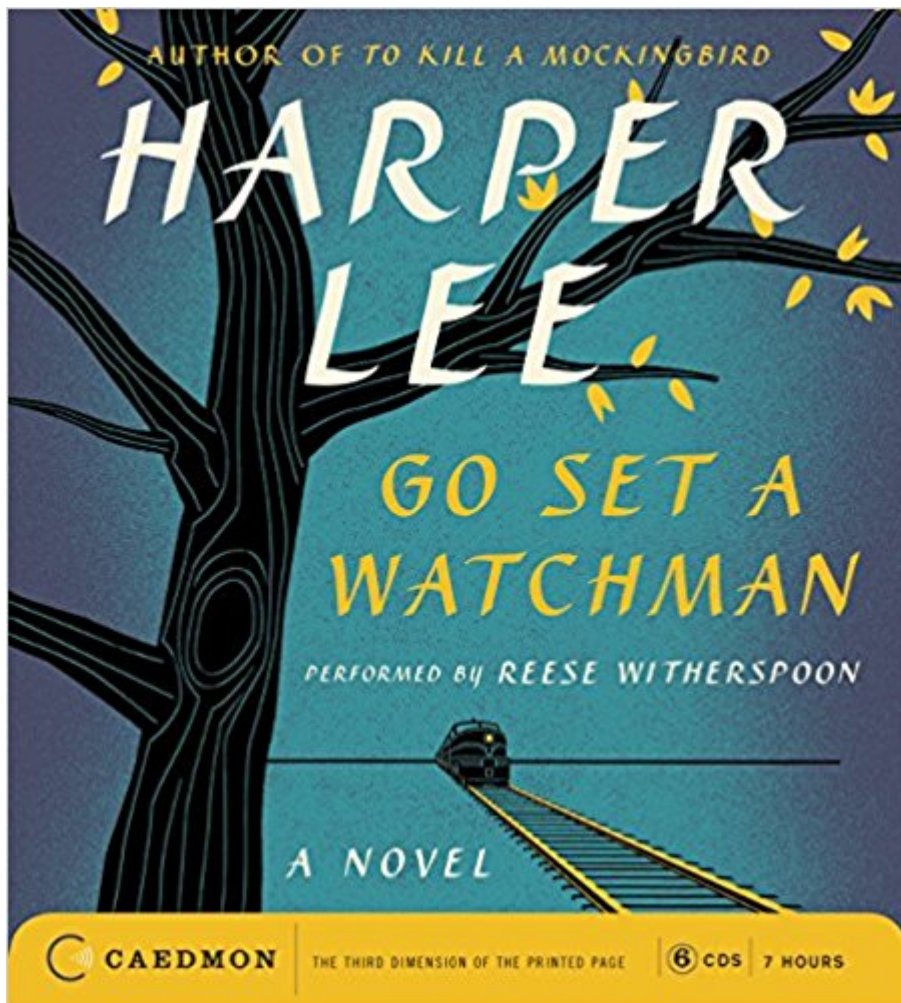


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Go Set A Watchman



Synopsis

From Harper Lee comes a landmark new novel set two decades after her beloved Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Maycomb, Alabama. Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch—"Scout"—returns home from New York City to visit her aging father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise's homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town, and the people dearest to her. Memories from her childhood flood back, and her values and assumptions are thrown into doubt. Featuring many of the iconic characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman* perfectly captures a young woman, and a world, in painful yet necessary transition out of the illusions of the past—a journey that can only be guided by one's own conscience. Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* imparts a fuller, richer understanding and appreciation of Harper Lee. Here is an unforgettable novel of wisdom, humanity, passion, humor, and effortless precision—a profoundly affecting work of art that is both wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times. It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context, and new meaning to an American classic.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: HarperAudio (July 14, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062409905

ISBN-13: 978-0062409904

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.8 x 5.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 11,718 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #515,764 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in Books > Books on CD >

Literature & Fiction > Classics #597 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction >

Unabridged #1147 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > General

Customer Reviews

"Go Set a Watchman is such an important book, perhaps the most important novel on race to come out of the white South in decades" (New York Times Opinion Pages: Taking Note) "Watchman is compelling in its timeliness." (Washington Post) "Go Set

a Watchman provides valuable insight into the generous, complex mind of one of America's most important authors. (USA Today) "Harper Lee's second novel sheds more light on our world than its predecessor did. (Time) "[Go Set a Watchman] contains the familiar pleasures of Ms. Lee's writing- the easy, drawling rhythms, the flashes of insouciant humor, the love of anecdote. (Wall Street Journal) "the voice we came to know so well in To Kill a Mockingbird - funny, ornery, rulebreaking - is right here in Go Set a Watchman, too, as exasperating and captivating as ever. (Chicago Tribune) "Don't let Go Set a Watchman change the way you think about Atticus Finch the hard truth is that a man such as Atticus, born barely a decade after Reconstruction to a family of Southern gentry, would have had a complicated and tortuous history with race. (Los Angeles Times) "A significant aspect of this novel is that it asks us to see Atticus now not merely as a hero, a god, but as a flesh-and-blood man with shortcomings and moral failing, enabling us to see ourselves for all our complexities and contradictions. (Washington Post) "The success of Go Set a Watchman... lies both in its depiction of Jean Louise reckoning with her father's beliefs, and in the manner by which it integrates those beliefs into the Atticus we know. (Time) "Go Set a Watchman's greatest asset may be its role in sparking frank discussion about America's woeful track record when it comes to racial equality. (San Francisco Chronicle) "Go Set a Watchman comes to us at exactly the right moment. All important works of art do. They come when we don't know how much we need them. (Chicago Tribune) "What makes Go Set a Watchman memorable is its sophisticated and even prescient view of the long march for racial justice. Remarkably, a novel written that long ago has a lot to say about our current struggles with race and inequality. (Chicago Tribune) "[Go Set a Watchman] captures some of the same small-town Southern humor and preoccupation with America's great struggle: race. (Columbus Dispatch) "Go Set a Watchman's gorgeous opening is better than we could have expected. (Vanity Fair) "Go Set a Watchman is more complex than Harper Lee's original classic. A satisfying novel it is, in most respects, a new work, and a pleasure, revelation and genuine literary event. (The Guardian) "Lee's ability with description is evident with long sentences beautifully rendered and evoking a world long lost to history, but welcoming all the same. (CNN.com) "A coming-of-age novel in which Scout becomes her own woman Go Set a Watchman's voice is beguiling and distinctive, and reminiscent of Mockingbird. (It) can't be dismissed as literary

scraps from Lee's imagination. It has too much integrity for that. (The Independent) "Atticus's complexity makes *Go Set a Watchman* worth reading. With *Mockingbird*, Harper Lee made us question what we know and who we think we are. *Go Set a Watchman* continues in this noble literary tradition. (New York Post) "A deftly written tale there's something undeniably comforting and familiar about sinking into Lee's prose once again. (People) "One overarching theme that many critics have zeroed in on is that there is a lot to learn from the novel, as both a writer and a reader. (Vulture) "As Faulkner said, the only good stories are the ones about the human heart in conflict with itself. And that's a pretty good summation of *Go Set a Watchman*. (Daily Beast) "Go Set a Watchman offers a rich and complex story To make the novel about pinning the right label on Atticus is to miss the point. (Bloomberg View) "[Go Set a Watchman is a] brilliant book that ruthlessly examines race relations (Denver Post) "In this powerful newly published story about the Finch family, Lee presents a wider window into the white Southern heart, and tells us it is finally time for us all to shatter the false gods of the past and be free. (NPR's "Code Switch") "[Go Set a Watchman is] filled with the evocative language, realistic dialogue and sense of place that partially explains what made *Mockingbird* so beloved. (Buffalo News) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Now available in a gorgeous, limited leatherbound edition, Harper Lee's landmark #1 New York Times bestselling novel set two decades after her beloved Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Maycomb, Alabama.

Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch "Scout" returns home from New York City to visit her aging father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise's homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town, and the people dearest to her. Memories from her childhood flood back, and her values and assumptions are thrown into doubt. Featuring many of the iconic characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman* perfectly captures a young woman, and a world, in painful yet necessary transition out of the illusions of the past—a journey that can only be guided by one's own conscience. Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* imparts a fuller, richer understanding and appreciation of Harper Lee. Here is an unforgettable novel of wisdom, humanity, passion, humor, and effortless precision—a profoundly affecting work of art that is both

wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times. It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context, and new meaning to an American classic. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

If "*Go Set a Watchman*" had been published before "*To Kill a Mockingbird*," it would have been meaningless. Tom Robinson's trial would be just a vague incident in the Jean Louise's memory instead of a culturally iconic scene. Atticus Finch would be his daughter's fallen hero, but not ours. If "*Watchman*" had been first, we would only know Atticus as a segregationist and we wouldn't care: he wouldn't have been an ethical role model and a hero. There would be references to Atticus's past and why Jean Louise's world is shaken when she finds out he is a segregationist, but we would not share them. Now, though, Jean Louise's (who I keep referring to as "Scout" out of habit) feelings of betrayal are our own, as we can see by the collective Internet outrage. That's why "*Watchman*" works; that's why I have to give it four stars. "*Watchman*" is about fallen idols and disillusionment. Jean Louise tries to reconcile how moral paragon Atticus Finch could be racist, and that's what the readers have been trying to reconcile, as well. The press release for "*Watchman*" said, "[Jean Louise Finch] is forced to grapple with issues both personal and political as she tries to understand her father's attitude toward society, and her own feelings about the place where she was born and spent her childhood," which gave us a hint that the Atticus we knew--the infallible anti-racist crusader--would not be that way in "*Watchman*." The talk about "*Watchman*" tarnishing Lee's legacy contributed to that idea. Still, I dismissed this possibility until it was confirmed, and even then, I was in denial. When Scout finds out Atticus is attending segregationist citizens' council meetings, she thinks "[He was] pulling something, [he was] there merely to keep an eye on things," a thought that I hopefully and childishly had, as well. But the most painful thing is that this Atticus is still recognizably, unquestionably Atticus Finch. Some speculated that this first draft Atticus would be different enough as a character (beyond the obvious) that we could easily dismiss him as Not Atticus and the book as Not Canon. He is still a loving father, a good neighbor, endlessly reasonable, thoughtful, articulate, patient, wry, giving. Still, his portrayal in "*Watchman*" makes me uneasy. JK Rowling could, conceivably, write a Harry Potter sequel set twenty, thirty years in the future, where Harry, an Auror, gleefully casts the Cruciatus Curse against suspected magical wrong-doers on a regular basis. Could she explain how he became this way as he grew older while making it consistent with his character from the first seven books? I think so, but I wouldn't want to read that. On the bright side, Jean Louise Finch serves as a moral compass. Atticus taught her well. She challenges beliefs that she knows are wrong. Of course, by today's standards, some of the

things she says are cringeworthy, but the point is, she is now the progressive heroine. She is not perfect, but she has potential to be better than her father and her hometown. We have hope that she will pick up where Atticus failed. She is also recognizably Scout Finch, the outspoken, precocious tomboy, but now she is twenty-six and still out of place in Maycomb. Jean Louise has been living in New York City, which contributes to the jarringness of her visit. She can't relate to the women of her town, their interests, or their views on race. And, of course, Aunt Alexandra is still on her case about her behavior and appearance. Other familiar faces include Aunt Alexandra, Uncle Jack (who takes a much more prominent role), and Calpurnia. Scout mentions that she still keeps in touch with Dill, who is exploring Italy, last she checked. Next to Atticus, the most disappointing news is that Jem died before "Watchman" begins. Henry Clinton is an important new character. He has been close to the Finches since, well, after the events of "Mockingbird." He became Atticus's protege after Jem died. Jean Louise has a serious relationship with him at the beginning of the novel, but, like Atticus, he attends those awful citizens' council meetings, and her view of him is shaken. I wanted to hate this book, and I wanted to be angry at it. The controversy surrounding its release would be enough: the story behind its publication is shady, almost certainly achieved through underhanded means, and even buying the novel was a moral quandary. Unfortunately, the book is good, and its message--however painfully it hits--is important: heroes can fall and they should. Not only that, but it forces us to look at our own values and behaviors. Atticus Finch was a huge relief: a person, albeit fictional, that we could look up to. He embodied everything an ethical person should aspire to (at least, the memetic version of him did). Atticus became a literary saint. However, even "Mockingbird" shows cracks in the statue we've erected of Atticus Finch. He has always taken a paternalist stance towards black people, but the focus of "Mockingbird" was his fight for justice. His moving courtroom scene, his progressive parenting, and his countless other noble deeds overshadow small things like making Calpurnia enter through the back door. But this indicates that his conception of justice and equality is limited--not as limited as the rest of Maycomb, of course, but still limited--and that becomes the focal point of "Watchman." The hardest truth of "Watchman" is not that Atticus changed. It is that he was always like this. The question that Jean Louise/Scout and the readers have to answer is, What are we going to do to be better?

I came in skeptical, but I loved this novel for exactly what it is: a brilliantly written, beautiful southern novel about a young woman who discovers her father is not a god. And I'm angry that some pompous, patriarchal publisher squashed it and convinced her to write a brilliantly written, beautiful southern novel about a young woman who discovers her father is a god. WATCHMAN is about

growing up, "killing the Buddha" and laying claim to one's own world view. I can certainly believe that this is Harper Lee's first novel. I totally understand why the editor buried it and encouraged her to bend her considerable talent to the concept of *MOCKINGBIRD*, latching onto a fairly insignificant anecdote and reframing it as the main plot thrust -- which also neatly swapped hero and heroine, making the star of the book a man instead of a young woman. Setting aside the suspicious circumstances of the magical appearance of *WATCHMAN* (and the buckets of money involved for the publisher and agent), I also totally get why Harper Lee might want us to have this novel now, at this point in her life. She is now where old Atticus is in *WATCHMAN*: an elderly person who is sick and tired of carrying the burden of our hero worship. So there. Take that. Eat your disillusionment and throw up behind the ice cream parlor that was once your childhood home. It hurts, and it infuriates, and it strips away your security blanket. Get over it. As an editor, I want to go back in time, embrace this young author, force her to firmly look in my eyes, and tell her: "This is a wonderful book. And you must write another one and another and another, and every one of them should say exactly what you want to say." Yes, I love *MOCKINGBIRD* as much as the next book nerd, but it breaks my heart that -- no matter what we know/don't know about the publishing process -- the publisher took hold of a young woman who had astonishing lyrical skills, massive raw talent, insight that transcended her years, and literary chops that set her on a trajectory to eclipse Faulkner, and they turned her into a one-hit wonder recluse who was unwilling or unable to ever publish another book. I love both Harper Lee's beautiful novels. I'm mourning for the dozen or so she could have and should have written.

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