

Dalia zada

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



Dalia Zada 4/26/11 TKM Essay Mr. Wenger Through His Eyes Prejudice is a foggy window which we all look out of. It impairs not only sight, but our thoughts and actions. When looking through the window, not everyone can see past the fog. Sometimes, we see people with differences; they are what we may not want them to be; whether it be because of color or sex, race or religion. Tom Robinson, a black man, is accused of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell, and is brought to trial. The townspeople of Maycomb believe in Tom's guilt whereas Atticus and his children believe likewise. There are distinct views concerning Robinson's innocence- views influenced by prejudice in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When people rely on prejudice to create authority, they are blinded by ignorance. The people of Maycomb misuse authority for prejudice reasons and are expressed using allegory. When Atticus uses the gun to shoot a kill the mad rabid dog, it was done for the good of the community. He was just as reluctant to use the gun then how the jury of Maycomb was more than willing to use their "gun". "I haven't shot a gun in thirty years". (96) Atticus only takes out his gun when it is for the best. When he is defending Tom, he uses everything he's got because he believes in Tom's innocence. He knows that a gun is a powerful thing and should only be used if necessary, unlike the jury who uses it only because they can. The gun can be seen as an abuse of power and authority. If used, a judge and a jury can misuse the gun in a case just like how Maycomb's jury did so in Tom's trial. They voted Tom guilty even though their job is to apply justice and to be fair to both sides. Because Tom is black and because they are prejudice and can do so, they take out their "gun". Tim Johnson is another symbol of prejudice. Jem and Scout did not know their

father was such a good shooter and they were very surprised to see him shooting: " With movements so swift they seemed simultaneous; Atticus's hand yanked a ball-tipped lever as he brought the gun to his shoulder. The rifle cracked. Tim Johnson leaped, flopped over and crumbled on the sidewalk in a brown-and-white heap. He didn't know what hit him" (96). Tim Johnson represents prejudice, and how, like a rabid dog, it spreads its disease throughout the town. In a conversation with his brother Jack about the coming trial and how to " get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease", Atticus is the one who refers to people's prejudice as a 'disease'. He accepts the Robinson case in an effort to fight against that, even though he is sure to fail. The symbolism Lee uses reveals the prejudice and narrow-mindedness of the citizens of Maycomb County, their fears and the immoral things they did. It also reveals the attempt to purify people from these feelings, by a hero figure, a model to the community, Atticus Finch, as well as his two children, who follow in his footsteps. The story ends with the reading of a book by Atticus, *The Grey Ghost*, another symbol perhaps for Boo Radley whose " face was as white as his hands and his grey eyes were so colourless" a description fitting to one of a ghost. Before she falls asleep Scout describes the story which happens to be about someone falsely accused of doing something he never did, exactly like Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, the two mockingbirds of the story so wrongly treated by others. " Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them". In Maycomb, a disease infects the majority of people. It is not the disease of the body, but a virus of the mind. The disease is ignorance, and from it, prejudice is derived. It is ignorance

that causes the people of Maycomb to create a social hierarchy. It is their prejudice towards other races that prevents the prevalence of justice. It is the struggles of certain heroes that assure that this disease is constantly being fought against. Through the social and racial prejudice that occurs in Maycomb, Lee suggests that society is not always as perfect as it seems. "He aint company, Cal, he's just a Cunningham-"(24) Scout is characterized as a blind ignorant girl who only knows people by their mark in society so that she can be portrayed this way. In Maycomb, a social pyramid seems to have been created. At the top there are the Finches, below them are the average people of Maycomb, below them are the Cunninghams, and below them the Ewells, who "lived as guests", (27) metaphorically speaking to their lack of aid to the society. They feed off nothing but prejudice and live as guests in the world because they are in no shape to do any better given their mental conditions, in success as well as in the depths of depression. The Negroes of Maycomb, despite their excellent qualities, are considered to be the lowest class. During the trial, Jem and Scout sneak in only to find out there is no more room. They end up getting "great" seats in the colored balcony. Being kids, they find nothing wrong with being up there, and even find it cool because then Atticus might not see them. "The colored balcony ran along three walls of the courtroom like a second story veranda, and from it we could see everything. "(164) ironically, the colored seating is up higher than the white area. The black are above them and they can see everything. Meaning they are actually no different than them and they even understand more than them because there is no foggy window for them. They are on the other side. They are not filled up with prejudice towards others. They may be

on the bottom rung of the social ladder, but in truth they are just as high up as anyone else. The scale of authority is disturbed when prejudice is used in a blinded, ignorant manner. Back in 125 B. C., the Greeks practically ruled all over the Eastern world. They impacted other cultures so much that they started to make people who weren't Greek feel unworthy. Because Greece was such an influential country and they knew it, they treated other countries very different. The word Prejudice was even derived from a Greek word meaning " Pre-judgment". Feeling inferior to others, they even made up a name for those below them. " Barbar". A Barbar was anybody who wasn't Greek. To be black in the USA when they were still segregated, it was insulting to refer to them as " boy". This was just as insulting, it was short for Barbarian. They believed that just because the person wasn't Greek, they were automatically barbaric and stupid. People in places like Italy and Spain even began to shed away their own cultures, even trying to write Greek poetry so they could appear to be one of them. The Greeks had the knowledge of how much influence and power they had and used it to condemn others and to spread their culture.