

To Kill a Mockingbird: Anticipation Guide

Pre-Reading Survey: Read the following statements, and select the appropriate response based on your views.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The U.S. court system upholds the statement, "all men are created equal."				
If you are innocent, you have no need to fear the judicial system.				
Adults understand things more accurately than children do.				
If you know you are going to fail at something, it's pointless to even try.				
"Acting like a girl" is a bad thing.				
Nobody is completely bad or completely good.				
Despite how hard a person tries, sometimes they just fail.				
"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."				
The way a person speaks reveals a great deal about that person.				
All people in the United States, for the most part, are treated fairly and equally.				
If you kill another person, you should always be punished.				
It's wrong to hate anyone.				
It's wrong to hurt an animal.				
All people are generally good.				
Children should not be allowed to read about, watch, or listen to news reports or court cases that involve serious issues.				
If you let your kids play with guns, you're a bad parent.				
It's okay to be different.				
Some words are so offensive that they should never be stated or written.				
Speaking standard grammar proves that a person is smart.				
A hero is born, not made.				
No one is above the law.				
Education is the great equalizer.				
When the law fails in punishing criminals, citizens should do so.				
People are overly sensitive when it comes to social issues.				

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Post-Reading Survey: Read the following statements, and select the appropriate response based on your views.

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5. Define stereotyping. Have you ever held a stereotype against someone, or felt you have been stereotyped? Explain.

6. When telling a story, do you think people tell them honestly or do they tend to exaggerate or embellish the story to an extent? Explain.

7. Based on the title of the novel, what do you think this story will be about?
(Hint: No one actually kills a bird at any point. But what do you think of someone who would do that? Keep in mind that mockingbirds are small, gray and white songbirds known for mimicking the songs of other birds and are generally considered harmless and even delightful).

Post-Reading Response

Directions: Review your previous answers. How have they changed after reading the novel?

To Kill a Mockingbird: Background and History
Harper Lee (1926-2016)

Famed author Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama. Lee is best known for writing the Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). The youngest of four children, she grew up as a tomboy in a small town. Her father was a lawyer, a member of the Alabama state legislature and also owned part of the local newspaper. For most of Lee's life, her mother suffered from mental illness, rarely leaving the house. It is believed that she may have had bipolar disorder.

One of her closest childhood friends was another writer-to-be, Truman Capote (then known as Truman Persons). Tougher than many of the boys, Lee often stepped up to serve as Truman's protector. Truman, who shared few interests with boys his age, was picked on for being a sissy and for the fancy clothes he wore. While the two friends were very different, they both shared in having difficult home lives. Truman was living with his mother's relatives in town after largely being abandoned by his own parents.

In high school, Lee developed an interest in English literature. After graduating in 1944, she went to the all-female Huntingdon College in Montgomery. Lee stood apart from the other students—she couldn't have cared less about fashion, makeup or dating. Instead, she focused on her studies and on her writing. Lee was a member of the literary honor society and the glee club. Transferring to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, Lee was known for being a loner and an individualist. She did make a greater attempt at a social life there, joining a sorority for a while. Pursuing her interest in writing, Lee contributed to the school's newspaper and its humor magazine, the Rammer Jammer. She eventually became the editor of the Rammer Jammer.

In her junior year, Lee was accepted into the university's law school, which allowed students to work on law degrees while still undergraduates. The demands of her law studies forced her to leave her post as editor of the Rammer Jammer. After her first year in the law program, Lee began expressing to her family that writing—not the law—was her true calling. She went to Oxford University in England that summer as an exchange student. Returning to her law studies that fall, Lee dropped out after the first semester. She soon moved to New York City to follow her dreams to become a writer.

In 1949, a 23-year-old Lee arrived in New York City. She struggled for several years, working as a ticket agent for Eastern Airlines and for the British Overseas Air Corp (BOAC). While in the city, Lee was reunited with old friend Truman Capote, one of the literary rising stars of the time. She also befriended Broadway composer and lyricist Michael Martin Brown and his wife Joy. In 1956, the Browns gave Lee an impressive Christmas present—to support her for a year so that she could write full time. She quit her job and devoted herself to her craft. The Browns also helped her find an agent, Maurice Crain. He, in turn, was able to get the publishing firm interested in her first novel, which was first titled *Go Set a Watchman*, then *Atticus*, and later *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Working with editor Tay Hohoff, Lee finished the manuscript in 1959.

Amidst much controversy, Harper Lee's original notes and draft were compiled into a book titled *Go Set a Watchman* which was published in 2015. The book received mixed reviews with many criticizing her family of publishing the book against Lee's wishes for monetary gains. Harper Lee died shortly after in February 2016.



To Kill a Mockingbird: Background and History
The Great Depression (1929-1939)

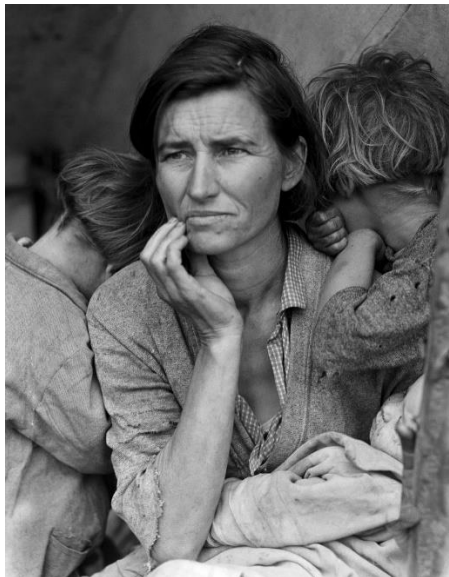
The 1929 stock market crash set into motion a series of events that plunged America into its greatest economic depression. By 1933, the country's gross national product had been nearly cut in half, and 16 million Americans were unemployed. Not until 1937 did the New Deal policies of President Franklin Roosevelt temper the catastrophe. This economic downturn persisted until the massive investment in national defense demanded by World War II.

The causes of the Depression were many, and still debated. High spending in the 1920s created a gap preventing working class people from increasing their incomes. The trade policies of earlier administrations increased the cost of American goods abroad. Lines of credit were overextended, which fueled speculation on Wall Street. The crash that occurred on October 29, 1929 ("Black Tuesday") soon spread across the world, ruining European economies not fully recovered from World War I.

American writers and artists depicted the devastation in prose and pictures. John Steinbeck immortalized the plight of Oklahoma tenant farmers fleeing the Dust Bowl in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) used the grim but dignified photographs of Walker Evans to illustrate the catastrophe in rural areas. Photographer Dorothea Lange, employed by the Farm Security Administration, documented in magazines and newspapers nationwide the reality that confronted American farmers.

Harper Lee experienced the Great Depression as a child in Monroeville, Alabama, and used her memory of it in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "Maycomb County," she writes, "had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself," a reference to a famous speech by President Roosevelt. Walter Cunningham's father refused a WPA (Works Progress Administration) job, fearing what would come of his independence if he went on relief. And Bob Ewell, as Scout tells us, was "the only man I ever heard of who was fired from the WPA for laziness."

Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother," (below) destitute in a pea picker's camp, because of the failure of the early pea crop. These people had just sold their tent in order to buy food. Most of the 2,500 people in this camp were destitute. By the end of the decade there were still 4 million migrants on the road.



Jim Crow Laws (1880s-1960s)

From the 1880s into the 1960s, a majority of American states enforced segregation through "Jim Crow" laws (so called after a black character in minstrel shows). From Delaware to California, and from North Dakota to Texas, many states (and cities, too) could impose legal punishments on people for consorting with members of another race. The most common types of laws forbade intermarriage and ordered business owners and public institutions to keep their black and white clientele separated. Here is a sampling of laws from various states:

1. **Nurses:** No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which negro men are placed. Alabama
2. **Buses** All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races. Alabama
3. **Restaurants** It shall be unlawful to conduct a restaurant or other place for the serving of food in the city, at which white and colored people are served in the same room, unless such white and colored persons are effectually separated by a solid partition extending from the floor upward to a distance of seven feet or higher, and unless a separate entrance from the street is provided for each compartment. Alabama
4. **Toilet Facilities, Male** Every employer of white or negro males shall provide for such white or negro males reasonably accessible and separate toilet facilities. Alabama
5. **Intermarriage** It shall be unlawful for a white person to marry anyone except a white person. Any marriage in violation of this section shall be void. Georgia. Overturned by **Loving v. Virginia (1967)**
6. **Burial** The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of white persons. Georgia
7. **Amateur Baseball** It shall be unlawful for any amateur white baseball team to play baseball on any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of a playground devoted to the Negro race, and it shall be unlawful for any amateur colored baseball team to play baseball in any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of any playground devoted to the white race. Georgia
8. **Parks** It shall be unlawful for colored people to frequent any park owned or maintained by the city for the benefit, use and enjoyment of white persons . . . and unlawful for any white person to frequent any park owned or maintained by the city for the use and benefit of colored persons. Georgia
9. **Circus Tickets** All circuses, shows, and tent exhibitions, to which the attendance of . . . more than one race is invited or expected to attend shall provide for the convenience of its patrons not less than two ticket offices with individual ticket sellers, and not less than two entrances to the said performance, with individual ticket takers and receivers, and in the case of outside or tent performances, the said ticket offices shall not be less than twenty-five (25) feet apart. Louisiana
10. **The Blind** The board of trustees shall . . . maintain a separate building . . . on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or black race. Louisiana
Promotion of Equality Any person . . . who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten or written matter urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or of intermarriage between whites and negroes, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to fine or not exceeding five hundred (500.00) dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both. Mississippi
11. **Prisons** The warden shall see that the white convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the negro convicts. Mississippi
12. **Education** Separate free schools shall be established for the education of children of African descent; and it shall be unlawful for any colored child to attend any white school, or any white child to attend a colored school. Missouri. Overturned by **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)**
13. **Textbooks** Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. North Carolina.



To Kill a Mockingbird: Background and History
Scottsboro Boys (1930s)

In the 1930s, the story of the Scottsboro Boys, nine black teenagers accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama, was reported in newspapers around the world. Many believe the high-profile series of events was an inspiration for the story of Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: the Scottsboro Boys story involved similar accusations, and it occurred in the same time and state as the setting of the novel.

The freight train left Chattanooga for Memphis at 10:20 a.m. on March 25, 1931. Thirty minutes after it had pulled out of Stevenson, Alabama, the stationmaster noticed there saw a group of white hoboes walking along the train tracks back toward the station. They told him that several black youths had thrown them off the train after a fight. The stationmaster telephoned ahead to the next stop, Scottsboro, but the train had already passed through. It was finally stopped at Paint Rock, where a sheriff's posse discovered nine black youngsters and, to everyone's surprise, two young white women dressed in men's overalls.

The nine blacks, known to history as the Scottsboro boys, ranged in age from thirteen to twenty. Five of them were from Georgia, though they claimed not to know one another. The other four did know one another; they were from Chattanooga, Tennessee. All of the nine were vagrants, and most of them were illiterate.

Twenty minutes after the train had been stopped, one of the women, Ruby Bates, called over a posse member and told him that she and her companion, Victoria Price, had been gang-raped by the blacks. The boys were immediately arrested and taken to the Scottsboro jail. As the sheriff sent the women to two local doctors for medical examinations, news of the alleged attacks spread. By day's end, a crowd of several hundred people had gathered outside of the jail, demanding that the "niggers" be turned over for lynching. Sheriff M. L. Wann pleaded with the mob to allow the law to take its course and threatened to shoot anyone who rushed the jail. He also telephoned the governor for assistance, and by 11:00 p.m., twenty-five armed guardsmen were on their way to Scottsboro. To ensure the boys' safety, they were moved to a sturdier jail in nearby Etowah. The local circuit judge, Alfred E. Hawkins, convened a special session of the grand jury to indict them; local citizens complained of the five day delay. One local newspaper remarked, "It is best for the county that these things be disposed of in a speedy manner as it gives no excuse for people taking the law into their own hands."

The trials began on April 6, just twelve days after the train incident. A crowd estimated at five to ten thousand gathered outside the courthouse, which was protected by national guardsmen wielding machine guns. Hawkins appointed as trial counsel a Tennessee lawyer, Stephen R. Roddy, who had been sent to Scottsboro by the defendants' families to look after their interests. The state sought the death penalty against eight of the nine defendants—all but the one who was identified as being only thirteen years old. The nine were tried in four groups, beginning with Clarence Norris and Charley Weems. Victoria Price was the main prosecution witness, and she testified that the black youths had thrown the white boys off the train and then gang-raped her and Bates.

Judge Hawkins blocked defense counsel's efforts to elicit admissions that the women were prostitutes and that they had had sexual intercourse with their boyfriends the night before the train incident. Testimony provided by the examining doctors raised serious doubts as to whether the girls had been raped. In their testimony, the two women also provided inconsistent accounts of various details of the incident, such as whether they had spoken with the white boys on the train and how long the interracial fight had lasted. One man present when the train was stopped testified that he had not heard Price make any rape allegations.

However, the admission by Norris on cross-examination that the women had been raped by all of the other eight defendants, though not by him, severely undercut his defense. (It later came out that Sheriff Wann had warned Norris that he would be killed if he did not admit that the girls had been raped.) Defense counsel prodded the illiterate and confused Norris to change his story, but he held firm. The defense called no witnesses and made no closing argument.

The prosecution's case grew stronger with each trial, as previously unhelpful witnesses were dropped and the alleged victims improved their stories with each recounting. Within a five-minute span on the witness stand, Patterson contradicted himself as to whether he had seen the girls being raped or indeed had seen them on the train at all. Several of the other defendants also testified inconsistently. After less than twenty-five minutes of deliberation, the jury convicted Patterson and sentenced him to death.

Five of the defendants were prosecuted together in a third trial. The state's case against them became weaker because these defendants did not incriminate each other on cross-examination, the women were less

certain in identifying them as the rapists, and one of the defendants was nearly blind while another had such a severe case of venereal disease that raping a woman would have been very difficult. The jury nonetheless returned five more death sentences. Judge Hawkins declared a mistrial in the case of the last defendant, Roy Wright, when the jury could not agree on whether to sentence the thirteen-year-old to life imprisonment or to death—a sentence the prosecution had not even sought. None of the four trials lasted more than a few hours.

In November 1932, the US Supreme Court overturned the convictions, declaring that the defendants were not provided adequate counsel and sufficient time to prepare their case. This violated the “due process” clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This clause reads: No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

In March 1933, the Scottsboro Boys were given new trials in Decatur, Alabama, one at a time. Haywood Patterson was tried first. High-profile New York lawyer Samuel Leibowitz agreed to be their defense lawyer. The case was reported in newspapers around the world. In his case, Leibowitz challenged Victoria Price’s version of events directly, angering many white Alabamians. He also called a physician as a witness, who explained that the physical examination of the girls at the time of the incident suggested that they were not raped. Finally, he surprised everyone by putting Ruby Bates on the stand (she had previously been missing), where she changed her testimony and claimed that the girls made up the charges to avoid being arrested for vagrancy. Patterson was found guilty anyway and sentenced to death. The judge postponed the other eight trials until public tension toward Leibowitz subsided. Then, in June, the judge set aside Patterson’s conviction, citing the overwhelming evidence that the charges were false, and he called for yet another new trial. In November and December of that year, Patterson was tried again, along with Clarence Norris, and both were convicted and sentenced to death.

On April 1, 1935, the US Supreme Court overturned the new convictions because lawyers for the Scottsboro Boys had proven that Alabama intentionally excluded African Americans from sitting on any juries. This violated the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Following the 1935 US Supreme Court ruling, the Scottsboro Boys were each tried again on the charges of raping Victoria Price and Ruby Bates. They were convicted again and served more time in prison. Scholar Michael Klarman maintains that the Supreme Court rulings in favor of the Scottsboro Boys probably saved their lives, yet he also points out that many white Alabamians responded to the rulings with greater animosity toward the defendants.

Haywood Patterson was sentenced to 75 years in prison. He escaped but was convicted of a different crime later in Michigan and died in prison there. Clarence Norris was convicted and sentenced to death in 1938, however he was paroled and released in 1946. Ozie Powell stabbed an officer, and was shot in response, but survived. He stayed in prison for the attack and the rape charges were eventually dropped. Andrew Wright, Charlie Weems were also convicted but paroled. The charges against Willie Roberson, Olen Montgomery, Eugene Williams, and Roy Wright were dropped in 1937.

On November 21, 2013, Alabama's parole board voted to grant posthumous pardons to the three Scottsboro Boys who had not been pardoned or had their convictions overturned.



Emmett Till (1954)

Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)

Emmett Till was a fourteen year old African-American boy from Chicago. In the summer of 1954, Emmett and his cousin were going to take the train from Chicago to Money, Mississippi to visit their Uncle Mose Wright. The boys really did not understand how life was in the South. They were from the North where black and white lived, worked, played and went to school together. Emmett's mother, Mame Till tried to explain to Emmett that in the South you don't even look at a white person, you put your head down and pay no attention to them. Upon arriving in Mississippi, Emmett and his cousin took Mose Wright's car and went into town. Wanting to show off to his "black" friends that he wasn't afraid to talk to whites, or possibly on a dare, Emmett went into a local grocery store and flirted with the white lady behind the counter. Accounts vary from whether Emmett whistled at her, said "bye baby" or said "You needn't be afraid of me, baby, I've been with white women before." The other boys ran for their lives.

Three days after this occurred the lady's husband, Roy Bryant and relative JW Milam went looking for Emmett. They showed up at Mose Wright's house in the middle of the night and took Emmett. They beat him and shot him in the head. They tied a cotton gin fan around his neck and threw him in the Tallahatchie River to hide the body. Bryant and Milam were charged with murder. The trial was considered a mockery. Mose Wright was the first black man in the South to stand up in a court of law and accuse a white man of murder. Wright left Mississippi never to return. After several days of the trial, the all-white, all male jury found them not guilty. To show the public back in Chicago just what these men did to Emmett, his mother had an open casket funeral to show the world the mutilated body of her son and the travesty that occurred when the two responsible were set free. Months later Bryant and Milan bragged about how they killed Emmett Till. However, after this confession, Bryan and Milan lost the support of even their own community. People that had once supported them turned on them. Bryant and Milan were not welcome in Money after the trial and were forced to move out of the state. Emmett Till's death became a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement.



The Civil Rights Movement or 1960s Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goals were to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans and to secure legal recognition and federal protection of the citizenship rights enumerated in the Constitution and federal law.

Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations and productive dialogues between activists and government authorities. Federal, state, and local governments, businesses, and communities often had to respond immediately to these situations, which highlighted the inequities faced by African Americans. Forms of protest and/or civil disobedience included boycotts such as the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56) in Alabama; "sit-ins" such as the influential Greensboro sit-ins (1960) in North Carolina; marches, such as the Selma to Montgomery marches (1965) in Alabama; and a wide range of other nonviolent activities.

This phase of the Civil Rights Movement witnessed the passage of several primary pieces of federal legislation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, expressly banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in employment practices and ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and by public accommodations.

Many popular representations of the movement are centered on the leadership and philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr., who won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the movement.

Review

1. What is Harper Lee's educational background?
2. What special gift allowed Harper Lee to write *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
3. What can you infer about Harper Lee's character based on the short biography? Be detailed.
4. When was the Great Depression?
5. Why was the Great Depression significant in American history?
6. Why is the Great Depression important in relation to *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
7. What allowed the United States to get out of the Great Depression?
8. What is one surprising aspect of the Jim Crow Laws?
9. Why do you think it took so long for the Jim Crow Laws to be abolished?
10. In 3-5 sentence, summarize the Scottsboro Boys incident?

11. Name three things that were improperly done during the Scottsboro Boys trial?

12. How do you feel about the ultimate outcome of the Scottsboro Boys incident? Explain.

13. How old was Emmett Till when he was murdered?

14. What is the reason Emmett Till was murdered?

15. What is evident about the difference in northern states versus southern states in America at the time of Till's death?

16. Is the trial of the Scottsboro Boys similar or different to that of Till? Explain.

17. What is your reaction or thoughts on the reaction received by Bryant and Milan after they confessed to the murder? Explain.

18. What was the goal of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement?

19. What were some of the actions taken by the protestors and activists in the 1960 Civil Rights Movement?

20. What was the outcome of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement?