

Tom Robinson is a very significant character in 'To Kill A Mockingbird'. Firstly, he can be seen as a metaphoric mockingbird. Towards the end of the novel when we discover Tom's death, we are reminded of Miss Maudie's words "Mockingbirds don't do one thing, but make sweet music for us to enjoy." Tom is proved innocent in the trial by Atticus but is convicted of the rape of a white

girl. As the story is based in the 1930's, the reason behind the conviction is that Tom is black. The huge amount of racial prejudice against african-americans in the Southern States of America at this time has lead to Harper Lee recreating the injustice of these times. As a child, Harper Lee experienced the Scottsboro child which convicted 9 black men of the rape of 2 white women. This real story has been the inspiration of the novel and Harper Lee expresses the injustice of both trials (for

the 9 men were proved innocent after their deaths) with the extended metaphor of a mockingbird. Tom Robinson has not done anything wrong and still ends up dying, which leads the reader to think his murder is like shooting a mockingbird.

The second part of the novel where

Tom Robinson is significant in the trial scene. He has been accused of raping Mayella Ewell, whose family is very poor. The Great Depression caused by the wall street crash left many people unemployed as poverty swept America and we are lead to believe this is the cause of their lack of money. During the trial Tom Robinsons states that he "felt right sorry for her." and ~~and~~ through Scouts eyes we can see that "nobody liked Tom Robinsons answer". This

makes Tom significant as it is an indication of the class system and the way it was regarded. Despite the Ewells being described as 'white trash' earlier in the novel, they still rank higher than black people. This is due to the fact that Africans were orignionally brought to America as slaves. The book was

written in 1960's, but as it was based in the years before heroes such as Martin Luther King, black people had few rights and any they had earned were ignored.

Tom Robinson had a right to a fair trial, but only himself and his children could see the true injustice behind the decision. Through the dual narration of Scout and Harper Lee, as a reader we can see that her views are for racial equality, but in the novel, these come across as childish.

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The final significance of Tom Robinson comes from after his death. Miss Maudie describes the towns slow realisation as 'a baby step'. Which may be symbolic of things changing. Maycomb is a microcosm of small towns in the Southern States of America and this idea

of a 'babystep' suggests that this ~~was~~ was a time when things were starting to change. Harper Lee is obviously 30 years ahead of the novel so knows of the huge fight for equality that follows. She is using even more symbolism by suggesting that America kept getting a tiny bit closer to racial equality.

* Another significant part of the novel for Tom Robinson is when he is in the jail and Atticus is defending him from a

group of white people. In the scene of total darkness, "in the light from a bare bulb, Atticus was sitting..." The fact that Atticus ~~is~~^{is} in the light suggests to the reader that he has the right idea about racial equality. Despite the class system, he has chosen to place himself on equal terms with

Tom and put his ~~and~~ own life on the line for a black man. The innocent in which Tom speaks "Mr Finch... They gone?" is significant as it shows that due to racial prejudice in the 1930's black people have been stereotyped. It is this that lead to Tom conviction. By making Tom Robinson innocent in everyway, she is helping ~~it~~ to build up the readers like for him so that they empathise with him more. By writing the novel from a mind that has

witnessed change, she was able to use the character of Tom Robinson and his story to personify all the cases and injustice of racial prejudice in the 1930's.