

To kill a Mocking bird

Book review

To kill a mocking bird is in any case a special piece of literature which stands out of the world literature unobtrusively, calling our attention, reprimanding with calm wisdom, with astonishing primeval and sincere story and style that hit you right in your heart, with its uncommonness wakes the reader up from a dream, from being lost in everyday life and encourages him to vigilance. It was written by American writer Harper Lee. It is to a great extent her autobiography as she says: »An author should write about what he knows and write truthfully.« From the time the novel was published until now it has been waking up from dream the shriveled souls and causing different reactions but nobody has remained indifferent. A lot of people have been disturbed by its directness and dealing with a wide range of topics that were all dealt equally as they are all integral parts of a human life. By that kind of presentation of reality it has disturbed a lot of immature and lost souls as it has shown them very calmly and realistically what kind of mental poor men they are.

The story is narrated in the first person by Jean Louis »Scout« Finch who is a six-years old child at the beginning, but her perspective mixes with the grown Scout`s creating an interesting mixture of an infantile and an adult perspective. The infantile sincerity and originality and the adult reason and wisdom are being interlaced. The novel is markedly narrative but this doesn`t make it nothing less expressive. It is a description of certain years of little Scout`s life which interlaces with great findings about life, society and people that have a strong influence on the reader. I would label the novel a very extensive and intensive metaphore representing very topical subjects on both individual and social level in the form of a exhaustive story.

The purpose of the novel is well expressed by Theodore and Grace-Ann Hovet: »Lee demonstrates how issues of gender and class intensify prejudice, silence the voices that might challenge the existing order, and greatly complicate many Americans` conception of the causes of racism and segregation.« All the subjects that are dealt with are shown through the events in everyday life of the Finch family and other inhabitants of Maycomb in Alabama. The novel takes place in 1930s in a small Southern town in which life is conducted by shriveled tradition and believes which are increasingly in conflict with the mentality of the people. Little Scout describes the children`s adventures that she has been through with her brother Jem and their summer friend Dill while facing conflicts between the shriveled reactionary conservative mentality of some adults whose lives are conducted by tradition, the principle of stratification, racism and the sincerity and originality of a infantile soul conducted by moral instinct, credulity and trustfulness. On the social level, the victory of tradition and backwardness over the human instinct which leads to racism, strong stratification, alienation and impersonality in the public relationships and processes. The persuasiveness of the novel arises from its apparent content. The place – a little town in the South and the time – 1930s are very important for the effect of the story. Half rurale and half burgeois environment is specific unstable, today`s libertarianism was still a rarity then which represented a danger for any unusual occurriences. This battle between the progressiveness of a humane spirit and shriveled aggressive tradition reflects in every single entanglement that occurs in the novel. Let`s take a look at this effect at some concrete examples: Atticus Finch is a middle-aged lawyer who has two children: Jem and Scout. In the novel he symbolizes a moral ideal, he is the holder of the progressive, humane spirit. This also reflects in his appereance – he is tall slender, has black hair, neat wise circumflect self-confident in his believes, following his spirit. In his humanity he decides to defend Tom Robinson, a Negro accused to have raped a young white woman. Tom is innocent and Atticus feels obliged to defend him not only before the accusation but also before racism which is making his work evan more difficult. However the

majority of the Maycomb inhabitants doesn't agree with Atticus defending a Negro, especially because a white woman is involved. In spite of Tom's innocence people can't overcome the conservative beliefs and just follow the right. This causes Atticus a lot of problems, his children are even attacked, but Atticus insists as he is a man of principles. The battle between principles isn't obvious only in the public life, it also affects the everyday life. The housekeeper of the Finch family is a black woman Calpurnia which is strongly respected, loved and considered as a member of the family for the Finches. This arises disagreement with Alexandra, Atticus's sister that is the representative of the reaction. Atticus educates his children in accordance with his spirit. They call him by his name and not »dad« or »father«. He gives them a lot of freedom in order to bring up confident and independent persons, but at the same time he emphasises very strictly the moral principles. Scout is a six-years old girl who doesn't act like a girl at all, she is a tomboy, refuses to wear dresses and she is determined and confident which were more characteristics of boys than of girls in those times, she often fights boys and knows how to step up for herself. This could be the influence of the two men she grows up with – Atticus and Jem. Alexandra thinks Scout should act more like a girl. Scout's brother Jem is four years older than her. Unlike Scout he is more circumspect, introverted and admires his father who is an example for him. Jem is very sensitive and a man of principles and because of that he is often hurt by irregularities that take place in the world of human relations. When old ill Mrs Dubose offends his father he is so hurt he destroys her flower bushes. But his determined father makes him apologize to Mrs Dubose. The children are very independent, active, fearless. They have the courage to do things adults don't agree with. Their summer friend Dill is also a representative of the modern progressive generation, he is markedly original, active, eccentric, with rich imagination. The three children are connected with desire for the unreachable and unusual, which finds realization in Boo Radley, a mysterious man who lives in the house on the other side of the road that hasn't appeared out of his house for more than 25 years.

The children are original, vigilant, they have their own special. Each desecration of human dignity, each ugly thing that happened to people hurts them very much. Their characters develop through the story, get to know the legalities of human relations. But they remain true to their principles.

The novel defends the sincere, original, innocent – the symbol of which is the mockingbird.

The novel describes the events very exhaustively with hidden message under the plain descriptions, often expressed with humour, irony. Dealing with both everyday feelings and taboos it upsets the reader showing him how imperfect and weakly he is. This effect was nicely expressed by some writer: »The novel is an icon whose emotive sway remains strangely powerful because it also remains unexamined.« The language and style are rich, picturesque, expressive. In an indifferent manner it calls our attention and teaches us. Its message concerns all of us. Today it is as current as it was at the time of publication, in some way even more as the world is turning more and more chaotic and confused which keeps us away from our primordial nature. The reading is agreeable and intensive because it arises the original in ourselves. It is a great résumé of the development of human mentality which makes it a classic.