

Review of harper
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flanagan's obesity:
the last ba...

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Prejudice is a preconceived opinion or judgment without proper knowledge or examination of facts. I have learnt that prejudice is unjust and leads to intolerance, discrimination and racism. These aspects of prejudice are illustrated in the texts, " To Kill a Mocking Bird" by Harper Lee, " Obesity: The Last bastion of prejudice" by Sahale Flanagan, and " A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove" by James Moloney.

Intolerance of particular groups of people based on prejudice and racism is found in " To Kill a Mocking Bird" by Harper Lee. Atticus accepts a case to defend a black man in a town where blacks are segregated and despised. This makes the whole town turn against him and even his children because they cannot accept that one of their own is defending someone that they hate.

" Your daddy (Atticus) is a disgrace, an' that nigger oughta hang from the water-tank!" (p84)

Due to the extreme racism rooted deep in the community, public display of intolerant behaviour is accepted in the town. Similarly, the article Obesity: The Last Bastion of Prejudice by Sahale Flanagan, illustrates the intolerant attitudes towards the obese based on stereotypical views. She uses the personal experience of a woman who has experienced a sudden change in attitudes towards her due to a 150lb gain in weight.

"...my kids were embarrassed, friends felt sorry for me, and strangers were shamelessly disgusted by my presence." - Leslie Lampert

By using a personal experience, Flanagan shows the other side of the story and is able to emphasize the prejudice towards the obese by invoking guilt and sympathy into the reader. Flanagan also uses 2nd person to be confrontational and blunt in order to demonstrate the stereotypical, intolerant views of the obese. In this way, she makes the viewer feel responsible and awkward.

“ You probably think she smells bad, you pity her, you ridicule her...”

These texts illustrate how intolerance based on prejudice opinions is destructive and unjust.

Discrimination is found in many places in “ To Kill a Mocking Bird”, particularly with the trial of Tom Robinson. Tom is a black man, who is discriminated against because of racial prejudice. He is convicted of a crime despite all evidence suggesting he was innocent because it would be a threat in a community which considered blacks as an inferior class, if the word of a black man was taken over the word of two whites.

“ If your not better then a black, who are you better then?” p186

Harper Lee creates a solemn atmosphere during Tom's verdict to emphasize the injustice and discrimination of the ruling. By using long sentences detailing the movements of each individual she creates a depressed atmosphere, waiting for the inevitable.

“ The foreman handed a piece of paper to Mr. Tate who handed it to the clerk who handed it to the judge...guilty...guilty...guilty...” p233

Similarly, in “ A Bridge to Wiseman’s Cove” by James Moloney, Carl Matt is assumed to be a trouble maker and is not welcome in Wattle Beach simply because he carries the name Matt. Throughout the novel, there are numerous connotations of the discriminating attitudes towards Carl because of an incident that happened in the past regarding his grandfather who was a Matt.

“ I never thought I’d see it, Joy Duncan sticking up for a Matt.” P85

This discrimination is especially obvious when Carl tries to find a job at the barge. Moloney uses a contrast in attitudes to highlight the discrimination. At first, Skip is keen and happy to get Carl working,

“ Skip laughed, you’re a keen one I’ll give you that.” P65

His words show that he has developed a fondness for Carl. However in comparison, he becomes furious when he learns that Carl is a Matt.

“ Matt! ...you bring a Matt onto my barge, let him come here, asking me for a job!” (p66)

The discrimination in these texts is evident in showing the injustices of prejudice.

Prejudice leads to intolerance, discrimination and racism. These aspects of prejudice are explored by the texts, " To Kill a Mocking Bird", " Obesity: The Last Bastion of Prejudice" and " A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove". These texts show the injustices that originate from prejudice and how, as Atticus Finch puts it -

"...You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them." (p309)