

The help vs. tkam essay sample



The saying “ never judge a book by its cover” is actually true. In reality books can have completely different titles, yet they can both share the same theme, or even multiple themes. To Kill a Mockingbird and The Help are two books which demonstrate this idea that books which may sound or seem completely different, may actually share the same theme. These two novels have many similarities, in not only the topics they discuss, but also the messages they send out to the reader. To Kill a Mockingbird and The Help both take place during the nineteen hundreds when segregation played a huge role in society. Although there are a plethora of themes discussed in both books, racism, perspective, and lifestyle are the most prominent themes which are expressed, because these three themes influence all the characters in both books and furthermore go on to affect almost every decision made by the people in these books.

Racism on its own affects the characters in the book more than anything else. In To Kill a Mockingbird and The Help, racism is obviously a major theme. In both of these novels, colored people hold a subservient role in society. The ways in which racism is expressed in To Kill a Mockingbird are comparably harsher than in The Help. In To Kill a Mockingbird, the colored people are treated as if they are worth nothing and have no purpose of living, because the whole town of Maycomb is so biased toward the white people. For example even when Tom Robinson is in court, due to accusation made by Mayella Ewell, the jury is composed of all white people.

Furthermore, the jury goes on to vote against him and give him the death penalty, even after Atticus has proven to them that it was impossible for Tom to have been the one who beat Mayella. Atticus specifically proves that it

could not have been Tom because the injuries show that someone must have used two hands, but Tom says “ I can’t use my left hand at all.

I got it caught in a cotton gin when I was twelve years old. All my muscles were tore loose” (Lee Chapter 19) which only proves it could not have been him at all. This situation proves that no one would even listen to a colored person when they were telling the truth. While racism is expressed in a noxious manner in *To Kill a Mockingbird* it is portrayed in an innocuous manner *The Help*. In this novel, almost all of the colored people are female maids working for white families. They are treated almost as normal people but they are still inferior to white people. The main difference between these books is that in *The Help*, the town is not nearly as biased as in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the white families care much more about their maids, rather than leaving them on their own to live. Since *The Help* takes place in the nineteen-sixties, some white people are actually becoming more in support of African American rights, for example, Skeeter is trying to help them out. Instead of having no hope at all, like Tom Robinson, the colored people in *The Help* have a lot of hope since Skeeter is trying to help them get more freedom in Jackson, Mississippi.

In addition to racism and discrimination, perspective also plays an important part in these novels. The way every individual character sees things, influences them to react in a different way than someone else. For example in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout, a young innocent 8 year old, sees things in a much different way than Atticus, her father and a lawyer. On one hand, she does not completely understand the concept of discrimination, while Atticus does. So when she hears that the final verdict is that Tom is guilty, she is a

little shocked, because in her mind she sees this as injustice. However, Atticus is not very surprised or shocked like her at all, because he knew this would happen the whole time. In *The Help*, perspective affects the choices made by all the characters. Hilly and Skeeter saw almost everything from two completely different points of view, especially their views on the maids.

Hilly kept trying to abuse and punish them, but in return, the maids ended up getting revenge on her through the pie that she (fortunately) ate. On the other hand, Skeeter tried to help out the maids by publishing their stories on her book so that their voices could be heard across the nation, and in return they ended up helping her get a job in New York. Getting the maids to Skeeter their personal stories was often times difficult, so Aibileen tried to pacify them when they got angry over how they had been treated, this made much easier for Skeeter to get their stories. However, Skeeter also has neutral views towards colored people, for example when she says, "I am neither thrilled nor disappointed by the news that they might let a colored man into Ole Miss, just surprised" (Stockett 83) she does not really care too much about them. This clearly shows how everyone's way of seeing things is different, and that their reactions to situations can be different too.

Last but not least, lifestyle had a great effect on both novels. Lifestyle during this time period played a key role in the way people were judged in public. This influenced people to have certain thoughts about them. Lifestyle basically split the societies in both novels into two. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, everyone generally has an abject lifestyle, since it takes place during the great depression, yet the white families are still better off than the colored ones. On the other hand, in *The Help*, the white families are all wealthy and

rich, whereas the colored people are very impoverished in comparison to them. At times it even seemed as if Skeeter had a fickle lifestyle since she spent so much time with colored people in their houses rather than her own. However, being inferior in *The Help* gives the colored people a reason to stand up and fight for their freedom, and also watching Martin Luther King Jr.'s peaceful protests on television, gives them hope. Unfortunately there isn't much hope for the colored people in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

All in all, these are the three themes which have the greatest impact on these novels. Although both novels are prominently based on racism, perspective, and lifestyle, there are still plenty of other themes that the novels share. Even though these novels were written almost fifty years apart, the separation of time of these two books has led to a different set of beliefs for each community, though they both still hold same fundamental values. Both novels have captivated millions of reader across the nation and world due to the similar fundamental values. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Help* have both shown everyone that our societies today share many of the same values as they did fifty years ago. Although the world will go on to change in many ways, the basic fundamental values held by people will always remain the same.