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Socio-Cultural Issues in *To Kill Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to my dear father, who has been nicely my supporter until my research was fully finished, and my beloved mother who has encouraged me attentively with her fullest and truest attention to accomplish my work with truthful self-confidence.

I dedicate this project to all the people who have worked hard to help me complete this project.

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This, who does not thank for little, does not thank for much. He, who does not thank people, does not thank Allah.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

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Abstract

To kill a Mockingbird is a novel that tackles the challenging issues of race, rape, education, religion and innocence through the eyes of a little girl named Scout. Thus, the current study attempts to conduct a thematic analysis to investigate the socio-cultural issues in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In order to conduct this study, three questions have been asked. The first inquires the ways of the representation of the social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The second seeks to the way of the exemplification of the cultural issues in the novel. The third examines the extent of compatibility between the socio-cultural issues in the novel and real life of Americans at the novel time. To respond to the previously asked questions, three hypotheses have been formulated; the first seeks to highlight that the social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are social class, gender roles and stereotypes, racism against African American, and justice and equality. The second hypothesize is that the cultural issues in the novel are education, religion, and struggle with identity. The third examines that Lee's portrays reflect the real image of the socio-cultural issues in early twentieth century. Accordingly, the study revealed the following results; social and cultural issues have been extensively used in the novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* were concerning the causes and consequences of racism and prejudice, as well as how good and evil can coexist within a single community or individual religion and education. Thus social and cultural issues were justified and presented in different features. In addition, Lee's portrayal reflects the real images of American socio-cultural issues.

Keywords: Great Depression, Cultural issues; Social issues, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents.....	IV
General Introduction.....	1

Chapter One: American Culture and Society (1930-1960): Historical and Literary

Background.

Introduction	5
1.1 American Society during 1930-1960.....	5
1.1.1 The Social Class Division.....	5
1.1.2 Gender Role and Stereotypes in the American Society	7
1.1.2.1 During the Great Depression.....	7
1.1.2.2 Racism against African American.....	9
1.1.3 The Role of Poverty in the American Society	11
1.4 The Great Depression Influence on the American Society	13
1.5 Social and Cultural Impact of the Time.....	14
1.6 The Great Depression Literature.....	16
1.7 The American Culture in Early Twentieth Century	17
1.7.1 The Impact of Education on American Culture.....	17
1.7.2 The Role of Religion in the Americans lives during the Early 20 th Century.....	19
Conclusion.....	21

Chapter Two: Investigating the Theme of Socio-cultural Issues in Haper Lee's To Kill the Mockingbird

Introduction.....	22
2.1The Historical Context of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.1.1The Great Depression.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.1.2The Scottsboro Trial	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.1.3The Civil Rights Movement.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.2Harper Lee's Biography.....	25
2.2Social Issues in <i>To Kill The Mockingbird</i>	26
2.2.1Social Class.....	26
2.2.2Racism Against Black People	30
2.2.3Gender Role and Stereotypes in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.3.4Justice and Equality	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.4Cultural Issues.....	38
2.4.1Education.....	38
2.4.2Religion.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
2.4.3The Struggle of Identity	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
Conclusion.....	45
General Conclusion.....	خطأ! ...
	الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
Works Cited.....	خطأ! ...
	الإشارة المرجعية غير معرّفة.
ملخص.....	54

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The Well-known American writers have always been discussing issues that characterize the human nature. One of them is Harper Lee who fascinated her audience by her novel which describes the social and cultural issues in America. Numerous social and economic changes had occurred in the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century what is known as modernism. It is a concept that refers to the artistic and cultural movement which represented urban life during that period in various domains like art, literature, science, and philosophy, in which artists, scientists, and thinkers challenged traditional ideas. In literature, writers conducted an innovative process in which they developed new methods, styles, and themes to substitute former ones in order to keep up with changing conditions. The modern era was watershed moment and time in American literature. The rise of massive groups and movements such as the Lost Generation and the Harlem Renaissance marked this period. The modern American novel, in particular, has attained unprecedented success and stature. During this period many changes has occurred in America socially and culturally.

By the turn of the twentieth century, traditional social, religious ,and cultural stability appeared to beeroding, and the pace of change appeared to be quickening. Modernity' sup setting force deeply challenged traditional forms of constructing and creating sense of human perception. Modernity interrupted the old order, derailed ethical and social rules it set into the hesitation previously sustainable presumptions about self, community, the world, and the divine due to the rapid rate of social and technological change. It stresses the wide spread alienation of peoples by war, empire, and economic situation and the blending of cultures and classes in expanding regions, modernity interrupted the old order It demonstrated the ethical and social codes, and called into question previously secure presumptions about identity, society, the world, and the divine. Consequently, the style and content of creative writing in American literature

changed radically. The Socio-cultural issues were pinpointed by American novelists. They also increased the representation of socio-cultural and themes in literature. As a modernist writer, Harper Lee endeavours to represent the real social and cultural issues of America during the Great Depression. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is a modern American novel written over three years and published in 1960. Readers have recognized and praised this work. It is a tale about childhood experience of Scout trying to find answers in the adult world. Lee's novel addresses racial discrimination, the loss of human values, childhood innocence, region, education, justice, equality, and gender issues.

2. Significance of the Study

It is an interesting task to go through a study about Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel is considered one of the best novels of the 20th century, and it deals with the social and cultural issues of 1930 America. Therefore, we chose this study to see to what extent she had been unique in her portrayal of culture and society.

3. Aims of the Study

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee introduces several issues throughout the novel. The story takes three years during the Great Depression where there have been changes in numerous aspects of the United States. Lee portrayed the social and cultural issues in the Maycomb community. As a modernist work, she tried to reflect the real-world social and cultural issues in her novel. Thus, the study aims to investigate the socio-cultural issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

4. Research Problem

Throughout the novel, the social and cultural issues can be observed through the attitudes and conversations of some of the characters. For example, Harper Lee's social issues examined the social class, gender roles and stereotypes, racism against African Americans, and justice and equality; whereas, in cultural issues, she deals with education and religion.

5. Research Questions

The current study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the social issues represented in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
- 2- What are the cultural issues represented in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*?
- 3- Does this representation reflect the real states of society and culture in that era?

6. Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the current study are formulated as follows:

- 1- The social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are social class, gender roles and stereotypes, racism against African Americans, and justice and equality.
2. The cultural issues in the novel are education, religion, and struggle with identity.
3. Lee's portraying reflects the real image of the socio-cultural issues in early twentieth century.

7. Methodology

Research methodology is the framework by which the study will be conducted. Following the guide lines of this methodology, this section starts with the reason behind choosing the method. It also specifies what extracts of corpora will be selected, and how they will be analyzed.

8. Choice of the Method

The study under investigation is qualitative in nature. It uses the thematic analysis method to generate the socio-cultural issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. For more accuracy, the descriptive historical method is used to report on the American society and culture during the early twentieth

century especially, between 1930-1960. This was for the purpose of justifying the representation of socio-cultural issues in the novel.

9. Corpus Selection and Analysis

The data for analysis will be collected from the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The corpora extracted will serve two points, the social issues, and the cultural issues in the novel. The chosen data will be uprooted due to the sociological account for both themes and historical evidence related to some socio-cultural issues representation during Harper Lee's time.

10. Structure of the Research

The current research is two folds. The first chapter is entitled: American Culture and Society (1930-1960): Historical and Literary Background. It describes and detects the American society and culture during 1930-1960 by giving a general scope of American culture and society during that period. The second chapter, the socio-cultural issues in *To kill a Mockingbird*. It investigates and analyzes how Harper Lee represents the themes of social and cultural issues in the corpus chosen.

CHAPTER ONE:

American Culture and Society (1930-1960): Historical and Literary Background.

Chapter One ; American Culture and Society (1930-1960): Historical and Literary

Background.

Introduction	5
1.1 American Society during 1930-1960	5
1.1.1 The Social Class Division	5
1.1.2 Gender Role and Stereotypes in the American Society	7
1.1.2.1 During the Great Depression	7
1.1.2.2 Racism against African American	9
1.1.3 The Role of Poverty in the American Society	11
1.4 The Great Depression Influence on the American Society	13
1.5 Social and Cultural Impact of the Time	14
1.6 The Great Depression Literature	16
1.7 The American Culture in Early Twentieth Century	17
1.7.1 The Impact of Education on American Culture	17
1.7.2 The Role of Religion in the Americans lives during the Early 20 th Century	19
Conclusion	21

Introduction

Before studying the socio-cultural themes in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is crucial to investigate early 20th century American culture and society. The 20th century was a pivotal era in the history of America, particularly in terms of culture and society. In this context, America had endured severe circumstances throughout the Great Depression, the 1st World War, and the 2nd World War. These circumstances played a vital role in the development of the American culture and society. Therefore, this chapter reviews American society and culture over the decades from 1930s to 1960s, focusing on social, economic, and cultural life.

1.1 American Society during 1930-1960

1.1.1 The Social Class Division

During this period, American society was divided into distinct classes based on various factors, including education level, profession, income, and lifestyle. Additionally, particular consideration was given to the schools that children attend, the reputation of a family in the community, and whether their wealth is “old” or “new” (Warner and Lunt). In his book, *The Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for Measuring Social Status*, W. Lloyd Warner states that American society is split into classes that differ across regions.

The New England Yankees are divided into six classes: Upper-Upper, Lower-Upper, Upper-Middle, Lower-Middle, Upper-Lower, and Lower-Lower class (Warner11). The Upper-Upper class includes those aristocratic and “high-society” families with “old money” who have been affluent for at least three generations. Men on this class are gainfully employed as prominent merchants, financiers, or in higher-level professions. Moreover, the family's wealth is usually inherited from either the husband or the wife, although it might potentially be inherited from both, and has been in the family for generations (11). The Lower-Upper class comprises of new families who have established their new money by launching a new business in shoes,

textiles, silverware, and finance. They have missed their fortune in a short period; however, despite being wealthy, they are not accorded the same respect as old money. That is due to ancestry and ancient family origins are of utmost importance (12). Both upper classes live in exclusive districts, congregate in expensive social clubs, and send their children to the best schools as 100% of their children are educated (14).

People who belong to Upper-Middleclass tend to be owners of stores and belong to the large proprietor and professional levels. Their average income is lower than that of the upper class but more than the other low class. In this class, 88% of the children are educated. The three social classes, the two upper classes and the upper middle class, reflect the level above the ordinary people. However, despite comprising three of the six categories, they account for just 13% of the total population. The Lower-Middle class includes clerks and other white-collar employees, small merchants, and a fraction of skilled workers. People of this class tend to live in small houses, and 44% of their children are educated (13-14)

Furthermore, the Upper-Low class consists of poor, but honest workers who are not highly skilled and work at minimum-wage jobs. In this class, 28% of the children are educated. Meanwhile, those who belong to the Lower-Low class, often known as "River bookered," live in clam flats. They are poor, dysfunctional, and regarded as "the disgrace of the society." They are described as lazy, shiftless, unwilling to work, and living like animals. In addition, only 26% of their children are educated (Warner 14).

The democratic Middle West and far west usually consist of five social classes: an upper class, two middle classes, and two low classes. The upper class, known as "400", includes both old and new families, as they are equal and there is no difference between them. As for the other classes, they are similar to those in Yankee city (Warner 17). As for the southern communities, which are situated in the older region towns, had a population that exceeds a thousand; they have a six-class system, similar to Yankee city, where the old families are dominant. Moreover, they

use the colour-caste system, which organizes and controls the relationship between the individuals classified as Blacks or whites. In this regard, W. Lloyd defines the colour-caste as "a system of values and behavior, which places all people who are thought to be white in a superior position and those who are thought of as black in an inferior status" (20).

1.1.2 Gender Role and Stereotypes in the American Society

1.1.2.1 During the Great Depression

At the beginning of the twentieth century, America was interested in agriculture and most of its inhabitants worked on farms. The expansion of industry throughout that period contributed to the prosperity of the country's economy. Due to the availability of job opportunities in industrial areas, many immigrants from the South and Europe came to search for a better life, approximately six million immigrants. During the 1900s, more than half of the women were employed and "were either foreign born parents, or African American" (May6). In the book *Middletown in Transition: A Study of Cultural Conflicts*, Robert and Helen Lynd state that gender roles in 1937 were as follows:

Men get the living, i.e., earn the money to buy the living for the family; they pay for the children's education and the family's leisure, as well as for food, clothing, and shelter...Women look after affairs within the household; they care for the small children, and rear and teach the children, always with male authority in the background in the form of the father who comes home at night or the male superintendent of schools (Robert and Lynd 176)

Accordingly, it is revealed that societal norms create stability and order to gender norms and duties. For example, these norms showed that men worked to provide for their own and family's sustenance, while women were the householders. However, when the Great Depression made unemployment high and prosperity rare, these norms were changed. Throughout the Great Depression, unemployment never decreased below 14% and only peaked at 25% during the worst period (David Welky9). Historian Kenneth Bindas argued, in *Remembering the Great*

Depression in the Rural South, that" Women needed to find work, to support their families, and to take care of themselves all within the confines of a society that viewed them as threats to breadwinners and the family structure". According to Kimmel,

“Never before had American men experienced such a massive and system-wide shock to their ability to prove manhood by providing for their families. With nearly one in four American men out of work, the workplace could no longer be considered a reliable arena for the demonstration and proof of one’s manhood”(Kimmel.140-141).

Some blamed women for men's unemployment, arguing that women stole men's jobs. In addition, they believed that female breadwinners negatively affected the family structure. As men were humiliated by the lack of job opportunities, women were easily employed because their wages were eager. As a result, some women became the sole breadwinner of the family because they did not have jobs for their husbands. Kassler Harris states that “They could not sit by idly, watching families recede into despair while jobs, even meager jobs, existed at all” (254).

Workingwomen attempted to translate idealized ideas of women into a more workable version of working womanhood. However, this endeavour became more difficult when gender standards altered to accommodate society's needs, causing the ideal woman's image to shift. In *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan W. Scott challenged biological determinism to argue that gender is an unfixed cultural construction, "a social creation of ideas about the appropriate roles for men and women". In other words, feminine and masculine identities are completely subjective and emerge from social contexts (Scott 32). For instance, women are supposed to maintain a home well decorated, prepare healthy food from their garden, and always have to make their children and husband the priority.

In 1933, in response to the unemployment increase, the federal government passed the National Economic Act, which prohibited married spouses from receiving more than one federal income. Thus, married women were obligated to leave their jobs so that unemployed men could reclaim their traditional place as breadwinners. According to May, the new deal "failed to promote the possibility of a new family structure based on gender equality" and, via regulation, discouraged married women from working. Gluck?? explains that young "upwardly mobile working-class women often joined the ranks of...workers before marriage, but after marriage, they usually withdrew from the labor force" (7).

With the beginning of the 2nd World War, many men in this period joined the military, leading employers to accept women to occupy the men's positions.

1.1.2.2 Racism against African Americans

Throughout the American history, Black people have suffered from persecution, marginalization, and racism. The late, according to Clark, Anderson, Clark and Williams (1999), racism is "beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation" (805). It has historically been a social construct used in America to establish hierarchies of superiority and subordination between whites and colored people (Bonilla-Silva, 27).

White people were more prone to perceive the majority of African Americans as dumb, lazy, violent, and preferring to live on welfare. African Americans were perceived negatively more than any other minority group (Williams and Williams-Morris, 246). The origins of racism in the United States lie in the forced relocation of Africans from their homeland to Western colonies, where they were bought as slaves (Foner 131). They were forced to work on cotton, tobacco and rice plantation. They were living in fear and poor circumstances. On January 1st 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring African

Americans' freedom in ten states (494). A few years later, the status of Blacks from slavery to restricted freedom through President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction Policy called BlackCodes that gavethem the right to own land and legal marriage but deprived them of voting, serving on juries, or testifying against whites.

In Pulaski, Tennessee, six-confederates associated Ku Klux Klan group between Christmas 1865 and June 1866 (Wade, Craig 31-32). They were characterized by wearing white robes and hoods. This hate organization employed terror in pursuit of their white supremacist gender. They intended to restore white supremacy through intimidation and violence against African Americans. In addition, they killed Blacks without connecting reasons, as it was through brutal processes, such as lynching in public (Shapiro31). It is predestined that 3.320 Blacks in the South were lynched between 1880 and 1930 (Fairclough 23).

In addition to racism, African Americans suffered from Jim Crow Laws that incited the segregation policy between whites and colored people. For instance, White American Society worked hard to keep African Americans out of public institutions like schools, courts, churches, and places like restaurants, hotels, and theatres (Stephenson 114-115). Also, Public transportation was regulated so that Blacks were required to ride in separate cars or occupy separate sections of the vessel (139).

Jim Crow Laws are the legitimizations of anti-Blacks racism. In that era, Christian clergy propagated the idea that " whites were the Chosen people, blacks were cursed to be servants, and God supported racial segregation"(Ferrise State University). .Blacks were relegated to the status of second-class citizens. W.E.B. Du Bois argued" The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the coloured line" (Du Bois15). Black-White marriages were highly uncommon in the early twentieth century (Fryer 75).

During the Great Depression, African Americans' situations deteriorated. President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested a program in the United States to combat the financial woes, known as the New Deal. The New Deal was divided into two main parts, the first one in 1932 to achieve economic recovery and the second New Deal in 1935 aimed at economic safety, seeking to stop poverty and unemployment. Unfortunately, for African Americans, the New Deal did not positively affect their situation. Moreover, Public assistance programs that were declared under the New Deal "allowed for widespread discrimination in the distribution of benefits". Despite the efforts to achieve justice and equality, African Americans, as usual, found themselves facing another wave of discrimination (Foner, 787).

The Second World War was a special time for African Americans. They were invited to join the military force. Over one million African Americans served in the military throughout the war years. In January 1942, The phrase Double V, or Double Victory, coined by the Pittsburgh Courier, feeling of the disappointment and urgency building within the African Americans during that period(Fairclough. 185). African Americans faced two battles: one to end fascism abroad and one to end racial discrimination at their country. Unfortunately, the Double V was not accomplished during the war years. Between 1939 and 1945, there were numerous lynchings, and Black soldiers realized themselves struggling in a deeply segregated armed force(827). Blacks returning from war with dignity alarmed whites, prompting many Southern states to tighten segregation policies.

1.1.3 The Role of Poverty in the American Society

Poverty is one of the most complex problems that humanity has suffered for many years. This is because poverty is one of the issues that contributed to several other problems, such as disease and insecurity. Poverty "means bad or insufficient food, unhealthy living conditions and endless other factors that lead to illness" (Sapolisky94).

Poverty rates at the beginning of the century varied. The percentage reached 40 per cent in 1900, 33 to 40 per cent during the Great Depression, and 25 per cent by the middle of the 1950s (Ref). The poor are divided into three groups. The first category consists of criminals, alcoholics and those who pose a threat to society; they are the "dregs" (the lazy and pathetic). and "skidders" (alcoholics, drugs addicts). tended to congregate in the poorest sections of the cities, and the reinforce a lower-lower class that lived without hope" (Patterson, p13).

This category represents about 5 percent. The second category includes new immigrants and landless workers, mostly living close to the first category. They worked hard for their sustenance and often did not wait for any government subsidies. Their society is considered cohesive and cooperative, with an emphasis on ethnic ties and relatives. They represent 30-40 percent in America between 1980 and 1930 (Patterson14).

In the South during the Great Depression, small farmers were the most impoverished members of this old poverty. In 1930, 1.7 million southern tenant and cropper families housed 8.5 million people 3 million of them were African Americans. They were they lived in poor houses that usually consisted of two to three-room cabinets under challenging situations where therewas " no screen, doors, plumbing, electricity, running water, or sanitary wells. One report in 1938 consisted that the southern states were a belt of sickness, misery and unnecessary death" (Patterson38).

Between 1929 and 1939, more progress in public welfare was made than in the previous three centuries. The early welfare state's structure significantly influenced its subsequent form. Nothing had a significant long-term impact on the structure of the American welfare state. During the Great Depression, Americans remained optimistic that private charity and private pension plans could handle the situation(Ref). The situation in Philadelphia, which developed the "most imaginative and effective" municipal relief operation in the country, demonstrated how

much work remained to be done. In 1931, the city enlisted the help of private agencies and municipal resources for \$1 million per month (Patterson⁵⁵).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the American government had a substantial effect on the poverty rates. Public programs convening income to the poor were minimal; however, they increased during 1950 and 1960 when the economical rates were effective (Plotnick et al. 68).

1.2 The Great Depression Influence on the American Society

The Stock Market Crash of October 24th, 1929, formally renamed "The Black Thursday," provoked the Great Depression by causing all prices on the New York Stock Exchange, Wall Street, to fall at an unprecedented rate. This crash was a watershed moment for Americans, as most historians believe it precipitated and justified the failure of the banking system, with over 5,000 banks closing. However, this failure resulted in over-productivity; the average American individual wage could not keep up with the steady rise in industrial productivity.

The agricultural decline, on the other hand, was both a symptom and an effect of the depression. The Midwest, also known as the Great Plains, had been struck by the worst drought in recorded history, earning it the moniker "the Dust Bowl"². The concept involves a series of droughts and enormous dust storms that sweep the Midwestern plains, particularly those of Oklahoma and Texas. During the Great Depression, this region was recognized for its harsh conditions, infertile soils, and strong winds.

The cataclysm was still not restricted to the government and banks; it enlarged essentially to the community as well. There were significant effects on United States society. Businesses failed, and millions of citizens kept their jobs, homes, farm land, as well as savings; in addition, various industries were severely harmed, most notably agriculture in the Midwest and importation .

Szostak Rick describes the Great Depression as "the longest, deepest, and most pervasive depression in American history" (44). The Great Depression was and continues to be the worst economic recession in American history. Moreover, it persisted from 1929 until the Second World War, exacerbating many changes in the country's cultural patterns.

1.3 Social and Cultural Impact of the Time

The Great Depression had a profound effect on United States society and culture more than anything else previously experienced. The economy is the sole driving force behind the new changes. Income inequality pushed the American people to do things that had nothing to do also with American Dream. Firstly, most Americans were out on the road looking for new occupations. Carson and Bonk state, "Men wanted to go to work, but plants stood idle. Prolonged unemployment created a new class of people. The jobless sold apples on street corners. They stood in breadlines and outside soup kitchens" (931).

The American government was unable to intervene back then because the country's financial situation was out of control, but the American people felt and understood the situation, which had done nothing but grow fury between all people. Furthermore, westward-uncontrolled immigration to improve economic conditions reshaped the American population division, as the population of the Great Plains left the city for California and Arizona (Ref). In his book *The Great Depression: The United States in the Thirties*, Robert Goldston provides an image of the displaced workers that Many of them started traveling. In search of unattainable employment, unemployed people traveled from town to town, city to city, state to state, accompanied by families, in broken-down cars, or, increasingly, alone. The Transient was adamant that nothing was going to get better had fallen behind, but the movement seemed to be going in the right direction. It was something to do, even if it was hopeless (52).

The majority of migrants were youths looking for work to support their families. Those who could not even migrate resided in massive tent cities known as Hoovervilles. They had two choices: try the futile quest for jobs in cities, as previously mentioned, or live with an extreme feeling of hopelessness, but the quest for finding never ended; if one was not trying to find a job, he had to be ready for any food offered by charities soup kitchens, which was eventually referred to as Hooverstew (Bryn 88).

The swift increase in crime, particularly in the mid-1930s, was unarguably more significant than that of the Roaring Twenties, as many jobless people reverted to fiddling with theft just to put food on their tables. As the crisis worsened, there were reports of armed white men yelling violently that they needed free food for themselves and their families (Zinn 363-364). Some young females transformed into whoredom to supplement their family's income. Not just that, but most bankers who seemed to have their banking systems down committed suicide. Fathers of a large number of children also committed suicide. Even worse, various indebted business owners committed suicide in large numbers. According to Studs Terkel's *Hard Times: an Oral History of the Great Depression*, a middle-class suburbanite reports his neighbor's reaction to the depression "lotta people committed suicide, pushed themselves out of buildings and killed themselves, cause they couldn't face the disgrace" (42).

While the decade was known for its collective poverty, which resulted in no more than food insecurity, health care became less prior for most Americans, with visits to the doctor restricted exclusively for the direst of cases and only when the price was affordable. As a result, Americans attempted to escape, causing rates of alcoholism to skyrocket, but this did not occur until the repeal of prohibition in 1933. As the economic crisis sharpened the costs of cigarettes, which were becoming increasingly expensive, smokers transitioned to cheaper tobacco products. Moreover, unrestrained prostitution resulted in new diseases among adolescents (ushistory.org).

It is evident that any social or economic change will have an impact on fashion. The decade has inspired the vast majority of women, as well as the time's most prominent leading fashion models, to adopt a new style that, in some ways, represents the era. The woman of the thirties was very different from the woman of the previous decade. They chose a much more feminine and functional picture than women in their twenties. Haircuts became gentler and much more sophisticated as the hemline lengthened(Reeves124).

The effects of the Great Depression extended to altering the familial landscape. House construction slowed to a crawl. Marriages were postponed, which exacerbated depression and a pointed feeling of loss among young females. Divorce rates fell progressively throughout the 1930s. Marriage abandonment rates were steadily rising, but those already married were taught about family planning because their financial positions were unsuitable for new-born children. Because of this new mode of thinking, the understanding towards the other sex shifted, influencing the family as the tide between the two shifted, and hence problems like marriage and the family appeared to be considered more seriously than during the Twenties. These factors contributed to a drop in birth rates, resulting in new demographic changes not seen since the Great Depression (Reeves 124).

1.4 The Great Depression Literature

Most Americans, particularly those living in the Dust Bowl area, experienced great anxiety during the Great Depression. It was loosely linked to joblessness, business and agricultural failure, and general distress. Unlike during the First World War and the Roaring Twenties, the United States experienced a new social context. Scholars in general and writers in particular, had encountered social situations vastly different from their previous ones. In terms of literary works, the impacts of the depression were prevalent. The plight of Dust Bowl migrants influenced the majority of the novels published during the decade. The most vivid examples are Henry Roth's

Call It Sleep, Nelson Algren's *Somebody in Boots*, John Dos Passos' novel *Trilogy U.S.A.*, and, without a doubt, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The novels were devoted to protecting the working class and were characterized as meta-fiction for the inference of portraying the voiceless social commentary over class- clashes and capitalism criticism. Above all the works noted, *The Grapes of Wrath* and other Dust Bowl novels stood out as the epoch's most outstanding literary representatives.

1.5 The American Culture in Early Twentieth Century

1.5.1 The Impact of Education on American Culture

It is determined that education plays a crucial role in society, with the form of teaching, learning, and the environment being widely disputed as a component responsible for people's growth. Therefore, the education system and the teaching framework must be considered seriously.

During the early twentieth century, the American educational system was a progressive approach. This program is also called "fads and fade" (Encyclopedia.com). The founder of this approach is John Dewey. "Dewey was known as the father of progressive education and was an advocate of social learning" (Slughter, 16). John Dewey was an American philosopher, educator, pragmatist, progressivist and educational reformer who influenced social reform (*EncyclopediaBritannica*). He is perhaps America's most prominent educational philosopher, and his work continues to impact every aspect of education. Dewey does not belong to any one movement or style, as Herbert Kliebard mentioned that "some-how hovering over the struggle, " and continued "rather than.. belonging to any particular side"(16). Progressive education expanded from primary grades to high schools(Encyclopedia.com).

In his book; *Thinking and Education*, Dewey writes "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results" (191). He also believes that education is a process of living and not a preparation for

future living(Dewey78) . In other words, he argued that education is a social process in which the school is a social institution for social reform. Thus, education is a process of how to live. In his study, Dewey characterized the concept of education as curriculum-centred and constructivism learning-centred education.

He regards that "... the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction " (Dewey16). Dewey highlighted the relationship between the child and curriculum where he believed that, the abandon notion of subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, and apart from the child's experience. Instead, he sees it as something fluent, embryonic, and vital; thus, he realizes that the child and the curriculum are simply two units which define a single process (Dewey11).

The twenties witnessed a remarkable development in the percentage of students as the state worked to support education and raise teachers' wages. As a result, The percentage of school enrollment was high compared to the other years. Unfortunately, this recovery did not last as the country entered a period of depression. The 1930s were difficult years for country schools. The value of farmland fell, and as a result, property taxes that supported schools fell as well. During the Great Depression, some schools choose to cut teacher's salaries, stop purchasing study supplies or simply close their door, especially when the money run out (Encyclopedia.com). Moreover, many schools have given up on secondary courses such as music, foreign languages, and sports classes, in addition to the use of coloured papers and paints for students.

The segregated schools were popular in the early twentieth century, particularly during the Great Depression. Those schools separate black and white students under the constitutional law "separate but equal "(History.com Editors). Nevertheless, in reality, black students and teachers did not enjoy the same privileges as whites. In Carolina, for instance, the supply and book budgets of black schools were much lower than those of white schools (Davis, Anita P).School

buildings for white students were worth one-tenth as much as those for African American students in the 1930s. Few schools for black children offered standard high schooled programs. Facilities for training African American teachers were not equally available within the state (Davis, Anita P).

During the 1950s, the population's educational level in the United States continued to rise steadily. In 1960, the median number of years of formal schooling by adults 25 years old and over were 10.6 years, up from 9.3 years in 1950. The percentage of adults who had completed high school rose from 34 to 41 percent over the decade (United States Census Bureau).

1.5.2 The Role of Religion in the Americans lives during the Early 20th Century

Religion has always been the primary engine of societies. It has played a significant and hotly debated part in people's lives in the twentieth century. Religions refer to "systems of thought and action building in large measure upon this powerful, pervasive, and involuntary tendency" (Guthrie). Religion entered the United States through immigration from the seventeenth century to the present.

The Protestant churches were founded by Martin Luther, who argued that Christians should depend on the Bible alone as their sole source of religious guidance. Sola Scriptura, or "the Bible", was the foundation of the Protestant churches. Protestantism was carried to America by the first generations of British settlers after 1607(Allitt. P5).

From the colonial period to the late 19th century, the majority of Americans considered America as an essentially Protestant place. By 1833, the last established state churches had also been disbanded. The First Amendment prohibited only the federal government from creating an established church.

Many Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries believed that they had created a republic that corresponded to the theological insights of the Reformation. The theoretical

inequality of America's citizens was a secular counterpart of the equality of every man in the eyes of God(Allitt6).

In the late of 19th century, scholars began to regard the Hebrew Bible as one of numerous collections of religious writings from the ancient Near-East. Consequently, some Protestants concluded that they could still place their faith in Jesus but not in the whole of the Old Testament. Additionally, Charles Lyell's discoveries in geology and Darwin's theory of evolution cast doubt on the nature of life itself.

The Episcopal, Methodist, Northern, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches comprised the "Protestant mainstream" early in the twentieth century. By 1945, most Protestant leaders with national names were theological liberals. Fundamentalists were more prevalent in rural areas and the South; their followers were less educated and poorer than liberal Protestants (7).

The depression period witnessed a problematic stage in all fields, including religion. William Kelley Wright, writing in the heart of the depression period, stated that "today we are passing through a period of religious depression no less severe than the concomitant moral and economic depression." By 1945, most American Catholics traced their ancestry to countries in south eastern Europe. The Reformation split of the sixteenth century led to mistrust and hatred between Catholics and Protestants. American circumstances had begun to temper these opinions by the 1940s. Even so, anti-Catholicism remained respectable between both Fundamentalist and liberal Protestants(Allitt 8).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the social and cultural problems of the United States in the early 20th century, especially between 1930 and 1960. It began with the American society during this period, describing the many social class divisions and the factors that led to its formation. Then, It discussed the importance of gender roles and stereotypes, particularly during

the Great Depression. Then, It addressed the issue of racism towards African Americans and the suffering that is inflicted upon these individuals. In addition, It discussed the effects that poverty has had on the evolution of American society. The chapter also discussed early twentieth-century American culture, focusing on education, religion, and the Great Depression. Finally, the chapter concluded with a review of how the previously listed elements have shaped the culture and society of the United States.

CHAPTER TWO

Investigating the Theme of Socio-cultural Issues in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*

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Introduction.....	22
2.1The Historical Context of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	22
2.1.1The Great Depression.....	22
2.1.2The Scottsboro Trial	23
2.1.3The Civil Rights Movemen.....	23
2.2.Harper Lee's Biography	25
2.3 Social Issues in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	26
2.3.1Social Class	26
2.3.2Racism Against Black People.....	30
2.3.3Gender Role and Stereotypes in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	34
2.4.4Justice and Equality	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معروفة.
2.4Cultural Issues.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معروفة.
2.4.1Education.....	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية
غير معروفة.	
2.4.2Religion	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معروفة.
2.4.3The Struggle of Identity	خطأ! الإشارة المرجعية غير معروفة.
Conclusion.....	45

Introduction

Harper Lee is a modern American author who was born in Monroeville, Alabama. She is well-known for her bestselling work *To Kill a Mockingbird* where she addresses various social and cultural issues. This novel aids to reflect on all of the issues that occurred in America between 1930 and 1960 when the book was written and then published respectively. The current chapter introduces Harper Lee's biography. Then, it delves into the events and circumstances that occurred during the novel's composition and publication. Further, it discusses the themes of social issues in the novel and deal with social classes, justice, equality, racism against blacks, and gender roles along with their stereotypes. Also, it portrays the theme of cultural issues which includes education, religion, and the struggle of identity.

2.1 The Historical Context of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, begins in the summer of 1932. It was published in 1960. Those were the most essential times in American history considering that they witnessed a succession of significant events that transformed the fate of Americans. The Great Depression, the Scottsboro Trial, and the Civil Rights Movement are examples of such occurrences.

2.1.1 The Great Depression

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee make several references to the Great Depression. The story depicts a typical vision of Alabama during a period when all Alabamians, including lawyers, doctors, and farmers, were affected by the financial crisis where "there was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County"(Haggerty 81). During the crisis, most cotton farms hired tenants, with the exception of the Cunninghams, who were not belonging to the category. In the novel, Atticus explains to Scout why Mr. Cunningham, who has been impacted by these problems, is unable to pay him money; this means that "the Cunninghams are country folk,

farmers, and the crash hit them the hardest"(81). Mr. Cunningham could not get a WPA job, and this is a reference to President Franklin Roosevelt's policy to reduce unemployment (82).

2.1.2 The Scottsboro Trial

Eric Sundquist claims that Tom Robinson's trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird* was influenced by the Scottsboro Trial, which was taking place at the same time. He highlights the rape case of Tom Robinson in 1935 as it "is set in a small-town Alabama courtroom that would inevitably have been reverberating with the impact of the ongoing trials of the Scottsboro Boys...[which] put the South under sensationally national scrutiny" (Fender 16). The Scottsboro Trial remains one of the most famous trials in the American history. The story begins on March 25th, 1931, when nine black men, along with other white men and two women, were traveling illegally from Tennessee to Alabama.

They were detained when a fight broke out between them. The two ladies, Victoria Price and Ruby Bates, accused the black males of rape after they were released. The trial started on April 6th, 1931, barely twelve days after they were captured (Johnson 16-7). The retrials lasted nearly a decade, practically until 1937, when the United States Supreme Court charged the four defendants while the others avoided the death sentence, escaped, or jumped parole (Fender 19-20).

2.1.3 The Civil Rights Movement

The publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* coincided with the Civil Rights Movement, which was a major event. During the 1930s when the racial segregation in the South was at its peak, White Americans had a distinct advantage over African-Americans. Black people considered inferior and uncivilized. White Americans and Blacks were divided on buses, highways, and in public places, and African-Americans were prohibited from contacting whites directly (Ref). Black people offered to work in the ministry, nursing, garbage collection, and as maids, among

other low rate occupations. The majority of Harper Lee's black characters are uneducated and work as maids or garbage collectors. Because African-Americans were not serving on juries, they were unable to vote. They were addressed as "boys," whereas whites, including little children, were addressed as "Mr., Miss, or Mrs". African-American characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are not addressed as ladies or gentlemen.

Following the 2nd World War, African-Americans, notably soldiers, spearheaded the Civil Rights Movement, demanding more equality, particularly in voting and employment. The battle against segregation made the 1950s a pivotal time in American history along with significant events considerably. The date of May 17th, 1954 marked a watershed moment for African-Americans. It also laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement. In *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, on this day, the United States Supreme Court declared the separation of African-Americans and white pupils in public schools to be unlawful and inequitable (Johnson 86).The Court determined that The segregation of white and colored students in public schools harms the colored students. Because the practice of segregating the races is typically viewed as implying the inferiority of the group, the impact is greater when it is supported by the law. We come to the conclusion that the "separate but equal" philosophy has no place in the realm of public education. Separate institutions of higher learning are fundamentally unfair (Fender 23-24)

This judgment prompted many whites and African-Americans to protest segregation, while others maintained it in order to build restraining legislation, forcing them to resort to violence at times (Johnson 86).On December 1st, 1955, in Montgomery, where Harper Lee's father was a lawmaker, an African-American lady named Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat for a white passenger and was imprisoned. Her arrest prompted a bus boycott in Montgomery resulting in significant financial losses until the United States District Court acknowledged that segregation in public transportation is unlawful (86-7).

Autherine Lucy joined the University of Alabama, where Harper Lee studied for six years, around the same time as the Bus Boycott. Lucy was irritated and discriminated in the campus. She was denied access to the institution's dormitories and cafeteria until her counsel told the university that he would pursue legal action. After multiple riots and attacks on black residents, she was expelled from the university. She was re-accepted on campus in reaction to the Supreme Court decision that declared segregation unlawful. Harper Lee was writing *To Kill a Mockingbird* at that time (Johnson 87-9).

Students in Greensboro, North Carolina, launched nonviolent protests against segregation by integrating lunch counters in 1960, the year *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published. White and African-American students known as “Freedom Riders” attempted to put the law that abolished segregation to the test, which resulted in repeated attacks and violence against them in Montgomery and Birmingham, resulting in many fatalities. On September 15th, 1963, four small girls were killed in their church by a bomb blast while they were attending Sunday School (89).

2.2. Harper Lee's Biography

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama, USA. Lee was the youngest child of Amasa Coleman and Frances Cunningham Finch Lee. She is known as Harper Lee, the name that was written on the cover of *To Kill a Mockingbird* because she requested that the publisher remove the first name "Nelle," which is pronounced as "Nail" in the Alabama accent, which irritated her. Harper Lee was devoted to her father as a child, and she enjoyed sitting in his lap while he read, as Scout does in the story. Unfortunately, her mother's relationship with her was tumultuous. Because of Harper Lee's maleness and clothing, they frequently got into fights. (Haggerty 13-5)

Harper Lee graduated from high school in 1944 and enrolled at Huntingdon College, a women's college in Montgomery, Alabama. she moved to Alabama University to study law (

Haggerty23-26). Lee was involved in literary, cultural, and humanistic endeavours. She received numerous honours, including the Alabama Foundation Award in 2002 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters the same year. President Barack Obama awarded her the National Medal of Arts in 2010 for her contributions to the arts. She died on February 19, 2016, in Monroeville, and was buried in Hillcrest Cemetery (Anderson).

2.3 Social Issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Literature has always been an effective method to mirror and explore social issues of a given society. literature, hence, is the reflection of real life and its issues whether good or bad. Many writers tend to use their writing to convey their voices beyond their words or to reflect current events. Through literature, writers represent longstanding problems or disagreements that are difficult to solve either directly or indirectly. Often, literature represents a picture of the issues that affect society in general.

American writers tend to use literature to speak out to the public without any restriction on expressing themes such as women's rights, social class, discrimination, racism, corruption, and prejudice, especially during the modernist movement.

2.3.1 Social Class

Harper Lee was inspired from her own life when she wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She represents her small Southern town of Monroeville by the name of Maycomb. In the novel, Lee highlights several issues that the 1930s American society went through. Although it is not always evident to which socioeconomic class each character belongs, the characters themselves have ideas and urge the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Accordingly, Jem classified people to four types. He explains the types to Scout saying;

There's four kinds of folks in the world. There's the ordinary kind like us and the neighbors, there's the kind like the Cunninghams out in the woods, the kind like the Ewells down at the dump, and the Negroes (Lee387).

Jem tries to make sense of the conflicts in Maycomb, troubled by the injustice of the Tom Robinson trial. As a result, he puts people into four categories depending on their financial status and race. The four types are "ordinary" people, who are white and from the middle-to upper-middle class Finch family, Miss Maudie Atkinson, and most of the city folk, the white working-class, Cunninghams, who are poor farmers making an effort to be productive in society, and the Ewells, who are poor, live by the dump and do not work. They represent the lowest social group. The last social group, according to Jem, is African-Americans or the Negroes who exist on the fringes of society.

Lee portrays Atticus as middle class. He was a white, lawyer who was one of the highly respected people in the town. Atticus comes from a farmer's family. After starting his practice, he gets a reasonable income that is enough for his family. Other characters that represent the middle-class in the novel are Hack Tate the police officer, the teacher Miss Caroline, Dr. Jack Finch, Dr. Raymond, John Taylor the judge, Mr. Underwood the editor, the other Lawyer Mr. Gilmer, as well as Aunt Alexandra, Mr. Link Deas, and Miss Maudie Atkinson. All those characters have the same social background, they are white, educated, and have an income.

To have a better understanding of Maycomb's working class, which is represented by Cunninghams, it is critical to get acquainted with the characters depicted in the novel. Firstly, Lee represents this class as white poor farmers who work for a living. On her first day in school, Scout describes her classmate from this group as "the ragged, denim-shirted and flour sack-skirted first grade, most of whom had chopped cotton and fed hogs from the time they were able to walk". Scout says these words when Miss Caroline, the teacher, who came from a different environment reads to them a boring short story about cats who have clothes, food, and a warm

house while many of the pupils do not have such life. The Cunninghams represented in school by Walter's who wears clean clothes but shoeless. Miss Caroline asks Walter many times to take a quarter from her to buy lunch for himself and to later pay her back because he had no lunch for that day, but he still refuses. This is what leads Scout to explain the situation of her mate to the teacher:

That's okay, ma'am, you'll get to know all the country 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 with what they had. They do not have much, but they get along on it. (Lee33)

The Cunninghams refuse to take any form of charity and paid their obligations with whatever they had. The Ewells, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, are white poor people who are considered a burden to society. They are dangerous and live on the outskirts between garbage and trash. The first character who appears in the novel from this class is Burries Ewell, Scout's mate. She describes him as a disgusting and unclean boy where:

The boy stood up. He was the filthiest human I had ever seen. His neck was dark gray, the backs of his hands were rusty, and his fingernails were black deep into the quick. He peered at Miss Caroline from a fist-sized clean space on his face. No one had noticed him, probably, because Miss Caroline and I had entertained the class most of the morning. (Lee 45)

In addition, Burries was a rude boy respecting no one, even his teacher, Miss Caroline. The Ewells are uneducated people and their children come to school only on the first day every year then they leave. Additionally, Bob Ewell is a notorious alcoholic, a man who cannot keep even one job. Mr. Atticus introduces this group to his daughter as:

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 would take me with him and show me where and how they lived. They were people, but they lived like animals. (Lee51)

Scout asks her father when if she could not go to school like Ewell. The Ewell family consists of a father, Bob, and a number of lice-covered children, who live in a derelict cabin with "plank walls supplemented with sheets of corrugated iron [and a] roof shingled with tin cans hammered flat" (Lee290). The Ewell are still in a higher social class than black people since they are white. As Diane Baecker mentions "Poor whites in the South owned little more than the color of their skin which served to both form an identity with the class above them and to distinguish them from the black people they tried hard to keep beneath them"(130).

The last class introduced in the novel is the, African-Americans. Unlike the Ewells, the line up in a clean space. Scout notes that "their cabins looked neat and snug with pale smoke rising from the chimneys and doorways glowing amber from the fires inside. There were delicious smells about: chicken, bacon frying crisp as the twilight air" (Lee 292). The first character from this class was Calpurnia who symbolizes a part of the good African-American community that respects whites and maintains a respectful distance while still educated. Calpurnia is the housekeeper of the Finches and she has a great influence on the actions of the Finch children. Throughout the novel, Calpurnia attempts to teach scout how to act and how to respect others as if she is her mother. One of the best examples is when Walter comes to have lunch in the Finch's house where Scout refuses Walter's way of eating. She said: "Don't matter who they are, anybody sets foot in this house you company, and don't let me catch you remarkin' on their way like you were so high and mighty! Yo' folks might be better'n the Cunninghams but it doesn't count for nothin' the way you're disgracin' 'em". (Lee42)

Reverend Sykes is another black character in the novel. He is in the same class as Calpurnia and like her, he respects white people. Whereas Lula believes that there should be a separation between the two communities. She acts harshly toward the Finch children when they go to church. She argues with Calpurnia "You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here – they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?" (Ref).

2.3.2 Racism Against Black People

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee highlights the issue of racism against African-Americans in Maycomb through the eyes of Scout. Laurie Champion asserts that racial injustice is the most obvious manifestation of moral corruption in Maycomb. Likewise applies to real-life Alabama (239).

The issue of racism against the blacks has been traced through several fields. The first kind of racism that African-Americans faced in the novel was racism in education. According to Baecker, the significance of literacy lies in it being a measure of intelligence and social position as he explains that "the town's people distinguish themselves from others [through] language, both the ability to read and the ability to name, abilities which fall along racial lines... literacy is an important distinction which serves to cut off the towns people from both the black residents and the poor whites" (129-30). Calpurnia is one of the only Black Americans in Maycomb who can read and write. She was taught how to read as she grew up in Finch Family. When Scout and Jem went to Calpurnia's church, they noticed that there are no hymn books.

Jem said it looked like they could save the collection money for a year and get some hymn-books:

Calpurnia laughed. "Wouldn't do any good," she said. "They can't read."

"Can't read?" I asked. "All those folks?"

“That’s right,” Calpurnia nodded. “Can’t but about four folks in First Purchase read... I’m one of ‘em.”

“Where’d you go to school, Cal?” asked Jem.

“Nowhere. Let’s see now, who taught me my letters? It was Miss Maudie Atkinson’s aunt, old Miss Buford—.” (Lee210-211)

Calpurnia is perceived as more civilized and intelligent than other African Americans, allowing her to command more respect from whites. She plays an essential role in the Finches’ life, Atticus asserts that “We couldn’t operate a single day without Cal, have you ever thought of that?” (Lee 43).

Without the opportunity to learn, African-Americans’ employment opportunities are limited and their economic fate is sealed. Moreover, there is no mention of African-American children attending Scout’s school. Thus, either blacks-only schools exist or the students must assist with household chores. Both alternatives emphasize the racial discrimination and the drawbacks of merely being African-American.

From the Scout’s speech when she went to Calpurnia’s church, it seems that there is segregation between blacks and whites in Maycomb as “Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill track” (Lee200). The church is formed by free Blacks, “called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves” (Lee200). Blacks practiced a distinct kind of Christianity based on African spiritual traditions. they were not permitted into white churches, following the emancipation of African Americans as Lee clarified in “Not only is its location discrete, but its condition is poor, consisting of an ancient paint-peeled frame building” (200).

The town's courthouse had a colored balcony reserved for African Americans. Also, Lee reveals the hypocrisy in the Maycomb community as "Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays" (200). In other words, Lee demonstrates how the Negroes and whites handle the church differently, as well as the hypocrisy inherited in Maycomb. The church is revered and respected by the black community, but it is also used for gambling by white males.

Additionally, racism could be seen in Mr. Ewell's speech when he said "I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin' on my Mayella" (Lee 295). Bob Ewell uttered these words at the trial, after convicting Tom Robinson to prison. He uses the word "nigger" to refer to Tom Robinson. This word is often used as a derogatory term of black people. However, using "black nigger" with the needless adjective "black" suggests that all Mr. Ewell sees is Tom Robinson's black skin, neglecting that he is also a human being that has the same duty as him.

Therefore, he gives himself the right to call Robinson racist words and refuses to use his name. Moreover, he uses "rutting", which is commonly used to describe animals, to demean Tom as an animal. Other discriminatory statements can also be seen later when he portrays black people's settlements as "that nigger- nest down yonder. They're dangerous to live around 'sides devaluin' my property" (Lee 298). Moreover, Robinson is convicted and lynched regardless, just because he is a Black and the girl is White. Therefore, the white "assumption- the evil assumption- that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women" (Lee 350). Hence, in the story, the Black are the targets of discrimination and are kept hidden beneath the curtain of segregation.

Throughout the story, Lee uses the term nigger-lover to point out the two categories of the Maycomb community. Firstly, the term is used to humiliate individuals, like Mr. Atticus, who reject any kind of racism against Blacks. Secondly, it is also used to identify those white people who are disrespectful toward colored people.

2.3.3 Gender Roles and Stereotypes

When a woman of the 20th century is thought of in the novel, she is typically represented as dependent, weak and passive. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee represents gender roles and stereotypes that were intertwined in Southern society in the way expected them to be presented in the early 19th century. In the Maycomb community, a parcel of individuals generalizes others by the way they look, dress or talk. *To Kill a Mockingbird* defends how girls should act like girls and boys should act like boys, which could be observed throughout the novel. Some of the characters in the novel had their own experiences with gender roles and stereotypes.

Lee went against what was typically expected of a woman in the character Jean Louise Finch or Scout. Scout, which is her nickname, means, according to College Dictionary: "one that is dispatched from the main body to gather information ... to observe and evaluate". Similar to her name, Scout goes to find paths through unexplored territory. She is a tomboy who acts and dresses in a boyish way and spends the majority of her time playing with Jem and Dill even though she was expected to act and dress like a girl by both family and neighbors throughout the novel. Despite being an educated and clever girl, she did not act as what society wanted. The best example of what Scout was struggling with is Aunt Alexandra and her negative comments. Aunt Alexandra is a traditional southern woman. She was fanatical about Scout's boyish style and wanted her to be more feminine. Scout narrates her aunt's words: Jem's growing up now and you are too,' she said to me. 'We decided that it would be best for you to have some feminine influence. It won't be many years, Jean Louise, before you become interested in clothes and boys"(Lee216).

In some scenes of the novel, Scout examines how painful it was to be excluded from something just because she was a girl. She said "I was not so sure, but Jem told me I was being a girl, that girls always imagine things, that's why other people hated them so, and if I started behaving like one I could just go off and find some to play with" (Lee69). Scout, the same

tomboyish explorer who wears overalls, is enforcing a gender standard. She is generally the polar opposite of "ladylike," but her behavior in some scenes in the novel demonstrates that she, too, is influenced by the social concept of a woman's obligation to her husband. Despite her clear opposition to the "typical" female conduct, she caught on to the demands of being a woman on a subconscious level, most likely due to her aunt's incessant nagging or watching Calpurnia cook:

"Grandma's a wonderful cook," said Francis. "She's gonna teach me how."

"Boys don't cook." I giggled at the thought of Jem in an apron.

"Grandma says that all men should learn to cook, that men oughta be careful with their wives and wait on 'em when they don't feel good," said my cousin.

"I don't want Dill waitin' on me," I said. "I'd rather wait on him." (Lee140)

Jeremy Atticus Finch is Scout's brother, known as Jem. He always tries to hide his fear from the public and he attempted to appear in command because men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold. Scout says "Jem wanted Dill to know once and for all that he wasn't scared of anything." It's just that I can't think of a way to make him come out without him gettin' us." Besides, Jem had his little sister to think of. When he said that, I knew he was afraid". (Lee72,75). Accordingly, Scout explains how Jem tries to hide his fear and pretend to be strong to protect his little sister.

Atticus Finch, the father of Scout and Jen, is against what had been typically believed in the Maycomb community. Atticus raised his two children by avoiding prejudice which was a common thing in the town and also teaches them to live their lives with integrity. In addition, he taught them how to treat people and respect them regardless of where they come from or their color of skin. Atticus advises his daughter by "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it"(Lee 50),.

Atticus explains to Scout that she has to know people's background and the situations they have been going through in their lives before judging them. Atticus gives his children some freedom to express who they are and the best example is Scout's boyish style. Scout says: "Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played us, read to us, and treated with us with courteous detachment" (Lee 8). He believes that men and women are the only ones who can define themselves with what they feel on the inside despite what others think. Atticus says: the one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.

Lee broke the traditional thoughts and perceptions about the woman in a small Southern town by introducing Miss Maudie as an unmarried independent woman. Miss Maudie was kind woman with strong personality. She was not austere about her femininity or her style. Scout described her as being "a widow, a chameleon lady, who works in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men's coveralls, but after her five o'clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in magisterial beauty"(Lee70-71). Scout admires Miss Maudie because she was different from others in the community. She never says something about Scout's acts or dresses. She accepts her as she is. Scout says "Jem and I had considerable faith in Miss Maudie. She had never told on us, had never played cat-and-mouse with us, she was not at all interested in our private lives. She was our friend"(Lee 76).

Calpurnia, known as Cal, is the Finch family's black housekeeper who has been with them since Jem was born. She has a great influence on Jem and Scout's life because she takes care of them as a mother ever since their mother's death. Cal teaches Scout many important lessons including manners, understanding people, and most importantly, equality. She also allows her to rebel against the Maycomb disease.

As the novel took place in 1930, Lee introduces most of male characters in a typical image where they dominate the important jobs in Maycomb. They are doctors like Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Frank, Judges like John Taylor and lawyers like Mr. Atticus. Unlike men, women have few

choices for occupations. They could only be teachers like Miss Caroline Fisher and Miss Gates, telephone operators like Eula May, or seamstresses like Mrs. Crenshaw.

2.3.4 Justice and Equality

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee portrays justice in Maycomb as a reflection of justice and equality in the United State during the early 20th century. Lee personifies justice and equality in the novel through the three characters Mr. Atticus, Boo Radley, and Tom Robinson.

Atticus defended Tom Robinson in his case despite the town's opposition to him. This is because he believes that all individuals, especially black people, deserve fair chance to prove themselves. People in the town continued to evaluate Atticus based on his viewpoint, and they lost respect for him because they did not believe a black man should be regarded as innocent at all. People were angry with Atticus just because he accepted to defend against Tom Ribbon. Scout said: "the court appointed Atticus to defend him. Atticus aimed to defend him. That's what they didn't like about it. It was confusing" (Lee 278-279). Atticus was fighting the injustice of Maycomb with his head. He urged Scout to do the same, even if people criticize Atticus for supporting Tom. Hesays:

"Scout, simply by the nature of the work, every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess. You might hear some ugly talk about it at school, but do one thing for me if you will: you just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change ..." (Lee 101)

Atticus replies to Jem's question after Tom is convicted and the case is lost, "I don't know, but they did it. They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it--seems that only little children weep" (Lee365). Atticus explains the racial prejudice and injustice that are ingrained in the Maycomb community.

Tom Robinson is a black man who suffered from racism in his case and his quest is to seek justice in court and prove his innocence. Due to his color, he is assumed to be evil and that he had committed the crime by the white community, without any evidence. Atticus tells his children that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law and that Tom has as much a chance of being acquitted as anyone else. He says "Tom Robinson's a colored man, Jem. No jury in this part of the world's going to say, 'we think you're guilty, but not very' on a charge like that. It was either a straight acquittal or nothing" (Lee 376).

From these words, the children discover that the racial tension has left Tom without an opportunity to prove his innocence due to discrimination in the minds of the community. Black men were never given the opportunity to defend themselves and they were considered guilty without evidence. He continues to explain, "There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads—they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life" (Lee 377).

This demonstrates that Atticus is morally good in believing that black men are equal to white men. He disagrees with what happens during trials. Despite everything, Atticus feels that racism is responsible for the world's unfairness. Therefore, he is training his children to realize this so that they can grow up to be decent people. He explains to Jem and Scout:

As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it- whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash. (Lee 378)

Through Tom's character, Lee represents Black Americans' struggles of being subjected to a great deal of injustice and bias. The fact that Tom was wrongfully charged but convicted because

the jury was made up of all white males, who were previously known to be part of a lynch mob, indicates the stacked odds against him.

Boo Radley is a figure that depicts the unfairness that many people face as a result of being misunderstood by society. Maycomb people have built a negative image of Boo Radley through one informed opinion about him before knowing all facts or his circumstances. Scout and Jem were fascinated with Boo throughout the novel because they had heard rumors about him and how terrible he was “People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in the windows. When people’s azaleas froze in a cold snap, it was because he had breathed on them” (Lee 13).

Due to the harsh words and prejudices that abound in Maycomb, Boo had decided to stay inside. People were hostile or even terrified of him after hearing all the myths and stories about his life. So, instead of risking having his feelings crushed, he preferred to remain alone. Jem says, “I think I’m beginning to understand something. I think I’m beginning to understand why Boo Radley’s stayed shut up in the house all this time... it’s because he wants to stay inside” (Lee 389). As everyone else has hinted, Boo had made a decision to stay indoors due to the brutality of the world around him.

2.4 Cultural Issues

2.4.1 Education

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee discusses her opinion on the educational system of Alabama in the 1930s. She believes that the education system is inequitable and has many flaws. Jeff Frank agreed with Lee's point of view about the education system:

Lee is correct, I feel, to draw our attention to what happens in education when adjustment is put before principles. She forces us to ask the question, if education does not help

students develop principles, when the exigencies of social life become a reality for them, will the adjustments they make promote—or hinder—democracy?(Frank56)

Lee indicates that Maycomb's educational system is The Dewey System, the same educational program of America in 1930.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout's reading and writing abilities, as well as her individuality, are hampered as a result of Dewey's approach. Each youngster is herded into a broad group that decides whether he or she is “ready” to read, write, or print. “Miss Caroline caught me writing and told me to tell my father to stop teaching me. “Besides,” she said, “we don't write in the first grade, we print. You won't learn to write until you're in the third grade” (Lee31). Miss Caroline, Scout's first-grade teacher, is an example of the failure of the educational system. She humiliates a starving pupil and necessitates a lecture on local social hierarchy to another. On top of that, she mystifies the class with a mind-numbingly ridiculous anecdote before telling Scout that she must cease reading and writing at home to study “properly” at school. All of this occurs on Scout's first day.

Throughout the novel, Scout wonders if the new educational system is actually benefiting her. She dislikes school and wishes the teacher would allow her to read and write instead of forcing the children to participate in ridiculous activities. In this contemporary educational environment, group dynamics, good citizenship, units, projects, and all sorts of cliches have replaced the life of the intellect, particularly reading. Scout soon recognizes her school's allegiance to the factory model of education and its futility:

The remainder of my school days were no more auspicious than the first. Indeed, they were an endless Project that slowly evolved into a Unit, in which miles of construction paper and wax crayon were expended by the State of Alabama in its well-meaning but fruitless efforts to teach me Group Dynamics. (Lee 55)

The significance of this passage lies in that even children observed the futility of projects with no aim, boring material, and attempts at social adjustment. Scout learns from her elder brother, Jem, that the ideals and practical content of education she encounters dubbed the Dewey Decimal System by Jem were not always what pupils had to swallow. She cannot compare her experience to anything other than the Dewey method and what she's seen personally in grownups she respects. Scout then makes an unexpected observation: "I could only look around me: Atticus and my uncle, who went to school at home, knew everything—at least, what one didn't know the other did" (Lee 55). Scout approaches Atticus with concerns about her education. He helps her realize that she must have an education, even if the process is frustrating, and that he will continue to read with her and educate her at home. Atticus recognizes the flaws in the educational system, but he also recognizes that his children must go through it to be a member of society. However, his moral and non-moral teaching at home is far more useful to his children than anything they learn in school.

Moreover, in chapter 26, Scout illustrates what they are supposed to do in the classroom. She comments:

Once a week, we had a Current Events period. Each child was supposed to clip an item from a newspaper, absorb its contents, and reveal them to the class. This practice allegedly overcame a variety of evils: standing in front of his fellows encouraged good posture and gave a child poise; delivering a short talk made him word-conscious; learning his current event strengthened his memory; being singled out made him more than ever anxious to return to the Group. (Lee 418-419)

In other words, Lee shows that in the Dewey education system, rather than encouraging students to become active participants in civic life, "Current Events" tells them that it is preferable to be a part of the "Group" than an individual who can think for herself or himself.

Throughout the story, Scout recognizes that life experiences are the best instructors, and Atticus has taught her more than any school could ever teach her. Lee clearly expresses skepticism about the structured educational system, suggesting that it may cause more harm than good. Maybe a more useful education might be acquired at home. However, "It is not easy to criticize Dewey, because when you do, you usually find that he has made the necessary qualifications somewhere else in his vast writings"(Hawkins 109).

2.4.2 Religion

The religious subject in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is incredibly essential. It serves as a pivotal point for the novel's other issues, which include racism, sexism, and prejudice. The citizens of Maycomb County believe that they are devout, wholesome people; however, we realize that they are exploiting their religion to engage in other criticisms. Although they listen to sermons about their religion and appear to practice it outside of church on Sundays, their opinions on social harmony are far from the flawless Christian virtues they feel they possess.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there is discrimination in religion. African-Americans have churches separated from white's ones. This appears when Jem and Scout visit Calpurnia's church. The children are rebuffed by Lula who says to Calpurnia "I wants to know why you bringin' white chillun to nigger church... You ain't got no business bringin' whitechillun here—they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?" (Lee 202). Lula judged Calpurnia because she brought the two white children with her to the Blacks' church despite them all practicing the same religious beliefs.

Lee also symbolizes the religious issues in the missionary circle where women discuss numerous issues. The talk in the missionary circle is amusing since the ladies do not live up to their Christian perception and gossip the entire time. Instead of practicing Christian beliefs, the ladies insult equality advocates, express biased ideas, and use racial slurs. They act like snobbish

elitists, looking down on others and criticizing Atticus behind his back. Scout understands their deceit and is highly uncomfortable with them. The church females are not honest when they discuss the Mrunas issue. They seem concerned about them, but then swiftly go on to speak about town gossip and their munchies. Moreover, they are deeply worried about poor black people all around the world, yet they portray no sympathy or respect for black people in their community.

The foot-washing Baptists have significant authority in Maycomb, a very pious community. The foot-washers have extremely strict beliefs, thinking that anything pleasurable is a sin. As a result, they are biased against others who think or believe differently than they do. Miss Maudie said to Scout:

You know old Mr. Radley was a foot-washing Baptist –

That's what you are, ain't it?

My shell's not that hard, child. I'm just a Baptist... Foot-washers believe anything that's pleasure is a sin. Did you know some of 'em came out of the woods one Saturday and passed by this place and told me and my flowers were going to hell? (Lee 75)

Miss Maudie explains to Scout that the foot-washing Baptists and the Foot-washers believe anything that's pleasure is a sin. She also narrates that a group of such Baptists even told her that she and her "flowers were going to hell" (Lee75). Miss Maudie continues "You are too young to understand it," she said, "but sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of – oh, of your father." (Lee 76). That means that the Bible may sometimes be a terrible thing because it can confuse and even hurt someone who takes their religion so seriously that they are unable to live a regular life. A conservative Baptist who feels that everything enjoyable is a sin spends all of their time literally reading the Bible.

Even when facing societal and physical challenges, faith motivates him to assist Tom Robinson. He explains his reasoning to Scout, saying, “This case, Tom Robinson’s case, is something that goes to the essence of a man’s conscience—Scout, I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man” (Lee 179).

2.4.3 Struggle with Identity

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee sheds light on the particular category of people who have identity problems. Those people either have a double life or they are trying to figure out who they are in a cruel society that judges people based on their color, dress, or social status. “One’s social identity has been proven to be an important source of self-esteem, behavior, one’s sense of belonging, and purpose in the social world” (Tajfel and Turner). Through the deep reading of the novel, it will be clear that those people are Calpurnia and Dolphus Raymond.

Lee portrays the cultural clash of Calpurnia who is a victim of segregation with a dual life. Calpurnia, a white family’s maid, lives a double life as both African and American. She lives among Blacks and Whites at the same time. This oscillation gives her a sense of double consciousness, which can be observed in her language and conduct, a double consciousness caused by the segregation of Negroes from white culture.

Calpurnia’s double consciousness is seen when she decides to take Finch’s children to the Black’s church. She gently bathes them, dresses them in their cleanest clothing, and gets them ready. Scout wondered about the reason “what’s all this for?” Calpurnia answers, “I don’t want anybody sayin’ I don’t look after my children” (Lee 200). This demonstrates that, despite the fact that Scout and Jem are not Calpurnia’s biological children, she treats them as if they are. She has a lot of love and pride for the children, so she wants them to look their best when she takes them to church.

Calpurnia's response demonstrates that she regards herself as the children's mother and a member of the White community. In the church, Scout realizes that Calpurnia acts and speaks differently when she is in her community compared to when she is in the Finch house. Scout says "That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me. The idea that she had a separate existence outside our household was a novel one, to say nothing of her having command of two languages" (Lee 213). This quote reveals Calpurnia's struggle with identity in two different cultures.

Calpurnia is a Negro even though she lives with a white family. As a result, when Jim asks her why she does not converse in a better language like the other, she responds with "Suppose you and Scott talked colored-folks talk at home- it's be out of place, wouldn't it? Now what if I talked white-folk's talk at church, and with my neighbors? They'd think I was puttin' on airs to beat Moses" (Lee 213). Calpurnia speaks perfect English at home, but when she is among black people in her neighborhood and at church, she communicates in their language.

On the other hand, because Calpurnia is a Blacks by blood and also attends their meetings, she is forced to act like the Blacks while she is among them. She is an American in her battle with the whites and an African in the meetings of the Blacks. As a result of vacillating between these two independent lives, she now has a dual reality and, consequently, blended identity.

Another character that struggles with the two cultures, the Black culture and the white one, is Mr. Dolphus Raymond. Raymond is a wealthy white man who chooses to live with his black mistress and their mixed-race children. Raymond and his family are treated as outcasts because they have a mixed culture. His children struggle from being multiracial and raised in a mixed culture. Jem said "Colored folks won't have 'em because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em because they're colored" (Lee 275).

Conclusion

To Kill a Mockingbird chronicles an essential element of American history. It is concerned with the socio-cultural issues that American citizens struggle with in the 1930s and 1960s. It has been and continues to be one of the greatest books for readers and scholars, maintaining a commanding place in the majority of study programs. It uncovers the social realities that characterized American society during the great depression. Also; it sheds the light on the social problem such as racism and gender stereotypes. Further, it shows the characteristics of culture in American. The novel exemplified the cultural issues through education and religion. Thus, Harper Lee wrote a magnificent historical novel that portrays social and cultural realities.

General Conclusion

Harper Lee introduces several issues throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The story takes place over three years during the Great Depression, which is time when several aspects of the United States have changed. Lee depicts the Maycomb community's social and cultural issues. She attempted to reflect real-world social and cultural issues in her modernist work. The study intends to investigate the Socio-Cultural Issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To outreach the underlined aim, sub-objectives were significant to be investigated. To extract the socio-cultural issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is necessary to have an overview about the American society and culture in early twentieth century, and the historical context of the novel.

For synthesizing the major studies related to the research, the first chapter was dedicated for the representation of both American culture and society in early twentieth century. Started with American society during this time, describing the numerous social class divisions and the factors that contributed to their formation. Then discussed the importance of gender roles and stereotypes, especially during the Great Depression. Then discussed racism toward African Americans and the suffering that is inflicted on these people. Furthermore, discussed the effects of poverty on the evolution of American society. The chapter also examined at early-twentieth-century American culture, with a focus on education, religion, and the Great Depression. Finally, the chapter concluded with a look at how the previously mentioned elements have shaped American culture and society.

For achieving the objective of research, have asked three questions. The first inquires into the representation of the social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The second seeks to the exemplification of the cultural issues in the novel. The third examines the extent to which the compatibility between the socio-cultural issues in the novel and real life of American at the novel time. To respond to the questions, three hypotheses have been formulated. The first seeks to

highlight that the social issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are social class, gender roles and stereotypes, racism against African American, and justice and equality. The second hypothesize is the cultural issues are education, religion, and struggle with identity. The third examine that Lee's portrays reflect the real image of the socio-cultural issues in early twentieth century.

In order to test our hypotheses, the related corpora is selected from the novel and accordingly the thematic analysis method is implemented to generate the socio-cultural issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. For more accuracy, the descriptive historical method is used to report on the American society and culture during the early twentieth century specially between 1930-1960. This was for the purpose of justifying the representational of socio-cultural issues in the novel.

The result vividly provides that social and cultural issues have been extensively used in the novel. *To kill a mockingbird* tackles the causes and consequences of racism and prejudice, as well a show good and evil can coexist within a single community or individual religion and education. Thus, social and cultural issues was justified and presented in different features.

Lee highlighted the classes issues in the novel as follows: Firstly, she pinpointed the social class differences. It is not always evident to which socioeconomic class each character belongs; the characters themselves had ideas and urge the reader to draw his own conclusions. According to Jem, Maycomb society is classified into three groups Ordinary people, Cunninghams, Ewell, and. Lee also clarified the features of each group. Secondly, she spots the light on racism against African American where they faced the segregation even in religion and education. Thirdly, Lee presented the gender role and stereotypes issues in Maycomb community where they firmly believed that girls should according to the accepted gender characteristics and the same case to boys. Fourthly, justice and equality personified in the novel through the three characters Mr. Atticus, Boo Radley and Tom Robinson. All the three characters struggled from social injustice and specially Tom who was accused by raping white women.

However, Among the social issues, Lee examined education, religion and identity. In education, Lee tried to show the educational system in that time. In religion, she portrayed the segregation and prejudice and also she represented the principle of Christianity by Atticus action throughout the novel. Lee indicated people who struggled with their identity by being the same person in different personality within two different worlds.

The findings vividly proved that the socio-cultural issues have extensively been used in *To kill a mockingbird*. After analyzing the presentation of social and cultural issues in Harper Lee's novel and the description of American society and culture during the early twentieth century, we concluded that Lee's portrayal reflects the real images of socio-cultural issues in America during the early twentieth century.

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ملخص

أن تقتل عصفوراً محاكياً أو أن تقتل طائراً بريئاً وترجمت أيضاً إلى لا تقتل عصفوراً ساخراً، هي رواية تعالج القضايا الصعبة المتمثلة في العرق والتعليم و الدين والبراءة من خلال عيون فتاة صغيرة تدعى سكاوت. تجري أحداث القصة في قرية مايكوم وهي بلدة خيالية صغيرة جنوبية في الاباما خلال فترة الثلاثينات أي فترة الفساد الكبير. تحاول الدراسة الحالية إجراء تحليل موضوعي للتحقيق في القضايا الاجتماعية و الثقافية في رواية هاربر لي أن تقتل الطائر المحاكي. من أجل إجراء هذه الدراسة، طرحت ثلاثة أسئلة. يستفسر الأول عن ماهي القضايا الاجتماعية في أن تقتل الطائر المحاكي. والثاني يسعى إلى معرفة القضايا الثقافية في الرواية. يبحث الثالث في مدى التوافق بين القضايا الاجتماعية والثقافية في الرواية والحياة الحقيقية للأمريكيين في زمن الرواية. للرد على الأسئلة المطروحة مسبقاً، تمت صياغة ثلاث فرضيات؛ يسعى الأول إلى إبراز أن القضايا الاجتماعية في أن تقتل الطائر المحاكي هي الطبقة الاجتماعية، و أدوار الجنسين والقوالب النمطية، والعنصرية ضد الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي، والعدالة والمساواة. الفرضية الثانية: تنص على أن القضايا الثقافية في الرواية هي التربية والدين والصراع مع الهوية. النظرية الثالثة تنص أن تصور لي تعكس الصورة الحقيقية للقضايا الاجتماعية و الثقافية في أوائل القرن العشرين. وعليه توصلت الدراسة إلى النتائج التالية: تم استخدام القضايا الاجتماعية و الثقافية على نطاق واسع في الرواية. ناقشت الرواية أسباب وعواقب العنصرية والتحيز، وكذلك كيف يمكن أن يتعايش الخير و الشر داخل مجتمع واحد أو دين فردي والتعليم. وهكذا تم تبرير القضايا الاجتماعية و الثقافية و عرضها في سمات مختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يعكس تصوير لي الصور الحقيقية للقضايا الاجتماعية و الثقافية الأمريكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الكساد الكبير، القضايا الثقافية؛ القضايا الاجتماعية، أن تقتل الطائر المحاكي.

