

Bibliotheca Alexandrina



This is an article on

To Kill a Mockingbird



This novel "*To Kill a Mockingbird*" was written by Harper Lee. It's her first and only novel. It was published in 1960 and received the Pulitzer Prize¹.

It was released in many countries like the USA, France, Belgium, Japan, Italy.....etc²

When Harper Lee wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*, her home state of Alabama was a hotbed of Civil Rights activity. Throughout the South, blacks and whites were segregated. African-Americans used different drinking fountains, entrances, and restroom facilities. They also had to sit on the back of public buses and were expected to move if a white person wanted their seat. Civil Rights issues were heating up across the nation, too, and so the subject of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was quite timely upon its publication³.

¹ Oracle ThinkQuest: Education Foundation, www.thinkquest.org

² The Internet Movie Database (IMDB), <http://us.imdb.com/>

³ "About *To Kill a Mockingbird*", CliffsNotes, www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird-About-To-Kill-a-Mockingbird.id-143.pageNum-7.html

To Kill a Mockingbird when you read the word for the first time, you may think of the birds and the person who hunt them, but if you look deeper, you will relate birds to man, especially with the word "*mocking*" which is a term used with people. And the word "mocking" is the beginning of thinking of crimes and the person who is not guilty in a crime. We also can't forget the word "*kill*" which is used also in crimes. From here you can think about killing a guilty man who would be punished because of a crime he did not commit.

All these ideas will come to you when you read the title or see the film. The problem of "black and white" in America was clearly given expression by Harper Lee in her novel and by the film makers in the film. She was brilliant in portraying a black man and a white girl not as opponents, had the girl been black, she would not have been given any attention because of the racial discrimination problems that prevailed in those days. Killing the black man at the end of the novel, before the next season of his case, is a good ending due to three reasons:

1. There is no evidence or witnesses of the black man's speech. If the lawyer lost the case, his position will be weaker among people especially after he was shown as guilty.
2. We cannot make the black man win the case, in those days. White Americans were looked down on blacks. If the writer made him win the case, this would have decreased the degree of credibility of both the novel and film.

3. Keeping the ending open, the black man made the reader think about what would have happen if he hadn't been killed. Would he have won the case or not? How would the situation between the blacks and the whites in his town have been had he won the case? What would the situation of the lawyer had been if he had lost the case?etc.

Readers have raised such questions and tried to get answers for them.

On the other hand we did not get to know who was guilty in this case? But we must admit that the lawyer's speech was very persuasive when he showed the reasons that made the white girl say what she said.

We also don't know exactly who was the hero? Was it the young girl who narrated the story and described the town and her life? Was it the young boy who was just killed at the end of the film? Was it the lawyer who carried the burden of the problem of "black and white" on his shoulders? Or was it the black man who was killed after he had become guilty in a crime?

There is some mystery related to the young boy - who had 10 years –and what he had met with, first the statues in a tree, and his trousers which were changed after he had left them – when he returned, he found they were not the same as he had left them near the house which he wanted to excavate, then the person who wanted to kill him at the end..

And when we have a deep look at the characters we will learn many useful things. The following details of the main characters are interesting:

1. The lawyer

- He was an important person in the film; he was an example for the fair father, because he was teaching his children in a simple way. He was showed them what is true and what is false and gave them the choice to do what they want without screaming or being nervous and he treated them as adults not as children.
- He was also an example for the successful lawyer who wanted to give every one his due. Also people at his town protested against him being a lawyer for a black man, he insisted on giving the man his due and going on the case. But, unfortunately, the black man was killed.

2. The young girl

- She was naive, she insulted two persons inadvertently
 - a. Her poor classmate. When she tried to explain to her teacher why he can't buy new things to his school and she did it again when he was eating at her father's house.
 - b. Her poor neighbor and his debt to her father.

She was smart and active. She was asked about everything she didn't know and she understood matters quickly.

3. The young boy

- He was brave. He could go everywhere without being scaring. He was not afraid of the mystery house - which was next to his house. He was not afraid of the strange man – the father of the white girl- who came close to the car of the boy's father when the boy was alone.
- He was strong. He could fight the man who wanted to kill him at the end of the film and did not go away. Also he did not think only of himself, but also of his sister, so he asked her to go away.
- He was smart. He could see different things like:
The things he had found inside the tree, he knew that the things were put for him and his sister.

he always tried to discover the mystery house -next to his house. He was active. He went everyday to different places without being tired and in summer he was always outdoors.

All these characters made both the novel and the film very successful. We really miss great films like that nowadays.