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Interface between Disability and Racism in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Letter of Approval

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Bikesh Shrestha

Interface between Disability and Racism in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Abstract

This research explores the interface between race and disability in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, emphasizing how societal attitudes intertwine these constructs to marginalize individuals. The novel portrays a racial hierarchy in which black individuals like Tom Robinson are figuratively disabled by systemic racism. Tom faced both physical and racial problems in his life. He faced the physical disability despite his injured left arm; societal biases strip him off agency and autonomy. His attempts to resolve the challenges in his life through legal avenues reveal the structural obstacles faced by African Americans in a prejudiced society. Tom Robinson faces physical injury is overshadowed by the societal prejudice that labels him incapable and untrustworthy solely based on his skin color. The legal system's failure to protect Tom illustrates how racial discrimination creates figurative disabilities by denying individuals the rights and protections afforded to others. Boo Radley, another key figure in the novel, highlights how perceived disability and societal exclusion intersect. However, he, as a white man, he is offered a legal protection. Deriving insights about disability from Lennard Davis' theory and about the nexus between racism and power from Colette Guillaumin and George M. Fredrickson, this study establishes how prejudice whether rooted in race, disability or both serve to ostracize and marginalize individuals. Meanwhile, the study also points out the ways both disabled characters, Robinson and Boo, are treated differently along the line of race and thereby they face diametrically opposite consequences.

Keywords: *interface, disability, race, racism, prejudice*

This study analyzes interface between race and disability in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* from the perspective of disability studies. Disability is the condition of difficulty in carrying out daily activities and taking part in social life normally due to problems in parts of the body and the physical system as well as obstacles created by physical, social, cultural environment by communication. The disability has been reflected in the novel based on socioeconomic and culture panorama, which determine if a person is disabled or not. In this study, Boo Radley. The multidimensional character of the novel lives with certain types of disability. Bob Ewell feels humiliated by both Atticus and the judge. Humiliation drives him to seek revenge. He threatens Tom Robinson's widow, tries to break into the judge's home, and ultimately attacks Jem and Scout as they return from a Halloween party. However, Boo Radley steps in to save the children, fatally injuring Ewell in the process. Boo then carries the wounded Jem back to Atticus's house, where the sheriff, in order to protect Boo from public scrutiny, claims that Ewell tripped over a tree root and fell on his own knife. After spending some time with Scout, Boo retreats into the Radley house. Therefore, he gets support from the white dominated society. White people treats him as disabled one because he is black. In the sense, black means the person who is like disable. The relationship between two is going with the border of racism and disability.

The novel illustrates the social landscape of America in the 1930s, a time when people faced discrimination due to their race, religion, physical appearance, skin color, and disabilities. This analysis focuses on the experiences of Robinson, an African American, within this societal framework. During the 1930s, America was gradually moving towards reducing racial discrimination. Furthermore, Boo Radley, the novel's central character, is depicted as having a disability. Therefore, he faces problems, including discrimination based on disability. Tom Robinson is an African American man who is viewed as disabled due to the prejudiced attitudes of white individuals, who see him as weak and powerless, similar to

how they perceive a black person with a disability. This analysis delves into the obstacles he faces in life and the steps he takes to confront and reshape the societal notions of disability that are prevalent in American culture. The narrative also examines the effects of disability on a character named Boo Radley. The lack of proper understanding, societal bias, and the irrational behaviors of educators and peers exacerbate Boo Radley's struggles. He actively challenges the dominant stereotypes associated with disability and ultimately succeeds in affirming his identity within his community as a person with a disability. Tom Robinson, a married African American man and father of three, is wrongfully accused of raping a white woman named Mayella Ewell, with these allegations stemming from Mayella and her abusive father, Bob Ewell.

The novel has been viewed from different perspectives. Many reviewers have lauded the book as a poignant and insignificant exposure of social reality of the South, and a powerful rendering of modern heroism. For Laurie Champion, the novel generates new meanings of "right" and "left" ordinarily used for "opposing spatial direction" (234). She sees that they "suggest . . . virtue and . . . inequity" respectively (123). Another critic, Donald F. Roden, viewing the novel, as a "story of experience" (54), analyzes how children learn the evils of the adult world as they are about to enter it. They find the words of adults full of injustice. As per Roden:

The theme of the novel extends beyond the topics of disability and the importance of understanding different perspectives. For the three children, the story centers on the idea of imitation. At the beginning, the protagonist is an innocent boy, but by the end, he has acquired a deeper understanding of adult behavior. Thus, it can be argued that the main theme of the novel is the perception of evil through the eyes of innocence. The primary expression of evil is aimed at Tom Robinson, inflicted by the adults of

Maycomb. This innocence is represented by the three children: Jem, Scout, and Dill.

(55)

The theme of the novel goes beyond the topics of disability and the importance of valuing different viewpoints; it delves into the complexities of human behavior and moral dilemmas. The story centers on three children, highlighting the idea of imitation as they learn from their environment and the adults around them. Initially, the protagonist is depicted as an innocent boy, brimming with curiosity and wonder about the world. His interactions with his siblings and the adults in their community reflect a youthful inquisitiveness as he seeks to understand the actions and beliefs he observes.

As the narrative unfolds, the protagonist undergoes a significant transformation. By the end of the story, he has acquired a deeper understanding of adult behavior, particularly the darker aspects of human nature. This evolution is marked by his exposure to the harsh realities of injustice and prejudice, which challenge his initial perceptions of right and wrong. The innocence he once held is gradually replaced by a more nuanced understanding of morality, shaped by the experiences he witnesses. Thus, it can be argued that the main theme of this novel is the perception of evil through the eyes of innocence. The protagonist's journey serves as a lens through which the reader can explore the complexities of human morality. The primary example of evil in the narrative is the injustice experienced by Tom Robinson, a character who embodies the consequences of societal prejudice and discrimination. Through the protagonist's eyes, the reader witnesses the profound impact of this injustice, as it shatters the illusion of a just and fair world. The portrayal of Tom Robinson's plight not only highlights the theme of racial injustice but also serves as a catalyst for the protagonist's moral awakening. As he grapples with the realities of evil and injustice, he begins to understand the importance of empathy and the need to challenge societal norms. This journey from innocence to awareness underscores the novel's exploration of the

complexities of human behavior, urging readers to confront their own perceptions of good and evil. In conclusion, the novel intricately weaves together themes of innocence, imitation, and the perception of evil, ultimately inviting readers to reflect on the moral complexities of the world around them. Through the protagonist's growth and the injustices faced by characters like Tom Robinson, the narrative challenges one to reconsider our understanding of morality and the importance of empathy in the face of societal flaws. Tom Robinson turned down the advances of Mayella Ewell. In retaliation, Mayella's father, Bob Ewell, aimed to escape the embarrassment of his daughter's actions by accusing Tom of raping her. Given the deep-seated prejudices against Black people in the community, Tom was convicted despite Atticus's attempts to defend him. After the conviction, Tom Robinson was shot while trying to escape from prison.

Steven Luvet focuses on a character named Atticus Finch, a lawyer, who regardless of being a white man, defends a black man as he is committed to his belief in humanitarian causes. Luvet, however, sheds light on, "the possibility that Atticus Finch was not quite the heroic defender of an innocence man wrongly accused" (134). He generates several questions and sets them as premises of his arguments that are generated after a deep concentration on the trial scenes of the novel.

Don Burther sees Lee's work as a work of rare compassion that makes her novel soar. For him, it is the best contemporary novel he has read since 1939. The critic here emphasizes the ability of the author to write with sympathy. In this regard, he notes:

Tom's jury consists of twelve ordinary men, but an invisible force has disrupted their ability to think rationally. This same influence was apparent that night outside the jail. When that group left, they did not do so as rational beings; instead, they were swayed by our presence. There is a factor in our society that leads people to lose their

composure, making it impossible for them to be fair, even if they genuinely tried.

(231)

There is full of prejudice against the black in American society so Tom is verdict as guilt behaves like a disabled. He is ready to send jail without proper justices against tom's action.

The discussion above shows this novel has been analyzed from various perspectives. However, it has not been studied from the perspective of disabled study, especially focusing on the interface between disability and racism. Therefore, I have located a research gap regarding this area and the present study is an attempt to fulfill this knowledge gap. This study will significant for those, who are interested to see the interface between disability and racism in Harper Lee's *To kill a Mockingbird*.

This study is a qualitative research. Therefore, it depends on interpretation and close reading of the text. In addition, I selected Harper Lee's *To kill a Mockingbird* as the primary text since I observed the issue of racism embedded within the notions of disability in it. As a researcher with a personal experience of disability, I found the portrayal of disabled characters to be especially compelling. Alongside a detailed analysis of the main text, I have also consulted a range of supplementary materials, such as journals, articles, and online resources, to collect vital information for this study. This research primarily relies on the field of disability studies to examine the novel, while also integrating relevant concepts from the study of racism to investigate the interplay between racism and disability. Regarding disability, Lennard Davis claims:

The notion of the divine or ideal body is ultimately unattainable for humans. The idea of an ideal implies that the human form, as imagined, must be shaped from the best qualities of real-life examples. Yet, these individual examples can never completely embody the ideal, since an ideal, by its very definition, cannot exist in our reality.

Representations of the ideal human form are found only in mythology; for example, figures like Venus or Helen of Troy symbolize female beauty. (10)

By contrast, the grotesque as a visual form is inversely related to the concept of the ideal and its corollary that all bodies are in some sense disabled. In that mode, the grotesque is a signifier of the people, common life.

The novel illustrates the social injustices faced by its characters, particularly highlighting Tom's unfair treatment that ultimately results in his imprisonment. He is portrayed as powerless, akin to someone with a disability, unable to confront the oppressive system. Throughout the story, Atticus shares valuable life lessons with his children, often questioning the norms of Southern Gothic literature. At the beginning of the novel, Atticus says, "You never really understand anyone a person until you consider things from his point of view until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (8). Lisa Detweiler Miller's research explores performance and disability themes in **To Kill a Mockingbird**. She argues that "to walk around in the skin of the members of Maycomb, Alabama, would mean participating in the community as a disabled individual" (9). The pronoun 'his' may refer to Boo Radley or any character with physical differences. Lee introduces skin as a universal trait, though its expression varies. Nearly every character in the story has a physical or cognitive limitation. In a racially prejudiced community, Colette Guillaumin's definition of race offers important insights into its effects on individuals:

Race is a political and cultural construct that is fundamentally biased, as demonstrated by historical facts. It acts as a social category that enables exclusion and violence, playing a crucial role in numerous oppressive systems of control. The idea of race serves as a tool for enacting violence, and its effectiveness in this role is undeniable. It justifies and organizes the violent domination of powerful social groups over those who are marginalized. (361- 62)

Guillaumin's viewpoints are essential for scholars investigating the detrimental effects of racism on individuals, particularly those of African heritage. This analytical framework is especially pertinent when exploring the experiences of characters within the novel, as it facilitates a more profound comprehension of the relationship between race and disability. Although some characters exhibit instances of empathy towards those with disabilities, the overwhelming societal obstacles that impede genuine acceptance and integration frequently overshadow these acts of kindness. For instance, while certain individuals may express compassion or understanding, their behaviors are often constrained by deep-seated biases and societal conventions that favor able-bodied individuals. This situation presents a paradox where empathy exists but fails to address the structural inequalities faced by marginalized groups. The challenges to fully integrate disabled individuals into society are complex, involving both overt discrimination and subtle biases in social interactions, institutional practices, and cultural narratives. These barriers can lead to isolation and inadequate representation, particularly for those who are both disabled and of African descent. Guillaumin's insights offer a framework for exploring the connections between identity, racism, and ableism, helping readers understand the characters' struggles and the broader implications of their experiences in a society that often neglects diversity. This analysis underscores the need for greater empathy and systemic reforms to tackle the root causes of discrimination and exclusion.

AneGilje examines literary characters in her thesis and notes, "What people overlook when viewing literary characters as either normal or less normal is why we see them as different, alienated or queer, compared to other characters in literary works" (6). This rhetorical method of exploring disability emphasizes the differences between characters, which in turn clarifies Boo's sense of isolation from the larger Maycomb community, a community that values its heritage and social status. Early in the story, Scout observes that

her family's history plays a role in her feelings of hurt pride, noting that "Some family members felt a sense of shame due to the absence of documented ancestors on both sides of the Battle of Hastings" (11). The research emphasizes the intricate and often troubling connection between disability and racial discrimination, highlighting how societal attitudes towards both can intersect in profound ways. In the context of Maycomb, a town characterized by its unique social dynamics and cultural norms, this connection becomes particularly evident. A common trait among many residents of Maycomb is their distinctive way of communicating, which reflects the town's historical and cultural backdrop. The town itself is described as a 'tired old town,' suggesting a sense of stagnation and weariness, yet it is also imbued with a 'vague optimism' that hints at the possibility of change, even amidst its slow pace of life. However, this optimism is not universally shared, as Maycomb exhibits a pronounced preference for those who conform to the traditional mold of white Southerners, both in terms of physical appearance and behavioral expectations. This societal bias creates an environment where individuals who deviate from these norms—whether due to race, disability, or other factors—often find themselves marginalized or ostracized. A prominent example of this dynamic is Mr. Dolphus Raymond, a character who embodies the complexities of this social landscape. As the father of several bi-disabled children, Raymond stands out in Maycomb not only because of his children's disabilities but also due to his own refusal to conform to the rigid societal expectations of the town. Raymond's lifestyle choices and his open acceptance of his children's differences place him at odds with the prevailing attitudes of Maycomb, leading to a sense of alienation for both him and his children. His situation underscores the broader theme of how societal norms can create barriers for those who do not fit neatly into established categories. The bi-disabled children of Mr. Raymond, while deserving of acceptance and understanding, are often subjected to the same prejudices that affect their father. This dual layer of discrimination—rooted in both disability and race—

illustrates the complex interplay of identity and societal acceptance in Maycomb, revealing the challenges faced by those who exist on the margins of this 'tired old town.' In summary, the research sheds light on the ways in which disability and racial discrimination are intertwined in Maycomb, as exemplified by the experiences of Mr. Dolphus Raymond and his children. Their story serves as a poignant reminder of the need for greater empathy and inclusivity in a society that often struggles to embrace diversity in all its forms. This emphasis on race means "colored folks won't have because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em'cause they're colored" (17). Indeed, one can notice this interconnection between racism and disability.

In the novel, Dolphus is portrayed as an alcoholic, reflecting the town's views. This perception deepens as readers see how disability is tied to community identity. After Jem's encounter with Bob Ewell, he suffers a broken arm, which symbolizes his future outlook. As noted, "When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being able to play football were alleviated, he was rarely self-conscious about his injury" (34). The opening paragraph of Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" deftly navigates the intricate themes of accidents and injuries, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of the characters' emotional and physical vulnerabilities. The narrative begins by highlighting the significance of these themes, particularly through the lens of childhood innocence and the harsh realities that accompany it. As the story unfolds, the focus shifts to the character of Boo Radley, whose reclusive nature becomes a focal point during that pivotal first summer. The children's attempts to coax Boo out of his home serve as a metaphor for their own struggles with fear and misunderstanding, reflecting the broader societal issues of isolation and prejudice. In the early chapters, Lee subtly weaves in the consequences of disability, both physical and emotional. The characters are portrayed with a rich complexity that underscores their individual flaws and vulnerabilities. For instance, Jem's arm injury, while temporary, serves as a poignant

reminder of the fragility of youth and the abruptness with which innocence can be shattered. This injury not only limits his summer activities but also symbolizes the broader theme of loss—loss of innocence, loss of safety, and the inevitable transition into a more complicated understanding of the world. The marginalized nature of the characters is a recurring motif throughout the novel. Boo Radley embodies the fear of the unknown, remaining hidden from a society that judges him without understanding. Aunt Alexandra represents the entrenched biases that often accompany social class and race, her prejudices serving as a barrier to empathy and connection. Meanwhile, Scout, with her youthful naivety, grapples with the complexities of human behavior and societal expectations, often suppressing her own emotions and identity in the process. This suppression is indicative of the broader societal pressures that dictate how individuals should behave, particularly in the context of race and class. As the narrative progresses, the characters undergo significant transformations, learning vital life lessons that contribute to their growth and maturity. Boo Radley's evolution is particularly striking; he confronts his fears and ultimately emerges as a figure of compassion and connection. His journey from isolation to engagement with the world around him serves as a powerful testament to the potential for change and understanding, even in the face of deep-seated fears and societal prejudices. Through these character arcs, Lee masterfully illustrates the complexities of human experience, emphasizing that growth often comes from confronting one's vulnerabilities and embracing the connections that bind us all.

At the foundation of this thesis lies the imperative to connect the themes of gore and the grotesque with concepts of disability and deformation. This connection is particularly salient in the context of Southern Gothic literature, where physical abnormalities and societal perceptions of them often serve as a lens through which deeper themes of fear, isolation, and humanity are explored. Numerous characters are depicted as villainous and malevolent due to their misinterpretation or significant physical deformities, which raises critical questions

about the nature of monstrosity and the societal constructs that define it. Boo Radley exemplifies this archetype of the Southern Gothic recluse, a character whose very existence is shrouded in mystery and fear. As a sinister figure, the very notion of Boo Radley becomes distorted into the grotesque, reflecting the community's tendency to demonize what it does not understand. The narrator notes, "In the town, Boo is a folktale. He mutilated people's chickens, and the Radley House had a pecan tree with nuts that could kill all ideas that made the Radley House unapproachable" (20). This description encapsulates the transformation of Boo from a real person into a mythic figure of horror, illustrating how societal narratives can warp perceptions of individuals who are different or disabled. The grotesque nature of these tales serves to reinforce the boundaries between the 'normal' and the 'other,' creating a chasm that isolates Boo from the community. However, throughout the novel, Scout reflects on the impression Boo leaves on her, revealing a more nuanced understanding of his character. As she navigates her childhood fears and the stories spun by the townspeople, she begins to see Boo not as a monster, but as a complex individual shaped by his circumstances. Her evolving perception is particularly evident during his visits to her home to check on Jem, moments that starkly contrast with the years of tales and games spun by the neighbors. These interactions allow Scout to peel back the layers of myth surrounding Boo, revealing his humanity and the profound loneliness that accompanies his existence. In this way, the narrative challenges the reader to reconsider the implications of deformity and disability, urging a shift from a perspective of fear and revulsion to one of empathy and understanding. Boo's character serves as a poignant reminder of the dangers of labeling individuals based on superficial traits, and the importance of looking beyond the grotesque exterior to uncover the shared human experiences that bind us all. Through Scout's journey of discovery, the novel ultimately advocates for a more compassionate view of those who are marginalized, suggesting that.

The primary theme of **To Kill a Mockingbird** is tolerance, highlighted by Atticus's

language and perspective, which contrast with Maycomb's dominant attitudes. A lighthearted moment occurs when Scout meets Boo Radley after Jem's accident, noting, "If Atticus could calmly introduce me to Boo Radley at a time like this, well, that was Atticus" (74). Atticus, despite being an excellent marksman, struggles with significant vision impairment and is perceived as 'feeble' due to his age and inability to play football with other fathers. This perception is intensified by his role as a father, requiring him to mature quickly for his brother Jack's education. A pivotal moment arises when Atticus uses his limited vision to shoot a rabid dog, earning the nickname 'one shot Finch' and alleviating the community's fear of the unknown. Atticus serves as a symbol of disability, and his madness ultimately culminates in his demise. As the townspeople prepare to take action against the rabid dog, this situation highlights the most critical form of disability present in the scene as, "the mockingbirds were silent" (25). This instance of disability is curious when we relate it to what we already know about the novel's other characters. Atticus's disability does not hinder his ability to work as a lawyer, nor does it hinder his ability to father children. In examining his privilege, you could argue his disability would affect him more if he were black or a woman.

In fact, Calpurnia's first character description noted in difference features and facets of her body shaming as, "Calpurnia was something else again. She was all angles and bones; she was near sighted; she squinted..." (45). The text highlights one of Calpurnia's immediate limitations, specifically her impaired vision, which serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges she faces in her daily life. In this particular paragraph, the focus is solely on her disability, with no mention of her race, suggesting that her visual impairment is a significant aspect of her identity that warrants attention. Although her eyesight does not play a central role in her overall characterization throughout the novel, it is introduced early on as an important detail for the reader to consider, hinting at the broader themes of limitation and resilience. Similarly, another female character who embodies the theme of disability is Mrs.

Dubose. Her struggle with addiction and her determination to overcome it, despite her physical and mental challenges, adds depth to the narrative and illustrates the complexities of human strength in the face of adversity. Both Calpurnia and Mrs. Dubose represent different facets of struggle, yet their disabilities serve to highlight their resilience and the societal perceptions surrounding them. In contrast, the character of Tom Robinson shares a different kind of social exclusion within the Maycomb community, paralleling Boo Radley in terms of marginalization. Tom's physical disability, specifically his injured arm, is a recurring motif throughout the trial, underscoring the additional barriers he faces. Unlike Calpurnia and Mrs. Dubose, whose disabilities are more personal and internal, Tom's injury is a visible reminder of the systemic injustices he endures. His arm injury complicates his ability to perform everyday tasks and significantly impacts his capacity to compete with his peers in the workforce, further entrenching him in a cycle of disadvantage. While both Boo and Tom are subjected to societal prejudice and face unjust accusations, the nature of their disabilities diverges significantly. Boo's social isolation stems from his reclusive nature and the community's misconceptions about him, while Tom's physical impairment is intertwined with the racial injustices that permeate the narrative. This distinction highlights the multifaceted nature of disability and marginalization, illustrating how different forms of exclusion can manifest in a society rife with prejudice. Ultimately, the exploration of these characters' disabilities serves to deepen the reader's understanding of the broader themes of empathy, injustice, and the human condition within the context of the novel. Tom effortlessly moves through the black community, but he faces challenges when he enters predominantly white spaces. On the other hand, Boo struggles to communicate in the way that Maycomb expects, which hinders his ability to connect with the broader society and leads to his isolation in the Radley House. Even at the end of the novel, despite being happy that Boo has saved Jem, Atticus and Heck Tate have to save Boo from what would be a prison sentence, insisting,

"Bob Ewell fell on his knife" (18). Boo returns to his home which is not much different from the prison he would have ended up in had Heck Tate and Atticus not shown Boo mercy. Boo is also understood as a character that needs protection. These two men, in deciding Mr. Ewell's fate, also seal the fate of Boo. Heck Tate wants to, "let the dead bury the dead" (27). Avoiding the creation of Boo as a scapegoat, Tate creates Boo as the hero. Though only eight, Scout understands that getting Boo in trouble for saving her life is "sort of like shooting a mockingbird" (55). Boo Radley's narrative helps one understand him as a fragile and meek presence despite the original fear and hesitation of the children to know him.

In the novel **To Kill a Mockingbird**, the themes of prejudice and discrimination are intricately woven into the fabric of Maycomb, Alabama, a town steeped in tradition and social hierarchy. The narrative reveals how an individual's worth is often determined by superficial markers such as family lineage and educational attainment, rather than their intrinsic character or moral integrity. This societal critique is particularly poignant when examining the racial dynamics that permeate the community. Scout Finch, the young protagonist, serves as a lens through which readers can explore the complexities of Maycomb's social structure. Her observations provide a nuanced understanding of the entrenched prejudices that dictate interactions among the town's residents. As she reflects on her childhood experiences, Scout notes the existence of a rigid caste system that governs social relations. She articulates this observation with a keen awareness of the predictability that characterizes the behaviors and attitudes of the town's older citizens. Her statement, "There was indeed a caste system in Maycomb, but to my mind it worked this way: the older citizens, the present generation who had lived side by side for years and years, were utterly predictable to one another: they took for granted attitudes, character shading, and even gestures, as having been repeated in each generation and refined by time," underscores the cyclical nature of prejudice. Scout's insight reveals how deeply ingrained social norms

perpetuate discrimination, as the older generation's attitudes are passed down to the younger ones, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of bias. The predictability she describes suggests a community that is resistant to change, where individuals are often judged not by their actions or beliefs but by the legacy of their family name. This is particularly evident in the treatment of characters like Tom Robinson, whose worth is overshadowed by the color of his skin, and Boo Radley, who is marginalized due to the stigma surrounding his reclusive nature. Moreover, Scout's reflections highlight the limitations of literacy and education as measures of value in a society that prioritizes social status over moral character. The novel critiques the notion that education alone can dismantle prejudice, as it is the deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs of the community that ultimately shape perceptions and interactions. Through Scout's eyes, readers witness the painful realities of discrimination and the urgent need for empathy and understanding in the face of societal norms that devalue individuals based on arbitrary criteria. In conclusion, *To Kill a Mockingbird* serves as a powerful exploration of prejudice and discrimination, with Maycomb's social hierarchy acting as a microcosm of broader societal issues. Scout. This is Maycomb's usual disease, a tradition that seems eternal and makes it nearly impossible for an outsider to ever find themselves back inside" (32). He is not utterly predictable; he has not lived side by side with anyone, nor has he been understood by the older generation, the people at the top of the caste system. If Scout recalls the caste system of her childhood as an adult, does this mean the caste system hasn't disappeared or changed? It means Boo must hide in order to be forgotten, and if he is forgotten, he is not bothered and less feared.

In American society, African Americans with disabilities encounter a complex web of challenges that are deeply rooted in the historical and systemic discrimination faced by Black individuals. This intersection of race and disability creates a unique set of obstacles that are often overlooked in broader discussions about social justice and equality. The novel in

question powerfully illustrates these challenges, providing a poignant commentary on the pervasive prejudice and discrimination that African Americans endure, not only because of their race but also due to their disabilities. Through the experiences of the characters Scout, Jem, and Dill, the narrative delves into the nuanced realities of life for African Americans with disabilities. Their interactions serve as a lens through which readers can examine the multifaceted nature of discrimination. For instance, the innocence of childhood is juxtaposed with the harsh realities of societal bias, revealing how deeply ingrained stereotypes and prejudices can shape perceptions and treatment of individuals who are both Black and disabled. The novel highlights specific instances where the characters confront or witness acts of discrimination, illustrating how societal attitudes can marginalize those who are already vulnerable. The experiences of disabled individuals are often compounded by racial bias, leading to a double burden that can manifest in various forms, including social exclusion, limited access to resources, and systemic inequities in education and healthcare. Moreover, the narrative emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding in overcoming these challenges. As Scout, Jem, and Dill navigate their world, they are confronted with the realities of injustice and inequality, prompting them to question the status quo and reflect on their own beliefs and behaviors. This journey of self-discovery not only enriches their characters but also serves as a call to action for readers to recognize and challenge the prejudices that persist in society. In conclusion, the novel serves as a powerful exploration of the intersectionality of race and disability, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by African Americans with disabilities. By weaving together the experiences of its characters, the narrative invites readers to engage with these critical issues, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of discrimination and the importance of advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society.

As mentioned earlier, Tom Robinson has a physical disability, specifically a significant impairment in his left arm, which is a crucial detail that is referenced multiple times throughout the trial. This disability not only serves as a pivotal aspect of his character but also plays a critical role in the narrative surrounding the accusations against him. Tom's arm impairment, the result of a childhood accident, severely limits his ability to perform tasks that require the use of both arms, making it particularly challenging for him to engage in manual labor, which is often the only type of employment available to him as a Black man in the racially segregated South. The repeated mention of Tom's arm during the trial underscores the prejudice he faces, as the prosecution attempts to manipulate the narrative to suggest that his disability somehow makes him more capable of committing the crime he is accused of. This manipulation highlights the intersection of race and disability, illustrating how societal biases can distort perceptions of individuals who are already marginalized. Tom's struggle is not just with the legal system but also with the everyday realities of living with a disability in a society that often overlooks or devalues those who are different. In contrast, Boo Radley, another marginalized figure in the story, faces a different kind of disability social isolation and the stigma associated with his reclusive lifestyle. While Boo does not have a physical impairment like Tom, he is nonetheless subjected to societal prejudice and misunderstanding. Both characters are victims of false accusations and societal judgment, yet their experiences reflect different facets of marginalization. Boo's disability is rooted in his inability to navigate the social world, leading to a life of seclusion and the development of a mythic reputation that further alienates him from the community. Tom's experience within the Black community offers him a sense of belonging and support, as he is surrounded by individuals who understand the systemic challenges he faces. However, when he enters predominantly white spaces, he encounters a starkly different reality. The racial dynamics of the time create an environment where he is not only judged for his race but also for his disability. This dual

marginalization complicates his interactions and amplifies the obstacles he must overcome. In predominantly white spaces, Tom is often met with suspicion and hostility, and his disability becomes a further point of contention, as it is used against him to reinforce stereotypes and justify the prejudices held by those in power. Ultimately, both Tom Robinson and Boo Radley serve as poignant representations of the ways in which society marginalizes individuals based on race and disability. Their stories highlight the complexities of identity and the profound impact of societal.

The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* poignantly highlights the struggles faced by disabled African American individuals, who are often subjected to systemic prejudice and discrimination. Through the eyes of the young protagonists Scout, Jem, and Dill the narrative unfolds as a coming-of-age story that intricately weaves their experiences with the harsh realities of their society. As they navigate their childhood in the racially charged environment of Maycomb, Alabama, they gradually become aware of the deeply ingrained attitudes that white individuals hold towards black people, as well as the inherent innocence and humanity of those who are marginalized. The theme of transitioning from innocence to experience is central to the novel, serving as a lens through which the characters' growth is examined. Over a relatively short span of three years, Jem and Scout undergo significant transformations, evolving from innocent children into more discerning individuals. Their playful interactions and imaginative games initially shield them from the complexities of the world around them, but as they engage with the adults in their lives, they begin to confront the uncomfortable truths of their society. The conversations they have with their father, Atticus Finch, serve as critical moments of revelation. Initially, Scout and Jem possess a simplistic understanding of morality, viewing the world in black and white. However, as they witness the injustices faced by their black neighbors, particularly during the trial of Tom Robinson, they start to grapple with the nuanced realities of human nature.

This journey is marked by a growing awareness of the coexistence of good and evil within individuals, regardless of their race. As the children confront the stark realities of prejudice, hatred, and violence, they are compelled to reflect critically on the societal challenges that permeate their community. The novel uses their initial innocence as a powerful framework to scrutinize the moral failings of Maycomb, exposing the deep-seated racism and social inequities that define the town. Through their eyes, readers are invited to witness the painful awakening to the complexities of human behavior and the societal structures that perpetuate injustice. Ultimately, *To Kill a Mockingbird* not only chronicles the maturation of Scout and Jem but also serves as a broader commentary on the moral landscape of America during the 1930s. Their journey from innocence to experience is emblematic of the struggle to understand and confront the prejudices that exist within society, making the novel a timeless exploration of empathy, justice, and the human condition. The following excerpt exemplifies this idea:

When Atticus handed us our air rifles, he decided against teaching us how to shoot. Instead, Uncle Jack offered us some fundamental guidance, mentioning that Atticus wasn't very keen on guns. One day, Atticus said to Jem, "I'd rather you aimed at tin cans in the backyard, but I understand your fascination with birds. You can shoot as many blue jays as you want, as long as you can hit them, Jem, but keep in mind that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird. (99)

In this passage, the mockingbird serves as a powerful symbol of purity and innocence, embodying the idea that certain beings, whether they are animals or people, exist in a state of vulnerability and goodness that should be cherished and protected. The mockingbird, with its beautiful song and gentle nature, represents those who do no harm and contribute positively to the world around them. However, just as hunters may pursue these innocent creatures for sport, often without a second thought, society frequently overlooks the value of innocence

and may even inflict harm upon those who embody it. This disregard for the innocent can manifest in various forms, from bullying and discrimination to systemic injustices that target the vulnerable. Atticus Finch, as a moral compass in the narrative, passionately advocates for the protection of innocence, recognizing that it is a precious quality that must be safeguarded. He teaches his children, Scout and Jem, the importance of empathy and understanding, urging them to see the world through the eyes of others. By encouraging them to avoid harming mockingbirds both in the literal sense of protecting the birds and in the metaphorical sense of safeguarding the innocent. Atticus instills in them a deep sense of responsibility and moral integrity. He emphasizes that every action has consequences, and that the harm inflicted upon the innocent can have far-reaching repercussions, not only for the victims but for society as a whole. Through this lens, the mockingbird becomes a poignant reminder of the fragility of innocence and the ethical obligation to protect it. Atticus's teachings resonate beyond the confines of their small town, serving as a universal call to recognize and defend the vulnerable in our communities. In doing so, he highlights the importance of compassion and the need to confront the darker aspects of human nature that seek to exploit or harm those who are defenseless. Ultimately, the mockingbird symbolizes the beauty of innocence and the moral imperative to nurture and defend it against the harsh realities of the world.

Throughout the trial, Jem is filled with unshakeable confidence that his father, Atticus, will prevail. His excitement and certainty about Tom's outcome are evident when he asks, "We've won, haven't we?" (34). Atticus responds, "I've no idea" (34). However, he has a clear grasp of the reality. Atticus knows that, despite his hard work, the chances of losing the case are significant. He understands that the jury is unlikely to acquit a black man accused of raping a white woman, no matter how strong the evidence is that points to his innocence.

Racism is deeply rooted in society, manifesting in various forms and affecting numerous aspects of life, including the justice system, which often perpetuates systemic

inequalities. This unfair treatment of Black individuals is not merely a historical artifact but a persistent reality that shapes the experiences of marginalized communities. In this context, a vital lesson that children learn is that life does not promise equality for all; rather, it often reflects a harsh and unyielding reality where biases and prejudices dictate the treatment of individuals based on the color of their skin. Atticus Finch, the father figure in this narrative, serves as a model of true courage and self-respect. He embodies the principles of justice, empathy, and moral integrity, demonstrating that these qualities are essential not only for personal growth but also for fostering harmonious coexistence within a diverse society. Atticus teaches his children, Scout and Jem, that standing up for what is right, even in the face of overwhelming opposition, is a hallmark of true bravery. His unwavering commitment to justice, despite the societal pressures and prejudices surrounding him, illustrates the importance of maintaining one's integrity and moral compass in a world rife with injustice. Through the trial of Tom Robinson, the children begin to grapple with the complexities of justice and injustice. They witness firsthand the stark contrast between the ideals of fairness and the reality of a biased legal system that fails to protect the innocent. The trial serves as a pivotal moment in their understanding of the world, as they confront the uncomfortable truths about racism, inequality, and the often arbitrary nature of justice. This experience forces them to question the values they have been taught and to recognize the pervasive influence of societal prejudices. Moreover, the children remain oblivious to the deeper meaning of the mockingbird, a symbol of innocence and the idea that it is a sin to harm those who do no wrong. The mockingbird represents individuals like Tom Robinson, who, despite their goodness and vulnerability, become victims of societal cruelty and injustice. As Scout and Jem navigate their understanding of morality and ethics, they are yet to fully grasp the significance of this symbol, which encapsulates the broader themes of innocence lost and the moral imperative to protect those who cannot protect themselves. In essence, the narrative

serves as a poignant exploration of the intersection of racism, justice, and moral integrity, highlighting the critical lessons that children must learn as they come of age in a world that often falls short of its ideals. Through the guidance of Atticus and the experiences surrounding the trial, they begin to form a foundation for their own beliefs.

They view it merely as a bird, but their father teaches them it's a harmless creature that sings for people's enjoyment. Unfortunately, white individuals take their lives without reason. Atticus, older than the other parents, sometimes embarrasses Scout and Jem with his intellect. When he gave them air rifles for Christmas, he chose not to teach them to shoot, emphasizing that they should never aim at mockingbirds, as harming them is a sin. Miss Atkinson explains:

All mockingbird do is sing and create beauty and pleasure. So it is a sin to hurt them.

The advice given by the father to children shows the innocence of the children as it is written that was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it. 'Your father's right' she said, Mockingbird don not do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird. (100)

Atticus teaches Jem and Scout that it is ethically wrong to kill a mockingbird, as these birds cause no harm and only offer lovely melodies. This lesson emphasizes the significance of safeguarding the innocent. In this context, the mockingbird symbolizes African Americans, who have historically endured oppression from white society.

A significant theme that Harper Lee delves into is the isolation faced by individuals with disabilities, as exemplified by the character of Boo Radley. At the novel's outset, Scout remarks, "The Radleys kept to themselves, a predilection unforgivable in Maycomb" (14). This notion that solitude is deemed unacceptable highlights the prejudice Boo endures due to

his mental health struggles. Lee uses Boo's character to demonstrate the challenges he encounters in connecting with the broader community. As the narrative progresses, Boo eventually reveals himself, leading Scout to develop a deeper understanding of him, particularly after he looks after Jem. Scout reflects, "The Radley's place had ceased to terrify me, but it was no less gloomy" (247). It reflects her development as she transcends her initial fears and misunderstandings regarding Boo Radley, a character who represents the intricacies of human nature and societal judgment. At first, she perceives Boo through the prism of childhood legends and the unsettling stories circulated by the townspeople, which depict him as a terrifying figure hiding in the shadows of his residence. However, as the story progresses, her viewpoint undergoes a significant transformation. She starts to recognize Boo not as an object of fear, but as an individual with his own challenges, feelings, and humanity. This emerging awareness sharply contrasts with the enduring darkness she associates with his home, which symbolizes the societal stigma that envelops him. It implies a more profound commentary on society's frequent failure to embrace those who are different, especially individuals who do not adhere to its standards or who carry the burden of disabilities. Despite Boo's attempts to engage with the children, his efforts are met with misunderstanding and trepidation, underscoring the tragic reality of his marginalization. His disability, which distinguishes him from the rest of the community, further intensifies this alienation.

The narrative events emphasize a strong adherence to moral principles, particularly Boo's readiness to advocate for what he believes is right, even at personal risk. His actions reveal a deep sense of integrity and compassion, illustrating that genuine courage often resides in subtle acts of kindness and protection rather than in grand displays. In a broader societal context, the narrative echoes the ongoing struggle against racial discrimination, which requires a holistic approach to address all forms of racial bias. The fight against racism extends beyond confronting overt acts of prejudice; it also involves dismantling the systemic

frameworks that sustain inequality. To effectively challenge racism, it is essential to confront and eradicate the biases faced by individuals of diverse skin colors. The idea of colorblindness can be likened to Ralph Waldo Emerson's concept of the 'transparent eyeball,' which symbolizes a perspective that transcends superficial differences. By adopting this outlook, individuals can recognize and appreciate the essential qualities and strengths of others, treating everyone as equals regardless of their racial backgrounds. In this context, Lee Brown's assertion that those with 'transparent vision' are metaphorically unaware of physical differences reinforces the notion that true understanding and acceptance come from looking beyond external appearances. Brown states, "The pupils of the saints are made transparent and they can see the uncreated light directly and with a sight which reveals in essence" (187). This quote captures the essence of this perspective, suggesting that a deeper and more meaningful connection can be formed when we focus on the inherent value of each person rather than their outward traits.

Jem's ethical choices and the broader dialogue about colorblindness converge on a fundamental principle: to create a more just society, we must recognize our shared humanity and commit to treating one another with respect and dignity, irrespective of race. Advocates of colorblindness argue that treating individuals equally, especially those from diverse racial backgrounds, contributes to a fairer society. In such a society, discrimination and its consequences like segregation, injustice, and bias—would be eliminated, as it does not make distinctions based on the various skin tones of its members. T. J. Wise, in his examination of colorblindness, asserts that "The racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. It focuses on commonalities between people, such as their shared humanity" (66). Therefore, the idea of colorblindness can be an effective approach to addressing racism, discrimination,

injustice, and prejudice, as it encourages the notion of viewing individuals without regard to their racial differences.

The story of the novel highlights the impact of insults on individuals' well-being through the character of Atticus Finch. Serving as a moral guide in a community rife with prejudice, Atticus's unwavering belief in Tom Robinson's innocence puts him at odds with the prevailing attitudes of his society. When he faces ridicule from two men for defending Tom, Atticus discusses his feelings with his children, Jem and Scout, expressing a deep frustration with human nature: "There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads they couldn't be fair if they tried" (238). This statement reflects Atticus's understanding that people often become ensnared by their own biases and limited perspectives, which obstruct their ability to recognize the truth or act justly. This theme of limited understanding resonates throughout the novel, especially in Lee's exploration of the stigmatization of disability.

People who deviate from societal norms, such as Tom Robinson, often find themselves misinterpreted and marginalized due to a widespread unwillingness to embrace diversity and difference. This reluctance to accept those who do not conform to established societal expectations can lead to significant injustices and a lack of understanding. Tom's unfair trial serves as a poignant symbol of a broader societal failure to recognize and honor his identity as a disabled African American man. His experiences highlight the intersectionality of race and disability, illustrating how these factors can compound discrimination and prejudice. The systemic biases present in the legal system and the community at large contribute to his tragic fate, as he becomes a victim of a society that refuses to see him as a fully realized human being deserving of dignity and respect. In stark contrast to the prevailing attitudes of his community, Atticus Finch emerges as a rare individual who actively seeks to comprehend Tom's humanity and the complexities of his

situation. Atticus represents a moral compass in a world rife with prejudice and ignorance. He recognizes that Tom's disability and race do not define his worth or character; rather, they are just aspects of a multifaceted individual who deserves empathy and justice. Through his defense of Tom, Atticus challenges the deeply ingrained biases of his society, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of humanity that transcends superficial differences. His commitment to justice and equality serves as a powerful counter-narrative to the marginalization faced by individuals like Tom, illustrating the importance of compassion and the need to confront societal norms that perpetuate discrimination. Ultimately, the contrast between Tom's tragic experience and Atticus's principled stance underscores the critical need for greater acceptance of diversity and the recognition of the inherent value of every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances. However, this empathy comes at a cost; Atticus himself becomes a target of societal scorn, as his compassion is perceived as a betrayal of the entrenched values held by many in his community. Atticus further articulates his disdain for the exploitation of marginalized individuals when he states, "There is nothing more sickening than a low-grade white man who'll take advantage of a Negro's ignorance" (252). In this powerful critique, Atticus challenges the entrenched belief among many white individuals that African Americans are inherently inferior and easily manipulated. His willingness to confront and dismantle these stereotypes not only highlights his moral integrity but also reveals the disdain he faces from those who cling to outdated and harmful ideologies. In this context, societal norms often serve as obstacles that cloud rational thought, allowing myths and unfounded beliefs to flourish unchecked.

The pervasive stigma surrounding disability and race creates an environment where empathy is frequently resisted, and ignorance often eclipses understanding. This societal backdrop not only hinders meaningful dialogue but also perpetuates cycles of discrimination and misunderstanding. In such a climate, individuals who face the dual challenges of

disability and racial prejudice often find themselves marginalized, their voices drowned out by the louder narratives of those who conform to societal norms. Through the character of Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," the author powerfully illustrates the struggle against these deeply entrenched societal issues. Atticus embodies the principles of empathy and moral integrity, standing as a beacon of hope in a world rife with prejudice. His unwavering commitment to justice and equality serves as a counter-narrative to the ignorance that permeates his community. By defending Tom Robinson, a Black man unjustly accused of raping a white woman, Atticus confronts the racial biases that cloud the judgment of those around him. His actions challenge the status quo and highlight the necessity of compassion in the face of systemic injustice. Moreover, Atticus's interactions with his children, Scout and Jem, further emphasize the importance of understanding and empathy. He teaches them to see the world through the eyes of others, encouraging them to recognize the humanity in everyone, regardless of their race or circumstances. This lesson is particularly poignant in a society that often dehumanizes those who are different. Atticus's moral courage in advocating for the marginalized serves as a powerful reminder of the impact one individual can have in the fight against societal injustices. Lee's portrayal of Atticus Finch underscores the idea that compassion is not merely a passive sentiment but an active force that requires courage and resilience. In a world where ignorance often prevails, Atticus's character challenges readers to confront their own biases and to engage in the difficult work of fostering understanding and acceptance. His struggle against the stigma surrounding race and disability is a call to action, urging individuals to rise above societal prejudices and to champion the cause of justice for all. In conclusion, the themes of empathy, compassion, and moral courage woven throughout Atticus Finch's character serve as a powerful critique of the societal issues surrounding disability and race. Lee's narrative compels us to reflect on our own roles in combating ignorance and stigma, reminding us that the fight for justice is not only a collective

responsibility but also a deeply personal journey that requires unwavering commitment and courage. Atticus remarks that "when a white man's word is set against a black man's, the white man always prevails" (295). As Jem becomes increasingly aware of the entrenched racism in Maycomb, particularly regarding Tom's case, he is deeply affected: "It was Jem's turn to cry. His face was streaked with angry tears as we made our way through the jubilant crowd. 'It ain't right,' he muttered" (296). This moment underscores Jem's realization of the community's bias, as he empathizes with Tom's plight. His distress stems from the jury's decision to convict Tom despite clear evidence of his innocence. Although the jury takes some time to deliberate, racism ultimately triumphs. Jem appears especially frustrated by the absence of common sense and the unwillingness to acknowledge the truth.

At first, Jem had an inflated view of Boo Radley, imagining him as "six-and-a-half feet tall, devouring raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, which is why his hands were bloodstained" (16). In reality, Boo is nothing like Jem's fantasy; he is a kind and gentle person. Unfortunately, because of the deep-seated biases in Maycomb, he is wrongly labeled as a monster and has become nearly a recluse.

As Jem matures, he gains a deeper insight into Boo Radley's decision to stay inside: "I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo Radley has remained shut up in the house all this time. It's because he wants to" (304). With his development, Jem's viewpoint evolves as he realizes that his earlier beliefs were influenced by prejudice. He learns the significance of empathizing with Boo, taking into account the story he has been told. Jem comes to recognize that Boo had the chance to leave his home long ago but chose to stay inside, likely due to the discrimination he would face. As Jem continues to grow, he becomes increasingly aware of the widespread racism and bias in Maycomb, and he starts to think he knows what is best for others. He learns to empathize with people, judging them not just by their appearances but also by their actions. In a similar vein, Scout reaches a stage where she can finally picture

Boo's life, acknowledging him as a fully realized human being. This newfound understanding prompts Scout to embrace her father's advice to foster sympathy and compassion, demonstrating that her experiences with hatred and prejudice will not undermine her faith in the fundamental goodness of humanity.

In Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," the character of Boo Radley serves as a pivotal figure in the lives of Scout and Jem Finch, captivating their imaginations and ultimately revealing the complexities of human nature. Initially perceived as a reclusive and frightening figure, Boo becomes a symbol of the unknown, embodying the children's fears and curiosities. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Boo is not the monster they imagined, but rather a deeply misunderstood individual who watches over them from a distance. His eventual act of heroism saving Scout and Jem from an attack serves as a powerful testament to his true character, illustrating that appearances can be deceiving and that kindness can emerge from the most unexpected places. Through Boo, the children learn valuable lessons about empathy, compassion, and the importance of looking beyond societal labels. In stark contrast, Tom Robinson's story is one of profound tragedy and injustice. As a Black man wrongfully accused of raping a white woman, Tom becomes a victim of the deeply entrenched racial prejudices that permeate the society of Maycomb, Alabama. His trial and subsequent fate expose the children to the harsh realities of racism and inequality, forcing them to confront the darker elements of their community. Tom's plight serves as a critical turning point in Scout and Jem's understanding of morality and justice, highlighting the systemic injustices that can lead to the loss of innocent lives. Through Tom's experience, the children grapple with the complexities of human behavior and the societal structures that perpetuate discrimination and hatred. Guided by their father, Atticus Finch, the children navigate these challenging lessons with a moral compass that emphasizes integrity, empathy, and the pursuit of justice. Atticus serves as a role model, teaching Scout and Jem to stand up

for what is right, even in the face of overwhelming opposition. His unwavering commitment to defending Tom Robinson, despite the backlash from the community, instills in the children a sense of responsibility to challenge injustice and advocate for those who cannot defend themselves. As Scout and Jem gradually learn about the lives of Boo Radley and Tom Robinson, they begin to develop a deeper awareness of the social and racial biases that exist in their world. Their experiences with these two men serve as catalysts for their moral growth, prompting them to question the prejudices that surround them and to cultivate a sense of empathy for those who are marginalized. Ultimately, the stories of Boo and Tom intertwine to illustrate the complexities of human nature, the impact of societal norms, and the importance of understanding and compassion in the

The characters' genuine and often confused reactions emphasize their personal growth and prompt readers to consider the moral implications of the novel's events. Historically, individuals with darker skin, particularly African Americans, have faced racial injustice. Following the abolition of slavery, it appeared that progress toward equality was possible, but instead, Whites enforced segregation and Jim Crow Laws, which falsely acknowledged Black equality while ensuring their sep

The Jim Crow Laws aimed to enforce separate but supposedly equal facilities for Black individuals, but they ultimately led to second-class citizenship and the denial of basic human rights. Black individuals faced mistreatment, lynching, segregation, and racial injustice, often labeled as inferior by society. Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird**, set in the 1930s but published in 1960, explores these themes by fictionalizing the Scottsboro Trial to highlight racial inequality. Through the perspective of young Scout and her family, Lee promotes a colorblind approach to race and advocates for peaceful coexistence, emphasizing the importance of respect and kindness rooted in shared humanity.

Prejudice and discrimination reflects as form of criminality in western societies.

According to George M. Fredrickson:

The term 'racism' is often used in a loose and un-reflective way to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or 'people' toward nether and the actions resulting from such attitudes. In fact, enslaving the Blacks instead of the Whites as their servants was at the root of white supremacist attitudes and policies to internalize inferiority over Blacks, especially African Americans. (403)

In this context, a belief developed among White individuals that "human races were not only distinct from one another, but that some were inherently superior to others" (Fredrickson 403). A major challenge faced by Black individuals is the prevalence of discrimination and prejudice, which results in systemic injustices against them. As highlighted in Brewer and Brown's Handbook of Social Psychology (1998), "Prejudice is an attitude directed toward people because they are members of a specific social group" (11). Furthermore, D. W. Sue, in his book *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation*, defines discrimination as "the act of treating people differently from others based primarily on their membership in a social group" (12). Throughout history, African Americans have faced systemic bias and discrimination, rooted in a complex past that dates back to slavery and continues to manifest in various ways today. This bias is often exacerbated by the historical label of "Negro," which has been used to categorize and dehumanize Black individuals, stripping away their individuality and humanity. The perception of Black communities has frequently been shaped by a prejudiced viewpoint, leading to widespread stereotypes that portray African Americans as less civilized, savage, or inferior to their White counterparts. These negative perceptions are deeply embedded in the dominant attitudes of White societies, which have historically wielded power and influence over social, economic, and political systems. The portrayal of Black individuals as dangerous or threatening has been a recurring theme in media, literature,

and public discourse, perpetuating harmful stereotypes that contribute to a culture of fear and misunderstanding.

This narrative has justified segregation and discrimination, claiming to protect White individuals from perceived threats from Black communities. The resulting bias has far-reaching effects on African Americans, impacting their access to education, employment, housing, and healthcare. The legacy of segregation and systemic racism creates significant barriers that shape the socio-economic conditions of Black individuals and communities. Additionally, these stereotypes foster distrust and division, hindering social unity and equality. Recent movements for racial justice aim to challenge these prejudices and promote a deeper understanding of Black identity and culture by highlighting African Americans' contributions to society. Ultimately, addressing prejudice and discrimination requires a collective effort to change attitudes that uphold inequality, fostering a society that values the dignity of all individuals, regardless of race.

Research on race and racism began in the early 20th century, with W. E. B. Du Bois as a key figure. His work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, aimed to combat racism and rejected racial superiority. In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, children learn vital life lessons through experiences rather than formal education. Scout's teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, prioritizes a rigid curriculum over individual needs, even forbidding Scout from reading with her father. Ultimately, an individual's motivation is the most important factor in the pursuit of knowledge. Calpurnia tells Scout that true learning requires a genuine desire; without motivation, individuals can only conform to others' views. Jem and Scout's ability to empathize, or "step into someone else's shoes," is a key trait. Jem's emotional intelligence is evident when he stops Scout from confronting Walter Cunningham and invites him to lunch, showing his understanding of Walter's struggles.

Walter is invited to dinner because Jem recognizes his need for a proper meal. Scout begins to develop empathy when Calpurnia explains the Cunningham family's struggles. As events unfold with Walter, both Jem and Scout learn to see the world from his perspective, deepening their empathy. This theme also applies to Tom, who, despite his hardships, is determined to create a better future for himself. Here hardship makes Jem life and other life full of conscience. Linda Anderson talks about such experiences in her book *The*

Autobiography:

The past, then, lying dormant or latent within the subject, seems to come from outside their lived experience as a momentous and violent shock, causing them retrospectively to recast their sense of themselves and the life they have led. History is never definitive or finally known, therefore, but is capable of constant alteration as more is remembered or released into consciousness, causing the subject to think both the past and the present differently. (61)

The previous lines demonstrate how individuals achieve maturity through their experiences, particularly highlighted at the end of the novel. By this point, most characters have gained a deep understanding of the events unfolding around them and the reasons behind them. The narrator remarks, "As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it . . . Whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash" (117). These remarks emphasize that maturity is shaped by personal experiences.

At the end of the novel, after Bob Ewell attacks Scout and Jem, Boo Radley intervenes and fatally injures Bob. Atticus and Sheriff Heck Tate discuss how to handle the situation while Scout walks Boo home. Atticus believes Jem is responsible for Bob's death and thinks Heck plans to cover it up to protect Jem, which he opposes to maintain honesty

with his children. Conversely, Heck knows Boo killed Bob to defend the kids and wants to keep this hidden to protect Boo, expecting the community to see him as a hero, despite Boo's desire for privacy. Ultimately, Atticus realizes that concealing Boo's role is the better choice.

Atticus Finch serves to deepen the readers' understanding of his character and the motivations that drive him throughout Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird." Atticus is portrayed as a man of unwavering principles, a steadfast advocate for law and justice, yet his commitment to his children transcends even his dedication to these ideals. This internal conflict reveals the complexity of his character; he grapples with the implications of his actions not just in a legal sense, but in a moral and familial context. Atticus is not particularly troubled by the potential ethical or legal ramifications of concealing Jem's involvement in the incident with Boo Radley. Instead, his primary concern lies in the potential damage to his relationship with his children. He understands that allowing Jem to believe he is held to a different standard than others would undermine the very values he strives to instill in them. Atticus's sense of responsibility extends beyond his immediate family; he feels a profound obligation to Boo Radley as well. He recognizes that exposing Boo to public scrutiny would not only be unjust but would also jeopardize the well-being of his children. This awareness highlights Atticus's deep empathy and moral integrity, as he prioritizes the emotional and psychological safety of both his children and Boo over societal expectations or judgments. The conclusion of the novel also emphasizes Scout's transformative journey as she walks home with Boo. His request for her companionship marks a pivotal moment, as it is the only time he speaks throughout the narrative. This silence speaks volumes about Boo's character; he is a figure who has been shrouded in fear and misunderstanding, not only by the townspeople but also by Scout and Jem. As Scout observes Boo's anxiety, she instinctively feels the need to protect his dignity from the harsh judgment of the community. By referring to him as 'Mr. Radley' and taking his arm, she subtly shifts the narrative, ensuring that it

appears as though Boo is the one escorting her, rather than the other way around. This act of kindness and respect illustrates Scout's growth and her ability to empathize with others, reflecting the lessons Atticus has imparted to her about understanding different perspectives. Atticus's final remark that most people are kind when seen for who they truly are serves as a poignant reminder of the novel's central themes. It encapsulates Scout's evolution from a child who harbored irrational fears of Boo to a young adult who can recognize and appreciate his humanity. This transformation is not just personal; it also critiques the broader

Disability is the primary focus of this study. The characters in the novel are viewed as disabled due to the socio-cultural and racial dynamics that exist in society. Their growth is shaped by their observations of societal norms, the treatment of African Americans, and the widespread nature of racial discrimination. Through the eyes of Scout and Jem Finch, "To Kill a Mockingbird" unfolds over three years, during which the siblings evolve from innocent children with a clear moral understanding to more perceptive individuals who recognize the complexities of good and evil in those around them. As they confront the harsh realities of prejudice, hatred, and violence, they begin to critically analyze these societal issues, including disability and racism. The novel uses their initial innocence to offer a critical examination of the shortcomings within Maycomb, employing sharp humor to underscore the absurdity of adult attitudes toward race, class, and disability in modern American society.

Conclusion

This study explores the convergence of disability and racism in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The narrative symbolically portrays disability by likening the experiences of Black individuals to those of a mockingbird. Within American society, African Americans are frequently viewed as marginalized or disabled. The metaphor of killing the mockingbird suggests that some white individuals see the elimination of Black people as a simple answer to the challenges they face, much like the ease of getting rid of a mockingbird.

The American judicial system demonstrates a bias that primarily favors white individuals, while Black individuals, regardless of their physical or mental abilities, are often viewed as disadvantaged. Various socio-economic and political factors within American society significantly contribute to the marginalization of Black individuals. Tom Robinson, an African American man with a disability, is on trial for the alleged rape of a white woman, Mayella Ewell. As a result, Robinson faces a double layer of marginalization. He is compared to a mockingbird, as he is unjustly condemned simply for trying to live a normal life. Atticus teaches his children that it is morally wrong to harm a mockingbird, as these creatures do not threaten anyone.

He faces challenges due to poor eyesight, and his age and inability to play football with other fathers highlight his vulnerabilities. As he ages, he is seen as 'feeble,' a term implying disability in Maycomb. A pivotal moment occurs when Atticus, despite his vision impairment, successfully shoots a rabid dog, earning him the nickname 'one shot Finch' for eliminating a community threat. The rabid dog symbolizes disability, as its condition leads to its death, and the townspeople's decision to shoot it underscores the scene's significant disability theme. This portrayal invites comparisons with other characters' experiences. Atticus's disability does not hinder his career or fatherhood, but if he were black, the consequences would be far more severe. His situation illustrates how socio-cultural dynamics influence the effects of disability; for white individuals like Atticus, racial privilege mitigates the impact, while black individuals are often viewed through a disability lens. The language used for black individuals often mirrors that for the disabled. Characters like Boo Radley also face marginalization; his disability leads to self-imposed isolation. Even at the novel's end, while Atticus and Heck Tate appreciate Boo's help in saving Jem, they feel the need to protect him from potential legal repercussions, highlighting the contrast in experiences based on race.

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