



Examining instances of Colour-Based Discrimination in Harper Lee's Novels: *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines racial prejudice in 1930s-1950s America, drawing references from the novels: *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*. It explores how Tom Robinson, a black man in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was denied justice due to the biased white society and its inability to challenge the allegations of a white woman against a black man. The paper also highlights the challenges faced by Atticus Finch, a lawyer defending an innocent black man, and the hostility he encounters from the prejudiced townsfolk. It aims to demonstrate that white attitudes towards black individuals are not fixed and can change over time. The protagonist, Jean Louis Finch, undergoes a transformation, realizing her father's racist beliefs in the second novel. In *Go Set a Watchman*, systematic and political discrimination against black characters is portrayed, illustrating how Atticus Finch's mindset has shifted towards social racism. The author, Lee, skillfully presents these narratives in a linear manner to convey her views on racial discrimination.

Keywords:

Discrimination, Blacks, America, Whites, Superiority.

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INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination encompasses any form of discrimination directed towards individuals based on their skin colour, race, or ethnic origin (OHCHR, 1965). In the United States, this bias against African Americans based on their skin colour persists even today (Monk, 2015). It is not limited to America but prevalent worldwide. Throughout history, racial or ethnic groups have faced discriminatory laws, practices, and actions in America and other countries. Minorities have been systematically denied rights and privileges, while white individuals, particularly European Americans and affluent white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, have often benefited from legally sanctioned advantages such as immigration, citizenship, voting rights, land ownership, and criminal justice procedures (Wikipedia contributors). This issue of racial discrimination has long been intertwined with American literature, with numerous novels and short stories addressing this theme (Race and Prejudice in American Literature | Encyclopedia.com). Among them, Harper Lee's works, namely, ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** and ***Go Set a Watchman***, shed light on the topic of racism.

Nelle Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, a small town in Alabama which replicates the fictional town 'Maycomb' in the novels. Atticus Finch is said to have been based on Lee's father, newspaper editor and humanitarian lawyer Amasa Coleman Lee. In 1919, in his lone criminal case, he unsuccessfully defended two African American men accused of murder. This case was the inspiration for the narrative of ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** (Foca and Fine, 2023). The novel was written in 1930s America. At that time America was going through the years of "Great Depression". The same setting, characters are there in her another novel ***Go Set a Watchman***. In fact, both the novels uphold the racial tension between whites and blacks in pre-war and post-war America. The novel ***Go Set a Watchman*** includes treatments of many of the characters who appear in ***To***



Kill a Mockingbird. The stories in the novel run in a linear manner. Lee has presented two different Scouts; one is 7 years old in ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** and another one is 26 years old ***Go Set a Watchman***. She realizes the changes and differences in his father who once used to be a negro lover now turning into a racist person. This may be shocking. But in societal pressure, this was very common in those days. The whitewashed society did not like the black people and did not want white man to support them.

This research paper aims to explore and analyze the theme of racial prejudice in 1930s-1950s America as depicted in the renowned novels ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** and ***Go Set a Watchman***, written by Harper Lee. The paper delves into the instances of colour-based discrimination, highlighting the social dynamics and racial tensions prevalent during that era. By examining the characters, events, and societal attitudes portrayed in the novels, this research aims to shed light on the ways in which racial prejudice manifests and its lasting impact on individuals and communities.

To Kill a Mockingbird, published in 1960, explores the story of Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama. The narrative unfolds through the eyes of Jean Louise Finch, or Scout, a young white girl who witnesses the trial and experiences the pervasive racism and inequality that shape the lives of African Americans in her community. Through Scout's perspective, Lee depicts the deep-seated biases and systemic discrimination faced by Tom Robinson, who is denied justice solely due to the colour of his skin.

The research paper aims to analyze the character of Atticus Finch, Scout's father and a respected lawyer who defends Tom Robinson in court. Atticus represents a moral compass and the embodiment of justice in the novel, challenging the prevailing racial prejudices of the time. However, the paper will also examine the complexities of



Atticus's character and the societal pressures he faces, which ultimately affect his ability to dismantle the racist structures of Maycomb. By critically examining Atticus's role, this research aims to delve into the challenges and limitations of challenging deeply ingrained racial biases within a predominantly white society.

Furthermore, the research paper will explore the ways in which Harper Lee presents the transformation of Atticus Finch's character in her later novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, published in 2015 but set two decades after the events of ***To Kill a Mockingbird***. ***Go Set a Watchman*** revisits Maycomb, with Scout, now known as Jean Louise, returning to her hometown as an adult. The novel reveals a different side of Atticus, as Jean Louise discovers his involvement with a white supremacist group. This shift in Atticus's mindset reflects the changing political landscape of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the rise of racial tensions during the Civil Rights Movement. By examining this transformation, the paper seeks to delve into the complexities of racial attitudes and the ways in which individuals; even those initially perceived as heroic and just, can harbour deeply ingrained prejudices.

Through a close reading of both novels, this research paper aims to demonstrate the ways in which Harper Lee skillfully depicts racial discrimination and challenges prevailing societal norms. The analysis will examine the social, political, and historical context of the novels to shed light on the systemic racism faced by black individuals and the challenges encountered by those who seek to combat it.

The research paper will adopt a qualitative approach, analyzing the narrative techniques, character development, and thematic elements employed by Harper Lee. Primary sources will include the novels themselves, supplemented by critical analyses, scholarly articles, and historical references that provide insights into racial discrimination in America during the period under consideration.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Rebecca H. Best in his article "Panopticism and the Use of "the Other" in "To Kill a Mockingbird" talks about the theme of bildungsroman. The growth of children' mind is one of the key aspects in this novel, understanding one's social position and the quest to understand the relation between people of different race. Rebecca H. Best in his article cites the exploration of Claudia Durst Johnson about the "Other" where Claudia Durst Johnson finds that the novel "invites the conclusion that we reach some sense of self-identity by our encounters with other forces, that is, with forces alien to our commonplace lives (Best 541). As a result of these encounters, we break the cultural and psychological barriers that imprison us and come to embrace a larger world."

Allen Mendenhall in his article "Children Once, Not Forever: Harper Lee's Go Set a Watchman and Growing Up" have intended to execute the fact that within time, everyone grows up from a child to an adult and starts to realize things from an adult point of view. Jean Louise in To Kill a Mockingbird sees things from a childish perspective but in Go Set a Watchman she observes everything from an adult and matured point of view. Allen Mendenhall in his article cites from the scripture First Epistle to the Corinthians: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (Corinthians 13:11, American King James Version as cited by Allen Mendenhall 6)

This thesis titled "A Structural and Thematic Comparison of Harper Lee's Novels To Kill a Mockingbird and Go Set a Watchman" by Bc. Michaela Friedlová aims to analyze and compare the two novels written by Harper Lee. The author examines the canonical coming-of-age novel, To Kill a Mockingbird and its original precursor, Go Set a Watchman which was published later. The thesis explores the structural and thematic aspects of the novels, considering them through psychological, sociological, and



stylistic perspectives. It also examines the factual similarities and differences in storylines and characters, many of whom are based on Lee's real-life acquaintances. The thesis provides a brief synopsis of each novel, delves into Lee's life and the historical and social background relevant to the stories, such as the Great Depression, Jim Crow laws, and the Scottsboro Trial. The comparison sheds light on the evolution of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a nuanced portrayal of children growing up, contrasted with the more intricate narrative of *Go Set a Watchman* that explores individual development and the realization of fallibility in one's father. The thesis further discusses the settings, timeframes, and narrative perspectives employed in each novel. According to the thesis author, the significant distinction between the two works lies primarily in the dynamic between Jean Louise and her father, resulting in a shift in her perspective on the world. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus Finch stands as a moral exemplar, championing the rights of all individuals and defending an African American man. His daughter, Scout, holds him in high esteem, viewing him as flawless. In her eyes, he embodies a saint-like figure, and his words and actions are beyond reproach. This unwavering admiration makes it particularly challenging for her to come to terms with his imperfections in *Go Set a Watchman* where his stance towards the rights of black people appears to have changed. (Friedlová 53-54)

In Michiko Kakutani's article titled "Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* Gives Atticus Finch a Dark Side," she discusses the shocking revelation in Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman* that Atticus Finch, once regarded as a moral icon in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is portrayed as a racist. Kakutani highlights the disorienting effect this revelation has on readers, who had revered Atticus as a paragon of justice and integrity. The article explores the stark contrast between the characterizations of Atticus in the two novels. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus is depicted as a compassionate and principled figure who

fight for equality and defends a black man wrongly accused of rape. However, in *Go Set a Watchman* set in the 1950s during the civil rights movement, Atticus expresses racist views and aligns himself with anti-integration sentiments. Kakutani raises thought-provoking questions about the evolution of the story from "Watchman" to "Mockingbird." She wonders how a narrative centered on a young woman's discovery of her father's bigotry transformed into a universal tale of innocence lost and societal injustice. The article also reflects on the impact of the decision to make Scout the narrator in "Mockingbird," capturing both her youthful perspective and retrospective wisdom. While "Watchman" may lack the lyricism of "Mockingbird," Kakutani acknowledges its portrayal of the daily rhythms of small-town life and the nuanced characters it presents. She commends Lee's editor's advice to shift the story's focus to Scout's childhood, which enriches the narrative and amplifies the disillusionment experienced by both Scout and Jem. The article concludes by highlighting the contrasting impulses behind the two novels. "Watchman" seemingly emphasizes the worst aspects of Maycomb, exposing racial and class prejudice, while "Mockingbird" strives to see the goodness amidst the hatred and presents an idealized father-daughter relationship. Kakutani suggests that both books share a plea for empathy but differ in whom readers are asked to empathize with—outsiders like Boo and Tom Robinson in "Mockingbird" and a bigot named Atticus in "Watchman." (Kakutani, 2015)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper raises the given question and attempts to answer it,-

- How does Harper Lee portray and explore colour-based discrimination in her novels **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman**, and what are the underlying social and cultural implications?



ANALYSIS

This research aims to analyze the depiction and examination of colour-based discrimination in Harper Lee's novels, **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman**, with a focus on understanding the broader social and cultural implications embedded within the narratives. By closely examining the treatment of characters and their experiences of discrimination based on race and skin colour, this study seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which Lee addresses and critiques the prevailing racial prejudices of her time.

Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal.- -Atticus's closing argument to the jury at Tom Robinson's trial.(Lee, Chapter 20)

Harper Lee's classic novel, **To Kill a Mockingbird**, provides a powerful exploration of racial prejudice and discrimination in 1930s America. At the heart of the narrative stands Atticus Finch, a lawyer and moral compass who fearlessly defends an innocent black man named Tom Robinson against baseless charges of rape. Atticus's unwavering commitment to justice and his willingness to challenge the deeply ingrained racial biases of his community make him a hero figure in the novel. This essay aims to analyze Atticus Finch's portrayal as a heroic character that stands by black individuals, examining his principles, actions, and the broader implications of his stance in the context of racial discrimination.

I. **Atticus Finch: The Moral Compass**

Atticus Finch is introduced as a respected lawyer in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama. He embodies integrity, compassion, and a deep sense of justice, making him a paragon of virtue and the moral compass of the novel. Atticus's commitment to



fairness and equality is evident from the beginning, as he teaches his children, Scout and Jem, about empathy and the importance of treating all individuals with respect, regardless of their race.

Atticus's decision to defend Tom Robinson, a black man wrongly accused of rape, showcases his unwavering belief in the principles of justice. Despite knowing the deeply ingrained racism of Maycomb's white society, Atticus stands firm in his determination to provide Tom with a fair trial. He recognizes the injustice of the situation and strives to ensure that Tom's voice is heard and that he receives equal treatment under the law.

II. Challenging Racial Prejudice: Atticus's Defense of Tom Robinson

Atticus's defense of Tom Robinson becomes a pivotal moment in the novel, where his courage and commitment to justice shine through. Despite overwhelming evidence supporting Tom's innocence, the deeply ingrained racial biases of Maycomb's society make it challenging for Atticus to present a fair case. The town's residents, driven by racial stereotypes and fear, are quick to condemn Tom based solely on his skin colour. Atticus confronts the racial prejudice head-on during the trial, skillfully dismantling the prosecution's case and exposing the inconsistencies in the testimonies. Through his powerful closing argument, Atticus urges the jury to look beyond racial biases and consider the evidence objectively. However, despite his best efforts, the outcome of the trial reflects the entrenched racism of the town, as Tom is unjustly convicted.

III. Atticus's Moral Influence on Scout and Jem

One of the essential aspects of Atticus's character is his influence on his children, Scout and Jem. He instills in them the values of empathy, tolerance, and understanding, teaching them to view individuals beyond the colour of their skin. Atticus's guidance serves as a counterpoint to the racial prejudices prevalent in their community, encouraging them to question and challenge discriminatory beliefs.

Atticus's lessons in empathy are exemplified through his interactions with Boo Radley, a recluse and outsider in Maycomb. He teaches Scout and Jem to empathize with Boo, recognizing the harm that prejudice and gossip can cause. Atticus's wisdom and moral guidance shape Scout and Jem's understanding of racial inequality and fuel their growth as individuals who strive for justice and equality.

IV. The Symbolic Significance of Atticus's Heroism

Atticus Finch's heroism extends beyond his individual character, carrying symbolic significance within the novel. His unwavering dedication to justice and equality represents the potential for change and the overcoming of racial prejudice in society. Atticus serves as a beacon of hope in a town marred by bigotry and discrimination, embodying the ideals of fairness and compassion that can challenge the status quo.

By standing up for Tom Robinson, Atticus becomes a symbol of resistance against the systemic racism that pervades Maycomb. He shows that individuals have the power to challenge and dismantle oppressive systems through their actions and unwavering principles. Atticus's heroism inspires others, including his children, to question the unjust norms of society and strive for a more equitable future.

Furthermore, Atticus's heroism highlights the complexities of human nature and the potential for growth and change. While Maycomb's society is steeped in racial prejudice, Atticus represents a departure from the prevailing attitudes. His character demonstrates that white individuals can overcome the biases ingrained in them and work towards dismantling racial discrimination. This is exemplified in his interactions with Calpurnia, the Finch family's African American housekeeper, whom Atticus treats with respect and dignity, challenging the traditional power dynamics of the time.

Atticus's heroism also raises important questions about the role of individuals in



effecting societal change. Despite the outcome of the trial, his unwavering commitment to justice leaves a lasting impact on those around him. The seeds of doubt and questioning he sows in the minds of Maycomb's residents have the potential to bring about gradual shifts in their perspectives. Atticus's heroism demonstrates that even in the face of overwhelming opposition, individuals can make a difference and pave the way for a more just society.

In Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird**, Atticus Finch emerges as a heroic figure who stands firmly by black individuals in the face of entrenched racial prejudice. His unwavering commitment to justice, moral integrity, and the principles of equality make him an emblem of hope and change in the oppressive society of Maycomb. Through his defense of Tom Robinson, Atticus challenges the prevailing racial biases and confronts the systemic injustice that permeates the town.

Atticus's heroism goes beyond his individual character, carrying symbolic significance within the novel. He represents the potential for change and the overcoming of racial prejudice, inspiring others to question discriminatory beliefs and strive for a more equitable future. Atticus's unwavering dedication to justice highlights the complexities of human nature and the capacity for growth and transformation, even in the face of deeply ingrained biases.

Ultimately, Atticus Finch's heroism in standing by black people in **To Kill a Mockingbird** serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of challenging systemic injustice, promoting empathy, and working towards a society that values equality and justice for all, regardless of race.

"Jean Louise, have you ever considered that you can't have a set of backward people living among people advanced in one kind of civilization and have a social Arcadia?..." You realize that our Negro population is backward, don't



you? You will concede that?" - Atticus Finch (Galehouse, 2015)

Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman* presents a significant departure from her iconic work **To Kill a Mockingbird**, particularly in its portrayal of the central character, Atticus Finch. In this chapter, we will explore the transformation of Atticus from the revered hero in the first novel to a complex and flawed character in **Go Set a Watchman**. Through a close analysis of Atticus's shifting perspectives on race and society, we will examine the implications of this change in terms of character development, moral complexity, and the larger societal context.

Atticus's Moral Complexity

In **Go Set a Watchman**, Atticus Finch is no longer the unwavering champion of justice and equality that readers encountered in **To Kill a Mockingbird**. Instead, he emerges as a character with morally ambiguous beliefs, grappling with the changing racial dynamics of the 1950s South. Atticus's transition from a hero figure to a flawed individual raises profound questions about the nature of heroism and the complexities of human character. By presenting Atticus with a more nuanced and contradictory set of beliefs, Lee challenges readers to confront the inherent contradictions within even the most admirable individuals.

The Influence of Setting and Time

The change in Atticus's character can be attributed, in part, to the novel's setting and the era in which it takes place. **Go Set a Watchman** is set in the 1950s, a time of significant social and political upheaval in the United States. The civil rights movement was gaining momentum, challenging the prevailing racial hierarchies, and demanding equal rights for African Americans. Atticus's transformation reflects the broader shift in societal attitudes towards race during this period. It is essential to consider the impact of this changing social landscape on Atticus's worldview and the pressures he faces to



conform to the prevailing norms of his community.

Jean Louise's Perspective

The readers experience Atticus's change through the eyes of his daughter, Jean Louise Finch (Scout). Jean Louise, who idolized her father in **To Kill a Mockingbird**, is deeply disillusioned upon discovering his racist beliefs in **Go Set a Watchman**. Her perspective serves as a lens through which readers can navigate the complexities of Atticus's transformation and grapple with their own emotions of disappointment and betrayal. Jean Louise's journey of self-discovery and her struggle to reconcile her image of her father with the reality of his racial biases mirrors the larger societal reckoning with ingrained prejudice.

The Significance of Atticus's Transformation

Atticus's transformation in **Go Set a Watchman** holds significant implications beyond the confines of the novel itself. It challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the complexities of human nature and the potential for even the most admirable figures to hold prejudiced beliefs. Atticus's change serves as a stark reminder that heroes are not infallible, and their flaws should be acknowledged and critically examined. Furthermore, the transformation of Atticus speaks to the broader evolution of societal attitudes towards race and the complexities of navigating racial issues in a changing world.

The Novel's Contribution to Racial Discourse

Go Set a Watchman's portrayal of Atticus's transformation adds depth and complexity to the ongoing discourse on race and racial attitudes. By revealing the flaws and contradictions within a revered character, Lee challenges readers to critically examine their own biases and preconceptions. The novel forces us to confront the uncomfortable truth that progress, and enlightenment do not always come in a linear



fashion, and even those who fight for justice can harbour deeply ingrained prejudices. Atticus's change invites readers to engage in introspection and consider the ways in which their own beliefs and perceptions may be influenced by societal norms and expectations.

Atticus's transformation in **Go Set a Watchman** serves as a powerful reminder that individuals are not immune to the influence of their surroundings and the prevailing attitudes of their time. As a respected lawyer and member of the Maycomb community, Atticus is not immune to the deeply ingrained racial prejudices that permeate the society in which he lives. Lee's portrayal of Atticus's change prompts readers to reflect on their own susceptibility to societal pressures and to question the extent to which their beliefs may be shaped by the prevailing norms of their own communities.

Furthermore, Atticus's transformation challenges the notion of heroes and the idealization of individuals. In **To Kill a Mockingbird**, Atticus is presented as an unwavering hero, embodying justice and righteousness. However, **Go Set a Watchman** shatters this idealized image and forces readers to grapple with the complexities and contradictions of human character. Atticus's flaws and prejudices serve as a stark reminder that even those we admire can possess deeply flawed beliefs. This realization calls into question the very nature of heroism and encourages readers to critically evaluate the individuals they admire, recognizing that they too may be fallible. By presenting Atticus's transformation within the context of the civil rights movement of the 1950s, Lee highlights the broader societal shifts occurring during that time. The novel captures the tension and resistance faced by individuals grappling with changing racial dynamics and the dismantling of deeply entrenched systems of inequality. Atticus's change represents a microcosm of the larger societal struggle to



confront and overcome systemic racism. It serves as a poignant reminder that progress is not always linear, and that the fight for equality requires ongoing self-reflection and examination of one's own biases.

Ultimately, **Go Set a Watchman** contributes to the racial discourse by challenging readers to critically examine their own beliefs and biases. By presenting Atticus's transformation, the novel prompts introspection and encourages readers to confront uncomfortable truths about their own prejudices. It underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue and self-reflection in the pursuit of racial equality and justice.

In Chapter II of **Go Set a Watchman**, Harper Lee presents a significant transformation of the hero figure, Atticus Finch. By revealing his flaws and prejudices, Lee challenges readers to critically examine their own beliefs and confront the complexities of human character. Atticus's change serves as a powerful commentary on the influence of societal norms, the fallibility of heroes, and the ongoing struggle for racial equality. *Go Set a Watchman*'s contribution to the racial discourse lies in its ability to prompt readers to engage in introspection and recognize the need for continuous self-reflection in the pursuit of justice and equality. Through the evolution of Atticus's character, the novel invites readers to actively participate in the discourse on race and to confront the uncomfortable truths that may lie within themselves.

Colourism developed in the United States during a time when human enslavement was a regular practice. Fairer-skinned slaves were frequently treated preferentially by their captors. Light-skinned slaves typically worked indoors at significantly less arduous domestic jobs while dark-skinned slaves toiled outdoors in the fields (Rahman 2). Because they were frequently family members, enslavers preferred light-skinned slaves. The light-skinned offspring of enslaved people were the clear indicators of these sexual assaults, which regularly pushed enslaved women into sex (Foster,2022). Even though



their mixed-race children weren't formally recognised by their masters, they were granted privileges that dark-skinned slaves weren't allowed. As a result, having pale complexion was valued in the society of the enslaved. Outside of the US, colourism might have more to do with class than with white supremacy. Colourism is thought to have existed in Asian nations prior to European contact, even though colonialism by Europeans surely left its influence on the world. The belief that white skin is preferable to black skin may have originated in that region since the ruling classes often have paler complexions than the peasant classes. The rich had lighter complexions since they did not work outside in the sun like peasants who eventually became tanned. Dark skin consequently came to represent the lower classes while pale skin represented the elite.

In **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman** Harper Lee examines Southern bigotry against African Americans. **Go Set a Watchman** shows that racial stereotypes persist in Maycomb, Alabama, despite **To Kill a Mockingbird** is more known for it.

There is a need to understand both works' racial prejudices and explain why they must be highlighted to understand better underrepresented communities' challenges (Clottey and Clottey 24). **To Kill a Mockingbird** follows the trial of a black man wrongfully convicted of sexually assaulting a white woman. An honourable attorney, Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson amid widespread prejudice, showing Maycomb society's systemic bigotry. The courtroom drama powerfully depicts racial injustice (Noorwood 48). African Americans are mistreated and made to sit on the balcony during the event. This trial represents racial inequality in this community and the South.

In **To Kill a Mockingbird** Harper Lee uses a variety of settings and individuals to show how ubiquitous prejudice is. Mayella Ewell and her racist father, Bob Ewell, are great examples of ignorance-based hate (Harold 49). Mayella's fabricated complaint against Tom Robinson shows how some white people exploit their status to persecute others. Lee utilizes Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose to show the older generation's racial



intolerance (Walker et al., 116). Her racist remarks about Atticus supporting a black man show how prejudice is passed down (Vang 69). Atticus defending a black man prompted her remarks.

Although **To Kill a Mockingbird** is often compared, **Go Set a Watchman** offers a fresh perspective on racial inequity. In the 1950s, twenty years after **To Kill a Mockingbird** an adult Scout battles disillusionment after realizing that her father and others in her tiny community were bigoted. **Go Set a Watchman** predates **To Kill a Mockingbird** despite its later publication (Kramer and Schierz 32). **Go Set a Watchman** was published before **To Kill a Mockingbird** yet it could be seen as an exploration of Scout's evolution as she experiences prejudice (Lee 34).

In **Go Set a Watchman** Scout visits Maycomb and witnesses its racism. In **To Kill a Mockingbird** Scout and Jem's hero, Atticus Finch, supports segregation. Scout's dramatic and emotional confrontation with her father's racism makes her rethink her thoughts about him and the community she once loved (Lee 67). Lee highlights how difficult it is to overcome discrimination and how even justice advocates are susceptible to social influences and biases by following Scout's development (Tharps 48). Scout's story illustrates reality. Further, both stories feature brief instances of bigotry that highlight the challenges minorities face today (Landor and Barr 103). Colour discrimination, bigotry, and institutional racism are prevalent. Lee's two novels about racism challenge readers to confront painful truths and assess their complicity in repressive systems.

Lee's writings also explore racism's foundations, not just its manifestations. It examines the most destructive forms of prejudice and their origins in institutionalized and individual biases (Meeta 108). In **To Kill a Mockingbird** Aunt Alexandra symbolizes Maycomb's racism and classism. Her inflexibility and hatred toward lower-class people

perpetuate prejudice and injustice (Monroe 99). In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Maycomb, Alabama's racist school system is a microcosm. Scout's school shows unfair teaching and rough treatment of African American children. Black children are segregated into inferior classrooms, promoting racial supremacy (Audrey 61). Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird** character Calpurnia, the Finch family's African American housekeeper, addresses educational disparity. Calpurnia's illiteracy shows African Americans' educational struggles. Calpurnia, a mother and wise woman has no formal education. Tom Robinson is a striking allegory for the book's theme of dehumanization and scapegoating of African Americans (Audrey 82). Tom, an innocent man wrongly convicted owing to his colour, became a symbol of African American justice system discrimination. Lee portrays Tom as strong and honourable despite their looming misbehaviour (Wibke 105). She emphasizes the tragedy of racial prejudice in our culture with his persona.

Borrell et al. (71) state that colourism has long plagued the US. Systematic racism, colonialism, and slavery led to this pervasive issue that affects modern American society. Colourism favours lighter skin tones over darker ones (Mitchell 73). Colourism has visibly impacted the US through unequal treatment and opportunity for people of different skin tones. Lighter-skinned people have had more social, economic, and educational chances (Brown 17). The false idea that a lighter complexion denotes more intelligence, beauty, and social prestige than darker skin explains this trend (Russell-Brown 83).

Colourism also shaped American beauty and style. Media and entertainment have promoted Eurocentric beauty standards like fair skin, straight or gently wavy hair, and Eurocentric facial characteristics (Canache et al. 49). Restrictive beauty standards for darker complexions can lead to low self-esteem, body image difficulties, and a desire to



meet these unattainable standards. Colourism harms American relationships (Coates 14). Some studies have indicated that lighter-skinned persons are more accepted by their own and other ethnic groups. However, darker-skinned people may endure prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping even within their people, limiting their social and economic growth. The legal system also exhibits racism (Monk 57). Studies demonstrate that lighter-skinned people are more likely to be acquitted and obtain shorter sentences (Noorwood 28). This prejudice stems from long-held appearance-based biases and exacerbates inequalities and injustices.

US anti-racists have increased their efforts in recent decades. Communities, scholars, and activists have sought to expand perspectives, challenge beauty standards, and promote racial and ethnic variety (Ellis et al. 93). The 1960s and 1970s Black Is Beautiful movement promoted African American beauty to fight Eurocentric beauty standards (Edward 93). Social media and grassroots organizations continue to elevate the voices of colourism victims, spurring debate and advancing diversity and inclusion.

Lee stresses the income discrepancy between black and white neighbourhoods to demonstrate how racism promotes poverty and limits possibilities for people of colour. The Cunninghams, poor white farmers, were more privileged than African Americans. In a prejudiced culture, race and class are intertwined (Glenn 111). In *Go Set a Watchman* Harper Lee examines how internalized racism affects underprivileged populations. Lee investigates how even the most giving people can be prejudiced (Subini 93) through Scout's medical uncle, Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack's response to Scout's question regarding her father's prejudice demonstrated the difficulties of eliminating bigotry and reaching racial equality.

Go Set a Watchman encourages activism and collective action against inequity. The 1950s Civil Rights Movement provides context for the novel's events (Hall 92). This



movement shows the power of grassroots activism. Lee depicts Reverend Zeebo, Jean Louise's childhood friend and racial justice activist, as one of the town's most influential activists (Rothstein 16). Lee sprinkles the novel with activist sections to emphasize that individual action can overthrow tyrannical systems. Moreover, both pieces show how racism affects people, communities, and societies worldwide (Russell-Cole 131). These studies show how racism permeates our culture, from classrooms and courts to personal relationships and the mind (Kenneth 66). Harper Lee encourages her readers to examine their biases, combat oppressive systems, and create a more equitable and inclusive society by highlighting different forms of discrimination.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF EXAMINING INSTANCES OF COLOUR-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN HARPER LEE'S NOVELS: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD AND GO SET A WATCHMAN

As scholars and researchers delve into the study of racial prejudice in literature, the examination of Harper Lee's novels *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman* continues to provide valuable insights into the complex nature of colour-based discrimination. This essay explores the future implications of this research, highlighting its significance in shaping our understanding of historical and contemporary racial dynamics, promoting social awareness, and fostering a more inclusive society. By uncovering the intricacies of racial prejudice within these novels, scholars can pave the way for a deeper exploration of racial issues in literature and society.

HISTORICAL RELEVANCE AND EDUCATIONAL VALUE

One significant future implication of this research is its contribution to historical understanding and education. By closely analyzing the racial dynamics presented in Lee's novels, scholars can shed light on the social, political, and cultural context of the 1930s-1950s in America. This research provides a nuanced portrayal of the challenges faced by marginalized communities, offering valuable insights into the experiences of African Americans during that period. It enables readers to comprehend the historical



struggles and injustices faced by black individuals, fostering empathy, and encouraging a more accurate understanding of the past.

Furthermore, incorporating these novels into educational curricula can serve as a powerful tool in promoting social awareness and empathy among students. By engaging with the themes of racial discrimination, justice, and morality, young minds can develop a critical lens through which they view contemporary racial issues. This research contributes to the development of educational materials that encourage dialogue, promote diversity, and foster an understanding of the long-lasting impact of racial prejudice.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

The exploration of racial prejudice in literature extends beyond the boundaries of the literary field. The research presented in this essay opens avenues for interdisciplinary connections and collaborations. Scholars from fields such as history, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies can draw upon the insights gained from the examination of these novels to enhance their own research on race, discrimination, and social dynamics. By integrating perspectives from various disciplines, researchers can develop comprehensive and multi-faceted analyses of racial prejudice, leading to a more holistic understanding of its complexities.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

While the novels by Harper Lee provide a lens into the historical context of racial discrimination, they also hold contemporary relevance in today's society. The examination of these texts offers valuable lessons that can inform ongoing discussions on racial equality, social justice, and the fight against systemic racism. By analyzing the characters, events, and societal attitudes within the novels, scholars can draw parallels to current issues and ignite conversations about the persistence of racial prejudices.

Moreover, this research can inspire social activism and encourage individuals to challenge their own biases and actively work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society. The critical examination of these novels prompts readers to reflect on



their own beliefs and attitudes, fostering a sense of responsibility to confront and dismantle racial discrimination in all its forms. By emphasizing the transformative potential of literature, this research can fuel the passion for social change and inspire individuals to become advocates for racial equality.

LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF INTERPRETATION

The exploration of racial prejudice in Lee's novels contributes to the ever-evolving field of literary criticism. As scholars continue to analyze these texts, new insights and interpretations can emerge, enriching our understanding of the complex themes and symbols present in the works. The research presented here can serve as a foundation for future literary analyses, inviting scholars to explore other dimensions of racial prejudice, such as the role of language, narrative techniques, and symbolism in conveying the authors' messages.

The future implications of examining instances of colour-based discrimination in Harper Lee's novels are far-reaching and hold significant value in shaping our understanding of racial prejudice in both historical and contemporary contexts. Through the critical analysis of **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman**, scholars can contribute to the fields of history, education, interdisciplinary studies, social activism, and literary criticism.

CONCLUSION

Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman** offer a profound exploration of Southern bigotry, colourism, and the pervasive nature of institutional racism. Through vivid storytelling and compelling characters, Lee delves into the social, political, and cultural contexts of the 1930s to the 1950s in America, providing a nuanced portrayal of the challenges faced by marginalized communities. These novels document the historical struggles and injustices endured by African Americans, prompting readers to confront their own biases and societal norms that perpetuate discrimination.



The examination of racial prejudice in Lee's novels has far-reaching implications for multiple fields of study. Historically, this research enriches our understanding of the era's racial dynamics, fostering empathy and a more accurate comprehension of the past. In educational settings, these novels serve as powerful tools for promoting social awareness, encouraging dialogue on racial issues, and developing a critical lens through which students can view contemporary societal challenges.

Furthermore, this research bridges interdisciplinary gaps, inviting collaborations between scholars of history, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and literature. By integrating diverse perspectives, researchers can develop a comprehensive understanding of racial prejudice and its complexities, leading to more holistic analyses and insights.

In contemporary contexts, the themes explored in Lee's works remain highly relevant. They offer valuable lessons for ongoing discussions on racial equality, social justice, and the fight against systemic racism. The critical examination of these texts can inspire social activism, urging individuals to challenge their own prejudices and actively work toward a more inclusive and equitable society. By emphasizing the transformative potential of literature, this research underscores the importance of engaging with these novels to fuel the passion for social change and to inspire individuals to become advocates for racial equality.

Lee's exploration of characters such as Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson, and Scout Finch provides readers with a lens to understand the complexities of human nature and the societal pressures that shape individuals' beliefs and actions. In **To Kill a Mockingbird**, Atticus Finch is portrayed as a champion of justice, while in **Go Set a Watchman**, his character is revealed to be more morally complex, reflecting the broader societal shifts and the persistence of racial prejudices. This transformation challenges readers to critically examine the notion of heroism and the fallibility of individuals.

The future implications of studying colour-based discrimination in **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman** extend into the evolving field of literary



criticism. Continuous analysis and interpretation of these texts can yield new insights and perspectives, enriching our understanding of the complex themes and symbols within the works. This ongoing scholarship not only deepens literary appreciation but also contributes to broader social and cultural discourses.

In conclusion, Harper Lee's novels are more than literary masterpieces; they are catalysts for critical thought and social progress. By shedding light on the intricacies of racial prejudice, they challenge readers to examine their own beliefs, advocate for justice, and contribute to a more inclusive society. The enduring relevance of **To Kill a Mockingbird** and **Go Set a Watchman** lies in their ability to inspire introspection, empathy, and a commitment to combating racial discrimination in all its forms. Through their examination of historical and contemporary racial dynamics, these novels continue to provide valuable insights and foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of race and prejudice.

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