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**The Depiction of Social Difference in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird**

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE (projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Předmětem závěrečné bakalářské práce bude zobrazení rozvrstvení společnosti v románu To Kill a Mockingbird od Harper Lee. V teoretické části autor objasní specifika daného regionu v meziválečném období, pojedná o rozdělení jižanské společnosti a o sociálních změnách, které jižanskou společnost v daném období formovaly. Student rovněž vysvětlí termíny, s kterými bude pracovat v analytickém celku. Analytická část se zaměří na vyobrazení třídních rozdílů a vztahů mezi reprezentanty různých společenských vrstev ve výše zmíněném díle. Svoji argumentaci autor opře o relevantní sekundární zdroje. Práci zakončí přehledné shrnutí daných zjištění.

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1. Crow, Charles L. 2003. A companion to the regional literatures of America. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.
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## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis aims to find and analyse the depiction of social differences in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is divided into two parts, the first of which is theoretical and provides historical and sociological background on the lives of the Southern Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, focusing on the era of the Great Depression. The analytical part describes the social relations between Maycomb residents and their differentiation in language and examines the variety of housing and clothes regarding the social class.

## **KEYWORDS**

social class, American South, Harper Lee, Great Depression

## **NÁZEV**

Vyobrazení společenských rozdílů v knize *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na nalezení a analýzu vyobrazení společenských rozdílů v knize *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee. Je rozdělena na dvě části. První, teoretická část pojednává životech občanů žijících na jihu Spojených Států Amerických a zaměřuje se na první polovinu dvacátého století a období Velké hospodářské krize. Analytická část popisuje společenské vztahy občanů města Maycomb, jejich rozdílné způsoby vyjadřování a zkoumá různorodost způsobů bydlení a oblékání v závislosti na společenské třídě.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

společenská třída, americký jih, Harper Lee, Velká hospodářská krize

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## INTRODUCTION

Harper Lee is the author of two essential novels. *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1960 and is to this day one of the most commonly read books in school, being used for demonstration of the 1930s South.<sup>1</sup> *Go Set a Watchman*, a sequel to the *Mockingbird*, was published in 2015 and had similar success. This bachelor thesis will be focused on the first novel and the way social difference is depicted in it. Although it is not considered an autobiography, Harper Lee used her own life as an inspiration and based the novel's story in Alabama. She also transplanted some of her personal experience from growing up in the South into her work, therefore gave the story additional credibility.

The story takes place in Maycomb, a small town located in southern Alabama, and is set in the 1930s when the Great Depression was devastating the whole country's economy and social conflict grew larger. *To Kill a Mockingbird* narrates a story about racism, social inequality, and growing up. Although the most highlighted theme in the novel is racism, it goes hand in hand with the theme of social classes, the differences between them, and their conflicts. The aim of the bachelor thesis is to analyse the class system in Maycomb, exemplify the members of each class, and analyse the different language usage of each class. The analysis itself is mainly based on the events of the novel and personal knowledge. Therefore a depiction of historical and sociological background is required, which antecedes the depiction of social difference in the novel itself.

The bachelor thesis consists of four chapters. The first theoretical chapter will summarize the history of class development in the United States in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with the forming of I.W.W. (The Industrial Workers of the World) and ending with Roosevelt's presidency and handling the Great Depression. The second theoretical chapter will aim to describe the period of The Great Depression, its impact on America's economy and social layout, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. The third and last chapter of the theoretical part will cover the historical backgrounds of the era, depict the class system in the South during the Great Depression, show examples of different social classes, and interpret their living conditions.

The aim of the last chapter, which represents the practical part of the thesis, will be to analyse the depiction of social difference in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The chapter will consist of three subchapters. The first one will focus on the class relations in Maycomb. Each class will be defined and put in a hierarchy

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<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Shields, *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee: From Scout to Go Set a Watchman* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2016), 164.



among the others. The second subchapter will be devoted to analyzing the language, which representatives of different classes use and how it is connected with their social status and education. Finally, the last subchapter will be dedicated to the living conditions of each class, such as housing and clothing.

# 1 CLASS IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Nelle Harper Lee (1926-2016) deals with racial issues, the idea of growing up, and courage. What lays underneath, however, is a picture of the southern society during the Great Depression. To fully understand the story of Maycomb's people, it is crucial to examine the social-historical background of the era, the changes which occurred during the Depression, and the relationships between different social layers. Addressing these social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* requires an analysis of the American society in the first half of the twentieth century, understanding the time of the Great Depression and the New Deal, and a more detailed examination of the southern class during the Depression.

The twentieth century opened with anger, strikes, and the idea of socialism. Such anger, according to Zinn, manifested in June 1905 in Chicago when a convention of two hundred socialists, anarchists, and radical trade unionists from all over the United States formed the I.W.W. – the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>2</sup> This newfound organization's primary aim was to unite all the working class into a union while being undivided by neither race nor gender or by working-class individuals' skills. As described by Arnesen, their secondary aim was to "take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system,"<sup>3</sup> as it was declared in the organization's 1908 constitution.

While the Great War raged in Europe, the U.S. drowned in its issues. The class conflict intensified, socialism on the rise. The working class was becoming angrier, and it had the right. Howard Zinn explains that despite the number of laws that were passed during the presidency of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, the working class did not get much change in their working conditions since the laws were more focused on creating the middle class.<sup>4</sup> The war also did not stop the I.W.W., who represented the working class, from being dissatisfied. According to Zinn, the organization and its members protested the war and the suppression of the working class. Their protests escalated in the arrest of 165 I.W.W. leaders for conspiring to hinder the draft, encourage desertion, and intimidate others in connection with labour disputes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 329.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History* (London: Routledge, 2006), 653.

<sup>4</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 350.

<sup>5</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 373.

After the U.S. entered the Great War in April 1917, a new wave of labour conflicts within the country was unleashed. Arnesen explains that many states threatened their workers with a work-or-fight policy, meaning that strikers would have to be drafted into the army.<sup>6</sup>

With the war over, the nation galloped in the 1920s period, which would later become known as the Roaring Twenties. The new decade changed the economic situation, and people moved in or near cities. As Robert Remini wrote, it was generally believed that most Americans lived in a rural environment. However, the census of 1920 revealed that more than 13 million people moved to urban centres, became city folk, worked in factories and offices, or ran local service establishments.<sup>7</sup> This migration of people and the industrialization of the economy improved the working-class' living and working conditions, wages and lowered unemployment by a considerable amount. Given such conditions, the middle class was formed. According to Zinn, about forty percent of the working population made over 2,000 dollars a year, hence could buy new gadgets, such as automobiles, radios, refrigerators.<sup>8</sup> Despite the wages rising, the remaining 60 percent of American workers, as suggested by Howe et al., still could not afford the "American standard of living," which was supposed to be achieved with a yearly income of between 2,000 and 2,400 dollars a year.<sup>9</sup> While inequality grew, both the working-class and the middle class were overshadowed by the income of the wealthiest five percent of the population, which increased by a much larger number. As Zinn comments, the ordinary worker's wage rose by approximately 1.4 percent a year, while the rich gained over 16 percent a year. The one percent of the families at the top received as much income as the 42 percent of the families at the bottom.<sup>10</sup>

According to Remini, "the Twenties were a time of economic and cultural growth, industrialization, urbanization, and everyone seemed to be making money, one way or another."<sup>11</sup> The only social class excluded from this age of prosperity were the farmers. Remini further mentions that after the War was over, the demand for crops lowered, prices for crops declined, and America's rural parts started experiencing true economic depression.<sup>12</sup> Such economic change escalated in dissatisfaction of the farmers and led to them moving to the cities even more, hoping for a better life and future. As Bernstein explains, it was a "migration of hope" because, for many farmers, city employment at almost any wage represented

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<sup>6</sup> Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, 1542.

<sup>7</sup> Robert V. Remini, *A Short History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 205.

<sup>8</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 382.

<sup>9</sup> John R. Howe Jr., Julie Roy Jeffrey, Gary B. Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 521.

<sup>10</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 382.

<sup>11</sup> Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 213.

<sup>12</sup> Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 213.

a rise in income.<sup>13</sup> With farmers moving into the cities, employers had to create more jobs. Luckily, one industry could make that happen, which welcomed the new workforce with arms wide open. The automobile industry, thanks to which big cities grew bigger and new metropolitan areas were built. Howe et al. explain how it pushed urban areas into the countryside and created the, almost exclusively non-black, suburbs. The significant expansion of the suburban, middle-class population was typical for the whole decade.<sup>14</sup> Automobiles and their users transformed and enlarged every city, but primarily Detroit and Los Angeles, in which the growth was the most significant.

Such prosperity was not apparent in the more rural parts of the country, where most people did not have as great lives as the city folk. Howe et al. comment how during WW1, the farmers, who made up most of the population, responded to the growing demand, and their crops saved lives in Europe. But since the war ended, crop price sank lower, and its amount grew higher. Many farmers could not make payments on their mortgages, and they lost their farms.<sup>15</sup> Howe also mentions that it was not only the lowering market prices of crops and farm products, which influenced the rural population because the farmers were also very vulnerable to natural disasters. As Howe et al. describe, their vulnerability became apparent when in 1927, the worst flood in the nation's history devastated the Mississippi River valley and made nearly a million people homeless.<sup>16</sup>

As the poverty of the poor grew, the wealth of the wealthy grew as well. The maldistribution of income became a severe issue, as the rich became richer much more rapidly than any other social group. As explained by Robert S. McElvaine in *The Great Depression*, the main reason why the wealth gap kept growing was the vast difference between productivity increase and the increase of wages. While productivity increased by over 40 percent, the wages grew by only 8 percent, which in conclusion, was still considered prosperous. However, the money was distributed unequally since the rich were getting richer at a much faster pace than the poor were becoming less poor.<sup>17</sup>

However, the American Society of the 1920s consisted of hopeful people who wanted to become rich. And everything around them encouraged them to do so. Howe et al. describe how people of all classes could find advertisements everywhere. Such advertisements motivated the American people to build a house, invest in stocks, start a career, and go follow their American dream. Many of these overly motivated

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<sup>13</sup> Irving Bernstein, Frances Fox Piven, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2010), 48.

<sup>14</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 524.

<sup>15</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 524.

<sup>16</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 525.

<sup>17</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression* (New York: Times Books, 1984) 96.

people later discovered that some dreams are just out of reach.<sup>18</sup> Such realization happened when on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, the day later to be known as the "Black Thursday," the stock market started crashing. The crash escalated and was at its worst by the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, also known as "Black Tuesday," which is, according to Linda George, to this day considered the most disastrous day in the history of the New York Stock Exchange.<sup>19</sup> Millions of people in business and even ordinary people lost their investments, and the following years came into history as The Great Depression.

According to Jacqueline Farell, The Great Depression made the already poor farmers much less wealthy, and occupations of the newly constructed middle class, such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, who lived in the small cities of the South, lost most of their savings.<sup>20</sup> Other consequences quickly escalated when people, terrified that their money would lose its value, withdrew all their savings from banks, which in the cause of that went bankrupt. Farell further explains that such actions directly affected the factories, in which most of the suburban Americans were employed, which did not have money to pay their employees, so they closed, resulting in growing unemployment.<sup>21</sup> Thomas A. Bailey regards that as if the economic problems were not enough. A terrible drought destroyed the Mississippi Valley in 1930.<sup>22</sup> As a result, thousands of farmers were forced to sell their property and work as tenants. However, having a shared land that the farmers could use did not always mean that their situation and living conditions would get better. The tenants did not only lack money but also a place to live because since they lost their fields. They also lost their cottages and were forced to live in rented accommodations, which were in a terrible state.

As the Depression kept on devastating the country, a new government was elected. Every poor person in America was anxious for a better tomorrow with the newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Remini writes how the President inspired the poor with new hope and how he pledged that he would restore "this great nation" in his inaugural address.<sup>23</sup> Despite the President's efforts and new initiatives, poverty was still squeezing the country's already poor working-class dry and deepened the financial struggle of the middle class as well. The people started to get irritated. The population's discontent with the economic situation escalated in a wave of strikes. According to Farell, the first ones to protest were the sharecroppers and tenants in 1933, who demanded higher wages from their landlords. And despite the SCU's (Sharecroppers' Union) victory, after the harvest season ended, the landlords began to terrorize

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<sup>18</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 527.

<sup>19</sup> Linda George, *The Great Depression* (San Diego: ReferencePoint Press, 2013), 42.

<sup>20</sup> Jacqueline Farell, *The Great Depression* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 1995), 47.

<sup>21</sup> Farell, *The Great Depression*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the American People* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), 814.

<sup>23</sup> Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 221.

their tenants and eventually started evicting them, resulting in even more considerable dissatisfaction.<sup>24</sup> Such protests spread across the country and were viewed by the media as Communist-driven rebellions meant to dissolve the capitalist system.<sup>25</sup> The communists truly did motivate the poor to go out on strikes and even led most of the unemployed Southern Unions, which greatly influenced most of the South's strikes.

In conclusion, the first half of the twentieth century not only scarred America's economy but society as well. The class inequalities grew more significant during the prosperous 1920s and escalated in people's anger in the 1930s. The worst life conditions were of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers, who often lost the roof over their heads, a place to work at, and their only hope was the relief checks. Despite losing most of their savings and often jobs as well, the middle class managed to survive the Depression with the little they had. However, so did everyone else. Although the economy got better over the 1940s and 1950s, the events of the two decades are not as crucial for this thesis. Therefore they are not included in this chapter.

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<sup>24</sup> Farrell, *The Great Depression*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> Zinn, *People's History of the United States*, 396.

## 2 THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

The story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the first half of the 1930s in Alabama. During this time, the United States was being devastated by one of the worst economic disasters in the country's history. The Great Depression caused millions of people to starve and lose their jobs.

Bailey explains that the main reasons why the Depression hit the United States were overproduction and underconsumption. The nation's ability to produce had outrun the ability to consume or pay for goods.<sup>26</sup> George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, in their book *America: A Narrative History*, explain that with the lower amount of money the people could make, they were forced to borrow, but rather than borrowing for necessities, the Americans borrowed for unnecessary investments, such as the stock market.<sup>27</sup> However, the downfall of America's economy was bound to happen since the mid-twenties, when even though the industry prospered, the maldistribution of income was already a serious issue. Not enough money was put in the wages; on the contrary, business owners invested in expanding their businesses. Still, the people were convinced that the country was in a state of overall prosperity and believed that only a bright future awaits them.

David M. Kennedy wrote: "Like an earthquake, the stock market crash of October 1929 cracked startlingly across the United States, the herald of a crisis that was to shake the American way of life to its foundations."<sup>28</sup> The crash of the stock market began on Black Thursday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1929, and lasted until the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, a day later to be known as Black Tuesday. Eric Rauchway remarks how during such a short amount of time, the share prices of the most prominent holders went down by a considerable amount, and by mid-November, more than a third of the whole stock market value had vanished.<sup>29</sup>

President Herbert Hoover was, by the Americans, associated with competence and the ability to deal with the crisis. As Rauchway explains, however, there were some sceptics, such as Calvin Coolidge, whom Hoover served as secretary of commerce, who complained, "That man has offered me unsolicited advice for six years, all of it bad."<sup>30</sup> Despite that, he won the election of 1928 and became America's 31<sup>st</sup> president. After the stock market crash, Hoover, as he was a conservative, dwelled on minimal federal intervention in economic affairs which occurred. He considered it essential that the business recovery

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<sup>26</sup> Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the American People*, 814.

<sup>27</sup> George Brown Tindall, David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2016), 1094.

<sup>28</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal: A Very Short Introduction*, 23.

should come from the business itself, meaning that private businesses should cooperate with local governments and not with the federal handouts. Such an approach labelled the President as a "do-nothing," and the people started blaming him for the situation, as Nancy and William Young described in *The Great Depression in America: A Cultural Encyclopedia*.<sup>31</sup> As a result of Hoover's idleness, as Remini comments, the situation had worsened, and by the summer of 1931, approximately 2,300 banks with a deposit of over 1.5 billion dollars had gone bankrupt. In addition, the number of unemployed had nearly doubled over five years, resulting in alarming 14 million unemployed in 1936.<sup>32</sup> To make the situation better and prevent a complete financial meltdown Hoover established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). As explained by McElvaine, the RFC's goal was to loan money to banks, insurance companies, building associations et cetera.<sup>33</sup> However, it did not in any way help small businesses. Therefore the economic situation did not change much.

With the worsening Depression, the criticism of Hoover's methods had escalated, and his chances of winning the 1932's presidential election had lessened. According to Tindall and Shi, who quoted the New York Times, he had "failed as a party leader, failed as an economist and failed as a business leader."<sup>34</sup> The collapse of the economy and Hoover's failures granted the Republicans exactly what they needed, and in 1933, a new President of the United States was elected. Franklin Delano Roosevelt represented a new hope for the Americans with his New Deal program, which was meant to restore the country's economy.

Roosevelt's first step was to save the banks. As explained by Rauchway, to achieve such a thing, he had to ask Congress to ratify his Emergency Banking Act, which was used to shut down banks for several days and to make money more available to them using the RFC which was empowered to buy bank stock.<sup>35</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, banks began to open and were significantly more functional and able to loan money. Bills similar to the Emergency Banking Act were passed during the "First Hundred Days" with the sole purpose of slowing the Depression.

According to Howe et al., Roosevelt primarily aimed to help the unemployed and the homeless, as in 1933, there were over million homeless Americans.<sup>36</sup> Howe et al. further describe the President's response: the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which granted 500 million dollars to cities and states to help the homeless. A short time after, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was

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<sup>31</sup> Nancy K. Young, William H. Young, *The Great Depression in America: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 240.

<sup>32</sup> Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 215.

<sup>33</sup> Robert McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L-Z* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), index, 804.

<sup>34</sup> Tindall, Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 1109.

<sup>35</sup> Rauchway, *The Great Depression & The New Deal: A Very Short Introduction*, 57.

<sup>36</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 547.



created, which employed over four million people in federal, state, and municipal projects. The CWA hired workers to build roads, schools, airports and hired teachers to keep the rural schools working.<sup>37</sup> However, in the early months of 1934, Roosevelt was forced to cancel the program since it was too big of a burden on the country's wallet. Kennedy commented on the follow-up, and more successful Roosevelt's initiative was the Works Progress Administration (WPA), established in 1935 and administrated by Harry Hopkins. WPA's primary objective was to create job opportunities in public projects. Hopkins' and Roosevelt's collective efforts put to work over eight million people over eight years of WPA's existence. According to Kennedy, the workers "built half a million miles of highways and nearly a hundred thousand bridges and as many public buildings, erected the Dock Street Theatre in Charleston and Timberline Lodge on the slopes of Oregon's Mount Hood, and laid out some eight thousand parks."<sup>38</sup> In addition, to address the elderly and disable Roosevelt enacted the Social Security Act of 1935. Shi and Tindall remark that in the President's own words, the Act was "the cornerstone" and "supreme achievement" of the New Deal and its purpose was to help the "unemployable," in other words, provide financial support for the elderly, aid to dependent children and for the blind or disabled in any other way.<sup>39</sup>

Another target of the New Deal programs were the farmers. A part of the economy which had suffered the most since World War 1 and struggled with Depression long before the stock market crash. The solution for the farmers' situation was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). McElvaine remarks that Roosevelt's administration signed the AAA into law in 1933.<sup>40</sup> Its purpose was to assist the farmers with restoring the past prosperity. Howe et al. explain that to achieve that, the system offered payments in exchange for reducing the production of primary agricultural staples.<sup>41</sup> The AAA initiative faced a lot of criticism because despite it being helpful to the more prominent farmers because they had higher income, the tenant farmers and sharecroppers suffered. After all, when the acreage of the landlords was reduced, there was not enough land to rent to the tenants. As Howe et al. suggest, Roosevelt's efforts to help the farmers continued with the WPA and Social Security systems. However, much more success was gathered by the Rural Electrification Administration, the purpose of which was to lend money to cooperatives, which would generate and distribute electricity in the poor rural areas.<sup>42</sup> Despite Roosevelt's attempts to

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<sup>37</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 547.

<sup>38</sup> Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, 253.

<sup>39</sup> Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 1138.

<sup>40</sup> Robert McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A-K* (New York: Macmillian Reference, 2004) index, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 548.

<sup>42</sup> Howe, Jeffrey, Nash, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 552.

limit production, the most significant impact, as McElvaine explains, can be accounted to the series of droughts and dust storms in the 1930s, which were also known as The Dust Bowl.<sup>43</sup>

The Great Depression hit America when it hurt the most, and President Hoover could not do much with it. However, Roosevelt's initiative helped to move the US economy out of the slump of the Depression. Despite that, New Deal itself, although its ineffectiveness in specific points was apparent, was genuinely innovative in its speed of accomplishment of the program's goals, and even though a large number of the reforms, which were supposed to restore prosperity were hastily drawn and their administration was weak, therefore were not successful in their original aim. However, despite some significant failures, the New Deal still helped millions of Americans to find new jobs, prevented them from starving to death, and helped them partially to get back on their feet.<sup>44</sup> Despite the New Deal not fulfilling all the expectations, the majority of voters were grateful for the active responsibility by the federal government and elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt president four times. The citizens also supported Roosevelt's successors of the Democratic Party, Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, who also expanded the New Deal<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A-K*, index, 250.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Jay Friedman, *Outline of U.S. History* (The U. S. Department of State, 2011), accessed February 6, 2017, [https://time.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/history\\_outline.pdf](https://time.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/history_outline.pdf), 214.

<sup>45</sup> McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L-Z*, index, 703.

### 3 CLASS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

"Fundamentalism, Ku Kluxery, revivals, lynchings, hog wallow politics – these are the things that always occur to a northerner when he thinks of the south."<sup>46</sup>

According to Roger Biles is the American South a region, which could be described by similar characteristics that are used to describe all underdeveloped areas around the world. Poor living standards, agricultural economy, widely spread social inequalities and social isolation from outside influence.<sup>47</sup> Leonard Reissman, in his article "Social Development and the American South," explains that during the Depression, the conditions got even worse since the unemployment rose to 25% during the first three years.<sup>48</sup> Most suffering Southern citizens were farm owners, tenants, and sharecroppers. Not only because of the stock market crash but also as a result of severe droughts in 1930 and 1931. Finally, Michal Goldfield remarks that even the already backward Southern industry fell prey to the Depression, as the 15 percent of workers who were employed in the industrial sphere lost their jobs.<sup>49</sup>

The South's poverty was apparent long before the Depression hit the country. However, the crisis confirmed the region's backwardness and bad economic state. As already mentioned, the people with the worst conditions for living were tenants and sharecroppers, who were vast in numbers. According to McElvaine, approximately 8.5 million tenants were in the whole country, of which 3 million were African American.<sup>50</sup> However, as Robert McElvaine also mentions, "Most black did not even know the Great Depression had come. They had always been poor and only thought the whites were catching up."<sup>51</sup> In other words, even though the Depression came as a shock to the rest of the country, the Southern tenants and sharecroppers were already in such dire conditions that it did not make such a difference. Wayne Flynt elaborately explains how during the Depression, the white tenants' life conditions spiralled down to a similar level as the African American's, which led to a loss of pride and self-respect that they tried to

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<sup>46</sup> Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 1.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard Reissman, "Social Development and the American South," *Ekistics* 22, No. 129 (1966): 159, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43616291?seq=1>.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Goldfield, *The Southern Key: Class, Race, and Radicalism in the 1930's and 1940's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 88.

<sup>49</sup> Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L–Z*, index, 910.

<sup>51</sup> McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L–Z*, index, 910.

preserve. However, given their poverty and life conditions in general, it was not an easy task.<sup>52</sup> The relationship between tenants and landlords was an essential aspect of Southern society. According to Flynt, it "spanned the range of openly exploitive to warmly helpful."<sup>53</sup> Most of the landowners, according to Flynt, believed that their tenants were lazy, irresponsible, ignorant, and were not able to make enough money to pay their bills. That is why the owners usually considered themselves above their tenants.<sup>54</sup> The sharecropping community was also divided by their race. As C.J. Fuller describes, the African American tenants were handled differently than the whites, and even though the whites were placed higher in the social hierarchy, they were still considered burdens.<sup>55</sup> Even though the tenant farmers had many issues with the society they lived in, they figured out how to protect themselves, at least partly. Flynt explains that the white tenants turned to politics, trying to make allies with various movements, including the Greenback-Labour party, the Farmer's Alliance, the Populist Party, and the Farmers Union. Despite all their attempts to be included and to have a say, they were still vastly uneducated and, in addition, did not have enough money to pay the cumulative tax; hence they were not qualified to vote.<sup>56</sup>

As their situation worsened, a resistance, supported by Alabama's communists, grew among the farmers. In his book *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*, Robin D.G. Kelley describes how one of the earlier uprisings of sharecroppers happened in Arkansas in 1931, which was immediately followed by a Communist exhortation of other communities to follow the initiative and fight the hunger and poverty.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, as Goldfield comments, the Communist' tries to mobilize the unemployed on larger scales were unsuccessful and primarily local.<sup>58</sup>

Southern society was divided into small communities, living in entirely different worlds. Flynt explains that rural people who moved into the city often became professionals, salesmen, craftsmen, or businessmen. Across the town and usually behind railroad tracks, there existed another community of textile workers.<sup>59</sup> Their districts were located on the peripheries of southern towns and usually had their churches, schools, and even their trade. According to Flynt, the division between people living uptown and the mill workers was of such importance that young people could not even date each other without

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<sup>52</sup> Wayne Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 89.

<sup>53</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 90.

<sup>54</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 90.

<sup>55</sup> C. J. Fuller, "Caste, race, and hierarchy in the American South," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, No 3 (2011): 607, accessed September 2011, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23011316>

<sup>56</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 91.

<sup>57</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 38.

<sup>58</sup> Goldfield, *The Southern Key: Class, Race, and Radicalism in the 1930's and 1940's*, 88.

<sup>59</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 92.

facing humiliation and ill looks of members of their communities.<sup>60</sup> Flynt further comments on the divisions of communities, which were primarily based on education, religion, and economic background and soaked with negative stereotypes, self-deception, and half-truths.<sup>61</sup> Although the social placement of the textile workers was low, many tenant farmers moved to the cotton mill towns to live a better life because compared to cotton picking, it was less monotonous and much more sociable. Members of the cotton mill communities often participated in a variety of activities, such as Sunday school, baseball, community dances, et cetera.<sup>62</sup> Although they considered themselves to be something different, the textile workers' communities rarely formed a separate class and still belonged to the lower, poor whites' part of society. The only more considerable difference between the mill occupation and other professions of the poor was that textile workers were almost exclusively white, and the percentage of African American workers was deficient.<sup>63</sup> During the Depression, many of the mill towns had suffered, and workers lost their jobs. However, to a certain degree, it was still operating business.

The Southern working class was also represented by coal miners, timber workers, and ironworkers as well. However, as the situation of all the working class was quite similar to that of textile workers, it is not as crucial to mention them in this thesis; therefore, they are omitted.

Although the class was of great importance in the American South, the distinction was more fluid and interchangeable. According to Fuller, what divided society the most was race.<sup>64</sup> Between different classes, there usually was a truce since everyone suffered during the Depression. However, in some instances, there was a clash between the lowest of the lowest, which were the tenant farmers, who usually did not have enough money to buy shoes or have a good life. Wayne Flynt remarks that what kept the poor together was a strong sense of religion, which in the South emphasized the humanity of all whites.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, the African Americans had their own churches and were pushed away from the white community since there still were remnants of racial prejudice from the past.

Lastly, the middle class had suffered greatly as well. According to Mary C. McComb, after the crash, they expressed their fears of losing their social position and of whatever other impact the Depression might have on them.<sup>66</sup> The crisis hit the poorest first, but by 1932, even the middle class was affected. McComb further explains that the middle class' wages dropped by approximately 40 percent, and the

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<sup>60</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 92.

<sup>61</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 92.

<sup>62</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 98.

<sup>63</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 107.

<sup>64</sup> Fuller, "Caste, race, and hierarchy in the American South," 614.

<sup>65</sup> Flynt, *Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites*, 107.

<sup>66</sup> Mary C. McComb, *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate Youth and Business Ideology, 1929-1941 (Studies in American Popular History and Culture)*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

people were therefore forced to question their beliefs and attitude towards hard work, which was supposed to bring the "American standard of living."<sup>67</sup> Although being heavily affected by the Depression, the middle class did not lose hope. Loren Baritz highlights the commentary of a news reporter Gerald Johnson from 1932, who spoke about the impact of the Depression on "ordinary Americans," who lived in his street: "Frankly, we are scared. However, we had seen it coming and had had time to brace ourselves so that we are not exactly stampeded. We are somewhat resentful because we think the depression had been made worse than it need have been by the stupidity of our rulers." He also mentioned that he was impressed and surprised with how his neighbours were calm and did not falter when facing the danger of the Communist party. They remained passive and clung to their hope that the crisis would pass eventually.<sup>68</sup>

Although the changes in social class during the Great Depression were significant and the Southern working class was hit the most, it did not upset the balance of society. The devastated landowners, tenants, and other workers only became poorer. In contrast, while being deprived of income and their living standards, the middle class hoped for a better future and clung to whatever ways of survival there were available. The upper class did not have as many representatives in the South as in the northern parts of the country, and it also is not as crucial for the purposes of this thesis; therefore, it was not mentioned in the chapter.

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<sup>67</sup> McComb, *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate Youth and Business Ideology, 1929-1941* (*Studies in American Popular History and Culture*), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (Missouri: Knopf, 1988) 101.

## 4 THE DEPICTION OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE IN *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

The following chapter aims to analyse Nelle Harper Lee's views on the social difference in her work *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The first subchapter examines the depiction of class in Maycomb, the second works with class relations, and in the third subchapter, the difference in housing and attire will be analysed.

Harper Lee took great inspiration from her own life when writing *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Born in 1926 in a small Southern town Monroeville she had direct access to racial prejudice, class separation and was able to experience the Great Depression in all its might. Lee's resemblance with the main character, Jeanne Louise Finch, also called Scout, is apparent since they were probably the same age at the beginning of the novel. Scout's father Atticus was a lawyer, as was Harper Lee's, and finally, the feared Radley place of Maycomb could be found in Lee's life as well, however, under the name of the Boulars' household.<sup>69</sup>

In connection with social inequality, the book addresses the social differences, which intensified during the 1930s when America, especially Southern states, was being devastated by the Great Depression. Harper Lee does not denounce the social division and its flaws. Nonetheless, she highlights some of the problems with which the 1930's society was dealing. Although it is sometimes not exactly clear to which social class each character belongs, the characters themselves have opinions and invite the reader to make his observations and conclusions.

Moreover, *To Kill a Mockingbird* offers more views and themes. One of the main ones, thoroughly discussed, is racism. Parallel to the social differences, the author does not thrust their ideas of right and wrong in the reader's face, yet she points them out quite clearly. Additionally, as described by Diann L. Baecker, the themes included in the book are: "Jem's maturation, the metaphor of the mockingbird, education, and superstition."<sup>70</sup> As the story is narrated by Scout, a six-year-old, the important racial and social issues are often overshadowed by other topics, such as Boo Radley, a strange, mysterious character living in the close neighbourhood of Jem, Scout, and Dill, who is their friend from Meridian, Mississippi, living with his aunt Ms. Rachel during summertime and is the main objective of their adventures, during which they are trying to lure him out and find out more about this malevolent phantom, as Scout calls

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<sup>69</sup> Harper Lee, *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird (Bloom's Guides)*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 12.

<sup>70</sup> Diann L. Baecker, *The Africanist Presence in To Kill a Mockingbird*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 102.

him.<sup>71</sup> Boo Radley is set aside when Dill leaves for his home in Meridian, and the author begins to introduce the social layout of Maycomb.

#### 4.1 CLASS IN MAYCOMB

Maycomb's social layout is more or less typical for a small Southern city of the 1930s. The only exceptions are Boo Radley, who does not belong anywhere and there is no information about him, and Dolphus Raymond, who is married to an African American woman and has mixed children with her. The rest of the Maycomb inhabitants is described by Jem, who divides the society into four groups – the white middle-class elite (Finch family, Miss Maudie Atkinson, and most of the city folk), and then distinguishes two separate groups of the white working-class – poor farmers such as the Cunninghams who were hit the hardest by the Depression, but still are good people, and the lowest class amongst the whites, who live by the dump and do not work – the Ewells. The last social group, according to Jem, are the Negroes, in the novel represented by Calpurnia, the housemaid, Tom Robinson, the falsely accused man, and many others.<sup>72</sup> Although some of the African American citizens of Maycomb have higher working status than some of the white people, they are still considered lower than all the whites, including the Ewells, who have no income, are a shame for the community and represent the lowest social group. Eric Erisman briefly describes the purpose of the caste system in Maycomb in his book *The Romantic Regionalism of Harper Lee*: "Maycomb has a taut, well-developed caste system designed to separate whites from blacks" and "keep the blacks in their place."<sup>73</sup>

Jem explains the social class he and Scout are part of as the "ordinary kind, like us and the neighbours"<sup>74</sup> they consist of the old inhabitants of Maycomb with a solid family background behind them and professional occupations, such as lawyers, doctors, policemen, et cetera. Teresa Godwin Phelps reveals the representatives of said class. Atticus, who is considered the best middle-class archetype, and Aunt Alexandra with her missionary friends, who are examples of the worst.<sup>75</sup>

Harper Lee introduces many characters who belong to the middle class because Jem and Scout usually come to contact with them. The most significant representative is Miss Maudie Atkinson, who tolerates the children's behaviour and lets them use her yard. She is an example of a friendly middle-class

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<sup>71</sup> Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (London: Arrow Books, 1989), 9.

<sup>72</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 249.

<sup>73</sup> Fred Erisman, "The Romantic Regionalism of Harper Lee," *The Alabama Review: A Quarterly Journal of Alabama History* XXIV, no. 2 (1973): 124, accessed March 23, 2014, [http://www.uwa.edu/uploadedFiles/alabamareview/1973Apr\\_RomanticRegionalismHarperLee.pdf](http://www.uwa.edu/uploadedFiles/alabamareview/1973Apr_RomanticRegionalismHarperLee.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 250.

<sup>75</sup> Teresa Godwin Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, published in *Critical Insights: To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Donald Noble (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010), 168.



lady who, along with Judge John Taylor, Sheriff Heck Tate, and landowner Link Deas, supports Atticus' defense of Tom Robinson. Her good-heartedness is demonstrated right after the Tom Robinson trial when she meets Jem and Scout, who are furious and devastated with the trial's outcome. She explains to the children that: "there are some men in this world who were born to do our unpleasant jobs for us. Your father is one of them."<sup>76</sup> Many other representants of the middle class are included in the novel, such as Miss Stephanie Crawford, who, along with Mr. Avery, gossip about everyone in town and are as informed as an average white middle-class citizen can be, Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, Nathan, and Arthur "Boo" Radleys and many others. The archetype of prejudice-filled, family-oriented, old Southern lady is Aunt Alexandra. According to Phelps, Lee portrays her and the missionary ladies with whom Alexandra spends her afternoons as parodical, backward thinking, and stuck in the past. They are prejudiced, gossipy and although they are trying to bring western civilization and Christianity, the ladies themselves often do not possess it.<sup>77</sup> Alexandra disapproves of Atticus's way of bringing up his children and tries to teach Scout how to be a lady. In the novel, Scout describes Aunty's tries with the following:

"Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of my attire. I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches; when I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants. Aunt Alexandra's vision of my deportment involved playing with small stoves, tea sets, and wearing the Add-A-Pearl necklace she gave me when I was born."<sup>78</sup>

Even though Aunt Alexandra pushed her beliefs and visions on Scout, she resisted with all her might and did not give up on keeping her tomboy appearance and behaviour. After Alexandra moves in with the Finch family, she even pushes her ideas on Atticus, who, despite having a different opinion, tries to convince Scout that she is not one of the working-class and should try to behave accordingly to her family name and social status.<sup>79</sup>

The middle class of Maycomb is a rather large community of people who know each other very well. The close relationship of its constituents is implied in the novel when Scout introduces Atticus, who "knew his people, they knew him, and because of Simon Finch's industry, Atticus was related by blood or marriage to nearly every family in town."<sup>80</sup> The relationship between middle-class people is further explained by Atticus when talking to his children about the heated discussion among their

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<sup>76</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 237.

<sup>77</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 169.

<sup>78</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 147.

<sup>80</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 5.

neighbours and friends regarding the Tom Robinson case and Atticus' role in his defence. "no matter how bitter things get, they're still our friends and this Maycomb is still our home."<sup>81</sup>

To have a better view of the Maycomb working class, it is crucial to make acquaintances with the representatives pictured in the novel. Firstly, Harper Lee introduces the farmer family of Cunninghams. They are portrayed as poor but humble members of the working class, who live in the outskirts of Maycomb and are presented as a part of a whole social group when Scout goes to school for the first time: "the ragged, denim-shirted and floursack-skirted first grade, most of whom had chopped cotton and fed hogs from the time they were able to walk."<sup>82</sup> In school, they are contrasted with Miss Caroline, the teacher, whose attire makes it evident that she is from a completely different social environment. Moreover, she reads a short story about cats in clothes, which the children entirely ignore since they are "immune to imaginative literature."<sup>83</sup> As a prime example of the farmer's working-class children, Walter Cunningham is introduced. He is described as a hookworm infected, shoeless but cleanly dressed young boy.<sup>84</sup> Miss Caroline, the teacher of the first grade, is surprised when she finds out that Walter has no lunch and intends to give him a quarter to buy lunch for himself, which he refuses. The narrator of the story, Jean Louise Finch, tries to explain his behaviour to Miss Caroline:

That's okay, ma'am, you'll get to know all the county folks after a while. The Cunninghams never took anything they can't pay back—no church baskets and no scrip stamps. They never took anything off of anybody, they get along on what they have. They don't have much, but they get along on it.<sup>85</sup>

From her explanation, it can be deduced that the Cunninghams were poor but proud and do not take charity. Even though they are usually not able to pay with money, they find a way. Phelps highlights how when Mr. Walter Cunningham had no money to pay for "entailment," he paid with hickory nuts, turnip greens, and crates of smilax and holly.<sup>86</sup>

The relationship of the Cunninghams and Finches is described by Aunt Alexandra, who sees a vast difference between the families. She calls them trash and forbids Scout from being friends with them, as she could learn something bad, which would influence her personality.<sup>87</sup> However, Scout is against such separation and does not feel the need to stay away from the Cunninghams because she sees them as equals.

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<sup>81</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 84-85.

<sup>82</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 18.

<sup>84</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 171.

<sup>85</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 22.

<sup>86</sup> Phelps *The Margins of Maycomb*, 173.

<sup>87</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 248.

The people with the lowest social status are the Ewells. Maycomb residents who represent a social class of their own. In the novel, Atticus describes the family with the following:

Atticus said that the Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day's work in his recollection. He said that some Christmas, when he was getting rid of the tree, he take me with him and show me where and how they lived. They were people, but they lived like animals.<sup>88</sup>

Even though the Ewells are more or less a part of the same poor working class, their pride and modesty are, compared to the Cunninghams, almost non-existent. The Ewells characteristics are demonstrated in the third chapter of the novel when Scout goes to school for the first time and comes in contact with Burris Ewell, who is "the filthiest human I [Scout] had ever seen."<sup>89</sup> Burris then proceeds to disrupt the lesson entirely, harshly insults the teacher and leaves the class. His behaviour upsets Scout because, as Burris explained, he would not attend school for the rest of the year, which, in Scout's eyes, was considered unfair. In the novel, Atticus comes to explain the phenomenon:

"Let us leave it at this," said Atticus dryly. "You, Miss Scout Finch, are of the common folk. You must obey the law." He said that the Ewells were members of an exclusive society made up of Ewells. In certain circumstances the common folk judiciously allowed them certain privileges by the simple method of becoming blind to some of the Ewells' activities. They didn't have to go to school, for one thing.<sup>90</sup>

Their way of life is further portrayed in the novel during the court trial, when Bob Ewell, the family's father, and Mayella Ewell, the oldest child of the family, are called to testify. During the trial, both Bob's and Mayella's way of speech give away quite a lot about their social status. For instance, during Atticus' cross-examination, Mayella accuses him of making fun of her because she called her "Miss" and "ma'am"<sup>91</sup> During the trial, it becomes apparent how sad the Ewells family life is, especially for Mayella, who despite her false accusations of Tom Robinson has an adamant time. Although Bob received weekly WPA (Works Progress Administration) relief checks, it was mentioned in the novel that they were "far from enough to feed the family, and there was a strong suspicion that Papa drank it up anyway."<sup>92</sup> Still, the strong hints on Ewell's terrible family life are mostly ignored since they are pictured as the villains, and the novel itself does not put their living conditions in the spotlight. The author does not show any concern for the orphaned children after Bob Ewell's death to highlight the family's unimportance for the

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<sup>88</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 33-34.

<sup>89</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 29.

<sup>90</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 34.

<sup>91</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 200.

<sup>92</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 201.

community. Phelps remarks that the author even invites the reader to ignore the suffering Ewells, just as Miss Caroline should have ignored Burris' behaviour.<sup>93</sup>

As explained by Phelps, the Ewells have no place in Maycomb's society and will stay on its rear. Similar to Cunninghams, they have no hope of moving upwards on the social ladder. However, the Cunninghams are at the very least caring enough to grant their children some education. In the novel, it is described as if the Ewells did not want to be a part of the community. Lastly, Bob's act of vengeance on Jem and Scout is exemplary behaviour of the lowest, "white trash," class since violence used as a solution can be used only by someone on the margin of society.<sup>94</sup>

The last social class introduced in the novel is African Americans. Phelps remarks that even in the book, there are two different kinds portrayed. The "good" ones, like Tom and Calpurnia, and the "bad" ones like Lula.<sup>95</sup> Calpurnia acts as Scout and Jem's surrogate mother, and she, along with Atticus, has the role of a moral guide and is undoubtedly Atticus' closest friend.<sup>96</sup> She represents a part of the African American community, which treats the whites with respect and keeps their distance but is still educated. In the novel, Scout and Jem have their first contact with the community when Calpurnia takes them to the African American church. Most of the African Americans treated the children with respect, as portrayed in the novel.

When they saw Jem and me with Calpurnia, the men stepped back and took off their hats; the women crossed their arms at their waists, weekday gestures of respectful attention. They parted and made a small pathway to the church door for us.<sup>97</sup>

Similar respect is demonstrated during the trial, when Tom Robinson explains how obedient he was when Mayella Ewell asked him to do work for her, even after a hard day of work. Out of sheer respect for the whites, Tom did not ask for anything in return for his help. The examples of Calpurnia and Tom prove that African Americans could be accepted by the white society when they behaved like they were supposed to and knew their place.

In the novel, their place was in a settlement beyond the town dump even more separated than the Ewells. The previously mentioned church was paid for with the first money of freed slaves. However,

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<sup>93</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 183.

<sup>94</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 180.

<sup>95</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 180.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas L. Shaffer, "Growing Up Good in Maycomb," 45 Ala. L. Rev. 531 (1993-1994): 539, accessed October 11, 2013, [https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law\\_faculty\\_scholarship/660](https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/660).

<sup>97</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 131.

even when the church was intended as a sacred place for African American citizens, the whites exploited it for illegal activities, such as gambling.<sup>98</sup>

The second kind of African Americans in Maycomb is represented by Lula. As noted by Phelps, Lula would, in this day, represent a Black separatist, who, although she is being portrayed as a negative character, has a valid point that the whites should not be trespassing and doing whatever they liked in the coloured settlement.<sup>99</sup> However, the rest of the community banishes her and accepts the children with humility. “Don’t pay no ‘tention to Lula, she’s contentious. She’s a troublemaker from way back, got fancy ideas an’ haughty ways – we’re mighty glad to have you all.”<sup>100</sup> Harper Lee uses this encounter to show what is expected of the African American community in Maycomb and how it should behave to be protected by the law.

To conclude the social layout and class division in Maycomb, it is crucial to understand that it is deeply connected with family tradition. If a family stays in one place for generations and is not a nuisance to society, it can gain social value. According to Phelps, Harper Lee attempts to erase the differences between classes with Atticus’s wisdom of not being able to understand someone unless you’ve tried to walk in his shoes.<sup>101</sup> However, such barriers are still being created. With the despidal of the Ewells, making fun of the Cunninghams, and ridiculing Aunt Alexandra’s ladies club.

## 4.2 LANGUAGE AND CLASS IN MAYCOMB

An important aspect of class distinction in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is literacy and the style of language which the characters use. In the novel, it is apparent that different social classes have different ways of speech, and there is significant differentiation between the African American citizens, the poor working class, and the wealthy middle class. However, given the fact that the story takes place in southern Alabama, there are some spottable similarities in the speech patterns, vocabulary usage, and correctness of grammar. The difference is first easily spotted when Scout goes to school for the first time and is already able to read fluently, which was a huge surprise to her teacher Miss Caroline because the poor farmers’ children were not as skilled.

As I read the alphabet a faint line appeared between her eyebrows, and after making me read most of *My First Reader* and the stock-market quotations from *The Mobile Register* aloud, she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 130.

<sup>99</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 182.

<sup>100</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 132.

<sup>101</sup> Phelps, *The Margins of Maycomb*, 167.

<sup>102</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 18-19.

As for the rest of the Maycomb people, literacy was not very spread. While the Ewells, apart from Bob and Mayella, were mostly illiterate because the rest of the children were not in school long enough to learn. The African American community had no access to education. That is why it is somewhat surprising that Calpurnia, the Finch family house maiden, can read and has enough social awareness that her style of language differs when she speaks to her African American peers from the style of language she uses while communicating with the middle-class citizens.<sup>103</sup>

One of the critical aspects of language in connection with class is the difference between Atticus's style of speech and that of Jem and Scout. Although all the Finches belong to the middle class, there are differences in their speech, caused mainly by their education. Although Atticus's language and education positively influence them, the children, especially Scout, sometimes find themselves confused. For instance, after Scout's first day of school, she is scolded by Miss Caroline for being able to read and therefore decides that she does not want to go there anymore. Atticus proposes an agreement and is met with Scout's confusion.

'I'm afraid our activities would be received with considerable disapprobation by the more learned authorities.'

Jem and I were accustomed to our father's last-will-and-testament diction, and we were at all times free to interrupt Atticus for a translation when it was beyond our understanding.

'Huh, sir?'

'I never went to school,' he said, 'but I have a feeling that if you tell Miss Caroline we read every night she'll get after me, and I wouldn't want her after *me*.'<sup>104</sup>

This example judiciously illustrates how the educated, middle-class vocabulary was different from the less educated people. Even though Scout is bright for her age and is on a much higher level than her first-grade colleagues, she is still overshadowed by Atticus. Jem does not have such trouble with his father's language because he is older and well-read.

A much more significant difference appears when the reader is introduced to Burris Ewell for the first time. He is a representative of the lowest working class in Maycomb, and his way of talking is considerably different from Miss Caroline or even Scout, who belong to the middle class. In the following extract, the gap in education and difference in class becomes apparent.

Miss Caroline took advantage of his indecision: 'Burris, go home. If you don't I'll call the principal,' she said. 'I'll have to report this, anyway.'

The boy snorted and slouched leisurely to the door. Safely out of range, he turned and shouted: 'Report and be damned to ye! Ain't no snot-nosed slut of a school-teacher ever

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<sup>103</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 139.

<sup>104</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 35.

born c'n make me do nothin'! You ain't makin' me go nowhere, missus. You just remember that, you ain't makin' me go nowhere!'<sup>105</sup>

Burriss Ewell's speech differs in several aspects. His grammar is on a low level, he uses a large volume of colloquial language and is even offensive towards his teacher, whereas Miss Caroline uses the correct forms of grammar and treats Burriss with respect, which indeed cannot be said about him. In the novel, various examples of Ewell's language collide with other characters, who belong to the middle class. The most apparent clash happens during the Tom Robinson trial, where Bob and Mayella Ewell are called to testify. Immediately upon being asked to describe the events of the November afternoon, Bob Ewell resorts to offensive, colloquial language. When Reverend Sykes points out that Scout should go home, Jem opposes that she does not understand what Mr. Ewell is saying, assuming she never heard such words used.

'Well, Mayella was raisin' this holy racket so I dropped m'load and run as fast as I could but I run into th'fence, but when I got distangled I run up to th' window and I seen '- Mr. Ewell's face grew scarlet. He stood and pointed his finger at Tom Robinson. '- I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin' on my Mayella!'<sup>106</sup>

His speech is immediately stopped by Judge Taylor, who is forced to use his gavel to calm down the courtroom since Mr. Ewell's expressions are considered not fit for a court hearing. He warns Mr. Ewell to use formal language, although he most definitely knows that he is not capable of it. Similar to his son, Bob's language capabilities are on a devastatingly low level, and it is apparent to which part of society he belongs. A similar situation occurs when Mayella is cross-examined by Atticus and is offended by common courtesy phrases, such as "ma'am" and "Miss." Judging from her reaction to common courtesy and polite language, it is apparent that she does not understand a civilized conversation. Most definitely because she never had the opportunity to have it since she is, like her father, a part of the lowest white working class in Maycomb.

Lastly, *To Kill a Mockingbird* offers a striking contrast in how different social classes in Maycomb approach addressing the African American population. Since the story takes place in 1930s Alabama, it is unlikely to encounter the characters addressing the African American citizens in a polite, 21<sup>st</sup>-century manner. The white people of Maycomb predominantly label the African Americans as "coloured folk," "Negroes," and "niggers." The terms used differ depending on which social class the person belongs to. The well-educated middle-class resorts to "coloured folk" and "Negroes," whereas the working class primarily uses "niggers." The African Americans themselves use various expressions, which differ based on the environment they are in.

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<sup>105</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 31.

<sup>106</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 190.

In the novel, there are various instances where the middle-class citizens speak about or directly address the African Americans. Although in the personal conversation they do not resort to race-related comments, when having a conversation, the middle-class usually uses the expressions “coloured folks” and “Negroes.”

With the Tom Robinson trial getting closer, Scout faces many offensive comments from her peers in school who, although they belong to the same social class as Scout, are children, therefore do not have the appropriate filter for their language. They accuse her father of defending “niggers.”<sup>107</sup> On that account, Scout decides to ask her father what that means and is immediately educated that she should not use such words because it is “common.”<sup>108</sup> Atticus explains to Scout that he was appointed the Tom Robinson's case and is supposed to defend him in court. Although he knows he is not going to win, it is, as he explains to Scout, necessary that he does it because he is a law figure, and if he had not accepted the case, he could not “hold up my [Atticus’s] head in town.”<sup>109</sup>

However, not all members of the middle class were as polite and educated as Atticus, and in some cases, even they resorted to offensive language when talking about the African Americans. Many middle-class citizens did not agree with Atticus defending Tom Robinson only because he was not white, and some of them did not hold back in expressing their opinions. Mrs. Dubose, an old lady who lived next door to the Finches, was one of them.

But Mrs. Dubose held us: ‘Not only a Finch waiting on tables but one in the court-house lawing for niggers!’

Jem stiffened. Mrs Dubose’s shot had gone home and she knew it.

‘Yes indeed, what has this world come to when a Finch goes against his raising? I’ll tell you!’ She put her hand to her mouth. When she drew it away, it trailed a long silver thread of saliva. ‘Your father’s no better than the niggers and trash he works for!’<sup>110</sup>

However, most of the middle class treated the African Americans with respect and was not offensive towards them, even though they did not particularly hold them in high regard.

A considerably different approach towards the African Americans have the members of the white working class. An example of such an approach is illustrated during the Tom Robinson court hearing. Bob Ewell, who was asked to describe the events of the afternoon when the crime was supposed

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<sup>107</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 82.

<sup>108</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 83.

<sup>109</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 83.

<sup>110</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 112-113.



to happen, used poorly formed sentences, wrong grammar. When talking about Tom Robinson, he did not hesitate to use offensive language, even when Judge Taylor stops him.

‘Why I run for Tate quick as I could. I knowed who it was, all right, lived down yonder in that nigger-nest, passed the house every day.’<sup>111</sup>

In the extract, it is visible how low Mr. Ewell holds the African American population, has no shame and does not understand the gravity of his speech. Mr. Ewell’s lack of education can mainly be the cause of the racist, offensive, and inappropriate choice of words.

In conclusion, apart from family heritage and occupation, the language is an important aspect of social division in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Even though Scout and Jem’s speech is similar to the working class, it is mainly because they are children and do not possess the needed moral compass and education, which would prevent them from using inappropriate words and words, which denote the African American population. With the advancing age, however, both Scout and Jem become more well-read and educated and therefore attain the needed language to speak as appropriately as their father does.

#### **4.3 HOUSING AND ATTIRE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL CLASSES IN MAYCOMB**

Among the family heritage, occupation, education, and language, it is also important to take notice of the different living conditions and clothing each social class has. Given that Maycomb is a rural town in southern Alabama, the standards are not set high. However, there is still some contrast between each part of society.

The Finch family is a representative of the southern middle class. They live on the main street among other middle-class residents, such as Miss Maudie Atkinson, the Radleys, Miss Rachel Haverford, and others. The street’s importance becomes apparent when before the Tom Robinson trial, all of the visitors from the county have to pass through it to make it to the city.<sup>112</sup> The house is quite large because all members of the family, including Aunt Alexandra, who comes to visit, have their separate rooms. Each room is equipped with a fireplace, and there is a garage attached. It stands on stone blocks, therefore has no basement, and is supplied with electricity. The house has a front and a back porch and is quite close to Maycomb’s centre.

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<sup>111</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 193.

<sup>112</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 174.

The other houses on the main street are built in a similar fashion, with the exception of the Radley place, which is not well preserved. In the novel, it is described as low, grey coloured with green shutters and rain-rotten shingles.<sup>113</sup>

The description of the Finch's residence can be used as an exemplary middle-class house in Maycomb since was no one particularly rich in the city. Therefore there was no option of having a larger, better-equipped house.

The working-class Maycomb citizens are divided into two groups. The Cunninghams and the Ewells. The Cunninghams are hard-working, dignified, but somewhat feral and straightforward farmers who live in the northern part of the county. They are a part of Old Sarum, which, according to Scout, is the "nearest thing to a gang" in Maycomb.<sup>114</sup> Their houses are not explicitly described. However, as they are from the lower working class, their housing would be much simpler, more modest, and less comfortable. The Ewell's property, however, is well-described in the novel.

Maycomb's Ewells lived behind the town garbage dump in what was once a Negro cabin. The cabin's plank walls were supplemented with sheets of corrugated iron, its roof shingled with tin cans hammered flat, so only its general shape suggested its original design: square, with four tiny rooms opening on to a shotgun hall, the cabin rested uneasily upon four irregular lumps of limestone. Its windows were merely open spaces in the walls, which in the summertime were covered with greasy strips of cheesecloth.<sup>115</sup>

From the description of the house, it is apparent that the Ewells had terrible living conditions and had no option to make them better. That, however, is not only because of the Depression, which had a significant impact on the farmer population but mostly because Ewells, according to Atticus, "had not done an honest day's work."<sup>116</sup>

The African Americans, being a social class of their own, are entirely separated from the white population of Maycomb. Their housing was located even further behind the town garbage dump, well past the Ewells. They lived in similar small cabins as the Ewells. Not much more is mentioned about the cabins. However, as mentioned in the novel, some of the African Americans were much cleaner than the Ewells.

'He's a member of Calpurnia's church, and Cal knows his family well. She says they're clean-living folks.'<sup>117</sup>

This description is given by Atticus when he is explaining to Scout who Tom Robinson is, and it can be deduced that most of the African American citizens are as clean as the ones whose cleanliness is described

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<sup>113</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 9.

<sup>114</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 10.

<sup>115</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 187-188.

<sup>116</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 33.

<sup>117</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 83.

in the novel. However, Harper Lee does not give any more examples of African American housing. Therefore it is not safe to come to conclusions.

The difference in clothing is an important aspect of both the difference in class and, in Scout's case, expression of freedom. There are various occurrences of class-distinctive clothing in the novel, and at the same time, the stereotypes are being attacked by Scout's abhorration of dresses and stubbornness.

Scout is constantly being forced to dress like a middle-class Southern lady by Aunt Alexandra, which she keeps protesting against with great passion. For most of the novel, however, Scout is seen wearing overalls and other supposedly boys' clothes, covered in mud and being utterly ignorant of Aunt Alexandra's wishes. When Aunt Alexandra moves in with the Finch family, she forces Scout to attend her missionary circles of Southern ladies. In the following extract, an accurate description of the Southern lady's attire is illustrated.

The ladies were cool in fragile pastel prints: most of them were heavily powdered but unrouged; the only lipstick in the room was Tangee Natural. Cutex Natural sparkled on their fingernails, but some of the younger ladies wore Rose. They smelled heavenly.<sup>118</sup>

Scout could never accept wearing such clothes, so she wore the same clothes as her brother Jem or other boys of her age in Maycomb.

The most significant difference between middle-class clothing and working-class clothing is the presence of shoes on children. Whereas the middle-class families could afford to buy shoes for their offspring, the poor farmers could not. In the novel, it is demonstrated on Scout's first day of school, where Walter Cunningham from the family of poor farmers does not have shoes on. It is pointed out that "if Walter had owned any shoes, he would have worn them the first day of school and then discarded them until mid-winter."<sup>119</sup> However, despite his lack of shoes, the rest of his clothing was clean and well taken care of.

The clothing of the remaining two social groups differed only in levels of dirtiness. Burris Ewell, who is Scout's classmate, is portrayed as rather filthy, and his clothes are dirty. The African Americans wore nearly the same things as the working class.

To conclude the differences in housing and attire among Maycomb's classes, it is vital to understand the economic situation during the 1930s. Houses in the Deep South were damaged by the whims of the weather and were diverse only in size and equipment. Some of the houses did not have electricity, and most of the poor farmer's houses were on the brink of becoming a ruin. Since everyone in

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<sup>118</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 253.

<sup>119</sup> Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 21.

Maycomb was poor during the novel's events, people rarely had enough money to afford new clothes. The farmers, who were hit the hardest, used the same pieces of clothing every day, and there were no other options for them. The middle-class citizens could afford better clothes, dresses for women, and, most importantly, shoes.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to find examples of the depiction of social differences in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and analyse them. The analysis was preceded by relevant historical and sociological background. The first theoretical chapter summarised the social conditions of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It briefly introduces the pre-war period of strikes, followed by the prosperous time, when America's agriculture saved Europe from starving, the Roaring Twenties, a period of significant technological expansion and at the same time struggle of the farmers' population because of natural disasters, and briefly the Great Depression and its impact on different social classes. The second theoretical chapter overviews the Great Depression in detail. Introduced the causes of the depression, the stock market crash in 1929, President Hoover's failed attempts to save the economy with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which proved to be too expensive to keep working, the transition between Hoover and Theodore Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt's New Deal programs and administrations, which were more successful, such as the Works Progress Administration and Agricultural Adjustment Act. Finally, the third, last theoretical chapter described the social conditions of the southern citizens of the United States, introduced the representants of the southern working class, such as tenants and sharecroppers, textile workers, timber workers, coalminers, and ironworkers, their struggle for jobs, food, and a roof over their head. It was followed by the introduction of the middle-class southerners, who suffered as well, however, not as much as the working-class population.

The analytical part showed how Harper Lee's Maycomb society introduced in the novel is based on her personal experience, and a large number of the characters portrayed in the novel are inspired by her real-life acquaintances, whom she grew up with in Monroeville, Alabama. Even the main character, Scout, is most probably based on Harper Lee herself because she would be the same age as Scout when the novel's events transpired. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she works with the differences in class in the southern society during the 1930s Great Depression and, at the same time, addresses several other issues, such as racism, growing up, and gender issues. Despite the importance of the addressed topics, Harper Lee distracts the reader with a rich backstory about a mysterious phantom Boo Radley who is the main objective of the children, one of whom is the narrator of the story.

The first subchapter of the analytical part depicted the four different social classes: the middle-class, the upper-working class, the lower-working class, and the African Americans. The author tries to erase the barriers between those classes with a child narrator, who is still naïve and not damaged from the adult world, and her father's wisdom, which encourages people to try the other person's shoes before judging him. However, Lee still unconsciously created barricades between the classes with how she

portrayed them in the novel. The middle-class is wealthy, educated, represents an important position in the society, and has family-like relations, even though its members disagree on many things. In contrast, the upper-working class is portrayed as poor, ill-mannered, ignorant, and considered trash by the middle-class citizens. The lower-working class is depicted as even poorer than the upper-working class farmers, a nuisance that does not want to be a part of society and has no hope of moving up the social ladder, alcoholic and overall “white trash.” The last social class, the African Americans, is divided into two groups. One of which treats the white residents of Maycomb with respect and tries to live their lives normally, along with the white people, and the other group, which acts as Black separatists, who disagree with the whites trampling over their property and rights.

The second subchapter of the analytical part dealt with the language used by each of the different social classes depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The division in class was not as apparent as in the first subchapter because since the story takes place in the deep American South, the citizens have some similarities concerning speech patterns, vocabulary usage, et cetera. However, a difference is still easily spotted. Even though they are educated and often well-read, the middle class sometimes resorts to offensive, colloquial language, however, not as often as the remaining classes. The members of the upper-working class are trying to be polite, and although they are not as educated as the middle class, their language stays somewhat polite and appropriate. Still, the grammatical correctness and vocabulary bank are less developed, and the difference in speech is significant. The lower-working class is uneducated, ill-mannered, ignorant, and its members do not hesitate to use racist and offensive language. They mostly use colloquial language, and grammatical correctness is entirely off. Lastly, the African Americans use similar language to the lower-working class because they are almost the same since they have no education. However, some exceptions are literate and able to communicate politely, correctly and have no issues with grammar.

The last subchapter described the different standards of accommodation in Maycomb and the varieties of clothing with regard to class. The Finches are described as a middle-class family who owns a large house with an electricity supply and a fireplace in every almost every room. The Cunningham’s housing is not described in detail; however, it can be assumed that they live in a farmer’s cottage, which was typical for the 1930s rural South. The Ewells, along with the African American citizens, live in former slave cabins, which are in bad condition since both social classes have no resources to make their living conditions better. The second part of the last subchapter was dedicated to differences in attire in connection with social class in Maycomb. People’s clothing differed based on their social status. However, since all the citizens were poor, the only significant difference was whether a person could or could not afford to have shoes.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* realistically depicts the social differences in 1930s Southern Alabama and non-violently, with child's innocence tells a story of growing up and living in a small town. Whether Harper Lee based her story on actual events or not, it surely touched the hearts of many and influenced millions of students and adults all over the world.

## RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat vyobrazení společenských rozdílů v díle *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee. Příběh se odehrává v malém fiktivním městečku Maycomb ve státě Alabama na začátku třicátých let dvacátého století. Vypravěčem je Jean Louise Finch, která je také známa pod přezdívkou Čipera. Během třicátých let na americký jih dopadala Velká hospodářská krize, která zapříčinila zvětšení rozdílů mezi jednotlivými společenskými vrstvami, a prohloubila chudobu už tak chudých jižanských farmářů. Harper Lee sama vyrůstala v podobně situovaném městě v Alabamě během třicátých let, a tak je její vyobrazení Maycombské společnosti velmi ovlivněno jejími vlastními zkušenostmi z dětství. Práce je rozdělena na dvě části. První, teoretická část, se skládá ze třech kapitol, které se zabývají historickou a společenskou situací amerického jihu v první polovině dvacátého století. Druhá, analytická část, pracuje přímo s románem *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee a analyzuje výskyt společenských rozdílů, pracuje s rozdíly v jazyce jednotlivých společenských vrstev a stručně nastiňuje rozdíly ve standardech bydlení a oblékání v závislosti na společenském umístění.

V první teoretické kapitole je zmapována společenská situace ve Spojených státech amerických v první polovině dvacátého století. Počínaje předválečným obdobím od roku 1905, kdy skupina socialistů, anarchistů a radikálů založila uskupení I.W.W. (Průmysloví dělníci světa), aby vyjádřili svou nespokojenost se stavem americké ekonomiky. Následuje popis první světové války, kdy se podmínky pro život o něco zlepšily, protože musely Spojené státy zásobovat Evropu jídlem a zabránit tak bojujícím vojákům ve vyhladovění. Kapitola dále pojednává o období dvacátých let, známým také pod názvem „Roaring Twenties,“ které se zapsalo do dějin především značným průmyslovým rozvojem a expanzí měst, ale také přírodními katastrofami, které značně ovlivnily ekonomiku a způsobily propad cen u zemědělských produktů. Na období dvacátých let navazuje stručný popis krachu na burze v roce 1929, který způsobil Velkou hospodářskou krizi, a jeho dopadu na společenské vrstvy americké společnosti. Čtyřicátá a padesátá léta jsou z kapitoly vynechány, neboť nejsou pro bakalářskou práci relevantní.

Druhá teoretická kapitola volně navazuje na první a ve větším detailu se zabývá Velkou hospodářskou krizí. V první části jsou představeny důvody, proč krize vypukla a detailněji popsán krach na burze v roce 1929. Navazuje popis prezidentství Herberta Hoovera, který se svými marnými pokusy pokoušel zachránit americkou ekonomiku a následně prezidentství Teodora Delano Roosevelta, který přišel s programem Nový úděl, jehož klíčovými součástmi byl zákon AAA, který redukoval množství vysazených zemědělských plodin a program WPA, který zajišťoval aspoň drobný přísun peněz pro nezaměstnané a chudé Američany.



Třetí a poslední teoretická kapitola se zabývá sociálními podmínkami obyvatel amerického jihu a představuje zástupce chudé dělnické třídy, které hospodářská krize zasáhla nejvíce, jako byli například nádeníci, pachtýři, ale dělníci ve výrobě textilu, dřevorubci a horníci. Kapitola nastiňuje zápas dělnické třídy o udržení jejich pracovních pozic, potýkání se s chudobou a hladověním. Následuje představení jižanské střední třídy, která ač měla také ekonomické problémy a často měla problém vyžít, tak na tom nebyla tak špatně jako populace dělníků.

Analytická část bakalářské práce se zabývá vyobrazením společnosti města Maycomb přímo v díle *Jako zabít ptáčka*. Maycomb je z určité části inspirován autorčiným rodným městem Monroeville, které se také nachází v Alabamě a Harper Lee v něm, stejně jako Jean Louise Finch, vyrůstala během Velké hospodářské krize. Postavy z knihy jsou často připodobňovány ke skutečným lidem ze života autorky, což přidává románu na věrohodnosti. Dokonce i hlavní postava, která je i zároveň vypravěčem příběhu, Jean Louise Finch je stejného věku jako Harper Lee byla během třicátých let. V knize autorka pracuje s rozdíly ve společnosti během třicátých let dvacátého století, ale zároveň poukazuje i na všudypřítomný rasismus, genderovou nevyváženost a průběh dospívání v jižanské společnosti. Autorka se i přes důležitost zmíněných témat nicméně snaží je upozadit a rozptyluje čtenáře příběhem o Bubu Radleym, který Čiperu, Jema a Dilla zprvu zajímá daleko víc, než společenské rozložení města a rasová problematika.

První subkapitola analytické části popisuje čtyři společenské vrstvy, které jsou v knize zmíněny. Střední třídu, do které patří rodina Finchů a jejich sousedé, vyšší a nižší dělnické třídy, do kterých patří například rodina Cunninghamů a Ewellů, a zcela oddělení společenská vrstva Afroameričanů, mezi které se řadí Calpurnie, Tom Robinson a další. Autorka se snaží vymazat společenské bariéry mezi jednotlivými vrstvami tím, že je celý příběh čtenáři předán dětskou vypravěčkou, Čiperou, která ve svém věku nerozlišuje společenské rozdíly a snaží se vnímat všechny členy jako sobě rovné. Zároveň pak také společenské bariéry boří Atticusova moudrá rada, že by si měl každý vyzkoušet chodit v botách ostatních lidí předtím, než je začne soudit. I přes její pokusy však Harper Lee nevědomky bariéry vytváří, a to způsobem jakým o jednotlivých třídách v knize hovoří a jak se k sobě navzájem chovají.

Střední třída je bohatá, vzdělaná a zastupuje důležité pozice ve společnosti, jako například právník Atticus, šerif Heck Tate a soudce Taylor. Také se střední třída v knize vyznačuje rodinnou tradicí a úzkými, skoro až rodinnými vztahy mezi sebou. Vyšší dělnická třída sestává v Maycombu převážně z chudých farmářů, kteří jsou vyobrazeni jako ignorantští, špatně vychovaní, ale zároveň hrdí a samostatní. Také jsou některými členy vnímáni jako odpad společnosti. Nižší dělnická třída je popsána jako ještě chudší, zcela nevzdělaná a je na ní pohlíženo jako obtíž společnosti, která nechce být její součástí a nemá žádné možnosti se posunout ve společenském žebříčku a je složena z alkoholiků. Členy poslední společenské vrstvy jsou pouze Afroameričané, kteří jsou také rozděleni do dvou skupin. První skupina respektuje

postavení bílé populace města, chová se k nim s úctou a akceptuje svoje nižší postavení, zatímco druhá skupina je složena z takzvaných separatistů, kteří nesouhlasí se superiorním postavením bílé populace a jsou nespokojeni s tím, jak je s nimi zacházeno a jak je na ně nahlíženo.

Druhá podkapitola analytické části se zabývá rozdíly v užití jazyka v závislosti na společenském postavení. Společenské rozdíly v závislosti na mluvě jednotlivých tříd nebyly tak znatelné, jako v první subkapitole, neboť se příběh odehrává na americkém jihu, tudíž má většina postav vcelku podobný způsob vyjadřování. I přesto jsou však rozdíly snadno rozpoznány. Představitelé střední třídy jsou vzdělaní, a tudíž používají spisovnější formulace, mají větší slovní zásobu a neuchylují se tolik k hovorovému jazyku. Nicméně se i u jejich zástupců objeví nespisovnost, vulgarita, či jiná nesprávnost.

Vyšší dělnická třída, která je částečně vzdělaná, usiluje o správnou a spisovnou mluvu, ale ne vždy se to podaří, tudíž se často objevuje nespisovný výraz, hovorový jazyk a slovní zásoba a gramatická správnost nejsou zdaleka na tak dobré úrovni jako u střední třídy.

Nižší dělnická třída spolu s Afroameričany se pohybuje na zhruba stejné jazykové úrovni, neboť obě skupiny nemají zpravidla žádné vzdělání, a tak zpravidla neumí číst ani psát. Členové nižší dělnické třídy se nebojí použít vulgarismy, rasistické výrazy a obecně nevhodnou mluvu. Někteří Afroameričané jsou i přes svoje společenské postavení schopni komunikovat v rámci možností spisovně, vhodně a nemají problémy s gramatikou, neboť se jim dostalo aspoň minimální vzdělání.

Třetí kapitola uzavírá celou práci a věnuje se rozdílům ve společnosti ve vztahu s ubytovacími standardy a stylem oblékání. Rodina Finchů, která patří do střední třídy vlastní velký dům s dostatkem místností pro všechny členy rodiny i návštěvu, mají zavedenou elektrinu a krb ve skoro každé místnosti. Domy rodiny Cunninghamů, kteří zastupují vyšší dělnickou třídu, nejsou v knize detailně popsány. Vzhledem k tomu, že se ale jedná o rodinu farmářů, kteří byli zasaženi Velkou hospodářskou krizí ze všech nejvíce, dá se předpokládat, že žijí v chatrči s jednou společnou místností ke spánku a nemají mnoho vybavení. Nižší dělnická třída, zastoupena rodinou Ewellů, přežívá v bývalé Afroamerické chatrči, která je v bídém stavu, rozpadá se a všude kolem je nepořádek, neboť Ewellové nemají žádné peníze, se kterými by se o svůj příbytek starali. Velmi podobně žije i Afroamerická populace Maycombu, nicméně, jak je popsáno v knize, ti se snaží mít své bydliště čisté.

*Jako zabít ptáčka* realisticky popisuje společenské rozdíly v Alabamě během třicátých let a nenásilně, s dětskou nevinností, vypráví příběh o dospívání a životě v malém městě. Ať už je příběh Harper Lee založený na skutečných událostech či ne, dozajista se dotkl mnohých a ovlivnil miliony studentů i dospělých lidí po celém světě.

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