

Session 4

Literature and Films

Introduction

In this session we looked at some novels and films that illustrate changing attitudes to race.

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)

A very important book in the abolition of the slave trade. Written by abolitionist, Harriet Beecher Stowe, it was a best seller in its day. It exposed the cruelties of slavery but was also guilty of creating several racial stereotypes.

[https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/46787.Uncle Tom s Cabin](https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/46787.Uncle_Tom_s_Cabin)

Little Black Sambo (1899)

A children's book written by the Scottish writer, Helen Bannerman. Although now considered racist, in its day it was considered to be quite progressive because it portrayed a more positive picture of a black boy.

<https://archive.org/details/storyoflittlebla1903bann>

Birth of a Nation (1915)

This film, based on the 1905 book "The Clansman" by Thomas Dixon, was responsible for the revival of the Ku Klux Klan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRtB6Ur76bw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3kmVgQHIEY&t=516s>

Gone with the Wind (film – 1939)

Based on the novel of the same name written by Margaret Mitchell in 1936, this block buster film still promotes the old stereotypes of black and white people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aUi7zTDQ6g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ7r2OVu1ss>

To Kill a Mockingbird (1960)

This novel by Harper Lee is a modern classic and portrays the injustices and discrimination suffered by black people in 1930s Alabama.

<https://cleveracademy.vn/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird.pdf>

I know why the Caged Bird Sings (1969)

The only book on this list written by a black woman, Maya Angelou, it was the result of the assassination of Martin Luther King. Following his death the author suffered depression and wrote this book as an account of her childhood in the American south in the 1930s. Like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is a powerful description of prejudice through the eyes of a child, but this time the child is black.

<https://archive.org/details/IKnowWhyTheCagedBirdSings>