

## **Merit of English Section**

### **Junior Division**

**Name of Winner: Leann Kwong**

**Name of School : St. Margaret's Co-Educational**

**English Secondary and Primary School**

**Book Title :To Kill a Mockingbird**

**Author : Harper Lee**

**Publisher : J. B. Lippencott & Co.**

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a young girl nicknamed Scout growing up in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama during the Great Depression tells the story of her father, Atticus' defense of a black man named Tom Robinson, who is falsely accused of raping a white woman. Scout and her brother Jem learn some

harsh lessons about injustice and racial prejudices of the Southern town they call home as they witness the biased trial. On the other hand, however, they also learn from Atticus courage, empathy, and morality. As they witness the verdict of Tom's trial and other events that impact their town, it ultimately shapes their maturity brought by the loss of naivety.

The bittersweet ending of *To Kill a Mockingbird* leaves the reader with both a sense of sadness for society's flaws and optimism for its capacity for good. It also further strengthens the book's position on showing evil being defeated by good: the persistence of injustice. It reflects Scout's loss of innocence yet a sense of hope remains. The unresolved mystery surrounding Scout's neighbor also further reinforces the major themes of good fighting evil and loss of innocence.

The title *To Kill a Mockingbird* hides the metaphor of

“mockingbirds”, mirror to the novel's major themes.

Mockingbirds are innocent birds that only sing to please others, so 'to kill a mockingbird' symbolizes destroying innocence.

Atticus teaches his children that it is a sin to kill mockingbirds.

This lesson reflects his view that innocent people should not be

harmed. The major “mockingbirds” in the book are Tom

Robinson, an innocent black man destroyed by racism, and Scout

and Jen’s neighbor, Boo Radley, a recluse who saves Scout and

Jem but then retreats into isolation. Atticus clings to hope that

goodness will prevail despite troubled results. The mockingbird

metaphor is a powerful symbol for the coexistence of good and

evil, and the importance of protecting innocence in an unjust

world.

Scout and Jem start with an innocent view of the world. Their

curiosity is piqued by mysteries like Boo Radley, their neighbor,

whom they imagine in fantastical terms. But as they witness

racism and injustice onwards the resolution of the story, their innocence is lost. After Boo saves them but returns to isolation, Scout reflects: “neighborhood just put up with him... not knowers, I reckon.” and “I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo Radley's remained inside all this time... he wants to stay inside.” Their maturity is marked by lost ignorance about evil's existence.

Another major theme is that good and evil coexist. Atticus teaches the children not to kill mockingbirds, as mockingbirds represent the innocent and good. Yet evil characters like Mr. Ewell persist. After Boo

saves Scout and Jem but resumes isolation, Scout learns: "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." Even when good triumphs, the conditions that make it necessary may remain. At the end, Scout hopes, "They're certainly entitled to think that, and they're entitled to full respect for their opinions... but before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience". But her experiences with innocent mockingbirds and persistent evil show coexistence. The future is made uncertain between the struggle of good and evil.

While there are some heavy themes, the story is told with a sense of childhood innocence and wonder through the voice of Scout. Her moral journey as she becomes aware of the

prejudices around her makes for a moving and impactful read.

The tone of the story is humorous which brings the reader warmth without downplaying the meaning behind the plot.

Though set in a specific time and place, the story explores timeless issues of injustice and racism that remain relevant to this day. Through the eyes of Scout, we see the racism and prejudice that exists in the town and how it affects the lives of those around her. The novel is a powerful commentary on race relations and social injustice, and it explores themes of courage, compassion, and the human capacity for goodness and evil. And is, overall, a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the complexities of American history and the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.