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Reader Response: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is an American novel written by Harper Lee in 1960. The story commenced when Scout, Jem, and Dill-- the main characters-- had become interested in Boo Radley, an enigma that never strays from home. While the children had become compelled by Boo Radley, Atticus--Scout's father--agreed to defend a black man who is on trial for allegedly raping a white girl in a racist society. Subsequently, Scout had been abused by not only friends, but also by her own family.

Atticus, Scout's father had taken the case of a black man, Tom Robinson, who had been on trial for a raping a white girl. In doing so, the Finches had been persecuted by friends and family; nonetheless, Atticus believed that you cannot judge someone by the color of their skin or the amount of money they had: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it" (Lee 83). During the day of the trial Jem and Scout watch from "the colored balcony," where people of non-white origin must watch from; Mayella and Bob Ewell, those who accused Tom of raping Mayella, presented wavering evidence against Tom. Atticus had proposed impressive and distinct evidence proving that Tom Robinson is innocent, nonetheless, the all white jury had convicted Tom Robinson for the crime of raping Mayella Ewell—"People generally see what

they look for, and hear what they listen for, and they have the right to subject their children to it” (Lee 174).

Scout, her brother Jem, alongside Dill--Jem's friend that ran away from his home in Louisiana--become interested in Boo Radley, after hearing a tale of how he had impaled his father whilst in his youth. Furthermore, they had sneaked onto his property and had been almost shot by Nathan Radley--Boo's father; in the process Jem had lost his pants, and when he had tried to recover them he found the holes in them patched. After the trial, Bob Ewell tries to kill Jem and Scout on Halloween night; and as survival is becoming improbable, Boo Radley comes out of his house and saves them both—killing Bob Ewell in the process. As a result, Scout is finally able to understand Atticus' feeling and thoughts; that people shouldn't be judged by their past actions, but by what they've done since then to atone for their sins.

Even though the book had many tragic events, I thoroughly enjoyed it. It taught me about courage, respect, and morality. Also, I learned that the thoughts of one person can influence others dramatically, i.e., one person is able to affect an outcome. Throughout the story, Scout inflicted no harm to others and always acted based on rectitude: therefore, I believe she is a mockingbird, “Mockingbirds don't do one thing except make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corn cribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee 49). Atticus is a *paragon of virtue*, someone who is the primal example of purity, he took the case of Tom Robinson knowing the shame and abuse that it would bring his family. Furthermore, he taught me about equality and that people would only see what they wanted to see and that no amount of reasoning would change their mind.

After being intrigued by Boo Radley, Scout, Jem, and Dill began to uncover the mysteries surrounding him: such as why people see him as a malevolent individual. During the Great Depression, social classes had been formed diverging the poor from the rich, which augmented the relations between blacks and whites. So, when Tom Robinson was charged for allegedly raping Mayella Ewell there was no chance of him being proved innocent. Subsequently, Jem and Scout learned that the opinion of one will not change even when presented with evidence of a counterclaim.

Harper Lee has taught me so much about the world, and I hope to continue reading her novels in the future. *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped me to understand that you cannot judge someone based on their past actions, and that what they do to atone for their sins is how you should judge them. I realized that I can implement her lessons into my life by making sure to treat everyone equally, regardless of their ethnicity, social class, gender, etc.

Works Cited

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Print. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1960.