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Ms. Smith

### Inequality in To Kill a Mockingbird

*Excellent  
book!*

What does one do when their town's society is falling apart from the inside? Written in 1960 and based in the 1930's, Lee's tale To Kill a Mockingbird puts the spotlight on difficulties that still pertain to modern times. The novel revolves around the rule of law. One may delve into the secrets of Maycomb, Alabama, and discover how much more complex the town is than what meets the eye. Black and white people co-exist but not always peacefully. Men and women are civil to one another, yet a dissent can be felt between them. Lastly, there are families with privilege and those without. These groups certainly do not live in harmony together. To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel that models the problems of racial, gender and social inequalities in society. ✓

Racial inequality is a problem *avoid vague words* heavily evidenced in this novel. As Lee's story is based in the 1930's, segregation is very common. At that time, black people are never given the same privileges or access to facilities as white people. For instance, when Scout Finch visits the courthouse in Maycomb, she tells us: "Four Negroes rose and gave us their front row seats. The Coloured balcony ran along three walls of the courtroom like a second-story veranda." (164), ✓ which means while the blacks had to sit upstairs, the whites got the main floor seats where they could see and hear the ongoing trial better. ✓ The oppressed are being told they are inferior,

*no personal pronouns*

simply because their skin tone is dark. In addition to unease between white and black people, there is also the issue of gender unfairness.

In this novel, gender inequality is a common occurrence with plenty of discrimination between men and women. During this period, it is not unusual for the gentlemen to tell ladies what to do. Males are the head of the household, working to support their families, while females stay at home to take care of chores and children. In To Kill a Mockingbird, Scout expresses her distaste with this notion after talking with Aunt Alexandra, saying: "When I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants." (81), as Scout believes girls should be allowed to do what they wish. She wants women to have equal rights, to be able to support their families with a job or be their own person. Great strain is felt by both men and women not only because of gender discrimination, but also socio-economic inequalities.

In To Kill a Mockingbird, there are both rich families and poor families living in Maycomb, but they are never caught mingling with one another. For example, when Scout asks Aunt Alexandra if she can play with Walter Cunningham, a poor boy, her request is declined: "'But I want to play with him Aunty, why can't I?' She took off her glasses and stared at me. 'I'll tell you why,' she said. 'Because-he-is-trash, that's why.'" (225). This is a result of people believing in a caste system where one may only socialize with others of their class. They think there is a social status that comes with their income or their family name, and therefore the rich are snobby to the poor. People judge others on how much money they have or the family to which they belong rather than on their character. A person's economic status in Maycomb could lead

to many social injustices, as people seem to see personality second to the amount of money one has.

In conclusion, Maycomb County of To Kill a Mockingbird is a town where prejudice towards race, gender and economics reign. One can plainly see how unfair life was back then, and how judgmental people in this novel could be. Human beings were assigned values based on their skin color, whether they were a boy or a girl, and their financial status. Of course, these beliefs still exist today, and the world must work hard to eradicate them so it does not repeat the mistakes of the past.

For the next essay, remind me to teach you about paraphrasing.

Work Cited

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Warner Book Inc., 1960



Formal Outline

- I. **Thesis statement** – To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel that models the problems of racial, gender and social inequalities in society.
- II. **Topic sentence** – Racial inequality is a problem heavily highlighted in this novel, and it's still an issue for today's society.

Racial

- a. Segregation
  - i. "Four Negroes rose and gave us their front row seats. The Coloured balcony ran along three walls of the courtroom like a second story veranda," - Scout Finch, TKAM (p. 164)
- b. Tom Robinson case
  - i. "In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins" - Atticus Finch, TKAM (p. 220)

\*Transition sentence – Amongst unease between white and black people, there was also the issue of gender unfairness.

- III. **Topic sentence** – In this novel, gender inequality is a common occurrence with plenty of discrimination between men and women.

Gender

- a. Scout/Jem
  - i. "Overnight, it seemed, Jem had acquired an alien set of values and was trying to impose them on me; several times he went so far as to tell me what to do." - Scout, TKAM (p. 115)
- b. Scout/Aunt Alexandra (Aunt A.)
  - i. "When I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants." - Scout Finch, TKAM (p. 81)

\*Transition sentence – Great strain is felt by both men and women not only because of gender discrimination, but also socio-economic inequalities.

- IV. **Topic sentence** – In To Kill A Mockingbird there are both rich families and poor families in Maycomb, but they are never caught mingling with one another.

Social Economic

- a. Walter Cunningham/ Scout/Aunt A.
  - i. "But I want to play with him Auntie, why can't I?" She took off her glasses and stared at me. "I'll tell you why" she said. "Because he is trash, that's why you can't play with him." Aunt A, TKAM (p. 225)
- b. The Ewell Family
  - i. "Atticus said the Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day's work in his recollection." - Scout Finch, TKAM (p. 30)

\*Transition sentence –