

Social class in to kill a
mockingbird
argumentative



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a novel by Harper Lee, the symbols of the mockingbird and the snowman helped to develop the underlying idea of social and racial prejudice in the text. This idea showed how prejudice can become ingrained within a community and how that can affect innocent people subsequently presenting the idea of innocence.

Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the story of how prejudice, when ingrained within a person, can cloud and impair their way of thinking. This novel is set in the mid 1930's in the fictional town of Maycomb. This was an era where racial prejudice was high and 'blacks' were being treated unfairly as they were seen as a symbol of defeat of the American Civil War which occurred 80 years previously. Because of this prejudice, segregation existed between white and black people, restricting them from utilising the same public facilities. In the novel, Harper Lee uses the mockingbird as a symbol to help develop the main ideas of prejudice and innocence.

Miss Maudie explains to Scout, the protagonist of this novel who narrates as a retrospect of her life, that mockingbirds are creatures that do not harm people "but sing their hearts out" therefore they come to represent innocents destroyed by evil. This is why "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird". The mockingbird is an important symbol as it helped to highlight the ideas of prejudice and innocence. Throughout the novel, many characters can be identified as mockingbirds, the main ones seen thorough the parallel stories of Boo Radley and Tom Robinson who are both seen as mockingbirds as they are innocent and are the victims of other people's prejudices.

Boo Radley is a recluse and is seen by Maycomb as a “scary, ghostly malevolent phantom” and consequently gains the nickname ‘Boo’ Radley, his real name being Arthur. He is a mockingbird as he has harmed no one; instead he left presents for Jem and Scout to find and eventually saves them from Bob Ewell. Boo has been ruined because of his parent’s narrow-minded bigotry and has been prisoner in his own home for 20 years because of his careless behaviour in his teens. This is the reason the people of Maycomb regard him as a ‘monster’ and ultimately becomes the victim of social prejudice. Tom Robinson is another ‘mockingbird’ who has harmed no one. Tom is accused and convicted for the rape of a 19 year old white girl.

Atticus Finch, Scout’s father, presents firm evidence showing that Tom was innocent but because of the town’s racial prejudice, they could not see a black man go free. This comes to show us ‘that when it’s a white man’s word against a black man’s, the white man always wins’ and is the perfect example of innocence destroyed by evils of society. Through the symbol of mockingbirds, Harper Lee attempts to show that mockingbirds are the oppressed of all races and beliefs and takes the reader to the heart of her main theme - the vulnerability and suffering of the innocent at the hands of the more powerful force. Another important symbol is that of the snowman which helped to develop the main idea of racial prejudice.

After a small shower of snow, Jem goes on a quest to build a snowman. Due to the lack of snow, he uses mud to create the interior of the snowman which causes Scout to exclaim that she hadn’t “heard of a nigger snowman” before. Jem then goes on to cover the mudman with snow making him white.

This is symbolic of the way blacks are treated in the Maycomb society, their oppression by whites.

Harper Lee shows that as the dark mud is covered by the white snow, hiding it from view, the black people of Maycomb are shunned into the background while the white people are regarded as superior. These helps to further advance the idea of racial prejudice and help me understand that regardless of a person's attitude, if a person was black, they were seen as inferior and treated with intolerance and contempt. They represent minorities. In conclusion we can say that the symbols of the mockingbird and the snowman were very important to text as they helped to further develop the ideas of prejudice and innocence. These symbols showed me how prejudice exists within a community and how innocents can be harmed because of it.

I believe that this novel has universal application as even in modern society prejudice exists (although not to the extent showed in the novel) and shows how it can impair a person's judgement of innocent people.