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## Symbolism In The Book To Kill A Mockingbird

Throughout Harper Lee's Novel To Kill a Mockingbird there is extensive symbolism throughout. Some subtle and others obvious. The most preeminent symbol is undoubtedly the mockingbird itself. A symbol of courage, innocence and adulthood. These are illustrated throughout the characters Atticus Finch, Boo Radley and Tom Robinson.

Atticus Finch demonstrates courage when he chooses to defend Tom Robinson in a legal case that no one else would even consider taking, a seemingly unwinnable fight. The opposite of courage in their society was not cowardice or fear of losing the case, but rather conformity – to fit in with the racist agenda of the time. Atticus stands alone in his community to defend an innocent black man, and fights outnumbered against the full brunt of Maycomb County's prejudice. His neighbours question his resolve and ask almost rhetorically whether he is "really a nigger-lover". Mockingbirds have been known to attack animals much larger than themselves to defend their nest- just like Atticus defends Tom. Everyone assumed Tom was guilty just because his black seeing "what they look for". Atticus gave Tom the benefit of the doubt, representing him even when everyone thought he was certain to lose. It becomes increasingly obvious that Tom was never seen as innocent before proven guilty, but rather his sentence was already decided at birth by the colour of his skin, and ultimately "left to die". Atticus likely knew from the start how Tom's story would end – but nevertheless against all odds the Mockingbird fought back.

As the novel progresses, the children's changing attitude toward Boo Radley is an important sign of their development from innocence toward a grown-up moral perspective. At the beginning of the book, Boo is merely a source of childhood superstition. As he leaves Jem and Scout presents and mends Jem's pants, he gradually becomes more intriguing and real to them. At the end of the novel, he becomes fully human to Scout, illustrating that she has developed into a sympathetic and understanding individual. Scout has demonstrated that she has matured to have adult like mental strength, not letting people defame her 'It's never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn't hurt you.'. Boo, an intelligent child ruined by a cruel father, is one of the book's most important mockingbirds; he is also an important symbol of the good that exists within people. Despite the pain that Boo has suffered, the purity of his heart rules his interaction with the children. In saving Jem and Scout from Bob Ewell, Boo proves the ultimate symbol of good. Towards the end of the book Scout thinks that hurting Boo Radley would be like "shootin' a mockingbird." Most important, Miss Maudie explains to Scout: "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but . . . sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." Scout and Jem's last name is Finch, another type of small bird, which naturally prefer to be with a companion, similar to that of the siblings.

Tom Robinson like mockingbirds only does good. He is a good husband, father, church goer, worker, citizen and person. During his trial, Tom stated the he had to pass the Ewell's house to get to work. He said that Mayella asked him to help her with the chores almost every day as he passed her house. She asked him to haul water, chop kindling, and do other tasks for her. Typically, Mayella's seven siblings watched as Tom worked. On the day of the alleged attack, Tom said Mayella asked him to repair a door. Tom examined the hinges and found nothing

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wrong with the door. Tom testified that he had noticed the house was unusually quiet and that he soon realized none of Mayella's siblings were at home. Mayella told him that it had taken all year to save enough money to send all the children to town for ice cream. Tom says Mayella then asked him to get a box from atop the chifforobe. While he was standing on a chair to get the box, Mayella grabbed his legs. Tom says he stepped off the chair, terrified because Mayella had grabbed him. Mayella then hugged and kissed him. Tom Robinson is a mockingbird because of his innocence; he has not harmed anyone and is an admirable character who offers help to others. Because Tom is innocent, it makes it 'sinful' to harm him. The parallel between killing a mockingbird and killing a cripple man, Tom, is apparent here. Both are completely defenceless before their persecutors and, thus, it is "sinful" for them to be killed in that way.

To conclude the use of the symbolism of the Mockingbird used through the characters Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, is not just about showing the good within all of us. These characters are used to show the child like innocence barrowed deep within. The characters are utilized to illustrate the development and depth of maturity and adulthood humans experience daily. "Real courage is" not "a man with a gun in his hand" "It's when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.'

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