

# What the mockingbird taught me

Business



I feel like there's something vaguely pathetic about selected novels for school. Every time an English teacher enthusiastically held up a dog-eared copy of some obscure story, he or she would be met with suspicious glances instead of excited chatter. Since required reading had been introduced into our academic lives, I always pitied the thick, musty volumes. The other kids automatically dismissed them, wary about their apparent complexity. Like bloodhounds, they sniffed out the traces of boring educational poison expertly. The halls rippled with murmurs, the latest reports if the book was truly "boring", or safe enough to be considered "alright".

The pages were laced with headache-inducing metaphors and symbolism and were treated with caution. Surely if they were enough to be taught in school there was no way they'd be interesting, right? Not quite. When I was in eighth grade, my Language Arts class had to read the great American classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Now, while I pitied school books, I have to admit my teacher didn't really sell this particular one too well. After introducing the book with precocious protagonist Scout, commenting on her acute cleverness and endearment, all I had to say was, "And this is all coming from a six-year-old?" I plucked a copy from the stack, eyeing the cover suspiciously.

Didn't look too interesting. Looking back, I can only cringe at my stupidity. I cracked open the book, scanning the fine print with low expectations. In the end, the novel was a roaring tale of racism in the deep American south through the wide eyes of a little girl. It was unique for its time, historical, and groundbreaking. Inside the odd cover (which my amateur self had wrongly judged) was one of my favorite stories ever.

To Kill a Mockingbird was complexity wrapped in a simple package, and I suppose that's what made the novel so intriguing. Towards the end of our unit I had to write an assignment answering questions in paragraph form. I had been typing for about an hour and was yawning at my laptop when I reached the very last question, which read, "What theme of To Kill a Mockingbird will you remember most?" A glance at the clock told me I really needed to be sleeping right now, but through my drowsiness I sat up and raised my eyebrows at the screen. There were several themes our class discussed, I recalled. I knew a lot of students mentioned something about Atticus and parental guidance, and about racism in the deep south.

But my mind fixated on another, smaller theme. It was often overlooked, being more of a minor subplot of the book, but it resonated with me. It's been two years, and it's still the theme that stayed with me. My fingers hovered over the keyboard, and all at once I rapidly typed out this answer: "I feel that the theme of growing up and the "loss of innocence" will really stick with me. Firstly, I am amazed at how it is a central theme in the book, yet is presented in such a subtle way and is not forced.

I didn't realize it while reading, but by the novel's end I looked back and saw how Jem and Scout had truly grown up and lost their innocence. Secondly, for a time I often wrestled with the concept of really growing up. I was in denial for a while, and thought that it was nothing but an extremely sacrificing process and that the whimsicality of youth would be forever destroyed and forgotten. Because of this, I wrongly held on to the last shred of naivety I had for far too long and isolated myself from anyone who was 'growing up' in a mental sense. Of course, logic got to me and I realized that <https://assignbuster.com/what-the-mockingbird-taught-me/>

maturity could also have so much good to it. Being more refined could suddenly open up countless windows of understanding and give you the wisdom to accept and tolerate so much more.

Childhood innocence isn't a completely benign sense either. Underneath the youthful purity lurks immaturity, bias, daftness, and others, but they're the qualities that can wash away with age. Innocence itself hangs on, the sense of wonder and awe that sticks with us long into adulthood. By eighth grade I was really beginning to accept these notions, and finally let go and gave myself into adolescence, and embarked on the very personal and sometimes emotional journey of growing up. I am going at my own pace, and I know there are many things I still need to learn and see and experience.

Reading *To Kill A Mockingbird* truly brought home this lesson, and reassured me that growing up is nothing to be afraid of or to be angry or guilty about. The spirit of childhood is something that will always stay in a tiny indestructible corner of everyone, and will never truly die. In reality, the feelings of being lost and confused, optimism, wonder, hope, happiness, puzzlement, determination, foolishness, and countless others can all be traced back to the essence of youth. The "inner child" within everyone is really what keeps us from turning into ignorant, cynical, adults. That special little feeling is what keeps us believing, even if only for a moment, in the impossible."