



Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historic Documents (The Greenwood Press "Literature in Context" Series)

By Claudia Durst Johnson

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To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel of such profound power that it has affected the lives of readers and left an indelible mark on American culture. This rich collection of historical documents, collateral readings, and commentary captures the essence of the novel's impact, making it an ideal resource for students, teachers, and library media specialists. Drawing on multi-disciplinary sources, the casebook places the issues of race, censorship, stereotyping, and heroism into sharp perspective. Through these documents, the reader also gains a taste for the historical events which influenced the novel as well as the novel's relevance in today's world. Among the documents which speak most eloquently are testimony from the Scottsboro Case of the 1930s, memoirs and interviews with African Americans and whites who grew up in Alabama in the 1930s, and news stories on civil rights activities in Alabama in the 1950s. Most of the documents presented are available in no other printed form. Study questions, project ideas, and bibliographies are also included for ease of use in further examination of the issues raised by the novel. Thirteen historical photographs complement the text.

Following a literary analysis of issues raised by the novel, the casebook opens with testimony and newspaper articles from the 1930s Alabama Scottsboro Case. The significant parallels of this case to the novel paint a social and historical background of the novel. Memoirs and interviews with African Americans and whites who grew up in Alabama in the 1930s further complete the historical landscape. Articles and news stories from the 1950s depict the increasingly tense, volatile environment in which the novel was written and published. Documents examine the stereotypes of the poor white, the African American, and the southern belle; and how the novel allows the reader to walk around in the shoes of those who have been stereotyped. More current articles examine the legal, literary, and ethical ramifications of the novel. These articles include a debate between lawyers over whether Atticus Finch was a hero, and discussion of

attempts to censor the novel.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Will be useful to teachers and student researchers, as both journey toward a richer understanding of Lee's novel and the complex ideas society is still exploring."-VOYA

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"This is exactly what every conscientious English teacher needs. History teachers will find it exciting as well. The concept is sweeping, bold, and imaginative; the execution fulfills the concept richly. I look forward more eagerly than ever to subsequent volumes in the series."-Robin Berson, Director Upper School Library, Riverdale Country School, New York City

About the Author

CLAUDIA DURST JOHNSON is Professor of English at the University of Alabama, where she chaired the English Department for 12 years. She is the author of the forthcoming volumes in the Greenwood Press *Literature in Context* series, *Understanding the Scarlet Letter* and *Understanding Huckleberry Finn*. She is also author of *To Kill a Mockingbird: Threatening Boundaries* (1994), *American Actress. Perspective on the Nineteenth Century* (1984), (with Vernon E. Johnson) *Memoirs of the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (Greenwood, 1982), *The Productive Tension of Hawthorne's Art* (1981), and (with Henry Jacobs) *An Annotated Bibliography of Shakespearean Burlesques, Parodies, and Travesties* (1976), as well as numerous articles on American literature.

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Edgar Villanueva:

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