

The Main Themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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The Main Themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are relevant in the modern society. People are struggling with the same questions that Lee has raised in the novel. Discrimination can lead to dire consequences, the novel shows why society must put an end to it. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not a classic growing-up novel, but rather a complex story that explores good and evil, justice and law, racial and sexist prejudice.

Exploration of the Main Themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The author uses first person perspective of a child to define the innocent view on the society that is trying to suppress them. The novel is told from the perspective of Scout, who is six years old at the beginning of the story (Lee, 1960). Over the course of the story, Scout grows up, and her earlier assumption that the world is a fair place is torn to shreds (Lee, 1960). Intense themes of the story – prejudice, justice, moral misunderstandings – are portrayed through Scout's eyes.

Growing Up

Children had to grow up in the story because their maturity came from learning the truth about the society that they have been living in. Scout and her brother, Jem, get wiser while overpassing pure child innocence (Johnson, 2018). They begin to connect themselves with the outsiders' community in their small town. Children learn that in fact, even legal questions may contradict the principles that the society claim to follow. As Scout and Jem are learning about the world's rules, they open their hearts and minds and start to love Boo Radley, one of the community's outsiders of whom they were terrified at first (Johnson, 2018). Scout bonds with Boo Radley, later coming to realization that she is an outsider in the society herself.

Children slowly tangle with the difficult and hypocrite world, which they never knew about behind the protection of the walls of their father's house. Errors of judgment that children make help

them confidently establish the concept of maturation (Dhaliani, 2020). Scout and Jem are confused by the reasonings and motifs of actions made by the adults. By the end of the story, children learn to distinguish the causes of the adult's behavior.

Justice and Law

The principles and codes that were shouted from every corner in the town of Maycomb, where the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* unfolds, were not followed. At least, the laws were contradictory for the outsiders of the community, people of color. Children discover that the society depends on legalities, but these laws are being broken by the same people because of them following the hidden social codes. The law should protect the mockingbirds (a symbol of innocent people who are discriminated against in the story) from the evil and injustice, but instead, they became a victim one more time (Johnson, 2018). People are raised with a belief in strictly following the law and religious principles.

In the novel, the reader can clearly see how standing by the rules only works in one direction. When Maycomb's community needs help for white people, they receive it. However, when Boo Radley was loud in the public square, he gets arrested. When the law comes to deal with the people of color, the society assumes they are guilty. Despite the circumstances, so-called 'justice' is only applicable for white people. In gratitude for saving Scout and Jem, the lawyer and sheriff break the law to save Boo Radley from jail (Lee, 1960). The law is not working for protecting black people equally, even in the modern world, more than fifty years after the book has been published. The example with the children also shows that the law could not protect their lives too, which prompts that law is not an equivalent to justice.

Racial Prejudice

Scout and Jem have been still believing that the society is driven by kindness when Tom's trial happened. After it, children came to the realization that there is much of evil hidden within people, and they both had to face the reality of racism. Calpurnia is a black woman, a housekeeper who looks after the siblings. Moreover, she is somewhat of a mother figure for them (Lee, 1960). Calpurnia was treated with respect by Atticus, children's father. On the other hand, Tom Robinson suffers from racial prejudice. He was charged with the rape of Mayella Ewell, a white woman.

Atticus quickly learns that Tom was convicted based solely on his skin color. Jem's and Scout's father reveals the truth to them, "The white man always wins in our courts when it's the word of a white man against a black man" (Lee, 1960). This represents how the discrimination by race can define the decision of the jury. Bob Ewell portrays racial prejudice in the story, while Atticus represents justice (Sharmila, 2020). Social hierarchy of Maycomb was not merciful to the black people, throwing them to the very low position. Scout's character is evolving through time, and she has grown from someone who should have been prejudiced to someone who is ready to put up a fight to stand for justice (Sharmila, 2020). Black people in the book are innocent, but demolished or hurt with only one reasoning behind it – the Maycomb's community is driven by prejudice. The society of the town does not want to puzzle out who is truly in the wrong.

Moral Complexity

Lee presents various complex morally wise decisions throughout the story. Atticus risks his reputation, position in the town social hierarchy, even his children's safety. He does all of that because of his bravery and strong sense of what is right and wrong, he is on the good side (Sharmila, 2020). He will later on even break the law for Boo Radley to bring justice. In opposition, there is Bob Ewell, who accuses Tom of rape only because of his race and threatens to kill Atticus's children, he is on the evil side. Ewell is not completely a villain same as Atticus is not completely a

hero. *To Kill a Mockingbird* talks about the social, religious and individual moral values. Although most of the people of the Maycomb look up to Atticus for being respectful to everyone and standing up for the black person, the community does not fancy to borrow his beliefs.

Conclusion

To Kill a Mockingbird is a first-person novel, which shows the struggles of growing up, as Scout faces the ugly side of the world: evil, injustice, and prejudice. By the end of the story, she matures into a girl who sees the society how it is structured – good and evil, justice and injustice, and everything in-between. Atticus shows his children how important it is to respect one another, without regard for the race, gender, or any other quality that might be different to what is seen as normal in the community. The novel is ultimately about growing up, but in other way – in the form of the soul escalation and gaining courage to fight discrimination that will destroy society if it will not be stopped.

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