

## *To Kill a Mockingbird* Webquest

*To Kill A Mockingbird* is set in the sleepy town of Maycomb, Alabama. The consciousness of a town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy is pricked by the quiet heroism of one man's struggle for justice. Through the young eyes of his children, Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores the irrationality of adult attitudes toward race and class in the Deep South of the 1930's. To best understand the lessons of this great novel, you must first understand the author, the times, and the place in which the story is set.

**Your Task:** is to visit various websites (provided for you) to learn the needed background information before starting the novel. Each website will also have a few questions for you to answer, simply to ensure that you are finding the important material at each site. This Webquest will give you a good feel for the 1930's and a good understanding of the historical context of the novel as well; therefore, you will be much more equipped to understand the novel itself.

**The Process:** All questions should be answered thoroughly. You have ample time to complete ALL questions; so be sure to SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY. The questions will be graded for correctness! **Using complete sentences, type your responses to the questions provided.**

**Evaluation:** The questions will be graded for accuracy and detail.

**The Goals:** After completing this activity, examining the historical background of the times and information on the author and her work, you should be able to:

- to identify elements of living during the Great Depression
- to identify the sources of prejudice, stereotypes, and racism within 1930s Southern society
- to explain why Harper Lee wrote about these topics

### Website #1 – The History of Jim Crow

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/homecoming/jimcrowpop.html>

1. What was "Jim Crow"?
2. Where did the term "Jim Crow" originate?
3. What Supreme Court case upheld segregation, or "separate but equal"?
4. What were the consequences of that decision?

### Website #2 –Jim Crow Laws

<http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/what.htm>

5. Put at least two of these laws into your own words.

#### **Guided Reading Notes from class:**

6. What spurred the Great Depression?
7. Who were the Presidents during the 1930's?

### Website #3 – The Depression

<http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture18.html>

8. **Social Problems:** What social problems occurred in the USA as a result of the depression?
9. **Images of the Depression:** How did it affect farmers?

### Website #4 – Sharecroppers

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1613>

10. What were sharecroppers or tenant farmers?
11. Especially after the Great Depression, what problems did sharecroppers have and leave as a "legacy"?
12. What is the difference between cash renters and sharecroppers?

### Website #5 – The Scottsboro Boys

[http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/SB\\_acct.html](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scottsboro/SB_acct.html)

13. Who were the Scottsboro Boys? How did they get into so much trouble?
14. Where and when did the Scottsboro Boys' original trial take place? How do you think this affected the outcome of their trial?
15. What does the NAACP acronym stand for? Why did the NAACP decide not to help the Scottsboro Boys?
16. The Communist Party came to the aid of the Scottsboro Boys. How did the South perceive the Communist

**Comment [f1]:** You do not have to answer these two questions, since this link doesn't work.

Party, and how was it similar to the perception of blacks? What was the Communist Party's hidden agenda in providing aid to the Scottsboro Boys?

17. The Scottsboro Boys were not provided with adequate defense lawyers. Please list at least 3 ways in which the defense lawyers were inadequate.
18. Describe the trials. Were they fair or unfair? Please include at least 3 supporting facts to back up your description.
19. Were the Scottsboro Boys ever pardoned of their convictions?
20. The Scottsboro Boys' trial took place during the childhood of *To Kill A Mockingbird's* author, Harper Lee. Make a prediction about how this trial might be an important impetus for the book.

#### Website #7 – Harper Lee

<http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/mockingbird04.php>

<http://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021>

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/harperle.htm>

21. When and where was Harper Lee born? What was her family like?
22. Who was her childhood best friend?
23. What did she study in college? Did she participate in any extra-curricular activities? Why might this be important to consider while reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*?
24. How did her decision to move to New York make *To Kill A Mockingbird* a reality?
25. What year was *To Kill A Mockingbird* published? When was it adapted to screen?
26. Was Harper Lee honored in any way following the publication of *To Kill A Mockingbird*?
27. Harper Lee's real life influenced many of the characters and events in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Given what have you learned about her life (including personality traits, friends, family, experiences) make a prediction about what kinds of issues might surface in the book. Do you think that your knowledge about Harper Lee will influence your reading of the book? Should it influence your reading of the book? Why or why not?

#### Website #8 – To Kill a Mockingbird

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged/index.cfm>

28. Over the past nine years, how frequently are books challenged?

29. What reasons are frequently given for challenging books?

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/index.cfm>

(look at the index to the left - there are two decades to choose from!)

30. Look at the list of classics that have been challenged. Where does TKAM fall and what reasons are given for it being challenged?