

Harper lee's to kill a mockingbird – gun and light symbolism essay sample

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There are several patterns present in the text that greatly affect the entirety of the novel by providing inspiring themes and concepts to the plot. The one predominant theme shown in this chapter depicts Atticus's uneasiness to use a gun, a symbol of mankind's tyranny and unfairness. Just as in the scene of Atticus with his gun standing against the rabid dog, Atticus's stance at the door of the jail is symbolic of his attitude towards discrimination and injustice. At the jail, Atticus doesn't hold a gun, for he dislikes handling a gun because of the unfair advantages that it poses towards others. Atticus also disliked handling a gun in the rabid dog scene, for it makes him feel like he has an unfair advantage over all living things. Nature is fair in the sense that it has given all beings things that are entitled to them, and using a tool like a gun to kill allows them special privileges which nature never intended for them to use. Atticus doesn't like the unfairness that mankind has taken over the blacks, for they have taken unfair advantage over the black's past situations.

Nature seems to have its own law which states that humans should not take advantage of their knowledge to harm others. In the name of public safety, however, Atticus was willing to put this moral aside in the name of a higher goal – the protection of human life. Similarly, in the jail scene, Atticus was again willing to have a firearm present. Mr. Underwood, who was probably present by Atticus's orders for protection, shows that Atticus will set aside his morals in order to protect human life. Again, this shows how law, such as nature's law, or even a personal law such as Atticus's avoidance of guns, must sometime be bent toward a higher aim. Atticus will guard the basic

human rights of Tom and all people of Maycomb using his knowledge and experience in law.

With his high morals, he will not lower himself to the violent measures used by others, even for his own self-defense, but only for the defense of a common society. The importance of this is that it shows how the whites have taken unfair advantage over the blacks, and that this notion that whites are superior over blacks is wrong. He is a role model for society, for he strongly believes in his morals and preserves the essence of life. Furthermore, this pattern is important because it shows to everybody that it is acceptable to bend one's morals in order to benefit society as a whole, and not to perform selfish acts that only benefit oneself.

Another pattern present in this chapter that is also demonstrated in the past chapters is the use of light to represent racial equality, and the use of darkness to symbolize discrimination. Atticus's light illuminates the night as Atticus strives to teach his community the truth and expose their prejudices. The light is an unusual addition to the scene, for it would not occur outside the jail unless the nondiscriminant Atticus brought it there himself. Likewise, without people like Atticus going out of their way to help others, the darkness of prejudice could perpetuate itself indefinitely. Similarly, at Boo Radley's house in the second chapter, the light shows Boo's childish personality and innocence, while the darkness present through the rest of the night symbolizes the tainted prejudice views that the rest of the society has.

Mrs. Dubose's house was dark during Jem's first few visits, but during his last visit, her house was slightly lighter, for Jem could better make out Mrs. Dubose's facial expressions. Furthermore, Mrs. Dubose insulted Atticus for defending Tom Robinson more during the first visits, but during the last week, she was peculiarly quiet. This shows that in the beginning, when the house was dark, Mrs. Dubose had more prejudice towards blacks, and later on when the house was lighter, she became more tolerant towards them. This pattern demonstrated in the novel about how light exemplifies racial acceptance, and how dark personifies discrimination, is peculiarly interesting and can be seen through several events.

Scout's conversation with Mr. Cunningham emphasizes her knowledge of young Walter Cunningham and reminds Mr. Cunningham of the human bonds that connect everyone in the town. From the indistinguishable group of men, she singles him out and restores his individuality out of obscurity of men by addressing him by his name and recalling his son entailment. When people join together in a mob, they lose a feeling of responsibility for their actions, for as a group they are one whole indistinguishable unit rather than separate individuals. Scout's ability to take Mr. Cunningham out of his group comes about solely from the sheer innocence of her statements and remarks. Her innocence shows how inconceivable the idea of their violent act are in her eyes, and forces them to consider the horror of their act from her perspective.

Mr. Cunningham, confronted with the shame of the group's plans and having been restored a sense of his own responsibility in them, decides to remove

himself from the scene. The theme that people in a group do things that they never would do individually is another thematic reoccurrence in the novel. Just as Mr. Cunningham becomes a prejudice activist in a group, Scout, Jem, and Dill together gather enough strength and courage to trespass on Boo Radley's yard. Without being in a large group with the same common goals, people would never carry out their actions alone. This can be seen after Dill is gone during the summertime, and Scout and Jem don't carry out any more stunts to intimidate Boo Radley. This is an important theme because it shows that in modern society, if most of the discrimination is eradicated, then the rest of the people will follow in their footsteps. Furthermore, if people stick together as a whole, they can accomplish things that they could have never done on their own.

This affects the novel, because by Atticus not having tremendous support for his racial equality actions, the theme predicts that he will fail to free Tom Robinson. However, because the citizens of Maycomb County have such similar views on racism, they become one unit and will triumph over Atticus.

Similarly, in *The Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and Jack struggle to win the favor of their fellow tribe, for the one tribe with the most followers will be victorious over the other. The struggle for power is a central theme in *The Lord of the Flies*, and whichever tribe receives it, either Ralph's or Jack's, will dominate. Just as the theme in *To Kill a Mockingbird* predicts, Jack's tribe conquered Ralph's tribe because he had more support from his tribemates who all stuck together as a whole to defeat Ralph's tribe. Ultimately, this theme about

accomplishing things as a unified group rather than individually is a universal essence present in several societies.