

Harper Lee's:

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

published 1960, during
the Civil Rights Movement

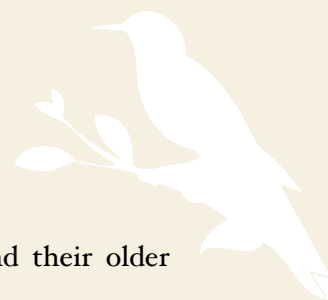
TIME
DEPRESSION:
1930s

PLACE
MAYCOMB,
ALABAMA

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LK Englisch (E,)

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PLOT OF THE STORY

- ◆ narrator **Scout Finch** lives together with her older brother **Jem** and their older widowed father **Atticus**, a lawyer
- ◆ they have a friend who comes during summer, **Dill**. Scout and Dill like each other.
- ◆ the three have a lot of fun together especially trying to get "**Boo**" **Radley** out of his old, mysterious house, but they never succeed in seeing him
- ◆ Atticus is appointed to defend a black man, **Tom Robinson**, accused of having raped a white woman, Mayella Ewell. Many people disapprove, taunt Scout and Finch and even try to lynch Tom.
- ◆ at the trial, Atticus proves that Mayella and her father **Bob** are lying. Nevertheless Tom is convicted guilty and **shot** when trying to escape from his innocent imprisonment
- ◆ being humiliated at the trial, Bob vows revenge. He assaults Scout and Jem on their way home.
- ◆ suddenly Boo Radley appears and helps them to escape. Jem breaks his arm and **Bob** accidentally **gets killed** by Boo Radley.
- ◆ the town sheriff declares this as an **accident** (he also knew that Tom was sentenced innocently)
- ◆ Scout now knows who Boo really is and **understands** what a valuable, likeable neighbour she has

IMPORTANT THEMES AND THEIR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- ◆ **racial injustice and Southern life**
 - ▶ "**Jim Crow**" laws were in effect until 1964 - **segregation** of black and white everywhere
 - ▶ "**caste system**" with a strict social hierarchy and **racial injustice** (e.g. Tom's sentence) especially in the South (high density of black people) lead to **social tensions**
- ◆ **social class** - hierarchy and genealogy (i.e. your relatives) decide upon your value as a person
 - ▶ e.g. Bob Ewell, though living on the junkyard, is white and "(trust-)worthier" than any black
- ◆ **courage and compassion** - (book, e.g. Atticus) in real-life, e.g. the **Civil Rights Movement**

LITERARY GENRE

- ◆ **Southern Gothic** - part of Gothic literature; exclusively from the American South
 - ▶ gothic and **grotesque** (irritating) elements to create suspense and explore **social issues** and the **culture of the South** - book, e.g. mysterious Boo Radley, mean-grotesque Bob Ewell
- ◆ **Bildungsroman** - "Coming-of-Age" story, describing the growth and change of a character
 - ▶ youthful naivité and good faith are confronted with real injustice, evilness, segregation - book, e.g. Jem and Scout do not understand why Tom is convicted guilty.

Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Kill_a_Mockingbird
<http://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/>

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/>
<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/> search: "To kill a Mockingbird"