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Destroying Innocence

To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel written by author Harper Lee that is centered around a lawyer, his two kids Scout and Jem, and a crushing court case. The title of the book appears a few times throughout the novel, the first time when Atticus Finch says that “it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” The word mockingbird in this novel is not just used to describe real birds being shot at with a gun, but also certain characters in the book believed to be possibly misunderstood and perfectly harmless characters in Lee’s work of art, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Two characters that one may consider to be mockingbirds are Tom Robinson, an African American man from the Finch’s cook Calpurnia’s black church, and Boo Radley, a man often talked about in an eerie or intimidating light by people in the neighborhood, and a neighbor of the Finch’s who never comes out of his own house.

Tom Robinson is one of the most vital characters to the plot of the novel, and is spoken about mostly when taken to court by the Ewells after Robert E. Lee Ewell accuses Robinson of raping his daughter of nineteen years, Mayella Ewell. The Ewells are a white family with kids, one Scout’s age by the name of Burris, and Mayella, the young woman who is forced to lie in court because her abusive father claimed that an innocent black man beat her and raped her, when really, it was her own father doing the beating. To be Lee’s idea of a mockingbird, you must be an innocent person hated and shot at by one or more people for reasons that don’t exist

in a kinder reality. To shoot at such a harmless creature makes one a sinner and deeply in the wrong. Bob Ewell shot at mockingbird Tom Robinson, who didn't do a thing, and only ever offered assistance and kindness to the young and abused Mayella Ewell, another mockingbird having been shot at by the same sinner, Robert E. Lee Ewell, a cruel man with an ugly soul. Mockingbirds will often hide themselves from the public, but will always be there when needed by the ones who need their help the most. Boo Radley is a perfect example of this; Boo never comes out until he is needed most.

Often times in life, strongly introverted people who never socialize at all with anyone or never even come out of their houses at all may be called weird or creepy or even dangerous. Boo Radley is a neighbor of the Finch's, but is talked about all the time in a negative light by people who have no reason to judge him or tell stories about him because they haven't even ever seen him or spoken to him in their lives. When people tell a new ridiculously insane and even violent story about Boo Radley, they are taking a personal shot at him, and are sinning by firing at a mockingbird. Even the children do this, although Scout is an innocent mockingbird herself and didn't know better which may give her an excuse to speak of untrue stories about Boo that she has heard before from others who fired at *her* by filling her mind with lies about a kind man with a truly big heart and a positively beautiful soul. Scout later meets Boo Radley after he saves her and Jem from the ferocious Bob Ewell who took the lowest shot possible at Atticus by trying to hurt his children. Boo Radley is a hero and a gentleman, just like Atticus Finch. Despite people's hideous stories about what went on with Boo in the Radley's house, what he was really doing was watching the children and developing deep protective and paternal feelings for them, which

is exactly why he felt the intense need to save them when he was watching Bob Ewell attack them from his window. The same window that he used to watch his kids grow up.

It's easy to say that people who hurt and kill mockingbirds do this because they are bad people, but in many real-life situations, that isn't the case. Some may fire at mockingbirds because they are jealous of them, a basic emotion felt by most people at one time or another. Mockingbirds are beautiful creatures with the most admirable innocence, a level of innocence desired by so many in the world that it makes them jealous, and jealousy does the most unimaginably horrid things to people's minds. Mockingbirds also may be shot at because they are often extraordinarily kind and caring creatures with a lack of great sin, and these lovely qualities unfortunately also make them an easy target for angry people. Mockingbirds are also easily misunderstood because they are so quiet and easily walked on. In some cases they might give in to pressure more easily, and sometimes the killing of a mockingbird may occur purely because of unfair prejudices, like in Tom Robinson's case. Robinson's skin color made it easier for people to get him into bad trouble, something that he couldn't even change or do anything about, something so shallow that has nothing at all to do with who he is as a human being. African Americans and other people with any other qualities that make them ever so slightly different from the mainstream idea of good or right are still beaten and killed today by people with a prejudice and a harmful weapon, whether it be a voice committing verbal slaughter, or a deadly object used to physically hurt or kill yet another mockingbird who never even did a thing to harm anyone.

The mockingbird is a valuable creature which Harper Lee truly made real in the brilliantly poetic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee created the mockingbird to help and protect,

to give her readers something to love and feel sorry for, and most importantly, she created the mockingbird to show that people really aren't everything they seem to be at a first glance. It all starts with unjust judging of a creature for no reason, and if things go in the worst place possible, there will always be a dead mockingbird at the end. To kill a mockingbird is to destroy innocence. It is a gruesome crime, and one that can never be undone. "It's a sin to kill a mockingbird," says Atticus Finch. Maybe even the most ghastly sin of them all.