



2009

# Harper Lee

Alison Canar

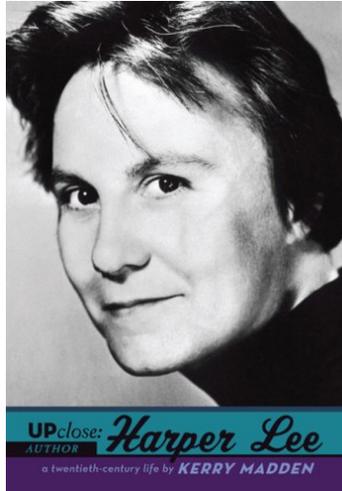
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Madden, Kerry. *Harper Lee*. Viking, 2009. ISBN 9780670010950. \$16.99. 224 p.

Reviewer: Alison Cañar

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult,

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biographies;

Subject: Lee, Harper--Juvenile literature; Authors, American--20th century--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Much of Harper Lee's childhood is similar to that of her character Scout. Just like Scout, Lee was a tomboy who called her father by his first name. Lee's father, like Atticus, was a lawyer who once represented a black man. Lee's own childhood friend--Truman Capote, who also became a famous author--inspired Scout and Jem's neighborhood friend, Dill. After laying the foundation of Lee's background, the remainder of the biography focuses on key events throughout Lee's adult life. Later topics include: Lee's time at college, the years editing her novel in New York City, researching with Truman for his book *In Cold Blood*, the Hollywood production of *Mockingbird*, and Lee's activities since leaving the public eye.

It might seem that writing a biography of a living person would be simple. Not, it turns out, if the subject is Harper Lee. Ms. Lee has been turning down interview requests since 1964, four years after the publication of her classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Despite the difficulty of her task, Madden succeeds in creating an overview of Lee's life which is both informative and engaging. Due to Lee's intense desire for privacy, many aspects of her life are surrounded by speculation. Is it true that an unknown vault contains a second work by Lee, waiting to be published posthumously? Unfortunately, Madden doesn't have all the answers, but readers will be intrigued by the questions researched in this mysterious, yet always honest and respectful, biography.

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