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## Meath County Council Library Service Book Club Kit

# TO KILL A MOCKING- BIRD



*Pulitzer Prize Winner  
over 30,000,000 sold*

## HARPER LEE



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# Notes To Readers

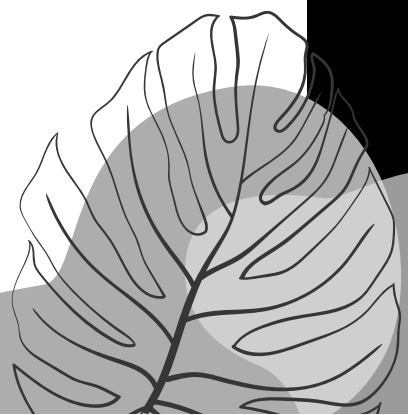
## Spoiler warnings

This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and contains spoilers

## Content warnings

Please be aware that *To Kill a Mockingbird* contains content that may trigger including depictions of murder, gun violence, knife violence, racism & racial slurs, rape, substance, addiction, stabbing and animal death.

<https://triggerwarningdatabase.com/2021/05/17/to-kill-a-mockingbird-by-harper-lee/#:~:text=Trigger%20%26%20Content%20Warnings%3A&text=Murder,Animal%20death>





# Reading Group Discussion Questions


Atticus works throughout the book to show his children that people often make both good and bad choices and to applaud the good while working to resolve the bad. Discuss some of your favorite lessons that Atticus teaches the children either directly or indirectly (with his actions).

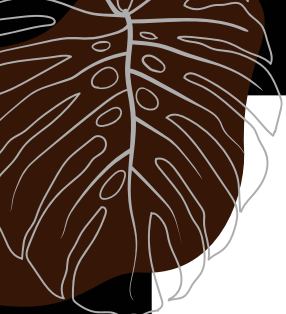
In the end, Scout and Jem “come-of-age,” awakening to the evils around them. Jem becomes embittered by the injustice he sees, but Scout continues to hope in the good of the human spirit. Why do you think Scout has a more resilient outlook in the end than Jem, despite going through the same trials?

At the end of the book, when Atticus asks Scout if she understands that Mr. Ewell fell on his own knife, she answers yes because exposing Boo would “be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird.” Discuss this idea. Then discuss the other mockingbirds hurt throughout the book by unnecessary evil (Jem, Dill, Tom Robinson, Mr. Raymond).

Scout and Jem have an idyllic childhood in their version of Maycomb. It is only as the events of the book transpire that they begin to understand the larger world around them, including the discrimination and poverty many of the citizens endure. How did this ring true of your own experiences as a child? Did you have any similar awakenings to Jem and Scout? Discuss this.

Scout is one of the most beloved narrators of modern literature. Her quirky, naïve, and bold voice enchants us and draws us to her side. How would this story have changed if Atticus or Jem had been the narrator? What about Boo or Calpurnia?






Scout's discrimination against Boo takes the book to a level beyond racial discrimination to discrimination in general and hits on the theme of the book: empathy. When Scout finally sees Boo as a human being, she empathizes with him. After the accident, Boo asks Scout to take him home. Up to this point, Scout has been leading him by the hand around her house. She insists then, that he bend his arm so anyone "would see Arthur Radley escorting me down the sidewalk, as any gentleman would do." Discuss how Scout shows the definition of empathy in her small action by treating Boo as Arthur Radley, a gentleman and human worthy of respect.

The novel hosts a cast of fantastic characters. Who was your favorite main character (Atticus, Jem, Scout)? Who was your favorite secondary character (Dill, Mrs. Dubose, Miss Maudie, Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, etc.)? Do you think that the book would have worked if Tom Robinson hadn't died? How would it have changed the story if Atticus had filed and won an appeal?

To Kill a Mockingbird is a Southern Gothic novel with many dark elements throughout the book. Name some of the Gothic elements throughout the book that you noticed (i.e. the rabid dog, the Halloween festival). How do you think this style added to the book?

Harper Lee won the Pulitzer for To Kill a Mockingbird and published nothing else 55 years until the manuscript of her first attempt at To Kill a Mockingbird was rediscovered and published as Go Set a Watchman. If you've read Go Set a Watchman, discuss how it differed from the style, story, and impact of To Kill a Mockingbird.



# Who Else Writes Like...?

A readers' guide to fiction authors



Harper Lee 📖 📱 🔄

HOME COUNTRY USA

LIVED FROM 1926 until 2016

GENRES **General**

WRITES LIKE

Suzanne Berne Chris Bohjalian Pat Conroy Jennifer Donnelly  
Carson McCullers Toni Morrison Stewart O'Nan J D Salinger  
José Saramago John Steinbeck Alice Walker

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can use the library's Reading Recommendation Website "Who Else Writes Like?" to find new books to read!

Who Else Writes Like...? will help you to find something to read by uncovering new authors based on ones you already like.

And there are lots of other ways to search Who Else...?, such as genre, character and series. There are also featured links to book award winners, useful websites and editor's choice of top titles.

Some titles included in the site may be suitable for young adult readers, who are in the process of 'crossing-over' to adult novels.

### How to Log In

To use this great resource just visit the Who Else Writes Like Website and Log in with your Library Card. Then select Meath County Libraries from the drop down menu of accounts and click on continue. And you're on your way to finding your next read.

And remember, you can also search our [online catalogue](#) and reserve the titles recommended.

[www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/what-to-read-next](http://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/what-to-read-next)

# About Harper Lee



Nelle Harper Lee (April 28, 1926 – February 19, 2016) was an American novelist. She penned the 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* that won the 1961 Pulitzer Prize and became a classic of modern American literature. Lee received numerous accolades and honorary degrees, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007 which was awarded for her contribution to literature. She assisted her close friend Truman Capote in his research for the book *In Cold Blood* (1966). Capote was the basis for the character Dill Harris in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The plot and characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are loosely based on Lee's observations of her family and neighbours, as well as an event that occurred near her hometown in 1936 when she was 10. The novel deals with the irrationality of adult attitudes towards race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s, as depicted through the eyes of two children. It was inspired by racist attitudes in her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama. *Go Set a Watchman*, written in the mid 1950s, was published in July 2015 as a sequel to *Mockingbird* but was later confirmed to be an earlier draft of *Mockingbird*.

# Interview with Harper Lee

As far as can be determined, author Harper Lee has granted but three interviews in her lifetime. The only extensive one, with Roy Newquist, is reprinted below. More recently, she engaged a reporter from London's Daily Mail in conversation, with the only stipulation being that the discussion never turn to her novel.

## **I'd like to first explore your own background—the particulars of birth, rearing, and education.**

I was born in a little town called Monroeville, Alabama, on April 28, 1926. I went to school in the local grammar school, went to high school there, and then went to the University of Alabama. That's about it, as far as education goes. There was one peculiarity, however, aside from my resisting all efforts of the government to educate me. I went to law school, the only odd thing in a thoroughly American stint of formal learning. I didn't graduate; I left the university one semester before I'd have gotten my degree.

## **When did you first become interested in writing?**

That would be hard to say. I can't remember, because I think I've been writing as long as I've been able to form words. I never wrote with an idea of publishing anything, of course, until I began working on *Mockingbird*. I think that what went before may have been a rather subconscious form of learning how to write, of training myself. You see, more than a simple matter of putting down words, writing is a process of selfdiscipline you must learn before you can call yourself a writer. There are people who write, but I think they're quite different from people who must write.

## **How long did it take you to write *To Kill a Mockingbird*?**

I suppose I worked on it in elapsed time of two years. The actual span of time was closer to three, but because of many family problems and personal problems I would have to quit at intervals and pick it up again. Two years would be it.

## **I know this is almost an impossible thing to do, but could you bare any of the roots of the novel? Of where it began in your own mind, and how it grew?**

You're right, this is very hard to do. In one sense, I think that *Mockingbird* was a natural for me, at any rate, for my first effort. In its inception it was sort of like Topsy—it just grew, but the actual mechanics of the work itself were quite different. Naturally, you don't sit down in "white hot inspiration" and write with a burning flame in front of you. But since I knew I could never be happy being anything but a writer, and *Mockingbird* put itself together for me so accommodatingly, I kept at it because I knew it had to be my first novel, for better or for worse.



**What was your reaction to the novel's enormous success?**


Well, I can't say that it was one of surprise. It was one of sheer numbness. It was like being hit over the head and knocked cold. You see, I never expected any sort of success with *Mockingbird*. I didn't expect the book to sell in the first place. I was hoping for a quick and merciful death at the hands of reviewers, but at the same time I sort of hoped that maybe someone would like it enough to give me encouragement. Public encouragement. I hoped for a little, as I said, but I got rather a whole lot, and in some ways this was just about as frightening as the quick, merciful death I'd expected.

**Are you working on another novel at present?**

Yes, and it goes slowly, ever so slowly. You know, many writers really don't like to write. I think this the chief complaint of so many. They hate to write; they do it under the compulsion that makes any artist the victim he is, but they loathe the process of sitting down trying to turn thoughts into reasonable sentences. I like to write. Sometimes I'm afraid that I like it too much because when I get into work I don't want to leave it. As a result I'll go for days and days without leaving the house or wherever I happen to be. I'll go out long enough to get papers and pick up some food and that's it. It's strange, but instead of hating writing I love it too much.

**To Kill a Mockingbird was turned into a film with what I felt to be an unusual degree of integrity. How did you feel about it?**

I felt the very same way. As a matter of fact, I have nothing but gratitude for the people who made the film. It was a most unusual experience. I'm no judge, and the only film I've ever seen made was *Mockingbird*, but there seemed to be an aura of good feeling on the set. I went out and looked at them filming a little of it, and there seemed to be such a general kindness, perhaps even respect, for the material they were working with. I was delighted, touched, happy, and exceedingly grateful. I think this kindness and respect permeated everyone who had anything to do with the film, from the producer and the director down to the man who designed the sets, from Greg Peck to the peripheral characters, the actors who played the smaller parts. It impressed me so much I asked people if this was the way filming generally ran, and they said, "Only when we're working on something we can respect." It was quite an experience, and yet I assume actors must have feelings, private feelings, of course, about material given them. They can't really be happy with something they don't like. But all of us connected with the filming of *Mockingbird* were fortunate to have the screenplay done by Horton Foote. I think this made a great difference.







# Brown Sugar Cracklin' Bread

The combination of brown sugar and bacon on this cornbread might change Scout's mind about adding molasses to her food!

## EQUIPMENT

Cast Iron Skillet

## INGREDIENTS

For the bread:

5-6 strips of bacon

1 ½ cup cornmeal

½ cup flour

4 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt

2 tbsp granulated sugar

1 ½ cups milk

2 eggs

3 tbsp oil

For the brown sugar topping:

2 tbsp butter melted

1 ½ tbsp brown sugar





# INGREDIENTS

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Cook the bacon in an oven safe skillet if you have one. Remove the bacon and reserve just enough grease to coat the skillet (or an 8X8 baking pan).

Crumble the bacon and set aside.

In a large bowl, mix the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt and granulated sugar.

Next, mix in the wet ingredients—milk, egg, and oil—until you have a mixture slightly thicker than pancake mix.

Pour the mix into the greased skillet or pan.

Sprinkle the cooked bacon on top of the mixture.

Cook for 17-20 minutes or just before the cornbread is done.

Remove from the oven and sprinkle the brown sugar evenly over the top. Then, drizzle the melted butter over that.

Place back into the oven and cook for 3-5 more minutes.

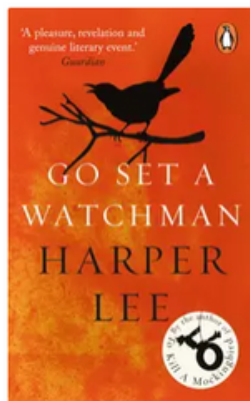
Serve with warm butter and honey, if desired.





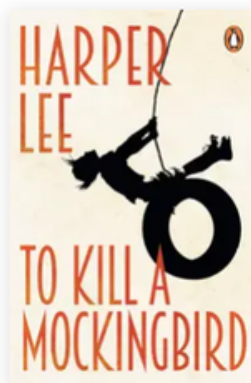
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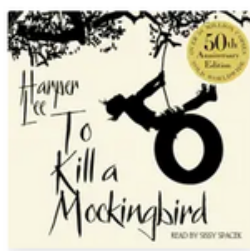
Go Set a Watchman  
Harper Lee  
On Loan  
Available on 2 July 2023



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To Kill a Mockingbird  
Harper Lee  
On Loan  
Available on 14 July 2023

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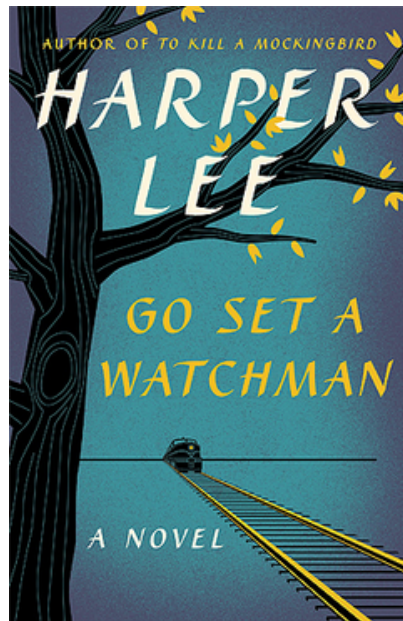


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To Kill a Mockingbird  
Harper Lee  
On Loan  
Available on 9 June 2023



# More from Harper Lee



Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch—"Scout"—returns home from New York City to visit her aging father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise's homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town and the people dearest to her. Memories from her childhood flood back, and her values and assumptions are thrown into doubt. Featuring many of the iconic characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman* perfectly captures a young woman, and a world, in a painful yet necessary transition out of the illusions of the past—a journey that can be guided only by one's conscience. Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* imparts a fuller, richer understanding and appreciation of Harper Lee. Here is an unforgettable novel of wisdom, humanity, passion, humor and effortless precision—a profoundly affecting work of art that is both wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times. It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context and new meaning to an American classic.



# Harper Lee's Advice to Young Writers

Hope for the best and expect nothing in terms of recognition

Write to please an audience of one: yourself

Write to exorcise your divine discontent

Gather material from the world around you, then turn inward and reflect

Don't major in writing



# Books of The Times

By HERBERT MITGANG

ALL the magic and truth that might seem deceptive or exaggerated in a factual account of a small town unfold beautifully in a new first novel called "To Kill a Mockingbird."\* At a time when so many machine-tooled novels are simply documentaries disguised behind a few fictional changes, it is pleasing to recommend a book that shows what a novelist can accomplish with quite familiar situations. The author, Harper Lee, is a woman in her early thirties; even though she seems to be recapturing the fleeting memories of childhood, clearly she is working harder to create a pointed story for the reader. Here is a storyteller justifying the novel as a form that transcends time and place.

She calls her Alabama town Maycomb, and it is so Deep South that it appears to be a vestige of the Confederacy. At least some of the children are still named after generals who fought under the Stars and Bars. But



A New York Times book review of "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Herbert Mitgang in 1960. The New York Times