



# The Society of Maycomb and its Influence on Jem and Scout in "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee

By Kathrin Hoffmann

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Bachelor Thesis from the year 2011 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7, University of Tübingen, language: English, abstract: In July 2010, the town of Monroeville, Alabama, threw a big birthday party for the book it is most known for: The home town of author Harper Lee celebrated the 50th anniversary of the publication of her extremely successful novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Having always been a "magnet for 'Mockingbird' fans", the town organized "walking tours and marathon readings of the novel in the courthouse" (CBS News). In the US, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is part of the curriculum of many school districts, highlighting its never-ending fame and its significance. Harper Lee went on to win a Pulitzer Prize for the novel in 1961. At that time, the novel was already a major success, having sold 500,000 copies (cf. Sullivan). In 1962, it was made into a movie, starring Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch. The movie received two Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Screenplay. As of today, the book has been translated into 40 languages, has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide, and is still selling about 750,000 copies every year (cf. Sullivan). Monroeville is not only the home of Harper Lee, but it also serves as the model for the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, in which the novel is set. As a matter of fact, scenes of the movie were filmed in Monroeville. Apart from the setting of the novel, readers and critics were quick to detect other similarities between Harper Lee and the narrator, the six-year-old girl, Scout Finch (whose real name is Jean Louise). Just as Scout's father Atticus Finch, Harper Lee's father Amasa was a lawyer. When Harper Lee was growing up, nine young African-American men were innocently accused and found guilty of raping two white women in the Scottsboro Trials, similar to Tom Robinson's fate in the novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an important novel for both young and old readers because of its appealing way to

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## The Society of Maycomb and its Influence on Jem and Scout in "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee By Kathrin Hoffmann Bibliography

- Rank: #9858863 in Books
- Published on: 2014-03-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.27" h x .9" w x 5.83" l, .13 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 36 pages

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