

Prejudice is a common problem during the early quarter of the twentieth century. In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* this problem is evident in Maycomb. Boo Radley, Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson are all victims of prejudice, and all three characters are plagued by this. It affects them all differently; crippling them and disabling them from acting as they wish.

In the novel, Boo Radley is a victim of prejudice. Boo Radley is not accepted nor does he fit into Maycomb society because he is different from others. He is not normal so he is punished by a society that is very judgmental. Boo does not act like a normal person. In society, his actions are mysterious and abnormal. One day Boo was cutting the newspaper with scissors, and when his father passed "Boo drove the scissors into his parent's leg, pulled them out, wiped them on his pants, and resumed his activity"(Lee, 11). Boo just sat there after stabbing his father. He did not apologize or feel remorse for his actions.

Boo Radley isolates himself from the people of Maycomb. Boo stays inside his home all day and nobody ever sees him. After some trouble with the law, "Mr. Radley's boy was not seen again for fifteen years"(10). If Boo chooses to go outside, he will be unfairly viewed as a visitor from abroad because of his mysterious ways. Boo stays inside his home because he knows that his society will ridicule him. After being isolated for so many years, Boo is developmentally challenged. Boo has lost his basic social skills and will not survive outside of his home. Boo is the object of rumors and is viewed as the town's erratic figure. The town speculates what he does inside his home. People believe that Boo "went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in windows... any stealthy small crimes committed in Maycomb were his work"(9). The town would blame or accuse Boo for any little crime or unexplained phenomenon. Children speculate as well as the adults. Jem speculates to Dill "Boo was about six and a half feet tall, ... there was a long jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped, and he drooled most of the time"(13). This is an example of prejudice in the novel because the children speculate and fabricate ideas of what this human does. The town portrays Boo Radley as a monstrosity in their society when he is just an individual who made mistakes and is a little bit diversified. This is an example of the crippling affect that prejudice has on a person.

Atticus Finch is another victim of prejudice in the novel. After the appointment to defend Tom Robinson, a black person, the town exhibits prejudice towards him. The townspeople believe that Atticus should not present a proper defense for a black person, but Atticus fully intends to do so because he believes in equal rights and does not believe in prejudice or racism.

Atticus Finch is the object of vicious comments by the townspeople. Many do not believe that Atticus should defend a black person in court because, in their biased opinion, a black person is guilty before the case is brought to trial. Mr. Bob Ewell confronts Atticus after the trial at the post office corner, spits in his face and says 'Too proud to fight, you nigger-lovin' bastard?... 'No, too old'(217). This does not bother Atticus because he knows that he is doing the right thing defending Tom properly.

Atticus's children have to confront comments by family and people in their neighborhood throughout the novel. In an incident at a family gathering Francis Finch tells Scout 'Grandma says it's bad enough he lets you all run wild, but now he is turning out to be a nigger-lover... he's ruinin' the family, that's what he's doin'"(83). Scout is confused about these comments and is not sure what they mean. One evening Scout asks Atticus "What exactly is a nigger-lover?"(108). Atticus responds to Scout and explains the term to her so that her ignorance will no longer bother her. Jem is also faced with a similar situation with Mrs. Dubose. She tells Jem, "Your father is no better than the niggers and trash he works for"(102). Jem understands what Mrs. Dubose says and lashes back at her destroying her flowers. Jem and Scout also hear Aunt Alexandra and Atticus arguing one night "she won't let him alone about Tom Robinson. She almost said Atticus was disgracin' the

family"(147). These comments are hard for the children and Atticus.

Tom Robinson is a victim of prejudice in Maycomb because of his race. Tom is black and accused of raping a white woman. Being a Negro in Maycomb during the nineteen thirties is difficult. During the trial Mr. Gilmer insinuates that Tom is guilty of raping Mayella Ewell because he has a previous conviction. Mr. Gilmer posed the question, 'What did the nigger look like when you got through with him?'... Atticus raised his head 'it was a misdemeanor and it's in the record'(196). By reason of Tom's inferior skin color he is judged to be a hurtful person in society.

Tom Robinson flees the Ewell's home after Mr. Ewell sees Mayella kiss him. At this point Tom has no other alternative. Mr. Gilmer questions Tom, 'Why did you run so fast?'... 'It weren't safe for any nigger to be in a-fix like that.'... 'you weren't in a fix... were you scared she was going to hurt you?'... "No suh, I's scared I'd be in court...scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do"(198) In the thirties a white person's word is superior to that of a black person's. Mr. Gilmer demonstrates this as he cross examines Tom on the witness stand. Mr. Gilmer questions Tom's word, 'you say she's lying, boy?'(197). This proves that even if Mayella is lying, the White community will believe her before the believe any honest or dishonest Black.

Tom Robinson is unfairly treated on the witness stand by Mr. Gilmer. Mr. Gilmer, the prosecuting attorney is disrespectful towards Tom. He treats Tom as if he is a child and refers to him as "boy"(197) when he is in fact a grown man with a family. Dill realizes 'that old Mr. Gilmer doin' him thataway, talking so hateful to him'(198). Mr. Gilmer is also disrespectful to the Black race referring to them as "niggers"(196) throughout out the trial.

The town of Maycomb displays prejudice against Boo Radley, Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson in different ways. They are all indefensible in society and there is nothing they can say or do to prevent discrimination against themselves. By the end of the novel, Maycomb seems to begin a positive change from prejudice. Society is now beginning to understand that Boo, Atticus and Tom's differences are what give them character and without their differences, life in Maycomb would be monotonous.

