Many Branches One Tree

Ephesians 4:2 “Always be humble, gentle, patient, and accepting of each other in love.” The characteristic of being humble can be found in many different situations, such as an act of kindness towards others. The historical fiction book*, To Kill a Mockingbird* written by Harper Lee takes place in the 1930’s. During the 1930’s in Maycomb, Alabama, a black man, Tom Robinson, is accused of raping a white girl. Although, the town knows that Tom Robinson has no chance in court for justice. A lawyer and single father, Atticus, decides to defend Tom Robinson during the trial. Atticus’s actions during the trial change the community’s perspective of other people outside of it’s race or social class. Through the circumstances of Atticus, Miss Maudie, and Tom Robinson, Harper Lee is trying to teach her reader that all of these circumstances require respect and the act of being humble. Harper Lee is encouraging her readers to be humble towards others who vary different races or religions.

Throughout the book Atticus shows the trait of being humble towards many people in his community. Atticus treats his family maid, Calpurnia, an African American, with respect and equality. Atticus tells Aunt Alexandria, “Calpurnia’s not leaving this house, until she wants to. She's a faithful member of this family and you'll simply have to accept things the way they are" ( Lee 182). However, Atticus sees her as a woman who is just as equal as all of the other women in Maycomb. Therefore he treats Tom Robinson and his family respect. Atticus tells Scout, “nigger-lover is just one of those terms that don’t mean anything. It’s hard to explain, white trashy people use it when they think somebody’s favoring Negroes over and above themselves” (Lee 144). Atticus does not turn Africans away or think less of them because they are a different race. He believes that all men are created equal.

Harper Lee writes about symbolism to represent the citizens in Maycomb, their views, and opinions towards others in their community. One day Scout, Atticus’s daughter, and her neighbor, Miss Maudie, were sitting on the porch Miss Maudie tells Scout, “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but . . . sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee 119.) She is referring to innocent souls who have done nothing to hurt others in the community yet the community members feel the need to hurt them. When she founds out Tom had just been shot she tells the people who have attended the mission trip meeting, "The handful of people in this town who say that fair play is not marked White Only; the handful of people who say a fair trial is for everybody, not just us; the handful of people with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord's kindness am I" (Lee 316). She is inferring that she has compassion for others who aren’t the same race as her through her symphony. Just as Atticus, Miss Maudie believes that everyone has a fair chance at life and people should treat others the way others have treated them.

Additionally, the red germaniums by Mayella’s house represent hope and excitement for her future. The red is representing the passion and spark she had towards Tom and wanting his attention. Tom Robinson has every reason to be frustrated with Mayella, yet he shows compassion towards her during the trial. However, Tom knows that the whole community is against him, because of his race. In the court room he tells Mayella’s dad, “Mr. Finch, I tried. I tried to ‘thout bein’ ugly to her. I didn’t wanta be ugly, I didn’t wanta push her or nothin’” (Lee 260). He didn’t want to hurt her event though she tried to seduce him, he knew that her dad abused and ignored her. Therefore, Tom also tells the judge, “Yes, suh I felt sorry for her, she seemed to try more’n than the rest of ‘em-“ (Lee 264). He is trying to tell the court room Mayella works hard and deserves more than what she has been given. He thought of Mayella as a girl who was seeking compassion from another person. Deep inside Tom knew that Mayella had a good heart.

Throughout the book Harper Lee is inspiring people to be humble towards those who may differ races or beliefs. The situations Atticus, Miss Maudie, and Tom Robinson went through involve courtesy and the act of being humble. With this in mind, to be humble does not require a lot of effort for a person to show to another, showing respect towards others makes that person feel good about themselves. Human beings have the choice to decide how they want to treat others, exhibiting the characteristic of being humble towards others encourages more people to respect others they associate with everyday life. Therefore, if people around the world showed compassion, love, and the act of being humble towards each other, whether it’s through a good deed or a compliment, the world would be a happier place to live in; it just takes a simple act of kindness.