# Changes:

Mama introduced me to the geraniums. The stunning pink, red and pure white buds that were her ultimate pride and joy. It was inevitable, I s’pose that as the oldest I was gonna learn to keep them like Mama did. I never really showed much interest in the geraniums. It was Mama’s job, not mine. Well, it was, until Mama left. Now it’s the only thing keepin’ me goin’. The little bit of Mama that’s always gonna be with me.

The funeral still seems like it was only yesterday. The day was dull and dreary. Rain dripped depressingly from every gutter, determined to make the day as awful as possible. I stood watchin’ as Mama was lowered down, down into the dark, black hole. The hole seemin’ly never ended. It was the hole that I knew Mama would never come back up out of. Papa stood watchin’ too, eyes fixated on the wooden box, sullen and unsmiling. My two youngest siblings, Helen, and Doris held each one of my hands. Doris leaned over and asked innocen’ly, “Ella, where they takin’ Mama?” I just squeezed her hand even harder. Over my shoulder my brothers Ken and Bert were also watchin’, shufflin’ their feet. Nancy and Betty stood near holdin’ each other, cryin’. All of sudden it hit me that I was their Mama now. They would depend on me. I broke down cryin’ too. Most thought it was out of grief for Mama. They didn’t know the tears were for me.

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“Ella, Betty’s hittin’ me an’ I said stop but she won’t!”

“May-ella, I need you now!”

“I’m hungry, like really really hungry!”

“I want Mama. Where’s Mama?”

My ears ring with complaints like these from day to night, all day, every day. I knew with Mama gone I would become their Mama, but I never knew it was gonna be this hard. I’m tryin’ hard to be kind and a good examp’l but I’m not sure how much longer I can keep this ruse up. Mama’s death took just as much of a toll on me as the others, if not more. Mama was more than a mother to me. She was a guide, best friend, sister; with Mama gone it’s like part of me’s gone too. I can’t keep goin’ on like this. I just can’t.

Life before Mama left was a ball. Every moment was full of laughter and fun, the way anybody feels in the spring when leavin’ dark winter behind. Papa was diff’rent too. Whenever Mama came into a room, his eyes would light up as if someone had found the on switch and flicked it. The dining room seemed to lighten as our large family all gathered together. Dinner was a noisy affair with everyone talkin’ over each other eager to tell Mama and Papa about their days. Mama always told us we shouldn’ talk over each other. “It’s unladylike,” she’d say to which the boys would retort with mischievous grins, “We ain’t ladies.” We’d scowl at them until Mama’s contagious, gurglin’ laugh would fill the room in perfect harmony with Papa’s loud guffaw. After dinner we would crowd around Papa, the little ones crawlin’ onto his lap, us older ones draped over his chair as we waited for him to tell us one of his famous stories. Halfway through the story, we’d realise Mama had sneaked in too, and she’d sit, as excited as any of us at Papa’s feet. We always saved her that spot. To remember Mama, I still do.

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Papa’s all diff’rent now. I think he’s tryin’ to drink away his grief. He never tells us stories anymore. The one time little Helen asked him to, he hit her. He stalks in late at night, shoutin’ and stompin’ loudly, wakin’ the littlies from their sleep. They’ve learnt to be quiet otherwise he shouts and takes his anger out on them. Once he’s gone to bed I gotta get up and tuck them all back in again. One night, as I was tuckin’ Betty and Nance in, Betty turned to me and asked, “Ella, when’s Mama gonna come back?” I just pulled her close and went back to bed. There was nothin’ else I could do. That night, I cried myself to sleep.

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Papa spends almost all the money on his drinks. I can’t be expected to support a family of nine on a couple of pennies. Many a night I go hungry to give as much as I can to the littlies. I try my hardest with them, but it doesn’t seem to be workin’. I long for someone my own age. Ken’s the closest to my age but he’s only thirteen years compared to my nineteen years. Sometimes I think it’d be better just to be run away. But deep in my heart I know I could never.

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Then one day somethin’ happened that changed my life. As I was outside waterin’ the geraniums, Mama’s flowers, a young man walked by. He called out, “Afternoon, Miss Mayella.” I was so stunned, I didn’t reply. Rarely did anyone talk or take any notice of me ‘cept to make fun. I felt a warm glow in my heart. From then on, I made sure I was always outside with the geraniums in the afternoon, so I could hear the familiar, “Afternoon, Miss Mayella.” There was something about this man that made me want him. I didn’t know if it was the kind, soft face, the slightly lilting voice or the fact that he seemed harmless due to a maimed arm. But there was one thing about him that told me I’d ne’er be able to have him. The fact that he was one of them. A nigger.

WORD COUNT – 939

# Writer’s Statement:

Through the use of various Harper Lee features, further and more deep and influential meaning is added to my story. This is added using characters, speech, informal style, Bob Ewell’s change, perspective, and themes.

The main characters in my story are exactly the same as those in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* drawing a direct connection. In the book, Mayella is only a side character but in my story, I have made her the main character. By making Mayella the main character I can show her in a different light to the readers in my story. She can be a seen as a softer, gentler and more caring person in my story whereas in the book she is portrayed as a selfish, defensive and untrustworthy person. This adds meaning to Harper Lee’s story as well as it explains why she is acting the way she does at the trial and while her actions are still wrong it shows her motive for raping Tom Robinson.

Another intertextual feature in my story is the speech of Mayella. Like in Harper Lee’s story, Mayella’s speech is uneducated showing how she’s been denied the education she needs. Many of the words are cut short such as “tryin’, cryin’, and “wakin’” and words such as “ain’t” are also used. This very clearly connects my story to *To Kill a Mockingbird* as Mayella also speaks like this in the book. However, in my story, Mayella’s thinking is shown which illustrates that she is quite intelligent even though by Harper Lee she is portrayed as very uneducated. This adds further meaning to her as a character by showing her intellect through her thinking it allows the reader to delve deeper into her as a character.

In my story, an informal style, is used to connect the reader further to the character. The casual laid back phrases such as “I knew it was gonna be hard”. This draws an obvious link to Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* as this is narrated by Scout therefore the language is also casual and laid back. However, the informal style also shows a lot about the family life of Mayella as she is narrating. It shows the type of class that Mayella lives in which is the lower class and therefore adds more meaning to her as a character. In my story, the informal language also helps the reader to understand clearly the struggles of a young girl trying to run a family with no help of a father and the reader can understand her feelings.

The way my story portrays Bob Ewell is another intertextual feature. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Bob Ewell is mean and he abuses Mayella. However, through my story, it explains the motive for his mean and abusive nature. Since his wife died, he totally changed and that adds meaning to his character in the book. Phrases in my story such as, “Papa’s all different now,” show how after his wife’s death, Bob Ewell became a completely different person. Through my story a different side of Bob Ewell is shown, and it also adds meaning to the book by showing how people react to different circumstances and how they can be totally changed by it, which is an allusion to how the prejudice completely changed some people in the town of Maycomb.

My story is from the perspective of Mayella Ewell. By writing a story from Mayella’s point of view, it shines a different light on her character compared to the way Harper Lee shows her in *To Kill a Mockingbird.* This helps to develop Mayella’s character in a more meaningful way. From my story we can see that she cares deeply for her siblings as she says, “I’m tryin’ to be kind and a good examp’l…” By writing this story from Mayella’s perspective it also adds a reason for her relationship with Tom Robinson later in Harper Lee’s book. Mayella says, “I long for someone my own age.” My story, written from Mayella’s perspective explains her growth in the situation and how she feels about her life. My story allows the reader to see Mayella as she truly is rather than how she is thought of in Harper Lee’s story, as that is from the perspective of Scout.

The last intertextual feature in my story is the theme of stepping into other people’s shoes. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus tells Scout and Jem to step into other people’s shoes. In my story, Mayella has to step into her mothers shoes after she dies. She says, “All of a sudden it hit me that I was their Mama now.” Throughout my story there is a growth in Mayella as she learns to step into her mother’s shoes. This connects my story to the book as the theme is the same. By using this theme in my story, it allowed me to show how stepping into someone’s else’s shoes can be very challenging but sometimes it must be done. It adds meaning to the importance of stepping into other’s shoes because then you realise what their life was like.

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