

Setting in to kill a mockingbird

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



I'd like you to think about what makes *To Kill a Mockingbird* such a renowned literary work of art. What is it that the book exposes to the reader that makes the book so moving? The answer lies in the fact of early 20th century racism in the South. Every aspect of this book, as you will soon be shown, is based upon the time, place and mood of the book-- it is historical fiction, after all. Therefore, in the case of *To kill a mockingbird*, the setting & mood is absolutely the most important of all the elements of fiction.

At heart, this book is about racism and the nature of society in this time, with all core ideas dependent on the time, place, and social conditions thereof. This book is about a marked moment in history, a retrospective into a not-forgotten way of life, and the nature of peoples in the the South during the 20th century. The theme, as anybody could agree, is racism (and, in a broader sense, how people view other peoples). Therefore, the theme is heavily dependent on the setting. The theme must be grounded to a small, Southern town similar to Maycomb, during this part of the 20th century.

This is only a small example of how deeply rooted this book is into the setting. For example, take a very expressive quote from Atticus Finch relating to the theme: "... you gentlemen would go on the assumption- the evil assumption- that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral... " (273). Obviously, the theme is, yet again, racism. More importantly, however, is the fact that this racism is dependent on setting, yet is such a driving factor in the story. This is only one of many examples that all things relating to theme in this book can be traced back to the setting.

This puts setting front and center for the next topic. This storyline is a quite an expectable, unpeculiar, and reasonable one. This is so due to the fact that <https://assignbuster.com/setting-in-to-kill-a-mockingbird/>

the plot, and the whole book in general, can only be unique to this era; in the way that everything from the inciting incident to the denouement is inextricably related to setting. For example, the inciting incident could be described as Bob Ewell initiating Tom Robinson's trial in the first place. Why did this happen? Because Bob Ewell is a characterized manifestation of racism during this setting.

Thus, quite obviously, he would also show much hatred toward a Negro such as Tom Robinson, and without reasonable doubt, drag him into a trial. The climax itself, I would say, is Tom's trial, and can be used as a second example; black vs. white, racist trials such as these were quite prominent during this time and place, and therefore, for the most part, can be pinned as being dependent upon the setting. Ask yourself: really, where and when else are you going to have this sort of thing happening? Even the ending of the book, where Bob Ewell attacks the Finch children, can be traced back to the fact that Bob Ewell hated Atticus for supporting blacks, because Bob was undoubtedly racist.

Where/when else can you find so much widespread, penetrating hatred against blacks? " He stood up and pointed his finger at Tom Robinson. 'I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin' on my Mayella! '" (231). Take this quote from Bob Ewell: his incredibly offensive and blatant racism is probably the sole cause of the main plot, or at least one of its most key points. His hatred is the reason the court trial even existed, and his stereotypical racism is largely dependent on setting. Now think: why are Scout, Jem, and all the other characters in the book the way they are?

The truth is, all major characters in this book are, at some point, at root, dependent on setting. Without going into extreme detail, I can use the Ewells to show you. The Ewells are portrayed as bawdy, low-class, and blatantly vulgar antagonists. Why so? It's because they are characterized as the stereotypical "redneck white trash", in order to stress the reality of racism inside the setting. Even the characterization in the book is there for a reason: to stress a theme or idea that is dependent, in the very end, on the setting; only another testament to how important time and place is to this book.

Let's look again at how the Ewells are portrayed, with Burriss Ewell: "Report and be damned to ye! Aint no snot-nosed slut of a schoolteacher ever born c'n make me do nothin! You ain't making me..." (37). Case in point. The Ewells are meant to be so... indecent, due to the fact that they were written to be hated. They were written to be vulgar and low. They were written to embody all the feeling of hate and condescension of racism. Furthermore, they embody racism, again, because it is a key point of this particular setting. As you can quite clearly see, the structure of this book, everything about it, and especially the core theme, is dependent on this specific time and place. The characters are tailored for the setting.

The key plot points merely result from the setting. The theme and the setting are inextricably intertwined. With the other elements of fiction all branching out from the aspect of setting in the case of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it undoubtedly must be the most important, and, therefore, the most driving element of fiction in the book. There's just no two ways about it- *To Kill a Mockingbird* is, after all, historical fiction about a small town in the South, during the Great Depression.