

Harper Lee's
**TO KILL A
MOCKINGBIRD**

Adapted by **Christopher Sergel**

**Student-Teacher
Study Guide**

compiled and arranged by
the Education Department of
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey



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Director's Notes

Exploring *To Kill a Mockingbird* has affected me more deeply and moved me more profoundly than any other play on which I have worked. There is something to be learned from every moment. Harper Lee's coming-of-age story of compassion and bravery has charmed me, surprised me, humbled me, and inspired me. I know I can speak for the cast when I say that we have encountered Harper Lee's moving and singular voice at every turn in the process and in every scene of the stage adaptation – so much so that it has been a challenge to hone in on which specific thoughts to share about the production in this limited space.

Where does one begin when commenting on *To Kill a Mockingbird* itself – a work that even the author declined to comment on for decades? Everyone can relate to the story in one way or another because of the ground it covers: childhood, class status, intolerance, conscience, race, injustice, fatherhood, friendship, love, and courage. Its themes are powerful and perfectly interwoven into a heart-breaking "tapestry."

While rehearsing the play, we have embraced the themes which drive both the action of the play and its characters: Youth and Innocence; Racial Injustice; Morality; Compassion and Forgiveness; Justice and Judgment – and stepping back from this tapestry, found one theme which takes them all under its wing: Perspective.

At its core, the story is about changing one's perspective – whether in regard to race, to one's neighbor, or even about family. It is only in changing our perspectives that we grow as individuals, and in turn, as a community. If we consider things from another's point of view, stand in someone else's shoes or climb into their skin, we move toward compassion, we deepen our morality, we exercise better judgment, and we let go of our prejudice against others because of their beliefs, the color of their skin, or just because they are not like us.

If we could all learn this "simple trick" that Harper Lee sets forth through the courageous stance taken by Atticus Finch, we would be continually operating from a place of compassion and the world would be a better place.

-Joseph Discher

To Kill a Mockingbird is made possible, in part, by a generous grant from
The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation.

Student Matinee performances of *To Kill A Mockingbird* are made possible, in part,
through the generous support of



CLASSROOM

FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

ACTIVITIES

Some of the principal goals of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's education programs is to demystify the classics, take them "off the shelf" and re-energize them for students and teachers alike. Toward these goals, this study guide provides educators with tools to both allay their own concerns and to expand the theatre-going experience for their students beyond the field trip to The Shakespeare Theatre.

The information included in this guide will help you expand your students' understanding of the classics in performance, as well as help you meet many of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. We encourage you to impart as much of the information included in this Study Guide to your students as is possible. The following are some **suggestions from teachers** on how you can utilize elements of the guide given limited classroom time.

- Many teachers have found that distributing or reading the Short Synopsis and Who's Who pages has greatly increased students' understanding and enjoyment of the production. It provides the students with a general understanding of what they will be seeing and what they can expect. Some teachers have simply taken the last five minutes of a class period to do this with very positive results.
- When more class time is available prior to your visit, we recommend incorporating the background information on the author, the playwright and the play itself. One teacher divided her class into groups and assigned each group research topics based on the divisions found in the study guide. Using a copy of the corresponding study guide page as a launch pad, the students had one week to research the topics. The students then presented their information to the class in three- to five-minute oral reports. Including the questions that evolved from the presentations, the entire project took only one class period.
- Using the questions found in the "TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION," many teachers will opt to take a class period *after* the trip to The Shakespeare Theatre to discuss the play with their students. The questions help keep the comments focused on the production, while incorporating various thematic and social issues that are found in the play.

Again, we hope you will incorporate as many portions of this study guide as you are able into your classroom experience. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in the study guide, please contact our education department. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers) about the classics and live theatre.

"What's My Line?" Promoting Active Listening

Teacher-tested, student-approved!
Try this exercise with your students:

Before attending the production, give each student one line from the novel/play to listen for. Discuss the meaning of the line and encourage their input in deciphering what the author and playwright meant by the line. How would the student perform the line? Why is the line important to the play? Does it advance the plot, or give the audience particular insight into a character or relationship?

Following the production, discuss the line again. Did the actor present the line in the way your student expected? If not, how was it different?

Happy Teaching,



Brian B. Crowe,
Director of Education



The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's
Main Stage, The F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre.

To Kill A Mockingbird: A Short Synopsis

NOTE: The events of the novel of To Kill A Mockingbird are greatly condensed in Sergel's adaptation for the stage. The action focuses almost solely on the circumstances surrounding the trial of Tom Robinson and the children's interest in Boo Radley. The arrival of the Finch relatives and other elements of Harper's novel do not appear in the play.

Set during the height of the Great Depression in the sleepy, fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, *Mockingbird* centers on the experiences of Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, a feisty young girl, who lives with her older brother Jeremy (Jem) and her widowed father Atticus, a prominent lawyer in town known for his strong moral fiber. The children see nothing extraordinary about their father, and in fact, find the fact that he is much older and more boring than their friends' fathers a bit embarrassing. The family is looked after by Calpurnia, a strict but caring cook and housekeeper. Scout and Jem are the only children in their neighborhood until the arrival of a boy named Dill, who spends the summer with his aunt who lives near the Finches.



Jem (Frankie Seratch), Dill (Ethan Haberfield) and Scout (Emmanuelle Nadeau) in The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
Photo: Gerry Goodstein ©2011.

The children spend much of their free time speculating on the inhabitant of an unkempt and spooky house on their street. Many stories surround the Old Radley Place, and most of these spawn from the mysterious Arthur "Boo" Radley who has not ventured outside his home for years. Dill, Jem and Scout plot to find a way to bring Boo outside. Atticus tells them not to bother Mr. Radley. He maintains that though the children may find Boo's desire to stay indoors peculiar, it is certainly not peculiar to Boo. "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view," he says, "until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Throughout the play, Scout discovers gifts in a knothole in the tree outside the Radley Place. The children have no idea who has left them but Scout is intrigued by each new token that appears: a stick of chewing gum, shiny Indian pennies, and two tiny figures carved out of soap.

As the play begins there is much talk among the townsfolk about the upcoming trial of Tom Robinson, a black man who has been accused of attacking Mayella Ewell, a white woman from the poorer part of town. The children face a great deal of ridicule from classmates as well as their neighbors because their father has taken on the Robinson case. A respected white attorney defending a black man in Maycomb was not looked

on kindly. Scout asks her father why he is defending the man if everyone thinks that he shouldn't. Atticus replies that he is convinced of Tom's innocence and, despite (and possibly because of) the town's opposition, he says, "If I didn't defend him, I couldn't hold my head up."

The children's opinion of Atticus changes one afternoon when a rabid dog appears lumbering up the street. Calpurnia rushes the children onto the safety of the porch as they await their father. Atticus soon arrives with Sheriff Tate who is armed with a rifle. To the children's amazement, Tate hands the gun to Atticus, who kills the dog with a single shot. It is then that they discover that their father, as a younger man, was known as "One Shot Finch."

When Mrs. Dubose, one of their neighbors, hurls disparaging remarks about their father at Jem and Scout, Jem goes into a rage and rips up her garden. When Atticus arrives and sees what his son has done, he orders him to apologize to the elderly woman, who, as penance for his outburst, asks to have Jem read to her for two hours each afternoon. It is only later that the children discover that Mrs. Dubose has been fighting cancer and a morphine addiction, and that Jem's afternoon readings help distract her from the effects of withdrawal and her illness.

One evening, shortly thereafter, Sheriff Heck Tate informs Atticus that Tom Robinson has been moved to the courthouse jail, and that he fears some of the townsfolk may attempt to lynch the man. Atticus tells the children to stay home with Calpurnia as he goes into town. The children sneak out against his orders and discover him seated in front of the jail. As Scout is about to approach her father to find out why he is there, a number of townsfolk drive up and demand that Atticus release Tom Robinson to them. When he refuses, the men begin to threaten violence. The children rush to their father, and Scout kicks a man who attempts to pull Jem away. The tension escalates until Scout recognizes Mr. Cunningham, the father of one of her classmates and a man who Atticus has helped with legal problems. As she asks him about his son and the troubles her father has helped him through, his temper subsides into shame and he orders the mob to disperse.

A few days later, Tom Robinson's trial has become an eagerly-awaited public affair, with everyone flooding into Maycomb to attend. Once again, Scout, Jem and Dill disobey Atticus' orders and sneak into town to watch the trial. Trying not to be seen by Atticus, they arrive too late to get seats on the main floor. Reverend Sykes, the minister of the local black church, offers them seats in the "colored balcony." During the proceedings, Atticus not only provides clear evidence that the accusers, Mayella Ewell and her father, have been lying, but also that it was Mayella who propositioned the innocent Tom Robinson, for which her father beat her. In her shame, she

accused Tom of rape and of beating her. As the jury enters into their deliberations, the children feel certain that their father will win the case. How could he not, with such clear proof of Tom's innocence? The adults in the community do not share the children's optimism, and despite overwhelming evidence, Tom Robinson is found guilty and taken back to jail. Jem and Dill are especially bewildered, angry and disillusioned by the jury's decision. Despite the verdict, Bob Ewell (Mayella's father) believes that he has been made a fool by Atticus and vows revenge. Shortly after the trial, despite Atticus' hope that Tom may be freed through the appeal process, Tom attempts to escape from prison and is shot dead.

The following autumn, Jem escorts Scout to a school pageant in which she is cast as a ham. As they return home, the children are attacked by an unseen assailant. Scout is thrown to the ground, and Jem's arm is broken. As the attacker goes after Scout, a mysterious figure comes out of the Radley house and defends them. He then gathers up the unconscious Jem and takes the boy to the Finch home. Atticus rushes to Scout's aid and the doctor and the Sheriff are called. Sheriff Tate informs Atticus that it was Bob Ewell who attacked the Finch children and was found dead, stabbed with a kitchen knife. They soon discover that it was Boo Radley who saved the children. Fearing what would become of Boo if the truth was known, the Sheriff decides to report that Bob Ewell fell on his own knife and died. When Scout escorts Boo back to his home, she takes a moment to see her neighborhood from the Radley porch for the first

time, and imagines the world through Boo's eyes. She tells her father that she and the other children had been wrong about Mr. Radley; he is in fact a nice man. With this realization, Scout seems to truly understand her father's advice about practicing compassion and understanding.



Atticus Finch (Brent Harris) and Scout (Emanuelle Nadeau) in The Shakespeare Theatre production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein © 2011.

Who's Who in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Jean Louise "Scout" Finch - The narrator and main character of the story. Scout lives with her father, Atticus; her brother, Jem; and their black cook, Calpurnia. She is a rebellious tomboy, with a fierce disposition when challenged.

Jeremy Atticus "Jem" Finch -

Scout's older brother and constant playmate. He is ten. Usually, quieter and more reserved than his sister, he turns moody and has a violent outburst as he struggles with the events that overtake the town.

Family Matters

Harper Lee's father, like Scout's, was an attorney, and she watched him at work quite often. For the family name in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Lee used her mother's maiden name, Finch.

Atticus Finch -

Scout and Jem's father, and a prominent lawyer in Maycomb, descended from an old local family. A widower with a dry sense of humor, Atticus has a strong moral center and tries to treat everyone fairly. "He is the same in the courthouse as he is on the street and at home." He attempts to instill this same fair-mindedness and sense of integrity in his children.

Calpurnia - The Finches' black cook and housekeeper. She is a stern disciplinarian and in many ways provides the children with a bridge between their white world and her black community.

Charles Baker "Dill" Harris - Jem and Scout's sometime neighbor and friend. Dill spends the summers with his aunt who lives near the Finches. An imaginative and confident boy, Dill is also highly sensitive and finds the trial of Tom

Robinson very upsetting. Early on in the play, he runs away from home to stay with the Finches when he feels himself unneeded after his mother remarries. Dill also encourages Scout and Jem to attempt to get Boo Radley to come out of his house.

Famous Friends

Harper Lee based the character of "Dill" on her own childhood friend; a young man who later grew up to be Truman Capote.

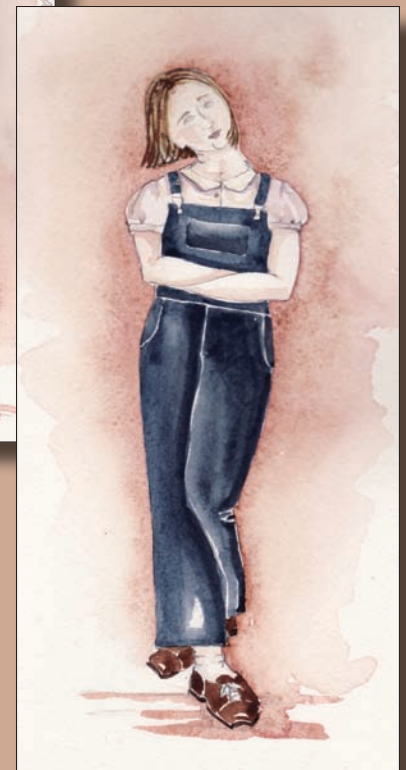
Arthur "Boo" Radley - A recluse who never leaves his home.

He is a principal topic of speculation for the children, who have heard numerous stories about the mysterious man. Rumor has it that Arthur got involved with the wrong sort of people as a young man and his father shut him in the house. Later he is said to have stabbed his father with a pair of scissors. Throughout the story, the unseen Boo leaves gifts for the children in the knothole of a tree.

Nathan Radley - Boo Radley's older brother, who after the death of their father, returns to Maycomb to oversee the Old Radley Place. He eventually cements up the knothole in which Boo had been leaving gifts for the children.

Miss Maudie Atkinson - A kind, cheerful and witty neighbor of the Finches, who is the children's best friend among the adults of Maycomb.

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose - An sickly, elderly, ill-tempered woman who lives near the Finches. Scout claims that she is the meanest woman who ever lived, and Mrs. Dubose never sees the children without having something nasty to say to them. Jem unknowingly helps her



Maggie Dick's costume renderings for Jean Louise and Scout in The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's production of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, 2011.

conquer her morphine addiction and help her bear with her illness.

Miss Stephanie Crawford - The neighborhood gossip and scold; she has opinions about everyone and everything that happens in Maycomb.

Mr. Walter Cunningham - A poor farmer with legal worries who Atticus aids even though Mr. Cunningham can only pay in trade from his farm. He is also one of the men that seeks to lynch Tom Robinson at the jail, but is moved by Scout's well-intentioned innocence and he disperses the mob.

Heck Tate - The sheriff of Maycomb and a witness at Tom Robinson's trial.

Bob Ewell - The head of one of Maycomb's poorest families. He is uneducated, abusive, frequently unemployed and violently racist. He accuses Tom Robinson of raping his daughter, and later threatens Atticus for exposing him in court.

Mayella Ewell - Bob Ewell's abused and lonely daughter. She is the eldest of the Ewell children. She attempts to seduce Tom Robinson, a black man, and then accuses him of rape.

Tom Robinson - A kind and sympathetic man, he is the black field hand wrongfully accused of rape by the Ewells.

Helen Robinson - The wife of Tom Robinson, who has been unable to gain employment since her husband's accusation.

Reverend Sykes - The minister of the local black congregation.

Judge Taylor - The local judge overseeing the trial of Tom Robinson.

Mr. Gilmer - The counsel for the prosecution in the trial of Tom Robinson.

Link Deas - Tom Robinson's employer.



Hometown Traditions

Every year since 1991, Harper Lee's hometown of Monroeville, Alabama has staged a week of performances of *To Kill a Mockingbird* with volunteer actors from the local community. Act one takes place in the Town Square. For the trial scene in the second act of the play, the audience and performers move into the Monroeville Courthouse, a location that Lee would have known well from her youth.



Members of the Monroeville community performing *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the local courthouse.

About the Author

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

- *To Kill A Mockingbird*

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. Lee's father was a lawyer, like the character of Atticus Finch, and she spent a good deal of time watching him in action in the courtroom. She developed an interest in English literature at Monroe County High School and attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery before transferring to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. She continued to pursue her interest in writing and contributed to the school's newspaper and its humor magazine, the *Rammer Jammer*, for which she became editor. In her junior year, she was accepted into the University's law school. The demands of her law studies forced her to leave her post as editor of the *Rammer Jammer*, and after her first year in the law program, Lee began expressing to her family that writing was her true calling. Soon after, she abandoned her law studies and moved to New York City to follow her dream.

Lee arrived in New York City in 1949 at the age of 23 and struggled for several years working as an airline ticket agent. While in the city, she became close friends with Broadway composer and lyricist Michael Brown and his wife Joy. After

writing several stories, she secured an agent in November 1956, but was frustrated that she could not devote herself to writing full-time. The following month she received a gift of a year's wages from the Browns with a note: "You have one year off from your job to write whatever you please. Merry Christmas." Lee quit her job and devoted herself to her craft. Within a year, she had a first draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It was published in 1960 just before the peak of the American civil rights movement. The novel was instantly successful, winning the Pulitzer Prize. It has since become one of the most widely-read books in the modern American canon.

Harper Lee has never published another book. Moreover, she has done nothing to publicize *Mockingbird* in over 45 years. She has received numerous honorary degrees and other distinctions including the 2007 Presidential Medal of Freedom, but has always declined to speak publicly about her work.

In a 2011 interview with the Daily Telegraph, Lee's close friend Rev. Dr. Thomas Lane Butts said that Lee told him why she never wrote again: "Two reasons: one, I wouldn't go through the pressure and publicity I went through with *To Kill a Mockingbird* for any amount of money. Second, I have said what I wanted to say and I will not say it again."



Harper Lee in the Monroeville Courthouse, ca. 1962.

About the Adaptor

Christopher Sergel's interests and talents led him on many adventures throughout the world. As captain of the schooner "Chance", he spent two years in the South Pacific; as a writer for *Sports Afield* magazine, he lived in the African bush for a year; as a lieutenant commander during WWII, he taught celestial navigation; as a playwright, his adaptation of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* was seen on Broadway.

But throughout his life, his greatest adventure and deepest love was his work with Dramatic Publishing, where he served as president from 1970-1993. During this time, he wrote adaptations of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Cheaper By the Dozen*, *The Mouse That Roared*, *Up the Down Staircase*, *Fame*, *Black Elk Speaks* and many more.

His love of theatre and his care for writers made him a generous and spirited mentor to many playwrights in America and around the world. His inspiration and integrity attracted to the company fine writers including C. P. Taylor, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Arthur Miller, Roald Dahl and E. B. White, to name just a few. He once said he hoped to be remembered as E. B. White described Charlotte: "a true friend and a good writer."

-bio from Dramatic Publishing

Notes from the Playwright

Meeting with Harper Lee to discuss the stage adaptation of her extraordinary book *To Kill A Mockingbird* was an event about which I felt much trepidation.

She was born Nellie Harper Lee in 1926 in the small town of Monroeville, Alabama, the youngest of three children born to Amasa Coleman Lee and France Finch Lee. It will not surprise you that her father was a lawyer or that she had a childhood friend named Truman Capote who is often thought to be 'Dill.'

In 1945, she became a law student at the University of Alabama and later became an exchange student at Oxford University, which she left before graduating to go to New York City and to write. The first manuscript of *To Kill A Mockingbird* was submitted for publication in 1957, but was not published until 1960 after a great deal of additional work. It was an immediate success, being selected by the Literary Guild and recommended by the Book of the Month Club. It was the basis of an Academy Award winning film starring Gregory Peck in the role of Atticus Finch. Since then the book has sold well over fifteen million copies!

My father, Roger Sergel, was had been Professor of English at the University of Pittsburg and who had been close to many leading writers of his day—Sherwood Anderson dedicated a book to him—particularly admired Harper Lee's book. He died before I met with Harper Lee, but I can still remember his unqualified enthusiasm for her work. When *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize, my father said, "This is the first time I entirely agree with the Pulitzer Prize."

Prior to meeting directly with Harper Lee, I had a number of useful discussions with Maurice Crain who was a creative force in her life, as to some extent he was in mine. Lucille Sullivan of that office was also a source of excellent advice on this project. The meeting with Harper Lee, as I recall it from twenty years ago, took place at the Hotel Pierre in New York City. It began as an early lunch and lasted several hours. As we discussed the adaptation and the reasons for the choices being made, I had a sense that she felt the work was on the right track which, of course, was due at least in part to the good advice I'd been given earlier by Maurice Crain. The good discussion continued with Harper Lee as we walked down the hotel corridor. Passing a row of public phones I had an irrational wish that I could call my father and tell him that I'd met with Harper Lee myself and the meeting had gone well.

A taxi stopped in front and I opened the door for Harper Lee. She embraced me and was gone. I've never seen her again.

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

-Christopher Sergel

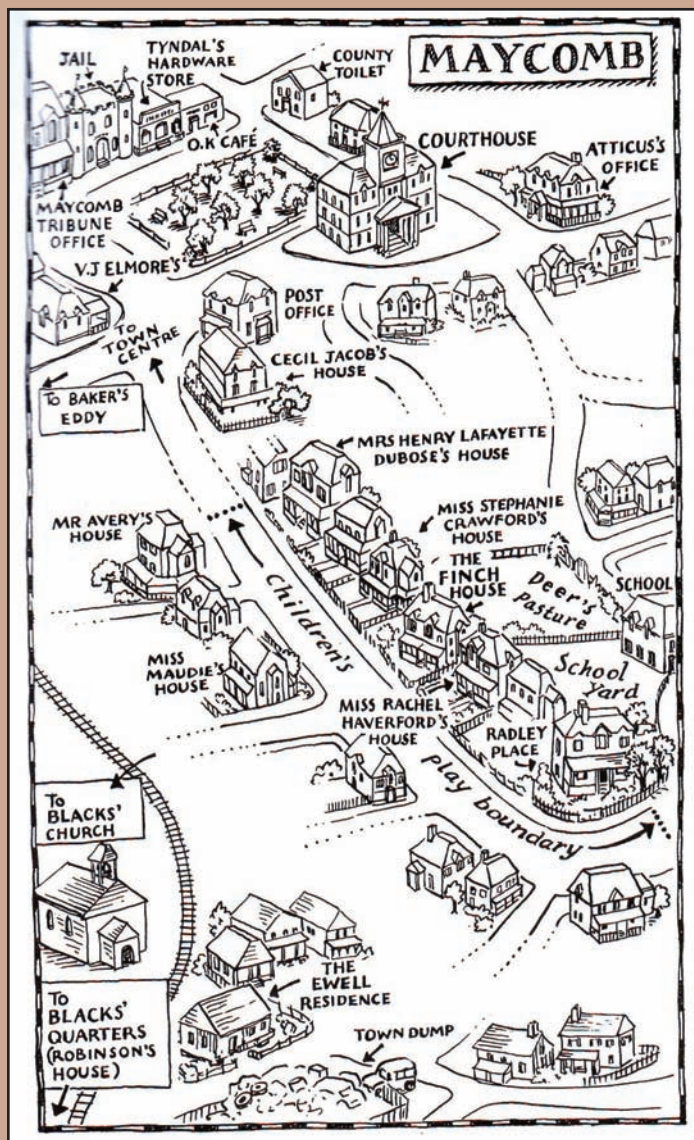
Sources and History of *Mockingbird*

From Harper Lee's father to her older brother to her young friend, Truman, many elements of the author's life as a child in Monroeville, Alabama can be found in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Despite this, Lee maintains that the novel was not intended to portray her childhood home, but rather was meant as a nonspecific Southern town. "People are people anywhere you put them," she stated in a 1961 interview.

The setting and characters are not the only elements influenced by Lee's youth in *Mockingbird*. In 1931, when Lee was five, nine black men were accused of raping two white women in nearby Scottsboro, Alabama. The case was the center of a media frenzy. Eight of the men were found guilty in a whirlwind trial and sentenced to death in the electric chair. The youngest, a boy of 12, was sentenced to life in prison. The international

firestorm that erupted from this "Southern brand of justice" was enormous. Through numerous appeals and reversals, new sentences and still more appeals, it was discovered that the women had lied in their testimony (in fact, there were no signs of any physical attack at all) and after many years, eventually all of the men were set free. Elements of this case, later known as the Scottsboro Case, can certainly be seen in the trial of Tom Robinson in Lee's novel.

Since its publication in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has remained widely popular, has sold millions of copies and has never gone out of print. Initial critical response to the work was mixed. Though most lauded the book as an insightful and poignant look at racism in the South, others found Lee's use of a narrative voice confusing, stating that it failed to integrate the innocence of the childish perspective of young Scout with the older woman she became.



Regardless of what critics said, the release of the book during the racially charged atmosphere of the early 1960s made it enormously popular and it won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. Shortly afterwards, it was made into an Academy Award winning film starring Gregory Peck. All the while, Lee retreated from public view and only wrote a handful of small pieces. *To Kill a Mockingbird* remains her only novel.

As the discourse surrounding race and justice in America has become more complex over the years, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has come under attack for the fundamental and "overly-simplistic" values it puts forth. Many have also criticized Lee's novel for promoting the notion that the black community requires a white male champion to rescue it from racial prejudice. This opinion notwithstanding, still others have argued that to simply see *Mockingbird* as a novel about race devalues it as an important coming-of-age story, depicting valuable life lessons one learns and the challenges one faces in the struggle of innocence in a sometimes evil world.

In her 1993 forward to the book, Lee requested that future editions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* be spared critical introductions. "*Mockingbird*," she writes, "still says what it has to say; it has managed to survive the years without preamble." Beloved by millions of readers worldwide, the book remains a staple of high school and college reading lists for "its appealing depiction of childhood innocence, its scathing moral condemnation of racial prejudice, and its affirmation that human goodness can withstand the assault of evil."

Commentary and Criticism

“My own recollection of the book, which I first read as a child, was that it was full of hard and ugly truths. The story, because it was revealed through the eyes of another child, caused me to understand injustice as no textbook or lecture ever could.”

– Kathleen Parker, *Washington Post*

“To Kill a Mockingbird is a first novel of such rare excellence that it will no doubt make a great many readers slow down to relish the more fully its simple distinction...The style is bright and straightforward; the unaffected young narrator uses adult language to render the matter she deals with, but the point of view is cunningly restricted to that of a perceptive, independent child, who doesn't always understand fully what's happening, but who conveys completely, by implication, the weight and burden of the story. There is wit, grace and skill in the telling. From the narrator on, every person in the book is every moment alive in time and place.”

– Richard Sullivan, *Chicago Sunday Tribune*

“In the twentieth century, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is probably the most widely read book dealing with race in America, and its protagonist, Atticus Finch, the most enduring fictional image of racial heroism.”

– Joseph Crespino

“No real-life lawyer has done more for the self-image or public perception of the legal profession than the hero of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. For nearly four decades, the name of Atticus Finch has been invoked to defend and inspire lawyers, to rebut lawyer jokes, and to justify (and fine-tune) the adversary system.”

– Steven Lubet

“For those entering the legal profession, who commonly worry that they will lose themselves in an overbearing and tainted alien culture, Atticus is a model of integrity. Atticus Finch is an example: a man who has found a way to live and work as a good person in a deeply flawed society.”

– Ann Althouse

“Perhaps the most egregious characteristic of the novel is the denial of the historical agency of Black people. They are robbed of their roles as subjects of history, reduced to mere objects who are passive hapless victims; mere spectators and bystanders in the struggle against their own oppression and exploitation. The novel and its supporters deny that Black people have been the central actors in their movement for liberation and justice.”

– Isaac Saney

“Finch never attempts to change the racism and sexism that permeates the life of Maycomb. On the contrary, he lives his own life as the passive participant in that pervasive injustice. And that is not my idea of a role model for young lawyers.”

– Monroe Freedman

“Students enjoy reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but my experience has been that their appreciation is meager. Over and over again their interpretations stress the race prejudice issue to the exclusion of virtually everything else...”

– Edgar H. Schuster, *English Journal*, 1963

“The innocent childhood game that tumbles into something adult and serious is a fairly common theme in fiction, but I have not for some years seen the idea used so forcefully.... Pretty soon we are in the adult game, based on the same fear and fascination of the dark: the ugliness and violence of a Negro's trial for rape and the town's opposition to the children's father for defending him. Miss Lee does well what so many American writers do appallingly: she paints a true and lively picture of life in an American small town. And she gives freshness to a stock situation.”

– Keith Waterhouse, *The New Statesman*, 1960

Terms and Phrases Found in *To Kill A Mockingbird*

air rifle — a rifle that fires projectiles by means of compressed air or other gas, in contrast to a firearm, which burns a propellant. Most airguns use plastic rather than metal projectiles.

azaleas — a flowering shrub that blooms in the spring. Mobile, Alabama is home of the Azalea Trail Maids, fifty women chosen to serve as ambassadors of the city while wearing antebellum dresses.

camellia bush — a flowering plant, and the state flower of Alabama.

chiffarobe — a wardrobe-like piece of furniture with a long space for hanging clothes on one side with a chest of drawers on the other.

cotton gin — a machine that quickly and easily separates cotton fibers from seeds, a job formerly performed by hand. It uses a combination of wire screens and small wire hooks to pull the cotton through, while brushes continuously remove the loose cotton lint to prevent jamming.

entailment — a restriction on a property that prevents it from being divided or sold, but requiring that it be passed down to a commonly accepted heir, regardless of the intent of the owner.

frog sticking — a manner in which, armed with a small pitchfork, one catches frogs from the bayou bank.

haunts — ghosts, apparitions, or lost souls.

Indian head penny — a coin produced by the U.S. Mint from 1859 to 1909; also known as an Indian Penny.

Ivanhoe — an historical novel by Sir Walter Scott, written in 1819. Set in 12th-century England, the legendary Robin Hood and his Merry Men appear in the book, helping to shape the modern notion of Robin Hood as a cheery, noble outlaw.

Johnson Grass — a fast growing “weed grass” that can spread so quickly as to choke out crops planted by farmers.

lemon drops — a lemon flavored lozenge; candy.

lye soap — a very basic soap made from lye (often from hardwood ashes) and lard. For a long time it was the only source of basic hygiene, and it is still believed to be ideal for stopping the spread of poison ivy, eliminating bed bugs and lice, as well as for cleaning everything from antique linens to hardwood floors. Lye soap was generally made only once a year, coinciding with the harvest and the slaughter of hogs in preparation for winter.

mad dog — a dog suffering from rabies, a dangerous and deadly disease that causes inflammation of the brain.

morphine — a highly addictive narcotic often prescribed to patients dealing with extreme pain.

rabbit tobacco — a flowering plant in the daisy family; commonly smoked or brewed into tea as a remedy for the common cold, the flu or a sore throat.

Rose Bowl — an annual American college football game played on New Year’s Day. Considered “The Granddaddy of Them All” because it is the oldest bowl game, first played in 1902.

ruttin’ — slang for sexual intercourse; a term used to describe aggressive breeding in animals during mating season.

sass — impudence.

scuppernong — a large variety of grapes native to America with a greenish or bronze color with a rounder and larger fruit.

smilax — a woody climbing flowering plant.

temerity — excessive confidence or boldness; audacity.

tollable — Mayella’s mispronunciation of “tolerable.”



Mr. Cunningham (Don Meehan) talks to Scout (Emanuelle Nadeau) in The Shakespeare Theatre production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein © 2011.

Who Said That?

Match the spoken line to the character who speaks it. One character speaks three of the lines listed below. Six characters speak none of the quotes listed below.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| A. "Maudie Atkinson told me you broke down her scuppernong arbour this morning. She's going to tell your father and then you'll wish you'd never seen the light of day!" | Jean Louise |
| B. "Folks where I come from aren't so scared. I've never seen such scary folks as here." | Scout |
| C. "He said some things I didn't like. I rubbed his nose in the dirt." | Jem |
| D. "Lack of money is no excuse to let a place go like that... But of course, they're Radleys." | Dill |
| E. "One thing doesn't abide by majority rule – a person's conscience." | Atticus Finch |
| F. "Calpurnia's hand was as hard as a bed slat. My mother died when I was two, so I never felt her absence. But I felt Calpurnia's tyrannical presence as long as I could remember." | Calpurnia |
| G. "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." | Mrs. Dubose |
| H. "I'd like to pay cash for your services, but between the mortgage and the entailment —" | Miss Maudie |
| I. "Miss Jean Louise, will you take me home?" | Miss Stephanie |
| J. "He's tryin' to take advantage of me. Tricking lawyers like Atticus Finch take advantage of me all the time with their tricking ways. But it don't change what I saw—" | Mr. Cunningham |
| K. "I should skin every one of you alive! The very idea – you children listening to all that!" | Heck Tate |
| L. "Did it ever strike you that Judge Taylor naming Atticus to defend Tom was no accident? That Judge Taylor might have had his reasons?" | Reverend Sykes |
| M. "Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win." | Judge Taylor |
| N. "I may not be much, Mr. Finch, but I'm still sheriff of Maycomb County, and Bob Ewell fell on his knife." | Mr. Gilmer |
| O. "Mr. Finch, I tried to 'thout bein' ugly to her. I didn't wanta be ugly. I didn't wanta push her or nothin'." | Mayella Ewell |
| P. "That black man yonder took advantage of me an' if you fine fancy gentlemen don't wanta do nothin' about it, then you're all yellow stinkin' cowards, stinkin' cowards, the lot of you." | Bob Ewell |
| | Tom Robinson |
| | Helen Robinson |
| | Nathan Radley |
| | Arthur "Boo" Radley |

Topics for Discussion

About the Play and Novel

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is considered by many to be one of the most important and powerful pieces of American literature, and the novel remains a staple of most high school and college curriculums. Why do you think Harper Lee's novel holds such importance in American culture? Do you believe it deserves this praise? Why? What does the story say about us as individuals? What does it say about our society? Do you think the story is still relevant today? Why do you think it remains so popular fifty-plus years after it was published?

2. In response to the children's complaints about their father's advanced years, Miss Maudie tells Scout, "You're lucky. You and Jem have the benefit of your father's age. If your father was thirty, you'd find life quite different." What does she mean? What benefits do the children have because their father is older? How do you think Jem and Scout would find life different if their father was younger? How do you think their life would be different if their mother was still alive?

3. Throughout the novel and the play, Atticus gives Jem and Scout advice about how to relate to the world around them, including, "You never really understand a person until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." What are three other important life lessons that Atticus teaches the children? How does he use the events and persons in Maycomb as examples to help shape Scout and Jem's view of the world? Do you think his lessons are important? Why?

4. Select two or three specific townsfolk from Maycomb from the long list of "supporting roles" in the novel. Discuss his/her role within the community. How do they affect the story? What influence do they have on Scout and Jem? Why do you think Lee included them in her novel?

5. Atticus never tells his children of his incredible skill as a marksman. Why do you think he has avoided letting them know that he was once called "One-Shot Finch?" Why does he not have any firearms in his home? Why does he refuse to teach his children to fire their air rifle? How does the children's view of Atticus change when he shoots the mad dog?

6. Consider the role of Boo Radley in the novel. Why does Harper Lee spend so much time telling the community's tales about Boo before he is ever seen in the novel? What is his role in the town, and in relation to his neighbors? How does the

reader's vision of Boo change once he is introduced at the end of the play?

7. Why do Scout and Jem refer to their father by his first name and not "father" or "dad"? What does it say about their relationship?

8. Courage is an important theme in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Discuss which characters display courage in the novel. In what way do each of them display their courage? Do any characters gain courage during the course of the story? What brings about this transformation?

9. Scout is told that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird, that "Mockingbirds just make music. They don't eat up people's gardens...they don't do anything but sing their hearts out." What characters in this play could be seen as mockingbirds; good people that are injured by the violence and cruelty of others? Why did you select each of the characters on your list? In what way are they innocent? In what way are they injured?

About the Production

1. The playwright has chosen to include an adult Jean Louise Finch to serve as a narrator for the play. How successful do you think this is? Did it assist you in understanding the story and the intentions of the characters? Would you have done something different? If yes, what would you have done differently?

2. If you have read the novel and/or seen the movie of *Mockingbird*, how is the play different? What characters and events have been removed? Is there an event or character that you particularly missed? Did any scenes affect you differently seeing them live on stage as opposed to simply reading them? Did any of the characters seem different than you imagined when reading the novel? How so? Did seeing the play performed alter your interpretation of the story? How so? Be specific.

3. How did the design choices (lighting, costumes, scenery, and sound) influence your interpretation of the play? Did you agree with the choices the director and the designers made? How does the location change from the street in front of the Finches' home to the courtroom? What do you think was the most effective element of the design? Why?

“Test Your Understanding” Quiz

- In what town does *To Kill a Mockingbird* take place?
 - Monroeville, AL
 - Knoxville, TN
 - Charlotte, NC
 - Maycomb, AL
- The main character of *Mockingbird* goes by the nickname of “Scout.” What is Scout’s real name?
 - Jean Marie Finch
 - Scout Louise Finch
 - Jean Louise Finch
 - Marie Louise Finch
- As punishment for destroying her flowers, Jem must do what for Mrs. Dubose?
 - Sing to her
 - Read to her
 - Plant new flowers
 - Clean her house
- The children are fascinated with a mysterious neighbor who never steps outside the house. Who is this neighbor?
 - Bo Jangles
 - Kat Stevens
 - Boo Radley
 - Kit Carson
- Who accused Tom Robinson of attacking and raping a white woman?
 - Mayella Ewell and her father
 - Reverend Sykes and Calpurnia
 - Scout and Jem Finch
 - Miss Stephanie and Mrs. Dubose
- What was Atticus’ nick-name when he was young?
 - Never-Lose Finch
 - The Judge
 - Quick-Draw
 - One-Shot Finch
- Where did Mayella tell Tom her siblings were when she invited him into her house?
 - On a picnic
 - At church
 - At school
 - Getting ice cream
- Which character runs away from home?
 - Mayella
 - Scout
 - Dill
 - Jem
- Who is the neighborhood scold that thinks everyone in town has a drinking streak, gambling streak and mean streak?
 - Calpurnia
 - Miss Maudie
 - Mrs. Dubose
 - Miss Stephanie Crawford
- How was Tom’s hand damaged when he was a boy?
 - It was run over by a train.
 - It was bitten by a dog.
 - It got caught in a cotton gin.
 - It was burned while firing a rifle.
- For her school pageant, Scout must dress as a _____.
 - cow
 - ham
 - lobster
 - mockingbird
- Why does Atticus say it is a sin to kill a mockingbird?
 - They don’t do anything but sing their hearts out.
 - They keep bugs out of the kitchen.
 - They scare away mice.
 - They are going extinct.
- How does Tom Robinson die?
 - He is taken from the jail and lynched.
 - He attempts to escape prison and is shot to death.
 - He does not die in the play or novel.
 - His arm gets caught in a cotton gin and he bleeds to death.
- What is Boo Radley’s real name?
 - Jim Radley
 - Thomas Radley
 - Arthur Radley
 - Nathan Radley
- Why does Sheriff Tate say that Bob Ewell fell on his knife and killed himself, rather than say that Boo Radley killed him?
 - He sees that Boo Radley is an old, sick man who will die soon anyhow.
 - He believes it would be a sin to drag the painfully shy Boo into the limelight.
 - Boo threatened to kill Tate if he told anyone that he stabbed Bob Ewell.
 - Because it is the truth.

Follow-up Activities

1. **“Critics’ Corner”** Write a review of this production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to both the acting and the design elements (lights, scenery, costumes and sound). Explain what you liked and disliked, and support your opinions. Then submit your review to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s Education Department, or see if it can be published in your school newspaper.
2. **“Alert the media!”** This play would certainly pack a news ticker: an attempted lynching, a rabid dog on the loose, a highly anticipated trial, potential perjury in the court-room, the attempted escape of a prisoner, and the attack of two young people in town. Assign these and other major events of the play to members of the class and create appropriate television or newspaper coverage. How do you think the people of Maycomb, Alabama felt about these events?
3. **“I learn by this letter...”** Write a letter or diary entry from the point of view of one of the characters, discussing an event or situation in the play. For example: a depiction of the action as Boo Radley would write it in his journal; Sheriff Tate’s police report (including his private notes) about the attack on Scout and Jem; a letter from Calpurnia to a friend or family member who does not live in Maycomb explaining the story from her point of view. Be sure to incorporate text from the play as much as possible.
4. **“Picture This!”** Create a picture collage with images that “speak to the play.” Have each student select a line from the play for which they feel a connection. It can be a line that suggests a strong visual image or something that touches the student’s heart. You can also assign particular lines and have the students draw them randomly from a hat. Discuss the lines and what it means. Why is it important in the play? What does the student see or feel when they read the line? Then find an image or object that portrays the essence of that line. Be creative! Try to avoid obvious or literal correlations. A picture of a mockingbird on a branch is not as affecting as an image of someone or something that represents the *idea* of the mockingbird in the play and novel.



Teachers:

Do you have activities or exercises to suggest for this play? We are always looking for new ideas to inspire students (and teachers). Send your suggestions to info@ShakespeareNJ.org and we will share them with other teachers, and maybe even include them in future study guides.

The trial scene from The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
Photo: Gerry Goodstein © 2011.

“Who Said That?” Answer Guide

A. Mrs. Dubose	G. Atticus Finch	M. Atticus Finch
B. Dill	H. Mr. Cunningham	N. Heck Tate
C. Scout	I. Arthur “Boo” Radley	O. Tom Robinson
D. Miss Stephanie	J. Bob Ewell	P. Mayella Ewell
E. Atticus Finch	K. Calpurnia	
F. Jean Louise	L. Miss Maudie	

“Test Your Understanding” Quiz Answer Guide

1. D	6. D	11. B
2. C	7. D	12. A
3. B	8. C	13. B
4. C	9. D	14. C
5. A	10. C	15. B

Meeting the Core Curriculum Content Standards

In 1996, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards that set out to clearly define what every New Jersey student should know and be able to do at the end of his/her schooling. The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is committed to supporting teachers by ensuring that our educational programs are relevant to standards-based teaching and learning.

Viewing a performance at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for discussion, writing, and other outlets for higher-order thinking. On this page you will find suggestions for ways to align your study of our production to each standard.

LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY STANDARDS

As a theatre dedicated to the classics, we are continually engaged in exploring some of the world's greatest literature, and the relationship between the written text and performance. Our philosophy and practice follow the four underlying assumptions of the Language Arts Literacy CCCS: that "language is an *active process* for constructing meaning," that "language develops in a *social context*," that language ability increases as learners "engage in texts that are *rich in ideas and increasingly complex in language*," and that learners achieve mastery not by practicing isolated skills but by "*using and exploring language* in its many dimensions." In the practice of theatre, we merge all areas of the language arts, as the standards suggest, "in an integrated act of rehearsal, reflection, and learning." Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 3.1: All students will apply the knowledge of sounds, letters and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension. *Read a scene from the play as a class and use context clues to interpret new words and expand vocabulary (3.1.C/F); demonstrate understanding by performing a scene from the play (3.1.G); compare and contrast literary elements in the play with another text being studied (3.1.H).*

STANDARD 3.2: All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. *Write a new ending for the play in blank verse or in modern prose (3.2.D), write a critique of the play which will be workshopped and published in a classroom setting (3.2.A/B/D).*

STANDARD 3.3: All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. *Participate in a post-show discussion (3.3.A/B), memorize and perform a monologue or scene from the play (3.3.D).*

STANDARD 3.4: All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations. *Select one speech or line from the play and compare how it was performed in the stage and film version (3.4.A/B).*

STANDARD 3.5: All students will access, view, evaluate and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources. *Discuss how the play expresses cultural values of the playwright's time (3.5.A); compare and contrast the printed text with its staged version (3.5.B).*

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

According to both No Child Left Behind and the New Jersey CCCS, the arts (including theatre) are a core subject and "experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education." In the area of performing arts, performances, workshops and study guide exercises developed by The Shakespeare Theatre address all five state standards.

Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 1.1: All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in response to dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Discuss the use of metaphor in both the text and the design of the production; discuss how the play expresses cultural values of its period and/or of today.*

STANDARD 1.2: All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Perform a monologue or scene from the play; participate in a classroom workshop that develops the physical and technical skills required to create and present theatre.*

STANDARD 1.3: All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Participate in a post-show discussion of elements such as physicality and creating motivated action; discuss the relationship between play text and production design.*

STANDARD 1.4: All students will develop, apply and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique. *Write a review of the production using domain-appropriate terminology; develop a class rubric for effective theatrical presentations; compare and contrast the play with work by other artists.*

STANDARD 1.5: All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society. *Discuss the representation of social issues (class, political leadership, etc.) in the play; research how the historical period affected the writer's work; compare the play to work from other historical periods.*

About The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation. Serving approximately 100,000 adults and young people annually, it is New Jersey's only professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare's canon and other classic masterworks. With its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences. The longest-running Shakespeare theatre on the East Coast and the seventh largest in the nation, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey marks its 49th season in 2011.



The company's 2011 Main Stage season features six productions presented in its 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre and runs June through December. In the summer, an Outdoor Stage production is also presented at the Greek Theatre, an open-air amphitheatre nestled in a hillside on the campus of the College of Saint Elizabeth in nearby Morristown.

In addition to being a celebrated producer of classic plays and operating *Shakespeare LIVE!* (one of the largest educational Shakespeare touring programs in the New York/New Jersey region), The Shakespeare Theatre is also deeply committed to nurturing new talent for the American stage. By providing an outstanding training ground for students of the theatre, and cultivating audiences for the future by providing extensive outreach opportunities for students across New Jersey and beyond, The Shakespeare Theatre is a leader in arts education. For additional information, visit our web site at www.ShakespeareNJ.org.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of 20 professional theatres in the state of New Jersey. The company's dedication to the classics and commitment to excellence sets critical standards for the field. Nationwide, the Theatre has emerged as one of the most exciting "new" theatres under the leadership of Artistic Director, Bonnie J. Monte since 1990. It is one of only a handful of Shakespeare Theatres on the east coast, and in recent years has drawn larger and larger audiences and unprecedented critical acclaim. The opening of the intimate, 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre in 1998, provided the Theatre with a state-of-the-art venue with excellent sightlines, and increased access for patrons and artists with disabilities.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is a member of ArtPride, The Shakespeare Theatre Association, Theatre Communications Group, and is a founding member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's programs are made possible, in part, by funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is received from

The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the F.M. Kirby Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and Drew University, as well as contributions from numerous corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals.

The Shakespeare Theatre is an independent, professional theatre company located on the Drew University campus.



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LOOKING BACK WITH SCOUT:

A conversation with Mary Badham

NOVEMBER 7TH & 8TH AT 7:30



In conjunction with our production of *To Kill A Mockingbird* The Shakespeare Theatre presents two special evenings of conversation with Mary Badham, the Academy Award-nominated actress best known for her portrayal of Scout Finch in the 1962 classic film starring Gregory Peck. Ms. Badham is one of the foremost champions of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and will discuss the novel and its messages as well as engage in a question and answer session with the audience.

To purchase tickets, call 973-408-5600 or visit ShakespeareNJ.org

Looking Back with Scout: A Conversation with Mary Badham is sponsored, in part, by the Morristown law firm of McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter.

Further Reading

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