

Prejudice in to kill a mockingbird



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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Prejudice is a many faced demon which comes in many shapes and disguises. The point that it often goes ignored or unnoticed and shows up in the most unlikely places is what makes it an even more dangerous thing. This is extremely evident in the novel To Kill A Mockingbird.

The first sign of prejudice in the novel is shown by the Finch children regarding Arthur (Boo) Radley. They see him as a type of monster or a malevolent phantom as Scout so aptly put it. Any small crimes which were committed in Maycomb were said to be his work. At night when the moon was down, he went and peeped in windows. When peoples azealeas froze in a cold snap, it was because he breathed on them. Even the children were affected by all these rumours, they refused to touch the pecans when the trees from the Radley place dropped into the school yard- according to them Radley pecans would kill you. All of this could be attributed to their prejudice against Boo, just because he never came out of his house to or socialised with outsiders, people just made up all these rumours about him as a reason for why he stayed inside.

The next type of prejudice shown in the book is class prejudice. It is unconsciously shown by Scout as well as a few of her compatriots on her first day at school. They attributed certain qualities to each family in Maycomb and expected these traits to be hereditary. For example the reason which Scout gave as to why Walter refused the quarter which Miss Fisher offered was because "hes a Cunningham" and the reason why Burris was so dirty and impudent was, as far as the children were concerned, was because "Hes

one of the Ewells". This shows the complacent way in which they treat class prejudice in Maycomb, in Maycomb it is just taken for granted, no questions asked. In fact the children, in stating these characteristics of the Cunninghams and Ewells did not even realise that they were being prejudiced, they had just been brought up that way. Later, when Jem invited Walter to tea and Scout criticised his table manners, Cal and Atticus were not pleased at all. Cal scolded Scout roundly by saying that Walter was company and that he could eat whatever way he wanted. When Scout retaliated by saying that Walter was not company that he was just a Cunningham, Cal did not let that serve as an excuse for her humiliating him. In this way, Cal tried to stop Scout from gaining the class prejudice of Maycomb and to treat all people equally.

Racial prejudice against Negroes are shown with regard to Dolphus Raymond and Tom Robinson. Dolphus Raymond is considered to be a type of oddball in Maycomb, because he is a white man yet prefers to live with the Negroes. In town, he has a reputation for being a drunkard, but he tells the children that that was just in pretence. Actually, he is a very sensitive man who loathes the society which makes blacks and whites live separately and hates the "hell white people give coloured folks, without even stopping to think that theyre people, too".

Tom Robinson is found guilty of raping of Mayella Ewell, in the face of very strong suspicion that his accusers are lying. One reason he was convicted was because it was a white mans word against a black mans one, and in Maycomb, a white mans word was always taken without any regard as to how trustworthy he was. I think the other reason he was convicted was

because he went against the accepted position of a Negro by daring to feel sorry for a white person.

All these prejudices are a result of people holding on to preformed ideas of a certain set of people. It is not just racial prejudice which is present in Maycomb but the narrow, rigid, intolerant codes of behavior which the townspeople wish to impose on others. These prejudices all show the inability of the people to, as Atticus puts it, “ consider things from his point of view” and the lack of understanding between them.