
Collective Humans Struggle In The Merchant Of Venice And To Kill A Mockingbird

Prejudices borne by persecuted individuals, and born out of stereotypes, corrupt an individual's relationship with self and society. The exploration of prejudice, as a human experience in texts, highlights the collective struggle humans inhabit as a result of institutionalised notions within society. William Shakespeare's classic play, 'The Merchant of Venice', and Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird' illustrate this innate struggle humans endure, through careful characterisation. The human condition desires to find acceptance in society without the compromise of self-expression and identity as a result of societal pressures.

Discrimination

Discrimination stems from the superiority complex weaved into the human condition; the desire to overcome 'inferiority' and become 'superior' to another. In every element of society, humans are exposed to this discrimination. Racism is a direct result of this superiority complex. Humans use physical qualities to differ themselves, and as a result, differences that are irrelevant on a large scale are brought forward and magnified until they are big enough for one person to consider themselves better, or 'superior', to another. For example, race and religion. Both are small personal details but as demonstrated in TMOV and TKAM, have become gateways for discrimination. Throughout TMOV, Shylock "the Jew", (as he is called by everyone in the play) is compared with a dog, a cur, and a demon, and is referred to as the very devil incarnation, and by extension, all Jews, are presented as money-hungry, conniving, and cruel.

Predetermined future/lack of personal choices

Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice' begins with Antonio exposing his state of melancholy to the audience, acknowledging that everyone has their part in society and in particular, Antonio's part "...a sad one." Shakespeare uses an imperative "must" in Antonio's lines, "...every man must play a part. And mine a sad one" strategically identifying with the expectation for people to play their predetermined part in society, good or bad, thus, alluding to the prejudice experienced by Portia with her future as determined by her dead father's will.

Misconceptions and pre-judgement

No matter where they go in the world, they will always be judged, scrutinized and categorized under societal misconceptions. Adversity, demonstrated through intricate characterisation of particular individuals in TKAM, is also key to understanding the realistic impacts misconceptions have on a person and their relationship with the space around them. For example, Harper Lee's characterisation of Arthur (Boo) Radley through the dialogue of other characters, shows how social misconceptions are none other than that. Misconceptions. Fortunately, in both texts, this pre-judgement develops to show the journey of acceptance and understanding as a person ignores misconceptualized notions and truly looks at the situation from a personal, non-biased point of view. For example, the progression of Scout's descriptions of Arthur (Boo) Radley, from

chapter one, informed by Jem's stories (which mainly come from Miss Stephanie), which describe Boo as a scary monster who only comes out in the pitch black and who "was about six-and-a-half feet tall... dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch...his hands were bloodstained - if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off." developing into chapter 28 where scout explains that "Boo doesn't mean anybody any harm" and even further to a place where Boo has saved her from Mr Ewell and brought her and Jem home.

On their last encounter when scout "slipped [her] hand into the crook of his arm" as he "stoop[ed] a little to accommodate" for her height as he "escort[ed] [her] down the sidewalk, as any gentleman would do." in this light, conveniently as they stood under a street lamp, Scout sees Boo through her own eyes, misconceptions aside.

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