Discrimination Changes People

People who were different then the majority were an easy target of hate and discrimination during the 1930s. African-Americans suffered because of their heritage and although some people realized what was happening to them, most people did not. The discrimination that these people went through changed them for ever. **What are the effects of discrimination on the characters?** *To Kill a Mockingbird* leads up to the aftermath of Tom Robinson’s trial. Tom is an African-American who was accused of raping Mayella Ewell and even though there is sufficient evidence to prove that he did not actually do it, he is still found guilty. The story explores the effects of discrimination of all kinds during the times of the Great Depression however, one of the main focuses is on racial discrimination. Calpurnia is the Finch family’s maid who is African-American and Dolphus Raymond is a white man who is married to a black lady and has had children with her. He is known to the town as an alcoholic. The novella *Of Mice and Men* has a large section of the book focusing on how discrimination towards different races can effect people negatively. Crooks is a black man who works as a stable buck on the ranch. He deals with racial discrimination every day because he is surrounded by white people. People think that it is ok to call him a “nigger” even though it is not. The book explains how simple it was for people to become lonely which is easily seen from Crooks. **In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird,* Harper Lee shows the reader that the mixed people of Maycomb are shunned from society completely for being more than one race and the black people are treated horribly by the white people. Scout and several other people realize how badly black and mixed people are treated because of Tom's trial, where**

**Scout talks to the minorities of the town and realizes that they aren't treated fairly. This calls attention to a theme of racial discrimination. On the contrary, in *Of Mice and Men,* John Steinbeck explains how Crooks has become bitter because of the way white people treat him. He is a perfect example of the loneliness minorities felt during the 1930s. Ultimately, the authors use their books to teach the readers about racism in society during the Great Depression.**

The people who are being discriminated against in *To Kill a Mockingbird* sacrifice their real personalities for something that will allow them acceptance.Calpurnia, the Finch family’s maid is one of them. It is discovered that she changes the way she speaks depending on who she’s talking to. She explains to Scout and Jem, “‘Suppose you and Scout talked coloured-folks’ talk at home it’d be out of place, wouldn’t it?’” (Lee, 167). This gives the reader insight into how people of colour were pressured to try and fit in during that time. Calpurnia feels like she needs to act the way white people do which includes talking like them in order to be somewhat respected. Although this thought seems ridiculous, it works for her and is true for all of the minorities of the town. The effect of this pressure is that the black people of Maycomb feel that it is not acceptable to be anything besides white and that if you want to make something of your life, you have to try to be as different from yourself as possible. Similar to Calpurnia, Dolphus Raymond pretends to be someone he is not. Scout and Dill talk to Mr. Raymond and

realize that he pretends so that people give him a sort of acceptance: “‘Secretly, Miss Finch, I’m not much of a drinker, but you see they [the town] could never, never understand that I live like I do because that’s the way I want to live.’” (Lee, 268). Dolphus telling Scout this lets the readers understand further just how judgmental the town is. They feel like there has to be a reason why he’s married to a black lady and had kids with her besides just being in love. So, he pretends to be a drunk to give them all a reason. It lets them think that he isn’t sober which is why he married her. The effects of discrimination are demonstrated very clearly with both Calpurnia and Dolphus because the racism that the citizens of Maycomb have changes two people’s personalities and characteristics to allow acceptance from others.

Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* is very lonely. There are several reasons and events that have lead to his loneliness. First, because the white workers on the ranch don’t socialize with him unless necessary, he has grown angry: “‘I ain’t wanted in the bunk house’ […] ‘Cause I’m black.’” (Steinbeck, 68). The character Crooks is helping the reader understand how people of colour were treated during that period. While everyone is sleeping in a bunk house and playing cards together, he is stuck living in the barn away from any form of socialization. Because he is not around people very often since he is black and they are not, he has grown to be a mean person : “‘I never knew till long later why he [his dad] didn't like that [being friends with white people]. But I know now.’” (Steinbeck, 70). Being discriminated against is a hard thing to deal with and when that person is a minority, there’s nothing they can do about what people are

saying about them. That’s why getting angry is a common thing that could happen. Unfortunately, anger has

become a major part of Crooks and now he hates anyone who is white even if, like Lennie, they are nice people. This prevents him from making any meaningful relationships and not having any

relationships feeds his anger. Loneliness and anger can consume a person until all that’s left is hate. Crooks is continually growing more hateful because of how the rest of the workers on the ranch treat him.

During the Great Depression, racism was not often discussed which is why these books discuss it. Literature is a great source for discussing difficult subjects. Lee and Steinbeck both bring insight on what racism looked like throughout that period of time and even after that. The word “nigger” was used often in both books. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* a common sentence heard is “nigger-lover” which is considered an insult.:“‘I certainly am [a nigger-lover]. I do my best to love everybody.’” (Lee, 144). Using the word nigger as an insult to white people demonstrates how black people were looked upon. They were not considered to be respected at all/ Scout hears people call her father this several times throughout the book and although she isn’t too sure what it means, she knows that it is something bad. Every time she hears it, she becomes discouraged and enraged. This form of discrimination effects not only the African-Americans but the white people who are being called it. Using that word lowers their self-esteem and the respect people

have for them. In *Of Mice and Men*, the workers on the ranch refer to Crooks most commonly as “nigger”. They use it so often, it is almost as if that was his real name. Being called such a word so often feeds into Crooks anger and like in the other book, it lowers his confidence. He also loses any respect he has earned by being called that. Both books use words to affect people negatively which showcases the impact of discrimination during the time that these books take place.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* focuses on the way people who accept and love African-Americans are treated. The discrimination that black people deal with impacts and affects both white and black people. *Of Mice and Men* focuses on the anger that can come from discrimination towards people. Lee shows several people in the town who open up to the minorities whereas the African-Americans and “nigger-lovers” who face discrimination try to change in order to feel acceptance. Steinbeck pushes the fact that loneliness comes from people who are discriminated against which can leave effects on people forever. Although some people’s views of African-Americans changes in *To Kill a Mockingbird,* both books show how cruel people can be when someone isn’t the same. The cruelty that those people suffer can completely change them for the worse or for the better depending how the issue is treated.