

Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



To Kill A Mockingbird

By: Christopher Sergel
Adapted from the Novel by Harper Lee

Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

<http://www.sactheatre.org>

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Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

Harper Lee and Christopher Sergel: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

By Marlo Ihler

In 1960, author Harper Lee published what was to become one of the most influential novels in American history, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Ironically when it was first published she was told not to expect it to sell more than a couple thousand copies. It quickly became a sensation, and now, over fifty years later, it has never been out of print, has sold over thirty million copies and has been translated into forty languages (Harper Collins, 2008). It also received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961, among other awards garnered over the years.

Lee, born in 1926, has stated that her novel is not an autobiography, though the basis of the story and its characters reflect her life growing up in Monroeville, Alabama, during the Great Depression. The central family's last name, Finch, is the same as Lee's mother's maiden name; her father was a lawyer, like Atticus Finch; Lee, too, studied law before pursuing her writing career; her best friend growing up, Truman Capote, was the inspiration for the character of Dill; the trial in the novel reflects a famous trial of the time (the Scottsboro trial); the fictional setting of Maycomb County bares resemblance to Monroeville (Joyce Moss and George Wilson, *Literature and Its Times*, 1997, vol. 3, p. 390, 395).

Within two years of publishing the novel, it was adapted by director Robert Mulligan into a highly acclaimed film, starring Gregory Peck. The film won three Oscars, including one for Peck's portrayal of Atticus.

By 1970, writer Christopher Sergel was working on a stage adaptation. Lee was always very cautious and careful about whom she would permit to use her story. Sergel was given permission to copyright his adaptation, which premiered in 1991 at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey. During the twenty years it took him to adapt the play, he made countless revisions, and even after it premiered he continued to revise it. Interestingly, it was originally intended for middle schools and high schools, but has since become a popular favorite of regional theatres across the nation (www.talkingbroadway.com).

It also enjoys an annual performance at the courthouse in Lee's hometown of Monroeville every spring, though Lee, who still lives there, does not attend. She remains "deeply private and defiantly silent" about her novel. The play has basically become a Passion play for the community, and "with its strong moral statement . . . has inspired the citizens of Monroeville" (Albert Murray, *New York Times*: Long Lives the Mockingbird, Aug. 9, 1998).

Sergel's version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was only one of many stage adaptations he did during his lifetime. He loved the theatre and did dramatic adaptations of other well-known books including Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, which ran on Broadway, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *The Mouse That Roared*, *Up the Down Staircase*, and *Black Elk Speaks*. He also wrote other plays and musicals, including *Fame*, *Get Smart*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Outsiders*, and *Pillow Talk*.

His personal background was as varied as the plays he adapted and wrote. Born in 1918 in Iowa City, Iowa, he lived a life full of adventure. Following his graduation from the University of Chicago, he served in World War II as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Merchant Marines and taught celestial navigation. Later, he spent two years as the captain of the

schooner Chance in the South Pacific. Then as a writer for Sports Afield magazine, he lived in the African bush for a year (www.nytimes.com/1993/05/12/obituaries).

In 1970, the same year he began adapting *To Kill a Mockingbird*, he became president of Dramatic Utah Shakespeare Festival 351 West Center Street • Cedar City, Utah 84720 • 435-586-7880 4 Publishing, a play publishing and leasing company founded in 1885 by his great uncle, Charles Sergel. According to their website, his “greatest adventures and deepest love” in life was the work he did at Dramatic Publishing (www.dramaticpublishing.com/AuthorBio.php?titlelink=9848). He was considered a “generous and spirited mentor” to numerous playwrights and authors, attracting to the company many fine writers of the 1970s and ‘80s such as Arthur Miller, Roald Dahl, Ray Bradbury, and E.B. White. He once said he “hoped to be remembered as a ‘true friend and a good writer,’” like E.B. White’s famous spider, Charlotte.

Sergel served as Dramatic Publishing’s president until he died in 1993 at age 75 in Wilton, Connecticut, from heart failure.

To Kill a Mockingbird: Synopsis

The adult Jean Louise Finch introduces the story, sharing her memories of growing up in Maycomb, Alabama, during the summer of 1935. Known as Scout when she was a young girl, she lives with her father, Atticus, her brother, Jem, and their cook, Calpurnia. At the top of the show, Jem and Scout discover Indian head pennies in the knothole of their neighbor's tree. The tree is on the property belonging to the Radleys, a mysterious and reclusive household, and they are at a loss as to where the money came from.

Walter Cunningham stops by to bring Atticus a "payment" of hickory nuts. Scout is confused why he pays in such a way, and Atticus explains how difficult the Depression has been on the country folks and farmers. Jem tries to get Atticus to play football but is disappointed when Atticus says he is "too old." Jem struggles to understand the importance of Atticus's job as a lawyer in town, as well as the fact he is much older than other kids' fathers. But Scout feels he might just be "the bravest man who ever lived" as he interacts with others in town who are intimidating to the children.

Soon Scout and Jem meet Dill who has come to spend the summer with his aunt who lives next door to the Finches. Scout and Jem tell him the story of the Radleys, explaining that the youngest son whom they call Boo never leaves the house. Dill, fascinated, suggests they try to "make him come out."

Atticus has a special relationship with his children. Jean Louise remembers how he took every opportunity to teach them something. However, their greatest lesson was about to emerge, and their world about to change when Atticus agrees to take on an impossible case: to defend in court Tom Robinson, a black man, when he is charged with raping Mayella Ewell, an impoverished white girl.

Scout and Jem discover more treasures in the knothole and decide to leave a thank you note to whomever is leaving them. Suddenly they notice a dog down the street that has "gone mad." Atticus is called home and he arrives with the Sheriff who insists that Atticus be the one to shoot the animal. To his children's amazement Atticus takes the dog down with one rifle shot. They start to understand there is more to their father than they realize.

The town is now starting to buzz with the news that Atticus is going to defend Tom Robinson in court. Some neighbors and townspeople have very strong feelings about whether or not Atticus should do it, and Scout asks him for more details. He says that though there is no chance of winning he still must do it to retain his self-respect.

As it gets closer to the trial, Tom Robinson is moved to the county jail in town. The sheriff is worried there might be trouble, and Atticus himself sits outside the jail to prevent the lynch mob from getting at Tom. Scout, Jem, and Dill sneak out of bed to see what is happening. Scout cannot resist going to Atticus, who is now surrounded by a group of men, including Walter Cunningham and Bob Ewell, Mayella's drunkard father. The children refuse to leave, and actually help diffuse the situation.

The trial begins, and people from all over Maycomb County come for the occasion. The children cannot help but join in the throngs of people at the courthouse, although they've been told to stay away. They end up sitting in the Colored balcony with Reverend Sykes. Multiple people are called to testify in the case, including the Sheriff, Bob Ewell, Mayella, and Tom Robinson. Atticus works to establish that it was not Tom, but Bob who beat up Mayella—and it soon becomes clear that Tom is innocent of the charges.

Scout, Jem, and Dill are engrossed in the trial and don't understand when the jury finds Tom guilty and sends him to prison. Later that fall, the sheriff reports that Tom tried to escape but was shot to death by the prison guards. He also advises Atticus take precautions against retribution by Bob Ewell who was humiliated by Atticus in court.

Halloween comes and the school children in town put on a pageant about Maycomb. Scout is dressed like a ham but sleeps through her part. Embarrassed, Jem tries to help her get home once the crowds have left. On the way, they are attacked by Bob Ewell. Someone rescues Jem, Scout gets away, and Bob "[falls] on his own knife" during the struggle and is killed, or so Sheriff Tate tells Atticus. Jem's arm is broken, but, in reality, his life was saved by none other than Boo Radley.

The adult Jean Louise sums up the lessons learned that summer and fall, and ends the play reiterating Atticus's advice that "you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them."

Characters

Jean Louise Finch: The adult Scout, Jean Louise narrates by telling the story of young Scout and the summer of 1935 in Maycomb, Alabama.

Jem: Scout's brother and playmate, Jem is twelve years old. Though he is very close with and protective of his sister, he also starts to detach himself from her, transitioning towards adolescence throughout the story. His beliefs and ideals are badly shaken by the prejudice and hatred he observes during Tom Robinson's trial.

Scout: At the beginning of the story, Scout is nine years old and lives with her father, Atticus, her brother, Jem, and their housekeeper, Calpurnia. She is inquisitive, impulsive, emotional, and by the standards of the day, a true tomboy. She believes in the basic goodness of the people in her community, which is tested as the story unfolds.

Walter Cunningham: A poor farmer whom Atticus tries to help, but who also unsuccessfully leads a lynch mob going after Tom Robinson the night before the trial.

Atticus Finch: As Scout and Jem's father and a widower, Atticus has taught his children to have a strong sense of justice and open-mindedness. He is a lawyer in Maycomb and is regarded as a man of integrity and decency who agrees to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman, even though he knows there is little chance to win the trial.

Calpurnia: The Finches' black housekeeper, Calpurnia is very strict and has helped look after the children since their mother's death.

Mrs. Dubose: An elderly, cranky, racist woman, Mrs. Dubose lives near the Finches. The children do not like her, but Atticus admires her for trying to conquer her morphine addiction.

Dill: While spending summers with his aunt who lives next door to the Finches, Dill meets and befriends Scout and Jem. He has a very active imagination and a strong sense of adventure, being the first to suggest the idea of "making Boo come out."

Mr. Radley: A reclusive neighbor of the Finches, Mr. Radley is the father of Boo. In complete contrast to Atticus as a father, he forces Boo to stay in their house at all times because of past trouble with the police.

Judge Taylor: The judge for Tom Robinson's trial.

Heck Tate: Maycomb's sheriff, a decent and respected man.

Bob Ewell: An alcoholic, poverty-stricken, and abusive man, Bob Ewell deliberately and wrongfully accuses Tom Robinson of raping his daughter, and then tries to attack Scout and Jem after the trial.

Reverend Sykes: The Reverend for the black community at the First Purchase African M.E. Church.

Mr. Gilmer: The prosecuting attorney in the case against Tom Robinson.

Mayella Ewell: The oldest of the nine Ewell children, Mayella Ewell is lonely, abused by her father, and unhappy. She tries to seduce Tom, and, when her father sees them, the father and daughter accuse Tom of rape and lie about it in court.

Tom Robinson: A black man who is falsely accused of raping Mayella Ewell, Tom Robinson is defended by Atticus in court. He is one of the story's "mockingbirds."

Boo Radley: A reclusive, mysterious neighbor of the Finches, Boo Radley becomes a source of fascination for the children, and starts to develop a sort of indirect friendship with them, leaving them small gifts. As one of the story's "mockingbirds," he is a prisoner in his own home, but emerges to protect Scout and Jem from a potentially life-threatening situation.

Miss Maudie Atkinson: Another neighbor of the Finches, Miss Maudie lives across the street from Scout and Jem. She is one of Maycomb's more open minded citizens, and often spends time talking to the children in her garden.

Miss Stephanie Crawford: The town gossip.

Harper Lee

By Lynnette Horner

Monroeville, Alabama, was a sleepy backwater town. It experienced a brief prosperity when the railroad came through in the early part of the twentieth century, then settled back into old slumber when the Vanity Fair factory went out of business. It resembles dozens of small towns in the South, and yet is remarkable as the birthplace of Nelle Harper Lee and as the inspiration for Maycomb, the setting of the “best novel of the twentieth century” (Voted by the Library Journal, *To Kill a Mockingbird* the best novel of the twentieth century [<http://www.shmoop.com/harper-lee/timeline/>]), *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Without a doubt, the confluence of place and people couldn't have produced a more fertile seedbed for the genesis of this beloved American novel.

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April, 28, 1926. Her father, Amassa Coleman (A.C.) Lee, was the son of a Civil War veteran and the product of a disciplined Methodist upbringing, which instilled in him that a life worth living included devotion to helping others. His life embraced many careers including country school teacher, bookkeeper, lawyer, and newspaper editor. He was a man of character and good judgment, and the inspiration for the main character, Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Nelle's mother, Frances Cunningham Finch was born into a prosperous family. She was intellectually brilliant, a gifted pianist, and attended one of the finest private schools for girls in the South. At age nineteen, Frances married A.C. Lee, who was thirty. They had four children, Alice, Frances Louise, Edwin, and the youngest, Nelle Harper. Frances also suffered from a “nervous disorder,” most likely undiagnosed manic depression. By the time Nelle was born, Frances's mental illness rendered her emotionally inaccessible to Nelle. A.C. was the most present parent in Nelle's life and she adored him. He spoke to children as adults and listened to them with the same respect and attention.

Nelle didn't fit the Southern standard of what a well-bred little girl should be. She was an unashamed tomboy throughout her life. When she was five-years-old she befriended Truman Parsons, the son of a Southern beauty and a ne'r-do-well father. He was small for his age, spoiled, wimpy, and would fly into raging tantrums. Although Truman was older than Nelle, she was bigger and tougher than he, and they became inseparable friends. Nelle was willing and able to defend him from playground bullies. They shared a love for reading, and a keen intellect and imagination which made them somewhat different from other children their age. They also shared a childhood hurt of parental abandonment; Truman's parents leaving him in the care of his relations; and Nelle's mother, battling her demons with mental illness.

A.C. Lee observed the children's days spent in the tree house reading books or making up their own stories and plots. He presented them with a most unusual gift for most children, but a treasure to Nelle and Truman, an Underwood typewriter, which they lugged around as their constant companion. The people and places of Monroeville provided ample story material for two bright, imaginative children. In the mid '30s, Truman's mother sent for him to join her and her new husband in New York City, but the friendship continued through the years. When he began his writing career, he changed his name to Truman Capote. Nelle was the person he invited to be his research assistant for his landmark book of nonfiction, *In Cold Blood*.

After high school, Nelle chose Huntington Women's College to continue her education. After her freshman year, she transferred to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa where she became the editor for the *Rammer Jammer*, a college publication with a satirical slant that encouraged creative expression. Nelle, who was unconcerned with fashion, never wore make-up, smoked a pipe, and could cuss in an unladylike fashion, was considered by some to be an eccentric and reclusive. In fact, she was just disinterested in the social whirl that occupied the minds of many students her age. Those who took the time to know her described her as comfortable in her own skin and had a quick humor. She didn't need the approval of others and didn't seek it out. The semester before graduation, she dropped out and moved to New York City, where her friend Truman was making a name for himself as a writer.

To support herself she worked in a bookstore and then as a ticket agent for Eastern Airlines and later at British Overseas Air Corporation. Keeping a roof over her head and food on the table, however, was not facilitating her writing career. Truman introduced her to a couple in his circle of theater friends, Michael Martin Brown and his wife Joy, who was a fellow Southerner. They took an immediate liking to each other and became good friends. Nelle opened up to them and confided her dreams of becoming a writer. In 1956, Nelle was unable to get enough time off work to travel to Monroeville for the Christmas holiday, and was invited to join the Browns. It was a Christmas that changed her life. The Browns presented her with proposition that they would pay her living expenses for a year so she could quit her job and write full time.

Soon afterward, she was invited to discuss her writing with the editors of J.P. Lippincott and Company. They liked her writing; it was obvious she was no amateur. But, her coming of age story about three children in the town of Maycomb was just a series of events without a strong central plot to hold it together. It would need a lot of work before it would be ready for publication. Tay Hohoff, one of the Lippincott editors, became her mentor, and guided her through a year of writing anguish, molding Nelle's novel into the literary masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The book was published in July 1960. Within a few weeks it hit the bestseller lists of the both the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. In May of 1961, Nelle's first novel had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

To Nelle, who was never interested in fame and was more comfortable in solitude or with a small group of intimate friends, the instant notoriety her novel created was overwhelming. Throughout her life, she was almost self-deprecating about her accomplishment and avoided, whenever possible, interviews and public appearances.

In 1961 Nelle's agents sold the movie rights to the Hollywood producers and director, Alan Pakula and Bob Mulligan. Nelle wanted to have a say in who would play the lead role of Atticus Finch and wrote a personal letter to Spencer Tracy inviting him to consider the role. He was obligated to another movie at the time. It was rumored that Bing Crosby had expressed interest in the role, and Rock Hudson was also considered by the producers. In the end, Gregory Peck was selected. Peck traveled to Monroeville to meet Nelle and A.C. Lee. He spent considerable time with A.C. wanting to get to know the essence of the man that inspired the character Atticus Finch. Initially, Nelle had reservations about Peck pulling off the role, but later said the first time he stepped on the sound stage, he became Atticus and her doubts evaporated.

Shortly after filming began for the movie, Nelle was called home and her beloved father died on April 15, 1962. She was grateful that he had lived long enough to see the success of her book and it's homage to him. With the success of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Nelle's publisher,

friends, and fans were waiting anxiously for her next novel. A second novel, however, was never completed, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* stands on its own as Harper Lee's single most important work. Nelle Harper Lee was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters April 2007. Later that same year, President George W. Bush presented her with the Presidential Medal of Honor with the words of this press release, "At a critical moment in our history, her beautiful book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, helped focus the nation on the turbulent struggle for equality" (Charles J. Shields, *I Am Scout, the Biography of Harper Lee*, [New York: Henry Holt, 2008]).

Nelle Harper Lee published her second novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, featuring the characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in July of 2015. She continued to live simply in Monroeville, Alabama until her death in February of this year, 2016. She was eulogized and buried in a church in her hometown.

To Kill a Mockingbird

By Elaine P. Pearce

Published in 1960, Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* was an instant success. Fifty years and nearly fifty million copies later, it is still widely read and greatly loved. Inspired by the novel's popularity, Charles Sergel wrote his theatrical adaptation in 1970 to meet the demand from schools for an acting version. Since then his play has reached beyond high school audiences, including one production that "toured regional theatres in the United Kingdom for nine months and then played seven months at the Mermaid Theatre in London." The Manchester Guardian called it a "beautifully crafted adaptation," and The Times review reported that it held "packed houses in rapt attention" (Charles Sergel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* [Woodstock, Illinois: The Dramatic Publishing Co., 1998]).

Compressing Harper Lee's many stories of a small Southern town during the Depression may seem a daunting task. For Sergel, the center of the play is the racial prejudice that allows the arrest and trial of Tom Robinson, a Black man accused of raping a white woman. However, he balances that public issue of social injustice with the private life of the Finch family—Scout, Jem, and Atticus. Scout and Jem, energetic children with a curious fascination for the mysterious Boo Radley, have led relatively carefree lives, but the adult world begins to spill over into theirs when Atticus becomes the defense attorney for Tom. The children have not yet learned the prevailing prejudices that come with age. Following their father's example, they tend to see the world differently from most of the folks of Maycomb, Alabama, in 1935. Like Atticus, they cannot "pretend to understand . . . why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up" (Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* [New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006], 100–101).

Scout and Jem also have a strong sense of justice. Scout would willingly beat up Walter Cunningham when he taunts her with, "How come your daddy defends niggers?"(9). Jem destroys Mrs. Dubose's porch flowers when she says that Atticus is "a nigger lover and no better than the trash he works for" (35). They have great difficulty understanding how a jury of adults can completely ignore the facts and reason to convict "a quiet, respectable Negro man who had the temerity to feel sorry for a white woman" (80). Atticus tells Jem that juries have convicted innocent Black men "before, and they did it today, and they'll do it again. And when they do it—seems like only children weep" (88).

In William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*, Captain Keller says that children keep their parents safe. Children also keep adults honest. Scout keeps the Old Sarum mob honest. Mr. Cunningham cannot hurt Atticus in front of his children, he cannot hurt a man who has helped him with a legal problem, and he cannot hurt the father of one of his son's classmates. Scout's conversation with him reminds him that he is still a human being, and that pulls him away from the mob mentality to stand in Atticus's shoes.

From that situation arises the focus of Charles Sergel's adaptation, What does it mean to be human? Human beings have certain rights. They have the right to privacy. "What Mr. Radley does is his own business" even if it does seem peculiar to Scout and Jem (21). People are "entitled to full respect for their opinions" (26) and "the right to make whatever decisions they consider best for their children" (57). And every individual, regardless of his skin color, has the right to be judged fairly in a court of law.

Rights are balanced with responsibilities. To be truly human, one must have compassion for his fellow man. “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (21). Tom Robinson helps Mayella because he has compassion for her. He appreciates her struggling attempts to add beauty to an ugly existence without any help from her family. Hardworking and honest, Tom is a human being, not just merely alive like Mayella’s father. Stunned by Tom’s death, Scout asks, “How could they shoot Tom?” Atticus must tell her that “To them he was just an escaping prisoner. He wasn’t Tom to them” (94). Killing a Black man is so much easier if he is not considered fully human.

Human beings also have the responsibility to do the right thing. When Scout wonders if Atticus can be right when so many people think that he is wrong, he tells her that a conscience “does not abide by majority rule” (26). A person cannot expect anyone else to respect him unless he does the right thing. Atticus “won’t have [his] children hear [him] say something different from what [he] knows to be true” (100). Atticus defends Tom even though he will be fighting his friends (25), even though Sheriff Tate believes he has everything to lose (43). Despite the futility of his actions, Atticus defends Tom because it is the right thing to do. “Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win” (25). The fact that Atticus does try to win, does offer a defense that keeps a jury out so long deliberating Tom’s fate, suggests that Maycomb may be taking “a little step along the way” (91) toward a time when Blacks will receive equal justice in a court of law.

In the meantime, individuals can provide the justice the courts do not. Concentrating on Tom Robinson’s case minimizes the other notable innocent of Harper Lee’s novel Boo Radley, who watches the children play from behind a window curtain, laughs softly when the tire in which Scout is rolling crashes against the Radley house, leaves many gifts for the children in the knot of the old tree, mends Jem’s pants that are stuck to the fence in an escape from the Radley’s yard, and places a blanket around Scout’s shoulders on the cold winter night when the children stand outside the Radley Place watching Miss Maudie’s house burn. To save Jem and Scout, Boo kills Bob Ewell, ultimately providing justice by killing the man who caused Tom Robinson’s death, but to make this information known, to drag Boo “with his shy ways into the limelight—that [would be] a sin” (101).

After Boo saves Jem and Scout, Scout stands on the Radley porch and sees her world as Boo must have seen it, protected from it by the walls of his home. She understands Boo, knows that he saw her and Jem as his children. “He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives” (Lee 320). As she makes her way home, she feels very old and concludes that she and Jem “still have to get grown but there [isn’t] much else left for us to learn” (103). That reminds me of E. E. Cummings’ lines, “children guessed (but only a few/ and down they forgot as up they grew.” Scout and Jem will not forget. And neither will we.

Study Guide Questions: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

From the Sacramento Public Library

- 1.) What "challenge" did using Scout as narrative voice present for Lee? How did she solve it?
- 2.) What part does the use of flashback play in the solution? How does *Mockingbird* have a "double point of view"?
- 3.) How does the paragraph beginning "Maycomb was an old town" comment on the events that are recounted in the flashback? Why is the adult-Scout needed for Lee to include a paragraph like this one?
- 4.) How does the younger Scout's innocence play a role in preventing the lynching of Tom Robinson? What does the adult Scout realize that the child-Scout does not?
- 5.) The title of Lee's book is alluded to when Atticus gives his children air rifles and tells them that they can shoot all the bluejays they want, but "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." At the end of the novel, Scout likens the "sin" of naming Boo as Bob Ewell's killer to "shootin' a mockingbird." Do you think that Boo is the only innocent, or mockingbird, in this novel?
- 6.) Was Calpurnia happy with the Finches? Why did her personality change when she was at church? Was she a realistic or idealized character?
- 7.) *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been challenged repeatedly by the political left and right, who have sought to remove it from libraries for its portrayal of conflict between children and adults; ungrammatical speech; references to sex, the supernatural, and witchcraft; and unfavorable presentation of blacks. Which elements of the book-if any-do you think touch on controversial issues in our contemporary culture? Did you find any of those elements especially troubling, persuasive, or insightful?

Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

Questions to ask before the play:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

Questions to ask after the play:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and

opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme, or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Additional Reading Material

"Teaching 'Mockingbird,' 'Watchman' and Harper Lee with the New York Times" by Amanda Christy Brown and Katherine Schulten for The Learning Network, a Teaching and Learning Blog with the New York Times

http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/09/10/teaching-mockingbird-watchman-and-harper-lee-with-the-new-york-times/?_r=0

'Harper Lee, Author of 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' Dies at 8' by William Grimes for the New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/arts/harper-lee-dies.html>

'Harper Lee's Novel Achievement' by Charles Leerhsen for the Smithsonian Magazine

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/harper-lees-novel-achievement-141052/?no-ist>

The New York Times Lesson Plan: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues_in_depth/Mockingbird.html