



RICHARD THOMAS is
ATTICUS FINCH in
HARPER LEE'S
**TO KILL A
MOCKINGBIRD**
A new play by
AARON SORKIN
Directed by
BARTLETT SHER

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

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THE SHUBERT ORGANIZATION

PRESENT

RICHARD THOMAS
IN
HARPER LEE'S
TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

A NEW PLAY BY
AARON SORKIN

ALSO STARRING

MELANIE MOORE JACQUELINE WILLIAMS JUSTIN MARK
YAEHEL T. WELCH STEVEN LEE JOHNSON JOEY COLLINS
RICHARD POE LUKE SMITH ARIANNA GAYLE STUCKI
DAVID CHRISTOPHER WELLS ANTHONY NATALE LIV ROOTH TRAVIS JOHNS
MORGAN BERNHARD DENISE CORMIER CHRISTOPHER R. ELLIS
STEPHEN ELROD GLENN FLEARY MAEVE MOYNIHAN
DANIEL NEALE DORCAS SOWUNMI GREG WOOD

AND
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ADAM GUETTEL

DIRECTED BY

BARTLETT SHER

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INTRODUCTION

“But Maycomb’s in the fight of its life. Are we gonna live in America or are we gonna live in the South? Atticus says there’s fundamental goodness in every one and I say being polite is no way to win a war.”

— Jem Finch —

WELCOME

Welcome to the teacher resource guide for the Broadway and National Tour production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We are excited for students to experience this dramatization of the classic novel by Harper Lee written by Academy Award winning playwright Aaron Sorkin, directed by Tony winner Bartlett Sher. This play allows for many historical and present-day curricular connections in your classroom.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Arts experiences resonate most strongly for students when themes and ideas from the play can be aligned to your curriculum. This resource guide has been created to help prepare your students to see *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We also hope to direct you to resources that can further your classroom exploration of the play, as well as of the novel. We encourage you to print and share pages of this guide with your students. Each section also includes links to additional materials, as well as activities you can do with your students before and after seeing the play.

To Kill a Mockingbird runs 2 hours and 35 minutes including an intermission, and is recommended for ages 12 and up. Please be advised that this production contains racially explicit language and costuming, references of sexual abuse, and brief gunfire audio.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

To Kill a Mockingbird provides many learning opportunities for students in areas related to:

- Jim Crow laws and segregation
- The Great Depression and the New Deal
- The judicial system
- Social class systems
- Gender politics
- Mass incarceration
- Confederate symbols

THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

There are many widely available synopses of the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This synopsis reflects the new dramatization by Aaron Sorkin.

The story takes place in the mid-1930s, in the small, tight-knit town of Maycomb, Alabama. At this time, the Ku Klux Klan has 5,000 members in the state. Congress has introduced an anti-lynching law. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt publicly supports it, but her husband President Franklin Delano Roosevelt does not. The New Deal was passed in 1933, but many are still out of work. A black man, Tom Robinson, has been accused of raping a poor white woman, Mayella Ewell, in her home just outside of town.

This new stage adaptation of Harper Lee's classic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, tells the story through the eyes of the three central child characters: Scout Finch, her older brother Jem Finch, and their friend Dill Harris. The play opens with the three children, played by adults, discussing the events of the past summer when Jem broke his arm and Maycomb was swept up in the rape trial of Tom Robinson. In Act One, the narrators guide the audience back and forth in time through the events of the year, jumping between the trial and back to the episodes leading up to it. Scenes morph and bleed into each other as we skip around in time throughout the story.

Scout and Jem's father Atticus Finch, a widower and local attorney, has been appointed by Judge Taylor to defend Tom Robinson. There is little evidence to support the case against Tom. Will Maycomb find a black man innocent of raping a white girl? Atticus thinks times have changed. Calpurnia, the Finches' longtime African American housemaid and cook isn't so sure. Bob Ewell, Mayella's father, is a bully and child abuser who is looked down upon by the community. Atticus has exculpatory evidence from Tom that Bob has been raping and beating Mayella since his wife died a number of years ago. Atticus believes he

will be able to get Mayella to implicate her father during cross-examination at the trial, but when the time comes she won't turn on her father.

In flashbacks, we see the children become obsessed with the town recluse, Arthur "Boo" Radley. They play pranks on Boo and sneak around his house.

There is rising racial tension in Maycomb as the trial nears. Calpurnia and Atticus argue about the best way to explain the trial and race relations to Scout and Jem. Atticus advocates that the children should treat every person with kindness, even as Bob Ewell and others in town call Atticus racial slurs. Atticus teaches his children to try to see the world through other people's eyes. Calpurnia takes issue with the children being taught to treat bigots with kindness.



Richard Thomas plays Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Bartlett Sher. Photo by Lia Chang

THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

Act Two picks up in the middle of the trial as the defense begins to call witnesses. The action progresses in real-time through the defense's testimony where Link Deas is called to the stand. Deas is Tom's employer. In this dramatization he is a composite character with Dolphus Raymond. He is a white man, married to an African American woman with biracial children. Deas testifies that Tom's arm was injured in a cotton gin accident when he was eleven and so he would have been incapable of causing Mayella's injuries. This implicates her father, Bob Ewell, instead of Tom

for beating her. Tom takes the stand and testifies that Mayella was a lonely girl seeking attention, and that she came on to him until he stopped her advances. Atticus gives a passionate closing argument, but the all-white male jury still finds Tom guilty and sentences him to death. Tom, Atticus, the children, and Maycomb are left with the bitter residue of the verdict. Despite getting his desired outcome, Bob Ewell has been exposed as a sex offender and child abuser. He tries to take violent revenge on the Finch family, but an unlikely hero intervenes.

THE CHARACTERS

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Atticus Finch | White widower lawyer |
| Jean Louise "Scout" Finch | White daughter of Atticus Finch, 8 years old |
| Jeremy "Jem" Finch | White son of Atticus Finch, 12 years old |
| Dill Harris | White friend of Scout and Jem; spends his summers in Maycomb |
| Calpurnia | African American, longtime housekeeper and cook for the Finches |
| Tom Robinson | African American cotton picker and field hand for Link Deas; lost the use of his arm when it was caught in a cotton gin. Was accused of rape by Mayella Ewell |
| Horace Gilmer | White prosecuting attorney |
| Judge Taylor | White judge presiding over the Robinson case |
| Bob Ewell | Poor white father of Mayella Ewell; an unemployed widower |
| Mayella Ewell | Poor white eldest daughter of Bob Ewell; cares for her seven brothers and sisters |
| Walter Cunningham | Poor white farmer; client of Atticus Finch |
| Link Deas | White land owner married to a black woman; has biracial children; rumored to be the town drunk; Tom Robinson's employer |
| Boo Radley | White; a total recluse; the Finches' neighbor; many rumors about him and his family in town |

THE PLAY

THE STYLE OF THE PLAY

NARRATORS

In this new dramatization of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the audience is guided through the story from the point of view of three children, Jem, Scout and Dill in the style of a memory play. Elements of a memory play include having: 1) a narrator that speaks directly to the audience (direct address) recounting events that have happened in the past, 2) non-linear storytelling, and 3) autobiographical elements from the protagonist's life. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, various scenes often take shape on stage as the three children describe them. The narrators take part in reenacting their memories as actors. The timeline of events is non-linear, as the children's dialogue with each other sparks other ideas and memories.

| | |
|-------|---|
| SCOUT | The accused, Tom Robinson, sat right there. He was brought into the courtroom through a side door, wearing handcuffs and escorted by the bailiff, who unlocked and removed the handcuffs before motioning for Tom to sit... Mr. Horace Gilmer, the state's prosecuting attorney sat right here. |
| DILL | Mr. Horace Gilmer would call just three witnesses to the stand, which was located here. |
| SCOUT | The jury was made up of twelve men, all white of course and all farmers. |
| DILL | Every last seat in the courtroom was filled with what seemed like every last person in Maycomb. It would've been a good day to rob a bank. |
| SCOUT | The white folks sat downstairs and the colored folks sat up in the balcony and that included Calpurnia. |
| JEM | And sitting here at the defense table was Tom Robinson's court-appointed lawyer, our father, Atticus Finch. |



Melanie Moore plays Scout Finch



Justin Mark plays Jem Finch



Steven Lee Johnson plays Dill Harris

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

SETTING THE SCENE

READ

Read the above excerpt from Aaron Sorkin's adaption of *To Kill a Mockingbird* setting the courtroom scene.

DISCUSS

- What do you know about the setting of the courtroom that you didn't know before?
- List all of the set pieces and characters that the narrators introduced.
- How do the characters set the scene?

IN GROUPS OR PAIRS

1. Assign students a setting from the following list or make up your own:
 - A. Lunchroom
 - B. Grocery store
 - C. Park
 - D. The principal's office
2. Have students decide on a character that would be in this setting.
3. Have students brainstorm the details of the setting using some of the following questions:
 - Are you outside or inside?
 - What time of day is it? What is the light like?
 - What time period are we in?
 - Pick a few adjectives that describe the mood of your location.
 - Pick a few adjectives that describe the furniture. Describe where everything is for the audience.
 - What do you hear? What sounds are in the distance? Select at least two sounds that you hear.
 - What does your location smell like?
 - What else do you see here?
 - Are there other characters around? What are they doing?
4. Using your character from step 2, write an opening narration that sets the scene for the audience.
5. Optional extension: Continue writing the scene with additional characters, or stage the opening narration.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

CHARACTER ANALYSIS AND POINT OF VIEW

POINT OF VIEW

To Kill a Mockingbird deals with mature themes, such as racial discrimination and injustice, rape, lynching, and social class. In this dramatization, the playwright, Aaron Sorkin, chose to tell the story from the point of view of three children. In the novel, the story is told exclusively from Scout's point of view.

BEFORE THE SHOW

DISCUSS

How does point of view affect a story? Consider a well-known text such as a fairy tale or a book you've read in class. Consider examples of texts which tell well-known stories from alternative points of view, e.g. *Wicked*, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Tiger Lily*. Why do you think Harper Lee chose to tell this story of racial prejudice and injustice through the eyes of a young white girl? How might having three child narrators in this dramatization affect the way the story is received?

ANALYZE

Have students read and discuss the list of characters in the play on page 3 of this resource guide. Which characters do you think might share a similar point of view of the events of the story? Which characters might have differing points of view?

AT THE SHOW

TAKE NOTES

Students should decide on an adult character to follow during the show and, using the graphic organizer below, take notes on this character's point of view about the events in the story. The example below looks at Calpurnia.

| | |
|--|---|
| MY CHARACTER | Calpurnia |
| SOCIAL CLASS | Working class |
| RACE | African American |
| OCCUPATION | Housekeeper |
| LIVES IN | Town |
| My character's has this opinion about Tom Robinson's trial | Calpurnia knows Tom is innocent. She's cynical about Tom's chances for justice, as long as the justice system is only composed of white people. |
| My character wants | Atticus to take a firmer stand against racial injustice in the town. |
| My character believes | That violent bigots like Bob Ewell don't deserve our empathy. |
| My character says | When Atticus says, "I believe in being respectful" she says, "No matter who you're disrespecting by doin' it." |

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

CHARACTER ANALYSIS AND POINT OF VIEW

AFTER THE SHOW

ANALYZE

Read this exchange from the script between Jem and Atticus after the verdict has come in:

JEM You're trying to excuse those jurors.
ATTICUS Explain. I'm trying to explain why they—so you can understand—I'm trying—
JEM They don't deserve an explanation and I already understand.

DISCUSS

- What was Jem's reaction to the verdict?
- How does Jem's reaction compare with the character that you tracked through the show?
- How would your character react if Atticus made excuses for the jurors who returned a guilty verdict?

WRITE

Have your students write a reaction to the trial verdict in their character's voice.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.



Jacqueline Williams plays Calpurnia in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Bartlett Sher.

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD: THE NOVEL

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING THE NOVEL



Nelle Harper Lee. AP Photo/Rob Carr

There are a wide range of supplementary resources available if you are reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* with your students. We particularly recommend Facing History and Ourselves' teacher resource guide "Teaching Mockingbird" and the National Endowments for the Arts' "Big Read Teacher Guide." The Facing History guide draws on many of the themes of identity, racial and judicial politics that are highlighted in this new dramatization.

From Facing History and Ourselves' "Teaching Mockingbird":

"Our study guide and lesson plans will help you use *Mockingbird*'s setting as a springboard for engaging students in issues of justice, gender, and race. This collection also offers African American voices, which are absent from *Mockingbird*'s narration, so you can deepen student perspectives of this classic novel."

www.facinghistory.org/mockingsbird

From the National Endowment for the Arts' "Big Read Teacher Guide: *To Kill a Mockingbird*":

"Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the rare American novel that can be discovered with excitement in adolescence and reread into adulthood without fear of disappointment. Few novels so appealingly evoke the daily world of childhood in a way that seems convincing whether you are sixteen or sixty-six."

MONROEVILLE, ALABAMA

The setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama which is closely modeled after Harper Lee's hometown Monroeville, a small town in central Alabama. Celia Keenan-Bolger, who originated the role of Scout on Broadway, answered questions about preparing for this role and her trip to Monroeville this past summer on page 21 of this guide.

Besides a few brief years spent living in New York City, Harper Lee lived in Monroeville until she died in 2016. Monroeville's main industry in the 1930's was farming which is represented in the play through the characters of Walter Cunningham, Tom Robinson, Link Deas,



Old Courthouse Museum, Monroeville, Alabama. The George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD: THE NOVEL

MONROEVILLE, ALABAMA



Mural depicting characters in the play and book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Located in historic downtown Monroeville, Alabama. The George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

and Bob Ewell. The population in the area has shrunk over the years as the county has become more industrialized and more people have moved to cities. Today, Monroeville calls itself the “Literary Capital of Alabama,” as, in addition to Lee, Truman Capote and several other authors have called it home. Today’s population is approximately 6,000 with a 37% poverty rate (Data USA, 2017). While this is lower than the poverty rate during the time of the play, it is still more than three times higher than the national average. (US Census, Income and Poverty in the United States, 2017).

Alabama has improved its wrongful prosecution and conviction rates since the 1930s, when the novel is set, but a large racial disparity continues to exist between Alabama’s prison population and the state population as a whole. Today, African Americans in Alabama are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than white Alabamans (Sentencing Project, 2018).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Theroux, Paul. “What’s Changed, and What Hasn’t, in the Town That Inspired *To Kill a Mockingbird*” *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 2015

www.smithsonianmag.com/history/whats-changed-what-hasnt-in-town-inspired-to-kill-a-mockingbird

Mills, Marja. “A Look Inside The Town That Inspired ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’” *Huffington Post*, July 15, 2014

www.huffpost.com/entry/to-kill-a-mockingbird-book_n_5585515

Newman, Cathy. “Remembering Harper Lee’s Hometown” *National Geographic*, February 19, 2016
www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/160219-harper-lee-dead-kill-mockingbird-interview-culture

Li, Anne and Ben Casselman. “What’s Changed in Harper Lee’s Hometown Since Mockingbird” *FiveThirtyEight*, February 19, 2016
www.fivethirtyeight.com/features/whats-changed-in-harper-lees-hometown-since-mockingbird

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

“You have to take a broad view of history.”

Jem Finch

To Kill a Mockingbird takes place in the midst of the Great Depression, a decade-long period of extreme economic turmoil and strife in the US. This economic strain is critical to understanding the motivations of many of the characters in the story. Before the Depression, most African Americans were limited to doing jobs that white people refused to do. When the Great Depression hit and the job market tightened, they found themselves competing for jobs with poor white people. In the 1930s, many African Americans in Alabama worked in agriculture and in private homes as domestic servants, as exemplified by two characters in the novel and the play: Calpurnia, the Finches' housekeeper, and Tom Robinson, who works on Link Deas' farm picking cotton. The Great Depression hit the agriculture industry hard, as exemplified by its effects on the farmer Walter Cunningham and the unemployed laborer Bob Ewell in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



Crowd of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash of 1929. New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection (Library of Congress)

The Great Depression was felt across the US, but it hit some harder than others. Between 1930 and 1940, employment of white people in Alabama declined by 5.6%, while employment of African Americans declined by 13.6%. Farmers of both races were devastated by the crash and farmers who could not afford to harvest their crops were forced to let food rot in the fields.

SCOUT Are we poor?
ATTICUS We are indeed.
SCOUT Are we as poor as the Cunninghams?
ATTICUS The crash hit the farmers the hardest



Black tenant family near Greensboro, Alabama. Delano, Jack, photographer. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

The “Roaring Twenties,” a decade of great prosperity, came to an abrupt end in October 1929 when the US stock market crashed. Many businesses were forced to close, putting their employees out of work. Those lucky enough to still have a job found their wages drop and the value of their money eroded by inflation. By 1930, four million Americans were out of work. By 1931, the number had risen to six million.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Facing History and Ourselves “Teaching Mockingbird” on the Great Depression
www.facinghistory.org/mockbird

Library of Congress: The Great Depression Lesson Plans
www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/?fa=partof_type:lesson+plan&q=great+depression

Annenberg Learner: The Great Depression, The Dust Bowl, and The New Deal
www.learner.org/series/essential-lens-analyzing-photographs-across-the-curriculum

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

PRESIDENT FDR AND THE NEW DEAL



Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
Goldensky, Elias, photographer.
Library of Congress Prints and
Photographs Division

There are many references to 1930's politics in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, including about then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) and the New Deal, a series of government programs which helped to bring the US out of the Great Depression. The character Bob Ewell receives

government welfare relief checks after losing his Workers Progress Administration (WPA) job.

Herbert Hoover was President when the stock market crashed in 1929. He thought the economic instability would be a passing phase. He also believed in the strength of individual power and didn't think the federal government should step in to help the economy recover. The public disagreed and in 1932 they overwhelmingly elected FDR, who campaigned on "a new deal for the American people." The New Deal became the umbrella name for the government programs that FDR implemented in the first 100 days of his presidency, including Social Security, which exists to this day. FDR's New Deal also created jobs through the WPA, which built many public works projects such as roads, bridges, and dams. The WPA also fought for fair wages and working conditions for workers, which eventually resulted in policies like the minimum wage, the end of child-labor, and an eight-hour work day.

Federal regulations dictated that New Deal programs could not be administered with racial bias. However, particularly in the South, the state and local authorities that administered New Deal programs were steeped in centuries-long institutionalized racism and consistently favored white workers over black workers. Additionally, many of the measures passed to improve working conditions only applied to mainstream

manufacturing and industrial jobs which were overwhelming white. The majority of Southern blacks – like Calpurnia and Tom in *To Kill a Mockingbird* – worked in agriculture and domestic service where these new rules did not apply.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

PBS American Experience "The New Deal" article:
www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/panama-canal-new-deal

"10 incredible examples of New Deal architecture and design"
www.curbed.com/2017/1/19/14323824/new-deal-architecture-wpa-pwa-hoover-dam

Federal Writer's Project and the Folklore Project
www.loc.gov/collections/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection

"1934: The Art of the New Deal"
www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/1934-the-art-of-the-new-deal-132242698/



WPA Poster promoting the U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps showing a young man with pickaxe.
Bender, Albert M., artist. Library of Congress

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

RACE RELATIONS

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE BIRTH OF JIM CROW

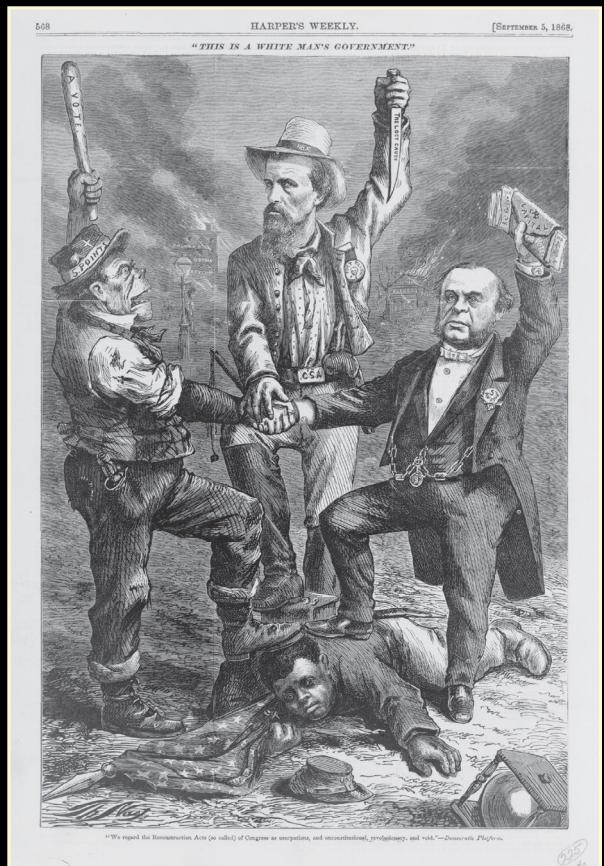
In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, students will see and hear many references to Jim Crow laws. In the courtroom, where a large portion of the play is set, blacks and whites are not permitted to sit together due to racial segregation dictated by these laws. The character Link Deas is in an interracial marriage and has biracial children, which was illegal at the time in which the play was set. In fact, Alabama did not amend its state constitution to make miscegenation legal until 2000.

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, the US began a decade-long period known as Reconstruction. During this time, the country passed legislation and formed programs to address the centuries'

long oppression of African American slaves and attempted to help them transition into free members of society. The landmark amendments to the US Constitution during this period were the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, ending slavery, ensuring citizenship to all those born in the US regardless of race, and ensuring the right for black men to vote. Reconstruction also attempted to address how the Confederate states that seceded were re-admitted into the Union. Before his assassination, President Lincoln had proposed much stricter reform mandates for the Confederate states as a prerequisite for being admitted back into the Union. However, when Vice President Andrew Johnson, a former slave-owner himself, assumed power he loosened many of these mandates and granted pardons to nearly all Southern whites. They quickly reformed their governments and passed "Black Code" laws to ensure white supremacy rule in the South. President Johnson also blocked the work of government agencies such as the Freedman Bureau, which sought to assist African Americans in their transition from slavery.

"Black Code" laws were the beginnings of what would come to be known as the Jim Crow laws. While federal law prohibited legal segregation under the Civil Rights Act of 1875, eventually Southern whites used their political power to reverse the impact of this legislation. It would take almost 70 years for the legal repercussions of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case to begin to be undone in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement.

To learn more about other Jim Crow laws read this article from Teaching Tolerance: www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts/jim-crow-is-watching



"This is a white man's government" Political cartoon depicting white men standing on top of a black soldier.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

RACE RELATIONS

THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA

1857 US Supreme Court finds in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that no black person in the US has the right to citizenship even if they live in a free state where slavery is illegal.

1863 President Abraham Lincoln delivers the Emancipation Proclamation ending government sanctioned slavery in the US.

1865 The Civil War ends and the Reconstruction Era begins.

1865 The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified making slavery illegal.

1865 The Freedman Bureau is established by the federal government to aid former slaves.

1865 Former Confederate officials are widely voted into office in Southern states and “Black Codes” are passed to restrict the rights of black citizens.

1865 The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is formed by Confederate veterans.

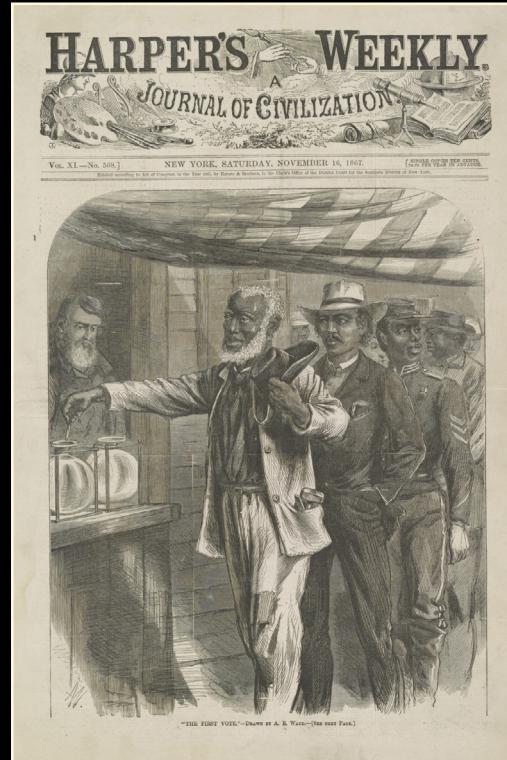
1868 The 14th Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified ensuring due process of law for criminal procedures and declaring that all persons born in the US are US citizens.

1870 The 15th Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified giving black male citizens the right to vote.

1870 Joseph Rainy of South Carolina is elected as the first black Congressman to the US House of Representatives.

1875 Congress passes the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 declaring segregation of races in public places illegal. The US Supreme Court will strike down this law in 1883 which will lay the groundwork for *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

1896 US Supreme Court decides in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that “separate but equal” segregation does not violate the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection clause.



An 1867 Harper's Weekly cover commemorates the first vote cast by African American men in Virginia. Library of Congress

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Learning for Justice’s “Reconstruction Amendments and Voting Rights” Lesson: www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/the-true-history-of-voting-rights

Facing History and Ourselves video “Setting the Setting: understanding Jim Crow” www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/understanding-jim-crow-setting-setting

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

RACE RELATIONS

KU KLUX KLAN

The character Bob Ewell makes reference to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and their influential political and social power throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*. After the end of the Civil War, mostly wealthy Confederate veterans formed the Ku Klux Klan, a hate organization dedicated to white supremacy. They utilized terror tactics to oppress newly freed African Americans and influence local elections to ensure white rule in the South. There were approximately 5,000 members of the KKK in Alabama in the 1930s, at the time the story is set.

Lynching, a murderous act of vigilantism, appears frequently in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Bob Ewell threatens to have the KKK come to lynch Tom Robinson before the trial begins. Atticus spends a night in front of the town jail where Robinson is being held, fearing a white mob will come to attack and lynch Tom.

Lynching is murder by hanging administered by a mob. The majority of lynchings in the US took place in the South between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the Civil Rights Era in the 1960s. This form of terrorism was a reaction to the loss of the Civil War and increased rights of African Americans and an attempt to preserve white supremacy. Between 1870 and 1950, more than 4,000 African Americans were lynched in the US. While lynching numbers declined between 1900-1930, the economic strain of the Great Depression increased racial tension in the South and lynchings began to rise again in the 1930s.

While lynching was not officially sanctioned by the law, most law enforcement authorities did nothing to stop it in their jurisdictions. Federal legislation was proposed twice in the early 20th century that would have allowed law enforcement authorities to be prosecuted in federal court for failing to protect people from lynch mobs. Democrats hoped the election of FDR in 1932 would provide the political momentum

needed to pass a federal anti-lynching law. Although Senators drafted a bill in 1935 which gained wide-spread support, it was blocked by the Southern white vote. FDR never came out in support of the bill.

INFLUENTIAL COURT CASES OF THE 1930s AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

1918 Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill is proposed to Congress; it passes the House of Representatives, but is stopped by a filibuster in the Senate.

1926 Nelle Harper Lee is born.

1929 The US Stock Market crashes. Over 25% of labor force is unemployed during worst years of the Great Depression (1929-1939).

1932 FDR is elected President with promise of his “New Deal.”

1932 *Powell v. Alabama* (known as “The Scottsboro Boys Trial”) is decided by the US Supreme Court ensuring the right to effective counsel in a criminal trial under the 14th Amendment.

1934 Walter Lett is accused, tried, and convicted of raping a white woman in Monroeville, AL. This will become inspiration for the Tom Robinson trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

1935 The Wagner-Costigan Federal Anti-Lynching Bill is proposed, but voted down in Congress.

1936 The US Supreme Court overturns a state defendant’s decision in *Brown v. Mississippi* because the confession was coerced by the police.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

RACE RELATIONS

In 2018, the first ever museum dedicated to lynching victims and their families was opened in Montgomery, Alabama. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice opened with, “the hope of creating a sober, meaningful site where people can gather and reflect on America’s history of racial inequality.” The museum is a project of the Equal Justice Initiative which published a multi-year investigatory report on lynching in twelve Southern states between Reconstruction and World War II called *Lynching in America*. The museum has also created duplicate memorials for each county named on the memorial, and has invited those counties to claim and install their memorials. They hope that, “eventually, this process will change the built environment of the Deep South and beyond to more honestly reflect our history.”

WATCH

NBC Nightly News story on The National Memorial for Peace and Justice museum:

www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/alabama-memorial-reveals-horrors-racism-honors-victims

DISCUSS

- Why do you think it has taken this long for a memorial to be erected for lynching victims?
- Why is this chapter of our country’s history on race relations often skimmed over or not covered at all?
- Do you think the individual counties where the lynchings occurred should claim and install their duplicate memorials?

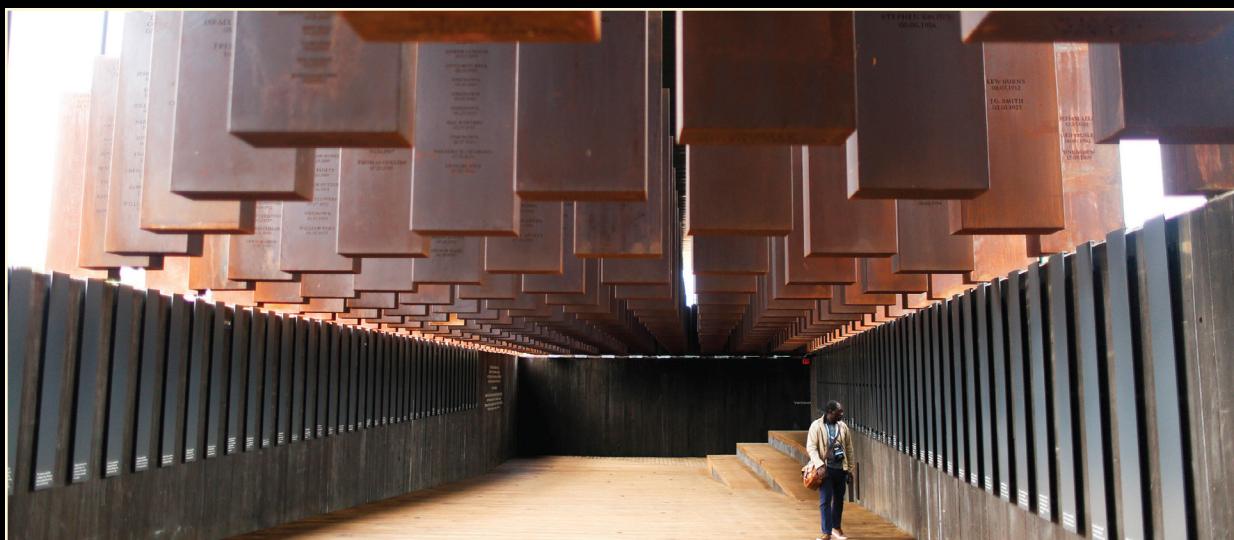
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Equal Justice Initiative Lynching in America interactive digital experience:

www.eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america

Teaching Activities for “A Lynching Memorial is Opening. The Country Has Never Seen Anything Like it.” The New York Times, April 25, 2018.

www.nytimes.com/2018/04/26/learning/teaching-activities-for-a-lynching-memorial-is-opening-the-country-has-never-seenanything-like-it.html



The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama pays tribute to the thousands of African Americans killed by lynching in the Southern US. AP Photo Brynn Anderson.

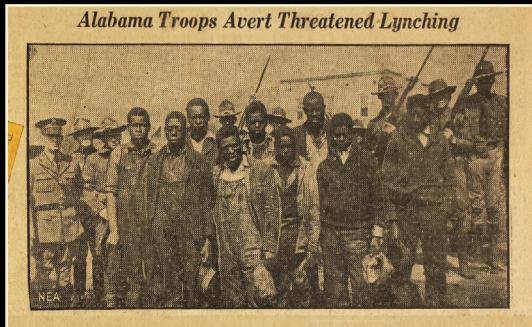
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

COURT CASES THAT INSPIRED *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

THE “SCOTTSBORO BOYS” TRIAL: POWELL V. ALABAMA (1932)

In this dramatization of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus makes reference to two US Supreme Court cases involving black boys and men accused of rape by white women. The verdicts of these two trials, Powell v. Alabama and Brown v. Mississippi inform Atticus's hope that Maycomb will not find Tom guilty, or if they do, that Tom will win his case on appeal.

In 1931, nine young black boys between the ages of 13 and 19 were involved in an altercation with a group of white boys and two white girls while stowed away on a freight train in Jackson County, Alabama. They were all removed from the train and questioned by the police, at which point the two girls accused the black boys of rape. The boys were arrested and transported to Scottsboro, Alabama where they were charged with rape, a capital offense. In Scottsboro, they were met by a white lynch mob causing the governor to call in the National Guard. None of the boys were originally from Alabama and had no family or connections in the state. They were forbidden from contacting their families.



The Huntsville Daily Times newspaper clipping on The Scottsboro Boys trial, 1931. Alabama Department of Archives and History Photograph and Pictures Collection.

DESEGREGATION, THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, AND *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

1948 President Truman ends segregation in the military and discrimination in federal hiring.

1954 US Supreme Court rules in Brown v. Board of Education school segregation is unconstitutional.

1955 Emmett Till is lynched in Mississippi for allegedly flirting with a white woman.

1957 President Eisenhower signs the Civil Rights Act of 1957 protecting voter rights.

1960 *To Kill a Mockingbird* published.

1962 The film *To Kill a Mockingbird* is released; wins Oscars for best actor, screenwriter, and art direction.

1963 Governor George C. Wallace of Alabama blocks black students from integrating the University of Alabama.

1963 Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers “I Have a Dream” speech at the “March on Washington.”

1964 Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964 establishing the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to prevent discrimination.

1965 Malcolm X is assassinated.

1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965 granting federal oversight of states' voter practices.

1966 US Supreme Court rules in *Miranda v. Arizona*, that police must inform all persons detained of their right to silence and their right to counsel before an interrogation.

1967 US Supreme Court unanimously rules in *Loving v. Virginia* that states cannot bar interracial marriage.

1968 President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (also known as “the Fair Housing Act”) to prevent housing discrimination and red-lining practices.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

COURT CASES THAT INSPIRED *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

The boys' trials proceeded with shocking speed: within two weeks of the alleged assault, all nine boys were arrested, tried, and convicted by an all-white jury. Eight were sentenced to death. Only the youngest's verdict resulted in a hung jury. The International Labor Defense (ILD) took up the boys' case and appealed first to the Alabama Supreme Court and then to the US Supreme Court. In 1932, the US Supreme Court overturned the case concluding the boys had not been provided with adequate legal representation during the trial.

Although this was a landmark Supreme Court decision that established precedent for the appointment of counsel and proper protection of due process of the law under the 14th Amendment, it did not mean the end of the boys' legal struggles. In fact, the Scottsboro boys would be involved in legal battles and trials for another six years, including a second case argued in front of the US Supreme Court, *Norris v. Alabama*. Ultimately, the convictions of five of the nine boys were upheld, even after one of the white women recanted her original testimony.

WALTER LETT TRIAL (1933)

The trial at the center of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was inspired by the details of a real rape trial that took place during Harper Lee's childhood. In 1933, Walter Lett was accused of rape by a poor white woman, Naomi Lowery, in Lee's hometown of Monroeville, Alabama. News of the trial was reported in The Monroeville Journal, which Lee's father edited. Lett was found guilty by an all-white male jury and sentenced to death. However, his sentence was commuted by then Alabama Governor Benjamin Miller, who deemed the evidence to be insufficient. Unfortunately, the personal and mental strain of the trial triggered Lett's mental illness. He was admitted to a mental institution when his sentence was commuted and he died there in 1937 of tuberculosis.



Jeff Daniels and Gbenga Akinnagbe in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Bartlett Sher. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

BROWN V. MISSISSIPPI (1936)

Raymond Stuart was a white farmer in Kemper County, Mississippi who was beaten to death in his home in 1934. A mob of enraged white farmers quickly formed at his house. Within one week, three black tenant farmers Ed Brown, Henry Shields, and Arthur Ellington were arrested, tortured, forced to confess to the murder, tried, and sentenced to death by an all-white jury. The case was appealed with the combined aid and funding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). The case was overturned by the US Supreme Court in 1936 in a unanimous decision arguing that the confessions had been coerced. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes stated in his opinion, "The rack and the torture chamber may not be substituted for the witness stand." *Brown v. Mississippi* laid the groundwork for *Miranda v. Arizona* in 1966, six years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published, which determined that all persons held by the police must be informed of their right to silence and their right to counsel before interrogation.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

COURT CASES THAT INSPIRED *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

DISCUSS

- Why do you think Atticus has such faith in the institution of the courts? How does his privilege as an educated, white man in 1935 influence his faith in the judicial system?
- Does the judicial system always protect us? If not, what is our obligation to follow the law? What changes would need to be made in order to make the system more just?
- What legacies of the judicial system of 1935 remain with us today?
- In an interview with USA Today about the dramatization, actor Gbenga Akinnagbe who played Tom Robinson on Broadway said, “You shouldn’t appreciate justice, it should be expected.” Do you agree or disagree?

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

PBS American Experience Timeline:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/scottsboronine-black-youth-arrested-for-assault



Jeff Daniels (center) and Company in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Bartlett Sher. Original Broadway Company. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

PRESENT DAY CONNECTIONS

MASS INCARCERATION

“The war between the states isn’t ancient history around here... Reminders of it are everywhere.”

Atticus Finch

While Jim Crow laws and racial segregation are now illegal in the US, there are still great racial disparities in our country, particularly in the educational and judicial systems. The US incarcerates more of its population than any other nation in the world, and incarcerates black and Latinx people at disproportionately high rates. In New York, for example, blacks are currently imprisoned eight times more often than whites.

Author Michelle Alexander coined the phrase “The New Jim Crow” in her book by the same name that addresses the disproportionate rate at which African Americans are imprisoned in the US.

To explore an excerpt of this book, look at this Learning for Justice lesson: www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8&list=PLvahqwMqN-4M0GRkZY8WkLZMb6Z-W7qbLA&index=17

The documentary *Thirteenth* by Ava DuVernay also explores the history of mass incarceration and “The New Jim Crow.” Netflix has made this documentary available to educators here: www.media.netflix.com/en

CONFEDERATE SYMBOLS, STATUES, AND NAMES

In the past few years, there has been a great deal of debate over whether to remove Confederate statues and symbols across the US. Many feel these symbols improperly glorify our history of racist practices and should, instead, be replaced by memorials or statues remembering those who fought and suffered under the Confederate legacy of white supremacy.



The Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville, Va., was at the center of a violent rally in 2017 resulting in the death of Heather Heyer. Wikipedia

PRESENT DAY CONNECTIONS

CONFEDERATE SYMBOLS, STATUES, AND NAMES

READ

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture's blog post on Confederate statues and symbols: www.nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/putting-white-supremacy-pedestal

RESEARCH

Are there any Confederate statues, buildings or streets named after Confederate figures in your city? What historical statues and symbols in your city might pose similar ethical questions to the Confederate memorials?

DISCUSS

- Do you think Confederate statues should be taken down?
- Would you take these statues and symbols in your city down? Would you put up more information regarding the people that are memorialized? What changes could you make if you left the symbols up?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Learning for Justice "Whose Heritage?"

www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/splcs-whose-heritage-report-a-teaching-opportunity

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2:

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7:

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1:

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

BEHIND THE SCENES

An interview with Celia Keenan-Bolger on preparing to play the role of Scout on Broadway

What an interesting idea to travel to Monroeville, Alabama as part of your preparation to play Scout. What did you get out of the experience?

I went to Monroeville in search of historical context to help my imagination as I was working on the play and developing the character of Scout. The first thing that really struck me was how beautiful Alabama is. I think because the movie is in black and white, I sort of pictured it as a dust bowl. I couldn't get over the red dirt roads and the lush vegetation. It was really hot and humid when I visited and the whole pace of life is much, much slower down there. I was struck by the friendliness of everyone in the town. I told people I was working on the play and while I was visiting the courthouse (where Harper Lee's father practiced law) a man named Stuart Richeson invited me to have lunch with his family. We ate catfish and shrimp and grits and fried green tomatoes and talked about life in Monroeville and living in a small town. It was enormously helpful.

How did Monroeville compare to the world described in the novel or in the new dramatization?

I kept trying to imagine Monroeville in 1937 with the courthouse and Methodist Church and Southern Alabama Avenue. And the great thing is that all of those remain, they just look a lot different. There was a helpful map that I found, where I could locate landmarks from the novel. I made the walk from the courthouse to Mel's Dairy Dream, an ice cream shop, where Harper Lee's house used to be. And I stood outside and looked over at the lot where Truman Capote lived. There was a gas station where Son Boulware, who the character of Boo Radley is based on, lived. But honestly, and this may sound strange, the trip didn't end up being about landmarks. It was more spiritually nourishing. Breathing that air and looking at the sky was somehow more informative.

How is it different to prepare to play a character from a classic novel, like Scout, that so many people are already familiar with?

I feel an enormous responsibility getting to play the role of Scout. I think she's maybe the greatest American literary heroine we have, so it can feel intimidating trying to bring her to life. When I've created a new character in the theater there's nothing to compare them to so that can feel a lot easier. But I've done a lot of research on Harper Lee and reread the book over and over.

What are the challenges and joys of playing a character who is 8 years old?

I love playing the young Scout. In some ways, I feel less self-conscious than I do playing the older version. I think physically, I've been really interested in watching eight-year-olds to see how they move around in the world. And I've been trying to figure out if there's a spirit of youth that's helpful rather than just pretending to be a child.

What was your relationship to *To Kill a Mockingbird* before you were cast to play Scout? Has it changed at all?

To Kill A Mockingbird was a really important book and movie in my life growing up. My grandparents were social justice fighters in Detroit, Michigan and my parents were very politically active, so the idea of "walking around in someone else's skin" was something we talked about a lot. I remember my mother reading me the book when I was young and then I reread it again in 8th grade. I also remember the movie sparking a long conversation about Brown v. Board of Education which resulted in me watching *Separate but Equal* with Sidney Poitier. I also used Scout's "Mr. Cunningham passage" from the novel as an audition piece whenever I was asked to present a monologue. I was just thinking about that in rehearsal as we were working on that section of the play. I think my 12 year old self would be pretty amazed that all these years later I'm getting to perform this role on Broadway.

MORE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ROLE ON THE WALL

“Maycomb had four distinct levels of citizenry.

The Negros, who were looked down on by the farmers, who were looked down on by the townsfolk, who were looked down on by the educated excepted for Atticus who couldn’t work up the blood to look down on anyone.”

————— Jem Finch ————

MATERIALS

Outline and procedure for “Role on the Wall” activity: www.dramaresource.com/role-on-the-wall

Below are links to suggested photographs from the Library of Congress Farm Administration collection and from Walker Evans’s book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Use these or select your own from the online collection: www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa

PROCEDURE

1. Break students into small working groups.
2. Give each group a photo representing the different social classes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
 - a. Educated Whites www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2016881557
 - b. Town Whites www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c09871
 - c. Farmer Whites www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96516419/resource
 - d. Black www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8a35825
3. Have students examine the pictures and consider:
 - What do you see in your picture?
 - What do you notice about the living conditions in the photograph (clothing, housing, food, hygiene)? What can we infer about this person’s life based on the photo?
 - What social class can we infer this person belongs to based on the photo?
 - What emotions do you see on the faces of the characters?
4. On the outside of the character figure on the handout or chart paper have students scribe what the outside influences on this person are: their surroundings, their social class, possible occupation.
5. On the inside of the person have students scribe their predictions of this person’s feelings. What do you think this person is thinking about based on the photo here?

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7:

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1:

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

MORE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

STANDING UP TO INJUSTICE

**“A weak person can’t fight.
A meek person won’t fight.”**

————— Jem Finch ————

EXPLORE/DISCUSS

1. Put a sign that says AGREE on one end of the room and DISAGREE on another end of the room.
2. Have students stand. Tell students you will read a statement. If they agree with the statement they can move to the side of the room with AGREE, or vice versa for DISAGREE. If they are somewhere in the middle, they can stand anywhere between the signs.
3. Read the quote above from the play.
4. Discuss with students why they decided to stand in the place they did. Highlight a few different opinions.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- When is it necessary to stand up and fight for justice?
- Why does Jem feel that Atticus is meek?
- Would you have acted differently than Atticus? What would you have done?

WRITE an argumentative essay defending or arguing against Jem’s quote.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1:

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1:

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

MORE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

“GOOD PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES”

JEM You're trying to excuse those jurors.

ATTICUS Explain. I'm trying to explain why they—so you can understand—I'm trying—

JEM They don't deserve an explanation and I already understand.

People, including playwright Aaron Sorkin, have often described the character of Atticus as an “apologist” for racist white Southerners. While Sorkin was working on this adaption of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the white nationalist rally took place in Charlottesville, Virginia to protest the removal of a Confederate statue. The rally turned violent, resulting in the death of counter-protester Heather Heyer at the hands on one of the white nationalists. In an interview with *Vulture Magazine* later that summer, Sorkin recounted how this play’s themes still resonate today: “All of a sudden, Donald Trump stood up at a news conference and said there are good people on both sides,” recounts Sorkin. “And I went, ‘Wow, bingo. We hit it right in the middle.’”

DISCUSS

- Do you believe there is fundamental goodness in everyone?
- Can it be useful to “crawl around in another person’s skin” as Atticus suggests in the play, to consider their point of view on the world? What if their viewpoints are fundamentally racist and bigoted?

Read the full *Vulture Magazine* article here:

www.vulture.com/2017/09/how-aaron-sorkins-to-kill-a-mockingbird-will-surprise-you.html



LaTanya Richardson Jackson and Jeff Daniels in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a new play by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Bartlett Sher. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

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