

The texts that I used to research connections of racism were The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, Schwarzfarher by Pepe Duquart and an extract from Clenched Fist by Witi Ihimaera. To focus my connections I used three questions: Who is being mistreated? What are the consequences of this behaviour? And what does the portrayal of racism reveal about society? I expect to find racism more prevalent in the older texts such as The Merchant of Venice and To Kill a Mockingbird whereas in the more modern texts such as Schwarzfarher and Clenched Fist it will be less prevalent because of the holocaust and the Blacks' civil rights movement in America.

Treatment of difference by the majority.

In the texts that I have studied a significant connecting aspect that I found was racism. Racism occurred in these texts in the treatment of outsiders to society. In Schwarzfahrer, the old lady mistreats the black man. During her monologue she calls him a "lout", "savage" and distances herself from him by referring to herself as "we" and him as "they". She never directly addresses him. Likewise in To Kill a Mockingbird, Tom Robinson, a Blackman convicted of raping a white woman (Mayella Ewell) is mistreated by Bob Ewell who knowingly falsely accuses him of raping his daughter because he helped her. He is then mistreated by the gang of men, who go to his jail cell and threaten to kill him. They presume that he is guilty because he is black. They believe that he must be guilty because black people supposedly act like animals. This suggests that the majority being white society judge Tom differently from themselves (in this case Tom is black) as outsiders physically. They do not judge him for who he is. Tom Robinson is actually a very nice person who helped Mayella do something but he was judged on his skin colour and this made him an outsider from the white majority. In society people are often too quick to judge people for what they are not who they are (1)

Another idea that occurred in my texts was that people abuse people who they feel threaten them. Evidence of this is that Bob Ewell feels that his manhood or power around his home is threatened by Tom Robinson as Tom helps Mayella with things around the house, e.g. cutting wood. The way that the old lady is sitting, holding her handbag in Schwarzfahrer suggests to us that she feels threatened by him. The texts suggest that these characters illustrate that they are thought of as a threat that needs to be abused in order so it does not rise up against the people. Bob Ewell thought that Tom was a threat to his status of the head of the family and man about the house so he mistreated Tom by falsely accusing him of raping Mayella.

Revenge is a consequence of racial behaviour.

In the texts that I have studied a consequence of racism is that a character who has been mistreated seeks revenge. In Schwarzfahrer, the black man seeks revenge against the old lady who has been persecuting him. He eats her ticket and as a consequence she is kicked off the bus. Likewise in the Merchant of Venice, Shylock seeks revenge against Antonio for calling him a "misbeliever, cutthroat dog" and "spit upon my Jewish gabardine". Shylock's revenge is seeking the pound of Antonio's flesh that he was promised in the bond. He will not accept any amount of money; he wants his revenge against Antonio. I think that people will seek revenge because they have been hurt and they feel they have been wrongly treated (2).

Another consequence of racist behaviour is people not standing up against racism. In the Clenched fist, Api is "smouldering with fury" about having a photo taken of him with a tourist yet he does nothing about his mistreatment. However, in To Kill A Mockingbird, Atticus Finch, a lawyer, stands up for Tom Robinson, a black man. He goes up against the mainly racist town he showed character by doing this. Likewise,

Shylock also stood up for himself by defying the pleas of the Christians for not seeking his pound of flesh (3).

Age affects the attitude of individuals.

Racism reveals how children's attitudes differ from adult's attitudes. In To Kill a Mocking Bird Jem and Scout (Atticus' children) both are very accepting of their cook Calpurnia, they go to church with her and sit in the black seats at the court room. Likewise in Schwarzfarher, the boy laughs at the old lady pulling her coat from underneath the black man but does not see her nasty intent. Whereas in The Merchant of Venice Antonio is racist to Shylock calling him "misbeliever cutthroat dog" Likewise, the old lady is racist to the black man in Schwarzfarher. The evidence suggests that children have no preconceived ideas about race. They are willing to accept people for who they are whereas adults accept people for what they are. Children see people rather than viewing a race (4).

The portrayal of racism reveals that people will abuse people even if they have not been wronged by them. In The merchant of Venice, Shylock has not wronged Antonio but Antonio has hated: Shylock on the Rialto in front of all the other Merchants because he was Jewish. In Schwarzfarher, the old lady has no reason to abuse the black man. In To kill a mocking bird, Tom Robinson did nothing to the gang of men who wanted to kill him apart from his race. In all three cases the abusers are driven to abuse the black people or Jews just because of their religion or race. This illustrates how strong their hate and racism is for these people (5).

In conclusion, I found was that most commonly people who are different to the majority are mistreated. This difference is usually either racial or religious to the majority. Also a major consequence of racial behaviour is that people will seek revenge against the abuser because they feel that they do not deserve this treatment. Also that children's and adult's attitude to race are different and children accept people for who they are not what they are. The overriding theme that I found was that difference is often prejudiced against.