

TKAM – LOOK Magazine Original Review

LOOK Magazine's Original Review of

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

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(NOTE: original review contains four photos with captions)

To make a movie out of a world-favorite book is a heavy responsibility.

Everyone involved in Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird has done his

job with love and skill. This Universal-International film is, like the book,

a magical masterpiece. It relates the story of a tomboy nicknamed Scout,

growing up in an Alabama town, "where there's no hurry, for there's nowhere

to go." But, as in a child's world, marvelous, unexpected things happen

just the same. Like Scout, we watch her quiet, widowed father (Gregory Peck, in his best role in years) become a rare hero as he attacks

dangers that can destroy everybody's peace: a mad dog on the loose,

and racial prejudice that boils over into another kind of madness.

The book's rape trial is shown intact

Ordered by their father to stay home on the day of the trial, Atticus Finch's

children go secretly to the courthouse anyway, determined not to "miss

the most excitin' thing that ever happened in this town." The

trial is also one of the most exciting things that ever happened in a movie. A Negro farmhand, Tom Robinson, is accused of "taking advantage of" a white girl. As the trial develops, lawyer Finch reveals that the accuser, a lonely, back-country girl, actually made a sexual pass at the accused. Discovered on the spot, she was beaten by her father, who then cynically pinned the "unspeakable crime" on Tom.

The truth doesn't matter to the jury: the accused is pronounced guilty. But not before some of the most eloquent words ever uttered in a film for the basic right of Negroes are said by Finch, in defense of "this quiet, respectable Negro who had had to put his word against two white people." The tragedy of this trial is so profound that audiences may feel like heeding a Negro preacher who tells Atticus' children to "stand up—your father is passing," as Atticus Finch, a brave white man who defended a black, walks out of the courtroom, defeated.