To Kill a Mockingbird : in-depth

CHARACTERS

Atticus Finch

Atticus Finch, the father of Scout and Jem, is a highly respected AND responsible citizen of Maycomb County. An attorney by profession, he has always tried to instil good values and a sense of moral propriety in his children.

Atticus' relation with his children is unique. He lets them call him by his name. Though outwardly detached and always busy with his work, he does manage to find the time and patience to explain the intricacies of human nature to his children. When Scout comes home from school, upset at being reprimanded for already knowing how to read, Atticus teaches her to compromise with the situation. By continuing to take lessons from the teacher, and at the same time, reading with her father at home, both could be kept happy. Thus, Atticus teaches his daughter, in her impressionable years itself, the mature demeanour of how to conduct oneself in public, and at the same time luxuriate in one's own decisions.

For Jem, Atticus is a role model, and Jem's maturity is largely due to Atticus' dealings in his work and his conduct at home. Jem follows the Tom Robinson trial very attentively and with much trepidation, and actually starts believing that his father will win the case. So, when the case is lost, Jem feels hopelessly disillusioned. Yet Atticus' acceptance of the situation and the explanation that a black man has yet to win over a white man, heartens him. Hence Atticus has a great influence over his children's perspective of things.

Atticus always tries to be truthful to his children and takes pains to explain the things they don't comprehend fully. The children know that he loves them absolutely. His reassuring presence is highlighted in the last few lines of the final chapter -- "He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning."

Atticus is a typical southern gentleman. He is always courteous towards ladies, even the sharp-tongued Mrs. Dubose. He never raises his voice, even at his children. His behaviour with Calpurnia is meticulous, giving her a fair status in the household. He is brave as well -- he faces the lynch mob in Tom's prison, without displaying any fright or anxiety. Though his speech is cool and formal, one knows that his heart is warm and he extends his amiability to all, including the black community as well as the poor whites, like the Cunninghams.

Atticus is primarily concerned for the welfare of his community which for him includes the whites as well the blacks. Therefore, he works diligently towards this

goal. He does not posses the usual faults of Maycomb citizens; of prejudice, arrogance and hypocrisy. Instead, he takes pains to take the side of the blacks whenever needed and never compromises on this stance of his.

Atticus believes in religious tolerance and he wishes his children would learn this too. He also teaches them to be tolerant of others' shortcomings and forgive them for the same. He insists that they respect Aunt Alexandra and tolerate her even if they find her even if they find her tiresome and rigid. He also insists that they go regularly to Mrs. Dubose's house to read out for her, even though he knows that she showers abuses on them. Therefore, he wishes to instil the virtues of Christian tolerance in his children.

Atticus is an ideal gentleman.

Jem

Jem has chosen Atticus as his role model, and he emulates him throughout the novel. However, at the same time he gets the opportunity to forming his individuality. Jem is a true brother to Scout, helping her out of scrapes, escorting her to school and back, guiding her at times and comforting her in general. When he is given money to buy something for himself, he buys a gift for Scout too. When he finds out that Scout has eaten the gum found in the knothole of the oak tree, he insists that she gargle her throat. When she muddles up her role in the pageant and is mortified, Jem is the one to console her. Much genuine concern and consideration is displayed by him in dealing with his unruly sister.

At the same time, some typical 'elder brotherly' syndromes are exhibited by him when he does not let her join in all the games he plays with Dill (as she is a girl). While escorting her to school on the first day, he instructs her not to follow him around school and embarrass him. He is thus portrayed as a brother, in all the characteristic ways.

Jem has a sharp mind too. During the trial, he follows all the details perfectly. He even understands the reason why Atticus was pointing out the side of Mayella's face which had been injured. When he builds the Morphodite Snowman, Atticus says, "from now on I'll never worry about what'll become of you, son, you'll always have an idea."

Jem's character undergoes a consistent change as the novel proceeds. At the beginning, he displays immaturity -- he does not realize the distress he is causing to Arthur by his pranks. During the middle of the novel, Jem he does mature though not entirely. He has a high regard for manliness and courage and is initially ashamed of his father's apparent feebleness in front of the fathers of his school friends. But his outlook changes completely when he sees his father shoot the rabid dog, and also when he faces the mob in the prison. By the end of the novel he has gained considerable maturity and Scout and Dill too realize this when Miss Maudie gives a slice of the 'grown-up' cake to Jem.

Jem is compassionate too, quite like his father. He empathizes with Arthur Radley and his predicament, and during the Robinson trial, he cannot help getting upset at the unfair discrimination against Tom Robinson. Jem takes on from his father's humane nature and he is portrayed as a strong character.

Scout

Scout, because of her age, and being the youngest in the family, is impulsive by nature and extremely emotional too. She unthinkingly rushes into fights and scrapes, cries when her ego is hurt and is generally is rash in her actions.

Scout is very warm and friendly. Even in the midst of the tension, when the mob gathers in Tom's prison, she attempts at a friendly conversation with Mr. Cunningham. During the ladies' meetings held in her drawing room, though unnerved by Stephanie Crawford's saucy comments, she tries her hard at conversing with the ladies.

As the novel proceeds, Scout too gains in maturity. She realizes how offensive they had been by tormenting Boo Radley. Though a natural tomboy, she begins to adjust to her feminine role and enjoys helping Calpurnia in the kitchen.

Finally, her behaviour with Boo Radley when she meets him, displays her sensitivity. She makes him sit comfortably and converses with him. She even escorts him back to the safety of his home. Thus Scout is an adorable character, with a great potential for perception and appreciable values in her personality.

Aunt Alexandra

Aunt Alexandra is Atticus' sister, who used to stay at the ancestral Finch landing before she arrives at Atticus' house to stay. She is very unlike Atticus in all respects, and the children do not take a liking to her in the beginning. For a start, her reason for coming is to bring some 'feminine' influence to the house, and that fact itself is negated by the children since (according to them), Calpurnia is a sufficient feminine influence. Aunt Alexandra is so unlike her brother Atticus that Scout cannot help wondering whether the real sister had been switched with some other child, at the time of her birth itself. This belief is nurtured by her because of some old folk-tales she has heard about changelings.

Aunt Alexandra, initially comes across as a cold, unfeeling and an unloving person. She embodies all the local prejudices of the Maycomb society, like the snobbishness over the black society and the hard heartedness for the poor

whites. She, therefore, is very easily accepted into the Maycomb society. But she annoys Scout by her insistence on ladylike behaviour and she even irks the otherwise patient Atticus by her racial prejudices and her insistence on ousting Calpurnia from the house.

But even Aunt Alexandra comes down from her presumptuous pedestal by the end of the novel. She shows her loyalty to her brother by standing him. When she hears of Tom's death, she is very upset, and immediately agrees to send Calpurnia to help Helen, Tom's wife. Her intense concern over her brother is noticed when she tells Miss Maudie, "I just want to know when this [trial] will end. It tears him to pieces." Her warm concern for the children when they have been rescued from Bob Ewell's clutches, also reveals the genuine love beneath Aunt Alexandra's tough and forbidding exterior: she possesses a very kind and loving heart.

Boo Radley

Arthur Radley, called Boo by the children, is an enigma in himself. As a young boy, he had been a pleasant, good-natured boy, but had fallen into the company of the unruly Cunningham boys and had created some mischief. As punishment his father had sentenced him to a lifetime confinement to their house.

Though having gained the reputation of a lunatic, Boo is basically a harmless, well-meaning person; childlike in behaviour sometimes, and as Jem and Scout realize, hankering for some love and affection. When Scout and Jem discover little gifts for them, the reader can easily understand that this is Boo's attempt to extend a hand of friendship to them. But these attempts, too, are thwarted by his father.

When Boo emerges from the house to rescue Jem and Scout, and is finally introduced to the children, it can be seen that due to his long confinement, his health has weakened and he is unable to even stand the harsh living room lights. Scout feels sorry for him and understands the sheriff's reason to save Boo from the menacing limelight, which would inevitably fall on him if the truth is exposed. Scout surmises correctly that it would be like killing a mockingbird, a sin which should be avoided as far as possible.

Bob Ewell

Bob Ewell is the useless, brutal father of a brood of children who have to live in extreme filth and shabbiness; with hardly any food to eat, surrounded by poverty and disease thanks only to him. Bob drinks away all the money got from the relief checks; is ignorant, foul-mouthed and arrogant. He has no qualms about submitting a poor, innocent black to death, for the apparent concern over his daughter, for whom he anyway has no great love or concern.

Even after winning the case, he continues to torment Tom's widow Helen. He does not even leave Atticus in peace and brings a great deal of stress by trying to

scare Atticus and later, attempting to harm the children. The reader feels no sympathy whatsoever for him, and in fact are glad at his subsequent death at the hands of Arthur Radley.

Mayella Ewell

Mayella, though Bob's daughter, is different in some ways. She attempts at keeping the house clean and looking after her younger brothers and sisters. But she has never had any friends, nor any love or affection in her life, and the only person who has been decent to her is Tom Robinson. Under such circumstances, one can understand her desperation to make sexual advances at Tom. She is to be pitied rather than condemned for her act, because it was a step taken through utter desperation. At the same time she is willing to lie in court and condemn Tom, so as to save her own life virtually, from the torturous treatment that may be meted out to her by her father. But she is certainly a better and more humanly person than her father and her crime is even pardonable unlike her father's.

Tom Robinson

Tom is a young, harmless, innocent, hardworking black. As Scout realizes, he would have been a fine specimen, but for his left hand, which had been injured in an accident. Tom was married, with three children and worked for Mr. Link Deas in his farm.

The only mistake he made was that he took pity on Mayella and often helped her by doing small household chores for her. He pitied Mayella for her deplorable condition and so helped her whenever possible. But the racial prejudices in Maycomb county are still too dominant for this concern to be outweighed, and so Tom lost.

Tom's courtesy and innate goodness is revealed during the court scene, when he refuses at first to repeat the foul language used by Bob Ewell. He never openly accuses Mayella of lying, he just feels that she must be "mistaken in her mind". All this endears him to the reader and his eventual death brings about a profound sense of sorrow and despair at the injustice prevalent in the society.

The Black Community

By including the black community in her novel, Harper Lee has very effectively revealed the striking differences between the two communities: the white and the black. Her main reason in writing about this community is of course to portray the outright oppressive manner in which the blacks were treated during those times. Her book is a bid to the readers to acknowledge the respect and regard due to this section of society.

Atticus' interest in this society is seen in almost every aspect of his life. His housekeeper is a black and he has utmost faith in her to raise the children in the

right way. Atticus never fails to support their cause whenever the need arises. Tom Robinson's case is the best example of Atticus' attitude towards the blacks. It is a case no lawyer would have touched. Atticus takes it up, knowing full well the futility of it. His main concern is showing sympathy towards them any not leaving any stone unturned in bettering their lot.

The blacks in this novel are portrayed as better individuals than the whites. They are honest folk, always maintaining cleanliness, who do any work to eke out a living. This is so unlike the Ewells who though white (are called 'white trash') and are dirty, lazy, good-for-nothing people who have never done a day's hard work. Even the African tribe which Mrs. Merriweather speaks of reveals a sense of warmth and familial feeling amongst them, which is truly lacking in the whites.

The whites always draw away from the blacks and even speak badly about them, but when Scout and Jem visit the church with Calpurnia, they are treated with respect and are not jeered by the blacks. Calpurnia herself has always treated the children like her own, and has instilled worthy values in them.

Through the court scenes, the reader realizes that Tom had treated Mayella with respect, and had actually felt sorry for her plight. Yet he is wrongly convicted and has to pay for a crime which he never committed. As Atticus points out in his final speech the white have always assumed that "All Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro women are not to be trusted around our men." The truth, he insists, is that there "is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman with desire."

Harper Lee has thus depicted a race which has always been looked down upon, because of their color, and she has tried to mitigate such feelings of racial hatred and prejudice in the reader.

PLOT (Structure)

To Kill A Mockingbird is divided into two parts. The first part extends from Chapter 1 to Chapter 11, and the second part from Chapter 12 to Chapter 31. Part One and Part Two, though connected with events and actions, have separate identities. Part Two is concerned mostly with Robinson's trial and is well unified. Part One contains several episodes which are relevant to the issue dealt with in Part Two.

Part Two, which is longer than Part One, focuses on the novel's main theme: racial prejudice still prevalent in the South, which denied equal status to the blacks and the whites. It entirely consists of the Tom Robinson trial. This begins from the middle of Chapter 16 and ends in Chapter 21. However, reference to the case is made before and after these chapters too.

Part One mainly deals with the characters of Jem, Scout and Atticus, and the innocent reactions of the children to the racial prejudices prevailing in their town. Scout is surprised that Walter has learnt no table manners, yet, the fact that she has invited him for dinner exhibits her sense of equality. Jem's admiration for his father is also depicted in the first few chapters.

The unifying element of both the parts is the unseen presence of Arthur Radley. He occupies the main interest of the children, which shifts away once the trial begins. At the end of the novel, the attention is brought back to Boo Radley, when he rescues the children from the evil clutches of Bob Ewell.

Close examination of the text reveals that Tom Robinson and Boo Radley have much in common. Both are innocent, harmless human beings, yet both are persecuted by the society: Tom for being black, and Boo for being a freak. Harper Lee shows her readers how wrong the society was by scorning such individuals.

Apart from the Tom Robinson trial and the Boo Radley encounter, the incidents in Part One are Miss Maudie's house catching fire, the shooting of the rabid dog, and the children's encounter with Mrs. Dubose.

One can notice that certain incidents and events take place in the first part to prepare the children for what is going to take place in the second part of the novel. The Ewells are introduced in the first part, so that the reader can fully comprehend the kind of people they are. This enables them to see through the act of Mayella and Bob Ewell. The typical characteristics of southern tradition and culture is also depicted in the first part, to enable the reader to understand why the Tom Robinson case was a futile one from the start. In this manner, both the parts are linked together with episodes, and one finds a structured pattern falling into place.

CONFLICT

Protagonist

The protagonist of the novel is Atticus Finch, who is the prime initiator and coordinator of various events in the novel. In his involvement with the poor whites of the community, like Walter Cunningham, as well as the deprived blacks, like Tom Robinson, he is portrayed as a just, sincere and a greatly considerate human being. He has clear-cut values and beliefs, and it is his sincere wish that his children too grow up with a broad outlook and an unprejudiced way of thinking. He is indifferent to what others have to say or think about his actions, and he is steadfast in his beliefs of equality and liberty.

Antagonist

Bob Ewell serves as the perfect villain in the novel, with his laid-back way of living and the utter disregard he has for other human beings. In the beginning he comes across only as a slovenly figure, uncaring about his family and brash in his dealings with others. But after the Tom Robinson episode, it is alarming to discover him an unfeeling, pretentious no-gooder who has no qualms about sending an innocent bystander to the gallows. Even after winning the case, on realizing that he has lost his respect in the people (because of Atticus), he even attempts harming Atticus' children, thus leaving not an iota of sympathy for himself in the reader.

Climax

The events in the novel build up to the singularly important and climactic scene of the courtroom, where Atticus tries to defend Tom Robinson from the allegations of Bob and Mayella Ewell. The tension is maintained throughout the trial as to whether Atticus would or would not win the case. Though the audience feels strongly for Tom's plight and it is apparent that he is innocent, the jury delivers the verdict that Tom is guilty. The immediate response to this is extreme disappointment and dejection, but the jury's verdict is final.

Outcome

The most surprising and touching thing is that instead of rebuking Atticus for losing the case, the black community showers him with food, as a gesture of their appreciation for having at least taken up the case and defending Tom. Tom is obviously the most upset, but Atticus is only quiet and exhausted. Ewell, on realizing his lost standing in the community, tries to make life miserable, first for Helen Robinson, Tom's widow, and then even Atticus. He finally resorts to harming Scout and Jem, but in the process loses his own life. Simultaneously, Scout's long cherished dream of meeting Boo Radley is also fulfilled. Thus the trial reveals a number of accidental as well as expected outcomes.

THEME ANALYSIS

During the first half of *Mockingbird*, Harper Lee constructs a sweet and affectionate portrait of growing up in the vanished world of small town Alabama. Lee, however, proceeds to undermine her portrayal of small town gentility during the second half of the book. Lee dismantles the sweet façade to reveal a rotten, rural underside filled with social lies, prejudice, and ignorance. But no one in Mockingbird is completely good or evil. Every character is human, with human flaws and weaknesses. Lee even renders Atticus, the paragon of morality, symbolically weak by making him an old and

widowed man as opposed to young and virile. It is how these flawed characters influence and are influenced by the major themes underpinning their society.

Three major themes run through *To Kill a Mockingbird*: **education**, **bravery**, and **prejudice**. We learn how important education is to Atticus and his children in the first chapter when Jem announces to Dill that Scout has known how to read since she was a baby. Atticus reads to the children from newspapers and magazines as if they are adults who can understand issues at his level. By the time Scout attends her first day of school she is highly literate, far surpassing the other children in the classroom and frustrating her teacher whose task it is to teach her students according to a predetermined plan.

It soon becomes clear why Atticus thinks education is so important. During his closing arguments Atticus explicitly acknowledges the ignorance blinding people's minds and hearts: "the witnesses for the state…have presented themselves to you gentlemen…in the cynical confidence that their testimony would not be doubted, confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the…evil assumption…that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their caliber" (217). Education is the key to unlocking the ignorance that causes such prejudice. Jem begins to understand this lesson toward the end of the book when he wonders whether family status could be based more on education than on bloodlines.

Jem also learns powerful lessons from his father regarding bravery and cowardice. Early in Mockingbird we learn that Atticus does not approve of guns. He believes that guns do not make men brave and that the children's fascination with guns is unfounded.

To prove his point, he sends Jem to read for Mrs. Dubose who struggles to beat her morphine addiction before she dies. He wants to show his son one shows true bravery "when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what" (121). Atticus also role models his sense of bravery by refusing to carry a gun to protect Tom Robinson from angry farmers and refusing to carry a gun to protect himself after Bob Ewell threatens guns. But bravery runs deeper than the decision to carry a gun. Atticus shows bravery when he takes Tom's case despite knowing that his town would turn against him and his children. Jem shows bravery when the children intervene on behalf of Atticus and Jem refuses to leave his father's side during the showdown with farmers at the jailhouse. And, perhaps the biggest lesson Scout must learn is to turn away and show real bravery rather than fight when people antagonize her.

The most important theme of Mockingbird remains the notion of prejudice in all of its forms. Clearly, with the Tom Robinson case, Lee's characters deal with racial prejudice head on. References to black men as "niggers" and "boys" persist

throughout the book. Black people occupy the lowest class level of Maycomb society as Maycomb's white population of every class waste no time reinforcing their rigid class rules. The fact that Atticus realizes that he has no chance to win his case defending Tom because Tom is black offers the most explicit indicator of deep-rooted racism. His closing argument in Chapter Twenty clearly outlines Atticus' views on racism. However, Lee also shows us prejudice as it pertains to gender and social class.

Although the entire town subscribes outwardly to traditional gender roles and class distinctions, Aunt Alexandra stands plays the greatest role in reinforcing these notions within the Finch family. Alexandra believes that because the Finch family comes from a long line of landowners who have been the county for generations they deserve greater respect than do other people and they must comport themselves according to their status. She refuses to associate with both black and white citizens alike because they do not fill the same social position. Atticus, on the other hand, urges his children to sympathize with others and to "walk in their skin" before they judge or criticize others.

Scout suffers acutely from the stereotypes imposed upon her because of the rigid sexism and gender rules that govern southern life. Scout hates to wear dresses and the find the accusation that she "acts like a girl" highly offensive. Although the characters do not explicitly deal with gender issues, Lee does offer several characters, Miss Maudie and Miss Stephanie in particular, who illustrate the broad spectrum of southern womanhood that lies beneath the simplistic "southern belle" stereotype

STYLE / LANGUAGE

Harper Lee has utilized Scout, a six-year old girl to relate the facts. Yet, the language she uses is not restricted to her age, since that would have severely limited the expressions which Harper Lee needed to give. She makes it clear that the book is being written by the adult Scout recreating her childhood experience.

A varied use of language is noticed throughout the novel. First of all, there is a difference in the language spoken by the whites and the colloquial use of language by the blacks. A compromise is reached by Calpurnia, who uses white man's language at Atticus' house, but switches over the black jargon the moment she is amidst the blacks.

Language describes the character of a person too. Ewell uses foul words and obscenities whenever possible, which shows his poor class. Mayella, though not using foul words, betrays a lack of education in her speech.

Atticus is formal in his speech, and his words are often laced with irony and humour. Yet he cannot be considered pompous or having an inflated ego because of this. When speaking to the children, he usually uses simple words which can be easily comprehended.

Jem and Scout sometimes use slang words, typical of their age. While speaking to Uncle Jack, Scout says. "I don't mean to sass you", and Jem remarks "shoot no wonder, then."

Tom uses the characteristic colloquial English, saying 'suh' for ' sir' and 'chillun' for 'children'. Yet, he is decent enough not to repeat the foul words used by Bob Ewell, in the courtroom. This indicates that though he has had very little formal education, his good manners and etiquette are innate.

Various derogatory terms for the blacks have also been used, like 'nigger', 'darky', 'Negroes', 'colored folk' and so on; this reflects the attitude of the whites towards the blacks. Thus language has been very adeptly and adroitly used by Harper Lee to enable her novel to read naturally.

MOOD

The mood of the novel on a general level is light and humorous, especially when it relates Scout's impulsive actions, Dill's antics and Jem's brotherly demeanour. However, the underlying mood throughout the novel is sombre and profound, because certain important issues are being valued and dealt with. Atticus' dealings with the blacks, the negative attitudes of some other members of the community, the trial of Tom Robinson and his gruesome end, depicts a seriousness and a grave reconsideration of accepted norms, which is expected of the readers by the author.

MORALITY IN THE NOVEL

Harper Lee, through her novel has attempted to present certain moral truths to the reader: the underlying morality of the Maycomb county has been well portrayed.

The primary moral truth that is evident in the book is the prominence given to life and the need to safeguard it. This does not only concern the trial scene where a black man's life is at stake, but various other instances too. Atticus values life fundamentally, even if it is that of a bird's. He refuses to touch a gun, unless it is absolutely essential. His son too, is careful enough to preserve all the earthworms while building his snowman, and even reprimands Scout when she tries to irritate them. Dill too shows the same love for living creatures, and he says that striking a match under a turtle can hurt it. Miss Maudie loves her plants and bestows a lot of love and care on them.

Another characteristic human value depicted is the need for love and affection. Arthur Radley has lived an entire life deprived of companionship. Dill, starved of

love, weaves fantastic stories which reveals the tragic nature of his life. Mayella too, through her words, reveals a desire for love and affection which she had only received from Tom Robinson.

Tolerance and patience are the other morals taught in this novel. Atticus teaches his children to tolerate Mrs. Dubose's vitriolic tongue, because she had a need for them. He teaches them to be patient with Aunt Alexandra, who had never dealt with lively children before. And most importantly, he teaches them to be tolerant of other's beliefs and values as he says: "You can never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view -- until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

These values and morals have one unifying message -- man needs the society he lives in. All men are equal and it is pointless to make distinctions. Only by living together in deliberate tolerance and love can one make the best of life.

Though the tone throughout is sombre and interspersed with serious thoughts, yet Harper Lee has injected humour in novel. She has made a subtle use of humour, so that the reader can comprehend the serious messages with the agreeable flavour of humour. Scout's childish viewing of the entire scenario touches the reader's heart and brings a smile to the face, while going though the entire gamut of experiences that childhood is all about. Thus she very effectively blends entertainment with serious morality.

The lesson of equality is also imparted very effectively. It is well brought out that man has needlessly differentiated between the color of complexion of people and so formed barriers of prejudice. Harper has taken pains to convey the message that one must learn to be tolerant towards others. Only then can a better understanding and a stronger bond of mankind be formed.

SYMBOLISM in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Harper Lee has used symbolism rather extensively throughout the novel and a great deal of it refers to the problems of racism in the South during the early twentieth century. Symbolism can be traced in almost every important episode or event which formulates the story line. Right from the beginning Scout's character and her outlook towards the behaviour of the people in Maycomb county symbolizes a child's innate curiosity towards life. It also portrays the untainted intelligence which helps her see beyond what is apparent.

Scout's understanding of Walter Cunningham's poverty and his self-pride is a prime example of this. Even Scout and Jem's relationship with Calpurnia symbolizes the rare understanding of racism prevalent during those times.

Miss Maudie is a classic example of the enlightened woman living in an age of suppressed womanhood. Miss Maudie hates staying indoors and is always seen pottering around her garden, working on her flowerbeds. She understands Atticus' need to fight against the racial prejudices and believes in him absolutely.

When her house gets burnt down, instead of moping about it, she is back on her feet the next day, restoring her house and her garden. She is thus a symbol of strength and integrity.

Mrs. Dubose symbolizes the grit and determination of a woman, who though aware of the fact that she is going to die soon, wants to do so with all her wits about her. Her addiction to morphine is a negative factor and she attempts to overcome it appreciably.

Finally, the deepest symbolism conveyed is through the use of the concept of the mockingbird. The mockingbird is a symbol of everything that is harmless. They only make music for others to enjoy and to kill such a being is a sin. Both Boo Radley and Tom Robinson are harmless individuals, who never intend to hurt a soul. Yet Tom's life is lost, and this is like shooting a mockingbird. As Scout wisely says: to hurt Boo Radley, too, would be like killing a mockingbird. Thus the mockingbird has been used to symbolize the good and the harmless things in this world which should not be abused.

In the novel, the people of Maycomb only know Boo Radley and Tom Robinson by what others say about them. According to a critic "Both of these characters do not really have their own 'song' in a sense, and therefore, are characterized by other people's viewpoints."

other symbols . . .
the mad dog - community gone mad
the tree house - a retreat from the world that gives oversight
Camellias - the old genteel South, living in the past
the gun - an abuse of power - Atticus' view; a means of power - the lynch-mob view
the cemented hole in the tree - being thwarted)
columns on buildings - persistence of the old South; a facade; anomalies
Atticus' pocket watch - Love of and absent mother

CONTRASTS within Maycomb society

Maycomb county comprises of a conglomeration of various sections of people, who live together in studied harmony. Their differences are noticeable, and therein lies the foundation for all trouble which emerges later on in the novel.

Outwardly, the community is divided into two sections: the white community and the black community. The blacks are simple, honest, hardworking folk, eking out a living by simple labour on the fields. They are God-fearing and attend church regularly. Being uneducated, they repeat the hymns sung in the church, by rote. Though poor they have a sense of self-respect and pride and would never take anything from another without paying back in kind. When Atticus takes up Tom Robinson's case, even though he loses the case, his kitchen is overflowing with

food items; the blacks' way of showing gratitude. Though Jem and Scout are white, they are treated with deference and respect when they visit their black church.

The white community is divided into two sections. One includes most of the citizens of the county, who are simple, yet well bred. They work hard, keep their houses clean and attend church regularly. At the same time, they are prone to indulge in idle gossip, and slander, and have a nose for prying into others' affairs. Stephanie Crawford, with all her well-bred insolence, cannot help making snide comments at Atticus and his children. There is an air of suppressed hypocrisy among many of these white citizens.

Another small segment of the white community comprises of what is called 'white trash'. The Ewells are a part of this segment. These people, though white are worse off than the blacks. They are poor not because of circumstances but because of sheer laziness and lack of ambition. The children are filthy, have no manners, and even refuse to attend school. They are mean and hard and have no qualms about using their fists. Even the law has to be altered a little to maintain order in the society, for instance. This community is worse off than the poor but inherently good blacks, yet consider themselves superior to them because of the color of their skin.

There is another smaller segment, consisting of the Cunninghams. The Cunninghams are known never to take anything they cannot pay back, they manage with whatever they have, which isn't much. When Scout's teacher offers Walter Cunningham a quarter to buy lunch for himself, he refuses, and Scout has to explain to her the ways of the Cunninghams. When Mr. Cunningham cannot pay Atticus money for his legal help he sends sacks of hickory nuts, turnips and holly to him.

Evaluating all these sections, one can notice a marked similarity between the blacks and the Cunninghams. Though different in race and color, their attitude towards life, and importance to honesty and self-esteem, depicts them to be good people who deserve better than what is meted out to them by the society.

The Ewells, on the other hand, are the worst kind of people, who show no concern towards bettering themselves, and in fact show insolence towards the others.

All these distinct sections of people have been portrayed to bring forth the problem of racial prejudice to the fullest.