



Charles J. Shields

Topics

Children and Young Adult Authors, Education, Historians

Travels From

Virginia

Bio

Charles J. Shields is an American nonfiction writer of trade biographies, history, and young adult books. In 1997, Shields left a career in high school teaching and administration to write independently. Over the course of the next six years, he published 20 histories and biographies for young people. Shields's first biography for adults in 2006— *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee* went on to become a *New York Times* bestseller, and a perennial favorite of readers and teachers, now in its 10th printing. In connection with the NEA's "Big Read" initiative, Shields spoke to hundreds of audiences about his biography of Harper Lee for community-wide reads of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Two years later, Shields followed-up his biography of Lee with a young adult version: *I Am Scout: The Biography of Harper Lee* (Holt), which received awards from ALA Best Books for Young Adults; Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year; Arizona Grand Canyon Young Readers Master List. In 2009, with fellow biographers Nigel Hamilton, James McGrath Morris, and Pulitzer-prize winner Debby Applegate, Shields co-founded Biographers International Organization (BIO), a non-profit organization founded to promote the

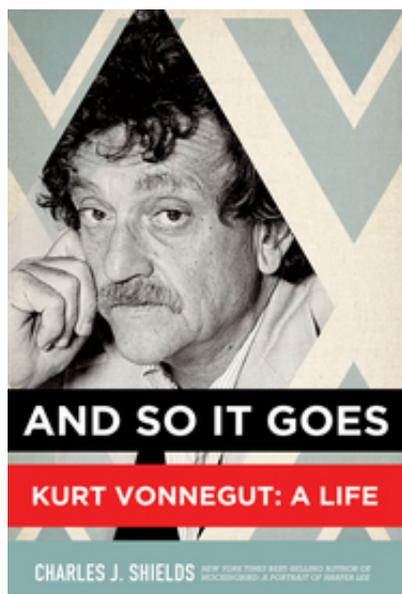
art and craft of biography. As of 2014, BIO has 350 members in 45 American states and 10 nations, including Australia, India, Kenya, and the Netherlands. In November 2011, Shields published the first biography of Kurt Vonnegut—*And So It Goes: Kurt Vonnegut, A Life*, described as an “incisive, gossipy page-turner of a biography,” by Janet Maslin and an “engrossing, definitive biography” by *Publishers Weekly* in a starred review. It was selected as a *New York Times* Notable Book, and *Washington Post* Notable Nonfiction Book for 2011. Shields served as a judge for the 2013 PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography.

SPEECHES

And So it Goes: Writing Kurt Vonnegut In 2006, Charles Shields reached out to Kurt Vonnegut in a letter, asking for his endorsement for a planned biography. The first response was no (“A most respectful demurring by me for the excellent writer Charles J. Shields, who offered to be my biographer”). Unwilling to take no for an answer, propelled by a passion for his subject, and already deep into his research, Shields wrote again and this time, to his delight, the answer came back: “O.K.” For the next year—a year that ended up being Vonnegut’s last—Shields had access to Vonnegut and his letters.

Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee Charles J. Shields brings to life the warmhearted, high-spirited, and occasionally hardheaded woman who gave us two of American literature’s most unforgettable characters—Atticus Finch and his daughter, Scout.

BOOKS

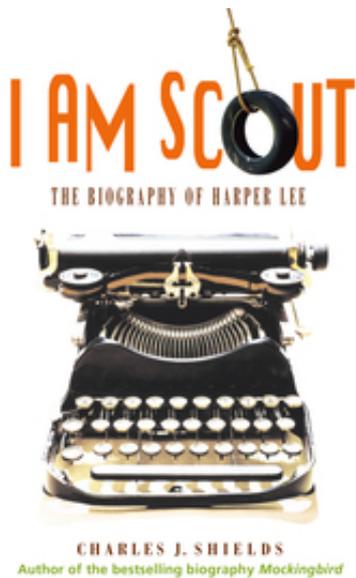


Trade Paperback

[And So It Goes](#) Kurt Vonnegut: A Life

St. Martin's Griffin

From the author of *Mockingbird*—the first authoritative biography of Kurt Vonnegut Jr., a writer who forever altered American literature In 2006, Charles...

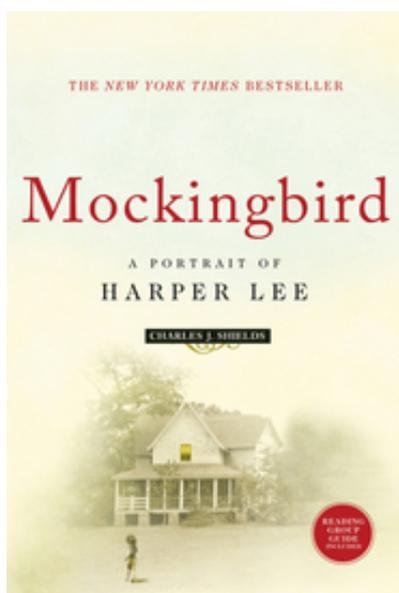


[I Am Scout](#) The Biography of Harper Lee

Henry Holt and Co.

To Kill a Mockingbird is one of the most widely read novels in American literature. It's also a perennial favorite in highschool English classrooms across the...

Hardcover



[Mockingbird](#) A Portrait of Harper Lee

Holt Paperbacks

"A fine, well-rounded portrait of Harper Lee. *Mockingbird* is good reading."—Star-Tribune (Minneapolis) *To Kill a Mockingbird*—the twentieth century's most...

Trade Paperback

REVIEWS: "Speaking without notes, Charles Shields kept an audience of over 200 mesmerized for more than an hour as he brought author Harper Lee vividly to life. While not a typically edge-of-your-seat topic, Mr. Shields enthralled the audience with a story full of suspense and drama. A pin dropped, and I heard it."

— Ray Dickinson, Director, Cocoa Beach Public Library

"The students adored Charles and his talk."

— Winona Seigel, The Commonwealth Governor's School, Stafford, VA

"We continue to receive wonderful comments on your program. So many people love the book and film of "To Kill a Mockingbird" and your stories and knowledge of it all, made it so much better."

— Patti Portnowitz, Director, Brevard County Libraries, FL

"Your talks have created quite a buzz around here. Everyone compliments you on what a great job you did. You really made our "Peoria Reads The Big Read" a success this year. You will be highly and fondly thought of around Peoria for years to come."

— Roberta Koscielski, Associate Director, Peoria Public Library

"Thank you so much for joining our four towns in Fairfield, CT over the weekend. You gave all four communities a greater insight into Nelle Harper Lee... We really appreciated your humor, and your easy-going ways."

— Geraldine Katz, Grants Coordinator at City of Stamford, CT

"Charles is a fabulous speaker and his talk was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. He offered many riches to our community read. We thought it was a great success."

- Jennie Lay, Bud Werner Memorial Library, CO

"It was a wonderful night. Charles is a fabulous speaker and his talk was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. He offered many riches to our community read. We thought it was a great success."

- Bud Werner Memorial Library