

# Theme of justice and the idea of trials in three different novels

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Throughout the three books, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez, and *The Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, the authors use the theme of justice and the idea of trials to express how powerful people always triumph and can manipulate the public to their will. The unfair prosecution of Tom Robinson, the imprisonment of the Mirabal sisters, and the trial of Charles Darnay all show unfair treatment of innocent people due to the uneven distribution of power weighted towards the powerful and the corrupt.

Tom Robinson is falsely accused for raping Mayella Ewell because he is black, which makes him a prime suspect and shows how biased the community of Mayham is. Although Atticus completely commits himself to this case by trying to save Tom Robinson, he fails and Tom Robinson is found to be guilty, although this is clearly not the case. In trials, the jury and the judge ultimately make a verdict, which means they hold all legal power. Clearly, Maycomb is a white-superior town; the black people have no voice and are looked down upon by most. By no coincidence, the jury of Maycomb is made up of all white men. Although Atticus's evidence is far superior to that of Bob Ewell's tenuous explanation, the case goes in favor of Mayella only due to racial prejudice. In the beginning of the novel, Atticus is a very respected man, he has many talents and is both humble and smart. However, after becoming Tom Robinson's lawyer, he becomes the new talk of the town, but only in a bad sense. People begin to doubt Atticus and soon he isn't trusted or even listened to. Everyone believes Atticus is making a poor decision by supporting Tom Robinson just because he is a black man. This racial segregation shows that the white people of Mayham are able to

bend the idea of justice in their favor because they are the majority of the town. Being the majority, they are able to impose what they want without anyone standing up against them. For example, when Atticus goes to protect Tom Robinson by sitting in front of the jail, and the group of white men come to the jail to attempt to lynch Tom Robinson, they don't want any business with Atticus. Instead, they are specifically targeting Tom Robinson, although Atticus supports Tom Robinson. This shows how the white people's idea of justice always matches up with what they want, showing that whatever they decide to do is always justified, even if it is putting an innocent man into jail such as Tom Robinson. This shows how Harper Lee uses racial discrimination along with the idea of justice to show how the majority (or in this case the superior community) will always dominate over the others and will always assume that their idea of justice is right.

When the Mirabal sisters are finally captured and put into jail by Trujillo, this represents Trujillo's inexorable power in his totalitarian state. Because Trujillo is a dictator, there is no one else who can stand up to him. He holds all power, therefore putting him above the law; he can do anything within his power, which is everything. Therefore, when the Mirabal sisters (all except for Dede) are captured, he puts them in jail without even a trial. Not only the sisters, but many innocent people are being put into prison by Trujillo without reason. This shows that there is no form of justice whatsoever under Trujillo. Instead of justice, there is Trujillo's reign of terror. In this novel, Alvarez never directly writes or includes a trial scene. The author does this in order to give the impression that the trial almost never even existed. This

shows how the convicted have no real voice in the trials or any rights at all. Because the convicted have no say in the trials, it is clear what the outcome of every trial will be. Thus, there is no true value to having a trial which is why Alvarez decided not to include any trial scenes in the book. After all, Trujillo is a dictator, making every decision of his legitimate because he negates the law. Therefore, Alvarez uses the idea of justice to show that Trujillo traffics all power in his state.

When Charles Darnay finally arrives in France with his imagine of glory, he is soon taken away and captured due to being an emigrant, showing that the revolutionaries have become empowered. Being an emigrant has never been a crime, until the power shift in France comes along. Although the king and queen technically still hold legal power in France, it is clear that the revolutionaries have seized all true power. The revolutionaries have started holding their own trials and creating their own laws. Therefore, these make-shift trials the revolutionaries are holding are sure to be unfair and heavily biased, showing that the French revolutionaries have the leisure to do whatever they think is just. Surely, Darnay would have stayed in prison without the help of Dr. Manette. The first time Darnay is captured, Manette hears about this and decides to help out. Fortunately, as a former prisoner of the Bastille, Dr. Manette is easily able to convince the revolutionaries to release Darnay. This shows that Dr. Manette has a reputation and power within the people. Dickens uses trials and justice as devices to show how the power shifts from the government to the people in France. Also, Dickens makes it clear that certain individuals, such as Madame DeFarge and Dr.

Manette, can manipulate people to their cause by using their idea of justice. For example, Madame DeFarge is all about revenge, she uses this to empower (almost brainwash) the people to fight for the revolution. Although Madame DeFarge does not hold much legal power, she is popular with the revolutionaries and she uses this in order to continually gain more power. This shows how certain individuals can manipulate the public to their motives. Dickens also uses the idea of justice and trials to show how the revolutionaries are gradually seizing power from the government.

The idea of justice and law are used in these novels to show imbalances in power, both in the government as well as within the people. Trials and justice are supposed to punish those who are guilty while saving the innocent. However, it is quite ironic how in all three cases, the innocent are accused, which further shows how the power of law is being misused. The condemnation of Tom Robinson, the Mirabal Sisters, and Charles Darnay all show how the most powerful people can manipulate the minds of others to do what they please without any restraint.