

Reflecting on a Classic - Emily Janzen

To Kill a Mockingbird

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee can be considered a classic due to its universal appeal. This is achieved first and foremost by its focus on themes which are understood by readers with a wide range of backgrounds and levels of experience. At the core of the book you find the theme of the importance of family in getting through tough times, which is demonstrated through the relationship of Atticus and his kids. This theme can be understood not just intellectually but emotionally by all as family is a fundamental part of the human experience. Another central theme is that of evil destroying innocence, which can be seen in how Scout and Jem are forced to grow up through Tom Robison's trial. This theme can also be universally understood due to an innate part of growing up being challenges which force the loss of innocence.

The second factor which gives this book a universal appeal is the relatable characters and situations. Each character has multiple layers, for example the simultaneously strict and caring Calpurina, which makes them feel more authentic. The majority of the situations these characters experience also fall into the range of basic human activities, including playing and going to school for the children and taking care of family and finances for the adults. Even the most unique situations they experience,

for example, the attack of Mr. Ewell, still fall into the realm of reality and thus can be related to.

To Kill a Mockingbird has been one of the most enjoyable reads I have experienced in a long time. Despite taking place almost 100 years ago, the central themes, ability to invoke emotion and relatability transported me into the story with ease. In fact, this book has changed my perspective on the time period it was set in as in the characters, plot and themes, I found many similarities to modern day and now recognize the permanence of the fundamental human experience. I used to think that people from the 1920's were radically different from modern individuals in their beliefs and desires, but through reading this classic book I now agree with Scout when she says "I think there's just one kind of folks. Folks." (Lee 518).

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Harper Collins, 2014.