To Consider a Mockingbird Inferior

"You assume because I am of superior power that I would consider you less than my equal?" Castiel, an angel on the television show Supernatural does not understand the concept of social inequality; he believes every living thing is just as mighty as him, despite being an angel of The Lord. Societies across the globe could use a lesson to two from the angel, for if they see someone living against social norms, they readily discriminate. The theme of inequality is a main in the historical fiction book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In this classic novel, the author, Harper Lee, tells of two children growing up to understand life's harsh realities as their father takes on a risky court case involving a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. By demonstrating the fictional town of Maycomb's reactions to the characters Tom Robinson, Atticus Finch, and Boo Radley, Harper Lee makes social equality seem near impossible. Through her novel, Lee illustrates that due to social norms, man is not capable of standing next to man without casting judgment, and therefore harboring thoughts of inequality.

Likewise, most of Alabama in the 1930's would consider African Americans to be inferior to them just because they are black, a racial minority. Anything a white man or woman claimed against an African American was assumed to be true. This sense of white superiority is shown through Tom Robinson's trial. "The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow..." (295) Through this quote, Atticus tries to explain to Jem that even within a courtroom, a place of truth, a black man cannot hope to win against the prejudice of a white society. Tom Robinson is inferior to the judges, and with him considered so low, they can do with him as they please. Lee shows that racism is a disease that only requires the whisper of one to influence the ideas of another. Mayella Ewell provides that whisper: "[Tom Robinson] got me round the neck, cussin' and sayin' dirt..." (241) Mayella is white, and considered superior to a black man, therefore the people of Maycomb latch onto the idea that Mayella could not possibly be lying. Through this display of racism, Harper Lee shows that at the time, it was nearly impossible for equality to reign with a large social barrier such as color in the way.

As well as prematurely judging Robinson's guilt, Maycomb residents turn on Atticus Finch for siding with a black man, an act that disrupts what is socially acceptable at the time; a white man should not be defending an African American. "Every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one is mine, I guess" (101). Unlike the other members of the town, if Attticus had not taken up Tom's case, he would never be able to forgive himself. A different type of inequality is at work here; defending Tom makes Atticus a friend of the black community, and by default, lowers him to the same level of respect. A lynch mob shows up in front of the jail. They are after Tom Robinson, but Atticus calmly sits on the porch of the prison as a blockade. Although Atticus is white, the mob would have no trouble taking him down in order to get to Tom. Through Atticus' battle to win the trial, Harper Lee shows that not only black, but by association, white men can be deemed inferior by society's ludicrous expectations. Atticus would have been victorious in the trial, if the accused had been a white man.

If an unbiased ruling cannot be applied to a man of the law in a courtroom by Maycomb residents, it is unlikely a mysterious, reclusive man could be judged fairly. This man, Boo Radley was thought to be wicked, crazy, or, in Scout Finch's mind, stuffed up a chimney. Boo Radley unknowingly endures similar derogatory statements by the citizens of Maycomb as he resides inside his house due to his religion. "The Radleys, welcome anywhere in town, kept to themselves, a predilection unforgivable in Maycomb" (11). This selection from *To Kill a Mockingbird* proves Boo different from the very beginning. Maycomb loves recreation, social events and going to church, but because the Radley's do not partake in any of these activities, the townsfolk make the harsh assumption Boo is some kind of monster, yet again considering themselves superior to the "unnatural" residents of the town. "Foot-washers believe anything that is pleasure is a sin" (59). Miss Maudie, an older woman living near the Finches, tries to explain Boo Radley's extreme Baptist religion. Because of his beliefs, Boo cannot stop Maycomb from living in fear of him; the venture outside it requires might qualify as enjoyment. Harper Lee allows shows the inequality in Maycomb early on in the book through the slurs and gossip of the town. With every word uttered against Boo Radley, the house-ridden man grows increasingly inferior to the community; no one wants to hear of a monster among the people. Boo is simply another Maycomb resident who cannot live up to the town's social standards.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* brilliantly demonstrates the injustice society raises because of its ludicrous views of equality. Harper Lee uses Maycomb's prejudice opinions in the circumstance of Tom Robinson's trial, Atticus defending him, and rumors of the mysterious Boo Radley to draw attention some of the numerous ways society discriminates against its own people. Many students and even adults today like to think they are different, they would be the ones to claim they do not look down upon one another, however discrimination is unavoidable. Teens look at fellow classmates with distain, adults find flaws in each other. It is the way our society has formed that makes equality practically unreachable. Although by standing in someone else's shoes, and by giving more than a quick glance at a fellow human, perhaps the equality based mindset of the angel Castiel is not entirely unreachable.