
King Lear's Perspective on the Imperfect Relationship Between Wealth and Justice in To Kill a Mockingbird and Lindsay Lohan

Justice systems exist to implement suitable punishments and to combat inequities. However, society's perspective of justice overwhelmingly favors the affluent, as evidenced in one of King Lear's memorable speeches. "Small vices" and petty crimes have plagued the impoverished population, while the wealthy have obtained the luxury of evading consequences for their immoral deeds by "plating their sins with gold." According to King Lear, the lance of justice breaks and ceases to function in the face of opulence. Novels such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, celebrities such as Lindsay Lohan, and news headlines across the nation testify to the indisputable truth of King Lear's perspective on the imperfect relationship between wealth and justice.

In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the inequalities of race and class unite to claim the life of an innocent man in the name of a depraved justice system. Tom Robinson, a destitute black man faced condemnation for the rape of Mayella Ewell, despite questionable testimony from the prosecution. On the other hand, Robinson's authentic account of the incident fell upon deaf ears. Under the influence of bigoted principles, the majority of the jurors automatically deemed the word of a poor, black defendant as unreliable. Armed personnel later shot Tom Robinson as he attempted to escape from prison by ascending a heavily guarded fence. Even after his death, the community of Maycomb seemed unfazed. They had expected an inferior, impoverished man to engage in such risky, wretched behavior.

On the other extremity of the economic spectrum, Lindsay Lohan avoided legal responsibility for her countless atrocities by offering her money as a token of her penitence. Police have charged Lohan with several counts of intoxicated driving, drug possession, theft, as well as violation of parole. An average person who committed Lohan's crimes could face a lengthy prison sentence. However, despite Lindsay Lohan's numerous arrests, she resided in a correctional facility for single day and devoted mere hours of community service in retribution. Lohan benefited from the luxury of house arrest and rehab as an alternative to being in state custody as a result of her ability to pay over \$100,000 in bail and costly fees to hire distinguished attorneys.

In addition to Lindsay Lohan, other court cases in which rich people have successfully mitigated their punishments have crossed numerous headlines of renowned newspapers such as *The New York Times*. In 2013, a Texas judge refrained from imprisoning 16-year-old Ethan Couch

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after he killed four people in a drunk driving accident. During the trial, the boy's family hired a psychologist who provided testimony on the boy's affliction with "affluenza," a psychological problem that arises in children of privilege. The result of this testimony was a sentence to 10 years of probation rather than the 20 years in prison which the prosecutors had yearned for. This was a unique circumstance in which personal misconduct was directly connected to personal wealth and the court ruling sparked momentous controversy. The trial's outcome outraged the victims' families and led the rest of society to question whether a teenager from a low-income family would have received such a lenient penalty.

Stretching from Shakespeare's era into modern times, inequities in the punishment of criminals have mostly appeared along economic boundaries. Justice systems attempt to assign penalties without bias, but society's tendency to favor the affluent has ingrained itself into numerous legal practices. Throughout the centuries, from the 1930's of *To Kill a Mockingbird* to the 2010's of Lindsay Lohan and Ethan Couch's exploits, wealth has managed to override common sense in the courts. The result is the incarceration of disproportional numbers of impoverished people, and overwhelming leniency towards wealthier criminals. Just as King Lear stated in his speech, the lance of justice breaks and ceases to function under the standard regulations in the face of economic divisions.

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