

# Symbols in harper lee's to kill a mockingbird

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Ms. Maudie declares, " Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird"(Lee 92-93) after Scout asks her why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird. These words articulate how the mockingbird symbolizes Tom Robinson; A mockingbird does not cause any harm and neither does Tom Robinson. He helps Mayella and she " shoots" him with accusation of rape.

The mockingbird is one of the most obvious symbols in Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird. However, the mockingbird is not the only symbol in the Finch's lives. Other symbols, including the court house's columns, Tim Johnson the mad dog, and the tree house play a major role in this novel about children facing the real world. Tim Johnson, the mad dog is only one of the many symbols in this book. In the novel, being racist was considered contagious.

Mentioned in the book, " Don't you go near that dog, you understand? Don't go near him, he's just as dangerous dead as alive" (Lee 111) expresses how rabies could be spread. Racism was considered similar to rabies- both were contagious. In this scene, Atticus has just shot Tim, due to his rabies. Due to Tom being an African American, racist people in the town of Maycomb cause his death. Tim and Tom cause people to fear them. Tim causes fear due to his rabies, and Tom due to his race.

Tim symbolizes racism just as much as he symbolizes Tom. In the novel Atticus is willing to deal with the mad dog that had rabies, as was he to take on the job of defending Tom Robinson. The tree house, like Tim play an important role as a symbol in To Kill A Mockingbird. The tree house, like Tim,

is an enormous symbol as well. It symbolizes the children's innocence, and how they lose a part of it as the plot progresses. In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the tree house is where the children go to play, and it's worry free for them.

Scout provides an example of the children spending their time in the tree house: "Routine contentment was: improving our tree house that rested between giant twin chinaberry trees in the back yard, fussing, running through our list of dramas based on the works of Oliver Optic, Victor Appleton, and Edgar Rice Burroughs" (Lee 8). This is right after Jem and Scout meet Dill and accept Dill to play with them. There, the children spend their time socializing. Chapter five mentions their time in the tree house as well: "They spent days together in the tree house plotting and planning, calling me only when they needed a third party." (Lee 42) , when Jem and Dill spent their time in the tree house planning how to get Boo Radley out of his house.

As the novel continues, and the children learn more and more about the world they live in, they lose innocence, and return to their worry free zone less and less as well. The tree house is one of the various symbols in this magnificent book, and there are others, like the columns at the courthouse. The columns at the courthouse stand tall symbolizing the beliefs of those in Maycomb County. The town's past and their beliefs about races are symbolized by the columns. In Chapter 16, the book states that the columns were the only part of the original courthouse: "The pillars were all that remained standing when the original courthouse burned in 1856.

" (Lee 164). These words portray the past because it was the only thing left from the original courthouse. It also represents Maycomb's beliefs. In the past, when the original courthouse had not burned down, they believed that blacks were less than human. In the time period of Mr.

Tom Robinson's case, the jury still had these same beliefs. To Kill A Mockingbird states," But for the south porch, the Maycomb County courthouse was early Victorian, presenting an inoffensive vista when seen from the north" (Lee 164). These words emphasize that although time has gone by, the beliefs that were in the past are still present by mentioning the early Victorian atmosphere. The court house may have not been the original courthouse, but the message was exquisitely clear that, Our-community-is-racist-and-if-you-are-black-you-will-not-get-a-fair-trial, as it would have been if it were in the 1850's. Tom Robinson, sadly is a victim of this.

He is found guilty due to his race, like how it would have been if the original courthouse was still standing. The mockingbird may be the biggest symbol, but it definitely is not the only symbol, such as the tree house, Tim the rabid dog, and the columns at the courthouse. Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird gives the audience multiple symbols that help tie the plot together. In conclusion, this outstanding novel has more symbols than meets the eye. \*\* Note that because a physical copy of To Kill A Mockingbird was not available, citations were made according to text at [http://www.edmondschools.net/portals/3/docs/sue%20newman/tkam%20text/to\\_kill\\_a\\_mockingbird\\_text.pdf](http://www.edmondschools.net/portals/3/docs/sue%20newman/tkam%20text/to_kill_a_mockingbird_text.pdf) \*\*