

# Example by StudyDriver

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## The Social Issue of Racism Example

The social issue of racism is one of the biggest problems facing the world and has been for ages. Racism is discrimination against a group solely based on race. Racist people believe that they are superior to the other races. Discrimination against races can happen to any race; however, in America it occurs most often against African Americans. For hundreds years, African Americans have been oppressed and discriminated against. Racism is a theme in many books, movies, poems, and other pieces of art. To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee and the Bible are two examples of books with racism as a theme. The lessons we learn about racism in To Kill a Mockingbird parallel the second part of Jesus's greatest commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

The history of racism in America started when the colonies were founded. Slavery came to North America in the early 1600s. The colonist needed free or cheap labor on their fields. Slavery became a way of life in North America. For years, people rebelled against slavery but the slave industry continued to grow. In 1831, a man named Nat Turner led one of the most well known rebellions against white slave owners. He gathered many slave recruits and murdered 60 white slave owners. This rebellion got peoples attention and exhibited a want for change. In the 1830s, the Underground Railroad began its efforts to help slaves reach freedom. Many African

Americans and whites helped with the Underground Railroad.

They helped free thousands of slaves. In 1861, the Civil War occurred. The Civil War was a battle between the North and the South. The Confederate States of America formed when eleven southern states tried to secede from the Union. The election of President Abraham Lincoln, the first republican president, prompted the southern states to try to leave the Union. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in the United States. Despite the fact that the South lost the war and that the government abolished slavery, people's hearts did not change. Whites continued to discriminate against blacks. In 1896, this attitude of hate led to the Jim Crow Laws and segregation began. Segregation is the idea that people are separate but are still equal. This caused even more tension between whites and blacks.

African Americans in the 1930s experienced lots of racial discrimination. Violence became even more common. The Ku Klux Klan, a racial hate group, tried to scare African Americans from voting and speaking out against the oppression. The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1866 and is still continues today. Unspeakable racist violent acts were performed by the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK murdered, lynched, and destroyed the lives of many black people. Ku Klux Klan members were white supremacists who could not except African American as equal citizens. The worst part is, many people supported this group. In the 1920s, the KKK had around 4 million members.

In the 1930s, the Great Depression affected everyone in the United States but the African Americans were greatly impacted. In many cities, African Americans were fired so that the businesses could hire unemployed whites. Segregation was also still very prominent. African Americans had separate churches, bathrooms, schools, and water fountains. Many of these separate facilities for colored people were rundown and not as nice as the white facilities. There were many rebellions against the Jim Crow Laws but it wasn't until 1964 that the Civil Rights Act was created. The Civil Rights Act made it illegal to discriminate against any person regardless of race, religion, and gender.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is about discrimination against race. Jean Louise Finch, Scout, and Jem Finch are the children of a lawyer named Atticus Finch. The story is narrated by Scout. In the small town of Maycomb,

Alabama, the citizens are suffering through the Great Depression. In the beginning of the story, Jem, Scout, and their friend, Dill, are intrigued by a spooky house in their neighborhood. The house belongs to local recluse Boo Radley. Although no one really knows Boo, he described almost monster-like. Jem says, "Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that's why his hands were bloodstained--if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off.

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." (Lee 16) Later in the book, Scout attends school for the first time and hates it. She is exposed to racism and sexism in the school. Later in the book, Tom Robinson, an African-American man, is accused of raping a white woman. Atticus Finch decides to defend him. Due to this, the Finch family suffers ridicule from racist whites.

Tom Robinson faces many hardships including almost being lynched by white supremacists. When the trial finally arrives, Atticus proves to the jury that Tom Robinson is innocent. Mayella Ewell, the woman accusing him, lies about Tom Robinson because she felt guilty when her father caught her coming on to Tom. Mr. Finch proves that the wounds on Mayella's face were not from Tom but from her father. Despite clear evidence to the contrary, the truth did not change the all-white jury's decision. Ultimately, the jury convicts Tom Robinson. Tom is put in prison but later tries to escape. He is shot and killed. Bob Ewell, Mayella Ewell's father, tries to get revenge on Atticus for making a fool of him. He attacks Jem and Scout. Luckily Boo Radley is there to save them. Despite their preconceived beliefs about Boo, this teaches the kids learn not to judge someone without knowing them. Scout learns how to be a sympathetic and kind person. She experiences racism but learns that it is caused by uneducated hatred. Scout and Jem grow as people and learn that the hardships they have faced should not sway them away from being good people.

There are many examples of racism in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Three of these are when the citizens call African Americans the n-word, two white people falsely accuse a black man of rape, and an all-white jury convicts a black man despite evidence that he is innocent. An example of derogatory language against African Americans is when

Mrs. Dubose says to Jem, "Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!" (Lee 229). In the book, Mayella and Bob Ewell accuse Tom Robinson of rape. Mayella Ewell was embarrassed because she was flirting with Tom and her father caught her. She said that Tom raped her to cover it up. During the trial, Atticus Finch proves that Tom Robinson did not rape Mayella Ewell. The all-white jury still sentences him to prison. Racism in this book is very prominent. Those are just three examples of the many racist events that happen within *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Harper Lee grew up during a time of racism and segregation. She also lived in Alabama where racism was very prominent. *To Kill A Mockingbird* is not an auto-biography but there are aspects of the book that are similar to what Harper Lee could have experienced. Born in 1927, Lee grew up during the Great Depression and during the middle of segregation. The book is set during the Great Depression and in the middle of segregation. During the time the story was set, the main character Scout would have been around the same age as Lee. The book is also set in Alabama which is where Lee was born.

Scout ends up learning that racism and sexism are based on uneducated hatred. She learns to do the right thing even though everyone else is not. Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson out of the goodness of his heart. In this process, he teaches both Scout and Jem to love everyone. Scout, Jem, and Atticus are the protagonists of the novel. They are the heroes. They set an example for the rest of world. The protagonists are against racism and the antagonists are racist. The fact that Lee's heroes are against racism shows that Lee is also against racism. If she was racist, the antagonists would not be racist because they are the enemies. *To Kill A Mockingbird* shows us that racism and hatred are unacceptable and you should always choose love.

The Bible is used by many as a guide to how we should live. God created us to live in community and accept each other. The Bible calls for us to love our neighbor no matter what. In Matthew 22:37-39, Matthew says, "He (Jesus) said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Sparks Bible NSRV 1087) Your neighbor is not just the people that live on your street; your neighbor is everyone

living on Earth. Loving everyone is what God wants for us. Racism is a sin. It is unkind and unacceptable. God loves all his children. He doesn't care if they are black, white, or brown. He loves us just the way we are.

The Bible and To Kill a Mockingbird show us that racism is wrong. These pieces teach us that we need to love even if it isn't easy. You can't follow what everyone else is doing. You must always do the right thing. Loving means getting to know people and accepting them for who they are. There is no place for hate and judgements based on fear. God made us all different and he wants us to love each other.