

"To Kill a Mockingbird" - Harper Lee

- ② Show how prejudice is significant in TKAM.

Prejudice is the unfair judgement of someone or a group, based on stereotypes that have been either crafted or taught from another person. In Maycomb County, the social code is built upon the foundations of contextual prejudice, and no one dares to challenge it. There are several themes of prejudice that are prevalent in Maycomb, including racism, sexism and social / class stereotyping. From the novel, we learn why it is a sin to kill a mockingbird, and thus the significance of prejudice. In 1930s Deep South America, slavery may have been abolished, but people were not ready to accept change and so the roots of racism were still ongoing.

The trial of Tom Robinson proves the significance of racism in Maycomb County. In the courtroom, the jury were not interested in whether Tom had genuinely committed the crime, but rather focused on "putting him back in his place." Atticus is forced to teach the children that "you'll see white men cheat black men everyday of your life, as you grow older." Here, he is trying to explain the way systemic racism has been integrated into the law and life of Maycomb. It is important to consider that he says "as you grow older." The children's innocence is susceptible to corruption and so Atticus tries to prepare them for the inevitable fact that there will be prejudice. Atticus has an unsympathetic tone here, which highlights the social norm that is racism. Since they are children and have been raised by a fair man, Scout ^{says} after says, "I think there's just one type of folks. Folks." Scout is renowned for being stubborn and sticking to her views, a quality taught to her by her father. In the trial in the courthouse, it is inevitable to us and Atticus that Tom Robinson would lose the case. However, the children had been protected by their innocence up to this point.

and he says this as a certainty of fact

Excellent analysis
Pratheesh

When the results are revealed, Jem's reaction is described "as if each 'guilty' was a separate stab between his shoulders." The violent ~~photograph~~ image being described portrays the ending of his innocence. Jem is forced to accept the fact that the law is brutally racist and that Tom is one of the several wrongly accused black people out there. In the context of an all-white jury, it would be obvious that Tom would lose the case. The Civil Rights Movement had not yet begun (1950s) and so America would not have been inspired by the case of Brown v Topeka yet. The literary context of the children's innocence in a coming-of-age story highlights the impact and significance of prejudice. Racism led to a huge milestone in their childhoods, and they are no longer children, but adults of Maycomb who are experienced of ~~prejudice~~.

Harper Lee places a young tomboy in a society with conservative gender roles, in the Deep South of America. Alabama was arguably the city with the most amounts of prejudice, mostly due to the politicians who blocked any Federal Government decision that could potentially move their society forwards. Maycomb was not ready to accept change, and this included gender equality. Before the war, women were expected to ~~behave~~ politely, wear little makeup, play no sport and act 'fashionably.' This changed for most women in America after the war, as they effectively took on the roles of men in factory production. However, this was not the case for all America - the rural South could not move forwards. Aunt Alexandra is quoted to be 'positively irritable on the Lord's day', as Scout describes her to wear "protective garments that pinched her waist and drew up her bosom." Although she is ~~uncomfortable~~, Aunt Alexandra persists to wear these impractical clothes, just to fit in with society and meet the radical fashion statement. This clearly shows the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the lengths that women feel pressured to go, just to be accepted. Once again, Scout's innocence prevents her

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from understanding exactly why Aunt Alexandra wears those clothes, although it is uncomfortable. The euphemism used by Scout: 'protective garments,' shows her naivety and misunderstanding of the gender stereotype. In the first chapter, during the description of Maycomb, the women are described: "ladies bathed before noon and were like soft tea cakes with frostings of sweat." The comparison of women to cakes, which are associated with beauty, delicacy and its only purpose is to be consumed. This belittles women and suggests that their only role is to look 'pleasing' and be 'pretty'. Scout never truly understands the gender stereotypes and so doesn't understand why the ladies mock her for dressing how she does. This conflict between Scout and the gender stereotype in Maycomb, highlights the prejudice against women and how they are forced to act a certain way in order to be accepted.

In 1930s, America was facing a Great Depression of the economy as a result of the Wall Street Crash on Black Thursday. Farmers did not benefit from the boom from the previous decade, and so the crash hit them the hardest. Walter Cunningham is a quiet boy in Scout's class and he is first introduced in Miss Caroline's lesson. The primary stereotype taught from the Cunninghams are that they are poor. Almost every quote concerning the Cunninghams is sympathetic to pity for their poverty. When Walter refuses to accept Miss Caroline's money, Scout has to explain, "Miss Caroline, he's a Cunningham." This tells us of everyone's perspective of the Cunninghams and that poverty is associated with even their name. Scout expects Miss Caroline to understand, which reinforces the shared view of the Cunninghams. "You're shamin' him, Miss Caroline." Scout can empathise for Walter and so tries to defend him from the accusations. This is ironic as she had ~~had~~ also felt trap to the prejudice complex, by associating the 'Cunninghams' with poverty. She also asks Atticus, "are we as poor as the Cunninghams?" Here, the word has changed meaning to an identity.

or statement of poverty. The word 'Cunypheme' is used as a comparison to see how poor they are. Prejudice is also inflicted onto groups "lesser" of another. When the word of Atticus defending a black man spreads, he is quickly referred to as a "n*gger-lover." This was supposed to be a derogatory insult to Atticus, but he is not insulted by it. The other white children take charge of their perspective and become prejudiced of Atticus by referring to him as 'white trash' and they view him to be lower than everyone else. People in Maycomb are prejudiced to people who break the city's town's 'social code.' Since they are not ready to accept change, those who speak out are victimised and are perceived as a 'threat' to the society.

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In Maycomb County, prejudice is a significant component of its social system. The people act as a unit and feel compelled to 'follow the sheep' and target the shepherd. Atticus tries his very best to protect the mockingbirds, but the unspayng ways of the law is too strong to be challenged. Instead, he warns everyone of the sins from killing a mockingbird. Prejudice is the destroyer of children's innocence, women's individuality and 'the poor man'. Prejudice killed the mockingbird and therefore, it is the most significant theme in Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird.'

Pratheesh - this is brilliant! It is probably the best GCSE student response to this novel I have read. You are consistent, enlightened, exploratory and astute. It was a pleasure to read.

Very, very well done.

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da Vinci awarded.