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SOCIAL PRESSURE TOWARDS TOM ROBINSON IN MAYCOMB

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Abstract: ‘‘To Kill a Mockingbird’’ is a book with multiple morals, where each reader can find his own sense. Tom Robinson is a person who unfairly accused for attacking Mayella Ewell. He is an African – American who brought not only a morality and mental growth, but also a lot of problems to the main characters. Moreover, the author chose Tom as a representative of innocence and society’s inhumanity towards black people. The main purpose of the paper is discuss racism and the consequences of it. The article demonstrates extent to which the main characters were reshaping throughout the story and injustice of society in Maycomb. It concludes with clarifying the scale of racism and poor level of society’s worldview in those times.

Key words: racism, society, inequality, morality, injustice, mental growth.

Introduction

The book “To Kill a Mockingbird” written by Harper Lee in 1960. The novel illustrates social pressure towards Tom Robinson in a small town named Maycomb through Jean Lousie Finch’s (Scout) eyes. She is living with her older brother Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) and father Atticus Finch. As her mother passed away when Jem and she were young Calpurnia looked after them and did household while Atticus was not at home. Although Calpurnia was African - American, she became as Finch’s family member. According to Akhrorova Nargiza (2025a), described like that:

“Jean Lousie, who was called Scout for her excessive curiosity, was only six years old and Jem was nine. The world around them is full of mysteries and enigmas. But despite their young age, Scout and Jem are distinguished by extraordinary quick wit and prudence, which, however, does not prevent them from committing pretty mischief and foolishness.”

I agree with the idea that Scout and Jem are curious and investigative. Even if they live in a cruel reality, thanks to their father they can think rationally and have their own opinion without depending on society. Atticus always equally respects each person in Maycomb and do not discriminate people because of their skin color or background. Moreover, he is an attorney who defended Tom Robinson despite social pressure. Tom is a black man who was accused for attacking Mayella Ewell, a white woman, only because of his kindness. In spite of having seven brothers and sisters, nobody helped Mayella and she often asked Tom to help while he was returning from work. Even though Tom was tired after work, he tried to help her. However, Mayella instead of appreciation took the advantage of his kindness. Mayella Ewell fell in love with Tom and wanted to see him every day. She tried to call Tom to her home by asking to help with different small tasks. However, her father, Bob Ewell, walked in on them together at home, which became reason for him to bit his daughter heavily. On top of that, he called police and blamed Tom for bitting and rapping Mayella. Tom Robinson never loved or touched Mayella. The only wrong thing he did, he felt sorry for white women, that she is lonely and needs help, especially for physical and domestic chores. Harper Lee shows the variety of opinions about Tom Robinson’s trial through several characters, such as Scout, Atticus and the citizens of Maycomb. The court completely changed characters’ lives and

each of them have their personal point of view about justice and inequality. The novel illustrates that courage and integrity can overcome discrimination and injustice.

Especially the research is firstly dedicates to analysis of character Scout who gradually grow throughout the story, mainly while Tom Robinson's trial. After that, it extends to the beliefs and thoughts of Atticus Finch. At the end, it finalizes with Finch's problems because of the cruel society. The aim of the research negative side effects of racism on young children. Each person ought to have access to good facilities and equal rights. The world should not be divided into separate territories for white and black people. Everyone must live in peace and harmony. Moreover, people's fate should not depend on skin color. First of all people have to understand what does the word racism mean. In accordance with the Merriam Webster dictionary ''Racism is a discrimination, prejudice or violence against people because of their race.''

Scout's Mental Growth

At first, Scout had a doubt that equality, trustworthiness and honesty exist. She hoped that Atticus will definitely win because of credible proofs. However, later on her faith gradually disappeared and she understood that racism is higher than truth. When she was not agree with the verdict, at the end her father says that:

''There's something in our lives that makes people lose their human dignity – they would want to be justice, but they can't. When a white person opposes a black person in court, the white person always wins. Such is the undistorted truth of life.'' (Lee, 1960, p. 173)

With these lines Atticus wanted to clarify for Jem and Scout how racism can destroy human dignity and the idea of justice. Thanks to Atticus Scout learns how to help people even if he himself does not always succeed. As Akhrorova Nargiza (2025b) states in her article: ''The trial serves as a pivotal moment in her life, forcing her to reconcile her childhood beliefs with the ugly trust of adult society''. After Tom Robinson's court Scout rethought many things and her life significantly changes. (Smith, 2019). She started to have her own ideas, thoughts, reflections and points of view. After the court Scout is no longer the girl who blindly beliefs in everything, this situation makes her more aware and starts to become a realist.

Morality of Atticus

Through Atticus author wanted to show how the city is unfair towards black people. Atticus had not any choice except defending Tom Robinson as otherwise he would betray his own principles and morality. As it is written in the book ''If I did not, I could not hold up my head in town, I could not represent this country in the legislature, I could not even tell you of Jem not to do something again.''(Lee, 1960, p. 75). Atticus tried to explain the situation to Scout, but she was too young to understand the whole scenario (Akhrorova, 2025a). Mainly, child who is around 6-9 years old is not able to understand adult's problems even if they do want. That is why Scout is also did not get her father's motives, but after that Calpurnia tried to clarify it.

During the court no matter how Atticus was trying to proof Tom, the trial found Tom guilty anyway. Whereas, Atticus had strong evidences such as no medical certificate about Mayella's health and even the fact that the beatings were done with the left hand could not proof Tom Robinson's innocence. The proof about beatings was true because Tom's left arm was damaged and he could not almost move it since childhood. Akhrorova (2025c) describes that ''he demonstrated true humanity and bravery in defending a black man and at the final argument, he summed up his speech with the following'':

''Gentlemen,'' he was saying, ''I shall be brief, but I would like to use my remaining time with you to remind you that this case is not a difficult one, it requires no minute sifting

of complicated facts, but it does require you to be sure beyond all reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant. To begin with, this case should never come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white''. (Lee, 1960, p. 207)

In spite of having well prepared proofs, Atticus failed. The main cause of it became social issues of that time. They think that black people are criminals, wrongdoers and should be sentenced to death.

Cruel Society of Maycomb

Furthermore, Finch's family got the variety of problems before and after the court. As soon as everyone heard that Atticus Finch is defending Tom Robinson, children at school started bullying Scout and Jem by calling them as a ''Nigger lovers''. This scene shows that even little children were cruel and racist at those times. However, first of all they were taking an example from their parents. Who could not even notice that their children are also becoming racists. Mukhammadieva (2023) says that ''On top of that, Atticus loses his status and good name in the community because of defending Tom Robinson and his children are bullied for being the children of ''nigger lover''. Despite bullying Atticus did not revenge or hate someone. He knew that it was just the opinion of society and tried to explain it to his children. Atticus said that there was no need to hit or tell bad things in return and taught that they should ignore them.

However, Mayella's father Bob could not hold his anger and blamed Atticus for dishonoring himself. Finally, Bob decided to revenge through Scout and Jem while they were coming back from school. Bob was stalking them on the way to home and attacked. He wanted to kill little children, but they fought off. When they had no strength left Boo Radley saved them. Thanks to him Scout and Jem did not get any serious injuries which could be dangerous for their life. Bob suffered for attacking Jem and Scout by his own life, due to could not containing emotions. Bob becomes the representative of prejudice and violence in 1930's. (Jonathan, 2016) Through him the author shows the problems of society and how racism can influence people and lead to injustice.

Conclusion

This novel teachs us many things as respecting each other, not to depend on other's opinion, not to judge people according to their skin color, background and rumors. Because it is not about personality, all of this is just society's opinion about him without knowing himself personally. This is happened with Tom Robinson, he as a kind man helped because of compassion that a lady did the majority of things alone. Without knowing the truth people found him guilty only by relying on false testimony and his skin color. This situation affected not only Tom, but also changed life of a several characters including Scout, Atticus and society itself. Thanks to trial Scout became more sensible and intelligent. In terms of many problems Atticus resisted and did not lose himself. Bob Ewell made a very big mistake by attacking children, because it was not the blame of Scout and Jem. As Atticus was just doing his job, but since Bob was furious, his anger became over morality. At the end, Bob paid for this mistake with his own life.

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