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Black and White Leads to Shades of Gray

Cinderella versus her evil stepmother, Harry Potter versus Voldemort, Love versus Hate, and Heroes verses Villains are all examples of the universal theme Good versus Evil. This theme is evident in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. This struggle is shown through the character of Atticus, the trial, and the character of Bob Ewell.

Good versus Evil is a very complex thing to discuss. What makes something good or evil? The bad things or the good things that happen usually lead to our opinion of what is good or evil. Black represent the bad things and White represents the good things. All though sometimes it isn’t that simple and it’s not just black and white. Which leads to the various shades of grey. The shades of grey represent the parts in our lives that we can’t necessarily say whether its good or evil, it’s a little of both. Which leads to the struggle of good versus evil.

In the town of Maycomb racism is a major role played to affect peoples’ lives. Racism and the negativity that it bring to this book is an obvious evil. Atticus represents the good in this scenario throughout his determination to stand by Tom Robinson and prove his innocence against the racist views of the town. Once Mayella Ewell, a poor Caucasian girl, accused Tom Robinson, an African American man, of rape because of his race the town automatically assumed he was guilty. “Scout, you aren’t old enough to understand some things yet, but there’s been some high talk around town to the effect that I shouldn’t do much about defending this man” said Atticus when talking to Scout about the case. (75) This quote means that most people in the town think Tom doesn’t have a case because he is black. Therefore Atticus, being the good man he is, heard him out as a human being and defended his innocence against the evil odds. Other examples of the evil that Atticus has to fight against are the negative influences affect his children’s lives that he has to help fix. One, when Atticus was known to be defending Tom Robinson, kids who had heard their parents’ racist views and negative views towards Atticus started telling these views to Scout and Jem. Jem was working on being more mature and level-headed but Scout wasn’t as level headed and started vfighting. Atticus later learned of this negativity and told her how violence won’t solve anything. He then explained to be more level-headed, ignore them, and not give them that reaction.

The trial of Tom Robinson versus Mayella Ewell is about the charge of rape that Tom has been accused of. Tom is not only fighting against Mayella’s word but also Bob Ewell’s word of what he has witnessed. Throughout the story Tom’s innocence is proven, by his statement of what happened and the fact that Mayella had been punched in the left eye and Tom didn’t have a right arm to do this. So obviously when the Ewell’s are giving their version of what happened they are lying. So it is the good truth versus evil lying. The jury for the trial was supposed to be peers of Tom Robinson, yet the jury was made up of all Caucasian males. So with racist views were already set so it didn’t matter how much Atticus proved the innocence of Tom the evilness of prejudice won out.

Bob Ewell is a poor man that lives off welfare checks and does little work. It has been brought to my attention when reading this book that he also has an alcohol problem and may abuse his children. During the trial Atticus asked Mayella “Who beat you up? Tom Robinson or your father?” she never answered. (187) Which as a reader makes us think because she didn’t answer that her father does beat her. Another example of the abuse is when Tom was giving his testimony and said Mayella said “She’s never kissed a grown man before an’ she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don’t count.” (194) Which leads to the assumption that Mayella may have suffered from sexual abuse from her father. As his poor life choices demonstrate his evilness, he also has a bad character. For example after Atticus had defended Tom during the trial Bob Ewell spat in his face and made rude remarks. Mr. Ewell doesn’t just stop there but also chases after Jem and Scout making Boo Radley save Atticus’s children from Mr. Ewell’s torment. Bob Ewell is not just negative towards Atticus and Atticus’s family but to other people as well. For example he followed Tom’s wife and tormented her until he was made to stop. So after all these examples of the evilness that he created throughout his life it is difficult to feel the sadness in his death that us as human being are supposed to feel. Which leads to the emotional struggle of wanting to feel compassionate and sadness due to his death with the struggle of being mad and hating him for the things he did. This leads to the complexity of the feelings we are supposed to feel from negativity of his character to the tragedy and shock of his death brings a struggle of good versus evil from within.

Good versus Evil is shown through the character of Atticus, the trial, and the character of Bob Ewell. Snow White versus The Queen, Dorothy versus The Wicked Witch of the West, Happiness versus Depression are all examples of the theme Good versus Evil. This theme is evident in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and in our everyday lives from rooting for the hero or fighting the evil from within ourselves. No matter what, human beings want to search for the good in everything, and the evil this story brought to our attention the struggle of fighting for the good

Work Cited

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird.* New York: Warner Books, 1960. Print.