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Society's Lesson

Everyday people interact, they see each other and the first instinct of a human being is to judge what they are observing. When humans judge other humans they tend to judge not by personality but by appearance, and by titles that have been put on a group of individuals by society, such as all Negroes are bad people or all white people are rich. Society tends to judge critically and harshly, just by looking at someone rather than actually learning and understanding them and then proceeding to make a judgement. For as long as humans live and interact they are going to judge each other and it can not be helped but they can learn to judge people, like Atticus says in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, “- until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Lee 30). In other words, do not judge someone until you really know them. Notably, one of the greatest pieces of literature in history is *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and it is such a great novel because it explains how people should not judge so quickly. In the novel three characters and their situations perfectly explain the wrong in people being so unfairly judgemental; Calpurnia not falling under the stereotypes of negroes but still being judged by them, Arthur “Boo” Radley being considered by the community as a monster when actually he is very caring, and Tom Robinson also not following the stereotypes and accused of being guilty of a terrible crime he did not commit. Although *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a

great novel with a great message it is banned or wanted to be banned in many places because of its use of racial slurs, profanity, the discussion of rape, alcohol, and is seen as inappropriate for schools. This brings forward the point that the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* should not be banned because of its theme, which is a vital lesson that should be taught to society; do not judge someone without an understanding of them.

First of all, in the novel Calpurnia is viewed by almost all Caucasians as, stupid and worthless. Several times in the novel Calpurnia is afflicted with rude comments and implications about her knowledge, manners and behaviour, which actually meet high standards. Every time Calpurnia speaks, she speaks properly, and at one point Scout describes Calpurnia's speech and says "... her grammar was good as anybody's in Maycomb" (Lee 24). Since Calpurnia "... had more education than most coloured folks" (Lee 24) she was intelligent enough to even teach her own kids, and these two quotes explain her level of intelligence. In the novel most of the discrimination comes from Aunt Alexandra, who wanted Calpurnia fired because of her race. At the moment in the novel where Aunt Alexandra invites Scout to the missionary meeting, Aunt Alexandra lets Calpurnia serve and the whole missionary group is surprised when they learn that the amazing beverages and sweets were prepared by Calpurnia. When Calpurnia serves the missionary ladies the refreshments they say "... Why, Alexandra, I never saw such charlotte... just lovely... I can never get my crust like this, never can... who'd've thought of little dewberry tarts... Calpurnia?... who'd a thought it" (Lee 228). This quote shows, by all the Caucasian ladies being surprised that a Negroe woman was very talented, that you can not judge someone without knowing them. The situations that Calpurnia goes through in the novel fully demonstrates the concept of not to judge right

away, because by stereotype, Negroes are considered stupid and worthless, but Calpurnia is extremely talented and intelligent.

Secondly, is how rumours have been spread around that Arthur “Boo” Radley is a monster, and everybody in Maycomb judges him by the rumours and not by whom he really is. From the beginning of the novel to the end, Arthur is sought out by Scout, Jem and Dill because they want to find out if the horror stories are true. Every time the name “Boo” is mentioned to a person in Maycomb the suspense starts to build and an eeriness is brought up because of a terrible rumour about him being crazy. Miss Stephanie who says she knows the whole thing explains, “Boo was sitting in the living room cutting some items from The Maycomb Tribune to paste in his scrapbook. His father entered the room. As Mr. Radley passed by, Boo drove the scissors into his parent’s leg, pulled them out, wiped them on his pants, and resumed his activities” (Lee 11). Several times in the novel Arthur gives gifts to Jem and Scout, which no longer portrays him as a monster but a caring person. Finally after searching for Arthur for a very long time, Scout learns the truth. When Mr. Ewell attacks Jem and Scout, Arthur appears out of no where and saves their lives. At this point Scout realizes that although Arthur is strange, he is not a monster but a hero. Thus showing that you can not judge someone until you learn who they are and understand them.

Lastly, Tom Robinson was accused of being guilty of a terrible crime he did not commit because of the colour of his skin. Throughout the novel Atticus works to defend Tom Robinson, a Negro accused of sexually harassing and physically beating Mayella Ewell. During the trial Atticus uncovers the truth, which is Tom did not commit any crime of any sorts and is completely innocent. When the supposed crime was committed

by Tom against Mayella, he was assisting her with chores when Mayella sexually harassed him. To clarify what happened, Tom says "... next thing I thing I knows she- she'd grabbed me round the legs, grabbed me round th' legs..." (Lee 193), "She reached up an' kissed me 'side of th' face" (Lee 194), this quote explains the truth and that he did nothing wrong. Unfortunately not many people believe him because the judges, other lawyers and jurors are Caucasian. He is a Negro, and the stereotype that Negroes are liars is strongly believed by almost all of the Caucasians of Maycomb. In the end of the trial the truth is discovered and it is that Tom is innocent. After Mr. Ewell saw Mayella being intimate with Tom he attacked her and the Ewells blamed Tom for the crime. The reason for blaming Tom is because he was there during the incident. He is a Negro and few Caucasians would believe a Negro. It is then revealed, when the jury is being polled, that what Mr. Ewell predicted is true. Despite the strong evidence the jurors are asked for their sentences and the response is, "Guilty... guilty... guilty... guilty..." (Lee 211). This quote shows how they still think Tom is a bad person and a liar because of a stereotype. Immediately after Tom is brutally killed Atticus goes to give the bad news to Tom's wife. Then Jem, who was there when Atticus broke the news, describes what happened, "... a crowd of black children were playing in Tom's front yard" (Lee 239), and when she finally was informed of the terrible fate of her husband "she just fell down in the dirt. Just fell down in the dirt, like a giant with a big foot just came along and stepped on her" (Lee 240). The reason these two quotes are so important is because they show that Tom was a family man, he was caring and he was loved. With all things considered, the fact that a caring, innocent person's life was ended because he was sentenced guilty for a crime he did not commit, for the reason that he fell under a stereotype, and he was judged without

any knowledge of him perfectly demonstrates how humans should not judge someone without actually knowing them.

In the final analysis, Atticus is completely correct. In other words you cannot judge someone right when you see them, without any information and comprehension of them. To summarize, someone is always seen as stupid, someone is seen as a monster, someone is seen as criminal and evil. Everything that they are seen as is false, but they are all judged like this because nobody gets to learn about them before judging them. In conclusion this happens in real life and not just in novels. Therefore, the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* should not be banned because of its theme, which is a vital lesson that should be taught to society; do not judge someone without an understanding of them.

Works Cited

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. United States of America: Warner Books, 1987.