

To Kill A Mockingbird

How do you visually represent a theme?

By Lea Marshall

The Individual and the Community

One idea that leaped off the page during my research into the script and *Mockingbird* book was the idea of INDIVIDUAL beliefs shaping a COMMUNITY (for better or worse.) Miss Maudie says, “Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the public streets.” This inspired the idea for the houses in our Maycomb neighborhood to not have walls because what happens inside the houses isn’t contained just inside those walls. The beliefs that people hold inside the walls of their homes influence the entire community. Privately held prejudices publicly convict an innocent man, a woman’s struggle to break an addiction needs a bit of caring attention from her neighbors, Atticus can’t keep his shooting prowess completely hidden, and another man comes out past his walls to save the lives of two children. We need each other. No man is an island, and no individual decision only affects one person. Our “private” reactions of fear influence our communities. But the good news is, so do our actions in love.

Courtroom Scene

Our stage courtroom is made up of pieces of our neighbor’s furniture. We have front porch gliders from neighbors, benches from back yards, tables & chairs from friends’ dining rooms, an antique typewriter from a local politician’s collection, and even a few chairs from my very own living room. This is because our courtroom isn’t a place of legality far removed from our everyday life. It is a living room, a family room, a dining room, and a front porch put together with pieces from the homes of our neighbors and friends. It is on those pieces of furniture that Maycomb citizens sit in judgment of those who are their neighbors and friends.

The Book Tree

I had this vision for the iconic Mockingbird tree to be made totally out of books. Hardback factual books (law books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries) for the base and then paperback novels (fictional stories) for the branching leafy expanse. Let me just add that visioning a tree made totally out of books is so much easier than the reality of creating one on the stage. I would like to thank my husband, Adam Marshall, and a crazy set construction crew who worked way too many hours to make this a reality. It is TREEmendous. I beLEAF it adds so much to the set. I think it is deeply ROOTed to my vision. And I promise never to do it again.

Visualizing the Time Period

Almost every prop and set piece harken us back to the 1930’s. Sydney Hockett has also chosen to use many 1930’s clothing items in her costuming. Surrounding ourselves with these tangible reminders of this time in history has been a great asset to our cast and crew. THANK YOU to so many Leon families that have trusted us with these precious set pieces, props, and costumes. We have loved using these vintage items for this show.