To Kill A Mockingbird: Nelle Harper Lee
Historical and Literary Context for the Novel
Week 2: March 31, 2015

R 417
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: News – Go Set A Watchman Cover Released.
   Question: What does the book’s cover tell you about the new novel?
   Impressions: Article: “Go Shill a Mockingbird” (Washington Post)

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)
TKM Covers
TKM and The Civil Rights Era
1930’s

Scottsboro Trials 1931-1937

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

1930’s
Tom Robinson Trial
In
To Kill A Mockingbird

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

| 1. Took place in the 1930s | 1. Occurs in the 1930s |
| 2. Took place in northern Alabama | 2. Takes place in southern Alabama |
| 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 | 3. Begins with a charge of rape made by a white woman against an African American man |
| 4. Poor white status of the accusers was a critical issue | 4. The poor white status of Mayella is a critical issue. |
| 5. **Central figure was a heroic judge**, a member of the Alabama Bar who overturns a guilty jury verdict against African American men. | 5. **A central figure is Atticus**, lawyer, legislator and member of the Alabama Bar, who defends an African American man. |
| 6. Judge goes against public sentiment in trying to protect the rights of the African American defendants. | 6. Atticus arouses anger in the community in trying to defend Tom Robinson. |
| 7. First juries fail to include any African Americans, a situation which caused the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the guilty verdict. | 7. The verdict is rendered by a jury of poor white residents of Old Sarum. |
| 8. **Jury ignores evidence i.e., that the women suffered no injuries.** | 8. The **jury ignores evidence, for example, that Tom has a useless left arm.** |
| 9. Attitudes about Southern women and poor whites complicate the trial | 9. Attitudes about Southern women and poor whites complicate the trial of Tom Robinson. |

Prepared by Claudia Durst Johnson, Harper Lee scholar/author; Catherine Turner, TKM Teacher, Prince William County Schools

Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin, James Madison University Professor; and (ThinkQuest.org)
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
TKM and the Civil Rights Era

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

1956
Supreme Court Ruling
Bus Segregation Illegal

1955-1959
Harper Lee Writes TKM
In New York City

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
Chronology
Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

1948
Esther Brown, a white woman from Merriam, Kansas, asks the Kansas NAACP branch to mount a legal challenge to segregated schools.

Note: In response, the NAACP branch presents a petition to the Topeka Board of Education on behalf of "The Citizen's Committee" asking it to end its policy of segregation. The petition meets stiff opposition and goes nowhere.

February 28, 1951
Case of Brown vs Board of Education is filed in the federal district court for Kansas.

August 3, 1951
Judge Huxman, writing for a 3 judge panel, Judges Arthur J. Mellott, Delmas C. Hill, and Walter A. Huxman issues his decision and findings in the Brown case.

Judge Huxman upholds the Topeka Board's policy on the basis of Plessy, but his nine findings of fact indicate that the policy is harmful to the education of Topeka's black children i.e., “Separate is not equal.”
November 1951
The NAACP Legal Defense Fund files an appeal of the Brown decision in the United States Supreme Court.

**Note:** In the weeks that follow, appeals in other cases around the country challenging segregated schools are also filed in the Court.

May 17, 1954
A unanimous Supreme Court issues its decision in Brown v Board of Education of Topeka.

**Note:** The Court finds that segregation in the public schools is "inherently unequal" and violates the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

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1951

Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGqqOMTreNA
TKM and the Civil Rights Era 1960’s

1960
Publication of TKM

1961
Harper Lee wins the Pulitzer Prize for Literature.

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

1962
Film, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is released

1963
John Kennedy assassinated
November 22
Medgar W. Evers is Murdered
June 12th
March on Washington
Led by Dr. King
August 28th
Birmingham Church Bombed
September 15th

1964
July 2nd
Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

1965
February 21st
Malcolm X assassinated

March 1965
3 Selma Marches for Voting Rights

1965
August 6th
Voting Rights Act Passes

1968
April 4th
Martin Luther King Assassinated

1968
June 6th
Robert Kennedy Assassinated

December 1964
MLK wins Nobel Peace Prize
Selma Official Trailer (2015)
Oprah Winfrey, Cuba Gooding Jr. Movie HD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6t7vVTxaic
MLK’s Speech: Nobel Peace Prize
December 1964

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5r98tT0j1a0
American Literary Period Timeline Overview

Native American Literature 1600-1750

Age of Faith Age of Reason 1750-1840

Realism Regionalism Naturalism 1865-1915

Faith and or Politically Based Literature

Romanticism 1840-1865

Anti-Transcendentalists
Gothic Writers
Dark Romantics

Transcendentalism Light Romantics

Reaction Against Rationalism Valued Emotion over Reason

Modernism 1915-1946

Post Modernism 1946

TK.M.

Beginnings of Feminist Literature

Reality Based Literature Espouses reality of a specific region of the country

Oral Tradition

Valued Emotion over Reason

Nothing is by chance

Gatsby 1925
Modernism/Post Modernism
Differences/Similarities

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 Waste Land”
   **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*
Resource: Authors who published only one novel

- Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights (1847)
- Boris Pasternak: Doctor Zhivago (1957)
- Sylvia Plath: The Bell Jar (1957)
- Ralph Ellison: Invisible Man (1953)
- J.D. Salinger: The Catcher in the Rye (1951)
- Margaret Mitchell: Gone with the Wind (1937)

- Emily Brontë: Pulitzer Prize 1982
- Boris Pasternak: Nobel Prize 1958
- Sylvia Plath: National Book Award for Fiction 1953

1937 - 1958: Prizes awarded to authors.
Gone with the Wind
Prequels/Sequels not written by Margaret Mitchell
Authorized by: Margaret Mitchell Estate

Prequel: Authorized Life of Mammy
October 2015

Sequel: November 6, 2007
Life and Times of Rhett Butler

Sequel: September 27, 1991
Authorized
Love Story of Rhett and Scarlett
By: Alexandra Ripley
Also: TV Mini Series