Stylistic Devices In To Kill A Mockingbird

Pulitzer Prize-winning novel to Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is a world-renown novel published in 1966 during the Civil Rights movement. The novel is set during the height of the American segregation in the 1950s. Using the perspective of an innocent child “Jean Louise”. This essay explores how Harper Lee uses a range of stylistic conventions such as symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony to present the themes of racism, the mockingbird, and prejudice as well as tell the story of Atticus finch a brave man who fights for those that can’t during the Great Depression.

Symbolism is used to enhance the description of the story. The title of the novel is an example of symbolism. Harper Lee uses the mockingbird as a symbol of purity and innocence, hence killing a mockingbird is to destroy purity and innocence. Scout asked Miss Maudie why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird, Miss Maudie explains to Scout: “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but . . . sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” Throughout the book ‘ Jem, Tom Robinson, Dill, Boo Radley, Mr. Raymond’ are identified as mockingbirds as they have been hurt by the evil. Tom Robinson, an African American man wrongly accused of raping a white woman “Mayella”. Although all the evidence points to Robert Ewell as the culprit, the jury found Tom Robinson guilty because of his skin colour. The connection between the title and the main theme is made very clear several times throughout the novel, after the death of Tom Robinson, Mr underwood then compares his death to “the senseless slaughter of songbirds,”. Scout compares hurting Boo Radley to “shootin’ a mockingbird.” One of the many mockingbirds in this book is Boo Radley. At the beginning of the book, Boo was seen as a dangerous person who the children often avoided and frowned upon. Boo was an intriguing and mysterious character to the children as he left presents for Scout and Jem also mending Jem’s clothing these were all part of his good deeds. Ruined by his father Boo remained with a pure heart and ploughed through his pain and suffering whilst still developing his caring and sympathetic personality. Because of this Boo is seen as the supreme symbol of good and a mockingbird.

The second stylistic device Lee uses is foreshadowing which represents the theme of racism. At the beginning of the novel, a mad dog was described to be running before it was shot. The shooting of the dog represents that perhaps Tom Robinson and the dog share the same fate. Coincidently the dog's name was tom Johnson, which is very similar to Tom Robinson. This foreshadows that someone innocent is going to die. As predicted after Toms’ trial he is shot whilst running from the courthouse. In the novel Tom Robinson gets killed purely because he is a black man. Another example of foreshadowing is shown when the mad dog is shot by Atticus It foretells the African American community and the fear many people in the town feel towards them. Additionally, most of the white folks avoid communication and interaction with the blacks in the area, this is relating to the neglect and hiding that the dog receives from neighbourhood residents. Atticus is not coerced into arguing against racial discrimination, as his decision to defend Tom Robinson was based on his morals and values. As he felt the responsibility to represent those who cannot do so themselves. Lastly the shooting of the dog correspondingly indicates how innocence is killed purely in the name of prejudice and racism, and people in the town simply assumed that Tom Robinson committed the crime of raping a white woman just because of the blackness of his skin tone.

Irony is another literacy device. Harper Lee uses this style to express her opinions about prejudice. It is ironic that Robert Ewell pays with his life for the crimes he has committed even though he was not punished by the law. For the prejudice reason That he was a white man he was never suspected for the assault of his daughter and was never charged for the criminal act. But eventually, Bob Ewell pays for the crime with his life. Another example of Irony is seen when Scout's teacher criticizes Hitler for being prejudiced when she is prejudice as well but just to a different race. One last example of irony is when Mrs. Merriweather, condemns Atticus' defence of Tom Robinson but glorifies the work that Mr. Everett has done with African tribes. Both Atticus and Mr. Everett are helping those who cannot help themselves.

Harper Lee's uses a range stylistic convention such as symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony in To Kill A Mockingbird to highlight the central themes of racism, the mockingbird and prejudice. To Kill A Mockingbird is a novel about prejudice and hypocrisy in a small town in Alabama known as Maycomb, during the time of the great depression. There are many mockingbirds in the novel, the shooting of the mockingbird references the death of innocence that has occurred many times throughout the novel.