

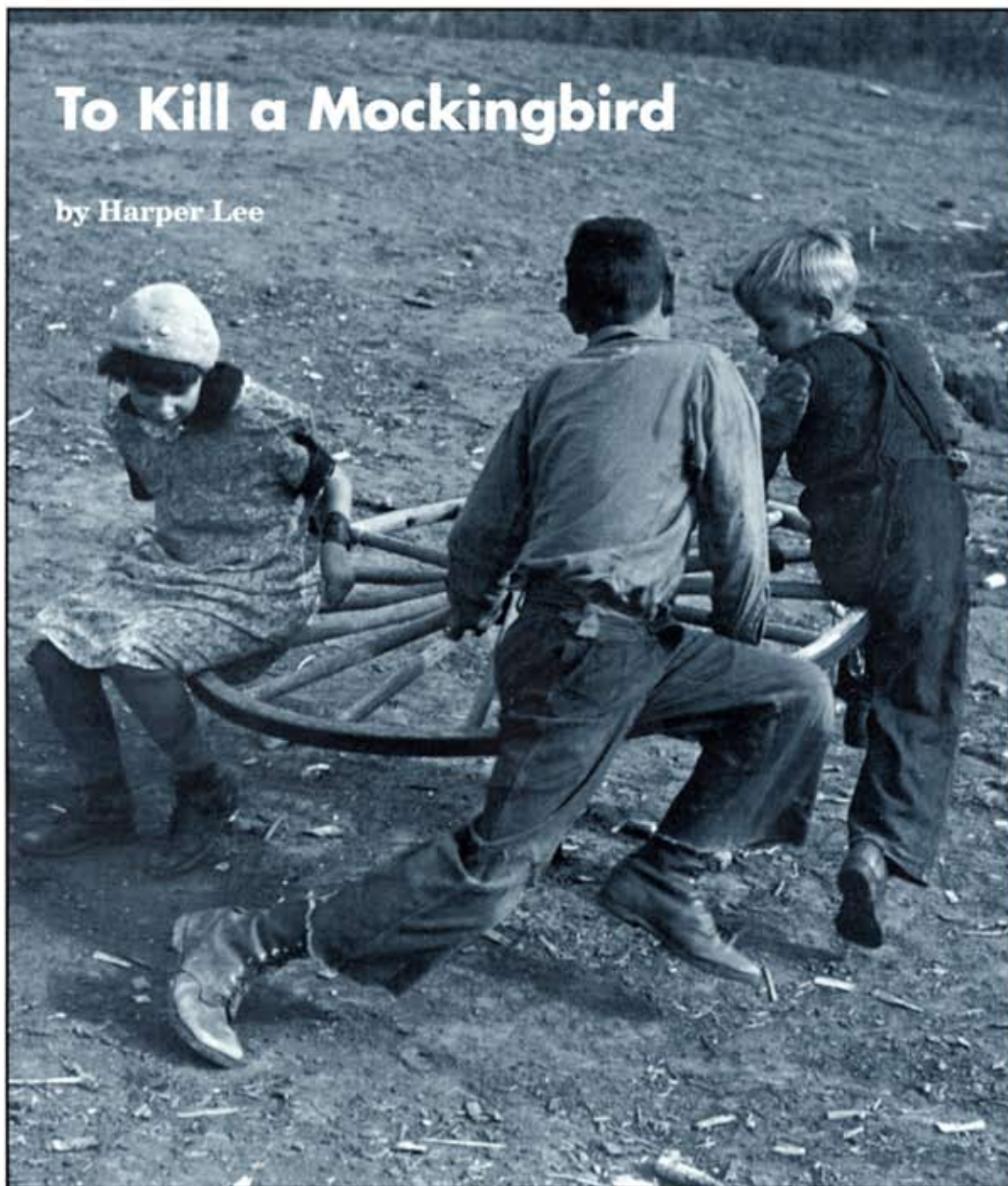
REPRODUCIBLE SERIES

# LATITUDES

Resources to Integrate Language Arts & Social Studies

## To Kill a Mockingbird

by Harper Lee



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# A Time in HISTORY

The following timeline traces some of the major events dealing with race relations and the Great Depression.

**1890**



U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* makes segregation on railroad cars legal (1896)

**1900**



NAACP is founded (1909)

**1910**



Ku Klux Klan receives charter from Fulton County, Georgia; Klan spreads to other Southern states (1915)

**1920**



U.S. Congress fails to pass anti-lynching bill (1922)

**1930**



**1940**



Haywood Patterson, one of the Scottsboro defendants, escapes from prison and flees to the North (1948)

**1950**

Last of the Scottsboro defendants freed on parole (1950)

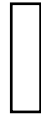
**1930**



Great Depression (1929-1939)

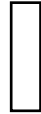
First meeting of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (1930)

**1931**



Nine African-American youths charged with the rapes of two white women in Scottsboro, Alabama; eight of the nine convicted and sentenced to death (1931)

**1932**



U.S. Supreme Court reverses convictions of the seven Scottsboro defendants on grounds that their constitutional rights were violated (November 7, 1932)

**1933**



Second Alabama trial of the Scottsboro Boys; defendants again convicted (1933)

**1934**



Franklin D. Roosevelt elected 32nd President of the United States (1933)

**1935**



NRA (National Recovery Administration) begins (1933)

**1936**



Hitler named German chancellor (1933)

U.S. Supreme Court again reverses Scottsboro convictions (1935)

**1937**



WPA (Works Progress Administration) begins (1935)

Jesse Owens wins gold medal in Summer Olympics in Germany (1936)

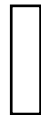
Franklin D. Roosevelt reelected U.S. President (1936)

**1938**



Four Scottsboro defendants freed; others sentenced to long prison terms (1937)

**1939**



World War II begins (1939)

Nazi invasion of Poland (1939)

**1940**

# Another Small-Town Halloween Party

Harper Lee based most of the characters and events in **To Kill a Mockingbird** on her own childhood experiences in Monroeville, Alabama. For example, Atticus is very much like Lee's own father, and Dill is drawn from her playmate, author Truman Capote.

An incident told in a biography of Capote reveals the similarities between the characters and events in Lee's early life and those in her novel. In **A Bridge of Childhood: Truman Capote's Southern Years**, author Marianne M. Moates tells of events that occurred during a Halloween party Truman gave at the home of his aunt, a neighbor of the Lees. Here we learn that sometimes even whites weren't safe at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan.



Don Uhrbrock, Life Magazine

Harper Lee and her father, Amasa, at home in Alabama, 1961

*Note: The story is told in the voice of Big Boy, Truman's cousin and a friend of both Truman and Harper Lee. In the following excerpt, Harper Lee is referred to as "Nelle."*

The party was in full swing when Sally Boular, dressed in a fluffy princess costume, burst into the house, shrieking, "Help! Please help! The Klan's got Sonny over at Mr. Lee's house! They're gonna hang him!"

She screamed her words as she described what happened. "We got on our costumes and walked as far as the Lees'

when the Klan saw us. They yelled, "There's one of them now!" and started running after us. We got scared and started running. Sonny tripped and fell in Mr. Lee's yard. He couldn't get up. They grabbed him and said they're gonna hang him! Come quick!"

Someone yelled, "Call the sheriff!"

While the adults crowded to the door in a hubbub of activity, Truman, Nelle, and I darted out the back door, down the steps, across the yard, and through the hedge. We reached Nelle's front porch before any of the adults managed to get there. All except Mr. Lee, who had heard

*continued*



Truman Capote

Granger Collection

the commotion and was standing outside in his undershirt and blue pants. He waded into the middle of the sheet-covered Klansmen, who had gathered in the middle of the road holding their torches high.

The Klansmen didn't offer any resistance to Mr. Lee, a big, strong man who had the respect of everybody in town. He was a member of the state legislature, editor of the *Monroe Journal*, and an upstanding citizen. No one wanted to be the one to cross him. When Mr. Lee got to the center of the activity, he came face-to-face with a Klansman wearing a hood with green fringe. This was the Grand Dragon.

In the center of the group was a series of silver-painted cardboard boxes that had been wired to make a square head, body, arms, and legs. Round eye-holes were cut in the front of the box on the head. The strange figure could barely walk with all the boxes wired to him, and he couldn't get his arms up to pull the box from his head....When [Mr. Lee]

finally removed the box, there was Sonny, white as a sheet, with tears streaming down his face. He tried to cling to Mr. Lee, but the boxes kept him back. "I wasn't going to hurt anybody," he said. "I was coming to the party as a robot, that's all."

Mr. Lee turned to address the crowd of Klansmen. "See what your foolishness has done? You've scared this boy half to death because you wanted to believe something that wasn't true. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves..."

One by one [the Klan members] silently ground their torches into the dirt and faded into the blackened night....

While we discussed the excitement and danger, Truman was getting it all in perspective. Then his comments and questions bubbled out: "...How about Mr. Lee? Did you notice after he spoke there was no shouting, no more talk? Did you see the look on the people's faces?" He paused, then said thoughtfully, "The power of the Klan is gone. Nobody has to be afraid of them anymore."

# MORPHINE

## A Southern Lady's Drug

*Morphine is a highly addictive pain reliever that is still used today, although it is strictly regulated. In the early 1900s, morphine addiction was more than an isolated occurrence. Following is a look at the “typical” morphine addict of the early 20th century. The data are summarized from **Dark Paradise** by David T. Courtwright.*

### 1920s Typical Morphine Addict

- white female
- middle-aged or older
- widowed
- homebound
- lives in the South
- property owner
- began using morphine for medical reasons

*The account that follows, from Courtwright's book, shows how Mrs. Dubose in **To Kill a Mockingbird** typifies the morphine addict of her time.*

**T**here is, by way of summing up, a character in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* named Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose. Mrs. Dubose is a propertied and cantankerous widow residing in a small Alabama town. She is also a morphine addict, having become addicted years ago as a consequence of a chronic, painful condition. Informed that she has only a short while to live, she struggles to quit taking the drug, for she is determined to “leave this world beholden to nothing and nobody.” Although fictitious, Mrs. Dubose personifies the American opium or morphine addict of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If all of the foregoing statistics were condensed into a single, modal type, it would closely resemble Mrs. Dubose: a native Southerner, possessed of servant and property, once married, now widowed and homebound, evidently addicted since late middle age. In all respects—her sex, age of addiction, race, nationality, region, class, and occupation (or lack thereof)—she is typical. Typical, too, is the origin of her condition: she was addicted by her physician.

# VIEWPOINTS

## on Equality

*These quotes from speeches, letters, books, and pamphlets reveal some Americans' feelings on race relations and equality.*

Not many of the aspects of life in Alabama are untouched by the influence of racial attitudes. The Negro problem has given a distinct coloration to our judicial procedures, to our social attitudes, to our educational points of view and even to our artistic and scientific endeavors. Religion itself has not been immune to the influence.

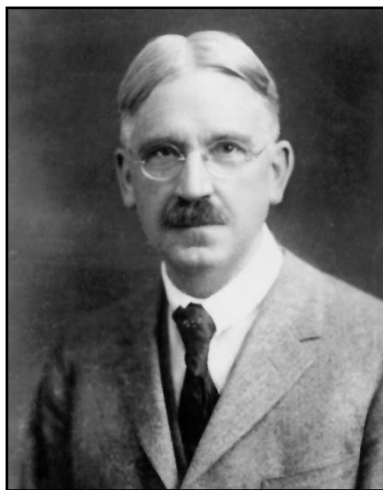
—Birmingham News  
(January 12, 1934)

...To the Negro in these counties in the South the image of America is the image of the Sheriff.

—James Nabrit, Jr.,  
May 1, 1963

As a race the Negro is definitely inferior to the white. The only fields in which they are superior are in their physical strength and their natural capacity as entertainers, making fun of themselves for the benefit of others.

—Robert Patterson,  
journalist



John Dewey The Granger Collection

Belief in equality is an element of the democratic credo....All individuals are entitled to equality of treatment by law and in its administration. Each one is affected equally in quality if not in quantity by the institutions under which he lives and has an equal right to express his judgment....In short, each one is equally an individual and entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range.

—John Dewey,  
*Intelligence in the Modern World*, 1939

The real problem is not the negro, but the white man's attitude toward the negro.

—Thomas Pearce Bailey,  
1914

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the underlying assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction on it.

—Justice  
**Henry B. Brown**,  
who argued with the majority opinion in  
*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896

Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.

—Justice  
**John Marshall Harlan**  
(the only Southerner on the Supreme Court), who disagreed with the majority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

—W. E. B. DuBois,  
1903

*continued*



**Viewpoints** *continued*

Now where rests the responsibility for the lynch law prevalent in the South? It is evident that it is not entirely with the ignorant mob. The men who break open jails and with bloody hands destroy human life are not alone responsible. These are not the men who make public sentiment. They are simply the hangmen, not the court, judge, or jury. They simply obey the public sentiment of the South—the sentiment created by wealth and respectability, by the press and pulpit. A change in public sentiment can be easily effected by these forces whenever they shall elect to make the effort. Let the press and the pulpit of the South unite their power against the cruelty, disgrace and shame that is settling like a mantle of fire upon these lynch-law States, and lynch law itself will soon cease to exist.

—**Frederick Douglass,**  
August 11, 1892



Langston Hughes

LOC



Eleanor Roosevelt

LOC

I think understanding and sympathy for the white people in the South is as important as understanding and sympathy and support for the colored people. We don't want another war between the states and so the only possible solution is to get the leaders on both sides together and try to work first steps out.

—**Eleanor Roosevelt,**  
1956

We Negroes of America are tired of a world divided superficially on the basis of blood and color, but in reality on the basis of poverty and power—the rich over the poor, no matter what their color. We Negroes of America are tired of a world in which it is possible for any one group of people to say to one another: "You have no right to happiness, or freedom, or the joy of life."...We are tired of a world where, when we raise our voices against oppression, we are immediately jailed, intimidated, beaten, sometimes lynched.

—**Langston Hughes,**  
1937

What, then, is the cause of lynching? At the last analysis, it will be discovered that there are just two causes of lynching. In the first place, it is due to race hatred, the hatred of a stronger people toward a weaker who were once held as slaves. In the second place, it is due to the lawlessness so prevalent in the section where nine-tenths of the lynchings occur.

—**Mary Church Terrell,**  
1904

Nowhere in the civilized world save the United States of America do men, possessing all civil and political power, go out in bands of 50 to 5000 to hunt down, shoot, hang or burn to death a single individual, unarmed and absolutely powerless....We refuse to believe this country, so powerful to defend its citizens abroad, is unable to protect its citizens at home.

—**Ida B. Wells,**  
1898

We are citizens just as much or more than the majority of this country....We are just as intelligent as they. This is supposed to be a free country regardless of color, creed or race but still *we* are slaves....We did not ask to be brought here as slaves, nor did we ask to be born black. We are real citizens of this land and must and *will* be recognized as such!

—**Mrs. Henry Weddington,**  
in a 1941 letter to President  
Franklin Roosevelt