Symbolism And Thematic Ideas In To Kill A Mockingbird

Authors use a variety of symbols, in order to enhance the themes in a novel. This is evident in Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird through the use of various meaningful symbols. Scout`s overalls are used to represent the thematic ideas of gender stereotypes. The overalls represent the stereotypical ideal of the clothing and manner females are supposed to wear and behave. They symbolize the idea of women having to clothe themselves in dresses and jewelry or the idea of females having to act ladylike. Although, in this novel, Scout and her overalls are used to change these stereotypes and create open-mindsets. The Snowman built by Jem and Scout in the novel is used to symbolize the thematic idea of racism. The snowman represents the several ways the coloured were degraded and insulted as they are used for slavery and are treated differently. It also represents the whites authority over the coloured. In To Kill A Mockingbird, Harper Lee uses the symbol of Scouts overalls and the snowman made by Jem and Scout in order to develop the thematic idea of gender stereotypes and racism.

Harper Lee uses the snowman built by Jem and Scout to represent the thematic idea of racism. The snowman is used to prove that every living individual coloured or not is to be treated equally. In the novel, the snowman is made up of dirt but is covered up with white snow. In Chapter 8 of the novel Scout states “ Jem I ain't ever heard of a nigger snowman” (Lee 89). The snowman is black on the inside but white on the outside. This shows no one’s self-worth should be determined based on race as everyone deep down is equal. The members of the town of Maycomb have such negative opinions towards coloured people that they don't see that race is not a major factor when assessing a person's personality. Similarly a black person like Tom Robinson was truly the foundation of the community was treated horribly and was sentenced to death purely based on a white man’s opinion. Additionally, the snowman symbolizes the authority the whites have over coloured people and the community. In the novel it is stated “ Jem scooped up some snow and began plastering it on”(Lee 89). The whites having superiority over the coloured has negatively impacted the black community in many ways. The blacks were used for slavery and later when it was embellished they were treated as a minority. Tom Robinson was considered as a slave and was used to fix things up for the Ewell family. Being a black person Tom Robinson is not worth enough to have a trial but due to Atticus defending him he has the chance. If that was not the case, Tom Robinson would not have the chance to prove his innocence. There were certain rules in the novel that the blacks had to follow such as, having to sit on the balcony, not being able to walk with their heads held up or even being allowed to stand up for themselves. Even in this generation white superiority and discrimination takes a part in our daily life.

The overalls Scout wears in the novel has been used effectively to symbolize the thematic idea of gender-stereotypes. Scout is known for her tomboyish and unladylike personality, but due to the stereotypical ideal of women having to dress and act ladylike, she is struggling to be herself. In the novel Aunt Alexandra tries to make scout dress and act differently: “[Aunt Alexandra's vision of my deportment involved playing with small stoves, tea sets, and wearing the Add-A-Pearl necklace…]” (Lee 108). In the time period, the book takes place in, women are known to wear dresses, jewelry and are supposed to keep the household intact. Women are not appreciated when they wore pants or acted unladylike. These gender-stereotypes are preventing Scout from expressing herself and are forcing her to become someone she is not.

Her overalls are her favorite piece of clothing and Atticus never has a problem with her wearing them. She continues wearing them as a way of fighting back the attempts of others trying to make her ladylike. In Addition to this, the overall's represent the lack of freedom women have during that time period. "I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches; when I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants"(Lee 108). They are restricted from going out or being able to play with men. They were supposed to stay home and do chores such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of the kids. In this generation, women have more freedom and are able to follow their dreams and achieve more than just cooking and cleaning.

In conclusion, symbolism and themes are a very important aspect of a novel or book. Harper Lee has effectively used the overalls and snowman to convey the thematic ideas of racism and gender-stereotypes. These were some of the most important themes in the book and they held very deep meaning. This book holds very important messages and should be a mandatory read.