To Kill A Mockingbird
Nelle Harper Lee
Historical and Literary Context for the Novel

F404: TA-1
Tuesday 11:50-1:15
Instructor: Donna Carducci Macurdy
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## Agenda: Day 2
### Historical/Literary Context for To Kill A Mockingbird

1. **Admin Stuff**
   - Announcements: Class Liaison
   - Lecture: Historical/Literary Framework for Novel
     - All read Chapters 1-5 for discussion next meeting

2. **Icebreaker Activity: Literary Perspective**
   - Focus: Authors, like Lee, who only published one novel
   - Question: Why did Lee stop writing?

3. **Lecture: Notes on:**
   - Novel – To Kill A Mockingbird
     - Historical Context:
       - TKM (1930’s) and the Civil Rights Era (1950’s/1960’s)
     - Literary Context: Modernism/Post Modernism

4. **Viewing:** Hey Boo (A Film by Mary Murphy)
   - Focus: Hollywood (The making of the movie) Time: (8:53)
Authors who only published one novel

- Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights, 1847
- Ralph Ellison: Invisible Man, 1953
- J.D. Salinger: The Catcher in the Rye, 1951
- Boris Pasternak: Doctor Zhivago, 1957
- Sylvia Plath: Ariel, 1965
- Margaret Mitchell: Gone with the Wind, 1936

- National Book Award for Fiction 1953
- Nobel Prize 1958
- Pulitzer Prize 1982
- Pulitzer Prize 1937
- Nobel Prize 1936
TKM and The Civil Rights Era

1930’s

1931-1937
Harper Lee
5-11 years old
during Scottsboro Trials

1930’s
Tom Robinson Trial
In To Kill A Mockingbird

Scottsboro Trials 1931-1937

The Scottsboro Boys with their lawyer and guards
(UPI photo, March, 1933).
## Parallels Between The Scottsboro Trials and Tom Robinson’s Trial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallels Between The Scottsboro Trials and Tom Robinson’s Trial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Took place in the 1930s</td>
<td>1. Occurs in the 1930s</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Took place in northern Alabama</td>
<td>2. Takes place in southern Alabama</td>
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<td>3. Began with a charge of rape against 9 black men on charges of having raped two white women in a freight car passing through Alabama</td>
<td>3. Begins with a charge of rape made by a white woman against an African American man</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Poor white status of the accusers was a critical issue</td>
<td>4. The poor white status of Mayella is a critical issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Central figure was a heroic judge, a member of the Alabama Bar who overturns a guilty jury verdict against African American men.</td>
<td>5. A central figure is Atticus, lawyer, legislator and member of the Alabama Bar, who defends an African American man.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Judge goes against public sentiment in trying to protect the rights of the African American defendants.</td>
<td>6. Atticus arouses anger in the community in trying to defend Tom Robinson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. First juries fail to include any African Americans, a situation which caused the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the guilty verdict.</td>
<td>7. The verdict is rendered by a jury of poor white residents of Old Sarum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jury ignores evidence i.e., that the women suffered no injuries.</td>
<td>8. The jury ignores evidence, for example, that Tom has a useless left arm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Attitudes about Southern women and poor whites complicate the trial</td>
<td>9. Attitudes about Southern women and poor whites complicate the trial of Tom Robinson.</td>
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Prepared by Claudia Durst Johnson, Harper Lee scholar/author; Catherine Turner, TKM Teacher, Prince William County Schools; and Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin, James Madison University Professor; and (ThinkQuest.org)
Excerpt from Langston Hughes, 
Scottsboro Limited, 
Four Poems and a Play in Verse 
Golden Stair Press 1932

The Town of Scottsboro

Scottsboro’s just a little place 
No shame is write across its face 
Its courts too weak to stand against a mob, 
Its people’s heart, too small to hold a sob.

http://www.imdb.com/video/withoutabox/vi162923289?ref=tt_pv_vi_1

2006 Movie: Scottsboro Trials 
Trailer: Heavens Fall
1950’s

1951/1954
Brown vs Board of Education
“separate is not equal”

1955
Rosa Parks Arrested
Boycott of Montgomery Buses
Led by Rev. Martin Luther King
* 8/28: Emmett Till Killed

1955-1958
Harper Lee Writes TKM
In New York City

1956
Supreme Court Ruling
Bus Segregation Illegal

1957
Federal Troops
Sent to Arkansas
To Enforce Court
Ordered
Desegregation of Schools

1960
Publication of
To Kill a Mockingbird

1960
Greensboro, N.C.
1st lunch counter sit-in
Federal district court judges Arthur J. Mellott, Delmas C. Hill, and Walter A. Huxman (left to right) handed down their decision on the Brown case in June 1951.

(Courtesy of Library, United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Denver, Colorado)

http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/brownvboard/brownhome.html
Emmett Till’s Legacy

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_kelley.html
TKM and the Civil Rights Era 1960’s

1961
Freedom Riders Arrive in South
Test new regulations barring
segregation in interstate
transportation.

1961
Harper Lee wins the
Pulitzer Prize for
Literature.

1964
July 2\textsuperscript{nd}
Lyndon B. Johnson signs
the
1964 Civil Rights Act.

December 1964
MLK wins Nobel Peace Prize

1962
Film,
To Kill a Mockingbird
is released

1963
John Kennedy assassinated
November 22
Medgar W. Evers is Murdered
June 12\textsuperscript{th}
March on Washington
August 28th
Birmingham Church Bombed
September 15th

1965
February 21\textsuperscript{st}
Malcolm X
assassinated

1965
August 6th
Voting Rights
Act Passes

1968
April 4\textsuperscript{th}
Martin Luther King
Assassinated

1968
June 6\textsuperscript{th}
Robert Kennedy
Assassinated
MLK’s Speech: Nobel Peace Prize
December 1964

http://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1853
American Literary Period Timeline Overview

Native American Literature 1600-1750

Age of Faith Age of Reason 1750-1840

Realism Regionalism Naturalism 1865-1915

Romanticism 1840-1865

Anti-Transcendentalists Gothic Writers Dark Romantics

Transcendentalism Light Romantics

Reaction Against Rationalism Valued Emotion over Reason

Gatsby 1925

Modernism 1915-1946

Post Modernism 1946

T.K.M.
1. Modernists/Post Modernists:
“Sought to capture the disjointedness of modern/contemporary life in both form and content of their work.”
- **Modernist Writers** wrote in response to World War I
- **Post Modernist Writers** wrote in response to World War II

2. Modernist/PostModernist Works:
“Works were constructed out of fragments, omitting expositions, resolutions, interpretations, transitions, and summaries often used in traditional works.”
- **Modernist Writers** sees fragmentation reflective of a “Freudian internal conflict, (and or) a problem that must be solved; the artist is often cited as the one to solve it.
- **Post Modernist Writers** view fragmentation as chaos; [a] chaos [that ]is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos.
  - Example: Fantasy or “magical realism” (fantasy that blends realism and fantasy)

3. Modernist Post Modernist Style:
- **Modernist writers** discarded all that was traditional in form and style; Ezra Pound (Imagist Poet) urged all writers to “Make everything new.”
- **Post modernists** writers embraced the new forms/styles but also incorporated more of traditional literary forms/styles into their works
Modernist/Post Modernist Literary Techniques

1. Stream of consciousness – writer’s attempt to capture the “natural flow of a character’s thoughts”

Example: Modernism
(1922) T.S. Eliot “The Wasteland”

Post Modernism: (1951) J.D. Salinger Catcher in the Rye

2. Themes of works were implied rather than directly stated creating uncertainty for the reader – reader had to draw own conclusions

Example: Modernism
(1937) Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God

Example: Post Modernism
(1952) Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man
Modernist/Post Modernist Literary Techniques

3. Symbols and Literary allusions used to suggest theme

Example: Modernism
(1925) F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*

Example: Post Modernism
(1961) Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*

4. Point of view used: Modernist/Postmodernist writers “believed that reality is shaped by people’s perception of reality”

Example: Modernism
(1929) Wm. Faulkner *The Sound and the Fury*

Example: Post Modernism
(1960) Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird*