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**The Significance of *To Kill A Mockingbird*
and the Character of Atticus Finch**

Talmage Boston

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* AND
THE CHARACTER OF ATTICUS FINCH**

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HISTORICAL IMPACT OF THE BOOK AND MOVIE

- The book has sold over 30 million copies since its publication in July 1960, making it 1 of the top 10 best-selling novels of all time. This year, in connection with the marketing effort being made for its Golden Anniversary, it's expected to sell 1,000,000 copies.
- It has been translated into over 40 languages.
- It won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1961.
- It spent 80 consecutive weeks as No. 1 on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List.
- In a 1988 survey of the National Council of English Teachers, it was then being taught in 74% of the nation's public schools, exceeded only by *Romeo & Juliet*, *MacBeth*, and *Huckleberry Finn*.
- In a 1991 Book-of-the-Month Club Survey of lifetime reading habits, it was rated second only to *The Bible* "as making a difference in people's lives."
- The movie won 3 Academy Awards, including Gregory Peck for Best Actor and Horton Foote for Best Screenplay Adapted from Another Medium.
- In June 2008, the American Film Institute voted Atticus Finch as the greatest hero ever in motion pictures.

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WHY IT CAME AT THE RIGHT TIME

- When the novel came out in 1960, *The Washington Post* said, "A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance, or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it, will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of new fiction bearing the title *To Kill a Mockingbird*."
- Mt. Holyoke College Honorary Doctorate to Lee in 1962: "*To Kill a Mockingbird* has made possible in us a deeper perception of the forces at work in our society. Without sensationalism, without cynicism, without bitterness, but with delicacy and strength, compassion and sternness, you have humanely treated the great themes of justice and suffering and the growth of understanding, and have formed them into a memorable work of art."
- Wikipedia: "The book was written and published amidst the most significant and conflict-ridden social change in the South since the Civil War and Reconstruction. Inevitably, despite its mid-1930's setting, the story told from the perspective of the 1950's, voices the conflicts, tensions, and fears induced by this transition. The novel's impact on race relations in the United States was noted as a factor in its success, that it arrived at the right moment to help the South and the nation grapple with the racial tension of the accelerating Civil Rights movement."
- When receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her contribution to literature in 2007, the White House statement said, "At a critical moment in our history, her beautiful book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, helped focus the nation on the turbulent struggle for equality."

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