

Abbey Allen

English I Honors

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Mysterious Judgement

During the Great Depression in the deep south, where acceptance is low and perfection is treasured, stereotypes and false assumptions are at an all time high. Being anything other than the norm seems to throw off society in a major way. In this book, many people stick to their guns and cause much controversy, which shows how corrupt the South is in this time period. With many different lifestyles portrayed throughout the book, symbolism plays a big role in showing how they are all the same positions. Harper uses the symbol of the Radley Place to develop the theme that nightmares can become saviors, curiosity can create hope, and digging deeper reveals the truth.

Usually being afraid comes from the unknown, and the Radley place is the perfect definition of the unknown. "Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom, people said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in windows"(Lee 9). This quote represents that no one really knows Boo Radley, but there are still rumors being created about him because he doesn't ever socialize with the people of Maycomb and is classified as an extreme introvert. "I never heard tell that it's against the law for a citizen to do his utmost to prevent a crime from being committed, which is exactly what he did, but maybe you'll say it's my duty to tell the town all about it and not hush it up", said Heck Tate (Lee 317). This quote is relevant because it shows, near the end of the book, how Boo

Radley saved Jem from Bob Ewell while coming home from the pageant and letting readers understand that he cares about his “friends” and is a brave, courageous character, and not what everyone believes he is.

With not much to do in this rural Southern town there must be a little curiosity, which Scout and Jem are not afraid to participate in. Ernest Dimmet once stated, “Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.” This applies to the many scenes in the book where Scout is perceived to be too young or too ignorant and must play detective on her own terms. She is not afraid to unveil the truth, but instead she wants to learn the truth that her community has been neglecting for a long period of time. “We spat ourselves dry, and Jem opened the gate slowly, lifting it aside and resting it on the fence. We were in the back yard. The back of the Radley place was less inviting than the front.” (Lee 58). They are taking themselves on an adventure to get a closer look at who the real Boo Radley is and how he lives, though it doesn’t give them much to work with, they never give up on finding the genuine Arthur Radley.

Every good detective knows that digging deeper will always lead to the truth, and this is what Scout’s main goal is while dealing with Arthur Radley. Marcus Aurelius once said, “Look within. Within is the fountain of good, and it will ever bubble up, if thou wilt ever dig.” This expresses exactly what is happening when the community of Maycomb makes false assumptions about the town outcast, Boo Radley, without ever meeting him and finding out his real personality. “One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough”(Lee 31). This ties in the no judgement theme about the entire book and also Tom Robinson’s court case where he clearly

was innocent, but somehow managed to be found guilty by false assumptions and witnesses because of his skin color, without digging deeper.

This simple, mysterious house in the rural town of Maycomb, Alabama is one of the biggest symbols in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Not only does it represent how a childlike curiosity is what people miss out on in life, but also it shows how digging deeper can reveal the truth. Many life lessons can be learned from this book, but one of the most important themes is to not judge a book by its cover and to dig deeper before false statements are made about anything. Though this seems like a simple concept, many continue the trend of using judgment before knowledge, that has been around for many decades. This may not change anytime soon, but it does give an accurate representation of what life was like in the Great Depression and how history is always capable of repeating.

Works Cited:

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