

How does to kill a
mockingbird present
issues of courage,
cowardice and
prejudice...

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To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel threaded with many powerful themes, morals and ethics. These controversial themes resonate with the setting of the American South in the 1930's. The most prominent themes in the novel are cowardice, courage and prejudice. These themes recur consistently and are highlighted through context in the novel. To Kill a Mockingbird is written from the perspective of a 8 year old American girl in the 1930's. The novel unfolds a story about an innocent black man accused of rape in a white Southern American County. The young naive girl Scout, recognizes the injustice of the towns accusations and sees the biased prejudices. By writing in the perspective of the young girl Scout, it allows the reader to have no prejudiced opinion. Instead the book is read through the eyes of a child, innocent and unknowing to societies views. Scout's perspective evokes emotion from the reader, questioning their moral and social ethics. By doing this the writer has successfully let you walk in someone else's shoes. " You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it. " Atticus Finch to daughter Scout. The novel is set in the small insular town of Maycomb Alabama in the American South. The year is approximately 1934, the middle of The Great Depression. It is apparent in the novel that the Depression has affected the town. This is highlighted through the poor and struggling family of the Ewells. Coinciding with the town's lack of wealth is the defined segregation between classes. " There's four kinds of folks in the world. There's the ordinary kind like us and the neighbors, there's the kind like the Cunninghams out in the woods, the kind like the Ewells down at the dump,

and the Negroes." Jem Finch Accompanying this fictional stereotypical town are the small southern town morals and prejudices towards African Americans. It is believed in Maycomb that Negroes are filthy low life that should not included within civilized society. This segregation through hierarchy is expressed continuously throughout the book, threaded into many themes and social situations. An example of Prejudice within the novel is during Tom Robinson's trial. Tom Robinson was a black man accused of raping a white woman, a crime that is felonious and results in the death penalty. Even though all the facts proved that he didn't do it, the jury still found him guilty. Tom's life has been sacrificed to racism and prejudice by the people who were there to protect him. The justice system didn't allow this man to have a fair trial because of the color of his skin. " The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any colour of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box. " Atticus Finch. Cowardice is also another strong recurring theme within the novel. A ' coward' is by definition a person who lacks the courage to do or endure dangerous or unpleasant things. Many citizens of Maycomb County by nature fall under this definition. This is particularly highlighted throughout Tom Robinson's trial. Even though there was irrefutable evidence proving Tom's innocence, members of the jury turned a blind eye and cowardly succumbed to societies prejudice. " Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed."(Scout Finch) Mayella is a

lonely 19 year old girl who is extremely segregated from society due to her class. Uneducated about intimacy and relationships, she tries to seduce a black man, abruptly kissing him without consent. From the window Mayella's father (Bob Ewell) witnesses the event. Ashamed of his daughter and concerned for his pride, Bob Ewell seeks out the authorities and covers his daughter's scandal with lies. " What did your father see in that window, the crime of rape or the best defense to it? " Atticus Finch To contrast characters Bob and Mayella Ewell, Harper Lee has developed the character Atticus Finch. Atticus is a courteous gentleman who holds high morals. He believes in social equality and is opposed to the social ethics of Maycomb County. Jeopardizing his reputation, Atticus defends a black man accused of rape. By taking this case he rebelled against Maycomb's social ethics and exposed himself to the community. In the novel there are many examples of Atticus' selflessness and courage. He continuously put others in front of himself and teaches his children what is acceptable in society and what is not. " As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men everyday of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it - whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash" Atticus Finch to his daughter Scout To Kill a Mockingbird is a fictional book portraying common society situation's in the 1930's. The novel reflects the social conflict of the 1930's, resonating the context with issues such as prejudice, racism and The Great Depression.