

To Kill a Mockingbird
Meet the Author: Harper Lee



Harper Lee, the youngest of three siblings, was born on April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama. Her parents were Amasa and Francis Finch Lee. From the time she was a young child, Lee loved to read. She attended local schools until 1944, when she enrolled in Huntington College in Montgomery. She attended Oxford University in England for a year as a Fullbright scholar. From 1945-1949 Lee studied law at the University of Alabama, but she withdrew before attaining her law degree.

In 1950 Lee moved to New York City. There she worked as an airline reservation clerk – first for Eastern Airlines and then for British Overseas Air Corporation, where she stayed for several years. Finally, she quit her job to devote all of her time to writing.

To Kill a Mockingbird, set in rural Alabama during the mid 1930's, was originally meant to be a series of short stories; however, Lee's agent persuaded her to expand the work into a complete novel. When she submitted it to J.B. Lippincott in 1957, the publisher thought it was still too much like a series of short stories. She rewrote it again! In 1960, the book was finally published. *To Kill a Mockingbird* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961. In 1962 it was released as an Oscar-winning movie starring Gregory Peck.

Harper Lee drew on her childhood experiences in writing *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Her father, Frances Finch Lee was a lawyer. She modeled the character Atticus Finch after him. Many of the other characters, too, were based upon her recollection of people she had known growing up in the south. Maycomb, the fictional town where the story was set, greatly resembled Lee's home town of Monroeville.

Although *To Kill a Mockingbird* was her only published novel, Harper Lee will always be remembered as a great American novelist. Indeed, her book has become a classic work of literature!

The Cover: A Closer Look Examine the front and back cover of your book and answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is the author of To Kill a Mockingbird?
2. The top of the front cover reads: “The Timeless Classic of Growing Up and the Human Dignity That Unites Us All.” Based on that, who do you think the main characters are?
3. When was it published?
4. What prize did it win? Based on that, without having read it, what characteristics do you think the book possesses?

About the Author Read the article about the author and answer the following in complete sentences,

1. Where and when was the author born?
2. Where did Lee work after college?
3. Why did she quit her job?
4. Why did it take so long for Lee to have her story published?
5. Where did Lee get the ideas for her book? Be specific.
6. What other books did Lee write?