

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Directed by Robert Mulligan
Produced by Alan J. Pakula
Distributed by Universal Pictures
Released in 1962

Childhood is a time of wonder. So much is new and incomprehensible. In fact, much of the joy of that stage of life lay in such ignorance. Before the pains, injustices, and disappointments of life impress themselves upon the human spirit, before hope is lost and life becomes routine, the mind runs free in flights of fancy and imagination, thrilling to each new discovery.

Despite the serious content of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, an air of wonderment infuses the entire story. Scout or Jim is present in every scene—practically nothing is made known to us that isn't also the purview of Jim or Scout.

And while the film seems to lose its moorings by documenting the Tom Robinson trial (being that it's the only part of the film where the protagonists are mere spectators to the action), we realize at the film's climax that the Boo Radley and Tom Robinson storylines were never parallel, but were all the while due to collide.

The film is not sentimental, it is not preachy—it exposes prejudice while acknowledging the difficulty in vanquishing it.

In this tired little world where time stands still, where money is scarce, summer heat punishes effort, and old prejudices stifle fresh thinking, Jim and Scout through their intelligence and resourcefulness never face boredom. They have nothing. But in games, exploration, observation, and questioning they begin to understand what life is all about. And we're carried along with them, recalling our own formative years, but marveling at how much things have changed. Often, we still don't have the answers to life's difficult questions. But back then we didn't need to know. We were looked after. We were secure and trusting. And while we are grateful that we have been spared the challenges faced by Jim and Scout, don't we all long to recover that spirit of adventure? Don't we miss being tested and proved equal to life's challenges? Don't the days seem shorter and the future bleaker? Don't we long for gentle slumber? Don't we all want a father like Atticus Finch?