

Group 6: Beyond the Book: The Culture of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Harper Lee Biography: How her life connected to story she wrote

- Provide a clear biographical profile of Harper Lee both as a person and as a writer. What are some myths about Harper Lee that exist that are not true?
- How did her childhood and upbringing influence her writing of this novel? What major characters, elements of its setting and plot emerge directly from real experiences in her childhood?
- What connections did Harper Lee have to the Civil Rights movement? Was she trying to make some political/social statements with this book? If so, what were those statements? What impact has her book had on American culture?

Role of Women in 1930s South and Women Characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- What was the typical role of women in the South in 1930s America? What limited rights did they have and/or what were they expected to be in the South at this time?
- The character of Aunt Alexandra in the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* is often thought of as a “proper” Southern lady. Based on your research, what was a “proper” woman of the South supposed to be like? What was the “social code” she was trying to uphold in the South? Look for descriptions of clothing, behavior, personality, and social roles.
- The character of Miss Maudie, the main character’s neighbor, is considered by many to be a woman who defied the typical role of women in the South. Based on your research, a woman behaving like that would be considered “improper” or “breaking the code” of a Southern lady. Are there any examples in history of such women? Who were they and what did they do to break the code?

Civil Rights Defenders for Blacks: Atticus Finch as a Reflection

- Who were some of the key historical civil rights defenders during the real Civil Rights movement in America? What ideas were they trying to promote and what support did they get?
- In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch is the father of the main character, Scout, and he is a defense lawyer for a black man, Tom Robinson. Despite all the racism and ignorance that surrounds him, Atticus fights strongly to defend Tom Robinson. What did white people who fought to defend the rights of blacks face in terms of hate and violence? Are their historical accounts of white defenders of blacks who faced the hate and violence? Explain who they were and the details of their experiences. Provide quotes when and if you can.
- Based on historical accounts and opinions in research, have all Black people looked at white characters like Atticus positively? Do some have negative perceptions of him as a character? Explain why.

<http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070626171138/www.chebucto.ns.ca/culture/HarperLee/bio.html>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070703033416/www.chebucto.ns.ca/culture/HarperLee/otherlinks.html>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056592/>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070707174818/www.chebucto.ns.ca/culture/HarperLee/film.html>

<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/to-kill-a-mockingbird.html>

<http://www.frankwbaker.com/tkam1.htm>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/12111/?tqskip1=1&tqtime=0416>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/12111/girl.html>

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/women.html>

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/stories/women/>

<http://www.medaloffreedom.com/GregoryPeckMockingbird.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/civilrights/change.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/civilrights/>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/civilrights/players.htm>