

Historical and Literary Context

Harper Lee and Civil Rights

1930s

- Over 25% of labor force unemployed during worst years of the Great Depression.
- 1932: Franklin D. Roosevelt wins presidency with promise of his "New Deal."
- The Scottsboro Boys trials last from 1931 to 1937. Nelle Harper Lee is four years old when they begin.

1940s

- 1947: Jackie Robinson signs baseball contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers.
- 1948: President Truman ends segregation in the military and discrimination in federal hiring.
- Harper Lee moves to New York City to become a writer.

1950s

- 1954: *Brown v. Board of Education* rules school segregation unconstitutional.
- 1955: Rosa Parks refuses to surrender her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, 1955.
- Lee accompanies Truman Capote to Kansas as "researchist" for his book *In Cold Blood*.

Early 1960s

- 1960: *To Kill a Mockingbird* published on July 11.
- 1962: The film follows and wins Oscars for best actor, screenwriter, and set design.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers I Have a Dream speech on August 28, 1963. King wins the Nobel Prize in 1964.

Mid-1960s

- 1964: Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enforcing the constitutional right to vote.
- 1965: Malcolm X is assassinated.
- Despite rumors of a second Southern novel, Lee never finishes another book.

2010s

- 2015: The manuscript for Lee's first novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, is discovered and published.
- 2016: Harper Lee dies in Monroeville on February 19 at age 89.