and become adults themselves? How does the trial and its aftermath affect Jem and Scout? Today, high-profile trials can often be viewed on TV or online—what impact does this have on children and our society?
- 13.** What role does the setting play in the story? What would have been different had the story taken place outside of a small Southern town? Racial issues still occur in our society today—what impact does location/setting play in relation to these issues?
- 14.** Librarians across America voted *To Kill a Mockingbird* the best novel of the twentieth century, yet the book is continuously challenged and often banned by schools and communities. What makes the novel so important and so divisive? What does the novel say about America in the recent past? What insights and lessons does it hold for us today?

*One of the most beloved novels of all time, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been a perennial favorite of readers for more than half a century. Many fans have revisited this novel after their first reading to experience again the beauty and power of Harper Lee's novel.*

Discussion Questions for Re-Readers

- 1.** How old were you the first time you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*? What was your reaction to the book then? How does this reading compare with your previous experience? Why did you choose to reread the novel?
- 2.** What did you discover with this rereading? Do the characters and the plot stand the test of time? What stands out for you in the novel on your most recent reading?
- 3.** What makes the book so beloved by so many readers? If you loved the book the first (or previous) time you read it, do you feel the same way now and why?
- 4.** Do you remember what you learned about yourself and the world the first time you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*? How have you changed since the first time you read the book? Have those changes influenced your opinion of the novel and its characters?
- 5.** *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set during the 1930s and was published in 1960 in the midst of events that would lead to the passage of the Civil Rights bill. How did America change in the intervening years between the book's setting, its publication, and today? How have racial and class attitudes evolved over the past fifty years? Is the book relevant to our world today?
- 6.** Did rereading inspire you to revisit your own memories from childhood or help you view them in a different way?
- 7.** Harper Lee interweaves social commentary about politics, class, and race with a coming-of-age story and a portrait of small town Southern life during the Depression. Is she successful at smoothly integrating all three elements? How do all three strands work together to create a story that is sweet, tragic, funny, and deeply serious?
- 8.** What lessons can a new generation of readers discover from reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*? What did you take away from reading the book again?



At the heart of To Kill a Mockingbird is a family, Atticus Finch and his children, Scout and Jem. While the novel examines difficult themes, it is also a story of growing up and discovering the beauty and sometimes painful truths of our world. Harper Lee carefully explores innocence, injustice, race, class, and prejudice through the observations and experiences of a young sister and brother, making these difficult issues vivid and clear for all ages to understand.

Discussion Questions for Families

- 1.** *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a story of a family and of growing up. Describe Scout and Jem. Do they get along well? How do their childhoods compare to those of children today? What do they learn by being on their own, free from adult supervision?
- 2.** Are there limits placed on Scout because she is a girl? What are those limits?
- 3.** How do Scout and Jem view their father, Atticus? How does the town regard him? Is he a good man and a good role model? What lessons does he teach his children about life, community, duty, decency, and courage?
- 4.** Atticus tells Scout that you can't truly understand another person until you stand in his shoes. What does standing in another person's shoes teach us about his or her life? What are some other lessons that Atticus imparts to his children?
- 5.** Why does Atticus defend Tom Robinson? He tells Scout, "Tom Robinson's case is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience." What is he telling her? What does "the essence of a man's conscience" mean?
- 6.** What is Calpurnia's relationship with the family like? Do the Finches see Calpurnia as more than the help? How do the Finches treat black people? What about the poor? Why does Scout ask Atticus if they are poor? Why does having a different skin color or not having money change some people's ideas about who a person is?
- 7.** Why did Boo Radley and the Radley's house fascinate Scout, Jem, and Dill? How do the adults behave toward the Radleys? Why did Boo watch over Jem and Scout? In saving the children from their attacker, did Boo do a bad thing? When she meets him for the first time, why does Scout address him as Mr. Arthur instead of Boo? Why do you think the children never saw him again after that night? Do you think he continued to watch over them?



Two years after the novel was published, *To Kill a Mockingbird* debuted on the big screen. The critically acclaimed film was nominated for eight Academy Awards and won three, and is on the American Film Institute's list of the greatest American movies of all time.

Discussion Questions for Page & Screen Comparison

1. How does the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* compare to the novel? What did the filmmakers keep and what did they change?
2. What challenges do you think filmmakers face in adapting a book to the big screen? Can they remain truly faithful in the retelling using a different medium?
3. Can a film ever capture the depth of a book? What does the film version offer audiences beyond the book?
4. Gregory Peck won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance as Atticus Finch. Which actors would you cast today if you were making the film?
5. The movie poster for *To Kill a Mockingbird* includes a burst warning that it is not suitable for children. Do you think most parents today would let their children watch the film? If you have children or hope to, would you allow your children to watch it?
6. In its review of the film, the *New York Times* praised the movie, yet said, “for all the picture’s feeling for children, it doesn’t tell us very much of how they feel.” Do you agree with this criticism? Are Scout’s and Jem’s feelings made clear in the book? How does a filmmaker capture or evoke “feeling”?
7. The late Roger Ebert’s review begins, “*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a time capsule, preserving hopes and sentiments from a kinder, gentler, more naive America.” Do you think the America portrayed in the book and the movie is “kinder and gentler”? How would you describe this time period?
8. The film was released in 1963, in what is considered to be the defining year of the modern Civil Rights Movement in which major events, including the March on Washington took place. Do you think the movie helped to influence its audience’s views of race and injustice? What impact does popular culture—fictional movies and novels—have on peoples’ attitudes and beliefs? Think about recent films that have stirred controversy. What makes them “divisive”?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. She attended Huntingdon College and studied law at the University of Alabama. She is the author of two novels, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*. Harper Lee has been awarded numerous literary awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Books About Harper Lee & *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird"—Harold Bloom
Scout, Atticus & Boo: A Celebration of "To Kill a Mockingbird"—Mary McDonough Murphy
Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee—Charles J. Shields

Nonfiction on Related Topics

To the Mountaintop—Stewart Burns
The Eyes of Willie McGee—Alex Heard
Devil in the Grove—Gilbert King
I Have A Dream—Martin Luther King Jr.
A Testament of Hope—Martin Luther King Jr.
Marshalling Justice—Michael G. Long
Strange Fruit—David Margolick
Eyes on the Struggle—James McGrath Morris
Let the Trumpet Sound—Stephen B. Oates
I Never Had It Made—Jackie Robinson
American Tapestry—Rachel L. Swarns

Bestselling Fiction from the Same Era

Dust Tracks on a Road—Zora Neale Hurston
Up the Down Staircase (1965)—Bel Kaufman
**Peyton Place* (1956)—Grace Metalious
**Tropic of Cancer* (1961)—Henry A. Miller
The Group (1963)—Mary McCarthy
**Lolita* (1958)—Vladimir Nabokov
Dr. Zhivago (1958)—Boris Pasternak
Atlas Shrugged (1957)—Ayn Rand
Bonjour Tristesse (1955)—Francoise Sagan
Franny and Zooey (1961)—J. D. Salinger
The Man (1964)—Irving Wallace

Coming-of-Age Classics

**Souder*—William Armstrong
Red Sky at Morning—Richard Bradford
**A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*—Betty Smith
**Black Boy*—Richard Wright

Fiction with Similar Themes

Wish You Well—David Baldacci
Ruby—Cynthia Bond
The Chaneyville Incident—David Bradley
Crazy in Alabama—Mark Childress
Peace Like a River—Leif Enger
A Lesson Before Dying—Ernest J. Gaines
A Time to Kill—John Grisham
Snow Falling on Cedars—David Guterson
**Their Eyes Were Watching God*—Zora Neale Hurston
Mudbound—Hillary Jordan
The Secret Life of Bees—Sue Monk Kidd
The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter—Carson McCullers
Cry, The Beloved Country—Alan Paton
Presumed Innocent—Scott Turow
**The Color Purple*—Alice Walker
**Native Son*—Richard Wright



**To Kill a Mockingbird* has been banned many times over the years. Asterisk denotes other banned books