



By James Barker at freedigitalphotos.net

The book "To Kill a Mockingbird", by Harper Lee, emphasizes the cruelty of prejudice, specifically racism, sexism, and classism. I wrote five poems based on the book, or rather, characters from the book.

This first of the five poems, "The day I was born," talks about a black man who was sentenced to death, despite being honest and earnest throughout his entire life. It is almost a replay of Tom Robinson's life. Tom Robinson was innocent, but he was sentenced to death because he was black.

The Day I was Born

06/2012, at age 15

On the day I was born, I was marked inferior
And on that day a target was painted on my back
For my skin they call themselves superior
Though they possess nothing that I lack

I worked as honestly as any
And much harder than some
And I just ask you how many
Times will you cheat on me until you're done?

With but a single breath
Though I never spoke a lie
You could send me to death
But never could you look me in the eyes

From the day I was born
these crosshairs never slacked
To the day I died in a ditch
with seventeen holes in my back



By Tina Phillips at freedigitalphotos.net

This 2nd poem speaks of someone closer to Boo Radley. Like Boo, the character in “The Hermit,” was a reclusive hermit that everyone thinks is evil, though many have never seen. The reality, however, in both situations is that they are actually nice people.

The Hermit

Nobody has seen him
For fifteen years he has stayed inside
But all claim to know the evils of him
And that his sanity has already died

Why would he have not gone outside?
For what other reason could there be
than for him to have died inside?
Beyond that they refuse to see

None will admit to this
But everyone here knows
Opting for their ignorant bliss
And to ignore the hate that they show

The real reason he doesn't leave
Is to exist in his escapist fantasy
With nowhere to go and nothing to see
He hides from the ugliness of reality

And yet, still they mock his memory
Until there is nothing left to remember
Naming, in his image, their corrupt fantasy
When in his kindness, that stress he once tried to disencumber

Is he a murderer who eats children raw?
Or just a kind stranger that nobody saw?



By Jenna Mackenzie at freedigitalphotos.net

This third poem that I wrote "Can I still Cry?" is a poem about Jem's sorrow at the loss of Tom Robinson's case. Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, and others are treating Jem like a man and giving him the idea that he has to behave like one, and this goes to his head, and he starts acting superior. Yet, like the character in this poem, Jem still finds himself confronted with his feminine side when he sees the monstrous injustice brought against blacks.

Can I Still Cry?

I am not a child anymore
They never tire to remind me
That I should grow up in my core
And throughout the rest of me

Yet there is so much I can't understand
And so much that I hate
It's hard to meet life's demands
Harder still to watch cruelty come in spates

For those who suffer by your hand
Can I still cry?
For those who could not find the strength to stand
Must I ignore and lie?

Today I stared into the face
Of the one they marked disgrace
But he looked kind enough to me

I stared off into space
And prayed for them to extend him grace
But still they stood by their creed

I watched them send him to be erased
For he was of another race
For him I still cry



By dan at freedigitalphotos.net

This 4th of my poems "For Lack of a Better World" is almost like a situation where Walter Cunningham Jr. is speaking to Aunt Alexandra. Alexandra defines the Cunninghams as trash even though they are actually honorable people, and because of her, Scout cannot be Walter's friend.

For Lack of a Better World

For lack of a better word
You define me as trash
For lack of a better word
I am just another poor boy in the world

Perhaps you do not yet comprehend
The change in behaviors that I rend
For the things that I cannot repay
I never borrow

Maybe your payment will not come tomorrow
Maybe not the day after
But until then, not even my sorrow
In the least matters

For lack of a better word
I am the honorable poor man
For lack of a better World
I've lost one more potential friend

For lack of a better world
My debts are all that matter

For lack of a better world
Money comes first, and your judgment tumbling after



By Simon Howden at freedigitalphotos.net

The 5th poem "Wear a Dress" is from the perspective of Aunt Alexandra speaking to Scout. Scout is tom-boy-ish and she always plays with the boys and wears pants. Aunt Alexandra wants Scout to be more lady-like despite her protests to the contrary, just like the characters in the poem. These are the similarities between the poems and the book.

Wear a Dress!

Wear a dress
Sit up straight
A damsel in distress
I will create

Don't be so brash
Or try to be like the boys
If you do you'll be trash
So go play with your toys

A lady is all you can ever be
This is the path that was carved out for me
And you'll have to follow it too
You have to grow up and be a lady

In the scheme of things, who are you more or less
You'll amount to nothing if you wear britches under that dress
Don't you go making friends with boys and their family's streaks
They are trash, and you may be

You ask why I'm so compassionate?
You say I'll turn you into a hypocrite?
Well, it won't be long until you're into boys and clothes
So don't blame me for your eventual woes