

Rubric: Racism and Justice in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Categories & Standards of Achievement

1. Thesis, Argument, and Structure

- **Excellent (4 points):** Presents a clear, insightful, and arguable thesis statement that offers a nuanced interpretation of racism and justice in the novel. The essay is logically organised with coherent paragraphs, smooth transitions, and a strong introduction and conclusion that synthesises the argument effectively.
 - **Good (3 points):** Presents a clear thesis statement. The argument is generally logical and organised, though some transitions may be abrupt or some points less relevant to the main argument.
 - **Developing (2 points):** The thesis statement is present but may be unclear or too broad. The organisation is loose, with some paragraphs lacking focus or a clear connection to the main argument.
 - **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks a clear thesis or logical structure, making the argument difficult to follow.
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2. Understanding of Racism & Social Hierarchy

- **Excellent (4 points):** Provides a comprehensive and nuanced explanation of racism as depicted in the novel, including systemic injustice, the rigid social hierarchy of Maycomb (e.g., Finches, Cunninghams, Ewells, the Black community), and casual bigotry.
 - **Good (3 points):** Defines racism in general terms and acknowledges its connection to the social class divisions in the novel.
 - **Developing (2 points):** Provides a basic or limited definition of racism, possibly focusing only on overt acts of prejudice without exploring the systemic aspects.
 - **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks a clear explanation or fundamentally misunderstands how racism functions within the context of the novel.
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3. Analysis of Characters & Moral Growth

- **Excellent (4 points):** Offers an in-depth analysis of how key characters experience, perpetuate, or challenge racism. Critically examines Atticus's moral courage (and may consider the "white savior" critique), the children's loss of innocence and developing moral conscience, and the symbolic role of victims like Tom Robinson and Boo Radley as "mockingbirds."
- **Good (3 points):** Identifies the main characters' roles in relation to the theme of racism and justice and acknowledges the children's moral development.
- **Developing (2 points):** Briefly states character roles but lacks detailed analysis of their

motivations, moral complexities, or development.

- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Misunderstands or does not address the key characters' relationship to the novel's central themes.
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4. Literary Devices and Contextual Understanding

- **Excellent (4 points):** Astutely analyzes key literary devices such as symbolism (e.g., the mockingbird), narrative perspective (Scout's naive, first-person narration), and characterisation to support the argument. Effectively integrates the historical context of the Jim Crow South in the 1930s to explain the novel's depiction of racism.
 - **Good (3 points):** Discusses some key literary devices and their connection to the themes. Shows a general understanding of the 1930s context and its relevance.
 - **Developing (2 points):** Identifies a few literary elements but provides limited analysis of their significance. Mentions the historical context but does not fully integrate it into the argument.
 - **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Fails to incorporate literary analysis or historical context, or uses them inaccurately.
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5. Use of Evidence and Citation

- **Excellent (4 points):** Integrates specific, relevant textual evidence (direct quotes and paraphrases) from the novel and any provided sources seamlessly and effectively to support all claims. Evidence is meticulously cited, and the essay provides an insightful explanation of how the evidence supports the argument.
 - **Good (3 points):** Uses relevant textual evidence to support most claims. Citations are mostly accurate, but the explanation of evidence could be more developed.
 - **Developing (2 points):** Uses some textual evidence, but it may be limited, not always relevant, or poorly integrated. Citations may be inconsistent or inaccurate.
 - **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks textual evidence or uses it inappropriately. Citations are missing or consistently incorrect.
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6. Language and Style

- **Excellent (4 points):** Demonstrates sophisticated vocabulary, varied sentence structure, and precise academic language. The writing is clear, concise, and free of errors. The tone is academic and objective, acknowledging the novel's use of offensive language as a product of its time without endorsing it.
- **Good (3 points):** Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. The writing is generally clear with few grammatical or spelling errors.
- **Developing (2 points):** Vocabulary is basic, and sentence structure may be repetitive. Contains several errors that hinder clarity, and the tone may be informal at times.

- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Frequent and significant errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation impede understanding. The language is informal or inappropriate for an academic essay.

Total Score: _____ / 24