

**A Study of Resoluteness of Calpurnia in
Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mocking Bird***

X. Merlin



Harper Lee

Courtesy:

<http://www.fox23.com/news/trending-now/photos-the-life-of-to-kill-a-mockingbird-author-harper-lee/95263556>

Abstract

Harper Lee created daring episodes of social problems relating to race and gender in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. The novel deals with the situations in the 1930's, within the geographical area of Alabama, where discrimination due to race and gender ran rampant. Lee was seemingly influenced by experiences in her own life, particularly two trials where black men were suspected of raping or sexually attempting to rape a white woman. She grew up in Alabama. Her father was a professional lawyer. Calpurnia is the black woman in *To Kill a Mocking Bird* who looked after Scout and Jem. Calpurnia was one of the black maids working for whites in the 1930's. She worked for a lawyer, resident of Maycomb. His name was Atticus Finch, father of Jem Finch and Scout Finch. Calpurnia is a flat character who has strong views and is in conflict with the society. This article examines the role of Calpurnia and her resoluteness in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*.

Keywords: Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, Calpurnia, Racial discrimination, Determination, Conflicts, Responsibility, Household Chores

The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement was the umbrella description given to social efforts to end discrimination and support improved acknowledgement of the civil rights of minorities, together with blacks and women. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a year-long protest by blacks against the general public transit in Montgomery, Alabama, starting in Dec 1955. The integration of schools picked up speed once the Supreme Court's verdict on Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. These developments helped Harper Lee instill strength and a moral code of ethics into characters such as Scout (a young girl), Atticus Finch (a lawyer and also the father of Scout and her brother Jem), and Tom Robinson (a black man unproved, defended by Atticus Finch).



Calpurnia Character

Courtesy:

<http://tokillamockingbirdchaptertwo.weebly.com/literary---character-explanation-calpurnia.html>

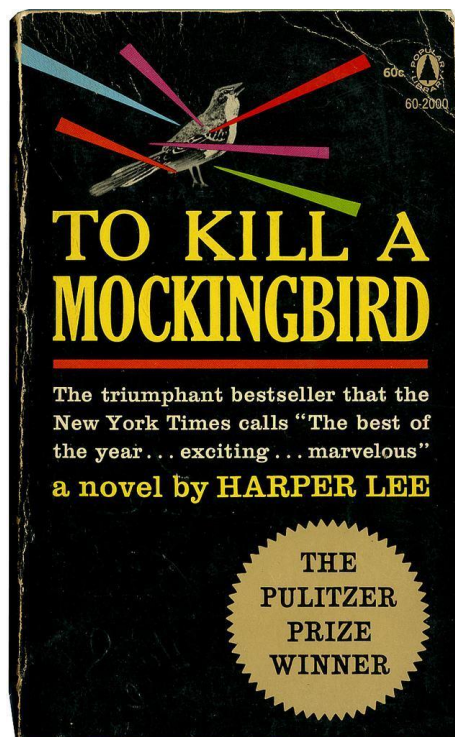
Calpurnia

Calpurnia is the black woman in *To Kill a Mocking Bird* who looks after Scout and Jem. Calpurnia worked for a lawyer, resident of Maycomb. His name is Atticus Finch, father of Jem Finch and Scout Finch. Calpurnia is a flat character who has strong views and is in conflict with the society. She is like a mother figure to Jem Finch and Scout Finch, and Atticus holds her in high esteem. Although she is treated well, she is not an equal. She calls Scout 'ma'am' and Jem 'sir.' Scout tells us about her relationship with Calpurnia: 'Our battles were epic and one-sided. Calpurnia always won, mainly because Atticus always took her side.'

Scout confuses Calpurnia's unappeasable behavior for the feeling of dislike. Calpurnia is knotty on her; she is demanding, and she rules with an iron hand, but Scout realizes that Calpurnia loves her in the way Atticus does. When Scout and Jem go to church with Calpurnia, Scout is confused by the way Calpurnia speaks when she is among her friends; her character serves as the bridge between two worlds, a sense of her double life, which is split between the Finch household and the black community. Calpurnia explains it this way:

Folks don't like to have somebody around knowin' more than they do. It aggravates 'em. You're not gonna change any of them by talkin' right, they've got to want to learn themselves, and when they don't want to learn there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language. (12.139-144)

This speech demonstrates the gulf between blacks and whites in Maycomb: not only do class distinctions and bigotry divide the two races, but language does as well. In that instant, probably for the first time, Scout realizes Calpurnia has a life outside the Finch family. She could not endure and adopt in the family throughout her life. Scout shares that same surprise when she spends time in Calpurnia's world.



Courtesy:

<https://flashbak.com/eleven-classic-covers-of-harper-lees-to-kill-a-mockingbird-55722/>

Part of the Family

Atticus is clear on his view that Calpurnia is one among his family. He declares that he couldn't have anything without her through the years. Calpurnia is also paid by Atticus to watch his children while he's at work. She's more of a parent to the kids than their Aunt Alexandra who comes to live with them. She washes their clothes, feeds them, and teaches them manners. "So from the point of view of the young man, the only kind of women who exist are entrappers and domesticators." (New Feminist Criticism Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, Pg. 73).

Since she is also African American, she represents her culture living in Maycomb Country during the 1930s. She's a good Christian woman who has a good work ethic and is a little superstitious as an African. Calpurnia is paid by Atticus to watch his children while he's at work. She's more of a mother to the kids than their Aunt Alexandra who comes to live with them. She washes their clothes, feeds them, and teaches them manners.

Two-dimensional Character

Calpurnia is a two-dimensional character. Her values of life and respect stayed constant. One example is, when Walter Cunningham comes home and pours molasses all over his dinner. She pulled Scout out, into the kitchen, from the diner, and taught her how to respect and be kind towards her guests. At the point when Scout was disturbed that Atticus had been acting mean towards her since Atticus did not know her side of the story in the battle with her cousin. When this happened Calpurnia was patient and explained the situation to her, and told her to be comprehensive, even though Scout was acting very unpleasant.

A last case of why Calpurnia was the part of a two-dimensional character is the circumstance is which she took both Scout and Jem to her black community church. Despite the fact that one of the ladies there was being uninformed and unwelcoming to the children, Calpurnia did not lose her esteems and stayed cool and set a decent case for Jem and Scout. "It seems to be a fact of life that we all- women and men alike- experience social conventions and responsibilities and obligations first in the persons of women, since women are entrusted by society with the task of rearing young children." (New Feminist Criticism Essays on

Calpurnia is an adroit dark lady who realizes what she is doing. One case is the point at which a distraught dog was free on their road. Calpurnia called every one of the neighbors. Each wood entryway was shut. This shows how she knew to get everybody to close their entryways and how the neighbors believed her pledge regarding the matter. She knew when and where to address things in various ways and when and where to talk with individuals.

A Loyal Maid – How Society Viewed Her

Calpurnia is a fine and loyal maid of the family but her biggest conflict is how society views her. One woman, Lula, questioned why she brought the Jem and Scout to a black church. Lula said “You ain’t got no business bringin’ white chillum here- they got their church, we got our’n. It is our church, ain’t it, Miss Cal” (119). These quotes show how some blacks viewed white people with hatred and in turn caused conflict with Calpurnia.

In Aunt Alexandra’s Missionary Society, life resumed as if she had always lived with us. Aunt Alexandra never missed a chance to point out the shortcomings of others. Everyone in Maycomb seemed to have a Streak: A Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, and a Funny Streak. She was also much occupied with heredity: who came from what family. I had received the impression the Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had, but Aunt Alexandra was of the opinion that the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was. (Pg-32)

This quote demonstrates that, however Calpurnia is an incredible cook Aunt Alexandra does not allow her to do anything that may have even a little possibility of demolishing her notoriety. Atticus said, “Alexandra, Cal’s not leaving this house until she wants to. You may think otherwise, but we really need her and she is a great person who feels like a member of our family. She’s done a great job of helping me raise the children.” 34). This quote shows how Alexandra wants Calpurnia out of the house even though she is one of the only things that keeps the house running. Calpurnia is smart and helpful she is still

looked down upon by society.

Always Setting a Good Example

In conclusion, with all the conflicts in which Calpurnia stepped in, she stayed defined as a flat character. When Scout was rude to the little farm boy, when Scout was upset after fighting her cousin, and when Lula was unwelcoming at the church toward the children, she maintained a status of kind, wise, and always setting a good example toward Atticus' children. Calpurnia is a strict disciplinarian and the children's bridge between the white world and her own black community. Lee introduces the black community at a decisive moment in the subject matter. By emphasising the goodness and solidarity of the black community, Lee casts the racism erect among Maycomb's white in an extremely farinaceous and disfigured light. Thus Lee enables us to identify the black community in a mode that makes the townspeople's involuntariness to do mean-spirited and stubborn.

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X. Merlin, M.A., M.Phil. Candidate
Research Scholar
Department of English
Karunya University
Karunya Nagar
Coimbatore-641114
Tamil Nadu
India
merlinx94@gmail.com