

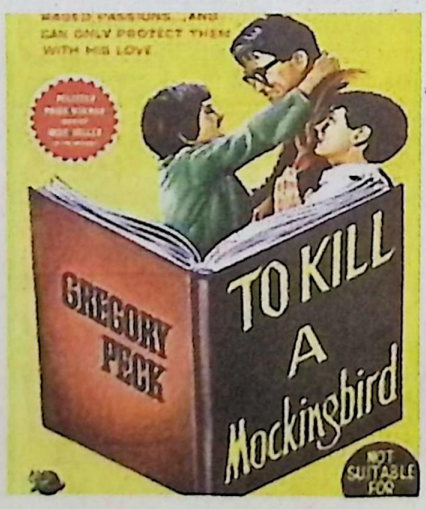
To Kill a Mockingbird

To Kill a Mockingbird is a 1960 novel by Harper Lee, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. Lee's only novel, a coming of age novel,is told from the point of view of Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, the young daughter of Atticus Finch, a lawyer in Maycomb, Alabama, a fictional small town in the Deep South of the United States. She is accompanied by her brother, Jem, and their mutual friend Dill.

Scout Finch lives with her brother, Jem, and their widowed father, Atticus, in the sleepy Alabama county of Maycomb. Maycomb county is suffering through the Great Depression, but Atticus is a prominent lawyer and the Finch family is reasonably well off in comparison to the rest of society. One summer, Jem and Scout befriend a boy named Charles Baker Harris (Dill), who has come to live in their neighborhood for the summer, and the trio acts out stories together. Eventually, Dill becomes fascinated with the spooky house on their street called the Radley Place. The house was owned by Mr. Radley, who had two sons, Nathan, who takes over the household after Mr. Radley's death, and Arthur (nicknamed Boo), who has lived there for years without venturing outside in daylight.

Scout goes to school for the first time that fall and detests it. She and Jem find gifts apparently left for them in a knothole of a tree on the Radley property. Dill returns the following summer, and he, Scout, and Jem begin to act out the story of Boo Radley. Atticus puts a stop to their antics, urging the children to try to see life from another person's perspective before making judgments. But on Dill's last night in Maycomb for the summer, the three sneak onto the Radley property, where Nathan Radley shoots at them. Jem loses his pants in the ensuing escape. When he returns for them, he finds them mended and hung over the fence. The next winter, Jem and Scout find presents in a tree left mysteriously for them. Presumably left by the mysterious Boo, Boo's brother Nathan Radley eventually plugs the knothole with cement claiming it was "diseased".

To the consternation of Maycomb's racist white community, Atticus agrees to defend a black man named Tom Robinson, who has been accused of raping Mayella Ewell. Because of Atticus's decision, Jem and Scout are subjected to abuse from other children, even when they celebrate Christmas at the family compound on Finch's Landing. Calpurnia, the Finches' black cook, takes them to the local black church, where the warm and close-knit community largely embraces the children. Atticus's sister, Alexandra, comes to live with the Finches the next summer. Dill, who is supposed to live with his "new father" in another town who hasn't payed



enough attention to him, runs away and comes to Maycomb. Tom Robinson's trial begins, and when the accused man is placed in the local jail, a mob gathers to lynch him. Atticus faces the mob down the night before the trial. Jem, Dill, and Scout, who sneaked out of the house, soon join him. Scout recognizes one of the men, and her polite questioning about his son shames him into dispersing the mob.

At the trial itself, the children sit in the "colored balcony" with the town's black citizens. Atticus provides clear evidence that the accusers, Mayella Ewell and her father, Bob, are lying: in fact, Mayella propositioned Tom Robinson, was caught by her father, and then accused Tom of rape to cover her shame and guilt. Atticus provides impressive evidence that the marks on Mayella's face are from wounds that her father inflicted; upon discovering her with Tom, he called her a whore and beat her. Yet, despite the significant evidence pointing to Tom's innocence, the all-white jury convicts him. The innocent Tom later tries to escape from prison and is shot seventeen times, killing him. In the aftermath of the trial, Jem's faith in justice is badly shaken because of the unbelieveable verdict, and he lapses into despondency and doubt.

Despite the verdict, Bob Ewell feels that Atticus and the judge have made a fool out of him, and he vows revenge. He menaces Tom Robinson's widow, tries to break into the judge's house, and finally attacks Jem and Scout as they walk home from a Halloween pageant at their school. Boo Radley intervenes, however, saving the children, and carries the wounded Jem back to the Finch home. Atticus at first believes that Jem fatally stabbed Mr. Ewell in the struggle, but the sheriff insists that Ewell tripped over a tree root and fell on his own knife. It is evident (although unsaid) that the sheriff wishes to protect the reclusive Boo, contrary to Atticus's belief, from the publicity certain to follow from the townspeople if they learned the truth of Boo's involvement. After sitting with Jem for a while, Scout is asked to walk Boo home. While standing on the Radley porch, Scout imagines many past events from Boo's perspective and feels sorry for him because she and Jem never gave him a chance, and never repaid him for the gifts that he had given them.