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Candidate session number			
Candidate name			
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Examination session (May or November)	MAY	Year	2012

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: ENGLISH ~~A~~ B

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: HOW ARE THE ISSUES OF RACIAL TENSION,
SOCIAL CLASS AND JUSTICE PORTRAYED IN THE MID-1930'S
SOUTHERN AMERICAN SOCIETY THROUGH "TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD" BY
HARPER LEE?

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

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Date: 16/02/12

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Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

essay is a very impressive example of balancing historical content (social issues) with literary concerns. In this sense it is an ideal A2 essay. She worked independently throughout, asking my advice on the balance she should give between her historical research and her analysis of the novel. I was very impressed with the final product and feel that it deserves top marks. She worked through her source material thoroughly and with academic rigour. She made sure to fulfil all of the criteria to ensure that she was in the best position to earn a top grade.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Date: 24/02/2012

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2		2	
B introduction	2	2		2	
C investigation	3	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	4	4		4	
E reasoned argument	4	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	4	4		4	
G use of subject language	4	4		4	
H conclusion	2	2		2	
I formal presentation	4	4		4	
J abstract	2	2		2	
K holistic judgment	4	4		4	
Total out of 36	34				

Name of examiner 1: _____
(ITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Name of examiner 2: _____
(ITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Name of examiner 3: _____
(ITAL letters)

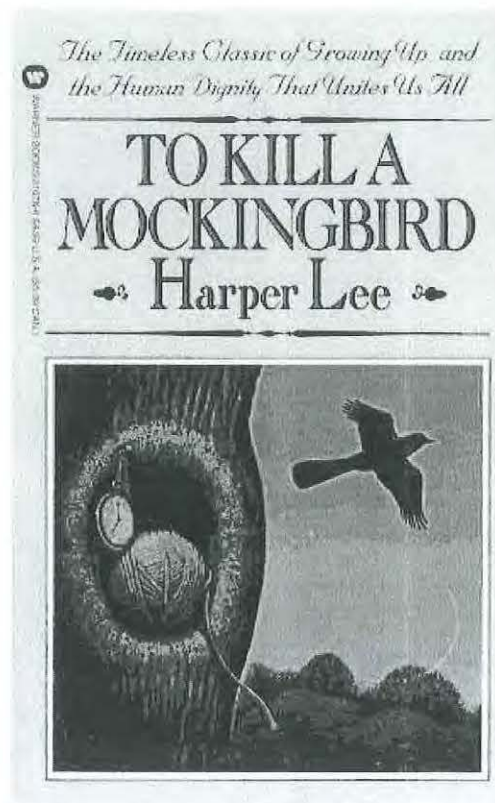
Examiner number: _____

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IB Cardiff use only: A: 105273

Date: 15/05/12

Extended Essay



Research Question: “How are the issues of racial tension, social class and justice portrayed in the mid-1930’s Southern American society through *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee?”

Subject Area: English A2

BY:

CANDIDATE NUMBER:

CENTRE NAME:

CENTRE NUMBER:

WORD COUNT: 3810



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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to analyze the veracity of the elements presented in *To Kill a Mockingbird* in context with factual American history during a specific time period. In order to carry out this investigation I will use the actual novel as the main source of analysis and secondary sources such as a history book and relevant websites for supporting evidence.

In order to address my question "*How are the issues of racial tension, social class and justice portrayed in the mid-1930's southern American society through To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee?*", I will explore the author's use of themes, symbols, language, motifs, construction of characters and significant quotations to depict the general feeling propagated in a typical Southern American small town, although the setting is fictional. Looking into the impacts of phenomena such as the Great Depression and the Great Migration enables a comparison between the fictional portrayal and the reality of the mid-1930's USA. In addition, dividing the investigation into chapters allows me to separately assess the trial as a representation of justice, the interaction of characters as a demonstration of racial tension and the segregation of communities as an illustration of social class. EQ

As a conclusion, Lee brings the reader closer to the authentic society that existed not only in Alabama but in many Southern states in the USA. Using irony and exaggeration of stereotypes she conveys the extreme prejudice, social disparity and lack of justice that dominated Maycomb, making an explicit critique of the white community's intolerant behaviour, which nowadays is considered unacceptable, while also valuing Atticus' moral ideals and sense of justice. argument

Words: 270

Introduction

To Kill a Mockingbird takes place in the fictional scenery of Maycomb, Alabama in the years of 1933 to 1935. In this period, the Deep South experienced and witnessed major events such as the Great Depression, the Great Migration and tense relations between races, where all of the issues led President Franklin Roosevelt to refer to the South as “the nation’s number one economic problem.”¹ Studies have indicated that in terms of religion, moral values and race relations between white and black, Americans living in Southern parts of the United States generally hold a more conservative ideology than non-Southerners.² These issues are important backdrop for Harper Lee’s novel and are manifested in the lives of the protagonists Atticus, Scout, Jem and Tom Robinson, enabling the assessment of *how the issues of racial tension, social class and justice are portrayed in the mid-1930’s Southern American society through the novel.*

worth

PO
a bit more content for P.D. would be helpful

Chapter 1: Overview of American society in mid-1930’s Southern USA

The Great Depression hit the South during a period when the USA had not entirely recovered from the Civil War. People would say that times preceding the Stock Market Crash of 1929 were “the good old days, but the good old days were already pretty tough.”³ As a result, not only did the economy worsen but tax revenue, profits, prices and international trade dropped dramatically and income per capita decreased by half compared to the Northern states, turning the South into the poorest section of the Depression.⁴ The human impacts of the Depression were disastrous. Unemployment in the U.S. rose to 25%, leaving numerous people homeless and unable to pay their expenses.⁵ The job market became more competitive for each person who became unemployed. Often women and children tried to find work when the man of their family had lost his; some women were accused of taking up jobs they were unsuitable for and were especially denied work if they were married.⁶ Families were then forced

¹ “The Great Depression and New Deal, 1929-1940s” 25 Feb 2011

<<http://iws.collin.edu/kwilkison/Online1302home/20th%20Century/DepressionNewDeal.html>>

² “Southern United States” 26 Feb 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States>

³ “The Great Depression in the South” 26 Feb 2011 <<http://www.stocks-simplified.com/Great-Depression-in-the-South.html>>

⁴ “Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression>

⁵ “Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression>

⁶ “The Human Impact of the Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <<http://bigmateo0.tripod.com/id2.html>>

good source for format

} not the best source

together in crowded settlements while the homeless built improvised shelters out of “tar paper, cardboard and scrap material.”⁷ This led to the creation of Hoovervilles, named after President Hoover as they believed he was to blame for the crisis.⁸ Starvation and illness were harsh consequences too – many people could not afford food, access to clean water and were therefore vulnerable to diseases. Those living in misery and poverty found themselves suffering most from the long-term effects of poor diets and lack of medical care.

The most affected people by the Depression were found to be at the bottom of the economic ladder. These included the African Americans, Hispanics and Asian American minorities who suffered and struggled more than white Americans.⁹ As a consequence of the Depression, they became the “first to get fired from their jobs and the last to get hired”¹⁰ – half of all black people were unemployed, a figure twice as high as whites, and those who did have a job usually worked temporarily while strikes were going on. It was common to see white protestors shouting racist mottos such as “No jobs for Niggers until every white man has a job.”¹¹ Black people were even looked down upon by the more established immigrant groups from Eastern Europe, who felt contemptuous towards them and Mexicans.¹² The response of governments to the economic crisis in the South involved “raising the sales tax and cutting spending on government programs”, yet this only led to even greater damage.¹³ In future, the recovery of the Great Depression in the South was made possible by governmental programs, which were part of the New Deal, such as the Resettlement Administration (RA) and the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), as they addressed the needs of the severely poor in the South.¹⁴ However, the South did not reach a decent economic state and standard of living until the Second World War.

Simultaneously, in this atmosphere of poverty and despair, prejudice against blacks was still a predominant feeling in the South. Many white people believed that “blacks needed to learn their place

⁷ “The Human Impact of the Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <<http://bigmateo0.tripod.com/id2.html>>

⁸ “The Human Impact of the Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <<http://bigmateo0.tripod.com/id2.html>>

⁹ “The Human Impact of the Great Depression” 26 Feb 2011 <<http://bigmateo0.tripod.com/id2.html>>

¹⁰ “The Great Depression in the South” 1 March 2011 <<http://www.stocks-simplified.com/Great-Depression-in-the-South.html>>

¹¹ “The Great Depression in the South” 1 March 2011 <<http://www.stocks-simplified.com/Great-Depression-in-the-South.html>>

¹² Walsh, Ben. GCSE Modern World History 2nd edition (John Murray Publishers) 2001 – page 198

¹³ “The Great Depression in the South” 1 March 2011 <<http://www.stocks-simplified.com/Great-Depression-in-the-South.html>>

¹⁴ “New Deal” 1 March 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal>

and remain there” and showed them how by insulting, convicting for minor offences, performing arbitrary justice and lynching.¹⁵ The existence of the Jim Crow laws were enforced in the USA from 1876 to 1965 and brought about a “separate but equal” status for Afro-Americans, with emphasis in the Southern states.¹⁶ This meant that the accommodation and treatment towards blacks was generally inferior to that of white Americans. The laws stipulated segregated facilities for white and blacks in restaurants, drinking fountains, public schools, parks, restrooms, libraries, amusements of all kinds, transportation and even the U.S. military¹⁷. Segregation was also present in “unconstitutional policies like literacy tests and poll taxes”¹⁸, the denial of jobs and health care and increase in cost of services such as banking and insurance.¹⁹ Black people also faced issues like disenfranchisement as the Southern governments passed laws that forced black people off voting rolls by making voter registration more inaccessible to them.²⁰ Judicial cases were not ethical and fair - in many cases, like Tom Robinson’s trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, convenient justice “was the order of the day.”²¹ Additionally, violence against black people was eminent in the period after Reconstruction as well as throughout the 1930’s. Attacks from individuals, police and organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan marked the racial disparities in the USA. The Ku Klux Klan formed in 1850 and spread rapidly into the twentieth century and terrorized blacks, Jews, Catholics, immigrants and any opposition. It was mostly present in the Midwest and rural South where black people and working-class whites competed for labour jobs.²² Beatings, lynching, parades and intimidation through violent means were common within the powerful political force and aimed in keeping white people in control.²³ Eventually, the Jim Crow laws were succeeded by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act, both of which only began at the end of the 1960’s.²⁴

good constitution

¹⁵ “Views of Race Relations by the 1930’s Society of Whites and Blacks” 1 March 2011

<<http://mgagnon.myweb.uga.edu/students/3090/04SP3090-Briggs.htm>>

¹⁶ “Jim Crow laws” 2 March 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws>

¹⁷ “Jim Crow laws” 2 March 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws>

¹⁸ “The Great Migration” 2 March 2011 <<http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec47det.html>>

¹⁹ “Racial Segregation in the United States” 2 March 2011

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation_in_the_United_States>

²⁰ “Disfranchisement after Reconstruction era” 3 March 2011

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disfranchisement_after_Reconstruction_era>

²¹ “The Great Migration” 3 March 2011 <<http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec47det.html>>

²² Walsh, Ben. *GCSE Modern World History 2nd edition* (John Murray Publishers) 2001 – page 201

²³ Walsh, Ben. *GCSE Modern World History 2nd edition* (John Murray Publishers) 2001 – page 201

²⁴ “Jim Crow laws” 3 March 2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws>

With the horrific conditions in the South, many Afro Americans headed North and West to escape racism as well as to seek jobs in industrial cities during the early twentieth century. The push factors included the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and were mainly motivated by the heavy segregation that blacks faced in the South. One of the pull factors was the fact that many people were attracted to the urban North, where industrialization demanded replenishing the work force in newly developed factories.²⁵ Hence, the Great Migration was characterized by the movement of almost a million blacks, who left the “unfavourable economic, political, and social conditions of the South”²⁶ to places known to be more racially tolerant, offering greater personal freedom. The result was that black communities in Northern areas often became isolated ghettos as newly arrived migrants from the South, who were not at all proud of their colour, were accused of intensifying white racism²⁷.

excellent summary
 JJ history related
 for TEM

Chapter 2: Maycomb as a portrait of reality

Subsequent historical clues support the assumption that the action of *To Kill a Mockingbird* begins in the summer of 1933. The narrator makes references to the pervasive poverty of the town, indicating that Maycomb is in the “midst of the Great Depression”²⁸, in addition to the outdated characteristics such as “the mule-driven Hoover carts”²⁹ and “dirt roads”³⁰. The descriptions of the town, “tired old [...] in rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square [...] a black dog suffered on a summer’s day³¹; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square [...] men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning and ladies bathed before noon [...] and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum³²” consists of pathetic fallacy to stress the slow rhythm of a small town, immersed in heat and traditional values. In the reader’s mind, Maycomb is painted as a sluggish Southern town where nothing happens and time drags along, which contrasts with all of the suspense

good

²⁵ “The Great Migration” 3 March 2011 <<http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec47det.html>>

²⁶ “The Great Migration” 3 March 2011 <<http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec47det.html>>

²⁷ Walsh, Ben. *GCSE Modern World History* (John Murray Publishers) 2001 – page 203

²⁸ “To Kill a Mockingbird” 24 March 2011 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/quotes.html>>

²⁹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 6

³⁰ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 6

³¹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 5

³² Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 6

redman

and moral greatness of the plot.³³

In terms of structure, the novel is considered a circular story, as Jem's broken arm is introduced in the beginning and the plot develops the events leading up to his accident at the end. Interestingly, it is written in the perspective of a child, who initiates the first-person narrative looking back to when she "first knew"³⁴ Maycomb, implying that she is recollecting her childhood. As a result, Scout's voice oscillates between a child's humorous, nostalgic and infantile point of view and a mature adult voice many years later, causing a progressive change of tone where she is increasingly dark, apprehensive and critical of society. It seems that Harper Lee purposely chose Scout to narrate the novel because a child's naiveté and ignorance limits her understanding of the conflicts she faces. This is why she questions herself when she is confronted with opposing ideas, for example, when her first grade teacher tells her she is too young to know how to read and write while Atticus had been teaching her all along. Scout's childish approach allows the reader to form a perspective that differs from her own understanding of the events. Her young voice is significant to depict an uncorrupted image of her reality, as an adult voice would implicate pre-conceived opinions and narrow-mindedness. In a way, an adult's ignorance is a similar form of immaturity to that of a child, yet the difference is that most adults lack the same fertility of imagination and do not question themselves as much. A clear example of this is reflected in Bob Ewell's character, whose ignorance leads him to blame his crime on an innocent black man and be easily believed, as a result of his advantageous position in society for being white. Therefore, having Scout's adult perspective in the background, even if it's not always present, ensures that the reader realizes what the important lessons are – those of which Scout herself only realizes as a grown woman.

As one of the most prosperous figures in Maycomb throughout the Great Depression, Atticus is an exception amongst other citizens at a time of despair in the South.³⁵ The theme of social class is raised as Miss Maudie states that Maycomb is divided into distinct sections, in that "there's four kinds of folks in the world. There's the ordinary kind like us and the neighbours, there's the kind like the Cunninghams out in the woods, the kind like the Ewells down at the dump, and the Negroes."³⁶ Just like in factual American history, black people in Maycomb were on the bottom of the social and economic

³³ "To Kill a Mockingbird" 24 March 2011 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/themes.html>>

³⁴ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 5

³⁵ "To Kill a Mockingbird" 24 March 2011 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/canalysis.html>>

³⁶ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 258

ladder. Blacks had their own settlement placed on the outskirts of the white Maycomb community, including their own segregated church and cemetery, while the town drunks, fools and negligent people, such as the Ewells and Cunninghams – who were not more educated or economically stable than the Robinsons and other black families – were placed higher up in the social hierarchy. Lee uses the perplexity of these divisions to criticize the role of class and its impact on disparities in the mid-1930's American society. ✓ *see p. 10*

A main moral theme of the novel is that of education and principles. As a model parent, Atticus gives Scout a vital piece of advice at the start of the novel that contributes to her character development – “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [. . .] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”³⁷ Atticus's parenting style consists of ingraining moral values in Jem and Scout, particularly justice, restraint, and honesty. Even though he knows that defending Tom Robinson is a hopeless case, Atticus tells his children that he must stand up to it in order to uphold his sense of justice and integrity. He raises Jem and Scout with the notion that they should always try to imagine themselves in somebody else's shoes before making judgments. This ideology stems from Atticus's proactive attitude towards the morals he embraces, including his approach to the Tom Robinson case and Bob Ewell's death, yet with the exception of when he agrees that a law must be bent to protect Boo and Jem. Nonetheless, Atticus' personality is the key factor of his heroic portrayal and strong influence over the community within the novel. Significantly, he represents the tolerance and goodness in the core of humanity, both of which are sharply contrasted with the racist world of Maycomb and the townspeople's unwillingness to support Tom Robinson. *imagine*

The loss-of-innocence theme is also important in the dramatization of racial tension in the novel. The displays of anger and intolerance are so intense in Maycomb that it becomes intrusive in Scout and Jem's lives, disrupting their childhood. They become targets of the unforgivably racist American Southerners who refuse to accept that the town's most renowned lawyer would choose to defend a black man. Scout suffers the negative impacts of her father's decision, being frowned upon and hearing offensive comments such as Cecil Jacob's declaration that “Scout Finch's daddy defends niggers.”³⁸ The ignorant fury of the inhabitants causes Jem and Scout to become outsiders in their own environment.

³⁷ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 33

³⁸ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 85

The extent of this disapproval is so great that even members of the Finch family treat the children sourly, such as when Francis insults Scout by calling Atticus a “nigger-lover.”³⁹ In spite of Atticus having instructed his children to practice quiet courage and avoid fights even if they are verbally abused, Scout still curses and beats Francis to preserve her dignity. Similarly, Jem experiences an unpleasant incident where Mrs. Dubose, an elderly and ill-tempered representation of everything that’s wrong with Maycomb, spitefully states that Atticus “isn’t any better than the niggers and trash he works for”⁴⁰, causing Jem to lose his temper and destroy her camellia bushes. Although Scout and Jem were conscious of the discrimination they were bound to face, they gained emotional maturity at every confrontation with evil. Nevertheless, the power of childhood innocence prevails and triumphantly brings out the best of human goodness in people, as shown by the incident when Mr. Cunningham is touched by Scout’s politeness and warmth even as he leads a lynch mob to kill Tom Robinson. Scout’s idealistic conviction that there is good in everyone is shown in this scene – when casually chatting to Mr. Cunningham about his son – as she compels the poor farmer to disperse the mob seeking to lynch Tom Robinson. He “squat[s] down and take [Scout] by both shoulders”⁴¹ and kindly responds to her, saying “I’ll tell him [Walter] you said hey, little lady.”⁴²

The children’s visit to a “coloured” church brings Calpurnia in a narrative spotlight in the novel, as racial inequality is illustrated by her character serving as a bridge between two worlds, the Finch household and the black community. Scout realizes that “Calpurnia led a modest double life [...] and had command of two languages.”⁴³ At each shift of ground, however, Calpurnia’s behaviour adjusts accordingly. With this, Lee formally introduces the reader to the segregated race and suggests a possible coexistence of white and black despite their different culture. Language therefore is a powerful tool to highlight the gap between whites and blacks not only in Maycomb but in every American town in which the two races are confined.

The juxtaposition of the black community and the Finch children also emphasizes the warm-heartedness, welcoming spirit and solidarity of the black community, as they receive Jem and Scout. The children visit Calpurnia’s church occurs exactly when Tom Robinson’s trial is thrown into crisis and the tension between races is at its highest point. It is also significant to note that Calpurnia’s son, Zeebo is

³⁹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 94

⁴⁰ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 117

⁴¹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 175

⁴² Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 175

⁴³ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 142/143

the town garbage collector, the fact that most parishioners present in the church are illiterate and even that Tom Robinson's wife can't find work for being married to a suspect of rape. These details suggest the inferiority of the black population and their belonging to the working class. Lee guides the reader to empathize with the black community while characterizing the white oppression as an extremely harsh, mean-spirited and stubborn force, with few exceptions. As if coincidentally, the children end up sitting in the "coloured section" of the courthouse in the trial and show no sign of disturbance. They lack the prejudice that lingers amongst the populous white courtroom and have been taught not to judge without empathizing. m

Chapter 3: The trial

Atticus is a major advocate of the accomplishment of racial equality through assistance of the courthouse. He believes there is hope for goodness to prevail over the evils of racism, but knows he will not be alive to see it happen. There is a sharp contrast between the good and evil manifested throughout the novel. Lee implies that the disparity is only allowed to exist because the citizens of Maycomb possess a distorted concept of justice and twisted moral values. As a consequence, although Atticus has faith in the essential virtue of mankind, he witnesses evil reign over honesty as an unimportant man suddenly gains power to destroy another just because he happens to be black. While Bob Ewell stands for the poverty, ignorance and hatred that characterized the dark American South in the 1930's, Tom Robinson represents the hardworking, pious and united black community that was victimized by the white majority.

The trial is the most mesmerizing and dramatic sequence in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as Atticus successfully exposes the injustice of his society and the excessively racist mentality of people in Maycomb. Even though the trial judges Tom Robinson, the town of Maycomb is metaphorically being tried simultaneously, as to evaluate whether truth will triumph or whether the citizens are corrupted to the extent that they will accept the word of a despicable man trying to rid himself of his own guilt and shame. good pt

When Jem says “we’ve got him”⁴⁴ after Atticus makes an excellent point, he does not get that his father’s efforts will be useless. The unquestionable evidence Atticus presented in court and the witnesses’ testimony of Robinson’s good character, such as that of Link Deas, fell on the jury’s deaf ears. At no time was racism alleviated during the trial. In fact, it was only made worse by Mr. Gilmer’s reference to Tom as “boy” and accusation at every turn, as well as Deas’ expulsion from the court due to his disruption. In reality, Tom’s story is the true account of events, both because of his sincere nature and Atticus’s genius interrogation of the Ewells, breaking the validity of his statements. Despite Atticus’ great performance, Mayella’s psychological damage and insistence on defending her testimony leads to Robinson’s conviction and death, turning justice into an unresolved issue. ✓

The unsuccessful turnout of events relates to the title of the novel as it highlights Lee’s concern with innocence being shattered by injustice.⁴⁵ A situation that illustrates this is when Atticus tells his children that “it is a sin to kill a mockingbird”⁴⁶ and Miss Maudie adds that “mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy [...] but sing their hearts out for us.”⁴⁷ A possible interpretation is that virtuous characters like Jem, Scout, Dill, Boo Radley and Tom Robinson were as harmless as mockingbirds and that, through contact with evil, lost their purity.

Evil is also symbolic of racism and injustice, as can be seen in abundant aspects of the novel. In Bob Ewell’s cowardly attempt to kill Scout and Jem, goodness prevails as the kind-hearted figure of Boo Radley comes to their rescue. As a consequence of this conflict between opposite forces, Tate decides to make justice right and lets “the dead bury the dead”⁴⁸ by saying that Bob Ewell fell on his knife. Additionally, integrity is mirrored through secondary characters such as Miss Maudie, who supports the promotion of justice and Mr. Underwood, who defends Atticus’ cause. Link Deas and Heck Tate and Dolphus Raymond are also decent men who try to preserve innocence. While Deas incarnates the opposite of racial prejudice, Raymond naturally chooses to live amid blacks and they are both able to look past race and praise Robinson’s word. From witnessing too much malevolence, Raymond has lost hope in the betterment of his society and warns Jem: “you haven’t seen enough of the world yet.”⁴⁹ Just like there is no explanation as to why the white community hates blacks, Raymond never explains

⁴⁴ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 202

⁴⁵ “To Kill a Mockingbird” 5 May 2011 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section5.rhtml>>

⁴⁶ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 103

⁴⁷ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 103

⁴⁸ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 317

⁴⁹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 229

Some individual characters might be helpful

precisely why he prefers blacks—he just does, yet he impersonates an alcoholic so the Maycomb townspeople can justify his choice of lifestyle.⁵⁰ What distinguishes these two situations is that Raymond personally prefers blacks and does not dictate how others should live, whereas the white community forcefully imposes its preferences on society. Lee brings the reader's attention to this contrast to purposely highlight the lack of reason implicated in racism. However, the non-racist attitude of the good characters in the novel is a representation of their incentive of justice.

Although the jury takes a heavily prejudicial attitude by convicting Robinson, there is still reason for the morally uncorrupted adult characters to hold out hope. Following the trial's verdict, Miss Maudie observes that there has been progress on some level and Maycomb has taken "a step—it's just a baby-step, but it's a step"⁵¹ towards equality. The trial serves as a lesson for both Finch children. Jem learns that true evil exists – as his illusions about justice and law turn out to be misleading – and acquires a set of morals that misfits the mid-1930's Southern small town mentality. In the same way, Scout's mature posture at the end of the novel, saying that "Boo Radley was the least of [her] fears"⁵² shows how hardened she became from the trial, hence how she integrated in the more serious concerns of the adult world.

debatable

Small connection
to Thomas
Language is excellent

⁵⁰ "To Kill a Mockingbird" 5 May 2011 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section10.rhtml>>

⁵¹ Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 246

⁵² Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1st Perennial classics edition) 2002 – page 278

Conclusion

The issues of racial tension, social class and justice in the mid-1930's Southern American society are portrayed through a fictitious story based on historic evidence. The themes, motifs, language and characters present in *To Kill a Mockingbird* raise issues and ethical dilemmas that American societies, particularly in the South, faced abundantly during the periods of the Great Depression and the Great Migration. Harper Lee successfully conveys the mood and atmosphere of the time in the character's routine, techniques such as pathetic fallacy, writing in a child's perspective, describing the setting of both worlds and most importantly by the central plot. Including the moral lessons and heightening the contrast between white and black communities in Maycomb undoubtedly paints a clear picture of reality in Alabama during the mid-1930's, where the structural imbalance and racial inequality caused a steep hierarchical society. Therefore Harper Lee's novel is not only a critical exposure of social concerns existent in the USA but is also a beloved classic and masterpiece of storytelling, description and humour.

consistent

*A very well put together essay showing good understanding of the social issues involved.
The presentation + language are excellent.
A very good effort.*

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✓ Wikipedia + spark notes are not the best sources for a book of this dimension.