

Discoveries: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

From the trials of Scout's first day at school to the greatest trial of her young life, the pages of *To Kill A Mockingbird* are filled with themes that reflect universal human experiences. Some involve children playing games which might offend the neighbors. Some involve learning to sympathize with those who are less fortunate. Some involve facing the brutal realities of racism. Whatever the specifics, the themes which we wrote about and discussed in class resonated with me. I realized how the novel encompasses so many facets of Southern life in the Great Depression, and my heart – broken by the senseless killing of Tom Robinson – was mended by the silent generosity of Boo Radley.

The process of creating this multi-genre project opened my eyes to a few new points as well. Creating a new ending to the story, one of my two favorite pieces, allowed my imagination to take root in the story and direct it in a way that brought greater pain upon the Finch family, yet allowed for a better sense of justice in the end. This piece forced me to write like Harper Lee: I couldn't just make the ending Disney-esque, because the characters in the story aren't perfect – but they are slowly becoming better people. The other piece which I particularly enjoyed writing was the analysis of three songs. I love seeing connections between seemingly disparate topics, and the more I dig into them, the more similarities are revealed to me. It reminds me of the old saying of John Muir's and Chief Seattle's: all things are connected. It is true for all the different parts of nature, as it is true for a 49-year-old teacher living in 2015 and a 50-year-old lawyer living in 1936.

Atticus and I face the same dilemmas: how to nudge people toward a greater understanding of each other, how to speak up for what is right, and how to best raise our children to be good people in an often difficult world. Atticus is a powerful role model for me, and doing this project has cemented *To Kill A Mockingbird's* place in my personal pantheon of favorite novels.