Injustice in To Kill A Mockingbird

Throughout this novel, Harper Lee illustrates how racist and prejudicial thinking creates injustice towards the black community. This is clearly demonstrated through the deeply ingrained stereotypes of black men: "Typical of a nigger to cut and run … Nigger always comes out in 'em". This ties closely with the perception of the black man as hypersexual, animalistic predator that have been percolated down the centuries (ideas that even have biblical 'authority' when we consider the story of Ham's offspring being cursed with blackness as a punishment for his sexual impropriety - even though in Genesis, the precise nature of this 'crime' is unclear).

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<tr><th>FOCUS</th><th>KEY IDEAS</th><th>CONTEXT</th><th>EVIDENCE</th><th>ANALYSIS</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">In this novel, the clearest example of when an injustice occurs is obviously racial issues and the case of Tom Robinson. Before we even get to the legal trial, it is clear from the symbolism of the jail that justice in Maycomb is unbalanced and ineffective.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Gender Inequality</td><td rowspan="2">Maycomb Jail</td><td>Emmett Till, the 14 year old black boy who was kidnapped, beaten and shot in the head for reportedly flirting with a white cashier, Carolyn Bryant, at a grocery store in 1955.</td><td>"someone's dream"</td><td>This reference to the American dream suggesting that one day we can achieve equality, is very ironic considering the past history of cases. One of the most notorious cases was that of…..</td></tr>
<tr><td>The madness is a reflection of when Bryant and Milam were not allowed to be retried for the Emmett Till case due to the double jeopardy laws. (67 minute trial never took the stand)</td><td>"miniature Gothic joke"
"like something Cousin Joshua might have designed"</td><td>Reflects themes of insanity and madness, reminding us of the metaphor about "Maycomb's usual disease", prejudice, infecting the legal system. Lexical choices like "fantasy" and "façade" continue to highlight the pretence of justice and the key theme of appearance versus reality.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(96% of the animals they used were caged for life)</td><td>"gala occasion"
"like a Roman carnival"</td><td>Just as the white community treating the trial as though its some form of entertainment shows the mockery of the institution, Miss Maudie aptly uses the simile … bringing to mind connotations of the cruelty of ancient Roman circuses in the treatment of Tom.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Segregation continues in the courthouse, with the black people having to sit upstairs in the balcony just as they have their own "Negroes quarters". Ultimately, however, the focus is on Tom's predicament and it is through this that Lee comments on the unfair treatment of so many black men and women.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Trial</td><td colspan="4">Atticus' summing up is, in many way, the climax of the chapters centred around the court case, and as such, Lee employs a variety of rhetorical techniques to make his speech to the jury as persuasive as possible. Firstly, he uses simple declaratives like, "this case should never have come to court" and "the state has not produced one iota of medical evidence", both of which create a tone of certainty and definitiveness. Stressing words like 'never' (the only polysyllabic word in a sequence of simple monosyllables) highlights the injustice of this case, which is enhanced by the irony of "this case is as simple as black and white." The fact is, that in Maycomb, there is nothing simple about the relationship between black people and white, and whilst Atticus is using this metaphor to convey the fact that based on the evidence alone, this case should be clear cut, the metaphor is also pointing to the complexity of race relations in the region. Because of the deeply engrained racial prejudice in the 1930s, evidenced by the Jim Crow laws, for instance, it is quite clear that this case will not be 'as simple as black and white'.</td></tr>
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<tr><td rowspan="4"></td><td colspan="4">opportunity to run – a sure sign of guilt." Tom is caught between two equally unviable options, and although he knows he is innocent, he highlights his plight when he says to Atticus, "if you was a nigger like me, you'd be scared too". The repetition of the verb 'scared' (also repeated in his statement that he was "scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do") has the effect of reflecting the fear black people must have had knowing they were facing a legal system that appeared to take no notice of the actual facts. Again, the trials of the Scottsboro boys, the nine black teenagers falsely accused of rape in Alabama in 1931, was another notorious example of a miscarriage of justice that lends historical credence to these fears. Even though one of the alleged 'victims' admitted that she had fabricated the entire story, the defendants were still found guilty, so when Tom asserts that he is scared he'd have to face up to something he hasn't done, his fears are legitimate.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">In order to prevent this occurring again in future generation, Mr Underwood is the one who takes on the responsibility of writing an editorial "so that children could understand".</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Editorial</td><td></td><td>"so that children could understand"</td><td>This reflects a recurring motif in the novel concerning the moral purity of children and the potential for adults to lean from those younger than themselves. This is purposefully done to make sure they understand, as the next generation, the injustice Tom faces.</td></tr>
<tr><td>One of the most notorious examples of slaughtering was lynching. Lynching was an extra-judicial execution carried out by a mob, often by hanging, in order to punish an 'alleged' transgressor, or to intimidate/ control a population of people….</td><td>"senseless slaughter of songbirds"</td><td>Sibilance - represents perse-cutors as demonic and snake like. Slaughter - killed brutally on a physical and emotional level, senseless - attacks the unthinking and unfeeling nature of his persecutors
Songbirds - another reference to the motif of the mockingbird</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Another figure who stands more strongly to help prevent injustices occurring is Atticus, who puts his best efforts into fighting against Maycomb's bigotry and racism.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Atticus</td><td colspan="4">Atticus is at pains to counter the negative stereotypes of blackness that are prevalent in the "evil assumption that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women…" The anaphora and triplet adds a rhetorical flourish, really hammering these points into the jury's head. What Lee does so successfully, is to replace the homogenous determiner 'all' with the much more unspecific determiner 'some': "some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women – black or white." This parallelism shows how ridiculous it is to give all black people the same negative identity; the first triplet highlights the lies that are perpetuated by prejudice and intolerance, and the second triplet conveys the realistic truth: some black men are not to be trusted, just as some white men are too. Atticus is emphasising our common humanity, blurring black and white lines as "this is a truth that applies to the human race and no particular race of men." The nouns 'truth' and 'lies' are repeated multiple times, reflecting a key theme of the text, as is the word 'equal'.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Lee deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence when she has Atticus quote Thomas Jefferson: "all men are created equal." Whilst he undermines the notion of equality in all areas, such as education, he stresses the equality that should be upheld by the legal system, not as an ideal but as a "working reality" ("our courts are the great levellers"). Ironically, the Jim Crow laws legally mandated racial segregation in all public facilities in Southern states of the former Confederacy, starting in 1890 with a "separate but equal" status for African Americans. This separation led to conditions for black people that tended to be inferior and it systematised a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages – not least in the judicial system.
Atticus has already used pronouns to great effect to engage the men of the jury directly ("you gentlemen"), particularly when he attempts to make allies of them by using collective pronouns ("we know") or paralipsis ("I need not remind you…"). Here, he appeals to their sense of moral duty and responsibility: "a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me…" before ending with a very emotive imperative: "In the name of God, do you duty…in the name of God, believe him." By calling on God, there is almost a sense of desperation, a final plea to do the right thing, and the fact that his voice has "dropped" shows just how much of a toll this case has taken on Atticus.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Similar to how much this case affects Atticus, the children are deeply devastated by the blatant injustice they see in Tom's case.</td></tr>
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<tr><td rowspan="3">Children</td><td>Dill crying</td><td></td><td>“it made me sick, plain sick”</td><td>Feeds back into the idea that this is a side effect of Maycomb’s disease - adults are blinded by prejudice that even children can understand.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Like Dill, Jem also cries after witnessing Tom’s verdict: “face was streaked with angry tears”.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Jem crying</td><td>This closely ties in with the hurt Maime, Emmett Till’s mother felt when she heard about the death of her son. In order to let the world see this injustice he faced, she decided to hold an open casket funeral (where over 50,00 people attended) which was a real catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement.</td><td>“face was streaked with angry tears”</td><td>Adj “angry” reflects how he feels betrayed by Maycomb - so hopeful for a win - failed to realise the deep prejudice ingrained
Children crying again reflects on the motif of the moral purity of children and how they can see the mockingbirds of the novel</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">In conclusion, we can tell that there is little justice served as even the legal representatives, such as Heck Tate, the sheriff, has given up faith in the legal system: “let the dead bury the dead”. However, more preferably, we could argue there is some progress made, according to Maudie, “it’s a baby step, but it’s a step”. This provides some realistic optimism, leaving the reader with the hope of change.</td></tr>
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