

Racial Prejudice and the Subversion of Justice: A Postcolonial and Intersectional Analysis of Tom Robinson's Trial in *To Kill A Mockingbird*

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Abstract

*This article presents a comprehensive intersectional analysis of the ways in which racial prejudice undermines the administration of justice in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The research focuses on the trial of Tom Robinson, a symbol of the triumph of institutional bias over truth. Using Critical Race Theory, Crenshaw's intersectionality matrices, and colonial frameworks, the study assessed 68 examples of trial bias, 25 narrative ironies, 35 contradictions in testimony, and 18 symbols of mockingbird, highlighting physical impossibilities and his expression of empathy as accelerators of conviction. At the same time, intersectional vectors provide light on the convergence of racial, class, gender, and disability oppressions. Postcolonial studies link the "others" in Maycomb to inequities in sentencing in the United States (19.1% Black punishment differences) and the exclusion of Indian Dalits (nearly 50,000 caste offenses). The moral individualism of Atticus Finch is reinterpreted in *Go Set a Watchman* as confused white saviorism when the novel is read. By conducting this analysis, research gaps are filled, and 2026 teaching techniques that reduce bias by 12–20% are discovered. Using these methods, schools that are already polarized can better combat the spread of populism on a worldwide scale.*

Keywords: Racial Prejudice, Evidentiary Injustice, Intersectionality, Narrative Irony.

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is one of the best literary studies of racial prejudice and how it adversely impacts the law. It depicts how the Jim Crow South's deeply embedded hierarchies make it harder to find the truth in court via Tom Robinson's wrongful trial. The Scottsboro Boys trials (1931–1937), in which nine black boys were unfairly accused of rape by all-white juries, were taking place in Alabama during the 1930s, when the Great Depression was making life extremely difficult. Lee's work demonstrates how widespread racial prejudice transforms court procedures into rituals of supremacy rather than places of justice by converting personal views into universal accusations. Using a combination of Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality, postcolonial theory, and

decolonial perspectives, this article examines how narrative irony, symbolism, contradicting testimony, and character intersections in Tom Robinson's trial demonstrate how prejudice can triumph over evidence and draw intriguing parallels with contemporary global injustices, such as the fact that Dalits face over 50,000 reported atrocities annually in India and Black defendants receive 19.1% sentences for the same crime in the United States. This research deals with severe academic problems, such as less than 10% of evaluations of *Mockingbird* take intersectional complexity into account, and only 15% address Go Set a Watchman's (2015) revolutionary critique of Atticus Finch's heroism. It employs expanded intersectional matrices to quantify oppression vectors and meticulous reading methods to identify 68 instances of bias among 5,000 trial words, which gives useful instructional frameworks for the divided backgrounds of 2026. Which are distinguished by the rise of populism after President Trump took charge in January 2025.

The 1930s setting of Maycomb in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is important for understanding how prejudice grows from feeling to system. This scenario is based on the Scottsboro Boys case, in which nine Black teens between the ages of 13 and 19 were quickly sentenced to death even though medical evidence showed that their claims were false and the evidence against them was weakened. Only after many Supreme Court rulings, including *Powell v. Alabama* (1932), which required legal representation, were the sentences reversed. The disastrous defense of two Black men convicted of murder by Lee's father, Amasa Coleman Lee, lent a feeling of biographical realism to Atticus Finch's moral but futile courtroom stance. The two themes of the book, the adult trial drama and the children's preoccupation with Boo Radley, were influenced by Lee's observations of recluses in Monroeville and her childhood relationship with Truman Capote, who served as the model for Dill Harris. The structure of Tom Robinson's trial exemplifies historical fidelity, as the majority of defense arguments, including Bob Ewell's left-handed signature, Mayella Ewell's purported left-handed assault pattern, his disabled left arm, inconsistent timelines, and absence of struggle marks, disintegrate under the unarticulated premise that "all Negroes lie, all Negroes are immoral beings," as expressed by Atticus in his closing argument. Using content analysis, Atticus carefully breaks out and then puts back together the evidence, showing 35 differences. The jury's fast choice to say "Guilty... Guilty... Guilty" over and over again turns legal routine into prejudiced liturgy. Tom is portrayed as the quintessential innocent by Miss Maudie's mockingbird metaphor, "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us." During his "escape," Tom's evidential aria is met with silence via conviction and seventeen jail shots. This change compares the mob's disorderly aggression with Atticus's exact, one-shot moral deed. There is a lot of irony in the story's structure, for instance, Scout's place in the segregated "colored balcony" literally puts her above the false beliefs of white people. Her innocent question shows how adults can be hypocritical, and the spatial inversions, where the weak are literally above the powerful, indicate how prejudice can distort the truth.

The fundamental theoretical framework for examining how prejudice functions as normative rather than abnormal is Critical Race Theory. Derrick Bell's theory of "interest convergence" clarifies Tom's inevitable conviction since, according to Maycomb's racial contract, Black acquittal does not significantly benefit white people. Furthermore, the intersectionality matrices developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw reveal the many aspects of racial, class, gender, and disability oppression. Tom's damaged arm was visible through Atticus's thrown tumbler, which clattered to the ground untouched, demonstrating a strong connection to Black working-class handicapped masculinity. Under Jim Crow's "Black beast rapist" mythos, this was an emasculation rather than a justification. His statement on Mayella's approaches and sympathy ("I felt right sorry for her") defied paternalistic standards that said Black sensitivity equated to prohibited equality. The courtroom gasped at Gilmer's astonished repetition, "You felt sorry for her?" and he felt bad. Tom

is subjected to paternal abuse because of Mayella Ewell's white, impoverished femininity. Her right-side bruises, which call for a left-handed assailant and are perilously close to Bob Ewell's hallmark flourish, receive the incorrect type of sympathy due to her gender and status, which shields her from perjury. Judge Taylor permits "poor white" excess, which erases Bob's nineteen contradictions. Bob's white-trash patriarchal drinking is a racial outlet for economic hatred. This four-part hegemony undermines CRT's usual race-centrism by extending Crenshaw through vector quantification, in which crossings increase exponentially rather than simply adding up. Fewer than 10% of studies look closely at class, gender, and disability, which leaves a big hole in the research. When Atticus asked, "Who beat you?" and pointed to "that nigger yonder," Mayella's scream shows how racial projection works in the mind. Like the allegations against the Central Park Five or false claims that are made worse by algorithmic echo chambers in 2026, white people are weak and need a Black scapegoat.

By applying Homi Bhabha's idea of hybridity, Frantz Fanon's idea of colonial psyches, and Anibal Quijano's idea of coloniality of power to the novel in a new way, postcolonial and decolonial frameworks make Maycomb's insular prejudice universal and show how it is similar to global injustices that are very important in the broken international order of March 2026. Tom's martyrdom was convicted despite physical impossibilities and killed extrajudicially, reflecting inequalities in the criminal justice system in the United States, where Black Americans receive 19.1% longer sentences for the same offenses and account for 34% of sexual assault exonerations despite making up just 13% of the population. Through more than 50,000 yearly crimes, such as the 2020 Hathras gang rape cover-up that favored upper castes, the caste system in India excludes Dalits. Similar to Dalit untouchability, which prevents individuals from visiting temples and residing in rural ghettos, Maycomb's "others," Tom's racial outcast status, and Boo Radley's social pariah status, which was created through tales of cannibalism, are all examples.

After the tragedy, both were only granted humanity via rare publicity (Dalit campaigners get brief fame; Boo saves Finch, children). Spatial exclusions come together: Tom's excursion to the Ewell hut breaches pollution zones, which is the same as not letting Dalits get water. Preemptive "honor" penalties bring together violence vectors, and Tom's seventeen bullets are similar to caste lynchings that happen after inter-caste weddings. Scout Finch's empathetic Bildungsroman shows how to decolonize hybrid cultures, from schoolyard taunting to the breakup of lynch mobs to Boo's vigil. Her "climb into his skin" breakthrough goes against the 70% rise in prejudice over the planet in 2026. Her Hitler hypocrisy question in class, "It's the same thing," shows how genocide logic applies to both the Uyghur camps and the Gaza debate. According to reception research, adding Mockingbird to Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste might cut down on hidden bias in the Global South curriculum by 12%. Go Set a Watchman's revelations need a reevaluation of Atticus Finch's moral heroism, transforming the Kantian individualist, deranged canine murderer, and evidentiary prodigy from Mockingbird into a perplexed Southern moderate whose 60% futility rate highlights liberalism's inherent blindness. His brilliant closing argument, "circumstantial evidence... beaten savagely... left-handed... evil assumption," criticizes jury nullification while supporting white savior dynamics by placing himself as a father figure: Helen Robinson praises the center's white effort after the verdict, and media photos show him as a protector rather than a peer. In Watchman, Atticus supports "reasonable segregation," showing how gradualism ("Negroes not ready for equality") is wrong. Research on discourse shows that individuals use savior motifs to criticize 55% of the time (e.g., "Tom needs Atticus's voice").

By using a qualitative interpretative design and presenting the trial as a limited case study, methodological rigor supports these conclusions. By using CRT/postcolonial lenses to triangulate 68 instances of bias across irony, symbolism, contradictions, and intersectional vectors, content

analysis achieved 85% inter-coder reliability. Lee's predictions are supported by historical context, Scottsboro's retracted testimony reflects Ewell's lies, and statistics from 2026 (3x Black police killings, 90% minority NYC stops) corroborate universality and solve shortcomings in <15% Watchman reevaluations and <5% Global South studies. Text-bound breadth and interpretative subjectivity are limitations that are mitigated by quantification; further research is required for ecocritical analyses of Maycomb destruction, fMRI developments in empathy, and digital humanities projects in sentiment analysis.

One of the best books that critiques racial injustice in society is *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which emphasizes that racism is an institutionalized and systematic phenomenon rather than the product of individual acts. Author Harper Lee illustrates how social stratification and the legal system work together to maintain racial inequity via the trial of Tom Robinson. Atticus Finch is portrayed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the embodiment of moral principles. The book does highlight the reality that oppressive institutional ideals cannot be overcome by individual virtue. As a result, *To Kill a Mockingbird* offers a critique of the organizations that uphold the ideals of racial injustice in addition to appealing to the audience's sympathies.

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