

Reflection essay on to kill a mockingbird

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The extract under study is taken from the book "To kill a mockingbird" written by Harper Lee.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" is her first novel and the Pulitzer Prize winning novel. The novel depicts the life of its young narrator Jean Louise "Scout" Finch in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama. Her father, Atticus Finch, is a smart lawyer with high moral standards. Atticus decides to take up a case involving a black man, Tom Robinson, who has been accused in raping a very poor white girl named Mayella Ewell. Atticus is sure in his defendant's innocence but Tom has almost no chance to be acquitted, because the white jury will never believe the black man more than a white woman. The article could be logically divided into four parts. The first part begins when we meet Atticus in the court-room who is "half-way through his speech to the jury".

He proves the fact of being an experienced smart lawyer who knows his business pretty well. His speech is logically organized; he speaks "easily, with the kind of detachment he uses when he dictates a letter". During his speech the jury seems to be attentive and appreciative. That is, according to Scout, because he is not a "thunderer". His children present in the court-room and notice some strangers in their father's behavior - the so-called "firsts" - this kind of digression shows Atticus's excitement ("This is equivalent of him standing stark naked"). Atticus addresses the jury "gentlemen", showing his respect for them. After stating the facts the lawyer goes on to the evidence of Tom's innocence.

The manner of his speech changes, and addresses the jury "as if they are folks on the post office corner". He appeals to these people to be just,

without prejudices. He tries to make the jury believe that Tom is not guilty. He says that the case “ requires no minute sifting of complicated facts” and compares it with black and white. This case of simily shows that Atticus uses the simplest words for people better to understand what he means. In the second part, we’d better name it “ The speech”, he carefully outlines each peace of evidence. According to him it was not tom Robinson but Mayella Ewell who was guilty.

The author compares her with “ a child, who hides stolen contraband”. Probably using this case of simile Lee tries somehow to approve Mayella's behavior and make the reader feel sorry for her. In this part of the extract we come across a number of stylistic devices, most of which serve to emphasize the meaning of the utterance. First of all it is rhetorical questions which Atticus asks and answers himself (what did she do? She tempted a negro), then such device as anadiplosis “ I have nothing but pity... but my pity does not extend so far as to her putting a man's life at stake”, or repetition “ She has broken a code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live”. These words underline the general passage atmosphere. Speaking about Mayella, Atticus repeats the verb “ must” to express the situation from Mayella’s point of view: “...she must put him away from her — he must be removed from her presence, from this world. She must destroy the evidence of her offense.

” We also come across a number of emphatic structures (it was guilt that motivated her) which also contribute to the expressiveness of the passage. Atticus characterizes Tom Robinson from his point of view, using epithets:

quiet, respectable, humble. He proves the fact that the Negro is not worse and in some way even better than many of white people. He expresses his idea using repetition (anaphora): " some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around the women - black or white". Atticus ends his speech with Thomas Jefferson's words - " all men are created equal", but he does not agree with it because he sure that all people are different, but there is one institution where all are equal - it is a court. The court is " one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president". Here, the author used the parallel construction which emphasizes the effect of statement.

But Atticus understands that the jury can make a mistake because:" The court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up". So the third part of the extract begins, it may be called " Waiting (or suspense)". Scout sees the jury return "...moving like underwater swimmers, and Judge Taylor's voice came from far away and was tiny": For Atticus, his children and Tom Robinson these moments turn into a nightmare. " The foreman handed a piece of paper to Mr. Tate who handed it to the clerk who handed it to the judge. " This repetition seems to be created to emphasize Atticus's feelings. The climax of the story is seen in the next paragraph.

Atticus's children at the state of critical stress: " Jem's hands were white from gripping the balcony rail". Here we see the repetition of the word " guilty", which shows the tightness in the air, and describing the Jem's feelings - a

comparison: “ each “ guilty” was a separate stab between them”. The fourth part, in my opinion, could be named “ Respect”. “ I looked around. They were standing. All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall, the Negroes were getting to their feet” One of them respectfully calls Scout “ Miss Jean Louse”, because everybody understand that Atticus did his best to protect the innocent. The novel has a number of interesting facts connected with its context and vocabulary.

The author uses words from the lawyer's dictionary, making a reader a participant of the events: corroborative evidence, jury, complicated facts, guilt, defendant, crime, state, testimony, witness, judge, with the court permission, testify, gavel”. It goes without saying that racism is a major theme of the novel. And the central message is the equality of white and black people.