Themes In To Kill A Mockingbird

To kill a mockingbird is an exceptional novel by Harper Lee. The book is loosely inspired by what Harper Lee experienced in her family. The book generally focuses on the coexistence of good and evil in a town called Maycomb. Main character Scout and her brother Jem experience changes in their perception of human behavior. As they grew up, they began to be enlightened towards the darker side of human morality which is contrary to how they looked at things from an innocent standpoint when they were young. The story is set during the time of the great depression and shows how evil and cruel the adult world was during that time. Harper Lee utilizes major themes such as Social inequality, racism, and injustice and the law to illustrate how cruel and full of prejudice the adult world was during that time.

First and foremost, the adult world in Maycomb entailed a societal hierarchy that ranks families in the society in accordance with various factors. This rank was majorly created in order of who was wealthier or more reputable based on illogical and groundless prejudice. The ranks are illustrated in the book to be quite irrational and unreasonable as the basis of the ranking is not justified. This ranking system led to destructive relationships between individuals in Maycomb society. This rank played a vital role in the lives of young Scout and Jem as it determined who they were allowed to communicate and have relationships with. Evidence of the consequences of the rank is shown when Scout is told by Miss Caroline not to associate with Walter Cunningham because he is from a less ranked family. Scout explains “You’re shamin’ him, Miss Caroline. Walter hasn’t got a quarter at home to bring you, and you can’t use any stove wood.” (22) The interpretation of this is that Miss Caroline treats Walter like less of a person because he doesn’t have any lunch. She tries to lend him some lunch money and that publicly humiliates him and his family name. This later angers Mr. Cunningham. Scout tries to have Walter’s back but she is disregarded and spanked by Miss Caroline. That goes to show how significant the social ranking system was. There was social stratification in society. This was when Scout and Jem were younger and they began to understand life in Maycomb through Atticus’s teachings. The illustration in that chapter shows how there is social inequality in the Maycomb community due to the illogical and prejudice ranking system.

In addition, racism was illustrated as a major issue in the Maycomb society which led to major vices in the story. Harper Lee elucidates that racism was a major theme in the community of Maycomb. Black people in the society were maltreated and not regarded as relevant as others due to the color of their skin. Racism incredibly ate deep into the fabric of the Maycomb society to the extent that the social rankings in the society had black people at the bottom of the list regardless of their wealth or status in the community. Evidence of intense racism is shown in the case of Tom Robinson. Tom Robinson is an honest, diligent and hardworking black man who was falsely accused of sexually assaulting a woman called Mayella Ewell. Her husband, Bob Ewell falsely accuses Tom Robinson of raping his wife. Atticus takes a huge and courageous decision to defend the black man in the court, proving he is not racist and believes in equality. Bob Ewell, on the other hand, does not agree with Atticus’s decision and spits on his reputation as a significant member of society. It is safe to say that Bob Ewell is a racist man. More detailed evidence of racism is shown when Dolphus Raymond, a white man explains to older Scout “Secretly, Miss Finch, I’m not much of a drinker, but you see they could never, ever, understand that I live like I do because that’s the way I want to live.”(204) Mr. Dolphin

Raymond is a white man who acts drunk all the time. He does this so he doesn’t have to give white racists a reason for his ‘inter racial behavior’. Hence, the explanation of the evidence as Dolphin Raymond being cautious of other white people in the community as most of them are racist individuals and he is not. This goes to show the extent to which the dislike for the black man was prominent in the Maycomb community. It was a thing of pride and satisfaction for the white racists to see a black man tremble. Racism caused multiple conflicts and later led to two mysterious deaths in the story. Racism is a major theme in the story and Harper lee does not fail to demonstrate how significant it was in relation to conflicts in the story.

Finally, the storyline of the book is quite centralized around injustice and the bias of the law. The law is analyzed by Harper Lee to be something that could be bent to favor certain circumstances. This can be for either good or bad. This can be for good if it is for the sake of uncontrollable happenings and circumstances. For instance, if the law of murder is bent to favor someone who was involved in the murder due to only self-defense. On the other hand, it is bad if it is bent for the sake of bias and injustice prevails. In the city of Maycomb, the law is bent based on favoritism and there is a reoccurrence of injustice in the adult world. When Atticus decided to stand for Tom Robinson in the courtroom this led to various skepticisms from white racists towards his reputation. This is because Maycomb is a town built upon values of racism, prejudice, and bias, majorly in the adult world. The fact that Tom Robinson was later prosecuted for a crime he did not do backs up the claim that the law is bias. Atticus loses the case and this shows the illogical favoritism of the law in Maycomb. Evidence of this is shown in Atticus’s analysis “The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box.”(226) Atticus is angered as he did not win his case and he bashes the law for being bias. He explained that it is not right for the law to feel pity or favor for any individual or group of people. The law should be the law and there should never be injustice. Especially when it is caused by racism. Atticus’s lamenting to Scout and Jem shows how much of a big deal the bias of the law is in the Maycomb society. He is disappointed by the law and the jury as they have been racist to an innocent black man. Atticus, knew that he was most likely not going to win the case but still had the courage to defend Tom because e he believes in Non-racist values. He also teaches Jem and scout the same beliefs. Atticus dreams of a better Maycomb and the world at large where insensible and unfair sentiments such as racism do not have a place at all.

In conclusion, an accurate phantasm of the adult world would clearly be created by the reader due to Harper Lee’s intelligent description of how society was. The presence of Social inequality, Racism, and bias of the law played a vital role in the lives of the members of the “Finch” family and the Maycomb society at large. The co-existence of good and evil is unveiled to Scout and her brother in the cruelest of ways. What they witness growing up enables them to understand how things work in the adult world. Scout understands the nature of the society but doesn't necessarily conform to how things are. Taking after her father's will and beliefs of what he thought was right.