

**AN ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND RACIAL
CONFLICTS IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S FICTION**

THE HELP

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Arts degree in English*

By

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SATHYABAMA

**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)**

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This is to certify that this Project Report is the bonafide work of **TAMIL SELVAN C (42970006)** who has done the Project work. He has carried out the project entitled "*An Analysis of Structural Inequalities and Racial Conflicts in Kathryn Stockett's Fiction The Help*" under my supervision from June 2023 to April 2024.

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ABSTRACT

Kathryn Stockett's fascinating novel *The Help* is set in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement. Three women are featured in the narrative: Skeeter Phelan, a young white lady who aspires to be a writer; Aibileen Clark, an African American maid who is intelligent and kind; and Minny Jackson, Aibileen's outspoken companion and fellow maid. Skeeter is determined to share the experiences of the black maids who serve white homes in order to highlight the injustices and struggles they deal with on a daily basis as tensions in the racially divided society grow. Despite the possibility of being discovered, Aibileen and Minny fearlessly contribute their experiences to Skeeter's research, risking their lives in the process. By working together, the women challenge social standards and address issues of racism, friendship, and empowerment. As their tales develop, they deal with prejudice, treachery, and internal conflicts before ultimately finding strength in cooperation and unity. *The Help* is a moving story about bravery and endurance in the face of hardship, emphasizing the value of compassion, comprehension, and sticking up for what is right even when it seems unachievable.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Kathryn Stockett's compelling novel *The Help* is set in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s during the civil rights movement. The narrative focuses on three women, Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter, whose lives intersect while they deal with social mores and racial conflicts. African American maids Aibileen and Minny work alongside a young white woman named Skeeter who wants to be a writer. The book examines issues of racism, friendship, and the pursuit of justice through their points of view. African Americans in the South underwent injustices, and Stockett's moving story highlights the bravery of those who dared to question the status order. *The Help* is a stunning illustration of fortitude, compassion, and the transforming potential of speaking out against injustice. The first chapter of this dissertation is split into two parts as a preliminary step. The historical portion comes first and sheds light on the primary aspect of our topic that is related to the novel that we will be analysing. Understanding Mississippian segregation, the Low and Jim Crow.

The three primary historical factors that are related to our study are represented by its effects on North America, which sparked the civil rights struggles among people of colour.

The second section is literary in nature and consists of the author biography along with the corpus and its features.

1.1 ABOUT THE NOVEL:

The compelling book *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett is set in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s—a period and place steeped in racial injustice and segregation. Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter are the three primary characters whose perspectives are used to tell the story.

African American maids Aibileen and Minny serve the houses and children of white families, subjecting them to daily injustices and indignities. Both Aibileen and Minny are restricted by the constraints placed on them by their race and societal expectations. Aibileen is wise and nurturing, while Minny is outgoing and disrespectful.

After graduating from college with dreams of becoming a writer, Skeeter, a young, prosperous white lady, returns to Jackson. Inspired by her personal friendship with her family's maid, Aibileen, and troubled by the racial injustices she sees, Skeeter takes on a dangerous project: writing a book that gives voice to the experiences of the black maids in Jackson.

While surreptitiously interviewing maids for her book, Skeeter develops close bonds with Aibileen and Minny and gains insight into their challenges, anxieties, and aspirations. In order to expose the systematic racism and inequality embedded in their culture, they risk their reputations and even their lives as they navigate the perilous waters of Mississippi during the Jim Crow era.

The Help explores the complexities of human relationships in the face of societal oppression and prejudice by delving into topics of friendship, race, class, and gender. With its gripping story and painfully funny elements, Stockett's book forces readers to face hard realities about both the past and present of America.

Through the interwoven tales of Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter, *The Help* honours the fortitude, bravery, and humanity of people who have the audacity to challenge the status quo and strive for equality and justice. The book's continuing appeal and high praise from critics bear witness to its lasting significance and influence, demonstrating the ability of narrative to elicit compassion, comprehension, and societal transformation.

1.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

The author of *The Help*, Kathryn Stockett, is a native of Mississippi who is renowned for her perceptive examination of social issues and moving storytelling. Stockett, who was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, is inspired by her personal experiences growing up in the racially volatile American South.

Prior to becoming a well-known novelist, Stockett held jobs in marketing and magazine publishing. Her upbringing gave her a profound grasp of the intricacies of interpersonal interactions and social dynamics, which she skillfully combines into her writing.

Published in 2009, Stockett's debut book *The Help* became an immediate literary hit. Using her deep understanding of Southern history and culture, Stockett created

a gripping account that illuminates the lives of African American maids employed by white families in the civil rights era.

Stockett has received a great deal of praise and recognition for her ability to eloquently capture the voices and experiences of her characters, both black and white. She sensitively and nuancedly addresses tough subjects like racism, privilege, and injustice in her fiction, forcing readers to face up to painful realities about America's past and present.

Although Stockett's treatment of race and her choice to write from the perspectives of African American characters as a white author have drawn criticism, the book has brought about crucial discussions about representation, empathy, and the ability of narrative to move beyond differences.

Following the release of *The Help*, Stockett has persisted in her writing and exploration of identity, family, and community-related themes. Even though she hasn't written a book since then, her debut is still regarded as a beloved and significant work that has had a lasting impact on modern literature.

1.3 SETTING OF THE NOVEL:

The setting of Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*:

The majority of Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* takes place in Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1960s—more precisely, in 1962 and 1964. Jackson acts as both the story's backdrop and a major influence on the experiences and interactions between the characters. Within Jackson, the novel depicts various settings that reflect the social and racial divisions of the time:

1.3.1 White Homes:

In Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, the white houses stand in for the racial tension and segregation that characterized Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s. The story explores the interactions between white households and their African American domestic workers against the backdrop of these homes, illuminating the power struggles and injustices prevalent at the time. The backdrop of these houses draws attention to the sharp contrast between the affluent white families' lifestyles and the difficulties that the black maids who work for them endure. A significant amount of the narrative is set in white families' houses, where African American

servants perform domestic duties. The segregated socioeconomic structure of the South is reflected in these houses, where black maids are required to work for white households but frequently get inferior treatment.

1.3.2 African American Community:

African Americans in 1960s Jackson, Mississippi are depicted in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* as a close-knit society united by a common history of prejudice and injustice. The book explores the lives of African American maids who serve white families, illuminating the difficulties they face, their tenacity, and the complicated dynamics in their interactions with their employers. Stockett depicts the struggles black people endure in a severely segregated society while also emphasizing their resilience, dignity, and feeling of companionship via characters like Aibileen and Minny. The African American community in Jackson, especially the neighbourhoods where maids reside and mingle, is also explored in the book. These environments shed light on the black characters' lives, hardships, and courage in the face of racial prejudice.

1.3.3 Skeeter's home:

Skeeter's house stands in stark contrast to Jackson, Mississippi's classic white dwellings in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. Skeeter is shown as a young, white lady who, in an effort to use writing to relay the tales of African American maids, defies racial conventions in her community. Her house is a representation of her progressive, rebellious spirit and her wish to reject the expectations of her affluent, white neighbourhood. The power of empathy and solidarity across discrimination based on race is highlighted by the fact that Skeeter's home, in contrast to the other homes in the book, transforms into a safe place where the maids can share their experiences and truths without fear of reprisal. Another significant location in the book is Skeeter Phelan's family house. This is the point at which Skeeter starts to question the racial inequalities she sees in her town and wrestles with her own privilege. The maids gathered at Skeeter's house to exchange tales and provide first hand accounts.

1.3.4 The Local Newspaper:

The local newspaper in Jackson, Mississippi, has a big influence on public opinion and feeds into racial prejudices in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. The journal frequently upholds prejudices against African Americans and reflects the general sentiments of the white population. One of the main characters, Skeeter, wants to be a journalist and eventually writes a book that gives voice to the African American maids' stories and confronts the newspaper's skewed views. The way the local newspaper is portrayed highlights how important it is for alternative voices to challenge these narratives and how ubiquitous the media is in perpetuating systemic racism. Skeeter works in an additional location where she is exposed to the reality of racial inequality and discrimination—the local newspaper office. She has a platform to question the status structure and promote change because to her position at the newspaper.

1.3.5 Other locations:

Characters from various social origins meet and navigate their relationships within the strict social order of the time at many Jackson communities in the novel, including the church, the country club, and the beauty salon. In addition to the houses and the neighbourhood newspaper, a number of additional locations in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* add to the intricate fabric of the narrative, such as:

Jackson, Mississippi: The novel's setting, Jackson, represents the racial tensions and social mores of the era while providing a backdrop for the individuals' interconnected lives.

Aibileen's residence: An African American maid named Aibileen serves a white family in Jackson. Her house sheds light on the everyday hardships and resiliency of the African American community.

Minny's house: Minny is an African American maid who also resides in Jackson and deals with personal issues such as violence from her husband. Her house is a symbol of the African American community's strength as well as its struggles.

The Junior League: The white women of Jackson's high society congregate at Junior League meetings and activities. These events provide insight into the social dynamics and expectations that women face in the neighbourhood.

Skeeter's university: When Skeeter goes to a university outside of Jackson, she starts to have doubts about the racial standards she was raised with. Her desire to question the current order and give voice to the oppressed is shaped by her experiences at university.

These places, along with others, add to the novel's finely detailed depiction of Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s and the nuanced relationships between gender, race, and class. The setting of *The Help* offers, all things considered, a rich background for delving into topics of gender, ethnicity, and social upheaval in 1960s America. It highlights the intricacies of interpersonal relationships in the face of structural oppression and acts as a miniature representation of the greater social and political forces of the time.

1.4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS:

Generally, a character study of Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* would concentrate on the three primary characters: Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan, Minny Jackson, and Aibileen Clark. Below is a brief evaluation of every character:

1.4.1 Aibileen Clark: Aibileen Clark is an African American domestic worker employed by the Leefolt household. She is presented as smart, strong, and sympathetic. Despite the prejudices based on race surrounding her, Aibileen acts as a surrogate mother to Mae Mobley Leefolt, whom she loves and cares for. Aibileen battles the inequalities she encounters as a black woman in Mississippi in the 1960s throughout the entire book, but she finds strength in her faith and in her relationships with other maids. Here is a character analysis of Aibileen Clark:

Compassionate: Aibileen is a compassionate person who frequently acts as a surrogate mother figure for the kids she looks after. Her maternal personality is demonstrated by her true love for Mae Mobley, the kid under her care.

Brave: Even though Aibileen lives in a racially segregated world where speaking up could have serious repercussions, she musters the bravery to collaborate with Skeeter on the book project and share her experiences as a maid.

Determined: Aibileen is committed to improving her own life as well as the lives of those around her. She aggressively looks for methods to confront the injustices she observes around her, even if doing so puts her safety in jeopardy.

Resilient: Aibileen has persevered in the face of discrimination and adversity. She perseveres in the face of adversity, finding support in her relationships with others and her beliefs.

Viewpoint: Aibileen has a deep awareness of human nature, especially as it relates to the dynamics of power and race in the South. Her views shed important light on the nuances of racism and oppression.

Empowered: Aibileen travels on a path of self-awareness and empowerment throughout the book. In a society that attempts to minimize her, she expresses her agency and humanity by telling her tale and by not going back.

All things considered, Aibileen Clark proves to be a complex person who personifies bravery, empathy, and fortitude in the face of difficulty. Her storyline in *The Help* emphasizes the value of compassion, unity, and the ability of individual voices to affect social change.

1.4.2 Minny Jackson: Another African American maid employed in Jackson, Minny Jackson is renowned for her penetrating tongue and violent disposition. Minny fights for herself and others, refusing to be quiet in the face of abuse and discrimination. In the book, her friendship with Aibileen offers both consolation and comedic relief. Stereotypes about black women are debunked by Minny's personality, which also emphasizes the determination and courage of people who are socially outcasts. Another important character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Minny Jackson. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, she is an African-American maid with a strong will who works for several white families in Jackson, Mississippi. Here is a study of Minny's character:

Feisty and Assertive: Minny has a reputation for being a fearless and talkative individual. She doesn't think twice about voicing her opinions, even if it means going against the racial standards of the day or facing her bosses.

Resilient: Minny has persevered in the face of many obstacles and misfortunes, such as racial prejudice and spousal abuse. Adversity does not defeat her, and she frequently comes up with inventive ways to defend herself and those she loves.

Resourceful and skilled: Minny takes great pride in her ability to cook and is a very excellent chef. Her ability in the kitchen eventually becomes a source of empowerment and independence for her, as she utilizes it to fight the status order and secure her own livelihood.

Loyal Friend: Minny has a strong sense of loyalty to her friends, especially Skeeter and Aibileen. She sticks by them no matter what, providing encouragement, counsel, and support as they fight against racial injustice and unfairness.

Complexity and Depth: Despite her strong demeanour, Minny occasionally displays signs of weakness and insecurity, particularly in relation to her violent spouse and her anxiety over losing her work. Her character gains depth and readers are able to relate to her better because of her complexity.

Growth and Transformation: Minny experiences substantial growth and transformation throughout the book. She finds the courage to stand up for herself and follow her goals while also learning how to negotiate the complicated intersections of gender, race, and class in the Deep South.

In *The Help*, Minny Jackson shows herself to be a vibrant and complex character who embodies bravery, defiance, and tenacity in the face of institutionalized tyranny. In the fight for equality, her story arc emphasizes the value of self-empowerment, unity, and the pursuit of justice.

1.4.3 Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan: With ambitions to become a writer, Skeeter is a young, wealthy white woman. She is portrayed as being perceptive, self-reliant, and advanced in thinking, challenging the social inequities and racial standards in her neighbourhood. Skeeter causes a stir when she decides to publish a book about the lives of black maids in Jackson, which causes her to lose favour with her friends and family. Skeeter travels on a road of self-awareness and development throughout the book as she wrestles with her privilege and develops empathy for the plight of others. One of the main characters in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan. In Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960s, she is a young, white

woman living during the Civil Rights Movement. Here is a Skeeter character analysis:

Empathetic and Compassionate: Skeeter is described as having empathy and compassion, particularly for the African-American maids in her community who work for white households. She tries to change things because she finds the racial inequalities she sees to be extremely upsetting.

Courageous and Determined: Skeeter exhibits incredible bravery and determination in the face of the social mores and expectations of her era. By taking on a dangerous endeavour to gather the testimonies of the black maids and reveal the injustices they experience, she puts her reputation and safety at danger.

Curious and Inquisitive: Skeeter is inquisitive and curious about the lives of the maids, which prompts her to consider the racial dynamics and power structures in her neighbourhood. Even in uncomfortable or risky situations, her curiosity pushes her to question the status order and look for the truth.

Independent and Progressive: Unlike many of her Jacksonian peers, Skeeter has an independent spirit and progressive views. She chooses to follow her passion for writing and social justice above the conventional roles that are expected of women in her social circle.

Growth and Transformation: Skeeter experiences tremendous growth and change during the course of the book. She changes from a youthful, innocent, and somewhat sheltered person to a fearless campaigner who will stop at nothing to pursue justice and equality.

Solidarity and Allyship: Skeeter's bonds with Aibileen and Minny demonstrate her dedication to solidarity and allyship with underrepresented groups. She acknowledges her privilege as a white woman and makes use of her position to give voice to the marginalized and downtrodden.

All things considered, Skeeter Phelan proves to be a fascinating and multifaceted character in *The Help*, exhibiting bravery, sensitivity, and a dedication to societal transformation. Her storyline emphasizes the value of action, allyship, and the strength of personal initiative in the fight for racial equality. Aibileen's employer, Elizabeth Leefolt, is portrayed as naive and insecure. Other noteworthy

characters in the novel include Celia Foote, a white woman from the wrong side of town who forges an unlikely friendship with Minny, and Hilly Holbrook, a white socialite who represents the racist attitudes and social conservatism of the era.

All things considered, *The Help* features complicated, finely created characters that each reflect a distinct aspect of the intricate socioeconomic terrain of Mississippi in the 1960s. Their connections and interactions move the story along while illuminating concerns of gender, racism, and class in American culture.

1.5 PROTAGONIST OF THE NOVEL:

Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan is the main character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. The main character, Skeeter, is a young, white lady from Jackson, Mississippi, whose viewpoint dominates most of the story. She is portrayed as being perceptive, self-reliant, and advanced in thinking, challenging the social inequities and racial standards in her neighbourhood.

Skeeter's path of self-awareness and development is revealed throughout the book as she wrestles with her privilege and develops empathy for the plight of others, especially the African American maids who serve white homes similar to her own. Much of the plot is set in motion by Skeeter's intention to publish a book about the lives of these maids, which causes controversy and puts her at odds with her friends and family.

Skeeter, the main character, moves the story along by her deeds, interpersonal connections, and growth. Her viewpoint sheds light on the complicated relationships between gender, racism, and class in Mississippi in the 1960s, and her pursuit of justice and the truth acts as an underlying theme for the whole book. Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan is one the central Protagonists in Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*. She is shown as a young, white lady from Jackson, Mississippi, who questions societal conventions and racial inequities prevalent in the 1960s South and violates expectations placed upon her by her community.

Skeeter is a smart, compassionate person with a strong sense of justice. She rejects the racist beliefs and prejudices of her childhood, in contrast to many of her contemporaries, and instead develops real relationships with African American servants like Aibileen and Minny. Skeeter is driven to elevate these women's voices

and share their tales in order to highlight the evils of prejudice and segregation because she is sympathetic and interested in the experiences of these ladies.

Skeeter resists being silenced and sticks to her beliefs in the face of pressure to live up to social norms. By pursuing a profession in journalism and speaking up for social change, even at tremendous personal danger, she defies the expectations of her social circle. Others are motivated to challenge the current system and join Skeeter in the struggle for justice and equality by her bravery and perseverance.

Skeeter goes through a process of self-awareness and development in the book as she wrestles with her privilege and comes to terms with her own prejudices. Her encounters with Aibileen, Minny, and other African American maids cause her assumptions to be questioned and her perspective to be expanded; as a result, she eventually develops a strong love for racial equality.

In the face of pervasive prejudice and injustice, Skeeter's persona also represents development and hope. She hopes to raise awareness of the structural inequities that exist in her culture and motivate others to take action by writing a book about the experiences of the maids. Her resolve to stand up to authority and change things is a wonderful example of how individual activism and group opposition may change the world.

In conclusion, Skeeter Phelan is a multifaceted and fascinating character in *The Help*, personifying the bravery, empathy, and tenacity of people who dare to question the status order and struggle for a society that is more just and equal. She encourages readers to confront injustice, stand up for what is right, and work toward a future where everyone is treated with decency and respect, regardless of race or background, via her path of self-discovery and advocacy.

1.6 ANTAGONIST OF THE NOVEL:

The main opponent in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* might be regarded as Hilly Holbrook. As a white socialite and Skeeter's childhood friend, Hilly is described as representing the racist sentiments and social rigidity of the time. Hilly is a character that represents oppression and intolerance throughout the book, upholding rigid social norms and the racial hierarchy. One of the main antagonists in Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help* is Hilly Holbrook. She is portrayed as a white woman in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s who is affluent, entitled, and incredibly bigoted.

The bigotry, entitlement, and hypocrisy that characterized that era's Southern society are starkly illustrated by Hilly.

Hilly is distinguished by her steadfast dedication to maintaining the existing order of segregation and white supremacy, as well as her ardent adherence to racist ideals. She is the Junior League's ringleader and the impetus behind programs like the Home Help Sanitation Initiative, which requires black domestic workers in white homes to have separate bathrooms. Hilly's actions demonstrate her steadfast commitment to upholding social and racial inequalities at any costs as well as her belief in the innate inferiority of African Americans.

In addition to being racist, Hilly is also shown to be vengeful, cunning, and self-serving. She regards African American servants like Aibileen and Minny as inferior and disposable, so she utilizes her social standing and influence to control them. In an attempt to establish her supremacy and keep control over these women, Hilly treats them with violence, intimidation, and exploitation.

Hilly may seem respectable and appropriate on the outside, but she is a fundamentally broken and ethically bankrupt person. In order to safeguard her own interests and hold onto her privileged status in society, she is prepared to compromise the welfare and dignity of others. Her attitude of Yule May, her own maid, whom she dehumanizes and degrades for her personal advantage, demonstrates her hypocrisy.

Hilly acts as a counterbalance to Skeeter and other characters in the book who defy social rules and speak out against injustice. Hilly's oppositional role emphasizes how ubiquitous racism and discrimination were in Mississippi in the 1960s while also highlighting the bravery and tenacity of individuals who dared to challenge the established order and fight for justice and equality.

In summary, Hilly Holbrook is a multifaceted and interesting character in *The Help*, personifying the prejudice, conceit, and duplicity of Southern society in the age of the Civil Rights Movement. She is a potent symbol of the moral flaws and structural inequalities that infused the social fabric of the era through her ideas and acts.

1.6.1 Hilly plays an antagonistic role in multiple ways:

Racism: Hilly aggressively promotes the segregation and oppression of African Americans in Jackson, Mississippi, and holds firmly held racist sentiments. She utilizes her power to enforce racial discrimination in many facets of daily life and is an outspoken supporter of Jim Crow laws.

Manipulation: Hilly controls and manipulates people in her immediate vicinity, such as her family, friends, and Junior League members. She isolates Skeeter and the servants as well as anyone else who disagrees with her or questions the established order by using her social standing and power.

Cruelty: Hilly has a heartless disdain for the dignity and well-being of others, especially African American maids employed by white houses. She enforces cruel and humiliating regulations, such the "Home Help Sanitation Initiative," which mandates that black housekeepers use distinct restrooms.

Opposition to Change: Hilly stands for the opposition to both the status order and societal advancement. She fiercely opposes Skeeter's attempts to write a book about the lives of black maids because she believes it will upend the current power structure and put her own privileged status in society in jeopardy.

Ultimately, Hilly Holbrook plays the main antagonist in *The Help*, representing the societal inequalities and institutionalized racism of Mississippi in the 1960s. A significant portion of the tension in the book is driven by her adversarial behaviour and views, which also emphasize how commonplace racial discrimination was at the time.

1.7 REMAINING CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL:

Along from the previously mentioned main characters (Aibileen, Minny, Skeeter, and Hilly), Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* has a wide ensemble of supporting characters who all add to the story's complexity and variety. Here are a few well-known characters:

1.7.1 Elizabeth Leefolt: Mae Mobley's mother and Aibileen's employer. Elizabeth is shown as being gullible and vulnerable to her friend Hilly's influence. She finds it difficult to bond with her daughter and is largely dependent on Aibileen to watch her. One of the white characters in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Elizabeth Leefolt. Aibileen Clark looks after her as Mae Mobley Leefolt's young mother. This is an

examination of Elizabeth Leefolt's character. Neglectful Mother: Elizabeth is shown as being uncaring and uninterested in Mae Mobley, her daughter. When she fails to show Mae Mobley attention and emotional support, she leaves her maid Aibileen to comfort Mae Mobley.

Socially Aspirational: Elizabeth is concerned with upholding her standing in Jackson's white society and keeping up her appearance. She frequently puts her own social obligations and reputation before of her daughter's demands or her domestic duties.

Conforming to Social Expectations: Elizabeth embraces the segregationist sentiments that are common among Jackson's white population, adhering to the racial and gender conventions of her period and neighbourhood. She doesn't criticize the racial hierarchy or raise concerns about the abuse of African-American maids.

Insecure: Despite giving off the impression of confidence, Elizabeth is shown to be insecure and susceptible to the influence of others, especially her close friend Hilly Holbrook. She gives in to peer pressure and takes on Hilly's bigoted beliefs and actions.

Limited Agency: In the very patriarchal and racially stratified Mississippi of the 1960s, white women were granted very little agency and autonomy. Elizabeth's character draws attention to this. She lacks the understanding or bravery to question the status order because she is bound by social expectations.

Character Development: Elizabeth's character doesn't change much throughout the book. After the story's events, she essentially doesn't change; she still puts her social standing first and complies with societal norms.

All things considered, Elizabeth Leefolt represents the acquiescence and complacency of a large number of white individuals in the upholding of racial injustice and inequality during the Civil Rights period. Her persona serves as a reminder of the importance of reflection, compassion, and responsibility in the fight against systematic racism and prejudice.

1.7.2 Celia Foote: Celia Foote is a wealthy white woman married to socially awkward and alienated Johnny Foote. Celia befriends Minny in an unexpected way;

she ends up being her maid and confidante. Jackson's white society's social conventions are challenged by Celia's charitable giving and outsider status. The complicated character of Celia Foote in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* She is a young working-class woman who struggles with social situations and marries affluent businessman Johnny Foote. This is an examination of Celia Foote's character:

Outsider: Because of her lowly upbringing and lack of social graces, Celia is portrayed as an outsider in Jackson's upper society. Because she is an outsider in the community, she is the subject of rumours and rejection from other women.

Vulnerable and Naive: Celia is portrayed as being both ignorant and weak, particularly when it comes to negotiating the social mores and customs of Jackson's affluent circles. She frequently violates the unwritten standards of decorum because she is ignorant of the racial tensions and dynamics in the neighbourhood.

Kind and Compassionate: Despite her social failings, Celia has a natural kindness and sympathy, especially for the African-American maids. She treats Minny and Aibileen with care and respect, building sincere ties with them.

Isolated and Lonely: Celia's inability to blend in with the other women in town and her difficulties becoming pregnant are the main causes of her isolation and loneliness. She turns to the maids for friendship and company since she is lonely and they accept and understand her.

Progressive and Open-Minded: Celia exhibits a more progressive and tolerant view of racial issues than many of her contemporaries. Regardless of colour or origin, she is more interested in real personal connections than she is in social standing.

Character Development: Celia experiences a great deal of personal development and change throughout the book. In the end, she finds strength in her own identity and principles as she learns to stand up for herself and resist the harsh criticism and judgment of others.

In *The Help*, Celia Foote challenges the inflexible social hierarchies and racial biases of Jackson's privileged circles, ultimately emerging as a likable and multifaceted figure. Her storyline emphasizes the value of empathy, sincerity, and the ability of real human connections to break down boundaries related to race and class.

1.7.3 Mae Mobley Leefolt: Aibileen's caregiver and Elizabeth's young daughter. Mae Mobley has a strong relationship with Aibileen, who acts as a surrogate mother figure and gives her the affection and care she doesn't get at home. One important character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Mae Mobley Leefolt. She is Elizabeth Leefolt's young daughter, whom Aibileen Clark looks after. This is an examination of Mae Mobley's character:

Neglected Child: Elizabeth Leefolt, Mae Mobley's mother, is shown to have given her little love and attention, making her a neglected child. She consequently develops a strong relationship with Aibileen, her African-American maid, who acts as a mother figure in her absence.

Desire for Love and Acceptance: Mae Mobley is in need of love and acceptance as a result of her mother's abuse. She finds consolation and comfort in Aibileen's loving care and attention, as she is treated with warmth and affection.

Innocent and Unaware: Mae Mobley is shown as being naive and oblivious to the racial tensions and biases that exist in her environment. She views Aibileen and other African-American maids as dependable and caring people in her life and develops sincere relationships with them.

Victim of Prejudice and Discrimination: Mae Mobley is subjected to racial prejudice and discrimination in her surroundings, even at an early age. Her perception of the world is shaped by her observations of Aibileen and other African-American servants being mistreated.

Symbol of Hope: Mae Mobley's persona offers hope that a subsequent generation would be able to transcend the racial injustices and divisions of the past. Her naivety and openness serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of empathy, understanding, and compassion in creating a more just society.

Impact on Other Characters: Mae Mobley's presence in the book has an impact on Aibileen and Skeeter's intentions and actions. Her relationship with Aibileen encourages the latter to take part in the book project, and Skeeter's developing consciousness of racial injustice is influenced by her experiences.

Mae Mobley Leefolt, who emphasizes the nuances of race, identity, and motherhood in the segregated South, comes out as an important and emotional figure in *The*

Help. Her storyline emphasizes how crucial love, understanding, and compassion are to combating structural injustice and creating a society that is more inclusive.

1.7.4 Charlotte Phelan: Skeeter's mother, Charlotte Phelan, is a conventional Southern woman who follows the social and racial norms of her era. Skeeter and Charlotte don't get along because Charlotte finds it difficult to comprehend her daughter's progressive goals and worldview. One prominent figure in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Charlotte Phelan. She has a big part in the book and is Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan's mother. This is an examination of Charlotte Phelan's character:

Traditional Southern Woman: Charlotte conforms to social norms of propriety, decorum, and femininity, making her the epitome of the traditional Southern woman. In Jackson's white community, appearances and social status are important to her.

Conventional Views: Charlotte's views on race and class are traditional, reflecting the beliefs of white Mississippians in the 1960s. Reflecting the pervasive bigotry of the times, she defends the racial hierarchy and does not inquire about the exploitation of African-American maids.

Concerned Mother: Charlotte shows her daughter Skeeter that she cares for her, even if she conforms to social conventions. Though with some doubts, she supports Skeeter in adhering to their social circle's expectations since she cares about her future.

Limited Agency: In the patriarchal Deep South, women—especially white women—had very little autonomy or agency. Charlotte's character serves as an example of this. Her decisions and actions are influenced by social norms and gender roles, which limit her.

Complexity and Contradictions: Charlotte has periods of complexity and contradiction, even if she comes across as a conventional and conformist figure at first. She seems to be hiding more complex feelings within, as evidenced by her private misgivings and worries about the racial inequities in her community.

Character Development: As Charlotte struggles with her daughter's increasing independence and Jackson's shifting social climate throughout the book, she

experiences some character development. She starts to doubt her own assumptions and biases as a result of her interactions with Skeeter and the servants.

All things considered, Charlotte Phelan shows herself to be a character that embodies the conflicts and paradoxes of her period and location. In addition to highlighting the complexity of race, gender, and identity in the segregated South, her narrative arc also emphasizes the value of empathy, reflection, and personal development in the fight against institutional oppression.

1.7.5 Stuart Whitworth: A young man from a prosperous white Jackson family and Skeeter's love interest. Skeeter's quest for independence and social progress is at contrast with Stuart's traditional values and expectations of his family. An important character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Stuart Whitworth. He is Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan's love interest and has influenced her experiences and viewpoints. This is an examination of Stuart Whitworth's character:

Socially Privileged: Stuart is a Jackson, Mississippi native who hails from a well-to-do, well-known white family. Because of his heritage, he has access to possibilities and benefits that many others, especially African Americans, do not.

Traditional Southern Gentleman: Stuart conforms to the social mores and expectations of his era and community at first, embodying the cliché of the traditional Southern gentleman. He maintains the status order in terms of race and class and is a conservative in these regards.

Romantic Interest: The heroine of the book, Skeeter Phelan, has a romantic interest in Stuart. In Jackson's upper-class society, their relationship is first portrayed as a standard courting between a young White couple.

Conflict and Awakening: As the story goes on, Stuart is drawn into the conflicts arising from Skeeter's participation in the maids' book project. His character is developing as a result of his mixed emotions and increasing knowledge of racial injustice.

Symbol of Change: During the Civil Rights era, Stuart's changing viewpoint on race and society represents the larger cultural shifts occurring in Jackson. His personal difficulties are a reflection of how some white people are becoming more conscious of racial inequity and have changed their attitudes accordingly.

Skeeter's trip: Stuart's persona also acts as a precursor to Skeeter's own activist and self-discovery trip. His early resistance to confronting the evils of the established order is reminiscent of Skeeter's inner turmoil and final choice to defy her community's racial conventions.

All things considered, Stuart Whitworth is a nuanced character in *The Help*, illustrating the conflicts and inconsistencies between white privilege and social norms in Mississippi in the 1960s. In the framework of the Civil Rights struggle, his character journey highlights the complexity of identity, morality, and societal transformation.

1.7.6 Constantine Bates: Skeeter's adored childhood maid who acted as a mentor and a stand-in mother figure. Skeeter is haunted by Constantine's sudden disappearance from the Phelan household, which also affects how she views race and identity. Though she is not present throughout the events of the book, Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* features a major character named Constantine Bates. She is the adored African-American maid who worked for the Phelan household for many years and reared the protagonist, Skeeter Phelan. This is a study of Constantine Bates's character:

Mother Figure: Throughout Skeeter's early years, Constantine acted as a mother figure for her, giving her affection, support, and direction. She has a significant influence on Skeeter's identity, morals, and beliefs.

Wise and supportive: Skeeter and other characters receive essential counsel and insight from Constantine, who is shown to be both wise and understanding. She has an in-depth knowledge of both the complexities of race and identity amid the South's segregation.

Voice of Reason: In the book, Constantine challenges the white characters' racial injustices and prejudices by acting as a voice of morality and reason. Skeeter is motivated to challenge the established order and pursue justice for those who are disadvantaged by her honesty and inner courage.

Victim of Discrimination: Because of her colour, Constantine experiences maltreatment and discrimination despite her love and wisdom. Her experiences

serve as a fuel for Skeeter's activism and underscore the structural inequities that African Americans in Jackson must contend with.

Legacy of Love: Skeeter's recollections and deeds carry on Constantine's legacy. She has an impact on Skeeter's choice to publish the book project and give African-American maids like Constantine a voice.

Resilience symbol: Constantine's personality symbolizes bravery in the face of difficulty. She continues to show compassion and support to everyone around her and holds fast to her principles in the face of obstacles and injustices.

All things considered, Constantine Bates is a pivotal and significant figure in *The Help*, standing in for the bravery, intelligence, and resiliency of African-American women against racial injustice. Her character acts as a catalyst for Skeeter's activist and self-discovery journey, emphasizing the strength of love, empathy, and unity in the pursuit of justice.

1.7.7 Yule May: Aibileen's friend and fellow maid who was caught up in a ring theft scandal with Hilly. The desperate measures taken by Yule May serve as a reminder of the financial struggles and extreme measures African Americans in Jackson must do in order to survive. An important character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* is Yule May. She is a maid for the Hilly Holbrook family and is African-American. This is an examination of Yule May's character:

Hardworking and Dedicated: Yule May is shown as a maid who is proud of her work and is both productive and dedicated. Even though she has experienced exploitation and discrimination, she is devoted to her work and supporting her family.

Ambitious: Yule May is presented as resourceful and aspirational. She is willing to take chances in order to pursue prospects for progress and better her family's situation.

Victim of Injustice: Yule May suffers injustice when Hilly Holbrook falsely accuses her of stealing. Her unjust dismissal serves as a stark reminder of the institutionalized racism and power abuse that permeate Jackson's white community.

Courageous: Yule May shows bravery by defending her rights and refusing to put up with the unfair treatment she gets in spite of the dangers. She acts bravely and defiantly, even in the face of possible repercussions, to pursue justice for herself.

Symbol of Resistance: Yule May's disobedience represents a movement against the period's repressive racial hierarchy. Her deeds encourage other maids to stand up for their rights and oppose the current order.

Humanized Representation: Yule May's portrayal brings African-American maids in Jackson to life, shedding light on their hardships and showcasing their tenacity in the face of misfortune.

In *The Help*, Yule May is portrayed as a multifaceted and captivating character who embodies strength, resiliency, and a will to fight for justice in a society plagued by injustice and inequity. Her storyline emphasizes how crucial it is to fight for equality with agency, solidarity, and the pursuit of dignity.

1.7.8 Ainsley Hayes: Junior League member and buddy of Hilly. Although maintaining to conform to the racial stereotypes of her social circle, Ainsley is portrayed as being more kind and accepting than Hilly. There is no character named Ainsley Hayes in Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*. There appears to be some misunderstanding. The television character Ainsley Hayes appears in "The West Wind."

These characters help to explore issues including gender, race, class, and social change in Mississippi in the 1960s, together with other characters in the book. Their interactions and connections give the story depth and complexity while highlighting the difficulties of living in the South's segregated society.

1.8 CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM:

In contemporary feminism, activism, diversity, and intersectionality have been prominent themes. The term "intersectionality," which was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how social categories like race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are interconnected and can overlap to produce distinct experiences of advantage and discrimination. In order to build a more inclusive movement, modern feminists understand how important it is to address these intersecting identities.

Furthermore, social media platforms have witnessed a rise in online activity and campaigning, giving feminists the ability to mobilize and amplify their voices globally. Conversations on sexual harassment, assault, and gender inequality have been

generated by hashtags like #MeToo and #TimesUp, which have raised awareness and prompted calls for reform.

The increased focus on reproductive rights, which includes access to abortion, contraception, and maternity healthcare, is another trend. International feminist movements are still fighting for bodily autonomy and reproductive justice, especially in the face of laws and policies that restrict it.

In addition, there has been a focus on dispelling gender norms and stereotypes and advocating for gender equality in all spheres of society, including as work, school, and leadership roles.

When everything is considered, modern feminism is distinguished by its dedication to inclusivity, diversity, and aggressive opposition to oppressive structures.

1.9 BLACK FEMINIST MOVEMENT:

The two movements that centred coloured women were the Women's Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. The discrimination against them was based on their colour.

The Civil Rights Movement's coloured men and the feminist movement's white women were targeted for sexual harassment. Consequently, Black American women band together to form The Black Feminist Movement, an organization that focused on their unique needs. Black women's primary goals were to become independent, resist sexism and racism, and achieve equality with males and all other members of society, regardless of gender or skin colour. African American women had to overcome sexism and racism, which meant that society had to change to meet these women's evolving needs. The idea that women may now pursue careers was one that males had to accept and swallow (Larbor, 1997).

1.10 WOMEN'S RIGHT MOVEMENT:

The second wave of the Women's Right movement, which played a significant role in American history, ran from 1960 until 1980. During this time,

American women sought to be granted the same rights as men in several domains, such as the workforce and education. Due to the accomplishments of their predecessors, who brought about and gained women's suffrage and full citizenship

through the first wave of feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those courageous women were able to demand such social equality. Various feminist organizations and groups were established during the 33rd wave of feminism. The Nation Organization for Women (NOW) is one of the primary examples of such organization (Mireille, 2009).

When NOW was founded in 1966, its main goal was to enable women to fully participate in American society and to exercise their unique rights, advantages, and obligations on a par with men (Britanica, 2014).

The *Feminine Mystique*, written by Betty Friedan, is credited with sparking the feminist movement in the 1960s, making her the symbol of the era (Friedan Betty, 1963).

Numerous significant milestones in the history of the women's rights movement include the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title 2 of the Civil Rights Act of 1994, which outlawed discrimination based on a person's race or gender in the workplace. Title 3 of the Education Amendment of 1972 and the Equal Rights Amendment of 1970 forbid gender discrimination in federally sponsored education (Lorbor, 1997).

The Women's Rights Movement offered women the opportunity to achieve sexual equality as well.

In fact, the Food and Drug Administration officially approved the oral contraceptive pill in 1960, allowing women to have sexual freedom and equality with men by separating sex from pregnancy. In addition, the Supreme Court's 1973 legalization of the right to an abortion was a significant stride forward for women in the sexual revolution (Ibid.).

The Women's Right Movement brought about significant transformation in American society.

Due to their success in achieving the social reform and equality they had long sought, women were heavily involved in the workforce, particularly in politics and education. Women were also becoming more independent and aspirational, and they gradually began to leave the security of the house and biological circle.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Depending on the particular subject of the study, different research approaches may be employed to assess Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. Nonetheless, the following are some typical research techniques that academics may use:

Literary analysis: To examine the text's themes, characters, narrative structure, and language use, researchers could study it closely. This method looks at literary tropes like imagery, irony, and symbolism to find deeper meanings in the book.

Historical Research: Because *The Help* is set in a historical setting, researchers can use historical research techniques to put the events, social dynamics, and cultural norms it depicts in context. This might include searching through academic publications, historical documents, and original materials about the civil rights movement and America in the 1960s.

Qualitative Research: To learn about readers' opinions, interpretations, and responses to the book, qualitative research techniques including focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires may be employed. Scholars could investigate the ways in which individuals from various backgrounds interact with the book and its topics.

Content Analysis: This deliberate reading of the text to find recurrent themes, motifs, and patterns is called content analysis. To classify and examine particular elements of the book, like character interactions, language, and plot developments, researchers can employ coding techniques.

Feminist Theory: Scholars utilizing feminist approaches can apply feminist theory to examine gender roles, power dynamics, and portrayals of femininity and masculinity in *The Help*. Using a feminist perspective, this method involves evaluating the book and determining how it either upholds or subverts conventional gender norms.

Intersectional Analysis: Using the theoretical framework of intersectional theory, scholars can analyse *The Help* in terms of how race, class, gender, and other social characteristics interact to shape the identities and experiences of the characters. This method looks for ways that privilege and injustice are extensively portrayed in the story.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Radwan *et al.* (2010) "Exploring Aversive Racism in Stockett's *The Help*." This study explores the idea of "aversive racism" as proposed by Gaertner and Dovidio in relation to Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. The story of Skeeter, a white child living in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s, and two black mammy ladies, Aibileen and Minny. Each of the three women tells her story in turn. Although the three points of view appear to be distinct from one another, they are combined in the production of a book called *The Help* that explores the realities of black maids working for white employers. The contrasting attitudes of the white family toward their black domestic assistance are the main subject of this research. Skeeter, who has a conflicted relationship with her mothers, alternates between upholding egalitarian principles and trying to shake off her racial sentiments. She mirrors Stockett's subliminal negative emotions, which promote a binary image of African Americans as inferior sub-humans and white Americans as sophisticated and deserving of social benefits.

Jordan *et al.* (2011) "Black Women as 'Domestic Workers' in Academia: Or on How We Became *the Help*." *The Help*, a 2009 fictitious book by Kathryn Stockett, brings a long-standing problem among Black women—who can speak for the Black woman—to present times. This book, which is set in the South, narrates how Black women were utilized in the contemporary Women's Movement and how their voices were utilized to help the White protagonist become free. This book can also be understood as a narrative about the interaction between academic feminist studies and critical Black feminists. In the same way that *The Help* saved this White woman from the customs of Southern middle-class life, critical Black feminist theory—more especially, intersectionality—has saved some mainstream feminist studies. I investigate how Black women are handled as research subjects and how their knowledge production is utilized in the advancement of research using articles from mainstream political science journals. According to the investigation, mainstream gender experts are using Black women's voices in a way that is strikingly similar to how Black women were utilized in the made-up story.

Maurilla *et al.* (2015) "Racial Discrimination in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*". *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett is a narrative book about the lives of two African-American maids, Aibileen and Minny, who worked as domestic servants in the South during the 1960s and were subjected to discriminatory treatment by their white employers. This study attempts to address two questions: 1). What constitutes racial discrimination against black maids? 2). What impact does racial discrimination have on black maids' lives? The sociological technique is thought to be the most appropriate one to use since the author examines how white masters treated black maids discriminatorily in light of the actual socioeconomic conditions in Southern United States throughout the 1960s. Furthermore, the discrimination actions are analyzed using Fred L. Pincus's theory regarding the type of discrimination. The study's findings demonstrate that there are two sorts of discrimination shown in the book: institutional and individual discrimination. These discriminatory practices are a reflection of the social climate in the South throughout the 1960s. Black maids' lives are impacted by racial prejudice in that they experience insecurity and mistrust towards white people.

Nazara *et al.* (2019) "An Analysis of Racial Discriminations as Seen in Kathryn Stockett's Novel *The Help*." The issue with this approach is that white people who think they are superior to black people still discriminate against black people based on their race. The treatment of black employees by white employers serves as an example of this in the book *The Help*. The purpose of this analysis is to examine the discriminatory acts, causes, and consequences of racial prejudice in the book *The Help*. Descriptive research is used as the data collection strategy in this investigation. Regarding the data analysis methodology, the writers employed qualitative techniques when comprehending the story. When gathering primary data, data collection techniques employ qualitative methods such as note-taking. By analysing data, the author applies structuralism method techniques in data analysis techniques.

Mahbub *et al.* (2020a) "Anti-Black Racism in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*: A Critical Discourse Analysis." The purpose of this study is to examine how Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help* presents anti-Black racism from an intellectual

perspective. Teun Van Dijk's theory of Critical Discourse Analysis with a Social Cognition approach, which was borrowed from the book Eriyanto (2001), served as the basis for this study. Discourse is analyzed using three dimensions by Van Dijk's social cognitive approach: the text dimension, the social cognitive dimension, and the social context dimension. The research analysis's findings demonstrate how Kathryn Stockett, the author of *The Help*, created her anti-racist and anti-abolitionist ideology through the use of text, social cognition, and social context factors.

Deroues *et al.* (2020b) "The Racial Discrimination against African American Women as Depicted in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* The case study of Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*." This thesis investigates Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* issue of racial prejudice against African American women in the 1960s. The study highlights the prejudice and discrimination that black women experienced at the hands of both black males and white housewives. This study will illustrate the African American struggle for equal rights by tracing back the most significant moments in their history. Feminism, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminism are the three methods that are employed. According to the data, white employers severely discriminated against black women in the early 1960s in a variety of ways to maintain their authority over them.

Nanlohy *et al.* (2021a) "The Acts Of Racial Discrimination To The Blacks As Seen In Stockett's *The Help*." The purpose of this research is to identify the instances of racial discrimination in *The Help* that white individuals committed against black people. The qualitative method was employed in this study when it came to word choice and text. Primary and secondary sources provide the data used in this research project. The internet articles and books that are relevant to this inquiry serve as the second source. The study's outcome is given in a descriptive manner. The investigation's findings revealed that *The Help* contains numerous instances of racial discrimination. It is seen in a few different sections. First, there is the Jim Crow Law of the Southern United States, which is a discriminatory law. The second issue is the discriminatory stereotypes that white people had about black people, including the notions that they are filthy, thieves, ill, and stupid. The final category is Discrimination in Public Services, which includes voting, public transportation, libraries, residential areas, schools, and health care.

Asrida *et al.* (2021b) "AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE SKIN IN NOVEL *THE HELP* WRITTEN BY KATHRYN STOCKETT."

The research's problem statements were: 1) How does Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help* reflect the author's social context? ; 2) How does the novel *The Help* reflect the social life that occurred in society? ; and 3) How does the novel *The Help* serve a social purpose? The sociology of literature approach was employed in the research to use the descriptive qualitative method. Note-taking and reading strategies were utilized in the data collection process. The findings indicated that a few conflicts occurred in the novel *The Help*: 1) The author's context clarified how white people in Mississippi discriminated against black maids. Numerous forms of discrimination against black maids exist; one quotation from the book claims that white people believe black people to be infected. One of the losers was black, and he developed depression as a result of the extremely cruel behaviour displayed by the white people; 2) the social life reflected in society described the situation in Jackson, Mississippi, where black maids were subjected to unjust treatment and discomfort in their social lives; and 3) the social function described the role of the government. The government has failed in this instance because it subtly supports the White population. In Mississippi, there was no black government since black participation in politics was not necessary.

Nasir *et al.* (2021c) "White Saviour Complex and (Mis) Portrayal of Blacks in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*." The employment of the white saviour cliché in American fiction is criticized in this article. The article examines Kathryn Stockett's 2009 first novel *The Help* and makes the case that the text's black female characters'. Their portrayal as devoted mothers and housemaids who rely on the white female protagonist to exercise her freedom and free herself subverts her claims of power and agency. By using Skeeter, a white female character, as the main narrator, Stockett reinforces the binary between Blacks and Whites rather than weakening it. Therefore, Stockett's attempt to criticize the imperialist aspects of white civilization ultimately amounts to a restatement of the idea that white people are the only ones who can deliver Black people from a life of servitude. The essay challenges the usage of the white saviour as a subversive cliché in a larger sense since it does not

significantly address the systemic, institutional, and ideological racism that largely favours whites over Blacks.

Andriani *et al.* (2023) "THE BRAVERY ACT OF MINNY JACKSON AND AIBILEEN CLARK IN *THE HELP* NOVEL BY KATHRYN STOCKETT." This study attempts to explain the plot, characters, and characterizations in *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, as well as the setting. It then goes on to discuss the bravery displayed by Minny Jackson and Aibileen Clark. This study employs a feminist perspective in qualitative descriptive research. The following are the study's findings. (1) The subject of slavery. The two protagonists of the African American race. Each has a unique personality. Background in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s, roughly between 1962 and 1963. (2) Bravery displayed by Minny Jackson and Aibileen Clark in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*.

Ali *et al.* (2024) "THE NOTION OF DISPARITIES IN RACE IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S *THE HELP*." This research explores the story of black women's hopelessness and journey back to life as it is told in Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*. The narrative highlights the misery of capable African American women in the workforce who are rejected by both white people and black males. It illustrates how black women are routinely perceived as less intelligent. Black individuals are more offensively regarded by society, regardless of their gender. Black women's lives are far more complicated than any other white woman's or black man's, like Hilly's or Leroy's. It is concerning that black women like Aibileen and Minny are in this circumstance. Both white people and black males oppress them. It is established that black women are the subject of abuse, exploitation, hatred, and neglect due to their gender and ethnicity. Because of this, this study draws attention to the double marginalization that black women in Stockett's book face by highlighting the feminist spectacle.

CHAPTER 3

ALOGROTHMS USED IN THE NOVEL

Racial inequality and discrimination were commonplace in 1960s Southern society, as Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* beautifully portrays. The African American characters in the book—Aibileen and Minny, in particular—who serve as maids for white families in Jackson, Mississippi, provide a lens through which to examine these themes. The following are some significant instances of racial inequality and prejudice that are shown in the book:

3.1 SEGREGATION:

Based on race, the story depicts the segregation of public areas, educational institutions, and other establishments in shocking detail. Aibileen and Minny, two African American maids, are restricted to the "coloured" areas of the town and are not allowed to use the restrooms or water fountains used by white residents. The novel *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett explores the complexities of racial discrimination and segregation in Mississippi in the 1960s. The novel delves into the intricate relationships of race, class, and power in the Jim Crow South while examining the lives of African American maids employed by white families against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement.

Three main characters are featured in the book: Aibileen, an African American maid who has raised white children her entire life; Minny, a vocal friend and fellow maid; and Skeeter, a young white woman who wants to be a writer and chooses to tell the maids' stories from their own points of view.

Since segregation controls every element of Jackson, Mississippi life, it is a major theme throughout the book. African American maids are forced into domestic service and endure racism, exploitation, and dehumanization while working in the homes of white people. They face prejudice, few possibilities for growth, and ongoing fear of violence and reprisals should they voice their concerns about injustice.

The impact of segregation on social dynamics and interpersonal interactions is also examined in the book. Despite the fact that White people depend on their African

American maids to take care of their kids and keep their homes clean, they frequently treat them cruelly, condescendingly, and disrespectfully. In turn, the maids have to strike a delicate balance between upholding their employers' rights and maintaining their own sense of self-determination.

Skeeter exposes the inequities of segregation and defies the current order by choosing to publish a book about the experiences of the maids. Interviewing Aibileen, Minny, and other maids, she learns of their struggles, resiliency, and resistance; in doing so, she illuminates the reality of Jim Crow society and gives voice to people who have been silenced and disenfranchised.

The Help shows how deeply segregation affects people and communities while also showcasing the bravery and resiliency of those who dared to question the existing order and fight for equality. The book presents a striking picture of the human cost of racism and the transforming power of empathy and solidarity through its rich characters and gripping story.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION:

White employers frequently treat African American maids harshly and verbally attack them, and they frequently receive low pay for their job. They put in a lot of effort and are committed, yet they are not given the same possibilities for growth and are viewed as less valuable than white people. Employment discrimination is a major issue in Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, which depicts the racial injustices and disparities that existed in Mississippi in the 1960s. The book examines the prejudice and exploitation African American maids experience at work, underlining the widespread racism and segregation that characterized the era.

African American maids like Aibileen and Minny are shown as hardworking, talented employees who are essential to the upkeep and care of white people's homes throughout the whole book. They put in a lot of effort and are loyal, but they still face discrimination and little prospects for growth.

There are various ways in which *The Help* exhibits employment prejudice. For doing the same task, African American maids frequently receive less money than their white counterparts. Additionally, they are not allowed to have access to fundamental rights and benefits including job stability, health insurance, and paid sick leave.

In addition, African American maids work in unfriendly situations where their bosses threaten them with violence and verbally harass them. They are afraid to speak out against abuse or to advocate for better working conditions for fear of losing their jobs or being retaliated against.

The book also emphasizes the intersectionality of discrimination, since African American women experience gender discrimination in the workplace in addition to racial prejudice. They are denied respect, recognition, and chances to grow in their careers while being forced to complete difficult and frequently humiliating jobs.

By revealing the structural inequalities and exploitation that the maids face, Skeeter's choice to write a book about their experiences puts employment discrimination in the spotlight. Skeeter sheds light on the realities of job discrimination in 1960s Mississippi through her interviews with Aibileen, Minny, and other maids. Through her conversations, Skeeter discovers stories of prejudice, exploitation, and resistance.

In general, *The Help* offers a compelling depiction of how job discrimination affects people and communities, emphasizing the necessity of racial justice and societal transformation. The book pushes readers to face the history of prejudice and injustice in the workplace and to work for a more just and inclusive society where everyone is respected and treated with dignity, regardless of colour or origin.

3.3 Social Hierarchy: The book emphasizes how African Americans are subordinate to white people in the tight social hierarchy of 1960s Southern society. Characters like Hilly Holbrook uphold this hierarchy by dictating how white people should behave and interact with black people through unwritten laws and social conventions. Social hierarchy has a big impact on how the characters live and interact in Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*, especially in the racially segregated Mississippi of the 1960s. In order to establish a strict hierarchy that governs power dynamics and interpersonal connections within the community, the novel examines how social rank, race, and class interact.

White families are at the top of the social hierarchy, controlling African American maids and other oppressed groups as well as having economic and political power. White families are shown as the ruling class, deserving to benefits and privileges

because of their social standing and race. They enjoy the labour and servitude of African American maids, reside in posh areas, and go to exclusive social events.

African American maids are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, employed as domestic helpers in white families' houses, where they put in long hours for meagre pay. Despite facing prejudice, exploitation, and dehumanization, they also hold some degree of power in their communities because they look after, confide in, and impart wisdom to the children of their employers.

There is a social hierarchy within the African American society that is determined by elements including socioeconomic status, level of education, and skin colour. African Americans with lighter skin tones, like Aibileen, Skeeter's maid, frequently have access to greater possibilities and privileges than those with darker skin tones. Greater social status within the society may also be enjoyed by those with more education or stable finances.

Through the relationships between characters from various racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, *The Help* exposes the complexity of social hierarchy. Aibileen, Minny, and other African American maids become unlikely friends with Skeeter, a white woman from a wealthy family, who challenges the racist and segregationist rules that control their community.

Skeeter's attempt to publish a book about the maids' lives is how the story highlights the inequities and injustices of Mississippi's 1960s social hierarchy. It highlights the tenacity and defiance of individuals who dare to defy social conventions while also shedding attention on the ways in which privilege and power are used to uphold the status order and continue systemic injustice.

All things considered, *The Help* offers a sophisticated examination of social hierarchy and its effects on people and communities, inspiring readers to consider the nuances of race, class, and power in American culture and to work for a more just and equitable future. Since segregated, African American children are unable to receive a high-quality education.

3.4 LIMITED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Because black schools have inadequate funding and segregated, African American children are unable to receive a high-quality education. The novel examines how

African American communities' life chances are restricted and poverty cycles are sustained by a lack of educational options. Limited educational possibilities are a recurring issue in Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*, which mirrors the structural hurdles to education and racial disparities in Mississippi in the 1960s. The book examines how racial, financial, and social norms frequently dictate access to education, hence sustaining poverty cycles and fostering racial segregation and discrimination.

Aibileen and Minny, two African American characters in the book, are portrayed as having few educational options because of the segregated schools and the dearth of resources and assistance available to black pupils. Black pupils are denied access to high-quality education and equitable opportunities for both academic and personal development because African American schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and segregated from white schools.

African American children have limited educational prospects, which are made worse by cultural norms and expectations that favour white students and uphold racial hierarchies. African American youngsters are frequently directed into household chores or low-paying employment rather than being encouraged to pursue higher education or aspirational professional options.

The impact of few educational chances on specific characters and their goals for the future is also explored in the book. For instance, Aibileen had aspirations of becoming a writer but is compelled to give up because of her inadequate education and lack of career progression chances. Similar to this, Minny fights against the constraints and barriers set by her children's segregated and unfair educational system in order to provide them a brighter future.

Through her contacts with Aibileen and Minny, Skeeter—a white lady from a privileged background—learns about the differences in educational possibilities between white and black youngsters. She is motivated to write a book about the experiences of African American maids in order to challenge the current order and promote social change after being inspired by their tales.

The story highlights the unfairness of limited educational options and the effects of systematic racism on people and communities through Skeeter's efforts. It acknowledges the obstacles and difficulties that underprivileged groups encounter

in obtaining high-quality education while simultaneously highlighting the significance of education as a vehicle for social mobility and empowerment.

All things considered, *The Help* offers a compelling depiction of the effects of restricted educational options as well as the tenacity of those who work to get over institutional obstacles and follow their aspirations. It serves as a reminder of the transforming power of education in fostering a fairer and equitable society and draws attention to the ongoing fight for educational justice and equity.

3.5 VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION:

White nationalists and the Ku Klux Klan provide a continual threat of violence and intimidation to African Americans. The novel's characters constantly dread reprisals for speaking out against racial injustice or questioning the established system. Violence and intimidation have a tendency themes in Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, which depicts the brutal reality of racial segregation and discrimination in Mississippi in the 1960s. The book examines how racial hierarchies and power dynamics are upheld in a community by using intimidation and violence as instruments of oppression.

Physical violence is one type of violence that is portrayed in the book and is frequently employed by white employers as a means of controlling and imposing their will over African American maids. Threats, intimidation, and even physical assault are used by characters such as Hilly Holbrook and her husband to quell opposition and preserve their privileged status in society. With no legal recourse or protection, African American maids like Minny and Aibileen endure verbal and physical harassment in their jobs.

Psychological violence, which includes pressure, manipulation, and intimidation, is another type of violence depicted in the book. African American maids are forced to submit to unjust and exploitative working conditions by white employers using their positions of power to intimidate and compel them into silence. The maids are also threatened with reprisal or job loss. Personas such as Hilly employ social exclusion and rumours to uphold racial segregation and penalize individuals who dared to question the established order.

In the larger community, where African American characters encounter harassment and threats of violence from white racists and segregationists, violence and

intimidation also transcend the workplace. The Ku Klux Klan is shown as a formidable and dangerous force that employs terror strategies to terrify African Americans and uphold white supremacy in the South.

The book explores Mississippi in the 1960s' pervasive culture of violence and intimidation via the experiences of characters like Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny. It draws attention to the anguish and anxiety that African American communities endure because they are always at risk of violence and discrimination, as well as the fortitude and bravery of individuals who have the audacity to stand up to injustice and oppose it.

In general, *The Help* effectively illustrates the detrimental effects of violence and intimidation on people and communities while drawing attention to the continuous fight for social justice and racial equality. It acts as a reminder of the human cost of prejudice and persecution as well as the significance of speaking out against injustice despite fear and hardship.

3.6 SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE:

The Help also looks at how racial injustice and discrimination are systemically embedded in institutions and reinforced by societal norms. Skeeter and other like characters take on the inequalities of the system and try to bring it down, but they encounter opposition and hostility from those who stand to gain from what is currently in place. Systematic injustice is a major issue in Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, which highlights the widespread prejudice and inequity that African Americans in Mississippi in the 1960s experienced. The book examines the ways in which institutionalized racism, unequal access to resources, and social norms that support racial hierarchies and tolerate oppression are manifestations of systematic injustice.

Institutionalized racism is a particular kind of systemic injustice that the book portrays; it permeates every facet of society, including the judicial system, the educational system, the workplace, and housing. African Americans face discriminatory laws and practices, systematic denial of equal rights and opportunities, and marginalization within their communities. For instance, African Americans' rights and liberties are restricted by Jim Crow laws that impose racial

segregation, and the criminal justice system disproportionately targets and imprisons Black people.

In the novel, unequal access to resources is another example of structural injustice. Because of discriminatory policies and practices, African American communities are deprived of access to high-quality healthcare, education, and employment prospects. White families can afford better schools and resources, whereas Black families' children attend overcrowded and underfunded schools. Aibileen and Minny, two African American maids, are caught in low-wage, exploitative employment with no opportunity for promotion, which feeds the cycle of poverty and economic injustice.

Because racial prejudice and white supremacy are so embedded in Mississippi culture in the 1960s, social norms and attitudes also play a part in the systemic injustice in the book. While African American characters are disadvantaged and silenced by cultural expectations and conventions, White characters, such as Hilly Holbrook, use their social rank and influence to impose segregation and maintain dominance over African Americans. Many characters are afraid to challenge the current order or speak out against injustice for fear of social rejection and reprisal.

Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter's experiences, among others, reveal the subtle nature of systematic injustice and its effects on both people and communities. It draws attention to the tenacity and fortitude of people who dare to defy social standards in the name of equality and fairness.

Overall, *The Help* effectively captures the structural inequities that African Americans endured in Mississippi in the 1960s and draws attention to the continuous fight for social justice and racial equality. It acts as a reminder that in order to build a more just and equitable society for all, structural racism and oppression must be faced and destroyed. Ultimately, *The Help* illuminates the lives of African Americans who were marginalized and mistreated by the dominant social order, exposing the brutal truths of racial discrimination and inequality in 1960s America. With its compelling storyline and characters, the book pushes readers to acknowledge racism's legacy and work toward a society that is more just and equal.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on explaining what American literature truly means by realism and how it contributes to Kathryn Stockett's success in her debut book, *The Help*. We embrace the theories of Marx and Weberian; these two thinkers aid the planned investigation in understanding the true nature of a racial social conflict.

Additionally, feminist theory has been used to explain women's concepts and goals because the novel's characters are all female. The story highlights the racial differences among the female characters, their experiences in life, and their desire to end inequality and be respected by men, regardless of their gender or colour of skin. Furthermore, we want to discuss the Black and Women's Rights Movements at the start of the 1960s, which will round up the theoretical chapter. Multiple frameworks of theory could be used in a theoretical analysis of Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* to examine the novel's themes, characters, and social setting. The following theoretical stances are some examples that could be used:

4.1 FEMINIST THEORY:

Gender roles, power relations, and how women are portrayed in literature and society are all examined by feminist theory. Scholars could examine the ways in which *The Help* depicts female characters, their interpersonal dynamics, and their attempts to exercise agency and empowerment in a divided by race and patriarchal society. This analysis could look at how the book either subverts or upholds traditional assumptions about gender and domesticity. This theory looks at gender stereotypes, power relationships, and how women are portrayed in literature and culture. Scholars could examine the ways in which *The Help* depicts female characters, their relationships with one another, and their attempts to exercise agency and empowerment in a racially segregated and patriarchal society. This analysis could look at how the book either challenges or supports conventional ideas about gender and domesticity. In order to understand and deal with the social, political, and economic injustices that women face, feminist theory incorporates a wide range of viewpoints and methodologies. It looks at the ways that people's experiences and possibilities within society are shaped by the intersections of

gender with other types of identification, including socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, racial background, and ability.

4.1.1 Gender Equality:

Gender equality is a term that describes how people of all genders should be treated equally and have similar rights and opportunities. It entails making certain that everyone, irrespective of gender identity, has equal access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes in all spheres of life, such as politics, the workplace, social interactions, and education. In order to achieve gender equality, systems of oppression and discrimination, including patriarchy, must be challenged and overthrown. Policies and practices that recognize and value the diversity of gender identities and experiences must also be promoted. Critique of patriarchy: Feminist philosophy criticizes patriarchal systems of dominance and power that give preference to men and subjugate women. It looks at how patriarchy affects laws, cultural practices, and social norms at the individual and institutional levels. Feminism aims to destroy systems of gender-based oppression by opposing patriarchal beliefs and behaviours.

Gender Socialization: Gender roles and stereotypes are created and reinforced by cultural practices, media representations, and socialization processes. Feminist theory examines these processes. Feminism encourages more flexibility and liberty for people to express themselves and follow their interests regardless of gender by bringing attention to the drawbacks and restrictions of inflexible gender standards.

Advocacy for Law and Policy: Advocacy for Law and Policy reforms that address discrimination and violence against women, as well as to advance gender equality, is informed by feminist philosophy. This could entail promoting equal pay, healthcare access, reproductive rights, and legal safeguards against harassment and violence motivated by gender.

Empowerment and Representation: Women's perspectives, experiences, and contributions should be given more weight in all spheres of society, including politics, the media, the arts, and academia, according to feminist philosophy. Feminism dispels prejudices and preconceptions by advocating for gender diversity and representation. It also gives girls and women role models and chances to succeed and take the lead.

Intersectional Solidarity: In order to confront intersecting forms of oppression, feminist philosophy promotes coalition building and solidarity between varied populations. Feminism encourages group action and systemic change advocacy by understanding the connections between the fights for economic, racial, environmental, and gender justice.

Feminist theory, taken as a whole, offers a thorough framework for comprehending and resolving the underlying causes of gender inequality as well as tactics for encouraging social change and creating a more just and equitable society for people of all genders.

4.1.2 Intersectionality:

Feminist theory places a strong emphasis on the intersections between gender and other social identities, including ability, sexual orientation, racism, and class. Feminism emphasizes the distinct experiences and difficulties experienced by people with overlapping identities and promotes inclusive approaches to resolving injustice by acknowledging the interdependent nature of oppressions. Within feminist theory and critical race theory, the concept of intersectionality highlights how social identities and oppressive organizations are interconnected. Intersectionality, a term first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, describes the manner in which individuals experience multiple, intersecting types of privilege and discrimination because of their diverse social identities, which include race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and nationality.

4.1.2.1 Important aspects of intersectionality:

Complexity of Identity: Intersectionality acknowledges that people have a variety of social identities that interact and intersect to influence their chances and experiences in society. Because of the combined influences of race and gender, a black woman may feel prejudice differently from a white woman or a black male.

Interlocking Systems of Oppression: The study of intersectionality looks at how oppressive systems, like ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and racism, interact and reinforce one another to create intricate and overlapping forms of privilege and disadvantage. People with intersecting identities endure

marginalization in different ways as a result of these intersecting systems of oppression.

Marginalization and Invisibility: Intersectionality draws attention to the ways that prevailing discourses and social systems marginalize or obscure particular groups of individuals. For example, in mainstream feminism or anti-racist campaigns that give priority to the concerns of more privileged groups, the experiences of marginalized groups may be disregarded or overlooked.

Intersectional Analysis: Intersectionality encourages scholars, activists, and decision-makers to take an intersecting stance when comprehending and resolving social challenges. This is known as intersectional analysis. This entails looking at the ways in which many axes of identity interact to influence how people perceive privilege and oppression as well as taking into account the larger structural and systemic elements that lead to inequality.

Social Justice and Liberation: By acknowledging the connections between the equality movements in many communities, intersectionality offers a framework for advancing social justice and liberation. Intersectionality provides valuable insights into attempts to confront oppressive structures and advance collective liberation for all by elevating the experiences and viewpoints of marginalized groups and promoting solidarity and coalition building.

All things considered, intersectionality is a potent analytical tool for comprehending the complexity of social identities and inequalities as well as directing initiatives to build more just, democratic, and inclusive societies.

4.1.3 Social Justice:

In order to build a more just and inclusive society, feminist philosophy focuses on resolving injustice and encouraging social transformation. This could entail promoting modifications to legislation, opposing unfair practices, and increasing public awareness of problems impacting women and underrepresented groups. According to feminist thought, social justice is the pursuit of justice and equality in society, especially with reference to matters of gender. It entails tackling the structural injustices, prejudice, and subjugation that affect people according to their gender identity and expression. In order to confront and destroy oppressive

systems, defend the rights and autonomy of marginalized groups, and build inclusive and equitable societies where everyone can prosper regardless of gender, feminist perspectives on social justice highlight the necessity for drastic change. This could entail encouraging community activism, spreading awareness, encouraging changes to regulations, and promoting education.

4.2 CRITICAL RACE THEORY(CRT):

The focus of critical race theory is on the relationships between privilege, power, and race. Using this approach, academics could analyse how *The Help* portrays racial hierarchy, prejudice, and resistance in Mississippi in the 1960s. The ways that race influences characters' identities, encounters, and interactions as well as the processes of racial oppression and solidarity that are depicted in the book may all be covered in this analysis. Interdisciplinary approach known as critical race theory (CRT) looks at the ways in which politics, law, culture, and society interact with race to maintain oppressive and unequal structures. CRT has its roots in legal studies and arose in the latter half of the 20th century as researchers attempted to comprehend and deal with the persistent effects of racism and racial injustice in the US and other countries. Among the fundamental ideas and concepts of critical race theory are:

Similar to feminist theory, intersectionality in critical race theory highlights how race intersects with other social identities, including gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability. It acknowledges that people's experiences of privilege and oppression are complicated and depend on how their various identities connect.

Structural Inequality: Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines how racism is ingrained in institutions, social structures, and laws, resulting in persistent inequalities in fields like criminal justice, housing, work, healthcare, and education. It draws attention to how racial injustice is systematic in nature and how it benefits some groups while marginalizing others.

Interest Convergence: Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines the theory that progress toward racial justice frequently happens when the interests of underprivileged groups coincide with those of privileged or powerful organizations. This idea helps to explain why racial progress may be sluggish or incomplete, since

dominant groups could only be willing to support change when it is advantageous to them.

Counter storytelling: CRT amplifies the voices and experiences of oppressed populations by using narrative and storytelling as a means of empowerment and resistance. By providing alternate viewpoints that put the lived reality of people of colour front and centre, counter storytelling subverts the prevalent narratives surrounding race and racism.

Critical Praxis: In order to question and change oppressive systems, CRT encourages academics and activists to participate in critical praxis, which combines theoretical analysis with hands-on action. This might include coordinating grassroots activities, pushing for social change, and supporting legislative improvements.

In general, critical race theory offers insights on tactics for social justice, liberation, and resistance as well as a framework for comprehending the intricate and persistent nature of racism and racial injustice. Academic study, activism, and advocacy efforts that attempt to advance racial fairness and demolish oppressive structures are still informed by it.

4.3 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL:

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* provides insightful social and cultural commentary on a range of topics related to 1960s Southern society, namely on social class, gender, and race. The following are some of the novel's most important remark points:

4.3.1 Racial Injustice and Discrimination:

Stockett delivers a biting analysis of the institutionalized discrimination and racial injustices that African Americans endured in the Jim Crow South. The book highlights the dehumanizing impacts of violence against black communities, job discrimination, and segregation via the lives of characters like Aibileen and Minny. The story's main themes—racial injustice and discrimination—reflect the hard reality of life in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s. The book does a fantastic job of capturing the pervasive racism and institutionalized prejudice that African Americans experience, especially when they work as maids for white people.

Black American characters like Aibileen and Minny experience marginalization, exploitation, and cruel treatment from their white employers throughout the book. They must complete difficult and frequently thankless work, but purely due to their race, they are denied basic rights, respect, and dignity.

The striking difference in living conditions between white households and their black maids is one of the most flagrant instances of racial injustice in the book. The fact that white houses are characterized by comfort, luxury, and affluence while the maids are forced to live in small, run-down apartments highlights the glaring racial socioeconomic difference.

The book also highlights the widespread racism ingrained in social standards and daily encounters. African American characters experience verbal abuse, micro aggressions, and degrading stereotypes from their white classmates and bosses. They are frequently denied agency and authority in their own lives and considered as invisible, silent, and inferior.

The legal and social obstacles that limit African Americans' abilities to progress and flourish exacerbate the racial discrimination portrayed in *The Help*. Black communities are disenfranchised by laws like voting suppression and segregation, which feeds the cycle of marginalization and injustice.

The African American characters in the book exhibit fortitude, bravery, and unity in their struggle for justice and dignity in the face of widespread racism and discrimination. By means of acts of resistance, small-scale rebellions, and moments of unity, people affirm their humanity and their entitlement to be accorded respect and dignity.

All things considered, *The Help* puts a harsh light on the persistent legacy of racial injustice and discrimination in America, forcing readers to face difficult realities about both the past and the present. In the ongoing fight for social justice and racial equality, the novel emphasizes the value of empathy, understanding, and group action by providing voice to the oppressed and disenfranchised.

4.3.2 White Privilege and Complicity:

The book examines how characters like Hilly Holbrook and the other Junior League members uphold and operate under the system of white privilege. Stockett criticizes

white people's involvement in maintaining racial oppressive systems and emphasizes the moral responsibility to oppose injustice and promote social change. Complicity and white privilege are major themes, which highlights the intricate relationships between power and race in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s. The story looks at how white individuals fight with their own culpability in upholding the status order while also exploring how they profit from and support racial oppressive institutions.

The characters of Skeeter and her social circle, who are part of Jackson's wealthy white elite, serve as a metaphor for white privilege. They benefit from possibilities and benefits that are not available to their African American counterparts, including social prestige, employment, and high-quality education. As Skeeter observes the glaring differences in possibilities and living situations between white families and their black servants, she begins to realize how fortunate she is.

Characters like Hilly Holbrook, who was Skeeter's childhood buddy and an unwavering advocate of segregation and white supremacy, are prime examples of complicity in the continuation of racial injustice. Hilly is a living example of the deeply ingrained biases and discriminating mind set that the white community in Jackson holds dear. She aggressively supports policies and social mores that maintain racial segregation and feeds negative preconceptions and stereotypes about African Americans.

Although not as blatantly racist as Hilly, other white characters in the book contribute to oppressive systems by remaining silent, showing little emotion, or accepting the current order in a passive manner. Without considering the morals or ethics of what they are doing, they profit from the work and enslavement of African American maids.

Skeeter's choice to ignore social standards and give voice to the hardships of black maids is a reflection of her growing awareness of her own role in the upholding of racial injustice. By writing and publishing the tales of Aibileen, Minny, and other maids, Skeeter wrestles with her privilege and the ethical duty to utilize her position to bring about change.

The complexity of racial solidarity and allyship is another topic that *The Help* emphasizes. Skeeter is driven by a desire to make racial injustice right, but in order

to effectively support black voices, she as a white woman must own her own limits and blind spots. The book illustrates how crucial it is to hear minority voices in the fight for social justice and to learn from them.

In general, *The Help* forces readers to face the unsettling facts of white privilege and involvement in the upholding of racial injustice. In order to attain true equality and justice for all, the novel emphasizes the moral necessity of confronting and destroying systems of oppression through its complex portrayal of persons struggling with their positions in a starkly isolated society.

4.3.3 Gender Roles and Expectations:

Stockett questions established gender norms and expectations, especially the restrictions and demands put on women in Southern society during the 1960s. Characters that pursue occupations and challenge the existing status, like Skeeter and Celia Foote, challenge societal conventions, whereas Minny challenges the idea of a submissive feminine stereotype. The lives of the characters especially the women, are greatly influenced by gender roles and expectations as they overcome the social mores and expectations of Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s.

The story depicts a society in which inflexible gender norms govern an individual's behaviour and chances, hence perpetuating conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Men are viewed as the main breadwinners and authority figures, while women are expected to conform to domestic responsibilities as spouses, mothers, and caregivers.

Skeeter, Minny, and Aibileen are three characters that are essential to the examination of gender roles. As African American maids, Aibileen and Minny are forced into servitude in white houses, where their duties are limited to household chores including cooking, cleaning, and child care. Their position as submissive characters in the household is dictated by societal expectations, notwithstanding their knowledge and aptitude.

Skeeter, on the other hand, challenges gender norms by pursuing a profession in writing, which is customarily associated with men in her community. Her rising discontent with the restrictions placed on women in her community is reflected in her desire to question the status quo and declare her independence. Skeeter starts

to doubt gender norms and the expectations placed on women as a result of her friendships with Aibileen and Minny.

In addition, *The Help* delves at the complexity of gender and motherhood, especially as it pertains to Aibileen's role as a surrogate mother figure to the white children she looks after while grieving for her own son. Through her experiences, Aibileen sheds light on the difficulties and sacrifices that women encounter in order to meet society's expectations for mothers, as well as the connections that cut over socioeconomic and ethnic boundaries.

As the maids band together to share their experiences and encourage one another through hardship, the book also addresses the issue of female empowerment and solidarity. They oppose the patriarchal systems that aim to silence and subjugate them by acts of resistance and solidarity, drawing strength from their common humanity and experiences.

All things considered, *The Help* is a subtle examination of gender norms and expectations, emphasizing the manner in which they influence the lives and experiences of its characters. The novel emphasizes the value of questioning society norms and expectations in the quest for equality and self-determination through their challenges and victories.

4.3.4 Class Divide and Economic Inequality:

The book also discusses the disparities in wealth and class that existed in Southern society, notably between African American domestic workers and white families. Stockett draws attention to the undervaluation of black labour and the financial struggles African American communities encounter as a result of the dearth of job and educational options. Class conflict and economic disparity are major themes that permeate Jackson, Mississippi's society in the 1960s. The story effectively illustrates the glaring differences in opportunity, privilege, and money between the African American working class and the white upper class.

The characters of Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter—who come from radically disparate socioeconomic backgrounds—are at the centre of the class gap. Being African American maids, Aibileen and Minny are members of the working class who live in poverty and get small compensation for their job. Their white employers marginalize

and take advantage of them, profiting from their low-cost and frequently unpaid work.

Characters like Skeeter and her social circle, on the other hand, are members of the white upper class and are entitled to riches, privilege, and social standing because of their race and financial level. They attend elite schools, live in luxurious mansions, and have access to opportunities that are not available to their African American peers.

The book highlights the ways in which racial discrimination is reinforced and sustained by economic inequality, as African American characters find it difficult to move up the social ladder because of prejudice and institutional barriers. Because of their reliance on their white employers for financial support, Aibileen and Minny are left exposed to abuse and exploitation and are caught in a vicious circle of poverty.

Furthermore, the differences in access to healthcare, education, and other requirements in *The Help* also mirror the class gap. Aibileen and Minny, two African American protagonists, fight to provide themselves and their family with access to high-quality healthcare and education, which exacerbates the cycles of inequality and poverty.

The Help shows the working class's resilience and camaraderie in the face of hardship, even in the face of the widespread economic inequalities it portrays. Characters like Aibileen and Minny, for example, draw strength from their common experiences and stand by one another during difficult times. They oppose the systems of privilege and power that aim to oppress them by showing solidarity and resistance.

All things considered, *The Help* provides a moving reflection on the ways that race, class, and power interacted in 1960s America, illuminating the lasting effects of economic inequity on both people's lives and communities. The work emphasizes the value of empathy, understanding, and group action in the fight for justice and equality through its detailed portrayal of humans navigating the complexity of social hierarchy.

4.3.5 Resistance and Empowerment:

The Help honours acts of resistance and empowerment among its characters in spite of the repressive social and cultural conventions of the era. The black maids' willingness to share their stories and Skeeter's determination to write a book about their experiences represent the strength of standing up to injustice and speaking truth to power. Themes of empowerment and resistance are highlighting the bravery and resiliency of those who dare to question the established quo and assert their agency in the face of injustice.

The character of Skeeter, a young white lady who dreams of being a writer despite society's expectations, is essential to the concept of resistance. Skeeter is adamant about giving voice to the stories of the black maids in Jackson, even in the face of criticism and isolation from her social group. Her brave act of disobedience against the prevalent standards of racial segregation and discrimination is demonstrated by her determination to write a book exposing the injustices experienced by African American women in white households.

Parallel to this, though in more suppressed forms, African American characters such as Aibileen and Minny exhibit acts of resistance in their day-to-day existence. Through their silent defiance, they challenge the dehumanizing treatment and exploitation they experience as maids, asserting their dignity and humanity in a society that wants to marginalize and silence them. Aibileen's willingness to take part in Skeeter's initiative in spite of the dangers is evidence of her fortitude and her faith in the ability of narrative to bring about change.

The Help also emphasizes the value of cooperation and group efforts in the fight for women's rights. Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny create a friendship that goes beyond social and racial barriers as they join together to support one another and share their tales. By working together, they are able to speak truth to power and draw strength from their common experiences.

The book also shows instances of both individual and group empowerment when characters musters the will to stand up to stereotypes and demand their rights. *The Help* honours the fortitude and agency of people who refuse to let the constraints placed upon them define them, whether it be Skeeter defying the gender norms of

her society, Aibileen speaking out against injustice, or the maids banding together to demand fair treatment.

In the end, *The Help* provides an impactful depiction of empowerment and resistance against injustice, serving as a reminder to readers of the value of bravery, comradery, and tenacity in the fight for justice and equality. The book encourages readers to face injustice and work toward a more just and inclusive society with its gripping story and well rendered characters.

All things considered, *The Help* offers readers a provocative examination of the human condition and the lingering effects of social injustice, as well as a moving commentary on the complexities of race, gender, and class in 1960s Southern society.

4.4 HISTORICAL CONCEPTS:

4.4.1 Jim Crow Laws:

In the Southern United States, racial discrimination and segregation were enforced by state and local statutes known as "Jim Crow laws." These regulations required racial segregation in public places including restaurants, schools, and restrooms. *The Help* depicts how African American maids employed in white homes were subjected to dehumanization and abuse as a result of their race as a punishment of legislation known as Jim Crow. A series of state and local ordinances known as the Jim Crow laws were implemented in the Southern United States during the Reconstruction era subsequent to the Civil War. These laws mostly targeted African Americans while enforcing racial discrimination and segregation. Jim Crow laws, so named because they enforced racial segregation in public places including theatres, restaurants, schools, and public transportation, systemically mistreated African Americans. The laws were named after a mythical black character that appeared in minstrel shows. Additionally, these laws effectively disenfranchised African Americans by limiting their ability to vote through grandfather clauses, literacy requirements, and poll charges.

The "separate but equal" theory, which was established by the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court judgment in 1896 and maintained racial segregation as long as facilities for Blacks were "equal" to those for Whites, served as the foundation for

Jim Crow laws. But in actuality, compared to facilities for White people, those allocated for African Americans were frequently worse, underfunded, and neglected.

These regulations penetrated many facets of life, including marriage, housing, work, and social relations, going beyond public areas. Interracial marriage was outlawed, and housing segregation laws like redlining prevented African Americans from residing in particular neighbourhoods. African Americans had few options for employment; many were compelled to work in low-wage, menial professions with little chance of promotion.

The Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations were responsible for much of the widespread violence and prejudice against African Americans that characterized the Jim Crow era. The use of executions, beatings, and other violent crimes to subdue African American communities served to uphold racial hierarchy and white supremacy.

African Americans opposed and battled against discrimination and segregation despite the harshness of Jim Crow laws. They did this by using a variety of strategies, including as civil disobedience, grassroots organizing, and legal challenges. Jim Crow laws were eventually overturned as a result of the mid-20th century civil rights movement, which produced the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited racial discrimination and segregation and gave African Americans the ability to vote again.

Even though Jim Crow laws are no longer in existence, their legacy lives on in American culture today. Racial disparities in healthcare, education, employment, and criminal justice are just a few of the areas where systematic racism that has persisted for generations is still present. In order to address persistent racial disparities and work toward a more just and equitable society, it is imperative to comprehend the background and effects of Jim Crow laws.

4.4.2 Segregation:

Throughout the book, the American South's widespread system of racial segregation in the 1960s is portrayed. Black and White people were kept apart by law in public areas, educational institutions, on public transit, and in other facets of daily life. *The Help* examines how African Americans were marginalized and racial

injustice was sustained by segregation. In the past, segregation has been defined as the deliberate division of people according to their race, ethnicity, religion, or other social traits. Although there have been many different forms of segregation throughout human history, the term is most frequently linked to the institutionalized racial segregation that took place in the United States during the Jim Crow era, especially in the Southern states. Racial segregation in the United States has its origins in the colonial era, when laws were enacted to limit the liberties and rights of Native Americans and African Americans. However, after the Civil War and the end of slavery, segregation solidified and became law.

African Americans were given equal legal rights and attempts were made to integrate them into society during the Reconstruction era (1865–1877). White nationalists, however, who wished to preserve the antebellum South's social and economic dominance, opposed these initiatives. Jim Crow laws, which imposed racial segregation in almost every sphere of public life, were the result of this opposition.

African Americans were routinely refused entry to public places like theatres, restaurants, schools, and public transit under Jim Crow legislation. In addition, they experienced prejudice in the workplace, housing market, and voting rights. Established by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the doctrine of "separate but equal" sanctioned the idea that facilities for African Americans may be kept apart as long as they were considered "equal" to those for Whites, hence legitimizing racial segregation. In actuality, though, African American facilities were frequently worse and underfunded in comparison to those serving White people.

Segregation was practiced in many ways across the United States and wasn't limited to the Southern states. Due to discriminatory hiring practices and redlining, which prevented African Americans from obtaining housing in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of White residents, African Americans in the North experienced de facto segregation.

Other racial and ethnic groups, like Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, experienced prejudice and exclusion from mainstream culture in addition to African Americans. For instance, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other legislation restricted immigration and denied citizenship rights to Chinese immigrants.

The United States' segregation and discrimination were contested by the civil rights movement in the middle of the 20th century, and as a result, Jim Crow laws were eventually repealed by historic laws including the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These legislations gave African Americans the right to vote again and prohibited racial discrimination and segregation. Even though segregation is no longer permitted by law in the US, its effects are nevertheless felt by society since racial differences still exist in the fields of criminal justice, employment, healthcare, and education. Addressing these persistent disparities and advancing the goal of a more just and equitable society require an understanding of the history of segregation.

4.4.3 Civil Rights Movement:

The novel is set during this period of social and political struggle that sought to abolish prejudice and racial segregation. Events related to the civil rights movement, including as demonstrations, marches, and acts of resistance, have an impact on the characters in *The Help*. Skeeter's choice to write a book about the lives of black maids is indicative of the social change movement and the civil rights movement's increasing strength. African Americans faced discrimination and racial segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement in the US was a crucial social and political movement that worked in order to ensure their legal equality. Taking place around the middle of the 20th century, the movement was distinguished by acts of civil disobedience, legal challenges, and peaceful demonstrations.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, among other constitutional amendments, were drafted during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War in an attempt to provide African Americans equal citizenship rights. This is when the Civil Rights Movement got its start. These victories, however, were short-lived since Southern states passed Jim Crow legislation to impose racial segregation and deny African Americans the right to vote.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a surge in the modern Civil Rights Movement thanks to significant occasions and well-known figures. The Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which overturned the "separate but equal" theory established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), declaring racial segregation in public schools illegal, was one of the most important occasions. The groundwork

was set by this ruling for further challenges to segregation in other spheres of society.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an important figure in the Civil Rights Movement, inspiring millions of people with his nonviolent resistance philosophy and making it synonymous with the movement. Major demonstrations were orchestrated thanks in large part to King's leadership, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–1956), which was sparked by Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, and the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, during which King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, which promoted racial harmony and equality.

Other significant figures and groups also rose to prominence during the Civil Rights Movement, including Rosa Parks, dubbed the "mother of the Movement," the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which coordinated voter registration drives, sit-ins, and freedom rides to protest discrimination and segregation.

White nationalists, segregationists, and law enforcement officers fiercely opposed the movement, which resulted in violent clashes and acts of domestic terrorism like the 1963 bombing of Birmingham, Alabama's 16th Street Baptist Church, which claimed the lives of four young girls.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which forbade racial discrimination in voting procedures and restored voting rights to African Americans, helped the Civil Rights Movement achieve significant victories in spite of obstacles and setbacks.

American culture is still affected by the Civil Rights Movement, which served as an inspiration for other campaigns for equality and social justice. The fight against racial injustice and inequality is still ongoing, despite significant progress being made in ending legal segregation and advancing civil rights. This highlights the Civil Rights Movement's ongoing significance in influencing the nation's collective conscience and aspirations for a more inclusive and equitable society.

4.4.4 White Privilege:

The Help delves into the idea of white privilege, emphasizing the benefits and privileges that white people enjoy in a society that is racially stratified. White privilege is embodied by characters such as Hilly Holbrook, who uses his position of power and social standing to uphold racial hierarchy and preserve the status order. The difficulties of negotiating white privilege in Mississippi in the 1960s are demonstrated by Skeeter's acknowledgement of her own advantages and her attempts to confront racial injustice. The term "white privilege" describes the advantages and benefits that white people enjoy in society just by virtue of their race, especially in situations where non-white people are subjected to systematic discrimination and disadvantage. This idea includes less obvious benefits like the presumption of innocence, representation in the media and in government, and freedom from racial profiling and stereotyping, in addition to more specific advantages like improved access to healthcare, work opportunities, and education.

White privilege has its roots in the historical context of slavery, colonialism, and institutional racism. White people have dominated and held positions of power in numerous civilizations throughout history, utilizing their racial privilege to keep control over institutions, resources, and social hierarchies. Generation after generation of people have continued this legacy of privilege, which has shaped cultural norms, attitudes, and structures in ways that marginalize people of colour and favour white people.

Because of the enduring racial discrimination, Jim Crow segregation, and heritage of slavery, white privilege has been especially prominent in the United States. Racial violence, institutionalized racism, and legal segregation are just a few of the structural obstacles to social and economic growth that African Americans and other oppressed groups have had to overcome for decades. In the meantime, white Americans have gained advantages over other groups in housing, work, education, and other areas, enabling them to amass riches and influence at the expense of others.

White privilege shows up in many facets of daily life, including things like interactions with the police, access to good healthcare, opportunities for education, and representation in the media and in politics. For instance, compared to people of colour, white people are less likely to be stopped, questioned, or physically abused

by police. In a similar vein, white kids are more likely to attend wealthy institutions with highly qualified faculty and cutting-edge learning tools, which gives them a substantial edge in both academic performance and future success.

Encouraging racial equity and justice requires facing and addressing white privilege. It necessitates acknowledging the ways that systematic racism benefits white people and making a concerted effort to topple these unfair structures. This may entail questioning discriminatory attitudes and behaviours both within oneself and throughout society, listening to and elevating the concerns of oppressed communities, and campaigning for legislative changes that address racial imbalances.

Even though talking about white privilege can be difficult or unpleasant for some people, doing so is essential to creating a society that is more equal and inclusive. Individuals and communities can work toward a future where systematic racism no longer stands in the way of social justice and human dignity, and where all people, regardless of colour, have equal opportunities and access to resources by admitting and confronting white privilege.

4.4.5 Economic Inequality:

Another topic covered in the book is the difference in wealth between African American domestic workers and White families. African American maids, such as Aibileen and Minny, are portrayed as having difficult lives due to their inadequate pay and long hours worked, leaving them unable to support their families. *The Help* illustrates the ways in which race and class interacted in the Jim Crow South, as well as the economic exploitation of black labourers. The unequal distribution of wealth, income, and resources within a community or between societies is referred to as economic inequality. Economic inequality has always existed and been a widespread problem, frequently entwined with social, political, and cultural elements.

Agrarian traditions, where the majority of people worked as peasants or workers with limited access to land and resources, are thought to be the origin of one of the oldest examples of economic inequality. In these societies, landownership was concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. Due to the widening income and

power gaps brought about by this difference in land ownership, societal hierarchies and class divisions were maintained.

Significant economic changes were brought about by the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, which gave rise to capitalism and new types of inequality. Some people benefited greatly from industrialization, but others experienced poverty, exploitation, and unfavourable working conditions in factories and mines. As the working class, or proletariat, battled to make ends meet, a wealthy capitalist class known as the bourgeoisie emerged during this time and acquired enormous fortunes through control of means of production.

The 20th century saw the emergence of welfare states and social welfare programs, which used government involvement and income redistribution to combat poverty and economic inequality. Nevertheless, deregulation, globalization, and technical innovation all contributed to the widening of the wealth gap and continued economic inequality.

Recent decades have seen an unparalleled rise in economic inequality, with broad sectors of the population unable to afford basic necessities while a small fraction of extremely wealthy people and corporations accumulate enormous amounts of money and influence. Factors like tax breaks for the wealthy, the weakening of labour laws, job outsourcing, and the financialization of the economy have all contributed to this trend by further consolidating wealth and widening income and wealth gaps.

The effects of economic disparity on people, communities, and societies at large are profound. It breaks down social cohesiveness, erodes confidence in authorities, and prolongs cycles of disadvantage and poverty. It also plays a part in a host of other societal issues, such as high crime rates, unequal access to education, and bad health results.

A diverse strategy is needed to address economic inequality. This strategy should include laws and policies that support labour unions and workers' rights as well as progressive taxation and minimum wage regulations. It should also include investments in healthcare and education as well as policies aimed at creating an equitable distribution of income and opportunity. It also necessitates overcoming

systemic injustices and structural hurdles, such as discrimination based on socioeconomic position, gender, and race, that support economic inequality.

In the end, encouraging economic growth, stability, and prosperity for all members of society depends on lowering economic inequality in addition to being a social justice issue. Societies may create a fairer and sustainable future for future generations by tackling the underlying causes of economic inequality and promoting inclusive economic policy. In order to shed light on the social and political climate of 1960s America as well as the lasting effects of racial injustice, *The Help* generally engages with historical ideas such as segregation, Jim Crow laws, the civil rights struggle, white privilege, and economic disparity.

4.5 STEREOTYPES IN THE NOVEL:

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* examines and dispels a number of stereotypes that were common in 1960s Southern culture, especially those pertaining to socioeconomic status, gender, and race. These are a few of the stereotypes that the novel addresses.

4.5.1 African American stereotypes:

The book challenges the idea that African Americans are less intelligent, obedient, and deserving of less respect than white people. Characters with intelligence, resiliency, and agency such as Minny and Aibileen challenge these preconceptions. But white characters in the book, like Hilly Holbrook, frequently reinforce these prejudices by considering African Americans to be inferior human beings best suited for manual labour. African American stereotypes are deeply rooted cultural beliefs and presumptions about people who identify as African Americans. They are frequently supported by the media, popular culture, and prejudices in society. These negative perceptions can affect how African Americans are viewed, handled, and portrayed in different settings, which can contribute to the continuation of discrimination and inequality.

The idea that African Americans are "lazy" or "unmotivated" is a common stereotype that depicts people as lacking in intelligence, ambition, or work ethic. The institutional obstacles and historical injustices that have impeded African Americans' access to economic possibilities, employment prospects, and education are disregarded by this stereotype. Additionally, it ignores the historical contributions

and accomplishments of African Americans in a variety of disciplines, such as science, literature, and the arts.

The "dangerous" or "criminal" African American stereotype is another prevalent one that depicts people as inherently violent, aggressive, or predisposed to criminal activity. Racist ideals that have been used to defend mass imprisonment, segregation, and slavery are the source of this stereotype. It keeps African Americans disproportionately sentenced in the criminal justice system, and it also keeps police violence and racial profiling alive.

Stereotypes that combine elements of race and gender, such as the "angry black woman" or "sassy" stereotype, depict African American women as being confrontational, boisterous, and aggressive, are frequently applied to them. This stereotype weakens African American women's capacity to stand up for themselves and express their feelings without fear of unjust judgment or labelling while ignoring their varied experiences and personalities.

Furthermore, stereotypes about African Americans' physical characteristics are common; traits like their dark skin, natural hair, and large lips are either fetishized or made fun of. This reinforces Eurocentric beauty standards and marginalizes people who don't fit the mold, which causes prejudice and low self-esteem among African Americans.

It's critical to understand that these stereotypes are skewed impressions built in prejudice, ignorance, and systematic racism rather than being grounded in reality. They hinder African Americans' chances for prosperity, representation, and fair treatment in society by contributing to their dehumanization and marginalization.

The continual promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion through education, discourse, and representation is necessary to confront and demolish preconceived notions about African Americans. It entails raising issues with implicit prejudices, scrutinizing how African Americans are portrayed in the media, and elevating their voices and experiences. Society may advance toward a more just, egalitarian, and inclusive future by dispelling myths and valuing the richness and diversity of African American identities.

4.5.2 Stereotypes of White Women:

The Help dispels the notion that white women in the South are meek, submissive, and delicate. Characters that challenge societal racial standards and make friends with African American women, such as Skeeter and Celia Foote, break these expectations. Skeeter's goal to become a writer and social change activist eliminates the myth that white women are lazy and subservient. Throughout history, dominant ideologies, cultural norms, and societal expectations have produced stereotypes of white women. While these stereotypes have changed over time and are applicable to many cultures and historical periods, they frequently represent and uphold race, class, and gender hierarchies.

The idea of the "damsel in distress," which depicts white women as delicate, submissive, and in need of male care and direction, is a common stereotype. Throughout the Middle Ages, European ideas of femininity gave rise to this caricature, which was then spread through popular culture, literature, and the arts. It limited the agency and autonomy of white women by portraying them as weak and in need of male leadership, therefore perpetuating patriarchal power dynamics.

The Victorian era gave rise to another stereotype known as the "angel of the house," which portrayed white women as morally upright, pure, and totally committed to their roles as mothers and housewives. Literature, religious doctrine, and social conventions all contributed to the promotion of this stereotype, which upheld traditional gender roles and the notion that white women should put their families and homes first.

There have also been stereotypes of white women as "fragile" or "hysterical," especially when it comes to emotional and mental health. This stereotype originated from medical beliefs of the 19th century, which pathologized women's feelings and actions by linking them to biological phenomena like "female hysteria." The marginalization and medicalization of women's experiences, which stifled their voices and disregarded their worries, was justified by this argument.

Historically, white women have been portrayed as "pure" or "innocent" while women of colour have typically been portrayed as exotic, hypersexual, or menacing. White women were portrayed as the pinnacle of femininity and moral goodness in this stereotype, which supported white supremacy and provided justification for racial segregation and discrimination.

White women have more recently been stigmatized as "privileged" or "entitled," especially in conversations about feminism and social justice. This stereotype highlights the linkages of race, gender, and class in determining women's experiences and opportunities while acknowledging the historical advantages and privileges received by white women in comparison to women of colour.

It's critical to understand that, like all stereotypes, those about white women are reductive, oversimplified representations that fall short of capturing the richness, diversity, and individuality of the lives of women. It takes critical thinking, intersectional analysis, and attempts to destroy oppressive structures that uphold racial, gender, and class disparities to confront these preconceived ideas. Through questioning preconceived notions and celebrating the diverse array of women's identities and experiences, society may progress toward a future that is more egalitarian and inclusive for everybody.

4.5.3 Stereotypes about African American Maids:

The Help challenges the idea that African American maids are "mammies" or "Sapphire" stereotypes; instead, they are portrayed as either sassy and outspoken or nurturing and subservient. The novel humanizes these clichés while also portraying the complicated inner lives, aspirations, and challenges of characters like Aibileen and Minny who go beyond their duties as domestic workers. The history of racism, gender inequality, and the legacy of slavery in the United States have all played a significant role in the lengthy and complicated stereotypes surrounding African American maids. Books, movies, and popular culture have all contributed to the continuation of these stereotypes, which have shaped how African American women are perceived as domestic workers and reinforced gender norms and racial hierarchy.

The "mammy" stereotype, which first appeared during the antebellum era and continued through the Jim Crow era and beyond, is one of the most persistent caricatures about African American maids. African American women are portrayed in the mammy stereotype as devoted, selfless, and caring caregivers for white families, frequently at the expense of their own wants and goals. This stereotype reinforced ideas of white superiority and paternalism while serving as justification for the exploitation and dehumanization of black women as workers and caregivers.

The "Jezebel" stereotype, which portrays African American women as hypersexualized and promiscuous, is another prevalent stereotype. This stereotype feeds negative preconceptions about black femininity and morals and has its origins in racist beliefs that defended the sexual exploitation of enslaved women.

In popular culture, the African American maid stereotype has also been characterized as the "sassy" or "mammy like" character, who is frequently portrayed as sharp-witted, outspoken, and fiercely independent. Although this portrayal of African American women may appear more empowering than the conventional mammy stereotype, it nevertheless perpetuates gender and racial stereotypes and restricts the representation of these women to specific, conventional positions.

For African American women employed as domestic workers, these prejudices have had tangible effects that have led to their marginalization, exploitation, and devaluation in the job market. Historically, African American maids have experienced discrimination, received inferior pay, and were not given access to prospects for career growth.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, African American maids have contributed significantly to the development of American culture and society. They have been at the forefront of the struggle for labour rights and civil rights, leading campaigns for equitable pay, improved working conditions, and dignity and respect at work.

In order to dispel misconceptions about African American maids, it is important to recognize the structural and historical injustices that have influenced their lives and to support laws and procedures that advance gender and racial equity. In order to achieve this, it is important to acknowledge the contributions made by African American maids to American culture, to tell their experiences and voices, and to fight toward the creation of a more just and inclusive society in which people of all races and occupations are treated with respect and value.

4.5.4 Stereotypes of Southern life:

By revealing the ugly racism, misogyny, and classism that lurk beneath the surface, the novel challenges stereotypes of the idyllic and romanticized image of Southern life. The worst elements of Southern society are embodied by characters such as Hilly Holbrook, who upholds prejudice and discrimination in the name of custom and

social order. A complex mix of historical events, cultural influences, and regional identity has formed stereotypes about southern society. Preconceptions of the American South as a distinctive and singular region with its own customs, values, and social dynamics are frequently reflected in these clichés.

The concept of the "Old South," which romanticizes the antebellum period as a period of aristocratic elegance, polite manners, and beautiful plantation life, is one common cliché of southern society. The myth of the South as a region of ageless charm and tradition is perpetuated by this stereotype, which is frequently linked to pictures of opulent plantations, southern belles, and polite hospitality.

But the hard reality of slavery, racial oppression, and economic inequality that millions of African Americans and impoverished White people had to endure are hidden by this romanticized picture of the Old South. It ignores the structural injustice, exploitation, and brutality that characterized the antebellum plantation economy.

The idea of the "Southern Belle," which depicts white women in the South as delicate, sophisticated, and committed to the ideals of femininity and domesticity, is another caricature of southern culture. The antebellum era gave rise to this caricature, which was then reinforced by popular culture, literature, and the arts, which in turn reinforced traditional gender norms and expectations for women in the South.

On the other hand, stereotypes about African Americans in the South typically depict them as submissive, obedient, and satisfied with their circumstances. Racial beliefs that rationalized slavery and segregation by depicting African Americans as less than human and deserving of freedom and equality are reflected in this stereotype.

Additionally, stereotypes of Southern civilization have been characterized as "backward" or "un progressive," especially when it comes to matters of racial relations, education, and economic advancement. This caricature stems from historical elements that have contributed to the South's ongoing poverty, inequality, and social unrest, including the legacy of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow segregation.

Although there may be some truth to stereotypes about southern society, they frequently oversimplify and misrepresent the vast diversity and complexity of the history and culture of the area. They have the power to spread damaging myths and false beliefs about the South, fostering unfavourable perceptions and impeding attempts to solve the problems facing the area and advance social progress.

It is necessary to acknowledge the region's complicated past, face its legacy of racism and injustice, and celebrate its rich cultural legacy and contributions to American society in order to challenge preconceptions about southern society. Through adopting a more complex and comprehensive vision of the South, we can make progress toward a time when people of all backgrounds and locations are accepted and valued.

All things considered, *The Help* humanizes its characters, challenges readers to consider the complexity of race, gender, and social status in America's past and present, and critiques and subverts stereotypes common in 1960s Southern society.

4.6 THEMES OF THE NOVEL:

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* delves into numerous themes that recur throughout the book. A few of the main themes are as follows:

4.6.1 Race and Racism:

The widespread racism and racial disparity that defined 1960s Southern society is one of the book's main themes. The prejudice African Americans in Jackson, Mississippi experienced, as well as the structural obstacles that continued to keep them on the margins, are portrayed by Stockett in explicit terms. In Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*, which takes place in 1960s Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement, race and racism are major themes. The complexity of racial interactions and the widespread prejudice that characterized Southern society at the time are both explored in the book.

The book depicts the pervasive racial hierarchies and divisions that existed in Jackson, Mississippi, where African Americans faced systematic discrimination, marginalization, and denial of opportunity and basic rights. Aibileen and Minny, two

African American characters, are maids for white households and deal with racism, exploitation, and dehumanization on a daily basis.

Skeeter, a young, prosperous white woman, is a vehicle through which racial and racist themes are explored throughout the book. Skeeter's choice to publish a book about the maids' experiences defies social conventions and compels her to face her own preconceptions. Skeeter becomes a fervent supporter of racial equality after learning about the structural injustices and inequities that black people in her neighbourhood must contend with through her contacts with Aibileen, Minny, and other African American characters.

The story also looks at how racism appears in societal conventions and day-to-day interactions. Racist ideas and views are embodied by characters such as Hilly Holbrook, who uses his social standing and influence to uphold authority over African Americans and enforce segregation. Jim Crow laws and other segregationist policies, like them, serve to institutionalize racism and sustain disparities in housing, work, and education.

The Help emphasizes the tenacity and defiance of African American characters who confront the difficulties of living under segregation while simultaneously questioning the current order and battling for justice through its depiction of race and prejudice. The book serves as a reminder of the continuous fight for racial equality and the necessity of opposing racism in all of its manifestations in order to build a society that is more just and equal.

4.6.2 Friendship and Solidarity:

The Help focuses into the significance of friendship and solidarity during difficult times. Personalities such as Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter establish profound connections that transcend racial and social barriers, offering mutual support as they overcome life's obstacles. In Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*, which examines the relationships developed between women from various ethnic and social backgrounds in 1960s Mississippi, friendship and solidarity are major themes. The protagonists in the book show how friendship can overcome obstacles and spur group action in the face of injustice, even in the face of racial divisions and social conventions prevalent at the time.

In a society full of discrimination and injustice, the friendships between characters like Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny are shown to be sincere and transforming, offering companionship, support, and strength. Despite their disparate racial backgrounds and socioeconomic standing, these ladies develop close bonds based on empathy, respect, and common experiences.

Skeeter's friendship with Aibileen and Minny is especially noteworthy because it goes against the expectations of racial and social conformity and undermines the norms of their divided society. Through their companionship, Skeeter becomes aware of the systematic injustices and disparities that African American maids in Jackson must contend with, as well as the realities of their lives. As a result, Aibileen and Minny discover in Skeeter a reliable ally and champion who raises their profile and works to effect societal change.

The ladies in *The Help* demonstrate their solidarity by working together to fight for justice and to challenge the current system. Other women in the neighbourhood are motivated to share their experiences and speak out against racism and prejudice by Skeeter's desire to write a book about the maids' experiences. The ladies band together to support one another and strive toward the shared objective of establishing a more just and equitable society in spite of the dangers and challenges they encounter.

In the face of hardship, the novel portrays friendship and solidarity as sources of resiliency and strength. Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny, along with other characters in the book, develop relationships that bear witness to the transforming power of human connection and the possibility of good change when people band together in opposition to injustice.

The Help concludes by highlighting the value of friendship and unity in defying social standards and taking on racism and oppression. The book highlights the ability of empathy, compassion, and group effort to overcome obstacles and arouse hope for a brighter future via the interactions between its characters.

4.6.3 Identity and Self-Discovery:

The book explores these themes, especially as they relate to characters like Skeeter, who struggles with her luxurious background and starts to doubt the racial

conventions of her community. As they face their own internalized ideas and muster the courage to claim their agency and value, Aibileen and Minny likewise go on journeys of self-discovery. In Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, identity and self-discovery are major themes as the characters struggle with their sense of self and work through the complications of gender, race, and class in 1960s Mississippi.

Characters like Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny go on self-discovery journeys throughout the book as they question social norms and confront cultural expectations in their segregated community. Skeeter is a young, affluent white woman who finds it difficult to balance her personal morals and convictions against the prejudiced assumptions and stereotypes that shaped her childhood. Skeeter finds her voice and becomes a champion for social change as a result of her contacts with African American maids like Aibileen and Minny, who make her question the injustices and inequalities that exist in her town.

As African American maids in white homes, Aibileen and Minny similarly struggle with identity and self-worth issues as they manage the intricacies of their social roles. Specifically, Aibileen battles racism and exploitation at work, lamenting the loss of her own son and the emotional toll of raising White children. Sharing her narrative and claiming her humanity and dignity gives Aibileen strength and empowerment, which she derives from her connection with Skeeter and her participation in the writing endeavour.

In contrast, Minny stands out for her determination and resistance in the face of difficulty. Despite experiencing harassment and discrimination at work, Minny finds agency and strength in speaking up against injustice. She also refuses to be intimidated or silenced. Minny gains confidence in herself and learns to recognize her value as a woman and an individual through her encounters with Skeeter and her own acts of rebellion.

Characters in *The Help* come together to support one another and strive toward a common goal of justice and equality, and this helps to weave themes of community and solidarity into the process of self-discovery. The characters work together to overcome obstacles and find strength from their common hardships and experiences. In the end, they find fulfillment and empowerment in accepting who they are and standing up for who they are as human beings.

To sum up, *The Help* delves with issues of identity and self-discovery by following its characters on their travels to confront societal injustices and inequality. The characters gain the ability to accept who they really are, discover their voices, and stand up for themselves in a society that wants to marginalize and repress them as a result of their experiences.

4.6.4 Social Justice and Activism:

Through Skeeter's initiatives that elevate the voices of African American maids and disrupt the current of things, *The Help* delves into the topics of social justice and activism. The book emphasizes how crucial it is to stand up against injustice and seek real change even in the face of risk and hostility. In Kathryn Stockett's book *The Help*, social justice and activism are major themes as the characters struggle with the unfairness of prejudice and segregation in Mississippi in the 1960s and attempt to build a more just and equal society.

Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny are just a few of the characters that take part in acts of activism throughout the book to question the way things are and promote social change. Skeeter, a young, affluent white lady, writes a book about the experiences of African American maids like Aibileen and Minny, using her advantages to elevate their voices. Skeeter is adamant about exposing the wrongs of prejudice and segregation and giving voice to the voiceless and disadvantaged, even in the face of opposition and criticism from her family, friends, and classmates.

As African American maids employed by white houses, Aibileen and Minny also participate in activism in different ways. While Minny refuses to be intimidated or silenced by her employers and asserts her agency by acts of rebellion and resistance, Aibileen finds empowerment in telling her narrative and claiming her humanity through her involvement in Skeeter's writing project.

The story focuses at the significance of group efforts and unity in the pursuit of social equity. The characters in *The Help* unite to support one another and strive toward a shared objective of justice and equality via their interactions and friendships. The book highlights the ability of group action to bring about social change, whether it is through Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny working together on the writing project or the Jackson maids banding together to protest the injustices in their community.

The Help not only emphasizes the value of individual actions of activism but also the alliance and unity that are essential in the struggle for social justice. Personalities such as Skeeter, who utilize their advantages and clout to champion underprivileged groups, offer illustrations of the revolutionary capacity of allyship in confronting institutionalized subjugation and establishing a fairer and more comprehensive community.

In general, *The Help* offers a compelling depiction of social justice and activism within the framework of Mississippi in the 1960s, emphasizing the bravery and tenacity of those who dare to question the status norm and struggle for a more just and equal future. The novel challenges readers to consider their own roles in the fight for social justice and to take action to bring about positive change in their communities by exploring themes like solidarity, allyship, and collective action.

4.7 SYMBOLS IN THE NOVEL:

Several symbols in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* have deeper connotations and support the themes explored in the book. Here are a few remarkable symbols:

4.7.1 The Help:

The phrase *The Help* alludes to the racial and socioeconomic stratification of Mississippi culture in the 1960s, where African American maids were frequently referred to by their employment title alone. This demeaning label captures the idea that black women were inferior to their white employers and should be treated as such. The book examines their situations, resiliency, and the bonds formed among them as they navigate through a racially divided community. The help also symbolizes the power of storytelling and solidarity in overcoming injustices.

4.7.2 The Book:

Skeeter's book, which becomes *The Help* in the end, represents the value of amplifying disadvantaged voices and the storytelling power. Skeeter chose to create the book as a way to question the established order and offer individuals who have been marginalized and oppressed by society a voice. The book itself acts as a symbol of empowerment and struggle against societal injustice. The book that the characters—Skeeter in particular—write to chronicle the stories of the African

American maids exposes racism and discrimination as genuine in Mississippi in the 1960s and challenges the existing systems. It turns into an instrument for change, offering the voiceless a platform and bringing attention to their hardships. Writing and sharing these experiences is a symbol of bravery, community, and the ability of empathy and understanding to change society.

4.7.3 The Bathroom:

In white households, the separated restrooms represent the racial divide and the unfair treatment of African Americans in Mississippi throughout the 1960s. The use of separate restrooms by the maids is a reflection of the systematic racism and dehumanization that Black people suffer on a daily basis. It represents racial segregation and division in the South in the 1960s. The bathroom serves as a symbol of the rigid social divisions brought about by Jim Crow legislation, which set aside separate spaces for White people and African Americans. In the book, the maids use the toilet as a place to talk about their experiences, hopes, and anxieties and to momentarily escape the harsh environment of their employers' houses. It also emphasizes the close-knit bonds that develop between the employers and the maids as well as the universal humanity that cuts beyond racial divisions.

All things considered, the restroom represents the mental and physical isolation that defines the time, as well as providing a setting for times of resistance and connection.

4.7.4 The Writing of Skeeter:

Skeeter uses her writing as a sign of resistance to the racial injustices and social standards that are prevalent in her community. Skeeter contributes to the movement for social change by exposing the reality of racial prejudice and challenging established power systems through her writing. Skeeter is a symbol of rebellion against the harsh rules of her culture especially with relation to gender roles and race. Skeeter opposes the pressure put on her as a white woman living in Mississippi in the 1960s to adopt the racist views and actions of her family, friends, and peers. In a daring act of resistance against the established status, she chose to

write a novel from the viewpoint of African American maids, signifying her rejection of the institutionalized racism and discrimination in her neighbourhood.

Skeeter's trip also represents the ability of knowledge and empathy to heal divisions and bring about change. Skeeter has an understanding of the injustices that the maids endure and gains a perspective on the world through her interactions with them, especially Aibileen and Minny. Her dedication to social justice and equality is demonstrated by her readiness to hear their tales and give them more voice through her writing.

Skeeter's function as a symbol also includes her difficulties with gender norms. Skeeter wants to be a writer, which goes against the norm for women in a society where marriage and motherhood are valued more highly than individual goals. Other women in the book who might feel limited by social expectations find inspiration in her resolve to pursue her passion and establish her independence.

Ultimately, Skeeter represents empathy, resistance, and the ability of one person's actions to change the world when fighting injustice.

4.7.5 The Hill:

The hill behind Skeeter's house, the place where Constantine conceived Lulabelle, is a symbol for the past's unspoken secrets and hidden truths. The admission of Lulabelle's existence and Constantine's departure from the Phelan home serve as a metaphor for the racial conflicts and injustices that underlie Jackson's ideal Southern culture on the outside. "The hill where Constantine's daughter Lulabelle was conceived" is a metaphor of guilt, secrecy, and the unspoken realities of the past. The hill is significant to both Skeeter and Constantine since it is the place where Constantine's connection with a white man led to her being pregnant with Lulabelle, a mixed-race child.

The hill takes on symbolic significance as a place of taboo and forbidden love, mirroring the racial tensions and injustices of the day. The choice Constantine took to conceal Lulabelle's paternity serves as a metaphor for the concessions and sacrifices made by African Americans in order to survive in a racist and discriminatory society.

Skeeter's perception of racial relations in her neighbourhood has changed significantly as a result of learning the truth about Constantine and Lulabelle's history on the hill. It makes her wonder about the injustice and hypocrisy of the culture she had accepted without question, which inspires her to take action and use her writing to give voice to the underrepresented maids.

4.7.6 The Red Dress:

Celia Foote's red dress represents her rejection of demanding expectations imposed on women in Mississippi in the 1960s and her disobedience of social standards. The choice Celia made to wear the red dress to Hilly's Junior League function is a symbol of her independence and refusal to fit into the mold of Southern gentility. It represents Skeeter's own liberty as well as society expectations. Skeeter is expected to stick to traditional gender roles and expectations as a young lady in Mississippi in the 1960s, including how she should dress and act. Skeeter is under pressure to live up to these expectations and fit into the stereotypical image of Southern femininity, which is represented by the red clothing that belonged to her mother.

When Skeeter wears the red dress, though, it also represents her will to stand up to these expectations and declare her independence. Skeeter shows her uniqueness and escapes the confines of society conventions by donning the garment. In addition to signifying passion, bravery, and rebellion, Skeeter's red dress may also represent her will to go against authority and follow her own path despite obstacles.

In the end, Skeeter uses the red dress as a symbol of empowerment and self-discovery, illustrating her path to speaking out for herself and standing up for her beliefs—even if it means defying social norms.

All things taken into account, these symbols provide the book more nuance and complexity, enhancing its themes and striking a deeper chord with readers. They act as potent reminders of historical injustices and the determination of individuals who dared to oppose them.

4.8 IMPORTANT QUOTES OF THE NOVEL:

The Help by Kathryn Stockett is filled with powerful and memorable quotes that encapsulate the themes and messages of the novel. Here are some important quotes from the book:

"You is kind. You is smart. You is important." - Aibileen Clark

This quote, spoken by Aibileen to Mae Mobley, reflects the importance of affirmation and self-worth, especially in the face of adversity.

"I always thought insanity would be a dark, bitter feeling, but it is drenching and delicious if you really roll around in it." - Skeeter Phelan

Skeeter's reflection on the liberating feeling of stepping outside societal norms and expectations highlights the theme of self-discovery and empowerment.

"The point of the book was to make people see that these coloured maids and nannies are just regular women. Regular women with sadness and triumphs, with small gladness and big disappointments." - Skeeter Phelan

Skeeter's explanation of her motivations for writing the book underscores the importance of empathy and understanding across racial divides.

"There is so much you don't know about a person. I wonder if I could've made her days a little bit easier, if I'd tried." - Skeeter Phelan

Skeeter's reflection on her relationship with Constantine highlights the theme of missed opportunities for connection and understanding.

"I have never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude." - Skeeter Phelan

Skeeter's appreciation for solitude reflects her independent spirit and her willingness to challenge societal expectations.

"I want to yell so loud that Baby Girl can hear me that dirty ain't a colour, disease ain't the negro side a town. I want to stop that moment from coming – and it come in ever white child's life – when they start to think that coloured folks ain't as good as whites." - Aibileen Clark

Aibileen's desire to combat racism and prejudice highlights the urgency of confronting societal injustices and fostering empathy and understanding.

These quotes, among others in *The Help*, resonate with readers and capture the complexities of race, identity, and social change in 1960s Mississippi.

4.9 LITERARY ANALYSIS:

The multi-layered book *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett explores issues of race, class, gender, power, and community in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s.

Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter are the three primary protagonists whose views alternate throughout Stockett's multi-narrative framework. A nuanced examination of the overlapping lives and perspectives of people from various ethnic and socioeconomic origins is made possible by this narrative style.

The examination of racial injustice and prejudice in the Jim Crow South is one of the book's main subjects. During this time, racial segregation was enforced by laws and African Americans had to deal with daily micro aggressions and prejudices. Stockett offers a biting indictment of the institutional racism that pervaded every facet of life. Readers are given a glimpse into the degrading effects of racism and the tenacity of individuals who dare to fight it through the perspectives of Aibileen and Minny.

The novel also explores class division and economic inequality, with Stockett highlighting the differences in opportunity, privilege, and money between the African American working class and the white upper class. Stockett draws attention to the exploitative nature of the domestic labour market and the economic reliance that keeps marginalized groups trapped in cycles of poverty through the characters of Aibileen and Minny, who serve as maids for rich white households.

Furthermore, *The Help* provides a sophisticated examination of gender norms and expectations in Mississippi in the 1960s. Skeeter's choice to become a writer questions conventional ideas of femininity and womanhood, while Aibileen and Minny deal with the restrictions placed on them as Black women in a patriarchal White culture. As the women in the book band together to support one another and fight against the repressive forces that aim to silence and marginalize them, Stockett captures moments of female empowerment and solidarity.

The Help is fundamentally a narrative about the ability of storytelling to bring about change and offer voice to the oppressed and disenfranchised. Through Skeeter's endeavour to write a book from the maids' point of view, Stockett emphasizes how narrative can be a transformational tool for social justice, empathy, and understanding.

All things considered, *The Help* is an engrossing and provocative book that provides a moving reflection on the nuances of race, class, gender, and power in America. Richly sketched characters and evocative writing by Stockett combine to create an engrossing read that stays with you long beyond the last page.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

At the end of *The Help*, by Kathryn Stockett, the protagonists deal with the consequences from Skeeter's book, which details the hardships and injustices African American maids in 1960s Jackson, Mississippi endured. As the novel provokes debate in the neighbourhood, the characters struggle with the fallout from defying the prevalent standards of racial segregation and prejudice.

Skeeter, Aibileen, Minny, and the other maids find strength in their common experiences and the relationships of solidarity they have established, despite the risks involved. Others are motivated to tackle societal inequalities and work for a fairer future by their brave actions of resistance and rebellion against the status order.

The novel's conclusion highlights the value of compassion, understanding, and group efforts in the struggle against racism and oppression. The characters in *The Help* demonstrate their humanity and dignity in the face of hardship by banding together and facing the established power structures that want to marginalize and suppress them.

In the end, *The Help* ends on a hopeful and resilient note as the characters carry on their fight for equality and justice in a world full of bigotry and injustice. Their tales serve as a reminder of the human spirit's unwavering capacity to triumph over hardship and bring about positive change, even in the most difficult circumstances. Many of the main issues in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* are resolved at the novel's climax, which also provides opportunity for contemplation on the long-term effects of the characters' choices. The following are a few noteworthy points from the end:

Publication of the Book: In spite of the dangers and difficulties she encounters, Skeeter publishes her book, which tells the tales and experiences of the African American maids in Jackson. The book's release signifies a major victory over the forces of injustice and racism in Mississippi in the 1960s.

Character Effects: The characters in the book experience a range of effects from the book's release. Skeeter encounters opposition from her neighbourhood, which

also affects her ties with her family and friends. Aibileen and Minny, meantime, are still figuring out how to handle the difficulties of being maids in a segregated world.

Empowerment and Change: In spite of their challenges, *The Help* protagonists achieve personal development and empowerment as a result of their deeds. In the face of tyranny, Aibileen and Minny affirm their value and dignity, while Skeeter finds her voice as a writer and activist.

Sustained Struggle for Justice: The book's conclusion concedes that there is still a long way to go in the struggle for racial equality and justice. Skeeter's book is a big step in the right direction, but there will undoubtedly be more battles to be won in the fight against racism and discrimination.

Finally, our analysis of Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* has shed light on the book's in-depth examination of gender, race, and power relations in Mississippi in the 1960s. Stockett reveals the intricacies of white privilege in the Jim Crow South as well as the structural inequities experienced by black maids through painstaking character development and compelling narrative. According to our analysis, the book subverts conventional narratives and gives voice to socially underprivileged people. We have learned about the resiliency and bravery needed to face injustice and effect change by studying the stories of Skeeter, Aibileen, Minny, and others. Furthermore, our research has demonstrated the ability of empathy, friendship, and solidarity to bridge racial differences. As we come to the end of our study of *The Help*, we are reminded of the themes' ongoing significance and the necessity of continuing to promote social justice and equality. Stockett's work looks at human connections and society conventions in such a way that it is both a mirror of the past and a lighthouse pointing the way to a more just future.

Overall, *The Help* ends with a satisfying resolution to the main problems in the book while highlighting the continuous fight for equality and social justice. It is a moving reminder of the value of compassion, unity, and fortitude in the face of difficulty.

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