

To Kill A Mockingbird: Setting – Part 1

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD: SEEING THE FILM THROUGH THE LENS OF MEDIA LITERACY

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SETTING, PRODUCTION DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

“In a sense, it’s hard to see what a production designer does because you’re intrinsically linked to the suspension of disbelief.. you’re actually trying to be invisible.”

Rick Carter, production designer, [MUNICH](#)

(as quoted in AFI’s American Film, Spring 2006)

SETTING

Historical Background

Students should be encouraged to explore [the Depression](#) period in US history. In the opening narration by Scout, she refers to the Depression twice when she says:

“Maycomb was a tired old town, even in 1932 when I first knew it.....Although Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.”

The phrase “nothing to fear but fear itself” refers to a line in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first inaugural speech to Congress in 1933, broadcast nationally by radio.

Atticus refers to the Depression in the scene which follows: after accepting payment from Mr. Cunningham, he explains to Scout “the crash hit them the hardest.”

(see recommended websites, lesson plans, readings below)

Students should also be encouraged to consider the time period in American history in which this film was released, 1963: the early days of the [Civil Rights movement](#). Teachers can encourage student exploration of topics like: [Scottsboro Boys Trial](#); [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#); [Rosa Parks](#); and [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

“The Maycomb courtroom in To Kill A Mockingbird is an almost perfect copy of one in Monroeville, Alabama, where author [Harper Lee](#) grew up. Scout is certainly the author herself and Atticus Finch is modeled on her father, A.C. Lee, a lawyer in Monroeville. Jem and Scout’s peculiar friend Dill is based on author Truman Capote, who was a childhood friend and neighbor of Harper Lee’s. Harper Lee attended law school at the University of Alabama but did not graduate. The story is fictional, although A.C. Lee once represented two blacks who killed a merchant and were hanged in the Monroeville jail.”¹

 photo of actual courtroom in Monroeville, Alabama image from: http://www.frontiernet.net/~mchm/	 Frame grab showing interior courtroom set
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