

where characters perform. In and nearby the court of Rome may be the referenced sites, but the playhouse stage reveals more, offering the medieval concept of *theatrum mundi*, or “world as a stage,” which measures all things vertically, from hell below to heaven above, as mankind “frets and struts his hour upon the stage,” as Macbeth says in another of Shakespeare’s plays.

—Wayne Narey

To Kill a Mockingbird

Author: Harper Lee (1926–)

First published: 1960

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Bildungsroman

Time of plot: Mid-1930’s

The retrospective narrator, Scout, examines how she learned to understand racial and social prejudices of small-town southern life by seeing the world through others’ perspectives.

Maycomb. Seat of Alabama’s fictional Maycomb County, located twenty miles east of Finch’s Landing. Through its citizens from professional, middle, and lower classes, Harper Lee analyzes the values and problems common in small southern towns during the Great Depression. Scout learns from Atticus to reject the racial and social prejudices of the town without hating its inhabitants. By walking in the shoes of others both before and after the Tom Robinson trial, she respects Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, who is determined to cure her morphine addiction before dying, and she appreciates Judge Taylor, Sheriff Tate, and farmer Link Deas, all of whom try to give Tom Robinson as fair a trial as possible in Maycomb.

Radley place. Home of Arthur (Boo) Radley and his family; located near Atticus Finch’s home. Community rumors about the seclusion of Boo in his home and about his violent actions provide mystery and excitement for Scout, Jem, and Dill during their summers. Actually seeing Boo or enticing him to leave his dark, isolated home becomes a goal for the children and a lesson in tolerance and acceptance. Through the gifts they find in the hollow tree in the Radley yard, they learn of Boo’s tentative attempts at friendship with them. When Boo saves their lives by killing Bob Ewell in the woods behind the school, they learn to respect his privacy and his desire to remain hidden from the probing eyes of the community.

Schoolhouse. School attended by the Finch children. By having children from the town and from the rural community

in the same classes, Lee shows the various social classes in the county and how all have learned to live together. Miss Caroline Fisher, Scout’s first-grade teacher, is considered an outsider because she is from Clanton in northern Alabama. She does not understand the social caste system of her students, and her new educational practices appear impractical to her students.

Courthouse. Government building in the town square in which Tom Robinson is tried for murder. The architecture of this building symbolizes the strong ties of the town to the past and its unwillingness to change. After fire destroyed the original classical structure, its massive columns were retained while a Victorian clock tower was added. This symbolizes the town’s acceptance of change only as a result of a conflagration and its attempt to preserve the past as completely as possible.

Having the black residents sit in the balcony of the courtroom during the Robinson trial stresses the physical and social segregation of the races. In contrast, having Scout, Jem, and Dill accepted by Reverend Sykes in the balcony also symbolizes the hope that the young generation of white southerners will be able to see both blacks and whites differently as they grow up. On the courthouse grounds during the trial, Scout and Dill learn from Dolphus Raymond that his false drunkenness is only a ruse he assumes in order to provide the community with an excuse for his living with a black wife and fathering children of mixed blood.

Finch’s Landing. Town in which Atticus Finch grew up. Located on the banks of the Alabama River, it was begun in the early nineteenth century by Atticus’s ancestor, Simon Finch, an immigrant from England, and remained the home of the Finch family until Atticus left to study law in Montgomery, Alabama, and his younger brother, Jack, left to study medicine in Boston. Their sister Alexandra continued to live there with her husband. The small town provides a strong sense of history and family within which Scout and Jem grow up. Although they only visit there, each child understands how their current home is an extension of the values and beliefs in which Atticus, Uncle Jack, and Aunt Alexandra were raised. Neither Atticus nor Jack returns to Finch’s Landing to live because the town is too small to support their professions, and each seems to disregard many of the mores espoused there as shown through the actions of Aunt Alexandra.

—Alan T. Belsches

To The End of The Land

Author: David Grossman (1954–)

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