

Explain how Harper Lee develops the symbol of the mockingbird in the novel.



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Mockingbirds are a symbol of sheer innocence; their existence causes no harm to others and the sole purpose of its life is to make mellifluous music for all to enjoy. The mockingbird's sweet chorus is destroyed and disregarded in to kill a mockingbird, as the harmless characters of Boo Radley and Tom Robinson are exiled and imprisoned despite their altruism. The use of the mockingbird in the title provides distinction and coincides through characters and events during the novel.

Harper Lee develops the symbol of the mockingbird in the novel through the town pariahs Boo Radley and Tom Robinson. Tom Robinson is accused of a crime he did not commit and in reality was helping another person without a reward. In chapter 10 Jem and Scout are shown an opening to the malevolence in society and are taught a moral lesson and the only sin considered by Atticus, " Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit em', but remember it's a sin to kill a mocking. This quote foreshadows the upcoming events involving Tom Robinson and the injustices he will have to endure, even though the Mockingbird is not deserving of anguish, he is still put to death through the hands of others who would shoot any bird, regardless of what kind it may be. Scout and Jem at the beginning of the novel are oblivious to the harsh racial segregation and the moral teachings of Atticus only have literal meanings until they become immersed in the enmity of racism, where their innocence is later destroyed and the blurred barriers between their father and Maycomb become clear.

Atticus is responsible for maintaining the stability of Maycomb and the co-existence of good and evil; he influences his children to have morally good actions and values unlike many other children of Maycomb. Atticus strives

for the rights of the mockingbird and the defenceless Tom Robinson, despite the fact that he knows as soon as Mayella Ewell screamed he was a dead man. Atticus allowing Tom Robinson to a trial allowed the ignorance and hatred in Maycomb to some extent deteriorate, even Mr.

Underwood a man who never spoke about the “ miscarriages of justice... likened Tom’s death to the senseless slaughter of song birds by hunters and children. ” Just as Atticus defends the innocent and vulnerable Tom Robinson, he also provides refuge and respect to Boo Radley, a prejudiced against outcast of Maycomb. From the beginning of the novel Atticus respects Boo Radley telling Scout and Jem not to play in his yard, as he deserves the sanctity of privacy. Town gossip and the children’s fantasy surrounding Boo Radley constrain him to his home, which is veiled in mystery, “ Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom.

People said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in windows”. Later in the novel the children realise that there was an error in their judgement of Boo Radley and their fear of him was unjust and cruel as behind the concocted hysteria is a kind-hearted and an innocent mockingbird as Boo Radley inflicts no harm on others and is just an innocuous victim of a cruel narrow-minded society.