

SCHULICH YOUTH PLAYS TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

BASED ON THE PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING NOVEL BY
HARPER LEE
DRAMATIZED BY **CHRISTOPHER SERGEL**
DIRECTOR **NIGEL SHAWN WILLIAMS**

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grades 6–12

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Contains some violence and mature and sensitive themes and language (e.g., racial slurs)

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 4, 8, 11, 15, 17, 21, 24, 25, 30; June 1, 7, 14, 19, 28;
September 18, 20, 28; October 2, 5, 11, 19, 24, 30;
November 1

ABOUT THE PLAY

Based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, this two-act play places the narrator, Atticus Finch's young daughter, Scout, at the centre of the story. The play uses the adult Scout as the Narrator, a role that is sometimes doubled with the character of Miss Maudie. Although the novel was written in 1960 and appeared as a celebrated film in 1962, this stage play was not written until the late 1980s.

Harper Lee set her novel at a time of intensifying class and racial tensions in the United States. During the Great Depression, the failing economy hit the South very hard, and the black population, already poor, felt the effects more than anyone. Segregation was normal, as were hunger, unemployment and deprivation. Organizations such as the racist Ku Klux Klan had enormous influence on both local politics and the consequences of judicial procedures. Mob justice – including lynching – was frequent and vicious.

SYNOPSIS

In Maycomb, Alabama, a black man stands accused of raping a white woman, and Atticus Finch is assigned to defend him. The black man, Tom Robinson, is innocent and his accusers' testimony is a lie, but even the wise Atticus can't prevent



the jury from finding him guilty. The trial holds the attention of the entire town, bringing them, as one neighbour says, one step closer to tolerance – and showing Atticus's young children, Scout and Jem, that there's much to be proud of in their father, even if he can't throw a football. Later, a violent attack on Scout and Jem brings the reclusive Boo Radley to their rescue and reveals the neighbourhood bogeyman to be a kind and quiet man.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- 1. All grades:** Language/English (listening to understand, speaking to communicate, reading for meaning)
- 2. All grades:** Drama, Music, Visual Art
- 3. Grades 6–12:** Health and PE (living skills, safe and positive interaction, conflict management, stereotypes and assumptions, bullying, harassment, decision-making)
- 4. Grade 10:** Canadian History Since World War I (communities, conflict and cooperation, Great Depression)
- 5. Grade 11:** American History (identity, citizenship and heritage; Great Depression – discrimination policies and practices, systematic oppression)
- 6. Grade 11:** World History Since 1900: Global and Regional Interactions (identity, citizenship and heritage: limited citizenship and/or human rights)
- 7. Grade 11:** Understanding Canadian Law (foundations of

- criminal law, criminal justice system, human rights)
8. **Grades 11–12:** Equity, Diversity and Social Justice (the social construction of identity, power relations, social awareness and individual action, respecting diversity, promoting equity and social justice)
 9. **Grade 12:** Canadian History, Identity and Culture (ethnocultural identities)
 10. **Grade 12:** World History Since the Fifteenth Century (Great Depression, segregation and the American South)
 11. **Grade 12:** Adventures in World History (Great Depression)
 12. **Grade 12:** Canadian and International Law (rights and freedoms: development of human rights law)
 13. **Grade 12:** Legal Studies (rights and responsibilities)

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- Prejudice/discrimination
- Racism
- Coming of age
- Strong female role model
- Social inequality
- Responsibility, integrity and perspective
- Law vs. justice
- Love and caring
- Good vs. evil
- Human dignity
- Courage
- The mockingbird
- Innocence and loss of innocence
- Education
- Revenge
- Empathy

CLASSROOM WARM-UP

To prepare students as they read the novel or play and start to analyze the characters and choices they make, start by asking them to think about their own identities.

Have students create a mind map by placing their names in the centre of a blank sheet of paper. Have them place information about themselves. Start with basic things such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, physical characteristics, occupation, community (e.g., neighbourhood, school, country). Then have them include labels others place on them, as well as their own hopes, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs.

Once that is completed, define *stereotype* (a generalization about a person or group of persons) and *racism* (prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person or persons of a different race, based on the belief that one's own race is superior). Discuss the harmful effects of stereotyping and racism. How do they affect how one thinks of one's identity and one's community?

ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée except May 4, 21, 30; June 1, 19, 28.

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

Register now for *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING THE CLASSIC*

Friday, May 4

Engage with teachers, playwrights and company members in a full-day symposium featuring play readings, workshops and discussions on contemporary approaches to the piece. Explore Audrey Dwyer's *Calpurnia* and Rob Kempson's *Mockingbird*, two contemporary takes on Harper Lee's well-known classic.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online

You can order your group tickets online at any time right from your desk. You can even select your seats! To start planning your trip, go to stratfordfestival.ca/schools.

Email

groups@stratfordfestival.ca

Phone

1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Mail

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