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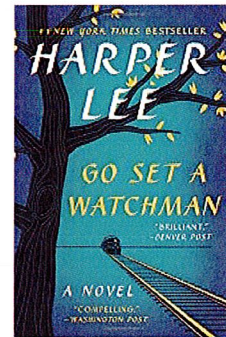
Go Set a Watchman

Harper Lee, 2015

HarperCollins

288 pp.

ISBN-13: 9780062409867



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Summary

From Harper Lee comes a landmark new novel set two decades after her beloved Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Maycomb, Alabama. Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch—"Scout"—returns home from New York City to visit her aging father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise's homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town, and the people dearest to her.

Memories from her childhood flood back, and her values and assumptions are thrown into doubt. Featuring many of the iconic characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman* perfectly captures a young woman, and a world, in painful yet necessary transition out of the illusions of the past—a journey that can only be guided by one's own conscience.

Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* imparts a fuller, richer understanding and appreciation of Harper Lee. Here is an unforgettable novel of wisdom, humanity, passion, humor, and effortless precision—a profoundly affecting work of art that is both wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times.

It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context, and new meaning to an American classic. (*From the publisher.*)

Author Bio

- Birth—April 28, 1926
- Where—Monroeville, Alabama, USA
- Education—B.A. (later studied law), University of Alabama
- Awards—Pulitzer Prize, 1961; Presidential Medal of Freedom, 2007
- Currently—Monroeville, Alabama

Harper Lee, known to friends and family as Nelle, was born in the small southwestern Alabama town of Monroeville, Alabama, on April 28, 1926, the youngest of four children. Her father, a former newspaper editor and proprietor, was a lawyer who also served on the state legislature from 1926 to 1938. As a child, Lee was a tomboy and a precocious reader, and enjoyed the friendship of her schoolmate and neighbor, the young Truman Capote.

While pursuing a law degree at the University of Alabama, she wrote for several student publications and spent a year as editor of the campus humor magazine, *Ramma-Jamma*. Though she did not complete the law degree, she pursued studies for a summer in Oxford, England, before moving to New York in 1950, where she worked as a reservation clerk with Eastern Air Lines and BOAC in New York City. Lee continued working as a reservation clerk until the late 50s, when she resolved to devote herself to writing.

She lived a frugal lifestyle, traveling between her cold-water-only apartment in New York to her family home in Alabama to care for her ailing father. Having written several long stories, Harper Lee located an agent in November 1956. The following month at the East 50th townhouse of her friends writer Michael Brown and Joy Williams Brown, she received a gift of a year's wages with a note: "You have one year off from your job to write whatever you please. Merry Christmas." Within a year, she had a first draft. Working closely with J. B. Lippincott & Co. editor Tay Hohoff, she completed *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the summer of 1959.

Published July 11, 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was an immediate bestseller and won her great critical acclaim, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. It remains a bestseller today, with over 30 million copies in print. In 1999, it was voted "Best Novel of the Century" in a poll conducted by the *Library Journal*.

After completing *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee accompanied Capote to Holcomb, Kansas, to assist him in researching what they thought would be an article on a small town's response to the murder of a farmer and his family. Capote expanded the material into his best-selling book, *In Cold Blood* (1966). The experiences of Capote and Lee in Holcomb were depicted in two different films, *Capote* (2005) and *Infamous* (2006).

Lee said of the 1962 Academy Award-winning screenplay adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Horton Foote: "If the integrity of a film adaptation can be measured by the degree to which the novelist's intent is preserved, Mr. Foote's scene-play should be studied as a classic." She also became a close friend of Gregory Peck, who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Atticus Finch, the father of the novel's narrator, Scout. She remains close to the actor's family. Peck's grandson, Harper Peck Voll, is named after her.

Later honors and recognition

In June 1966, Lee was one of two persons named by President Lyndon B. Johnson to

the National Council on the Arts. On May 21, 2006, she accepted an honorary degree from the University of Notre Dame. To honor her, the graduating seniors were given copies of *Mockingbird* before the ceremony and held them up when she received her degree. In a letter published in Oprah Winfrey's magazine *O* (May 2006), Lee wrote about her early love of books as a child and her steadfast dedication to the written word: "Now, 75 years later in an abundant society where people have laptops, cell phones, iPods and minds like empty rooms, I still plod along with books." In 2007 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush.

Go Set a Watchman

According to Lee's lawyer Tonja Carter, following an initial meeting to appraise Lee's assets in 2011, she re-examined Lee's safe-deposit box in 2014 and found the manuscript for *Go Set a Watchman*. After contacting Lee and reading the manuscript, she passed it on to Lee's agent Andrew Nurnberg.

On February 3, 2015, it was announced that HarperCollins would publish *Go Set a Watchman*, which includes versions of many of the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. According to a HarperCollins press release, it was originally thought that the *Watchman* manuscript was lost. According to Nurnberg, *Mockingbird* was originally intended to be the first book of a trilogy: "They discussed publishing *Mockingbird* first, *Watchman* last, and a shorter connecting novel between the two."

Jonathan Mahlers account of how *Watchman* was only ever really considered to be the first draft of *Mockingbird*, however, makes this assertion seem unlikely at best. Evidence where the same passages exist in both books, in many cases word for word, also further refutes this assertion.

The book was published to controversy in July, 2015, as a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, though it has been confirmed to be only the first draft of the latter, with many narrative incongruities, repackaged and released as a completely separate work.

The book is set some 20 years after the time period depicted in *Mockingbird*, when Scout returns as an adult from New York to visit her father in Maycomb, Alabama. It alludes to Scout's view of her father, Atticus Finch, as the moral compass ("watchman") of Maycomb, and, according to the publisher, how she finds upon her return to Maycomb, that she...

is forced to grapple with issues both personal and political as she tries to understand her father's attitude toward society and her own feelings about the place where she was born and spent her childhood.

The publication of the novel (announced by her lawyer) raised concerns over why Lee, who for 55 years had maintained that she would never write another book, would suddenly choose to publish again.

In February 2015, the State of Alabama, through its Human Resources Department, launched an investigation into whether Lee was competent enough to consent to the publishing of *Go Set a Watchman*. The investigation found that the claims of coercion and elder abuse were unfounded, and, according to Lee's lawyer, Lee is "happy as hell" with the publication.

This characterisation, however, has been contested by many friends of Lee. Marja Mills, author of, *The Mockingbird Next Door: Life with Harper Lee*, a friend and former neighbor of Lee and her older sister Alice, paints a very different picture. In her piece for *The Washington Post*, "The Harper Lee I Knew," she quotes Lee's sister Alice, whom she describes as "gatekeeper, advisor, protector" for most of Lee's adult life, as saying...

*Poor Nelle Harper can't see and can't hear and will sign anything
put before her by anyone in whom she has confidence.*

She makes note that *Watchman* was announced just two and a half months after Alice's death and that all correspondence to and from Lee goes through her new attorney. She describes Lee as...

*in a wheelchair in an assisted living center, nearly deaf and blind,
with a uniformed guard posted at the door [and visitors]
restricted to those on an approved list.*

New York Times columnist Joe Nocera supports this argument. He also takes issue with how the book has been promoted by the "Murdoch Empire" as a "newly discovered" novel, attesting that the other people in the Sothebys meeting insist that Lee's attorney Carter was present when the manuscript was first found—in 2011, not 2014—by Lee's former agent (who was subsequently fired) and the Sotheby's specialist. They claim Carter knew full well that it was the same one submitted to Tay Hohoff in the 1950's and reworked into *Mockingbird*—and that Carter has been sitting on the discovery, waiting for the moment when she, not Harper's sister Alice, would be in charge of Harper Lee's affairs.

Stephen Peck, son of actor Gregory Peck has also expressed concern. Responding to the question of how he thinks his father would have reacted to the book, he says that his father "would have appreciated the discussion the book has prompted, but would have been troubled by the decision to publish it."

Peck notes that his father considered Lee a dear friend. She gave him the pocket watch that had belonged to her father, on whom she modeled Atticus and that Gregory wore it the night he won an Oscar for the role. Stephen, who is president and chief executive of the United States Veterans Initiative, goes on to say, "I think he would have felt very protective of her," and he believed his father would have counseled Lee not to publish *Watchman* because it could taint *Mockingbird*, one of the most beloved novels [in] American history.

Later in the same article, which was posted in *The Wall Street Journal*, Stephen Peck says,

To me, it was an unedited draft. Do you want to put that early version out there or do you want to put it in the University of Alabama archives for scholars to look at?

(Adapted from Wikipedia. Retrieved 8/16/2015.)

Book Reviews

Don't let *Go Set a Watchman* change the way you think about Atticus Finch...the hard truth is that a man such as Atticus, born barely a decade after Reconstruction to a family of Southern gentry, would have had a complicated and tortuous history with race.

Los Angeles Times

[*Go Set a Watchman*] contains the familiar pleasures of Ms. Lee's writing—the easy, drawling rhythms, the flashes of insouciant humor, the love of anecdote.

Wall Street Journal

Watchman is compelling in its timeliness.

Washington Post

A significant aspect of this novel is that it asks us to see Atticus now not merely as a hero, a god, but as a flesh-and-blood man with shortcomings and moral failing, enabling us to see ourselves for all our complexities and contradictions.

Washington Post

The success of *Go Set a Watchman*... lies both in its depiction of Jean Louise reckoning with her father's beliefs, and in the manner by which it integrates those beliefs into the Atticus we know.

Time

Go Set a Watchman's greatest asset may be its role in sparking frank discussion about America's woeful track record when it comes to racial equality.

San Francisco Chronicle

Go Set a Watchman comes to us at exactly the right moment. All important works of art do. They come when we don't know how much we need them.

Chicago Tribune

[T]he voice we came to know so well in *To Kill a Mockingbird*—funny, ornery, rulebreaking—is right here in *Go Set a Watchman*, too, as exasperating and captivating as ever.

Chicago Tribune

What makes *Go Set a Watchman* memorable is its sophisticated and even prescient view of the long march for racial justice. Remarkably, a novel written that long ago has a lot to say about our current struggles with race and inequality.

Chicago Tribune

[*Go Set a Watchman*] captures some of the same small-town Southern humor and preoccupation with America's great struggle: race.

Columbus Dispatch

Go Set a Watchman's gorgeous opening is better than we could have expected.

Vanity Fair

Go Set a Watchman is more complex than Harper Lee's original classic. A satisfying novel... it is, in most respects, a new work, and a pleasure, revelation and genuine literary event.

Guardian (UK)

Lee's ability with description is evident... with long sentences beautifully rendered and evoking a world long lost to history, but welcoming all the same.

CNN.com

A coming-of-age novel in which Scout becomes her own woman.... *Go Set a Watchman's* voice is beguiling and distinctive, and reminiscent of *Mockingbird*. (It) can't be dismissed as literary scraps from Lee's imagination. It has too much integrity for that.

Independent (UK)

Go Set a Watchman provides valuable insight into the generous, complex mind of one of America's most important authors.

USA Today

Atticus' complexity makes *Go Set a Watchman* worth reading. With *Mockingbird*,

Harper Lee made us question what we know and who we think we are. *Go Set a Watchman* continues in this noble literary tradition.

New York Post

A deftly written tale...there's something undeniably comforting and familiar about sinking into Lee's prose once again.

People

As Faulkner said, the only good stories are the ones about the human heart in conflict with itself. And that's a pretty good summation of *Go Set a Watchman*.

Daily Beast

Go Set a Watchman offers a rich and complex story... To make the novel about pinning the right label on Atticus is to miss the point.

Bloomberg View

Harper Lee's second novel sheds more light on our world than its predecessor did.

Time

[*Go Set a Watchman* is a] brilliant book that ruthlessly examines race relations.

Denver Post

Go Set a Watchman is such an important book, perhaps the most important novel on race to come out of the white South in decades...

New York Times Opinion Pages: Taking Note

In this powerful newly published story about the Finch family, Lee presents a wider window into the white Southern heart, and tells us it is finally time for us all to shatter the false gods of the past and be free.

NPR's "Code Switch"

[*Go Set a Watchman* is] filled with the evocative language, realistic dialogue and sense of place that partially explains what made *Mockingbird* so beloved.

Buffalo News

The editor who rejected Lee's first effort had the right idea. [*Watchman*] is clearly the work of a novice, with poor characterization (how did the beloved Scout grow up to be such a preachy bore, even as she serves as the book's moral compass?),

lengthy exposition, and ultimately not much story, unless you consider Scout thinking she's pregnant because she was French-kissed...compelling.... The temptation to publish another Lee novel was undoubtedly great, but it's a little like finding out there's no Santa Claus.

Publishers Weekly

Scout...[is] returning home from New York to Maycomb Junction, AL, post-Brown v. Board of Education and encountering strongly resistant states'-rights, anti-integrationist forces that include boyfriend Henry and, significantly, her father, Atticus Finch.... Readers shocked by that revelation must remember that...the work in hand is not a sequel but served as source material for Lee's eventual Pulitzer Prize winner, with such reworked characters a natural part of the writing and editing processes. —Barbara Hoffert

Library Journal

[*Go Set a Watchman*] too often reads like a first draft, but Lee's story nonetheless has weight and gravity.... As Scout wanders from porch to porch and parlor to parlor on both the black and white sides of the tracks, she hears stories that complicate her—and our—understanding of her father. To modern eyes, Atticus harbors racist sentiments.... Lee...writes of class, religion, and race, but most affectingly of the clash of generations and traditions.... It's not *To Kill a Mockingbird*, yes, but it's very much worth reading.

Kirkus Reviews

Discussion Questions

1. *Go Set a Watchman* takes place more than twenty years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* begins. When *Wa t c h m a n* opens, Jean Louise Finch—now twenty-six and living in the North, in New York City—is returning to her hometown of Maycomb, Alabama. Describe the Maycomb of *Go Set a Watchman*. If you have read *Mockingbird*, has the town changed in the intervening years? If so, how?
2. Harper Lee writes, “Until comparatively recently in its history, Maycomb County was so cut off from the rest of the nation that some of its citizens, unaware of the South’s political predilections over the past ninety years, still voted Republican.” What are these predilections, and where do they originate? What is Harper Lee telling us about the period and the politics and attitudes of this small Southern town?
3. Maycomb is a town without train service, and its bus service “was erratic and seemed to go nowhere.” How does this lack of connection isolate the citizens of Maycomb, and how does that isolation affect how they see themselves and outsiders? Early in the novel, her longtime friend Henry Clinton tells her “you’re gonna see Maycomb change its face completely in our lifetime.” What does he foresee that Jean Louise cannot—or perhaps does not want to see?

4. Think about the extended Finch family. What is their status in Maycomb? What is the significance of being a Finch in this small Southern town? Does it afford them privileges—as well as expectations of them and responsibilities—that other families do not share? Do the Finches have freedoms that others do not enjoy?

5. Describe the Jean Louise Finch of *Watchman*. How does this grown-up woman compare to her younger self? How does Jean Louise conform—or not—to the ideal of womanhood in the 1950s? What was that ideal? Compare her to her Aunt Alexandra and the women of Maycomb. Does she fit in with these women? What did you learn about them at the Coffee social that Aunt Alexandra hosts in Jean Louise's honor? In both *Mockingbird* and *Watchman*, Alexandra tells Jean Louise that she is part of a genteel family and that she must act like a "lady." How did ladies "act" in the first half of the twentieth century and is there such a thing as a "lady" today?

6. Has living away from Maycomb—and in a place like New York—had an impact on Jean Louise? What does she think about New York and life there? What does the big city offer her that Maycomb does not—and vice versa? Now that Atticus is older and suffering from arthritis, why doesn't Jean Louise move back to Maycomb permanently? "Maycomb expected every daughter to do her duty. The duty of his only daughter to her widowed father after the death of his only son was clear: Jean Louise would return and make her home with Atticus; that was what a daughter did, and she who did not was no daughter." What responsibilities do children—especially female children—owe their parents?

7. Describe the relationship between Jean Louise and Atticus at the beginning of the novel. Does Jean Louise idealize her father too much? How does she react when she discovers that her father is a flawed human being? How does this discovery alter her sense of herself, her family, and her world? By the novel's end, how do father and daughter accommodate each other?

8. Talk about the Atticus portrayed in *Go Set a Watchman*. If you read *Watchman* first, how might the novel color your ideas about the Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? What was your reaction to some of the opinions he voices in *Watchman*? Do they make him a more realistic—if less heroic—character than that portrayed in *Mockingbird*? Is Atticus racist? Would he consider himself to be racist?

9. "Integrity, humor, and patience were the three words for Atticus Finch." After your reading of *Watchman*, do these three words still hold true? What words would you use to describe him?

10. What are Jean Louise's feelings toward Henry Clinton? Would he make a good husband for her? Both her aunt and her uncle tell her that Henry isn't "suitable," that he "is not her kind." What do they mean, and what does it mean to Jean Louise? Is it strictly because of Henry's background or is there something more? What adjectives would you use to describe Henry's character?

11. Is Henry like Atticus, his mentor and friend? Is Jean Louise's assessment of Henry later in the novel correct? Are Henry and Atticus good men? Can you be a moral person and hold views that may be unacceptable to most people? How do Atticus's actions toward the blacks of Maycomb compare with his views about them?

12. Why does Maycomb have a citizens' council, and why does this upset Jean Louise when she discovers that nearly everyone in town belongs to it? By allowing the likes of a racist segregationist like Grady O'Hanlon to speak at the meeting, are Atticus and Henry defending O'Hanlon's First Amendment right to free speech—or are they condoning his message?

13. Harper Lee writes, "Had she been able to think, Jean Louise might have prevented events to come by considering the day's occurrences in terms of a recurring story as old as time: the chapter which concerned her began two hundred years ago and was played out in a proud society the bloodiest war and harshest peace in modern history could not destroy, returning, to be played out again on private ground in the twilight of a civilization no wars and no peace could save." Why would this realization have helped Jean Louise? Are we still fighting the Civil War today?

14. Harper Lee offers a window into Jean Louise's turmoil after she attends the citizens' council meeting. "Had she insight, could she have pierced the barriers of her highly selective, insular world, she may have discovered that all her life she had been with a visual defect which had gone unnoticed and neglected by herself and by those closest to her: she was born color blind." Why is Jean Louise's color blindness a "visual defect"? How does being color blind shape who she is and how she sees the world?

15. Trying to reconcile the knowledge Jean Louise has learned with her views of those she loves forces her to confront painful questions. "What was this blight that had come down over the people she loved? Did she see it in stark relief because she had been away from it? Had it percolated gradually through the years until now? Had it always been under her nose for her to see if she had only looked? No, not the last." What makes her say no to this question? And finally, "What turned ordinary men into screaming dirt at the top of their voices, what made her kind of people harden and say 'nigger' when the word had never crossed their lips before?" What answers can you give her?

16. What kind of reception does Jean Louise receive in the Quarters when she visits Calpurnia, the Finches' retired housekeeper? How does Calpurnia react to seeing Jean Louise, and what is Calpurnia's response when Jean Louise asks her how she truly felt about her family? Would Calpurnia have answered the same way if asked that question a few years earlier—or if asked a few years later?

17. Near the novel's end, Jean Louise questions herself. "Everything I have ever taken for right and wrong these people have taught me—these same, these very people. So it's me, it's not them. Something has happened to me." Do you agree

with her? Has she changed—or is she truly the person who she was raised to be? Atticus tells her, “I’ve killed you, Scout. I had to.” What does he mean?

18. Do you think that the white community of Maycomb sees itself as being victimized in *Go Set a Watchman*? How do these people justify this belief—and how does this belief justify their attitude and behavior toward the emerging Civil Rights movement and those who are a part of it, especially the black people of Maycomb?

19. *Go Set a Watchman* was written three years after the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education*. How did that decision impact the nation and especially the South? What is Jean Louise’s opinion of that decision? What about Atticus’s? How do their responses reflect comments about Supreme Court decisions involving minority rights in our own time? What does this tell us about ourselves as Americans and about our views of race today?

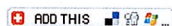
20. Consider the novel’s title, *Go Set a Watchman*. What is its significance? Why do you think Harper Lee chose this as her title for the book? Though it is fiction, the book is a historical document of its time. What does reading it tell us about the modern Civil Rights movement and its effect on the South? What lessons does the book offer us in understanding our own turbulent times?

21. How have our attitudes about race evolved since the 1950s when *Watchman* was written? In what ways have we progressed? Is the stain of racism indelible in our national character, or can it eventually be erased? Can it be eradicated for good?

22. Late in the novel, Uncle Jack tells his niece, “Every man’s island, Jean Louise, every man’s watchman, is his conscience.” What wisdom is he imparting to her? Uncle Jack also calls Jean Louise a “turnip-sized bigot.” Is she? Why?

23. Did reading *Go Set a Watchman* deepen your understanding of *To Kill a Mockingbird*? How are the two books linked thematically? Talk about the experience of reading *Go Set a Watchman*. Does it stand as a companion to *Mockingbird*?
(Questions issued by the publisher.)

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Entry Updated : 02/26/2016

Full text biography:

Harper Lee

Birth Date : 1926

Death Date : 2016

Known As : Lee, Nelle Harper

Place of Birth: United States,Alabama,Monroeville

Place of Death: United States,Alabama,Monroeville

Nationality : American

Occupation : Novelist

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Awards:

Pulitzer Prize, Alabama Library Association award, and Brotherhood Award of National Conference of Christians and Jews, all 1961, *Best Sellers' Paperback of the Year Award*, 1962, and Alabama Humanities Award, 2002, all for *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Quill Award for Audio, 2007, for audio version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Presidential Medal of Freedom, President George W. Bush, 2007; National Medal of Arts, President Barack Obama, 2010; Best Fiction Prize, Goodreads Choice Awards, 2015, for *Go Set a Watchman*.

Personal Information:

Born April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, AL; died February 19, 2016, in Monroeville, AL; daughter of Amasa Coleman (a lawyer) and Frances (Finch) Lee. **Education:** Attended Huntington College, 1944-45, and University of Alabama, 1945-49; also attended Oxford University. **Politics:** Republican. **Religion:** Methodist. **Avocational Interests:** Golf, music.

Career Information:

Writer. Airline reservation clerk with Eastern Air Lines and British Overseas Airways, New York, NY, c. 1950s. Member, National Council on the Arts, 1966-72.

Writings:



- *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lippincott (Philadelphia, PA), 1960.
- *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper (New York, NY), 2015.

Contributor to *Vogue*, *McCall's*, and *O, the Oprah Magazine*.

To Kill a Mockingbird has been translated into more than forty languages.

Media Adapters:

To Kill a Mockingbird was filmed by Universal in 1962 and adapted as a London stage play by Christopher Sergel in 1987. An audio version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, read by Sissy Spacek, was published by Caedmon Audio in 2006.

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Sidelights:

With the enormous popular and critical success of her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee established herself as a leading figure in American literature. According to Dorothy Jewell Altman in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "a regional novel with a universal message, combines popular appeal with literary excellence, assuring Harper Lee's place in American letters."

Lee did not release any new fiction for more than four decades and was adamant that the grueling pressures of celebrity had dissuaded her from ever publishing again. In 2015, however, she elected to publish her second novel, *Go Set a Watchman*. The novel was released in July 2015.

To Kill a Mockingbird is narrated by six-year-old Jean Finch, nicknamed "Scout," who, along with her older brother Jem, watch as their father, Atticus Finch, an attorney in Maycomb, Alabama, defends Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell, daughter of Bob Ewell. During the three years of the trial, the two children come to an understanding of prejudice as their father stands his ground in defending a man he believes to be innocent. Scout and Jem are taunted by classmates and neighbors who object to the idea of a white man defending a black man, and the situation intensifies until Robinson is threatened with lynching; he is only saved by Jem and Scout's innocent intervention. At the trial, the jury finds Robinson guilty, even though Atticus proves he cannot possibly have committed the crime. Despite this truth and all his hard work, Atticus can't break through Maycomb's deeply entrenched racial prejudice that "all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around ... [white] women." According to a *Booklist* contributor, the story is told with "a rare blend of wit and compassion." The novel moves "unconcernedly and irresistibly back and forth between being sentimental, tough, melodramatic, acute, and funny," wrote a *New Yorker* reviewer.

One of the novel's subplots revolves around attempts by the two siblings and their friend Dill Harris to draw out Arthur "Boo" Radley, a local recluse who has remained hidden in the Radley home since his teenage years, when he was arrested for a prank and then released into his father's stern custody. Locked in the house, a victim of his father's religious notions and misplaced family pride, Radley eventually becomes a victim of the town's prejudice, and is feared by both adults and children. The children's wild ideas about the unseen Boo--that he eats raw squirrels and wanders the town by night--reflect the town's misconceptions about race. Dill, who is fascinated with Boo, convinces Jem and Scout that they should try and entice Boo to come out of his house so they can see him. Boo responds to this attention, secretly leaving gifts for the children in a hollow tree, mending Jem's pants when he tears them while climbing over the Radleys' fence to spy, and covering Scout with a blanket when she stands out in the cold watching a neighbor's house burn in a fire. In the end, Boo saves Scout from being killed when Bob Ewell, drunk and murderous, tries to kill her in order to exact vengeance on her father.

When Boo is revealed as a benefactor to the children, they must reconsider their preconceptions about him. "One of the most interesting features of *Mockingbird*," writes William T. Going in his collection *Essays on Alabama Literature*, "is the skill with which Miss Lee weaves these two struggles about childhood and the law together into one thematic idea." "The achievement of Harper Lee," Edgar H. Schuster argued in the *English Journal*, "is not that she has written another novel about race prejudice, but rather that she has placed race prejudice in a perspective which allows us to see it as an aspect of a larger thing; as something that arises from phantom contacts, from fear and lack of knowledge; and finally as something that disappears with the kind of knowledge or 'education' that one gains through learning what people are really like when you 'finally see them.'"

Although the storyline of the novel appears to be simple, the book presents several opposing pairs of themes: ignorance versus knowledge, cowardice versus heroism, guilt versus innocence, and prejudice versus tolerance. The town's entrenched ignorance is contrasted with the education the children gain by following their innate instinct for truth and justice, and their accurate observations of the adults around them, particularly Atticus, who always tells them the truth. Atticus's clarity and courage is sharply contrasted with Bob Ewell's cowardice and bullying. Atticus tells Scout what true courage is, using the example of a neighbor who defeated her addiction to morphine: rather than being "a man with a gun in his hand," courage is "when you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what." Atticus embodies this definition of courage when he defends Tom Robinson, a case he knows he will probably lose. Innocence and guilt are sharply contrasted when the most innocent characters in the book--Tom Robinson and Boo Radley--are judged guilty by society.

Throughout the book, Lee draws on the symbol of the mockingbird, which she associates with Boo Radley and Tom Robinson. This bird, which sings almost continuously, represents innocence and joy; the children's neighbor, Miss Maudie, tells them that it's a sin to kill one. Another symbolic moment occurs when an unusual snowstorm blankets Maycomb in white, and Jem builds a snowman over a base layer of mud. When the snowman melts, the mud is revealed. In one day, the snowman has gone from the black color of the underlying mud to white, and back to black, revealing how superficial skin color really is.

Lee drew upon her own childhood experiences as the daughter of a lawyer in Alabama to create the fictional events in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Together with her brother and their childhood friend Truman Capote, Lee enjoyed many of the small-town adventures depicted in the novel; Capote would later base a character in his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, on Lee. Scout's troubles in school--she is so far advanced in reading

that she finds her school work boring--reflects Lee's own childhood boredom with grade school. Lee's older sister, Sook, a recluse who rarely left the family house, shares many of the qualities exhibited by the character Boo. Lee's father, Amasa Coleman, served in the Alabama State Legislature from 1927 to 1939, and was the model for Atticus Finch. "Although Lee stressed that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not autobiographical," explained Altman, "she commented that a writer 'should write about what he [sic] knows and write truthfully.' The time period and setting of the novel obviously originated in the author's experience."

Lee began her writing career after leaving college in 1950 just before completing her law studies. While supporting herself in New York City as an airline reservation clerk, she sought the advice of a literary agent about her work. The agent advised her to expand one of the short stories she had written into the novel which became *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The process of writing the novel took several years. During this time Lee quit working, lived in a cold-water flat and was supported by friends who believed in her work. In 1957 she approached the publishing firm of Lippincott with the manuscript. Although editors criticized the novel's structure, which they felt read like a series of short stories strung together, they saw promise in the book and encouraged Lee to rewrite it. By 1960, with the help of Lippincott editor Tay Hohoff, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was finished.

The book was an immediate popular success, being selected by two major book clubs, the Literary Guild and the Book-of-the-Month Club, and condensed in the *Reader's Digest*. In addition, the book won the Pulitzer Prize and several other awards. However, critical response to the novel was initially mixed. It was only with the success of the film adaptation in 1962--a winner of two Academy Awards and starring Gregory Peck and Mary Badham--that many critics took a second look at *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Initial reviews had sometimes highlighted the novel's melodramatic qualities or the unlikely nature of the story being narrated by a child of six. Phoebe Adams in *Atlantic*, for example, found the story "frankly and completely impossible, being told in the first person by a six-year-old girl with the prose style of a well-educated adult." Granville Hicks wrote in the *Saturday Review* that "Lee's problem has been to tell the story she wants to tell and yet to stay within the consciousness of a child, and she hasn't consistently solved it." Later critics were more generous with the novel, citing Lee's storytelling abilities and creation of a believable small-town setting. As R. A. Dave wrote in *Indian Studies in American Fiction*, Lee "is a remarkable storyteller. The reader just glides through the novel abounding in humour and pathos, hopes and fears, love and hatred, humanity and brutality ... We hardly feel any tension between the novelist's creativity and social criticism [while] the tale of heroic struggle lingers in our memory as an unforgettable experience." He also wrote that Lee created "an epic canvas against which is enacted a movingly human drama of the jostling worlds--of children and adults, of innocence and experience, of kindness and cruelty, of love and hatred, of humor and pathos, and above all of appearance and reality--all taking the reader to the root of human behavior."

Despite these later critics' comments and the book's popular success, no book-length study of the work was published until Claudia Durst Johnson's *To Kill a Mockingbird: Threatening Boundaries* appeared in 1994. Johnson wrote, "Some of the most interesting criticism of the novel, and certainly the largest volume of commentary on the novel, has been done by legal rather than literary scholars." Teresa Goodwin Phelps wrote in the *Alabama Law Review* that "While the novel depicts change in one facet of law and society, it reinforces the status quo in other troubling aspects." These aspects include its casual attitude toward the sexual abuse of Mayella Ewell by her father, as well as its condescending view of poor whites.

Since its initial appearance in 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been a continuing favorite with high school and college students. But, aside from a few short articles for magazines, Lee has published no new work in over thirty-five years. The reason for this extended silence remains a matter of speculation. Lee has avoided making public comments about her life or her work, although reports at the time *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published described her as a slow, methodical writer who rewrote constantly. When pressed for personal information, Lee has used humor to protect her privacy, describing her political affiliation as "Whig," and saying that she believes "in Catholic emancipation and the repeal of the Corn Laws" and commenting that her favorite fan letter was one that accused her of not taking the rape of white women seriously: "Why is it that you young Jewish authors seek to whitewash the situation?" She responded with a clever letter, signing it "Harper Levy."

Lee has counted among her favorite authors Charles Lamb, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jane Austen, and Thomas Love Peacock, as well as various religious writers of the nineteenth century. As Lee once commented: "Writing is the hardest thing in the world ... but writing is the only thing that has made me completely happy."

Despite her love of writing, continuing to work after publishing *To Kill a Mockingbird* proved to be somewhat intimidating for Lee. She began a second novel in 1961, writing from noon until early evening, and revising so extensively that she produced only one or two pages per day, but never presented this work for publication. In the early 1960s she penned several short essays and an article titled "Love--In Other Words" for popular magazines. However, Lee retired from literary activity by mid-decade. Despite the fact that its author's renown rests on a single book, *To Kill a Mockingbird* retains its place in the American literary canon. For many years Lee divided her time between New York City and her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, where her sister, Alice Lee, worked as an attorney.

After withdrawing from the pressures of stardom, Lee became an infamous recluse. Protective of her privacy and paralyzed by the expectations generated by the enormous success of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee maintained she would never publish again. She became so inward she even ceased giving any public

interviews after 1964, leaving readers and critics to speculate about her physical and mental condition--and the existence of her other rumored literary endeavors. Lee's long absence from public life ended in 2014, however, when her lawyer Tonja Carter began hunting for the original manuscript to Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While rifling through Lee's safe-deposit box, she found an original copy of the manuscript to that novel--and something else. As she was flipping through the text, she stumbled upon scenes and characters that were seemingly unrelated to the narrative of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Intrigued, she read the manuscript more closely and eventually realized she had located a second book entirely. She had accidentally found an unknown Harper Lee work titled *Go Set a Watchman*. The novel had been lost since the 1960s, when it had become stuck to a manuscript copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and forgotten. Lee, who had written *Go Set a Watchman* before penning *To Kill a Mockingbird*, had submitted a draft of the novel to her publisher long before writing that latter work. When her publisher told her to rewrite her draft using the original protagonist but setting it two decades earlier, Lee did as she was told. *Go Set a Watchman* was abandoned and forgotten, left to molder in an unvisited corner of a safe-deposit box for decades.

Harper publisher Jonathan Burnham described Lee's reaction to the discovery of her long-lost novel in an interview with Russell Berman in *The Atlantic*. Burnham told Berman: "She was thrilled. She believed it to have been lost. She was delighted it was found. She's always been a self-critical writer, so she shared it with some close friends and advisers, and they told her that it was extremely and eminently publishable. So she was thrilled." Lee, who was left virtually blind and deaf in the aftermath of a 2007 stroke, released *Go Set a Watchman* in summer of 2015. The novel, which had an initial print run of two million copies, was released with fanfare and was slated to be one of the great publishing events of 2015.

While *Go Set a Watchman* was completed before *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is actually the sequel to that latter work. The novel is set two decades after the events described in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel sees an adult Scout--Jean Louise Finch--returning to her Alabama home after living in New York. Where *To Kill a Mockingbird* explores the nature of race relations in the Deep South during the Great Depression, *Go Set a Watchman* is a sustained investigation of the increasingly violent and wrathful racial politics of the region during the civil rights era. Scout has changed little in the two decades between *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*. She is still a feisty, assertive tomboy who chafes against the impositions of society and the gendered expectations that determine the contours of her life. She is still unfit for the stifling conservatism of the world around her. In *Go Set a Watchman*, Scout's progressive racial and gender politics are contrasted with the regressive and hateful ideology of her father, Atticus Finch. Lionized by readers for generations for his noble stand against racism and inequality in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the Atticus of *Go Set a Watchman* is a different character altogether, a man warped and twisted by the years and by the transformations wrought by age. He is a virulent racist. Early in *Go Set a Watchman*, readers discover that Atticus is an active member of the Ku Klux Klan and is a board member of one of the newly formed Citizens's Councils dominating Southern politics. Historically, these organizations, which were little more than citizen militias, fought hard to oppose racial desegregation. In *Go Set a Watchman*, Atticus denies the essential humanity of African Americans, insists on the legitimacy and necessity of segregation, and advocates for the preservation of the South's entrenched racial hierarchy. Throughout *Go Set a Watchman*, Lee asks readers to reflect on how individuals grapple with the social upheavals that everyday surround them. Atticus and Scout struggle to accommodate and reconcile themselves to the searing conflicts tearing the South apart and, ultimately, Scout is left disappointed by her father's surrender to received opinion and ingrained conservatism. *Go Set a Watchman* aims to be a timely work, a study of a contradiction at the heart of contemporary American political consciousness. The novel asks how a society can simultaneously believe all its members are equal and yet persist in maintaining the fiction that a segment of that society is incorrigibly different--and inferior--as a result of its cultural characteristics. *Go Set a Watchman* seeks to probe the cognitive dissonance underlying America's venomous racialized politics.

Reviewers regarded *Go Set a Watchman* as a less lyrical and finished sequel to the novel it eventually spawned. Many perceived that its narrative lacked the polish and poetry of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and observed that it possessed the uneven tone and bumpy pacing one would expect of the rough-hewn first draft of a novel. Julia Keller, writing for the *Chicago Tribune*, predicted that "The critical verdict on what some have called the most anticipated novel of the age will be mixed, which is fitting; as a narrative, it's flawed, sometimes annoyingly so." Keller went on to write, however: "But the moral fervor that shines forth in *Go Set a Watchman*--the same deep yearning for social justice that makes *To Kill a Mockingbird* so much more than just a an exercise in nostalgia for sleepy small towns and a bygone era--is striking and inspiring." Keller sensed that there was amateurism in *Go Set a Watchman* but found the novel--in its treatment of the ways racism perpetuates itself and mutates when confronted by legal and societal challenges--possessed a unique thematic heft.

Many reviewers felt that Lee's decision to depict Atticus as a virulent racist added urgency to *Go Set a Watchman* and made the novel an unlikely but appropriate companion piece to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In her *New York Times* evaluation of *Go Set a Watchman*, Michiko Kakutani remarked: "The depiction of Atticus in *Watchman* makes for disturbing reading, and for *Mockingbird* fans, it's especially disorienting." Similarly, Sam Sacks wrote: "Go Set a Watchman is a distressing book, one that delivers a startling rebuttal to the shining idealism of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This story is of the toppling of idols; its major theme is disillusion" in his *Wall Street Journal* appraisal of *Go Set a Watchman*. For Natasha Trethewey, the disclosure of Atticus's degeneration into a bigot foregrounded Lee's themes and made *Go Set a Watchman* a stunningly prescient

work of fiction. In the *Washington Post* she wrote: "A significant aspect of this novel is that it asks us to see Atticus now not merely as a hero, a god, but as a flesh-and-blood man with shortcomings and moral failing, enabling us to see ourselves for all our complexities and contradictions." Overall, reviewers greeted *Go Set a Watchman* as an imperfect yet potent work of fiction from one of America's most distinguished authors.

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ONLINE

The Opinion Pages | OP-ED COLUMNIST

The Harper Lee ‘Go Set a Watchman’ Fraud

Joe Nocera JULY 24, 2015

Called away on family business, I was afraid I’d missed the sweet spot for commentary on the Harper Lee/“To Kill a Mockingbird”/“Go Set a Watchman” controversy — that moment right after “Watchman’s” release on July 14 when it was all anybody in literary circles could talk about.

Then again, the Rupert Murdoch-owned publishing house HarperCollins announced just this week that it had sold more than 1.1 million copies in a week’s time, making it the “fastest-selling book in company history.” “Watchman” has rocketed to the top of the New York Times best-seller list, where it will surely stay for a while. And the Rupert Murdoch-owned Wall Street Journal not only excerpted the first chapter on the Friday before publication, but it also gave its readers a chance to win a signed first edition of the book. Talk about synergy!

So perhaps it’s not too late after all to point out that the publication of “Go Set a Watchman” constitutes one of the epic money grabs in the modern history of American publishing.

The Ur-fact about Harper Lee is that after publishing her beloved novel, “To Kill a Mockingbird,” in 1960, she not only never published another book; for most of that

time she insisted she never would. Until now, that is, when she's 89, a frail, hearing- and sight-impaired stroke victim living in a nursing home. Perhaps just as important, her sister Alice, Lee's longtime protector, passed away last November. Her new protector, Tonja Carter, who had worked in Alice Lee's law office, is the one who brought the "new novel" to HarperCollins's attention, claiming, conveniently, to have found it shortly before Alice died.

If you have been following The Times's cleareyed coverage, you know that Carter participated in a meeting in 2011 with a Sotheby's specialist and Lee's former agent, in which they came across the manuscript that turned out to be "Go Set a Watchman." In The Wall Street Journal — where else? — Carter put forth the preposterous claim that she walked out of that meeting early on and never returned, thus sticking with her story that she only discovered the manuscript in 2014.

But the others in the meeting insisted to The Times that she was there the whole time — and saw what they saw: the original manuscript that Lee turned in to Tay Hohoff, her editor. Hohoff, who appears to have been a very fine editor indeed, encouraged her to take a different tack. After much rewriting, Lee emerged with her classic novel of race relations in a small Southern town. Thus, The Times's account suggests an alternate scenario: that Carter had been sitting on the discovery of the manuscript since 2011, waiting for the moment when she, not Alice, would be in charge of Harper Lee's affairs.

That's issue No. 1. Issue No. 2 is the question of whether "Go Set a Watchman" is, in fact, a "newly discovered" novel, worthy of the hoopla it has received, or whether it something less than that: a historical artifact or, more bluntly, a not-very-good first draft that eventually became, with a lot of hard work and smart editing, an American classic.

The Murdoch empire is insisting on the former, of course; that's what you do when you're hoping to sell millions of books in an effort to boost the bottom line.

But again, an alternative scenario suggests itself. Lee has said that she wanted to write a "race novel." Though her first effort had some fine writing, like many first-time novelists she also made a lot of beginners' mistakes: scenes that don't always add up, speeches instead of dialogue, and so on. So she took a character who was a

racist in the first draft and turned him into the saintly lawyer Atticus Finch who stands up to his town's bigotry in defending a black man. He becomes the hero of "To Kill a Mockingbird." (Which is also why it's silly to view the Atticus Finch of "Go Set a Watchman" as the same person as the Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird," as many commentators have done. Atticus is a fictional character, not a real person.) Lee still wound up with a race novel, which was her goal. But a different and much better one.

In one of her last interviews, conducted in 1964, Lee said: "I think the thing that I most deplore about American writing ... is a lack of craftsmanship. It comes right down to this — the lack of absolute love for language, the lack of sitting down and working a good idea into a gem of an idea."

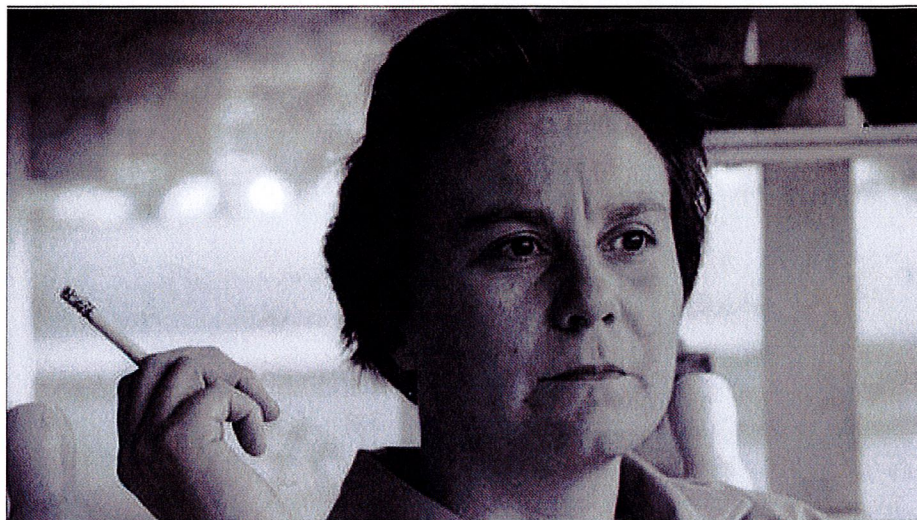
A publisher that cared about Harper Lee's legacy would have taken those words to heart, and declined to publish "Go Set a Watchman," the good idea that Lee eventually transformed into a gem. That HarperCollins decided instead to manufacture a phony literary event isn't surprising. It's just sad.

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A version of this op-ed appears in print on July 25, 2015, on page A21 of the New York edition with the headline: The 'Watchman' Fraud.

CBS NEWS / July 13, 2015, 10:46 AM

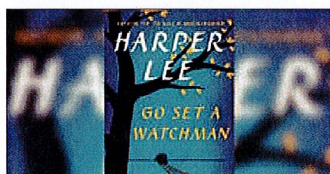
What's the message behind the new Harper Lee book?


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As controversy mounts ahead of Harper Lee's **highly-anticipated new novel**, Jonathan Burnham, a vice president at Harper Collins, Lee's publisher, described the message the author was trying to convey.

"Often there are no clear lines as to what is absolutely right and absolutely wrong in the way you view the world," Burnham said.

Like Harper Lee's famous novel "To Kill a Mockingbird," the author's new book, **"Go Set a Watchman,"** is told from the perspective of its main character, Scout, but set 20 years later.



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Harper Lee novel cover unveiled

performance of the lawyer and father and though fictional, the character became a kind of legal prophet.

"Atticus Finch, as he's presented in 'To Kill a Mocking Bird,' is saintly," Harper Lee biographer Charles Shields said. "He's come to be an example for people who are faced with difficult normal decisions. He's an exemplar of a certain kind of individual who loves justice."

Scout is a grown woman, and America will learn that the father she revered in "Mockingbird" may not be the person readers think he is, reports CBS News correspondent Michelle Miller.

If "To Kill a Mockingbird" is the literary conscious of a generation, Atticus Finch was its moral compass.

In Lee's classic novel, Finch defends a falsely accused black man of rape in 1930's, Jim Crow Alabama. Gregory Peck won an Oscar for his 1962

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But in Lee's new novel, "Go Set a Watchman," Scout discovers the flawed reality of her 72-year-old father. He's attended Ku Klux Klan meetings and advocates for segregation. Finch says to Scout, "You realize that our Negro population is backwards, don't you?"



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More questions raised over Harper Lee's "Mockingbird" sequel

only published work.

But will Finch, a character long heralded for his sense of justice and equality, now be viewed as a bigot? Or simply a multi-dimensional man of his time?

Readers will need to make up their minds.

"He is a man of prejudices. All of us have prejudices. This Atticus Finch in "Go Set a Watchman" is harder to understand, but let's not duck the work of doing it," Shields said.

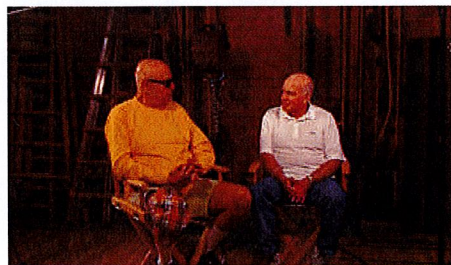
Lee is a notoriously private woman. She hasn't given a full interview in more than 50 years. So we may never definitively know why she wrote these characters this way, or why she published "Watchman" after all these years.

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