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To Kill a Mockingbird Book Analysis

To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel authored by Harper Lee who tells the story of society entangled with issues of racism, gender discrimination and class struggle. Lee tells the story from a child's point of view. Using concrete language, the author manages to highlight critical themes that bedevil our current society in an honest and candid way. The title of the book prepares the audience for a violent experience since one would ask, why kill a mere mockingbird? Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* novel paints a picture of the modern society involved in legal career issues, discrimination and human characteristics which on the one hand are detrimental to the progress, but on the other hand, describe a real society.

First, focusing on the title of the novel, it could be interpreted as the destruction of innocence. The author strives to capture the attention of the readers with the mind teasing title. A keen reader would therefore probably ask themselves why someone would have the idea of killing a mere mockingbird. It is this inquiry that will make the reader want to not only purchase the book but also read thoroughly to find out the significance of the title. Lee, using different characters such as Jem, Dill, Robinson, and Tom, portrays how innocent people can be hurt through evil acts of either the society or those around them.

Furthermore, the novel highlights the morality of humans in any given society. The author focuses on the inquiry whether or not humans are inherently right or are they naturally evil? Though the main characters such as Scout and Jem, Lee portrays human nature. There are

other characters such as the Maycomb who during Tom's trial, believes that only the white people need a fair trial. In figuring out the moral nature of humans, some of the characters get hurt in the mayhem. While Scout thinks her father's actions in defending the black man charged with rape are right, Maycomb thinks it is not justifiable. There is, therefore, need to evaluate the actions of people in society. Through such evaluations, the novel justifies that humans have their distinct characters and moral. However, the society is made of people from different background and is therefore bound to have a hybrid of morals.

Lee narrates the story in the eyes of a young child; Scout Finch. The choice of this style of narration is candid and makes the story credible. Although the level English used is higher than what the child would have used, it is comprehensible. The child's viewpoint offers a challenge regarding how the audience would have judged the characters of the novel. If an adult had told the story and discriminated the characters such as Edwin who was from a poor family, the audience would have judged them harshly. However, because it is a child who discriminates, the audience may decide softly with the benefit of the doubt. The child innocence assumes that they have either never seen evil, or cannot comprehend it if they see or experience it. The style enables the child characters such as Scout and her brother Jem share their experiences freely with the audience who can therefore judge.

Similarly, the novel revolves around complicated and emotive issues such as gender inequality, racism and social classes in the society. Such issues may either attract the audience or repel some readers. The child narration makes the readers want to get intimate with the protagonist in the novel. The choice, therefore, gives the novel a larger audience unlike if the author chose an adult narrator. The child narration is vital in areas where the author chooses to

remain discrete on some issues. The child's viewpoint may be excused for not illuminating on such issues.

The overriding theme in Lee's novel is racism. Racial discrimination is a tumour in the American society that even with the massive awareness and campaigns, it has always been propagated even with law enforcers. The depression era in America saw a rise in racial discrimination in America. Perhaps that is why the author chooses to highlight racism across the novel. While racism is primarily regarded as discrimination based on an individual's skin color, the novel leans more to black people's discrimination by the whites.

The child narrator, Scout, first brings to the attention of the audience that their family had a housekeeper who was of black origin. The housekeeper also doubles up as a mother since their mother was not around. The children respect their house helper and show her the respect she deserves. They do not discriminate her despite her different color skin. However, things change when Scout hears the house-help speak in a different accent. Scout, therefore, comprehends that people may be different and act differently because of those who surround them. While such actions may display the effects of racism, it also explains the transition of the narrator's innocence into the experience. She now understands that evil is part of the society and she should learn to live with it.

Gender issues are also prevalent in the novel. Different character, including the narrator, are discriminated based on gender. First, the audience's attention is brought to a young Scout who is portrayed as a tomboy. Her display of male behavioral characteristics seems to bother everyone else but her father. The society has a standard that it expects of a woman. When Scout fails to meet the norm, she is therefore criticized and ridiculed by her peers, aunt and even her brother. Her aunt, in particular, is forced to move in to teach her how to behave like a lady. While these actions affect Scout's personality,

they display her courage to persist and live on despite the odds. Some other characters such as Miss Maudie face discrimination based on their female gender. She cannot be a member of the jury because she is a woman. Lee, therefore, manages to portray the woes women face in their pursuit for career fulfilment especially in male-dominated careers like the law.

Social differences are also a major issue in the novel. The author paints a picture of social differences that the society has not only instigated but also learnt to live with. The white people, for example, have been portrayed as of a higher class as compared to those of black origin. For example, despite some of the whites having social issues such as mites and lice, they are still considered superior than blacks with higher hygiene conditions. Those in the low class cannot afford legal representation and often find themselves convicted. Scout's father as a lawyer comes in at one moment to ease the plight of one such individual. Social classes bedevil even the modern society. However, Lee manages to illustrate that although the problem cannot be rooted out, it is how we deal with it that matters. Those in a better position in the society can offer a hand of help to those in need to create a cohesive society.

Harper Lee's book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, although written in 1960, highlights contemporary issues that people face in the society. The story revolves around issues of discrimination, child innocence, gender, legal career, the social coexistence of good and evil, and the significance of moral education within a society. The novel is a masterpiece that is recommendable to people of different ages due to the candid, innocent narration used while highlighting mature topics.