**SWBS Essay: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (by Harper Lee)**

**Somebody:** Jean Louise “Scout” Finch is a young girl living in Alabama during the Great Depression. During the events of the book she is between seven and nine years old. While no one in the town of Maycomb is well-off financially, her and her family are likely better off than others, as her father is a lawyer. She lives in a family of her father, Atticus; her older brother, Jem; and the family servant, Calpurnia. Her mother died when Scout was young, so she doesn’t remember her. Scout also has a friend named Dill that is often at her house to play, and the two of them are “engaged” to be married when they grow up. Scout is a tomboy in every way, embracing overalls over dresses, preferring the company of men to women, fighting, swearing, and seeing it as the worse insult to be called a girl. She is extremely smart, able to both read and write before she ever goes to school. She asks a lot of questions, is unafraid of just about everything except for Boo Radley, and has a great imagination. She is the narrator of the book; therefore, the audience is able to see her thoughts and feelings more so than any other character.

**Wanted**: One thing Scout wants is freedom to act the way she wants, not “like a lady.” This is an issue because of the time period and the stereotypical town in which she lives. Most women in the town, including Scout’s aunt, feel that she isn’t being proper unless she is in a dress, baking, and “being a ray of sunshine.” She also fights for freedom to act the way she wants at school, as her teacher punishes her for being able to read and write. A second thing she wants is to make sense of the world around her. What is racism? Why are people racist? Why do mobs act the way that they do? How can Maycomb citizens be both good and bad? She seems to constantly be analyzing why people of the town and Jem do what they do. A third thing she wants is knowledge of Boo Radley. Boo is a mystery that her curiosity will not allow her to drop, causing her to attempt several plots in order to gain this knowledge.

**But:** The townspeople’s ignorance, hypocrisy, and assumptions get in the way more than anything else. Her aunt specifically forces upon her a stereotypical approach to the way the world works. Aunt Alexandra works tirelessly to keep Scout away from the freedom she seeks. According to Alexandra, Scout must learn to be a proper lady and take pride in the family history. Scout couldn’t care less about those. On the flip side, Alexandra demands that Scout must not be friends with anyone “below” the Finches or be seen associating with Calpurnia outside the house, which is exactly what she wants to do. An obstacle to her learning about the town is the town’s hypocrisy itself. Scout takes people at their word; it slowly dawns on her that the world is much more complicated than that, because people like Miss Gates, Mrs. Merriweather, and Miss Stephanie Crawford often say one thing and do another. People (other than Atticus and Miss Maudie) often tend to talk down to Scout and other children as well, rather than speaking truth to them and treating them like adults. The biggest obstacle to Scout learning about Boo is Boo himself and his family. They are clouded in secrecy, with Boo not allowed to come out of the house. Another major obstacle to learning truth about Boo is all the rumors that exist about him.

**So:** Scout obtains her freedom to a certain extent by the end. Aunt Alexandra gives Scout her overalls to wear. Atticus fights for Scout to have freedom as well, teaching her through his actions that she doesn’t need to be obsessed with family history and that she should absolutely value all those around her, even Walter Cunningham. Her desire to learn about the town is a journey throughout the book. She ends up learning about hypocrisy, learning that everyone has some good (and some evil) inside them, and that it’s best to crawl around in their skin to get to know their perspective. She learns that racism is real, it’s wrong, and it’s worth fighting against. More than anything, the trial of Tom Robinson shows her just how complicated of a world she is growing up in. Finally, she accomplishes her goal of meeting Boo Radley when Boo saves her and Jem from the murderous Bob Ewell. Scout walks him back home, pausing at the end of the book to see the events of the entire story through Boo’s perspective.