
The Coming of Age and Loss of Innocence in Harper Lee's to Kill a Mockingbird

As a youthful and curious child, the small town that Scout Finch lived in seemed like the world. Since the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* was set in the south during the course of the 1930s, where she lived included a lot of prejudice and unruly, opinionated people. In the book, everyone that lived near each other knew each other. The town also included Scout's older brother Jem and her father, Atticus. All the characters were living in Maycomb County, Alabama which was a very small, prejudice and unequal place. The author Harper Lee expresses the death of innocence and coming of age through the character Scout and her conflicts with the world and people around her.

To begin, Harper Lee expresses the death of innocence when Scout experiences external conflict with her teacher Miss Caroline. Scout loses her sense of sense of idealism when she feels the necessity to inform her teacher of the financial circumstances of one of her classmates, Walter Cunningham, and the teacher punishes her for trying to be beneficial because Scout had already gotten off on the wrong foot. " 'You're shamin him Miss Caroline. Walter hasn't got a quarter at home to bring you, and you can't use any stove wood.' Miss Caroline stood stock still, then grabbed me by the collar and hauled me back to her desk. 'Jean Louise I've had enough of you this morning... hold out your hand.' I thought she was going to spit in it... Miss Caroline picked up her ruler, gave me half a dozen quick little pats, then told me to stand in the corner". Being hit or smacked brings the victim to the conclusion that they did something they weren't supposed to. This guides the victim to ponder upon what they can do to improve upon themselves, so they don't make the same mistake. In this quote, being hit by Miss Caroline can give the reader a chance to infer that Scout learned to keep her nose out of other people's business or problems. Though the reader would infer this, she still had decided to try to beat Walter up for getting her in trouble. Overall though, Scout had learned a valuable lesson.

In addition, Lee expresses the death of innocence through Scout alongside the character Aunt Alexandra. As soon as the additional side character Aunt Alexandra is introduced she is constantly forcing Scout to "act ladylike" and perform the acts that are signs of maturity and adulthood. 'Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of my attire. I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches; when I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants. Aunt Alexandra's vision of my deportment involved playing with small stoves, tea sets, and wearing the Add-A-Pearl necklace she gave me when I was born; furthermore, I should be a ray of sunshine in my father's lonely life".

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Scout grew up with her older brother and father as influences and though Atticus Finch was a very abreast man, Jem and Scout were wild and dirty. Without a proper mother like influence Scout did not know any better. Scout knew how she acted was not normal for a girl of her age, but she did not want to be like the other girls. Aunt Alexandra tried to persuade Scout to act like a “proper woman” with proper etiquette. This quote and how Scout normally acted could lead the reader to deduce that Aunt Alexandra was trying to reform Scouts lifestyle and how she had made an attempt to prevent her from acting like a tomboy.

Finally, Harper Lee expresses the death of innocence when Scout and her brother Jem learn the dangers of racial prejudice. When Scout and Jem get themselves involved in their father's case involving a black man, they learn the opinions that the white men and women in Maycomb have on black people. Scout and her brother Jem learn the importance of equality. “Cry about the simple hell people give other people — without even thinking. Cry about the hell white people give colored folks, without even stopping to think that they’re people, too”. Scout attends the trial where Tom Robinson is patently falsely accused and convicted by a family that was trying to excuse their wrong doing. The only apparent reason he lost the case is because he was a negro man in a preconceived world. Being a person of color in the thirties is already hard, but Tom Robinson had to be put on a trial against all white men. With the help of Atticus Scout learned something that most people do not learn until they are older.

Altogether, Harper Lee expresses the death of innocence and coming of age through the character Scout and her many conflicts. The idea of the death of innocence is portrayed through the important moments in the book involving her problem with Miss Caroline and her infuriating influence from her Aunt Alexandra. She also learns to face the racial prejudices her small town endures. In conclusion, the book To Kill a Mockingbird can have a multitude of themes but the most apparent theme was the death of innocence and coming of age. 9 year old Scout Finch experienced a few transformative experiences that led to her metamorphosis into a mature thinker. Overall, this book gave the reader an idea of what it was like to grow up in the troubled world of the 1930s.

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