

# To kill a mockingbird research paper history essay

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Period C  
Miss, Cecchi  
To Kill A Mockingbird Research Paper  
Part I:  
Research

The Great Depression began after the stock market crash on October 29, 1929 and lasted until about 1939. This sent the United States into the longest and darkest economic depression in American History. The gross national product fell from \$104.4 billion in 1929 to 74.2 billion in 1933 (Carson 1). Unemployment rates were also affected by the depression; in 1929 the U. S Labor Department reported that there were about 1.5 million people in the U. S without jobs (Carson 1). In the Depression's peak, unemployment in the U. S was as high as 16 million. Around 1933, the total annual income of the U. S shrank from \$87.8 billion to \$40.2 billion (Carson 1). Many farmers during the Depression struggled, a farmer's total combined income dropped from \$11.9 billion to \$5.3 billion. (Carson 1) Herbert Hoover was the president at the time and relied on the cooperation of business and labor to maintain payrolls and production of profit. The economy after the stock market crash, left most people stunned. Many people were unemployed, which almost created a new class of people. Many of the unemployed lived in "Hoovervilles" which were shantytowns on the outskirts of large cities. Men and boys who lived in "Hoovervilles" traveled searching for work around the country. Some men fought for garbage cans filled with trash because of how scarce food was. Although it is said that overall there was little violence during the Depression. The violence that did occur came from rural areas. (Carson 1) "The angriest Americans were those in rural areas" (Carson 1). The most affected by the Depression, were those who were already just getting by before the Depression even started. (Hanes 9) Soup kitchens started to become more and more popular during the depression. Some men waited in the cold for long periods of time to receive

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their food. (Hanes 10) Entertainment in the Depression was hard to come by for most families. Families had to cut back, by making their own toys made from wood or coming up with new games. The board game Monopoly was invented during the Depression and quickly became popular, Monopoly alone sold about 20 million copies during the first week. (Hanes 94) Playing games and having fun wasn't the only thing that was reduced during the Depression. Schools systems were affected during the Depression, many schools began to have shorter days. Budget cuts affected schools, some had to close down completely because of the shortage of money and supplies. (Hanes 113)The Great Depression for most was " a crisis of the American mind" (Carson 2). Most citizens thought the United States " faced a future of limited opportunity" (Carson 2). Not until about 1935 did United States banks begin to re-open. Although by early 1937 there were signs of the United States economy finally recovering. Business indexes were beginning to go up, and The New Deal " eased much of the acute distress" (Carson 2). Most of the damages of the Depression were about fully improved by 1938. The Depression how ever did not truly end until the government " launched massive defense spending in preparation for World War II" (Carson 2). World War II helped end the Depression because it increased job opportunities, such as ammunition and weapon factories. The jobs increased from World War II helped the U. S recover. Thesis: During The Great Depression the major factors such as economic failure, and poverty relates to, To Kill A Mocking Bird because there were examples of economic failure and poverty such as the Ewells and the Cunninghams. Part II: RelationTo Kill A Mocking Bird takes place in the 1930s, the same time The Great Depression took place. Macomb wasn't the richest town in Alabama and showed signs of

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poverty and economic failure in their citizens. The most widely exemplified of these citizens are the Ewells and the Cunninghams. Jem and Scout were asking Atticus about their current financial position and the Cunninghams got brought up. Atticus explained their financial situation to Jem and Scout. "The Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them the hardest" (Lee 27). Atticus is telling Jem and Scout that the Cunninghams were hit by the "crash" the hardest. The "crash" is also known as The Great Depression. This quote is important because it explains how since the Cunninghams were farmers, they were hit the hardest by the Depression which put them in poverty. Although the Cunninghams were strongly affected by the Great Depression they were very humble about it. Scout explains to Miss Caroline that Walter Cunningham doesn't borrow money that they cannot pay back. "The Cunninghams never took anything they can't pay back- They don't have much but they get along on it" (Lee 26). This quote is important because during the Depression most people took whatever they could from each other, the Cunninghams got by from whatever little they had. Unlike most people during the Depression, many shared and took from each other. Miss Caroline had a hard time understanding Burris Ewell, when he was in her class. Scout walked in the classroom to see Miss Caroline standing in the middle of the room, with a face full of horror. Miss Caroline suddenly screamed "Its alive" (Lee 34)! Everyone in the classroom was wondering what was going on, Miss Caroline explained that some-sort of bug crawled out of Burris Ewell's hair. Miss Caroline then went up to Burris and told him that he is excused from class. "I think we'd better excuse you for the rest of the afternoon. I want you to go home and wash your hair." (Lee 35). During the Depression, many people

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who were as poor as Burris Ewell could not afford to cleanse themselves on a regular basis. This quote is important because it shows how Burris and his family cannot afford to bath themselves because they are suffering from economic failure and poverty due to the, The Great Depression. Scout described Burris's hygiene as " the filthiest human I had ever seen, his neck was dark gray, the backs of his hands were rusty, and his fingernails were black deep into the quick" (Lee 35). By this description it seems that Burris bathes little to never, this is an effect of the Depression because it caused the Ewell's to not be able to afford to bathe. The town of Macomb is divided in different sections by the residents social classes. The Ewells and the blacks live in the worst parts of town. " People like the Ewells lived as guests of the country in prosperity as well as in the depths of a depression" (Lee 227). Many people during the depression lived off welfare from the government or whatever they could get from people. This quote is important because it explains how some people during the Depression lived off whatever they could. Most poor people like the Ewells during the Depression lived in shacks or cabins made out of scrap materials found in town dumps. " The cabin's plank walls were supplemented with sheets of corrugated iron, its roof shingled with tin cans hammered flat, so only its general shape suggested its original design" (Lee 227). This importance of this quote is that it shows how during the Depression poor people like the Ewells had to make a form of shelter out of scrap materials that were not ideal for a house.

Part III: Conclusion  
The Great Depression took place in the 1930s and, To Kill A MockingBird took place during the same time. In the novel, the Ewells and the Cunninghams are the most effected by the Depression because they show signs of economic failure and poverty. It is important to show how

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these families were effected by the Depression, because how they were treated and how they lived during the novel was due to their financial position. An example of this is when Burris Ewells is excused from class due to his poor hygiene. Harper Lee addresses the effects of the Great Depression in this novel because since it was relevant to the time period of the story, Lee wanted to show how the people effected by the Depression got by and how they were different from everyone else. Overall Lee wanted to show how economic failure and poverty can separate people from each other in Maycomb or any other society. For example, the blacks and the Ewells living in a remote part of Maycomb from the general population. The importance of this aspect helps the reader understand the effects of poverty and how it can separate people. The separation between the residents is due to their social class and where these citizens stand economically. Overall, having examples of the Great Depression is important in To Kill A MockingBird because it helps the reader understand the effects of poverty and economic failure, and the separation of people.