

UK & IRELAND TOUR
2025/26



HARPER LEE'S
**TO KILL
A MOCKINGBIRD**
A new play by AARON SORKIN
Directed by BARTLETT SHER

EDUCATION RESOURCE

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CHARACTERS

ATTICUS FINCH A property lawyer in Maycomb County, Alabama, Atticus Finch is the protagonist in this adaptation of the novel. He is a white lawyer representing Tom Robinson. Atticus urges his children to see the good in everyone, suggesting “before you judge someone it’s a good idea to get inside their skin for a while and crawl around”. Whilst in most responses to the original novel Atticus is considered the embodiment of justice, empathy and equality, this adaptation presents him as a flawed protagonist whose determination to see the best in people can cause him to be blind to deeper injustices and hypocrisy.

SCOUT (JEAN LOUISE FINCH) Atticus’ daughter and Jem’s sister. Scout speaks the opening and closing lines of the play and provides much of the narrative. The original novel is told from Scout’s point of view in first person narrative, but in this adaptation, she shares the narrative with Jem and Dill.

JEM FINCH Scout’s older brother, he is on the cusp of adulthood and is determined to protect both his sister and his father from the prejudice and potential violence that threatens during the summer in which the story takes place.

DILL (CHARLES BAKER HARRIS) Dill stays with his Aunt Rachel in Maycomb. He is keen to suggest that his father is a train engineer, but he admits to Atticus that he has in fact never met his father and that his mother is ‘looking for a new dad’. Dill narrates the action with Scout and Jem, and also provides much of the humour which is sometimes caused by his naivety.

TOM ROBINSON A black man falsely accused of raping Mayella Ewell. He has a wife and three children. After an accident at eleven years old, Tom is unable to use his left arm: a fact that should immediately exonerate him from the crime of which he has been accused.

CALPURNIA Originally a maid for their maternal grandmother, Calpurnia has helped to raise Scout and Jem following the death of their mother. In Scout’s own words, she has “helped raise Jem and me and Atticus”. It is Calpurnia who exposes Atticus’ flaw in his determination to see the good in everyone, even when such goodness does not exist.

BOB EWELL A white man who falsely accuses Tom Robinson of raping his daughter. Before the trial Ewell threatens Atticus and warns against representing Tom. Bob is fatally stabbed when he attacks Jem and Scout as they walk home. Sheriff Tate, Judge Taylor and Atticus accept the idea that Bob fell on his own knife, rather than being killed by the one used by Boo Radley. Throughout the trial, Bob is paranoid, offensive and prejudiced and is unable to accept any ideas about community and justice other than his own.

MISS STEPHANIE A neighbour who relishes gossip and rumour. Miss Stephanie tells Scout, Jem and Dill the story of Boo Radley attacking his father. The children question the rumour, and demonstrate that they - as children - are more discerning of the truth than Miss Stephanie, who is an adult.

MAYELLA EWELL At nineteen years old, Mayella is the eldest of the Ewell children. She is raising them, with no support from her father. During her testimony it becomes clear that her father Bob Ewell is abusing her. She is terrified of her father and her testimony is very obviously made up of words that Bob has spoken.

BOO (ARTHUR) RADLEY Although Boo speaks very few lines, he plays an integral part in the story. Considered a mysterious and potentially dangerous recluse by most of the community, Boo rescues Jem and Scout from Bob Ewell’s attack after the pageant. Sheriff Tate, Judge Taylor and Atticus all protect Boo after they realise the extent of the actions he takes to protect the children.

LINK DEAS Known as ‘the town drunk’, it becomes clear that Link deliberately cultivates the reputation so that people will leave him alone. After his mixed-race son died as a result of being unable to access hospital treatment, Link’s wife took her own life. Link’s story highlights the hypocrisy and inequality that existed within communities. In this adaptation, the characters of Link Deas and Dolphus Raymond from the original novel have been conflated.

MRS HENRY LAFAYETTE DUBOSE A neighbour of the Finch family, Mrs Dubose’s cruel taunts provokes Jem’s destruction of her prized flowers. Atticus reveals that she is ill, and has been reliant on morphine, the withdrawal from which causes her vitriolic outbursts. Calpurnia’s opinion is that she is a deeply unpleasant, prejudiced woman regardless of her ailments and challenges.

MR CUNNINGHAM A poverty-stricken resident of Maycomb who is dependent on Atticus’ generosity in providing legal advice. He pays in firewood, vegetables and nuts rather than with money because it is all he can give. Scout challenges Cunningham when he is part of the mob (wearing Ku Klux Klan hoods) who threatens Atticus outside the courthouse where Tom Robinson is being held. Her repetition of the advice given to him by Atticus shames him into calling off the mob and leaving the courthouse.

HECK TATE Sheriff of Maycomb.

JUDGE TAYLOR The presiding judge in the trial of Tom Robinson, who asks Atticus to represent Tom Robinson when it becomes clear that the original lawyer, Vernon Hockney, has given Tom poor advice about his plea.

HORACE GILMER The prosecuting lawyer who shows enormous disrespect when repeatedly calling Tom ‘boy’ in the court. During the trial, Gilmer is determined to malign a number of Maycomb residents, including Link Deas, in the name of ‘justice’ for his client, Bob Ewell.

DILL’S MOTHER Dill repeatedly claims that his father works on the railroads. However, Dill’s mother is exposed as neglectful, locking Dill in his room ‘for his protection’ and leaving him for long periods of time either alone or with his Aunt Rachel in Maycomb. She returns to Maycomb having found a new husband.

THEMES

CHILDHOOD AND THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE

The story is narrated through direct address by the three children in the story: Scout, Jem and Dill. Although they are still children, the audience can see the various realisations that the world around them is not entirely safe or fair, despite Atticus' attempts to keep his children safe and raise them to be kind. There are also moments in the play, such as Scout's speech to Mr Cunningham that the innocence and naivety of children can be more powerful than the words or actions of grown men.

RACE

Harper Lee published *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960. The novel is now more than sixty years old, but the issues of race, discrimination and violence are still prevalent in society. In between the Broadway opening and the London transfer of the play, the murder of George Floyd in 2020 reminds us that prejudice and injustice are still commonplace today even though some progress may have been made.

OUTCASTS

As well as the influence of racial discrimination, there are several other characters who are ostracised or considered suspicious because they do not conform to society's expectations. Mr Link Deas, who carries a bottle that everyone assumes is full of whiskey, reveals that he drinks Coca-Cola but allows those around him to believe it is alcohol so that they will leave him alone. Link has a child with a Black woman, but because the child is mixed race, they are unable to obtain medical assistance when their son was ill, and so he died.

Boo Radley is a source of fascination for the three children, despite Atticus' warnings to leave him alone. Despite the way in which the community have gossiped about him, Boo's kindness involves leaving gifts for Jem and Scout and, ultimately, saving their lives.

TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

In the play, there are several characters who do not conform to society's expectations. Scout is a tomboy and is resistant to being made to behave otherwise. Dill's otherness has been expanded by Sorkin. He is a boy beginning to discover his sexual identity, as well as being the child of a (neglectful) single parent family.

A CALL TO ACTION

Throughout the play, the phrase 'All Rise' is used a number of times. Scout explains "Back then I imagined we were being summoned to do more than just stand. I imagined when the bailiff called "All rise" that something large was required of us. Something stunning, magnificent and rare". These two words form the final sentence of the play, spoken by Scout. The audience is challenged to continue the fight – it is the responsibility of every individual to be responsible for positive change.

FAMILY AND PARENTING

Jem and Scout's mother has died, and Dill's mother is physically absent. It emerges that he has never met his father, but has created a full history for himself, including the information that his father works on the railroads and that's why he is absent much of the time.

Watching the play, we realise that the children often inhabit the roles of parents and/or caregivers, even to the point of trying to protect Atticus from physical threats made by the mob at the courthouse.

CLASS AND POVERTY

The circumstances in which Mayella and Bob Ewell live are exposed during their testimonies. Mayella has saved money for twelve months in order to allow her siblings to enjoy an ice cream as a treat. The complex issues of neglect and abuse are also explored in the narrative between Mayella and her father, and the way in which the rest of the community perceive them.

Walter Cunningham, shamed by Scout when he is part of the mob that threatens Atticus, is also struggling with poverty in Depression-era America. He pays for legal counsel with material items such as chopped wood, or produce because he has no cash to pay for Atticus' services.

ADAPTING TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

AARON SORKIN is a well-known playwright and screenwriter and is responsible for some of the popular films and TV series in America. His first play, *A Few Good Men* was adapted into a film starring Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise, and his other works include *The Social Network*, *The West Wing* and *Molly's Game*.

Sorkin was approached by producers to adapt *To Kill a Mockingbird* for Broadway in 2017 and originally assumed that he would “just adapt the book and stand the important scenes up”³ but quickly found that he was simply trying to “swaddle the book in bubble wrap and gingerly put it on stage”⁴. When redrafting, Sorkin realised that for the play to work, Atticus (as this version's protagonist) needed a flaw, and that Harper Lee had actually provided one in the novel. When the novel is taught in schools it is easy to hail Atticus as a hero and the personification of justice and compassion, but when we look deeper, Atticus is too determined to see the good in people where none exists.

Aaron Sorkin notes that the original novel only focusses on two black characters, Tom Robinson and Calpurnia. Although there are other black characters in the novel (such as Reverend Sykes), none of them are given agency. Sorkin therefore provides much more opportunity for Calpurnia and Tom to convey their attitudes and experiences. In this adaptation, Reverend Sykes does not utter the lines that were included in both the novel and the 1962 film, “Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'”⁵. Instead, when Atticus tells Calpurnia, “I believe in being respectful”, Calpurnia responds, “No matter who you're disrespectin' by doin' it”⁶. Calpurnia also challenges Atticus in the following exchange:

I heard you say “you're welcome”. Back when you told me you'd be defending Tom Robinson. You told me and I guess I didn't react with sufficient gratitude and as I walked away, you said, under your breath, “you're welcome”. And I never thought that this house would be a place I'd have to remember to be grateful.”⁷

The cast and creative team of *Mockingbird* are keen to address the notion of Atticus Finch as ‘white saviour’ – a white man coming to the aid of a black man and ‘saving the day’. The trope is addressed by Sorkin who says, “there are a number of things that are turned on their head [in this production]”⁸. Calpurnia is able to tell Atticus, “I'm sorry for whatever ails Mrs Dubose but she was a negro-hatin' sack o' dirt before it was medicinally enhanced and she ain't the only one on the street”⁹. This Calpurnia articulates experience and emotion, as opposed to simply being concerned with Scout's clothes and diet. Explaining some of his decisions in the light of the original novel, Sorkin says, “There's no such thing as a ‘typical Black maid...plays aren't written about typical people doing typical things...’. Therefore, it's no surprise that Sorkin allows us to witness an interaction between Calpurnia and Atticus:

Calpurnia: Would it help if you crawled around in a different skin?

Atticus: They shouldn't have to live in fear right where they live.

Calpurnia: Lemme try hard to see if I can relate to that.¹⁰

Gbenga Akinagbe, who originated the role of Tom Robinson in the original Broadway production, notes that in this play, Atticus doesn't save the day and in 2022, the issues explored in the play have not vanished. When Atticus tells Calpurnia, “Joy cometh in the morning”¹¹, she replies, “morning's taking its sweet time getting here”. The audience is challenged to assume some responsibility for progress when Scout ends the play with “all rise”.

As the next generation of theatre makers and global citizens, we invite you to explore how you can do just that. Walter Cunningham, shamed by Scout when he is part of the mob that threatens Atticus, is also struggling with poverty in Depression-era America. He pays for legal counsel with material items such as chopped wood, or produce because he has no cash to pay for Atticus' services.

³ 1a podcast, <https://www.globalplayer.com/podcasts/episodes/7DraBzk/>

⁴ This Cultural Life, BBC Sounds, 2nd April, 2022

⁵ Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, (London: Mandarin, 1989) p.233

⁶ Aaron Sorkin, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 2018, p.98

⁷ Ibid. p. 97

⁸ 1a.

⁹ Sorkin, p. 98

¹⁰ Sorkin, p. 67

¹¹ From Thirtieth Psalms, Verse 5. “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”.

¹² “The Social Network” (Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay)

PSHE

Using your own programmes of study, you may wish to explore the following moments in the play. All quotations are taken from Aaron Sorkin's adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Note that race related language specific to the period is mentioned in this activity (discussion point 9)

1. RESPECT:

Atticus: I believe in being respectful.

Calpurnia: No matter who you're disrespectin' by doin' it

2. SOCIAL CHANGE:

Scout: All rise.

...

Atticus: Smaller armies have changed the world

3. DECENCY:

Scout: Isn't that what decency is? Trying to do the right thing is the right thing, that's what the man was saying."

4. CHANGE FOR THE BETTER:

Atticus: We can't go on like this, we know that, so let's hasten the change. Let's hasten the end of the beginning, let's do it right now in Maycomb. Let's begin with justice.

5. DISCRIMINATION IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM:

(Stage direction) Tom is confident, assured and well-rehearsed, while still aware that he's in front of a white jury.

6. THE WHITE SAVIOUR:

Calpurnia: I never thought that this house would be a place I'd have to remember to be grateful.

7. COMPASSION:

Heck Tate: Don't mean to contradict you, Mr Finch. He wasn't crazy, he was mean as hell."

8. KINDNESS IN ADVERSITY:

Atticus (to Dill): You have no business being kind. But there you are.

9. EXCUSES VS. EXPLANATIONS:

Atticus (to Jem): Men like Bob Ewell carry that humiliation with them like it was handed down. Every Negro face he sees walking free is a reminder. Remember what I said. A man will have his dignity.

Jem: That's a bad excuse.

10. CHILDHOOD:

Calpurnia (to Scout): You're just a child. You've seen some things you shouldn't a had to yet. And you've heard some things...I love what I see when I look atcha, Scout.

...

Dill's mother: Maybe this time you could try a little harder(at)...bein' a little quieter. Maybe not so many questions...or so many observations. It's just that they can rub people the wrong way sometimes.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

TASK: Look at this timeline which places events in the United States alongside events in Britain. Even though we might see the Civil Rights Movement as an American one, it is clear that Britain has its own history which we must examine, explore and understand.

Think of when members of your own family were born. How many of these events have happened during your lifetime, your siblings' or your parents'? What impact does that have on the way in which you consider these events. Which of these events particularly surprises you, and why?

How can you summarise how the world has progressed on issues of race, diversity, inclusion and tolerance?

The Jim Crow laws (which existed in the USA between 1865-1965) were a series of laws which enforced segregation, and limited access to activities that we might usually take for granted. Schools, libraries, hospitals, churches and even public bathrooms were subject to discriminatory laws that segregated black and white communities. You can see their influence, and resistance to them, in the timeline below.

The timeline represents key moments in both British and American history in the campaign for Civil Rights. Whilst this is by no means an exhaustive list, the events have been chosen to demonstrate landmark events in our distant and recent pasts, and to highlight the continued need to fight for equality, inclusion and freedom from discrimination.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1954: Brown vs. Board of Education legally ends segregation in schools. However, segregation continues in many schools.

1955: Emmett Till, a 14 year old boy, is lynched after being accused of wolf-whistling at a white woman. Decades later, the woman admits that she lied. The Guardian explains the case in more detail [here](#).

1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus, sparking the Montgomery bus boycott.

UNITED KINGDOM

1948: HMT Empire Windrush brings 1027 immigrants from Jamaica to Britain. This follows the British Nationality Act which allows the right to settle in the UK for everyone who was, at that time, a British subject (if they were born in a British colony).

1958: Notting Hill race riots occur in late August, beginning with a small domestic incident between Jamaican Ray Morrison and his Swedish wife Majbritt. Others become involved in the dispute, Black homes are targeted by white men, and Marjbritt herself is also attacked by white rioters. The riots last five days. The desire to heal the divides at this time eventually inspire the creation of the Notting Hill Carnival.

1959: Antiguan Kelso Cochrane is fatally stabbed on his way home from Paddington Hospital where he had received treatment for an injured thumb. Although suspects (a gang of young white men) are identified and arrested, no-one is ever convicted of the murder. Over 1200 people attend the funeral.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1960: *To Kill A Mockingbird* is published

The Greensborough Sit In takes place: four African American women refuse to leave a whites-only lunch counter.

1961: The Freedom Rides take place: white and African American civil rights activists challenge the segregated bus terminals in the American south by attempting to use the 'whites only' areas.

1962: *To Kill A Mockingbird* is released.

1963: John F Kennedy sends the National Guard to resolve a stand off when Governor George C Wallace stands in the doorway to block two Black students from registering at the University of Alabama.

Riots and violence in Birmingham, Alabama after four young girls are killed in a bomb attack at 16th Street Baptist Church.

During the March for Jobs and Freedom in Washington DC, Martin Luther King delivers his 'I Have A Dream' speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

1965: Malcolm X is assassinated.

Selma to Montgomery march.

President L.B. Johnson signs the Voting Right Acts of 1965, which abolishes literacy tests as part of the requirement for voting rights.

UNITED KINGDOM

1963: The Bristol Omnibus Company's policy of refusing employment for Black and Asian people sparked the 60 -day boycott organised by Paul Stephenson, a teacher. The ban was lifted on 28th August – the same day that Martin Luther King delivered his 'I Have a Dream' speech.

1964: Martin Luther King visits UK and preaches in StPaul's Cathedral.

1965: Malcolm X visits the UK just ten days before his assassination.

The Race Relations Act is passed, and extended in 1968 and 1976.

1966: Rhaune Laslett launches the Notting Hill Carnival

1967: A branch of Black Panther movement founded in the UK.

The National Front is formed, amalgamating the British National Party, the Racial Preservation Society and the League of Empire Loyalists. Anti-immigration – including the repatriation of all non-white immigrants – is a key issue used to recruit members. The party continues to grow in the coming decade as major immigration to the UK continues.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1968: Martin Luther King is assassinated. James Earl Ray is convicted of his murder the following year

UNITED KINGDOM

1968: MP Enoch Powell makes his 'Rivers of Blood' speech at The Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham, criticising mass immigration, and quotes several of his constituents who oppose increasing racial diversity in their constituency. He faces widespread criticism from Labour (who were then in power) and some Conservatives, whom Powell represents. He is sacked from his role of Shadow Defence Minister, sparking strikes by 2000 dockers in response to his dismissal.

1972: Idi Amin, president of Uganda, expels the Asian minority from the country. Many are British citizens, and move to the UK. 27,000 are eventually allowed to settle in the UK, but there are strong objections by some communities. One council even taking out newspaper adverts warning immigrants not to seek jobs in their city.

1981: Brixton riots caused by tensions between the police and local community. The riots last for 3 days. The New Cross Fire kills 13 people. Widely reported to be caused by a racist attack, a second inquest in 2004 upholds the fire was caused deliberately but was not a racially motivated action.

The Handsworth riots take place in Birmingham, partly in response to increasing use of stop and search powers by the police. A disproportionate number of those searched are Black.

The Toxteth riots in Liverpool also take place. 1981 is a year of social unrest, attributed mostly to racial tension.

1985: The Broadwater Farm riots are sparked by the death of Cynthia Jarrett who dies of heart failure during a police search of her home. PC Keith Blakelock is stabbed to death during the riots. The second Handsworth riots take place in Birmingham. These riots are more violent than those of 1981. Amirali and Kassamali Moledina are burnt to death in the Post Office that they run together.

1987: Four black MPs are elected, the first for 100 years. All are labour candidates: Dianne Abbott (the first Black female MP), Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1991: Rodney King is beaten by police, a 12 minute attack that is caught on video camera by a bystander who releases it to the media. King is later awarded over \$3million in damages. King dies by accidental drowning in 2012.

1992: The LA race riots are sparked by the acquittal of four police officers who were charged with use of excessive force in their arrest of Rodney King the previous year, despite the existence of video evidence. Ten of the twelve jurors are white. More than 50 people die and over 2300 people are injured in the violence.

2008: Barack Obama wins the US Election, becoming the 44th American President. He is the first African-American president of the United States of America.

UNITED KINGDOM

1993: Stephen Lawrence is murdered in an unprovoked, racially motivated attack. No one is found guilty until 2012, when Gary Dobson and David Norris are sent to prison, serving a minimum of 15 years and 2 months, and 14 years and three months respectively. More information from The Guardian can be found [here](#). Stephen's parents - Neville and Doreen Lawrence - campaign for justice over the coming decades.

Joy Gardner is killed during a police immigration raid on her home. In 1995, three police officers are found not guilty of manslaughter.

2000: Race Relations (Amendment) Act demands that institutions to take action to promote and ensure racial equality.

2001: Derek Bennett is shot and killed by police when he is mistakenly thought to be holding a gun.

2003: Doreen Lawrence is awarded an OBE (services to community relations).

2008: Doreen Lawrence opens an architecture centre named after her son Stephen. Racial motives are blamed for the four instances of vandalism which take place within two weeks of the centre opening.

2011: Mark Duggan is shot and killed by police. His death provokes rioting in London and in cities across England, which last for five days.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2013: Black Lives Matter movement is founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi. This follows the acquittal of George Zimmerman of the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012.

2014: The Ferguson unrest (also known as the Ferguson Riots) is caused by the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, by Darren Wilson, a police officer. Eric Garner is killed by a police officer, held in a chokehold, despite repeating "I can't breathe". These are the same words that are heard by George Floyd before he dies in 2020.

2016: Colin Kaepernick takes the knee before a football game, saying that he "cannot take pride in the flag of a country that oppresses Black people and people of colour."

Donald Trump wins the US Election and is inaugurated in January 2017.

2017: President Donald Trump encourages football supporters to leave the stadium if NFL players take the knee, and encourages team owners to sack players who make the gesture.

Barack Obama quotes Atticus Finch in his farewell speech at the end of his Presidential term of office.

2018: The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, is opened in Montgomery, Alabama.

To Kill a Mockingbird opens on Broadway.

UNITED KINGDOM

2015: The first Black Lives Matter chapter is started in Nottingham, UK.

2016: The first Black Lives Matter demonstrations take place.

2018: The Windrush Scandal – since 2013 the Home Office have received reports that members of the 'Windrush Generation' have been subject to proceedings that treated them as illegal immigrants, threatened with deportation and wrongfully detained.

2019: Teenager Greta Thunberg begins climate change protests and tells the UN Council "I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!... You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words."

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA AND UK: A TIMELINE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2020: George Floyd is murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin.

Breonna Taylor is fatally shot by police in her own home.

Joe Biden wins the US Election, defeating President Donald Trump.

2021: Derek Chauvin is found guilty of murdering George Floyd and sentenced to 22 ½ years in prison. His three colleagues are also found guilty of civil rights violations.

Joe Biden is inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. Poet Amanda Gorman reads her poem 'The Hill We Climb'.

The US Capitol is stormed by protestors: David Grossman, a member of the right wing militia group Proud Boy movement says they are "taking our country back".

2023 Tyre Nichols is brutally beaten by five Memphis police officers during a traffic stop. He died days later.

UNITED KINGDOM

2020: Manager Gareth Southgate confirms that the England football team will take the knee before games in the Euro 2020 World Cup. British Home Secretary Priti Patel calls the action 'gesture politics' and states that supporters have a right to 'boo' players who do.

2022: *To Kill a Mockingbird* opens in London after a two year delay caused by Covid-19.

2025: *To Kill a Mockingbird* begins its UK & Ireland Tour opening at Leeds Playhouse.

PSHE, DRAMA AND ENGLISH LESSONS

GUIDANCE FOR CONVERSATIONS

When discussing the sensitivities around race, diversity, and inclusion you may wish to:

Establish language to ensure accuracy.

The Global Majority refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities.’” (see the Children of Maycomb article for more information). Dominant culture is, according to Tiffany Jewell, “the group of people in society who hold the most power and are often (but not always) in the majority. In the US and the UK: people who are white, middle class, Christian and cisgender are the dominant culture.”

Establish boundaries around language.

The script for *To Kill A Mockingbird* includes the N-word. In rehearsals for the play, it could only be spoken out loud in the context of rehearsing or performing a scene. It could not be used in conversation, or outside of the rehearsal room. You may wish to explain this to your students, and work with them to establish rules around asking and answering questions, use of particular words, and how to express any discomfort with what is being discussed.

Provide trigger warnings.

During rehearsals, the cast would receive trigger warnings before dealing with specific scenes. In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, mention is made of neglect, physical and sexual abuse, violence and racism. Visual triggers include the use of hessian sacks made into hoods, as used by members of the Ku Klux Klan. Characters wearing these hoods enter the auditorium (stalls) in one scene at the end of Act One.

Seek support from your PSHE and RE leads in your school.

Your school will have experienced members of staff, school policies, as well as statutory guidance on delivering difficult content, that you can use to develop your own skills. Remember that it is all of our responsibility to inform and educate ourselves on these issues. A reading and resource list is included below.

RACE, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

REFERENCES FOR RESEARCH AND FURTHER READING:

Reading:

- Akala, Natives: *Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire*, Two Roads, 2019
- Tiffany Jewell, *This Book is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action and Do the Work*, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2020.
- Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race*, Bloomsbury, 2018
- David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Short Essential History*, Macmillan Children's Books, 2020
- Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy: How to Recognise Your Privilege, Combat Racism and Change the World*, Quercus, 2020
- David Brown, *A Concise American History*, Routledge, 2020

Podcasts:

- *Speaking of Racism*
- *Good Ancestor Podcast* with Layla F. Saad
- *Escape: the Underground Railroad Podcast* (contains strong language)
- *How To Fail with Elizabeth Day, S9, How to Fail: Claudia Rankine*
- The Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families has a series of podcasts that discuss the link between racism and mental health.
- *BBC World Service Witness Archive* includes coverage of the voyage of Windrush, Rodney King and the LA riots, the 16th Street Bombing and Brown vs the Board of Education.

DRAMA: LIVE PRODUCTION

WATCHING THE SHOW

Before the show:

The production is narrated by the three children – Scout, Jem and Dill – who are also involved in the action. There are a number of different locations, including:

- The porch of the Finch house
- The courtroom
- A room in the Finch house
- Outside the court house
- Mrs Dubose's garden

With your teacher, decide what each member of your class will focus on when making notes and/or doing research. Use these headings to help you.

- **Characterisation:** Actors' performances. Focus on one or more of the following: Jem, Scout, Dill, Atticus, Tom Robinson, Calpurnia, Mayella Ewell, Bob Ewell, Mrs Dubose.
- **Costume design:** What do the costumes tell you about character, period, and theme? The play is set in the early 1930s, during the Depression. Class is a major theme in the play, as well as difference and intolerance. How is this communicated through costume design?
- **Set design:** Creating location, period, mood and atmosphere. The play is narrated by the three children, and the narrative moves swiftly from the courtroom to other locations in Maycomb. Note the transitions between scenes, as well as the sets themselves. How has the designer ensured that the action is not interrupted?
- **Sound and music:** Notice the use of recorded sound and live singing to underscore the action. How is the audience encouraged to 'buy in' to this possibly unexpected use of music?
- **Lighting design:** The brightness of the court scene is one way of exposing the injustice that is happening in Maycomb. Lighting is also used to suggest the oppressive heat of Maycomb, in the Deep South of America. Note how lighting is used to suggest time and weather, as well as to create mood and atmosphere. How does the lighting designer also ensure the audience is looking at the most important point of the stage in key scenes?

After watching the production, set up a shared document (for example a Google Doc) on to which you can all right your assigned information. This will help you create a strong overview of key moments in the production and enable you to evaluate what you saw.

After the show:

Annotate these key scenes to help you remember key points in the performance and the different production elements that have been used.

Prompt questions:



- Mayella finds the courtroom setting intimidating. There are various uniforms, and items of characters' clothing that might make her feel inferior. What can you see in this photograph that suggests this?
- Maycomb is in the Deep South of the United States. It is a very hot summer. How do the costumes in this photograph suggest this?
- What can you infer from Mayella from their costume in this photograph?



- In this photograph, Dill is moving amongst the people in the courtroom whilst telling the story. What do you notice about the eye gaze of the various characters?
- How are the actors using their facial expression and body language to communicate the tension and worry felt by the characters in this photograph?
- How is period and setting created by the set design in this photograph?



- Calpurnia is the Finch family's housekeeper. What does her costume suggest about her status?
- How does this actor convey her character using her body language and facial expression here?



- How do the two performers sitting on the veranda communicate their emotions in this scene?
- How does the set design suggest location and period, as well as the sense of a family home?

WRITING ABOUT THE PRODUCTION: CHECKLIST

For each statement, identify your confidence in each of the skills.

Green = completely confident

Amber = with support I can do this

Red = I cannot do this

For those skills that you identify as red or amber, what next steps do you need to take to move towards green?

PRODUCTION ELEMENT:

ACTING

"I CAN" STATEMENTS

GREEN / AMBER / RED

I can...

Explain how the characters of Scout, Jem and Dill were created through the use of vocal, facial expression in at least 3 moments in the production.

Describe how a relationship between the three children was created through the use of space, levels and eye contact.

Evaluate how the actors playing the children interacted with performers playing Atticus and Calpurnia.

Evaluate the way in which a performer (one or more of the children) delivered a monologue to the audience when telling the story.

Explain how the characters of Bob and Mayella Ewell were communicated.

Explain how the ensemble created i) the courtroom community ii) the mob outside the courtroom.

PRODUCTION ELEMENT:
SET

“I CAN” STATEMENTS

GREEN / AMBER / RED

I can...

Explain and evaluate the stage configuration for the production.

Describe and evaluate the set design for the court scenes.

Describe and evaluate the set design for the porch of the Finch house.

Describe and evaluate how the location of the exterior of the courthouse is created.

Evaluate how the set design aided swift transitions between scenes and locations.

Describe and evaluate the way in which the auditorium was used to bring the reality of racism and aggression even closer to the audience.

PRODUCTION ELEMENT:
COSTUME

“I CAN” STATEMENTS

GREEN / AMBER / RED

I can...

Describe the costumes worn by Dill, Jem and Scout and how they created a sense of character and narrative.

Describe Atticus’ costumes and evaluate how it communicated his character.

Explain and evaluate the costumes worn by Calpurnia to give a sense of character and a sense of location and culture.

Explain and evaluate the costume worn by Tom Robinson.

Explain and evaluate the use of costumes for Bob and Mayella Ewell, with particular reference to their poverty.

Explain the costumes worn by members of the ensemble to create a sense.

PRODUCTION ELEMENT:
LIGHTING

“I CAN” STATEMENTS

GREEN / AMBER / RED

I can...

Describe how lighting created a sense of setting, mood and atmosphere at the beginning of the performance.

Explain and evaluate how lighting was used to create the heat and oppressive atmosphere of Maycomb.

Explain and evaluate how lighting was used in two key moments in the courthouse.

Explain and evaluate the lighting used in the moments where Bob Ewell are attacked.

PRODUCTION ELEMENT:
SOUND

“I CAN” STATEMENTS

GREEN / AMBER / RED

I can...

Describe and evaluate the use of music in key scenes in the play.

DRAMA: STUDIO ACTIVITIES

DEVISING TASK

Norman Rockwell's painting; *The Problem We All Live With*, depicts six year old Ruby Bridges on her first day at William Franz Elementary School in New Orleans in 1960. Look closely at the painting, and the accompanying information here.

How might you use this painting, and your understanding of the painter's methods (such as placing the viewer's gaze at Ruby's level, rather than providing an adult's perspective) to create a piece of drama?

Discussion:

Aaron Sorkin says, "You have in the jury, 12 characters who know as little as the audience does. There's a reason to tell the jury everything that the audience doesn't know."

How can you link this statement with the decision to stage the play with 12 empty jurors' chairs? What position is the audience placed in, as a result of using this device? Can you link this with Scout's final words of the play, "All rise"?

ACTING ACTIVITY: THE CLOSING SPEECH

Read and rehearse this speech. Work with a partner to identify objectives for each short section, and consider how you would stage this in your own drama space to make the most impact.

Scout

Dill never came back the next summer. We never saw him again. I thought I spied him one time across the campus green when I was in law school, but it wasn't him. I'm just thinking -

(pause)

Sorry, I'm just thinking why did Atticus go into the hospital room alone? Why did I have to wait in the hall? And what did he and Jem talk about for ten minutes?

(pause)

I'll be damned...A sheriff...and a judge...and the most honest and decent person in Maycomb - the most honest and decent person-

(pause)

You know...you know, there was a religious man who once said, "Lord, I don't always know the right thing to do, but I think my desire to please you pleases you."

(beat)

Isn't that what decency is? Trying to do the right thing is the right thing, that's what the man was saying, so...

(pause)

...I was wrong. Bob Ewell fell on his knife. And I'm alright leavin' it at that

(Scout and Jem and Dill exchange looks)

And that night, the last night of the summer, Atticus sat by Jem's bed 'till the sun came up. I tried staying awake too but I couldn't make it all the way. Just as I fell asleep I heard Atticus whisper-

Atticus

You rest now, son. I'll be doin' the fightin' from here on.

Scout

All rise.

To Kill A Mockingbird, Aaron Sorkin

ACTING ACTIVITY: THE OPENING SCENE

In groups of four, work on rehearsing this scene. The fourth group member should consider the lighting for this scene, which must provide the opportunity for swift transitions to subsequent scenes, as well as establishing the mood and setting an atmosphere.

Content warning: mention of suicide.

AT RISE:

TWO BOYS AND A GIRL STAND ON AN OTHERWISE EMPTY STAGE. THEY ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE AND EACH OTHER.

Scout

Something didn't make sense. On September 2nd, 1934, the Maycomb Tribune reported, on page 3 in the lower right corner, that Mr. Bob Ewell died instantly when he fell on his knife. But why would his knife be pointed toward his chest when he fell?

Jem

He was drunk.

Scout

I've seen plenty of drunks and they may not be able to recite their own names but they know which end of a knife to be concerned with. Why was it pointed toward his chest?

Jem

Suicide.

Scout

You think after beating on me and beating on you he suddenly decided to kill himself?

Jem

Maybe.

Scout

Why?

Jem

Remorse.

Scout

Bob Ewell was incapable of experiencing that emotion and nobody kills themselves with a knife. What's more, the story in the Tribune said that broken glass was found in the pocket of his trousers. The drunks keep those bottles in the backside pockets so why did it break if he fell flat on his chest?

Jem

I don't know, why don't we leave it be.

Scout

(to the AUDIENCE)
I know what you all are thinking.

Jem

Which is more than they can say for you.

Scout

You're thinking that if Bob Ewell didn't fall on his knife, it means someone else in this story was responsible. It would also mean that the most honest and decent person in Maycomb--the most honest and decent person--was harboring a lie.

Dill

Juliet.

Jem

What?

Dill

Juliet killed herself with a knife. At the end of the play when Romeo's dead because he didn't know the poison Juliet took was only temporary. Powerful plot twist.

Jem

That was helpful, Dill, but I don't think Mr. Ewell knocked my sister down, broke my arm, knocked me unconscious and then performed the final scene from Romeo and Juliet.

Scout

Here's what we can agree on. My brother, Jeremy Finch, who everyone calls "Jem" and who, as he's happy to tell anyone who'll stand still long enough to listen, is four years older than me, was knocked unconscious and had his arm broke just above the elbow. It happened on the last night of summer. We can agree on this fact.

Jem

Nope.

Scout

Evidently we can not agree on this fact.

Jem

It happened on the last night of summer but it began much earlier.

Scout

Jem means it began with the trial of Tom Robinson.

Jem

No.

Scout

That is not what Jem means.

Dill

It began when I said we should make Boo Radley come out of his house.

Jem

It began with General Andrew Jackson.

Scout

What?!

Jem

If Jackson hadn't run the Creek Indians up the creek then our great, great-grandfather, Simon Finch--

Scout

Oh it started with the damn trial!

Jem

Fine. Agreed.

Jem

Do you even know what we're talking about?

Dill

I know most of it but if Bob Ewell didn't fall on his knife. I don't know the end. But I do know it started with the trial.

(THE STAGE WILL NOW BEGIN TO FILL WITH WHATEVER THE NARRATORS ARE DESCRIBING)

To Kill A Mockingbird, Aaron Sorkin

ENGLISH: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION OR WRITTEN TASK:

Atticus, the 'hero' with the fatal flaw

Aaron Sorkin says, "*Atticus does have a flaw, but we've been taught that it's a virtue to see the good in everyone*".

The legacy of the novel, and the film starring Gregory Peck, has presented a view of Atticus of a 'hero'. However, Sorkin's adaptation finds the flaw in Atticus' character that was, in fact, always present in the novel. Atticus believes a little too fiercely in the goodness of everyone.

Discuss how the play presents this new interpretation of Atticus, with reference to the original novel. You may wish to discuss:

- The omission of the line "*stand up... your father's passing*" which is uttered by Reverend Sykes in the novel, as Atticus leaves the courtroom.
- The reduction of encounters the audience has with Mrs Dubose, who appears several times in the first half of the novel. How does her one main scene on stage intensify the impact of her hateful comments to Jem in the play? Why does it create a much stronger reaction from the audience?

RESEARCH AND DEBATE:

A Story for the 21st Century?

Does the novel stand the test of time? How do changing attitudes affect the place of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the literary canon? What books might now take its place in your school curriculum? What do you notice about the writers and narrators of books in the 21st century that deal with similar issues as Harper Lee in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

Harper Lee was famously reclusive and refused most requests for interviews. In 2015, a prequel to the novel was published called *Go Set a Watchman*. Its publication was not without controversy, with moral questions asked about Lee's willingness to publish it. It also presents Atticus as expressing some racist opinions which undermine his status as a staunch supporter of the Black community in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Read the novel and compare it to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Write a review and share it with your class.

CREATIVE WRITING TASK:

Updating the novel

If the story was written now, how might it be different in tone, literary devices and narrative perspective? Write part of the first or last chapter, or a key moment in the narrative, to explore what these differences might be.

ADAPTATION TASK:

Making a pitch

Aaron Sorkin and the production team are keen not to reproduce the popular 1962 film starring Gregory Peck. Create a pitch for a new film version. Include casting, changes to the original novel, designs for the locations and suggestions for marketing material to appeal to diverse audiences. Present these to your class. Perhaps your teacher might offer a prize for the most successful pitch!

CAREERS

There's a lot more to working in theatre than performing! As well as the obvious creative and performance based roles, the theatre industry relies on bookkeepers and accountants, physiotherapists, HR, Press & Marketing, engineers, hospitality roles and many. Take a look at the production programme for *To Kill a Mockingbird* to see just how many people it takes to mount a West End production. Consider your interests, skills and strengths. Can you see where you might fit in to a production team, now that you've seen that list?!

You may also see roles that you might not be familiar with. For example, this production has a Cultural Co-Ordinator.

Tavia Rivee Jefferson talks about her role here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3GXYcK7Njg

You can see how Bartlett Sher (director) and Aaron Sorkin worked on the production here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xiljo0bkH6g

Find out more about how to find and access training for the theatre industry by looking at the following websites:

- **Get Into Theatre** www.getintothetheatre.org
An in-depth exploration of roles and opportunities to work in the theatre industry.
- **Federation of Drama Schools** www.federationofdramaschools.co.uk
- **Open Door** www.opendoor.org.uk
An award- winning organisation helping young people who do not have financial support or resources to apply for the UK's leading drama schools.
- **Inspiring the Future** www.inspiringthefuture.org/secondary-and-colleges
A great resource for teachers and enhances curriculum provision by making links with practitioners and artists.
- **Go Live Theatre Projects** www.golivetheatre.org.uk