

OCTOBER 11 - NOVEMBER 6, 2011

Dramatized by Christopher Sergel

Directed by Dennis Garnhum

Starring RH Thomson as Atticus Finch

Enrichment Guide

Prepared by Dom Saliani

and

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Great-West Life
ASSURANCE COMPANY



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ABOUT THEATRE CALGARY



The Max Bell Theatre in the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts – Home to Theatre Calgary
Photo by David Cooper

In the 1940s, Dr. Betty Mitchell, a drama teacher at Calgary's Western Canada High School, inspired such loyalty and devotion in her students that they continued to study with her after graduating. Together they named themselves "Workshop 14" and became one of the country's finest amateur theatre companies. Two decades later, a second amateur group called the "Musicians' and Actors' Club" (MAC), composed of local business people, were staging short plays and excerpts from musicals in the old Isis movie house. MAC and Workshop 14 merged to become MAC 14 under the direction of Kenneth Dyba and mounted productions in a converted tractor house, later to be named The QR Centre. MAC 14 became Theatre Calgary, a fully professional theatre company, on July 1st, 1968.

Christopher Newton, formerly the Artistic Director of the Shaw Festival, was appointed the first Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary. A keen interest was expressed at this time to produce plays by Canadian playwrights; James Reaney's *The Three Desks* was produced during the first season, as were two others of Newton's works: *You Two Stay Here*, *The Rest Come With Me* and *Trip*. In 1971, Clark Rogers succeeded as Artistic Director, the very year a disastrous fire destroyed most of the company's archives. Harold G. Baldrbridge assumed the direction of the company in 1972, and for the next seven years presented a blend of national, international, contemporary, and classic works.

In 1977 Rick McNair joined Theatre Calgary as the director of Caravan, a touring theatre troupe that brought drama to the schools throughout Alberta. Caravan was renamed Stage Coach Players in 1979 and still exists in Calgary today as Quest Theatre, originally under the direction of Duval Lang. Mr. McNair was appointed Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary in 1979 and presented premiers by John Murrell, W.O. Mitchell, and Sharon Pollock. In 1984, Sharon Pollock became the fifth Artistic Director of the company and again a commitment to producing new Canadian work was re-established.

Martin Kinch succeeded as Artistic Director in 1985. During this time Theatre Calgary became the resident company of the state-of-the-art theatre in the Calgary Centre of Performing Arts (now known as the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts). Designed in conjunction with Theatre Calgary, the Max Bell Theatre came to completion as a striking performance space. Every seat is within sixty feet from the stage so audiences can enjoy the kind of intimate rapport with the actors that serves to enhance the magical experience of live theatre.

In 1991, Brian Rintoul came to Theatre Calgary as Executive Producer. Mr. Rintoul had produced plays previously for Theatre Calgary in the QR Centre. In 1996, James Brewer was appointed Acting Artistic Director and Richard C. Dennison became the general manager. In 1997 Ian Prinsloo assumed the role of

Artistic Director. Prior to joining Theatre Calgary, Mr. Prinsloo was the co-founder of Orange Dog Theatre in Toronto.

In 1997, Tom E. McCabe, after a successful tenure on the Board of Directors, became General Manager (and later President). Prior to this, Mr. McCabe served as Executive Director of Tourism Alberta and held numerous positions over a 25-year career with the Bank of Montreal.

In September 2005, Dennis Garnhum was appointed the new Artistic Director. Over the past 6 years, Theatre Calgary has renewed its commitment to developing and producing new plays through FUSE: The Enbridge Play Development Program and has also nurtured and mentored a new generation of Alberta theatre artists through the FUEL Artist Development Program.



(L to R) Andrew McNee, Christian Goutsis, Jordan Schartner, Hrothgar Mathews and Erin Wells in Timothy Findley's *THE WARS*, by Dennis Garnhum, 2007.
Photo by Trudie Lee



David Fox and Aaron Stern in W.O. Mitchell's *JAKE & THE KID*, by Conni Massing, 2009.
Photo by Trudie Lee



The company of *BEYOND EDEN*, by Bruce Ruddell, 2010.
Photo by David Cooper

THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

THEATRE CALGARY

Presents

Harper Lee's

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

CAST

Ardon Bess	Reverend Sykes
Aaron Conrad	Boo Radley
Edwin Curr	Jem
Joyce Doolittle	Mrs. Dubose
Kudjo Fiakpui	Tom Robinson
Jenise Jarrell	Scout
Brooke Johnson	Jean Louise Finch
Haysam Kadri	Mr. Gilmer
Hal Kerbes	Walter Cunningham
Robert Klein	Judge Taylor
Duval Lang	Heck Tate
Norma Lewis	Helen Robinson
Melanee Murray	Calpurnia
Laura Parken	Stephanie Crawford
Valerie Ann Pearson	Miss Maudie
Michaila Skye	Mayella Ewell
R.H. Thomson	Atticus Finch
Barry Thorson	Nathan Radley
David Trimble	Bob Ewell
Marcus Trummer	Dill

CREATIVE TEAM

Dennis Garnhum	Director
Brian Perchaluk	Set and Costume Designer
Kevin Lamotte	Lighting Designer
Barry Thorson	Assistant Director
Kathryn Davies	Stage Manager
Patti Niece	Assistant Stage Manager
Karen Killaly	Chaperone

Advisory: The production contains racially discriminatory language of the time-period and original novel.

ABOUT THE NOVELIST – HARPER LEE

Nelle Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama on April 28th, 1926. She was the youngest of four children born to Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Cunningham Finch (their combined names would become the inspiration for “Atticus Finch”). Harper Lee’s father, like Scout’s in the novel, was also an attorney who had served on the state legislature.

Her early childhood provided Lee with a wealth of experiences that she would later use in her writing. Of note is the fact that her best friend and neighbour at the time was Truman Capote. In her novel, the character of Dill is based on Capote.

Harper Lee attended the University of Alabama where she studied law before eventually settling in New York City in 1949 to follow her dream of becoming a writer.

A turning point in Lee’s life occurred during the Christmas season of 1956 when she received a most unexpected generous gift. Two of her best friends, Michael and Joy Brown, so believed in her future as a writer that they gave her enough money to do nothing but write for a year. And the rest is history.

When Lee first submitted her manuscript, entitled *Atticus* in 1957 to the J.B. Lippincott Company, the editors found it promising, but asked her to rewrite it because it read more like a series of short stories than a novel. Two and a half years later, with the help of her trusted editor Tay Hohoff, she resubmitted the reworked draft and *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published. Lee’s only novel, the book was an enormous success, staying on bestseller lists for over 80 weeks and receiving the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961.



Nov. 5, 2007: President Bush presents Harper Lee with the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Since the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee has granted few public interviews or public appearances and, with the exception of a few short essays, has not published since.

Although Lee has been honoured with countless awards and honorary degrees, she has declined all invitations to deliver a speech. At one award ceremony in 2007, she responded to a comment made by the chairman that she really did have something to say to the audience with the following:

"Well, it's better to be silent than to be a fool."

She is not, as some believe, anti-social or a recluse. She just does not enjoy the public spotlight. She now lives with her sister Alice in New York.

To Kill a Mockingbird has sold well over 30 million copies and continues to be a staple in most English classrooms. It is considered by many literary critics and readers to be one of the finest and best loved novels of the 20th century.

HARPER LEE AND FEATURE FILMS

Harper Lee has appeared as a character in three films and played by three different actors:

[Scandalous Me: The Jacqueline Susann Story](#) – TV Movie (1998) - Tracey Hoyt

[Capote](#) (2005) - Catherine Keener

[Infamous](#) (2006) - Sandra Bullock

She also indirectly appears in the film adaptation of Capote's [Other Voices, Other Rooms](#) (1995) as the character Idabell Thompkins. According to Capote, Idabell was based on what he remembered of Harper Lee as a child.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT – CHRISTOPHER SERGEL

Christopher Sergel was born in 1918 in Iowa City, Iowa. He has served as a captain of a schooner in the South Pacific and also spent a year in Africa working as a writer for the *Sports Afield* magazine. Between 1970 and 1993 Sergel was manager of the Dramatic Publishing Company, a play-publishing and leasing company which was founded in 1885 by his great uncle, Charles Sergel.

Christopher Sergel has authored almost 20 plays, most of which are adaptations from other genres. Some notable works include:

Black Elk Speaks	An Occurrence At Owl Creek Bridge
Cheaper by the Dozen	Our Miss Brooks
Fame	The Outsiders
The Family Nobody Wanted	Pillow Talk
Get Smart	Up the Down Staircase
The Homecoming	Welcome to the Monkey House
Lost Horizon	Who Am I This Time?
Meet Me in St Louis	Winesburg - Ohio
The Mouse That Roared	You Were Born on a Rotten Day

In 1993, Christopher Sergel died on his birthday in his home in Wilton, Connecticut. He was 75.

Christopher Sergel on Harper Lee as a writer:

"Perhaps the essence of what I believe she does better than any writer I know is captured in a brief response Atticus makes to a question from his daughter Scout.

In the book as in the play, Tom Robinson, a black man, is wrongly convicted of a crime he did not commit and is later shot down by prison guards as he tries to escape.

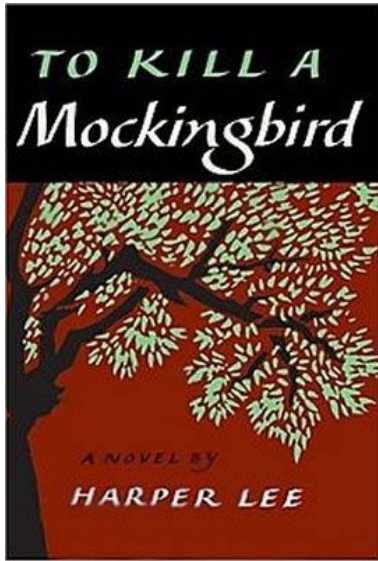
In anguish Scout asks her father how such a thing could be done to Tom.

Atticus replies, "Because he wasn't 'Tom' to them."

The special beauty of Harper Lee's work is that she takes us inside the people of her book, and in their various individual ways, each becomes "Tom" to us."

- Christopher Sergel

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL NOVEL



1960 - First edition cover

Harper Lee began writing *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1953 and while the basic elements of the story remained, the work went through a long period of revision before publication. In fact, one snowy night, as she and editor Tay Hohoff were working in Lee's New York apartment, Lee became so frustrated with her writing that she threw her entire hand-written manuscript out the window and into the street below. Fortunately, Tay Hohoff was able to convince Lee to go outside and pick up the pages of the priceless manuscript.

Although not a critical success at first, the 1960 publication was an instantly popular bestseller. It was translated into 10 languages less than a year after its initial publication and almost immediately the story was adapted into a movie starring Gregory Peck as Atticus. In 1961, the book won the coveted Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. It is estimated that there are over 30 million copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in print. It was named the "Best Novel of the Century" in a 1999 Library Journal poll.

While *To Kill a Mockingbird* is fictional, several places, people and events from Harper Lee's childhood parallel those of her central character Scout. The houses, streets and environs of Maycomb described in the book are closely drawn from Lee's memories of her childhood in Monroeville, Alabama. Down the street from the Lees lived a family whose house was always boarded up. The son of the family got into some legal trouble and the father kept him at home for 24 years out of shame. This became the model for the Radleys. Lee's father, Amasa, was an attorney as well as the editor and publisher of the local newspaper. In the book, Scout's mother died when she was a baby and is therefore an absent figure. Harper Lee was an adult when her mother died, however Frances Finch was prone to a nervous condition throughout her life that made her distant and often uninvolved in Lee's early years. Lee also had an older brother (by four years) named Edwin, and a black housekeeper that came daily to care for the Lee house and family.

The character of Dill was modeled on Lee's childhood friend Truman Capote (known then as Truman Persons). Like Scout, Lee was a tomboy who was confident and quick to fight, whereas Capote was ridiculed for his advanced vocabulary and lisp. Capote later recalled the two of them as "apart people." In 1960, Lee travelled with Capote to Kansas to investigate the multiple murders that were the basis for Capote's celebrated work of non-fiction [In Cold Blood](#).

Several incidents from Lee's childhood may have inspired the trial and character of Tom Robinson. In 1919, Lee's father defended two black men accused of murder, who were convicted and hanged. Also, when Lee was 10 years old, a white woman near Monroeville accused a black man named Walter Lett of raping her. The story and the trial were covered by her father's newspaper, and Lett was convicted and sentenced to death. Tom Robinson's trial also reflects the famous case of the [Scottsboro Boys](#) in which nine black men were convicted of raping two white women on very poor evidence. In 2005 Lee stated that she had in mind something less sensational than the Scottsboro case, but that it served "the same purpose" to display Southern prejudices.

"It is and it isn't autobiographical. For instance, there is not an incident in it that is factual. The trial, and the rape charge that brings on the trial, are made up out of a composite of such cases and charges ...What I did present as exactly as I could were the clime and tone, as I remember them, of the town in which I lived. From childhood on, I did sit in the courtroom watching my father argue cases and talk to juries."

-From an interview with Harper Lee, New York Herald Tribune, 1962

FACTS ABOUT THE FILM

- The film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was released on Christmas day, 1962 – just in time to qualify for the 1962 Academy Awards – it won 3 Oscars including the Best Actor Award for Gregory Peck.
- The film role of Atticus was initially offered to Rock Hudson and then Jimmy Stewart before Gregory Peck was approached to play the part.
- Lee agreed that Peck was the perfect casting choice for the role of Atticus because he looked so much like her own father. When Peck visited Harper Lee after the release of the movie, she gave him her father's pocket watch as a token of her esteem.
- Gregory Peck and Harper Lee became very good friends. Lee's friendship with Peck's family has continued into the present. Gregory Peck's grandson - Harper Peck Voll - is named after her.
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* was nominated for five Oscars. Not only did it win the Academy Award for Best Actor (Gregory Peck), Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Black-and-White Art Direction, but it was also honoured with a special humanitarian award for its treatment of racial injustice.
- To film the courtroom scenes, the studio built a detailed set using the courtroom in Monroeville, Alabama as their model.
- Boo Radley was played by Robert Duvall in his first feature film role.
- In 2003, the American Film Institute named Atticus Finch as the greatest movie hero of the 20th century.

For more information about the film, check out this [IMDb trivia](#) page.

"To Kill a Mockingbird is about bigotry....

For me the most beautiful scene is the moment when the Judge drops by to ask Atticus to take the case in defense of Tom Robinson. Casually put and casually answered, the question needed no answer. The judge knew it would not be possible for Atticus to say no. As for Jem and Scout, they learn a sense of honor from Atticus."

- Gregory Peck

FACTS ABOUT THE PLAY

In 1965, Christopher Sergel received permission from Harper Lee to write a stage adaptation of her novel. It was first presented on stage in Greenwich, England, in 1988.

Christopher Sergel met with Harper Lee once, briefly, over coffee to discuss the direction his adaptation was taking. She approved of his work, they said goodbye, and they never saw each other again.

Sergel's version contains more of Harper Lee's prose than the movie version and is significantly different from the novel and the film in that it includes the use of Jean Louise (the adult Scout) as the narrator of the story.

Christopher Sergel's stage adaptation of the novel was first performed in Harper Lee's hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, in 1990. Since then, the play is performed there every May. The annual [production](#) begins in the courthouse grounds and then moves indoors into the Monro County Courthouse for the trial scenes. The actors are local townspeople and the jury is made up of random male audience members. To add to the realism, the audience is racially segregated.

Sergel's adaptation has become one of the most produced plays in North America and a constant favorite for high school productions. To preserve authenticity and to fight censorship, Sergel refuses to allow his play to be censored by omitting the "n-word."

MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM THE PLAY

Miss Maude: "Mockingbirds just make music. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

Dill: "I'm little but I'm old."

Atticus: "You see, you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view."

Atticus: "The main reason – if I didn't defend him I couldn't hold my head up. I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again."

Atticus: "But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they're still our friends and this is still our home."

Atticus: "But there's one way in which all men are created equal. There's one human institution that makes the pauper the equal of Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein. That institution ... is a court of law."

Atticus: "I wanted you to see what real courage is... Courage isn't a man with a knife in his hand -- it's when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win -- but sometimes you do."

Atticus: "I won't have my children hear me say something different from what they know to be true. If I do, I won't have them anymore. I can't live one way in town and another way in my home."

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR - DENNIS GARNHUM



Dennis Garnhum, Theatre Calgary's Artistic Director and Director of *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Photo courtesy of Theatre Calgary

What is your personal history with *To Kill a Mockingbird* ?

D.G. *My first experience with To Kill a Mockingbird was ten years ago, when I was asked to direct it at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton and then at the Manitoba Theatre Centre. I wasn't someone who had read it in school or seen the movie. Not knowing much about it, the advantage for me then was that I came to think of it as a play first.*

When I got the opportunity, I actually went down to Alabama to discover Harper Lee's roots. The book was based on the world around her – the courtroom, her town, her neighborhood and her childhood, including her close friend Truman Capote. So I've walked the lands that she walked and that has stayed with me.

Three of the major characters are children under 12. That must be a real challenge to deal with in a stage play with such a long run. How do you deal with this and what other challenges do you have to consider with the production?

D.G. *You ask what the challenges are, but it's the opportunities that actually make it exciting for me. The very first time I read the play, I had an overwhelming impression of how I would do it that I couldn't get out of my mind.*

I didn't want to do it in a traditional way that had these sad little "house" sets and that kind of stuff. I really thought it was important to strip that away and surround the audience with what the play is really about — to be surrounded by the goodness of Atticus Finch and be witness to the story. That's why we have on-stage seating in this production. We have thirty seats inside the set that are occupied by audience members. They figure out in Act Two that they are abstractly the court, but they really aren't asked to participate. We don't make audience members perform like the court – just watch.

It's a big story, a lot of actors – there are twenty actors in the show and they travel all over. With this production's set, the play is actually easier to perform because the audience is asked to imagine all the different locations.

And yes, it's a huge challenge that the show really is led by three children. They're in every scene and on stage all the time. They share quite a burden in terms of hosting the play. We've got wonderful kids and equally important are their parents who are standing by to make sure the kids are there and ready to perform. The special thing about the roles as written is that they're great kid roles and the kids get it. You don't have to work hard to explain it to them. They understand, and the kids that we've picked (who, by the way, are all from Calgary) are so fantastically perfect! Our little Scout is so spunky! I don't have to direct her to be spunky, she already is.

What special message do you hope your audiences will get out of this performance?

D.G. *I can't think of a time more than now when we need to remind ourselves about goodness and decency. And that is what Atticus Finch is all about. Our society is eroding in terms of manners and behaviours and so I think that element in the play is shockingly relevant.*

To Kill a Mockingbird is a controversial work. It has been banned several times over the past 50 years – mostly because of the use of the “n-word.” What do you say to people who are offended and who object to the use of the word in classroom settings and on public stages?

D.G. *It does not bother me for a second that we are using the “n-word” because that is what they said and that is how they behaved and continue to behave. That's why this play matters. I think that the word is more electric now because we've decided it's a bad word – much more now than fifty years ago. It was a bad word before, but now it's a terrible word. I'm not making any kind of strong statement about anything by including it. That's what the story is and that is what we must do. We must honour what the story is. And I hope it does offend. You should be offended by hearing that word. It's very hard for the actors to say because they don't want to say it. But I think that word alone is not nearly as offensive as the way white people treat blacks. That's a thousand times more offensive than a single word.*

You have some very special elements in mind for this production. What are they and what effect do you hope to create?

D.G. *What makes To Kill a Mockingbird a great play is the scale of it. In our production, we have twenty actors, mostly local. There's something about having a large cast. I always prefer to go to a play with more people on the stage. I find that there's a different energy, a very different excitement.*

I am also very excited that we have R.H. Thompson playing Atticus Finch. I think that he is Canada's Atticus Finch. I couldn't believe our luck that he said yes when he was offered the role. But he knew he wanted to say yes because he loves the play and the novel.

The opportunity for audiences to be on stage is a fantastic double-experience. Thirty people get to watch the play really close up, and the remaining seven hundred get to watch those audience members watch the play. I think that is really interesting in that it changes the dynamic of the experience. Plus, you'll see it is a very visually stunning production that will excite the imagination and bring the story to life. There is also a lot of music and pageantry.

As for the effect that I hope to create, I need to say that I'm always amazed and baffled by the story, because it's both very ugly and very beautiful. I don't know how Harper Lee managed to get this across so well, but she did. We love this story, but what happens in it is awful. But it's also such a joyous experience. You can't help but tear up at the beauty in the play.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PLAY

The Finch Household

Jean Louise Finch	The narrator of the play. She is Scout as an adult.
Scout	A tomboyish young girl; daughter of Atticus Finch
Jem (Jeremy Finch)	Scout's older brother and son of Atticus Finch
Atticus Finch	A lawyer; Jem and Scout's father
Calpurnia	African-American woman; servant and nanny for the Finch family

Neighbours

Dill	Charles Baker Harris; a friend to Scout and Jem
Maudie Atkinson	A trusted neighbor.
Stephanie Crawford	The neighbourhood scold
Mrs. Dubose	A cranky but wise old neighbor
Nathan Radley	Boo Radley's protective older brother
Boo Radley	A misunderstood and often maligned town recluse

Other Citizens of Maycomb, Alabama

Mayella Ewell	A white woman who accuses Tom Robinson of beating and raping her.
Bob Ewell	Mayella's bigoted and abusive father.
Heck Tate	The sheriff
Judge Taylor	The judge
Mr. Gilmer	The public prosecutor
Walter Cunningham	A farmer and friend of Atticus Finch
Tom Robinson	A young African-American man accused of raping Mayella.
Helen Robinson	Tom's wife
Reverend Sykes	African-American minister.

PLOT SUMMARY

Setting: 1935, in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama

Act One

Jean Louise Finch returns to the place of her youth and recalls the events that occurred in her hometown when she was only six years old and known as Scout.

Scout and her older brother Jem meet and befriend a young boy named Dill who spends his summers with his aunt in the house next door to the Finches. The three children, fueled by rumours and tall tales told by the townsfolk are frightened of their reclusive neighbor Boo Radley but they cannot resist the urge to take a look at Boo and to get him to leave his house.

Scout and Jem learn that their father has undertaken the defence of a black man accused of beating and raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell. As a result, Scout and Jem are picked on at school and they begin to believe that perhaps their father is not good at anything. This opinion changes when Atticus is called upon to shoot a mad dog. When the neighbor, Mrs. Dubose, makes negative comments about Atticus in front of the children, Jem gets back at her by destroying the flowers and plants in her garden. As punishment for this, Jem is forced to read to Mrs. Dubose every day.

One night – just before the trial, the children notice that Atticus has taken a folding chair and gone into town. They follow him and find him sitting outside the jail where Tom Robinson is being held. A lynch mob arrives but the children are able to shame the men into going home peaceably

The trial begins and Tom Robinson is formally accused of raping and beating Mayella.

Act Two

As the trial continues, the children, who are sitting in the gallery with Reverend Sykes and the other African-Americans, see their father definitely prove to any reasonable person that Tom Robinson could not have committed the crimes he is accused of. Nevertheless, the all-white male jury finds Tom guilty. Despite his victory, Bob Ewell is angry that he was shown to be a liar in court and vows to get revenge on Atticus.

While Atticus works on Tom's appeal, the community is shocked by the news that Tom Robinson has been shot trying to escape from a work farm prison. As life seems to return to normal in Maycomb, the children are attacked one night in the woods. An unlikely rescuer comes to their aid and a decision is made that echoes the title and theme of the play.

MOCKINGBIRD AND CENSORSHIP

Despite its overwhelming popularity and critical acclaim, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (the novel, film, and play) remains controversial due to its use of prejudicial language – most specifically the use of the “n-word.” The word appears 48 times in the novel, about ten times in the movie and 13 times in the play. As a result, it has been banned in many schools and school jurisdictions.

The debate over the use of the “n-word” and whether *To Kill a Mockingbird* should be studied in the classroom or presented on the stage is a heated one. It is recognized and acknowledged that the world today is quite different from the 1930s (when the story is set) and the late 1950s (when the novel was first written). Some argue that what may have been commonplace, if not acceptable, in those days is surely not to be condoned today. On the other hand, it is also argued that for the sake of realism - to preserve authenticity and to emphasize the ignorance and bigotry rampant during that period of time - it is sometimes necessary to reproduce and not shy away from repeating the language that was used then.

In Canada, the novel has been banned in a number of schools and school jurisdictions.

The Theatre Calgary production does include the use of discriminatory language contained in the original novel and play.

Harper Lee on the banning of her book:

Since 1964, Harper Lee has avoided the limelight and has refused to be interviewed. She briefly broke her silence in 1966 when she wrote a letter to the editor commenting on the attempts of a school board in the Richmond, Virginia area to ban *To Kill a Mockingbird* on the grounds that it was "immoral literature." The letter reads:

Recently I have received echoes down this way of the Hanover County School Board's activities, and what I've heard makes me wonder if any of its members can read.

Surely it is plain to the simplest intelligence that To Kill a Mockingbird spells out in words of seldom more than two syllables a code of honor and conduct, Christian in its ethic, that is the heritage of all Southerners. To hear that the novel is "immoral" has made me count the years between now and 1984, for I have yet to come across a better example of doublethink.

I feel, however, that the problem is one of illiteracy, not Marxism. Therefore I enclose a small contribution to the Beadle Bumble Fund that I hope will be used to enroll the Hanover County School Board in any first grade of its choice.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To better understand and appreciate *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one needs to be aware of the historical context during which the novel/play was conceived and written.

When Harper Lee was only a young child, America was in the grips of the Great Depression. The economic hardships suffered by Southerners are an integral part of story of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

A significant event that left a lasting impression on the six-year-old Harper Lee was the controversial trial of the nine [Scottsboro Boys](#) for the alleged rape of two white women. Despite the absence of any substantial evidence, all but one of the nine African-American men were found guilty and sentenced to death. The condemned men remained on death row for many years but were eventually released. The case was finally closed in 1976 when the last of them received a pardon.

Harper Lee began writing her novel in the mid 1950s. This was precisely the same time that the Civil Rights movement in the United States was gaining strength and momentum.

Significant Events of the Civil Rights Movement

May 17, 1954 - Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas - The Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools is illegal.

December 1, 1955 - [Rosa Parks](#) is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to give her seat to a white person on a city bus.

January, 1956 – [Autherine Lucy](#) becomes the first African-American to attend classes at the University of Alabama.

January, 1956 - Reverend [Martin Luther King](#) Junior's home is bombed.

February 4, 1956 - The University of Alabama's campus becomes the scene of violence because of Autherine Lucy's enrollment.

February 22, 1956 – 115 leaders of the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott are issued arrest warrants.

November 13, 1956 - Supreme Court rules that bus segregation is illegal.

September, 1957 - Federal troops enforce integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1960 – *To Kill a Mockingbird* is published and becomes an immediate best seller.

For more, check out the [Historical Background Site](#) and scroll down to the “Civil Rights Era.”

JIM CROW LAWS

A sad chapter in American history involves the enactment of “Jim Crow” laws. Between the 1880s and well into the 1960s, most American states passed laws that kept African-Americans segregated from white society and which also served to reinforce the racist belief that whites were superior to blacks.

Here is just a short list of the more notorious “Jim Crow” laws passed by various states:

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)

All marriages between a white person and a negro, or between a white person and a person of negro descent to the fourth generation inclusive, are hereby forever prohibited. (Florida)

Education The schools for white children and the schools for negro children shall be conducted separately. (Florida)

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)

Any person...who shall rent any part of any such building to a negro person or a negro family when such building is already in whole or in part in occupancy by a white person or white family, or vice versa when the building is in occupancy by a negro person or negro family, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$25.00 nor more than \$100.00 or be imprisoned not less than 10, or more than 60 days, or both ... in the discretion of the court. (Louisiana)

Separate schools shall be maintained for the children of the white and colored races. (Mississippi)

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)

Every person...operating...any public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage which is attended by both white and colored persons, shall separate the white race and the colored race and shall set apart and designate...certain seats therein to be occupied by white persons and a portion thereof, or certain seats therein, to be occupied by colored persons. (Virginia)

[More examples of “Jim Crow” laws.](#)

DID YOU KNOW? - A GLOSSARY OF ALLUSIONS AND VOCABULARY

The following information provides background, definition or explanation of specific references in the play that you may not be familiar with. The references are presented in the order in which they are mentioned in the play. For your convenience, some relevant websites are hyperlinked.

corncribs – place where unhusked corn is stored

scuppernog - sweet grape plant commonly found in the US southeast

smilax - A slender vine often used in floral decorations



Indian-heads - U.S. pennies minted between 1859 and 1909.

get shinnied up – get excessively drunk; shinny is southern slang for “whiskey”

snipe hunt - a practical joke in which someone is taken on a pretense into the dark forest and abandoned there by the jokers. Equivalent to going on a wild goose chase.

entailment - A legal matter often involving a property inheritance

frog-sticking without a light - attempting to catch frogs in the dark with a small pitchfork-like stick. Doing so without a light is evidence that such people do not know what they are doing.

Chiffarobe - a piece of furniture with a tall space for hanging clothes above a chest of drawers.

WPA - The [Works Progress Administration](#); a government social program (part of the New Deal) designed to get people back working during the depression.

haints - ghosts

FURTHER READING – BOOKS RELATED TO THE PLAY

Novels

Malorie Blackman	<u>Black & White</u>	(2007) novel
Joyce Carol Oates	<u>Black girl/white girl</u>	(2006) novel
James Lee Burke	<u>Burning angel</u>	(1995) novel
John Steinbeck	<u>The Grapes of Wrath</u>	(1939) novel

Non-Fiction

John Howard Griffin	<u>Black Like Me</u>	(1961)
Charles J. Shields	<u>Mockingbird : a portrait of Harper Lee</u>	(1996)
Mary McDonagh Murphy	<u>Scout, Atticus, and Boo: A Celebration of Fifty Years of To Kill a Mockingbird</u>	(2010)

FURTHER VIEWING – MOVIES/TV RELATED TO THE PLAY

[A Raisin in the Sun](#) (1961)

[Black Like Me](#) (1964)

[Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys](#) (1976 TV Movie)

[In the Heat of the Night](#) (1988)

[Heavens Fall](#) (2006)

[Hey, Boo Harper Lee & To Kill a Mockingbird](#) (2011) Documentary