

Explore the ways
harper lee presents
conflict in to kill a
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Explore the ways Harper Lee presents conflict in 'To Kill A Mockingbird'

Conflict can be a disagreement or an argument between individuals or communities, for example different ideas or interests can result in conflict. Conflict can be used to describe physical combat or verbal opposition between people. To Kill A Mockingbird is set in 1930s South America; this was the time of the Great Depression after the American Stock Market collapsed in 1929. Times were hard and there is a lot of poverty in the novel, even the Finches are not wealthy. Harper Lee presents conflict in the novel through many different aspects; one of these ways is how prejudiced the white communities are towards the black communities. A factor contributing to people's racist attitude was that land owners blamed the end of slavery for loss of profits and status. Other aspects of conflict in the novel are how society can affect individuals and influence people's actions and opinions. It also mentions how gender was related to the way you were treated and people's expectations of you. It highlights how conflict can occur within families too.

Prejudice is part of everyday life for most of the characters in Maycomb, and this was the case for most of the American South in the 1930s. When characters use racist language like 'darky' or 'nigger' they don't think it is offensive, they think black people are inferior and don't need to be treated with respect. There is an example of this as white men use the black community's church during the week to gamble. Atticus calls racism 'Maycomb's usual disease' and says he doesn't want Jem and Scout to 'catch it'. This shows how common racism is, and how hard it will be to change what so many people have believed all their lives. When Atticus takes on

Tom Robinson's case, the jury pronounce Tom as guilty even though evidence clearly points to him being innocent. Atticus knows before the trial that the jury will be pressured to name Tom guilty because of his skin colour, 'The jury couldn't possibly be expected to take Tom Robinson's word against the Ewells' . ' When Jem and Scout visit the Black Community's church, most of the congregation are welcoming, but Lula is prejudiced against them, ' You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here – they got their church.'

Some black people dislike white people because of the way they are treated by them. Mr Raymond comes from a respected Maycomb family, he prefers the company of black people rather than white people. Everyone thinks he is a drunk but he only pretends, he is actually just drinking Coca Cola. He understands that the white community don't understand why anyone would prefer the company of black people, so tries to help them to have a reason why he does, ' they could never, never understand that I live like I do because that's the way I want to live. ' Miss Gates is Scout's third-grade teacher, when she is explaining Hitler to the class she says, ' Over here we don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecuting comes from people who are prejudiced.' Scout thinks this is hypocritical because she heard her say after Tom Robinson's trial, ' it's time somebody taught ' em a lesson, they were getting way above themselves.' This shows that some of the characters in Maycomb are aware of prejudice but do not recognise their own racial prejudices towards the black community.

Conflict is shown by the way Society can be against individuals. When Atticus agrees to defend Tom Robinson the town turn against him, Atticus knows this, ' there's been some high talk around town to the effect that I shouldn't
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do much about defending this man'. Atticus tries to protect Tom when he knows a lynch mob is coming to get him, by sitting outside the jail. They threaten Atticus, but Scout reminds them that they have no reason to be against Atticus and they leave him alone. When Tom Robinson steps into the court room as a black man the jury immediately decide that he is guilty, and everyone knows this, Reverend Sykes says, ' I ain't ever seen any jury decide in favour of a coloured man over a white man.' This shows that although the town are prejudiced against Atticus because he is defending Tom, they know support from him will not affect the outcome of the trial. Mr Radley was ashamed of his son's behaviour when he got into the wrong crowd as a youngster and punished him by locking him up.

There is a lot of gossip around Maycomb about Boo and people blame him for any bad things that happen in the neighbourhood, ' Any stealthy crimes committed in Maycomb were his work.' Jem turns him into a monster, ' his hands were blood-stained', and ' his eyes popped'. At the end of the novel however, we find that Boo is misunderstood, and gossip of the town's folk has made him up to be a ' malevolent phantom'. Scout tells us he is timid, he had, ' the voice of a child afraid of the dark'. Miss Caroline is a brand new teacher and has been trained to teach in a certain way. When she finds that Scout's premature reading ability disrupts her teaching plan she has no idea what to do with her, and tells Scout not to read at home anymore. ' Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me anymore, it would interfere with my reading.' This shows how society is oblivious to individual situations and this can cause achievements to be frowned upon.

Conflict is also shown in the novel through gender. Scout is a tomboy, but some characters in the novel are uncomfortable that she is not acting like a typical young girl. At the start of the novel Jem has a go at Scout for acting like a girl, ' Jem told me I was being a girl, that girls always imagined things.' Though when Jem has grown up, later on in the novel he wants her to behave more like a girl, ' It's time you started being a girl and acting right!' Aunt Alexandra and Uncle Jack also give their opinions on what Scout should grow up to be, though in different ways, ' Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of my attire. I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches,' she picks on Scout and tells her what she should be doing and aiming for.

Uncle Jack on the other hand tries to remind Scout of her gender to persuade her to behave, ' You want to be a lady, don't you? I said not particularly.' Scout is stubborn when she is told what to do and sometimes gets upset, ' I burst into tears and fled to Calpurnia.' However it is not just the conflict between other people telling Scout how to behave, she is also fighting against her emerging femininity within herself. When Scout watches Calpurnia she admires her, ' by watching her I began to think there was some skill involved in being a girl.' Later on in the novel Scout attends Aunt Alexandra's missionary tea, ' I was wearing my pink Sunday dress, shoes and a petticoat,' she does this to please Aunty and also tries to be polite to the guests. This shows Scout is beginning to grow up and accept her femininity.

Family Conflicts is another way of employing disagreement into the novel.

Dill feels like he doesn't fit in with his family and runs away, his parents

aren't interested in him, ' they just wasn't interested in me.' He felt

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neglected because his parents were always out and when they were home they ignored him, they had the attitude of 'now-you've-got-it-go-play-with-it.' Arthur Radley has been kept inside the Radley house, 'Nobody knew what form of intimidation Mr Radley employed to keep Boo out of sight.' Mr Nathan Radley carried on Boo's imprisonment and refrained Boo from leaving gifts for Scout and Jem in the tree, by filling up the hole with cement, 'someone had filled our knot-hole with cement.' Scout's cousin, Francis torments her about Atticus defending Tom Robinson and calls her a 'nigger-lover' and says he 'certainly does mortify the rest of the family.'

This sets off Scout's temper and she punches him, 'I split my knuckle to the bone on his front teeth.' Atticus and Aunt Alexandra are also an example of friction with the Finch family and Scout recognises their differences, 'Aunt Alexandra was Atticus's sister, but when Jem told me about changelings and siblings, I decided that she had been swapped at birth.' Aunt Alexandra turns up to stay and tries to have an influence on Scout, 'We decided it would be best for you to have some feminine influence,' this is because she disagrees with the way Atticus has brought Scout up. 'Aunty had a way of declaring What Is Best For The Family'. Aunt Alexandra is not as open minded as her brothers, she is proud of her family background and tries to make Jem and Scout proud too. Her differences to the rest of the family create friction but later on in the novel we see a more sensitive and caring side to her.

These aspects of conflict show that throughout your life you face the theme of conflict frequently in many different lights. At the end of the novel Scout is only eight, but she has encountered many different types of conflict. There is conflict within Scout's family which shows conflict can be connected closely <https://assignbuster.com/explore-the-ways-harper-lee-presents-conflict-in-to-kill-a-mockingbird-essay-sample/>

to your life every day. There is also conflict within other families in Maycomb, such as the Ewells and the Radleys. Prejudice in Maycomb and the racist attitude engrained into the community's minds also shows that people can be oblivious that they are in conflict. Harper Lee also shows how different genders can encounter conflicting ideas and how society can influence conflict on individuals. Conflict is in all aspects of life and *To Kill A Mockingbird* reflects this.