

# The ku klux klan in harper lee's book 'to kill a mockingbird'

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Harper Lee's famous novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is set in the little town of Macomb county, Alabama. The novel is set in the 1930's which is when black people still didn't have rights. Lee's novel shows this when a black man, Tom Robinson is accused of rape against a white woman, in these times it was nearly impossible to defend a black man, especially against a white woman. After the accusation against Tom Robinson the book begins to show the honest reality of what the Ku Klux Klan otherwise known as the KKK did all throughout the 20th century, with a mob of prejudice activists come as a gang/mob to kill Tom Robinson, a man they knew was innocent. These groups and groups like this would devote their lives and days to ruining other people's lives and would go to extreme measures to achieve this, and they would.

After the civil war in 1865 the Ku Klux Klan made a revival through another time of injustice and racist human beings towards black, this was the second Klan, the first Klan ran from 1865-1871, the second Klan run from 1915-1944 and the third Klan ran from 1946-present. Most of the black resistances were stopped around these times and the Ku Klux Klan would do anything to hurt them. All the resistance groups were smaller than the KKK so it was easy for the Ku Klux Klan to stop most resistances in the early 20th century. As the book is set in the 1930 it is set around the peak of the Ku Klux Klan, at its peak the Ku Klux Klan had over 4 million members nationwide, most people didn't view black people as other human beings and viewed them more as slaves and didn't feel as if black people had the same rights as white people, which is why they had Jim Crow laws (laws that separated black people from white people), such as different bathrooms and allocated

seats on the bus (black people had to sit at the back). Now that people have realised what the KKK is doing the number of members has gone down dramatically, it is around 4000-8000 people. Most activity by the KKK was done in groups, which is similar to some events in the Lee's book.

The Ku Klux Klan had a big influence in Harper Lee's famous book *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

The day before the trial Atticus gets a tip off from Sheriff Tate that there will be a mob coming to the jail where Tom Robinson is that night. Around the early 20th century mob lynchings were a popular thing among the KKK, normally killing a black person and leaving them hanging on a tree. The mob that went to the jail was a bunch of ordinary men that have a hatred towards black men, this includes Mr Cunningham a farmer and a dad of Walter Cunningham, Jem's classmate from school, Lee writes that "In ones and twos, men got out of the cars. Shadows became substance as lights revealed solid shapes moving toward the jail door. Atticus remained where he was. The men hid him from view. "He in there, Mr. Finch?" a man said. "He is," we heard Atticus answer, "and he's asleep. Don't wake him up." In obedience to my father, there followed what I later realized was a sickeningly comic aspect of an unfunny situation: the men talked in near-whispers".

This scene shows that the mob/gang is a bunch of ordinary men, who appear to be friends with Atticus. The men are going into an undoubtedly serious situation are making jokes about it. The men are obviously here to kill Tom Robinson but Atticus wants to stop this. Later on Atticus' children Jem and

Scout come down and lee writes this " There was a smell of stale whiskey and pigpen about, and when I glanced around I discovered that these men were strangers. They were not people I saw last night. Hot embarrassment shot through me; I had leaped triumphantly into a ring of people I had never seen before". This scene shows the truth about mobs and how ruthless members of the Ku Klux Klan are until one person looks through the mask and sees the weak man in the strong and intimidating group, which was scout in this situation as she saw Mr Cunningham in the group, a poor farmer, whose son knew scout from school. The men came with the intention to kill Tom Robinson, but left without that intention, because of Scout, a little but wise 8 year old girl. Scout's wisdom could be because of her father, Atticus. Scout earlier on in the book asked " Do you defend niggers, Atticus?" I asked him that evening.

" Of course I do. Don't say nigger, Scout. That's common."

" s what everybody at school says."

" From now on it'll be everybody less one."

Nigger was a commonly used word throughout the 20th century but started to turn into a racial slur later on in the 20th century; most people used the word and didn't think anything of it. The book manages to show that even when most white people are racist towards black some people still view them as people and respect them, Atticus Finch is one of those men and passes his knowledge down towards his kids.

This scene was heavily orientated around the Ku Klux Klan and Lee managed to show the truth about the Ku Klux Klan.

Lee's novel manages to capture the reality of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 20th century. Throughout multiple scenes Lee manages to talk about the Ku Klux Klan with little hints here and there. The key scene is the Tom Robinson lynching attempt which shows how a gang of weak men can be taken down by one wise person. The

Ku Klux Klan had a big affect on this scene as this is what they would do around this time. Overall Lee's book is a great book that not only talks about racism but also talks about what the Ku Klux Klan did in the 20th century towards black people. The attacks from the Ku Klux Klan still cause some black people great grief and pain.