

To kill a mockingbird argumentative



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A central theme in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is man`s inhumanity to man. Many types of inhumanity – whether intentional or not – can be seen throughout this novel. Scout and Jem Finch as well as Dill treat Boo Radley with a level of inhumanity; however, their intentions are not cruel, merely childish and playful – as they are. However some examples of inhumanity found in the novel are not as innocent. An evident struggle that continues throughout the book, is the inhumanity black people suffer at the hands of white people; as well as men`s towering empowerment over women, which is often shown in violence and other cruelty.

It is evident in the novel, that racism of all kinds affects the everyday lives of many people. Though this may be a fictional story, the conflicts are as valid in the world of Scout and Jem Finch as they are in reality today. Many writers throughout the centuries have used their compositions to mirror the struggles that took place in their modern day. Shakespeare; possibly the greatest writer of the Elizabethan times portrayed racism against Jews in act III scene I in his play *Merchant of Venice*.

Although the ethnic origins of the characters differ, the message remains the same; “... Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passion? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same disease, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer... if you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? ” This quote reveals that all people are the same; we are all human. Though we may have different qualities, we are all equals.

Scout, Jem and Dill; the children whose adventures the story is based upon, take part in many acts of inhumanity. However, they are not aware that their actions could be classified as inhumane. Their young minds, ignorant of privacy and personal boundaries, hunt and re-enact life situations of the long hidden Boo Radley, who resides in a mysterious house on their street. Due to immaturity and lack of knowledge, the children vision him as an animal. These factors reflect their perceptions of the social norm. Boo behaviours as a hermit sparks their imagination to create an image of Boo. “...

Jem gave a reasonable description of Boo: Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that’s why his hands were bloodstained – if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off. There was along jagged scar that ran across his face what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped, and he drooled most of the time... ”(TKAM, 18). This image of Boo led the children to be extremely curious and eager to see him for themselves. ““... Let’s try to make him come out,’ said Dill.

‘ I’d like to see what he looks like... ” (13) “... Dill and Jem were simply going to peek in the window with the loose shutter to see if they could get a look at Boo Radley... ”. () “ Dill had hit upon a foolproof plan to make Boo Radley come out at no cost to ourselves (place a trail of lemon drops from the back door to the front yard and he’d follow it, like an ant). ”(144). At one point they attempt to contact Boo with a note put through an open window with a fishing pole. Atticus, the father of Jem and Scout, catch them and he teaches them a lesson of respecting privacy as well as treating everyone in an equal and humane manner.

“ What Mr. Radley did was his own business. If he wanted to come out, he would. If he wanted to stay inside his own house he had the right to stay inside free from the attentions of inquisitive children, which was a mild term for the likes of us. How would we like it if Atticus barged in on us without knocking, when we were in our rooms at night? We were, in effect, doing the same thing to Mr. Radley. What Mr. Radley did might seem peculiar to us, but it did not seem peculiar to him. Furthermore, had it never occurred to us the civil way to communicate with another being was by the front door instead of a side window?

Lastly, we were to stay away from that house until we were invited there, we were not to play an asinine game he had seen us playing or make fun of anybody on this street or in this town... ”. The inhumanity that results from racist attitudes in the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not only found in fictional writing. Racism is an issue which much of the world’s population is subject to. “ *To Kill a Mockingbird*’s Maycomb county could be considered a [small representation] of American class as a whole” (*To Kill a Mockingbird: The Class System in Maycomb County*).

Before the trial of Tom Robinson; Scout, Jem and Dill did not had the chance to experience the full extent of the hatred and lack of justice that was present when such formal racism was revealed. When in the courtroom, Dill becomes upset about the way Tom was being treated. He left the courtroom in tears. Once outside he meets Mr. Rudolph who shares Dill’s views of racism and says: “... Cry about the simple hell people give other people – without even thinking. Cry about the hell which people give coloured folks, without even stopping to think that they’re people, too... ” (TKAM 201).

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Atticus is also another character in the story who feels negatively about racism. Almost all of Maycomb looked down on Atticus for doing the humane deed of defending Tom. “.. said you lawed for niggers and trash... ” (103). Many of the students at school teased Scout and Jem about their father being a “ nigger-lover” because he was defending a Negro. Unfortunately, the arguments do not stay in the school yard as Atticus is confronted with a mob of white men at the local jail. The men want to get into the jail to attack Tom, but Atticus stations himself at the entrance as a diversion and obstacle in order to protect him.

When confronted with the mob Atticus says to one of the men “‘ Link, that boy might go to the chair, but he’s not going will the truth’s told. ’ Atticus’s voice was even. ‘ And you know what the truth is’. ” (146) Atticus is a man who has self-pride and humanity. Although many people are against his choices, many are grateful that Atticus is there “ to do our unpleasant jobs for us” (215). Men, since the beginning of time, have always had more influence and power than women. In the 1930’s, women’s power was weak. The men in the story evoke much power over women in their command.

This is evident in the story through many examples of Mayella Ewell and her father Bob. Mayella is subject to her father’s will in more ways than one. When Bob beats his daughter, she must allow him too, for he is the higher power. As well, she must hide two secrets from society; that she had tempted a Negro and that her father had beat her. “‘ Do you love your father, Miss Mayella? ’ was his next [question]. ‘ Love him, whatcha mean? ’ ‘ I mean, is he good to you, is he east to get along with? ’ ‘ He does tollable, ’

cept when – ‘ Except when? ’ Mayella looked at her father, who was sitting with his chair tipped against the railing.

He sat up straight and waited for her to answer. ‘ Except when nothing’, said Mayella. ‘ I said he does tollable. ’ Mr. Ewell leaned back again. ‘ Except when he’s drinking? ’ asked Atticus so gently that Mayella nodded. ” (183).

Previously on the defence stand, Mayella rearranges the original story of her situation with Tom Robinson such that he becomes the culprit. Through much of Atticus’s evidence, it is clear that Tom Robinson could not have harmed Mayella. Due to her duty to her father, she lies again and again to protect him. “ “ What did your father see in the window, the crime of rape or the best defence to it?

Why don’t you tell the truth, child, didn’t Bob Ewell beat you up? ’ When Atticus turned away from Mayella he looked like his stomach hurt, but Mayella’s face was a mixture of terror and fury. ” (187-188) Despite the many characters that inflict inhumanity on others and despite the existence of evil, Harper Lee’s ultimate message is more positive. This story also reflects society’s constant struggle for equality, humanity and goodwill to others. “ Jem turned around and punched his pillow. When he settled back his face was cloudy. He was going into one of his declines, and I grew wary. His brows came together; his mouth became a thin line.

He was silent for awhile. ‘ That’s what I thought too,’ he said at last, ‘ when I was your age. If there’s just one kind of folks, why can’t they get along with each other? If they’re all alike, why do they go out of their way to despise each other? Scout, I think I’m beginning to understand something. I think I’m

beginning to understand why Boo Radley's stayed shut up in the house all this time... it's because he wants to stay inside. " The book ends in a hopeful note as she underlines that although man has the potential for evil and inhumane acts, he also has a boundless potential for goodness, kindness and fairness.