

Analyse how a theme
or idea in the text is
relevant to real life
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

' Prejudice cannot see the things that are because it is always looking for things that aren't.' Throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee explores the different forms of prejudice present in Maycomb society - be it prejudice against women (sexism), racial prejudice or prejudice against anyone who chooses not to adhere to social expectations. Through Scout Finch's innocent, unfiltered eyes we see the prejudice in Maycomb for what it truly is: extremely unjust. Lee's fictional town of Maycomb reflects our own society, and therefore these ideas are highly relevant to real life. *To Kill a Mockingbird* illustrates how far society has come from the 1930s in our struggle to overcome prejudice in all forms, but it also serves the purpose of showing us that change towards a less prejudiced society is still needed.

Maycomb is controlled by rigid sexism and gender rules, which Scout Finch is perplexed by. Scout is, in essence, a tomboy in a society that expects her to be " a lady". Despite the absence of a mother, Scout has been raised by her father, Atticus, to view and treat women as equals. Therefore, Scout is strongly against the idea of women being ' housewives' and believes that as a girl she can do everything that a boy could do, and is consistently trying to prove this to her older brother Jem by joining in with his games. Harper Lee makes the inequality of men and women obvious to the reader when Scout learns that women can't serve on juries - she says " I was indignant".

This shows her rage at the evident discrimination towards women in the court of law, where once again " all men are created equal." This idea is relevant to real life because it allows us to appreciate the advancement of our society. Women are no longer expected to serve men (i. e. cook and clean for them) as the professions that were male dominated during Scout's

time are available to both men and women now. The stereotypical positions of men and women in society have been broken down to such an extent that we even have a female prime minister now. Scout would fit quite comfortably into 2008, where women can serve on juries and are definitely not expected to wear dresses all day. Through this novel, Harper Lee also illustrates the idea of hope for change for those societies elsewhere in our world where women are still struggling for equality.

The main type of prejudice that Harper Lee explores in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is racial prejudice. The social class system in Maycomb deems blacks to be the lowest class level of society, and due to this, blacks are treated as inferior. Throughout the novel the black people are referred to as “niggers” and anyone who shows them any kindness, such as Atticus, “nigger lovers”. Lee clearly illustrates the racial prejudice in Maycomb through Tom Robinson (a black man wrongly accused of the rape of a white girl). The fact that Atticus (who is Tom’s lawyer) realises he has no chance of defending Tom in court because it would be a miracle for “any jury decide in favour of a coloured man over a white man”, offers the most explicit indicator of the entrenched racism in Maycomb. Atticus believes that “in court all men are equal” but he knows that “people have a way of carrying their resentments right into the jury box.”

When the jury convicts a clearly innocent Tom, it illustrates to the reader that “the evil assumption that all Negroes are basically immoral beings” was unable to be overcome by the all white jury. They were unable to realise that it is just an “assumption” or prejudice, and that being black doesn’t make Tom automatically guilty. This idea is relevant to real life because with the <https://assignbuster.com/analyse-how-a-theme-or-idea-in-the-text-is-relevant-to-real-life-essay-sample/>

advancement of technology concerning travel, we live in a multi-cultural nation and a multi-cultural world. Lee encourages us to embrace this and look past the facade of skin colour or else, Lee warns, more will end up like Tom Robinson, destroyed by evil. Blacks have fought for equality and have achieved it due to people in real life like Atticus. Lee persuades the reader to fight further for the equality of all races because one by one, further change towards a better and more equal society will occur.

Maycomb society's prejudice does not only target those who are different in gender or race, it is also prejudiced against those who choose to be different. Boo Radley (the recluse in the neighbourhood) is labelled as a "malevolent phantom" because he is not seen outside his home. It is not enough for Maycomb society just to leave him alone; instead he is the object of rumours and games. The children re-enact stories they have heard about him and dare each other to spy on him.

Atticus dissuades his own children from doing this and eventually when Boo saves their lives they learn that Boo is far from a monster, he is in fact the epitome of good. However, at the end of the novel it is obvious that Boo will continue to be misunderstood by the majority of the townspeople, because just like they were unable to let go of their prejudices against Tom, they will be unable to let go of their prejudices against Boo. This idea is relevant to real life because it teaches us not to make preconceived judgements about others based on rumours we've heard about them. This is something that most of us do without even thinking about it, so Lee teaches us "to consider things from [other people's] point of view". She shows us that once we "

climb into [other's] skin and walk around it" we will be able to realise that "most people are nice...when we finally see them."

Overall, Lee explores many forms of prejudice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She shows us how prejudice against women, racial prejudice and prejudice in general are all 'evils' in Maycomb society. These ideas are particularly relevant to real life because they are 'evils' that are present in our own society too. Lee shows the reader how far we have progressed in our fight against prejudice, but she also illustrates how far we still have to go. Change starts with one person, and she persuades each reader to let that person be them.