

## PROJECT FOR SUMMER READING FOR FORM IV (2017-18)

Acquire and read a print edition of Harper Lee's 1960 novel [\*To Kill a Mockingbird\*](#). After the first week of class in August, we will have a test on the novel.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is very widely acknowledged as a center-piece of American education. Your reading of it is not an idle pastime, but an important step in your understanding of our literature and of our world. It is also a delightful story.

A note on the language of the novel: You should not be surprised or disturbed that this important novel occasionally uses vulgar or even deeply offensive language. First of all, the foul language is historically and artistically accurate, since the story unfolds in the racially segregated (and rather bitterly divided) society of southern Alabama in the 1930's. Therefore, the hatred of some groups for others is ingrained even in the characters' words. The author might have been able to speak around this problem, but she chooses, to her credit, to present it directly and honestly, precisely to teach us how much of a problem it is. In fact, she shows that calling someone the wrong name, and even thinking about them the wrong way, not only keeps us from knowing who they really are but can even destroy them and us along with them.

In addition to your careful reading, please complete the following written assignment, which will serve as a draft for our first major essay in the school year.

1. Choose one of the following questions to address:
  - a. **Boo Radley:** The novel opens with a little debate about whether the story really begins with the Ewells or with Boo Radley. What connection does the Boo Radley story have to the whole story of the novel? Why is it intertwined with the story of the Ewells and Tom Robinson?
  - b. **Dill:** What is Dill like and why is he in this novel?
  - c. **Children:** Why does Harper Lee focus her story on children, rather than directly address the problems of the adult world around them?
  - d. **Racism:** What does this book say about the problem of racism—its nature, causes, effects, challenges—the hope and way to overcome it?
2. Select the three passages of the text that you think are most important for writing on the topic you have selected, and type them out.
3. For each passage you have typed, compose a paragraph explaining what you think the passage has to say about the question at hand.
4. Compile your passages and paragraphs in clear order, and hand them in during our first class.

## FURTHER WORK (OPTIONAL)

You may also compose a report on another work of fiction as extra work for the first quarter. Choose a book from the English Department's recommended reading list, or another good book—something ambitious like Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or something simpler like Potok's *The Chosen*, Crane's *The Red badge of Courage*, or something in a different genre like an Arthur Conan Doyle mystery novel, or *The Westing Game*. It should not be something you have read before. [Feel free to consult with Fr. Stephen about a book you want to read, to make sure it is the right sort of thing, not too simple].

Read the book and write up a little literary review of it by writing a paragraph offering a thorough answer on each of the following topics (in order).

1. What is the most inventive passage, idea, thing in the story?
2. What is the best point of dialogue, that reveals something most interesting (like the character)?
3. What is the funniest, most frightening, most delightful, or most interesting part of the story?
4. What led you to choose this particular book?
5. What is good and beautiful about this book as a whole (why read it)?

For the first three parts, make sure to write out the passage you are treating. You should also include the specific information about the book: title, author, publication date, whatever else might seem important (put this stuff first).