
Symbolism in the novel “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee

Symbolism is a very important aspect of any story. Symbols can build on the theme of a book like a theme about good and evil. It can also be the symbolism of a character or an animal like a Mockingbird.

In the novel, “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee, the symbolism of the Mockingbird and Boo Radley plays an important role in developing the key themes of tolerance and acceptance as well as good and evil. Boo Radley is a character who throughout the book, helps the children in many ways and he develops the theme of good and evil. The children go from seeing him as an evil person to seeing him as a good person. This is shown when Lee writes, "Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that's why his hands were bloodstained -- if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off. There was a long-jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten, his eyes popped, and he drooled most of the time." (Lee, 13). This quote shows how the kids thought of Boo Radley in the beginning of the book, but when compared to the end of the book, they are very thankful towards him because he saved their lives. It builds on one of the main themes of good and evil because, in the beginning of the book, Scout and Jem thought that the whole Radley family was on the evil side, but when he helps them in ways like he sewed Jem's pants and he put little surprises in the tree, they see he isn't actually bad. They see how he is actually a good person when Scout thinks, "He was still leaning against the wall. He had been leaning against the wall when I came into the room, his arms down and across his chest. As I pointed he brought his arms down and pressed the palms of his hands against the wall. They were white hands, sickly white hands that had never seen the sun, so white they stood out garishly against the dull cream wall in the dim light of Jem's room...His face was as white as his hands, but for a shadow on his jutting chin. His cheeks were thin to hollowness; his mouth was wide; there were shallow, almost delicate indentations at his temples, and his gray eyes were so colorless I thought he was blind...as I gazed at him in wonder the tension slowly drained from his face. His lips parted into a timid smile, and our neighbor's image blurred with my sudden tears." (Lee, 270).

In this passage, Scout realizes that her neighbor isn't a bad person and that he is a good person. She sees how he is actually a nice person who wouldn't hurt them in any way. Boo saved them because he isn't a bad person. He is a person who was trapped by his parents and that made people think he was bad. This builds on the theme of good and evil because he has now switched to the side of goodness, in the children's eyes, and now they trust him as a

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person who they can count on. This shows why Boo is a person who helps the children throughout the book and builds on the theme of good and evil. In "To Kill a Mockingbird" the symbol of the mockingbird can develop the key theme of tolerance and acceptance in Maycomb.

In the novel, Tom Robinson is one of the people that can be represented as a Mockingbird. This can be seen when Tom says, "A soft husky voice came from the darkness above: 'They gone?' Atticus stepped back and looked up. 'They've gone,' he said. 'Get some sleep, Tom. They won't bother you anymore.'" (Lee, 155). This quote shows how Tom was afraid of the people that had come to silence him, like a hunter trying to silence a mockingbird because it was singing its song. Also, this shows how because he was a Mockingbird, they didn't want to hear his song and accept it, so they resort to trying to kill it. Tom knew that he had done nothing wrong by helping Mayella those days and he was just trying to be nice, just like how a Mockingbird will sing its song because they want us to hear their songs. Because the people do not accept Tom Robinson and the black population as a whole, they don't tolerate when they try to act like they are the same as the white population. This is shown when Atticus says, "There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads --they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life." (Lee, 220).

When Tom helped Mayella, they could not tolerate that a black person would help a white woman without doing something terrible to her. This shows their racist views of the black population and how they could never accept one of the black population, but only their own population. When Tom was caught, he was a trapped bird and when they sentenced him to jail, he was a silenced mockingbird that would never sing again.

This shows how the symbol of the mockingbird can be used to develop the theme of tolerance and acceptance. All the examples provided are proof that in the novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, the symbolism of the Mockingbird and Boo Radley plays an important role in developing the key themes of tolerance and acceptance as well as good and evil. A society that is not accepting and has no tolerance for the black population creates situations like Tom Robinson's trial. Also, the misconception of Boo Radley made the children think he was an evil existence in Maycomb when he was, in fact, a person who they could count on with their lives. Harper Lee is able to effectively use symbolism throughout the novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird", and the Mockingbird serves as a very important symbol in this fantastic novel.

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