TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

AUDITION MONOLOGUES

Original audition monologues inspired by characters in Christopher Sergel's adaptation of Harper Lee's novel; not excerpts from the script.

1. Scout Finch

Female, child or young teen | Spirited, curious, emotional

Setting: Scout struggles to understand why adults treat people differently.

> "I don't understand grownups. I really don't. They tell you to be honest, but then they get angry when you tell the truth. They tell you to be kind, but I've seen some of them treat people worse than any schoolyard bully ever would.
>
> Atticus says people are complicated. Well, I think that's just a fancy way of saying they don't always make sense.
>
> Everybody in this town has something to say about somebody else. They whisper about Boo Radley, they say terrible things about Tom Robinson, and now they're talking about my daddy just because he's trying to help someone.
>
> I used to think being brave meant fighting somebody bigger than you. But maybe being brave means standing up for someone when everybody else tells you to sit down.
>
> I don't know everything. I'm just a kid. But I know when something doesn't feel right. And what they're doing to Tom Robinson doesn't feel right at all."

2. Jean Louise Finch, Adult Scout

Female | Playing age: 25–50 | White | Reflective, perceptive, warm, quietly emotional

Setting: Jean Louise recalls her childhood in Maycomb and the way her understanding of her father changed as she grew older.

> “I used to get impatient with my father. I wanted an answer before I’d finished asking the question, and he could sit there long enough to make you wonder whether he’d heard you at all.
>
> I’d tell him somebody had said something cruel. I’d expect him to put down his newspaper, march outside, and straighten the whole town out.
>
> Instead, he’d make room for me beside him.
>
> (A small smile.)
>
> That was particularly aggravating when I was ready for a fight.
>
> I remember his glasses sliding down his nose. The newspaper folded on his knee. Little things. Things you don’t think to remember while they’re happening.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> For years, when I thought about that trial, I remembered watching him. I hardly ever wondered what it had been like for him to come home afterward, knowing we were waiting for him to explain it.
>
> He must have been tired. And disappointed. Perhaps frightened for us.
>
> I never asked.
>
> (Gently.)
>
> I wish I could sit beside him now. I wouldn’t need him to explain everything.
>
> I think I’d just let him finish reading.”

3. Atticus Finch

Male, adult | Calm, thoughtful, powerful restraint

Setting: Atticus explains why he must defend Tom Robinson despite the town's opposition.

> “There are moments in a man's life when he has to decide what kind of person he intends to be. Not what his neighbors expect of him, not what makes his life easier, but what he knows in his heart to be right.
>
> I know what people are saying about me. I hear it when I walk down the street. I see it in the faces of people I've known my entire life.
>
> They think I should walk away from this case. They think defending Tom Robinson is a mistake.
>
> But what kind of father would I be if I taught my children to believe in justice and then turned my back on it when justice became inconvenient?
>
> The law is supposed to protect every man, not simply the men we like or the men who look like us.
>
> I may not change the minds of everyone in that courtroom. I may not even win. But when this is over, I want to be able to look my children in the eyes and know that I did what was right.
>
> Sometimes that's the only victory a man can hope for.”

4. Tom Robinson

Male, adult | Vulnerable, sincere, emotionally intense

Setting: Tom reflects on the accusation against him and the fear of not being believed.

> “I keep thinking there's got to be some way to make them understand. Some way to tell them what happened so they'll finally believe me.
>
> I never wanted trouble. Never went looking for it. I worked hard, tried to help folks when I could, and went home to my family at the end of the day.
>
> But now I'm sitting here, and it feels like none of that matters.
>
> I can tell them the truth a hundred different ways, but I see how they look at me. Some of them made up their minds before I ever opened my mouth.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> I've got a wife. I've got children. They need me. And I don't know how to explain to them that their daddy might not come home because somebody decided his word wasn't worth believing.
>
> I ain't asking for special treatment. I ain't asking anybody to feel sorry for me.
>
> I'm just asking them to listen. To see me as a man telling the truth.
>
> Is that really so much to ask?”

5. Mayella Ewell

Female, teen or young adult | Defensive, frightened, conflicted

Setting: Mayella struggles with fear, loneliness, and the pressure surrounding her testimony.

> “You all sit there looking at me like you know everything about my life. Like you know what it's like living in that house.
>
> You don't know anything.
>
> You don't know what it's like waking up every morning wondering if somebody's going to be angry, or what you might've done wrong this time.
>
> I take care of those children. I clean that house. I do what I'm told because that's what I'm supposed to do.
>
> And nobody ever asks me what I want.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> You think I don't know what people say about us? About my daddy? About me?
>
> I hear them. I hear every word.
>
> Maybe I wanted somebody to be nice to me for once. Maybe I wanted somebody to look at me like I was worth something.
>
> (Becoming defensive.)
>
> But that don't mean you get to stand there and make me feel like I'm the one on trial!
>
> I'm telling you what happened. That's what you wanted, isn't it?
>
> So why won't you just leave me alone?”

6. Jem Finch

Male, young teen | Frustrated, idealistic, emotionally charged

Setting: Jem reacts to the verdict and begins to question everything he believed about fairness.

> “I thought they were going to do the right thing. I really did.
>
> I sat in that courtroom and listened to every word. I heard the evidence. I heard what Atticus said. Anybody paying attention could see what was happening.
>
> So how could they do it?
>
> How could twelve grown men sit there and decide that Tom Robinson was guilty when the truth was right in front of them?
>
> (Pause.)
>
> All my life I've been told that the law is fair. That people are supposed to be treated equally. That if you tell the truth, the truth matters.
>
> Well, what good is the truth if nobody wants to hear it?
>
> I used to think Maycomb was a good place. I knew people could be mean sometimes, but I never thought they could be this cruel.
>
> Atticus keeps telling me that people have good in them.
>
> I want to believe him. I really do.
>
> But after what happened today, I'm not sure I know what to believe anymore.”

7. Calpurnia

Female, adult | Strong, compassionate, commanding

Setting: Calpurnia speaks about dignity, respect, and the lessons children must learn.

> “I've spent a good part of my life watching people decide who deserves respect and who doesn't.
>
> Some folks think respect comes from the clothes you wear, the house you live in, or the family you were born into.
>
> But I've known people with beautiful homes and terrible hearts. And I've known people with almost nothing who would give you their last piece of bread.
>
> So don't you tell me a person's worth can be measured by what they have.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> Those children are growing up in a world that's going to teach them plenty of ugly things. They'll hear words that hurt. They'll see people treated unfairly. And sooner or later, they'll have to decide whether to follow the crowd or stand for something better.
>
> I can't protect them from everything. Neither can their father.
>
> But I can teach them to look a person in the eye. To listen before they judge. To understand that kindness isn't weakness.
>
> Because one day those children are going to grow up.
>
> And I hope, when they do, they'll have the courage to treat people better than this world has taught them to.”

8. Bob Ewell

Male, adult | Aggressive, bitter, prejudiced, threatening

Setting: Bob Ewell confronts someone who questions his honesty and authority.

> “You think you're better than me, don't you? That's what this whole town thinks. You walk around with your fancy clothes and your fine manners, looking down your noses at people like me.
>
> Well, let me tell you something. I was born in this town, same as you, and I ain't about to let anybody tell me what I can and cannot do.
>
> You don't know what it's like trying to keep a family together when you ain't got two pennies to rub against each other. You don't know what it's like having people laugh at you behind your back.
>
> (Steps closer.)
>
> And now that lawyer Finch thinks he can stand up in front of everybody and make me look like a fool?
>
> He thinks because he's got a little education and a fancy reputation, he can say whatever he wants about me?
>
> (Pause. Quietly threatening.)
>
> Well, people ought to be careful about who they embarrass in public.
>
> Because some men don't forget being made a fool of.
>
> And I sure as hell ain't one of them.”

9. Miss Maudie Atkinson

Female, adult | Warm, wise, outspoken, compassionate

Setting: Miss Maudie reflects on Atticus and the town's treatment of Tom Robinson.

> “You know, I've lived in Maycomb long enough to see just about everything. I've seen good people make terrible mistakes, and I've seen people who claim to be righteous do some awfully cruel things.
>
> This town has a way of convincing itself that everything is just fine, so long as nobody asks too many questions.
>
> But then somebody like Atticus Finch comes along and reminds us that doing what's right isn't always the same as doing what's popular.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> Now, I know folks are disappointed. Lord knows, I am too. But I want you to understand something.
>
> Just because a man loses a battle doesn't mean he was wrong to fight it.
>
> There are people in this town who know what happened in that courtroom wasn't right. They may not be brave enough to say it out loud, but they know.
>
> And maybe someday they'll find their voices.
>
> (Gently.)
>
> Until then, we keep doing what we know is right. We keep treating people with kindness. And we don't let the ugliness of the world make us ugly too.”

10. Sheriff Heck Tate

Male, adult | Practical, authoritative, conflicted, compassionate

Setting: Sheriff Tate reflects on the difference between enforcing the law and doing what is right.

> “I've worn this badge long enough to know that the law doesn't always make things simple.
>
> People think being sheriff means everything's black and white. Somebody does something wrong, you arrest them. Somebody breaks the law, you make them answer for it.
>
> But life isn't always that easy.
>
> I've seen good men make bad decisions. I've seen innocent people suffer because somebody was too proud to admit they were wrong.
>
> And I've seen this town turn its back on people who needed help the most.
>
> (Pause.)
>
> Now, I believe in the law. I wouldn't wear this badge if I didn't. But I also believe there's a difference between justice and simply following the rules.
>
> Sometimes you've got to ask yourself who you're protecting and why.
>
> Because if the law can't protect a decent person who's done nothing wrong, then what good are we doing?
>
> (Firmly.)
>
> I've made my decision. And I intend to stand by it.
>
> You can call it whatever you like.
>
> I call it doing my job.”