
To Kill A Mockingbird: Coming Of Age

“Shoot all the Blue Jays you want, if you can hit ‘em, but remember, it’s a sin to kill a mocking bird”. A father’s advice to his children. Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a coming-of-age novel in which Scout and Jem learn important life lessons that leave a mark on them and change the way they act and view the world around them. This is achieved through the use of irony and societal discrimination.

To commence, throughout the novel "*To Kill a Mockingbird*", Lee included many life/ point of view changing incidents. One of these incidents takes place at Mrs. Dubose's house who was portrayed to be a mean and bad/evil person in Jem and Scout's eyes who both wanted nothing to do with her. Atticus knew she was very ill which is why he tolerates her insults towards him by simply acknowledging that she suffers from morphine addiction. Atticus encourages the children to be polite and greet Mrs. Dubose such as him. He then proceeds to instruct Scout and Jem to not let their selves be angered by Mrs. Dubose's insults. However, Jem does indeed become angry when Mrs. Dubose criticizes Atticus for defending Tom Robinson and proceeds to cut the blooms on her camellia bushes. Atticus learns what Jem has done and sends Jem to read to her. Every time Jem couldn't pronounce a word, Mrs. Dubose flamed him for it. Jem hated reading to Mrs. Dubose as she was old, had a foul smell, and was very mean towards Jem and Scout. Soon, Mrs. Dubose's time comes and she passes away, leaving one last gift for Jem, a white camellia flower. White symbolizes purity. She passes on a camellia to Jem which symbolizes that she is passing down that 'bravery' to Jem. The fact that he attacked the flowers was meant to be a learning opportunity for Jem, even if he did not see it at first.

Furthermore, the second incident takes place in the courtroom where Tom Robinson is at trial and accused of raping a white woman named Mayella Ewell. At first, it seems that Tom did rape her for she has signs of strangulation on the right side of her neck. However, we soon learn that Tom is crippled in two ways. The first way consists of a more physical manner, Tom's left arm is crippled. To strangle Mayella on the right side of her neck, Tom would've had to use his left arm which he cannot do. 'Then the Jury is in Toms's favor right?' you ask, WRONG! You see, Tom is also socially crippled, Tom is a black man, one of the "lower classes" therefore, no matter how strong the evidence, Tom is still guilty for being black. Dill then, cannot handle the adult's cruel and unjust way of handling these matters due to his high sense of morality and innocence and begins to cry. Later on, Tom loses the trial and is sent to Jail. Not one night passes, and Tom wakes up dead. Atticus then finds out about this and is devastated.

Moreover, these incidents that have happened in "*To Kill a Mockingbird*" novel serve as lessons to the children. The first incident teaches the children about true bravery; not some false bravery where one hides behind a gun or weapon, No! True bravery such as facing one fear and consequences, learning from one's past mistakes and actions. Jem learned true bravery and learned that inside every person there is a co-existence of good and evil. Jem realized that Mrs. Dubose was brave enough to fight her addiction, such as Atticus was brave to defend a black man. He knew that he would lose, he knew the consequences of his actions but took on the case to show Jem true courage 'I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the

idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do.' despite being white himself, he took on the case knowing the consequences, but he was willing to face those consequences because it was morally right.

To conclude, Lee uses eerie imagery to show that Boo Radley is an outcast. Lee uses bird symbolism, Mocking birds for characters such as Boo Radley and Mr. Dolphus Raymond, and Blue jays representing the Ewells. The mocking birds represent innocence in the coming-of-age novel. The blue jays represent the racially broken down people in their respective time such as Bob Ewell, the mob outside the courthouse, they represent aggression. All these events made Scout and Jem realize the cruel and biased society. To Kill a Mockingbird is truly a coming-of-age book, in the sense that it took these children's innocence away and opened their eyes, they've become aware, they contain knowledge of the true horrors of society and the Racism at hand even in modern times. "Shoot all the Blue Jays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember, it's a sin to kill a mocking bird".

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