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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF JULY 13, 2015

Massachusetts education officials say they have no plans to drop “To Kill a Mockingbird” from the state’s suggested reading list for high schoolers, even though a forthcoming sequel to the popular, Pulitzer prize-winning novel recasts the story’s long-celebrated protagonist as a racist.

The statewide curriculum framework set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education names Harper Lee on its list of suggested authors for students to read between grades 9 and 12.

“There has not been any discussion here about removing Harper Lee from the list of suggested authors in our curriculum frameworks,” department spokeswoman Jacqueline Reis said in an e-mail Monday.

As of Monday, Lee’s only published book was “To Kill a Mockingbird,” which debuted in 1960 and became an Oscar-winning film two years later. The story is set in the 1930s in segregated Alabama and told from the perspective of a young girl named Scout. The plot’s central character is Scout’s father, a lawyer named Atticus Finch, who defends a black man in court, while condemning prejudice and hatred.

However, Lee, now 89, is due to put out a related title Tuesday, "Go Set a Watchman," which picks up with Finch 20 years later. In a development that has stunned some of "Mockingbird"'s fans, the new book paints him in a much different light, hostile to the growing civil rights movement of the 1950s.

According to reviews of the novel ahead of its release, Finch in the book calls blacks "backward" and "unable to share fully in the responsibilities of citizenship."

"Would you want your state governments run by people who don't know how to run 'em?" Finch says in the book, according to reviews. "They've made terrific progress in adapting themselves to white ways, but they're far from it yet."

The new book also says that Finch once attended a Ku Klux Klan meeting, and has him saying "the Negroes down here are still in their childhood as a people," and asking his daughter, "Do you want Negroes by the carload in our schools and churches and theaters? Do you want them in our world?"

Lee actually wrote "Watchman" a few years before publishing "Mockingbird," but when she submitted it to her editors, they asked her to draft a different story focusing instead on Scout's childhood. That rewrite became "Mockingbird," a classic that for years has been required reading for teenagers around the country.

Lee's lawyer has said she stumbled upon "Watchman" last year, and in February publisher HarperCollins made the shocking announcement that Lee would be releasing another book.

There has been heavy demand for pre-orders of "Watchman," according to the publishing company.

*Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)*

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