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**LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE HELP BY KATHRYN  
STOCKETT THROUGH THE HISTORICAL APPROACH**

**Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Bachelor in English**

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## Dedication

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## Abstract

The purpose of Kathryn Stockett's book "The Help" it was to show how white people discriminated black people and how racism, discrimination and segregation came to affect the lives of many them. These people who suffered from many mistreatments, injustices and deprivations during many years. Kathryn wants to show the dark side of decades behind which even in the present they left an indelible mark. This research wanted to show how did racism and segregation affect Aibileen during her lifetime and black people nowadays? The main idea is to show the consequences that all this brought for the society in which the main character lived. All the deprivations he had to endure and how every black person had to have the strength to continue.

The researcher used the historical approach to understand better the background of history and all events. Some findings in the investigation were the great injustice that black people received and at the same time the knowledge that they could not enter anywhere since there were rules to follow which they had to follow if there were no consequences.

It is necessary to highlight the importance of the events that occurred in the decade of the 60s and how this came to affect society

## Resumen

El propósito del libro de Kathryn Stockett "The Help" era mostrar cómo los blancos discriminaban a los negros y cómo el racismo, la discriminación y la segregación llegaron a afectar la vida de muchos de ellos. Estas personas que sufrieron muchos malos tratos, injusticias y privaciones durante muchos años. La idea es mostrar el lado oscuro de décadas atrás de las cuales, incluso en el presente, dejaron una marca imborrable. Esta investigación quería mostrar cómo el racismo y la segregación afectaron a Aibileen durante su vida y la vida de las demás personas. La idea principal es mostrar las consecuencias que todo esto trajo para la sociedad en la que vivía el personaje principal. Todas las privaciones que tuvo que soportar y cómo cada persona negra tenía que tener la fuerza para continuar.

El investigador utilizó el enfoque histórico para comprender mejor los antecedentes de la historia y todos los eventos. Algunos hallazgos en la investigación fueron la gran injusticia que recibieron las personas negras y, al mismo tiempo, soportar el no poder ingresar a ningún lado ya que habían reglas que tenían que seguir si no habían consecuencias.

Es necesario resaltar la importancia de los eventos que ocurrieron en la década de los 60 y cómo esto llegó a afectar a la sociedad.

### 1.3 Justification

This research has the purpose of providing enough information on the racial segregation that existed during 1962 and how the lives of women were according to society. Nowadays, racism and discrimination are still a problem in our society, but the difference is that little by little these have changed thanks to the struggle for equality that is being presented. For instance, the book under study reflects the combination of two social problems, which were experienced in the United States; therefore, this analysis is important to know more about the history of racism developed in the book *The Help*. Here, it is depicted how people of color were deprived of their rights, and the families for whom they worked treated them as if they were their property just because of the color of their skin.

Due to the above stated, it is indispensable to compare everything that happened in the book to what it is happening now, so we will know how different it is now. These problems continue to be experienced every day in this country; even though, 69 years have passed since the story in the book was developed, society can still observe how racism continues to affect the whole world. Clearly, the situation is not the same as before because now all people have more rights and freedom, but they still struggle to eradicate it completely. The United States is widely recognized for the number of people who remain being racist and continue to mistreat people of color in the streets, as they still believe that white people are superior.

Moreover, discrimination against women is also developed in this book, as it is presented as social pressure exerted against them. White women had to get married and have a family at a certain age, so they would be well-seen by society. As the story goes, one of its protagonists is presented as independent, and at the same time, this person becomes the one in charge of

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developing a book that talks about the experiences lived by the black maids of the city. These kinds of stories helped people to take courage, as well as to inspire and encourage them to act against these situations.

Currently, around the world, there have been marches in favor of women's rights, since it is now very common to see in the news how they are deprived of their rights, mistreated, abused, treated as if they were worthless, and even, this situation has reached the extremes, as the large number of women murdered increases. Many women have raised their voices to end this discrimination, and they are still struggling to completely eradicate this situation, which little by little, has been achieved.

A common question is, how the story of this book can help us to make a change in people's minds and end with the discrimination against women and racism? The more informed people are and learn about the subject, it will be easier to become aware of the situation. Therefore, it is necessary that there be equality, since all human beings deserve to have the same rights. Not because a person has a different skin color or a different gender, it means that the person is less. Every human being deserves to be treated in a good way, as they have rights.

Despite the struggle during the 60's against these two major problems, this is still present in our society, but little by little society has been-changing- It is important to emphasize that during that time, in the United States, people of color suffered more injustice. Every day, these people fought to recover their rights and that is how they managed to get out of this circle of racism and start having better lives. These situations have a lot of history, which is important to remember to show all the suffering of these people had been through for many years. This investigation paper will show how to understand a little better everything related to racial segregation and discrimination against women, which is a topic presented in this novel.

Moreover, this book serves as inspiration for a society that aim to justice and equality for every person. Scientist and Philosophers have stated there is but one race, the human race. Scientific innovation and sociological analysis have agreed, now it is necessary for human beings to let this knowledge sink in on every mind.

### **1.4 Antecedents**

For many years, racism and discrimination against women have been part of the lives of many people, and little by little this has affected them just because of the color of their skin color and gender. Back then, both, white and black women, suffered a lot from discrimination, as back then white women were demanded to be married at a certain age, be at home and start a family. This as it was not well-seen by society that they were single and independent women. Moreover, African American women suffered a lot just because of the color of their skin. Even, many of them were treated as slaves, humiliated, deprived from their rights and lived in unbearable conditions. This as, in those times, white people were considered superior and believed that they had more a right than black people and that it was indispensable not to mix and maintain the division among them. In the case of black women, it was much more difficult, since they suffered from rejection not only because of their skin color, but also because they were women; thus, the only opportunity they had was to work as maids for white rich families.

In North America and apartheid-era South Africa, racism dictated that different races (chiefly blacks and whites) should be segregated from one another; that they should have their own distinct communities and develop their own institutions such as churches, schools, and hospitals; and that it was unnatural for members of different races to marry. Historically, those who openly professed or practiced racism held that members of low-status races should be limited to low-status jobs and that members of the dominant race should have exclusive access to

political power, economic resources, high-status jobs, and unrestricted civil rights. The experience lived by members of low-status races included acts of physical violence, daily insults, and frequent acts and verbal expressions of contempt and disrespect. All of which had profound effects on self-esteem and social relationships.

The idea of race was invented to magnify the differences between people of European origin and those of African descent, whose ancestors had been involuntarily enslaved and transported to the Americas. By characterizing Africans and their African American descendants as lesser human beings, the proponents of slavery attempted to justify and maintain the system of exploitation while portraying the United States as a bastion and champion of human freedom, with human rights, democratic institutions, unlimited opportunities, and equality. Moreover, by the 19th century, racism had matured and spread around the world. In many countries, leaders began to think of the ethnic components of their own societies, usually religious or language groups, in racial terms, and to designate “higher” and “lower” races. Those seen as the low-status races, especially in colonized areas, were exploited for their labor, and discrimination against them became a common pattern in many areas of the world.

In the United States, racism came under increasing attack during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s, and laws and social policies that enforced racial segregation and permitted racial discrimination against African Americans, were gradually eliminated; in addition, the laws aimed at limiting the voting power of racial minorities, were invalidated by the Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964) to the U.S. Constitution. Despite constitutional and legal measures aimed at protecting the rights of racial minorities in the United States, the private beliefs and practices of many Americans remained racist.

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The story wrote by Kathryn Stockett is about two black maids in the Jackson, Mississippi of 1962. They found themselves joining a young white socialite, as she took on writing the true story of what it was like to work as a black maid in the South's white homes. Against the backdrop of the Civil Rights era, though, the book carried a larger symbolism, becoming the framework of a national conversation about race, Tribune Literary Editor Elizabeth Taylor told the audience in her introduction.

First, Elizabeth Taylor and Kathryn Stockett just spoke generally about *The Help* and how Kathryn came to write it. At the heart of her storytelling, Kathryn told the crowd, was a conviction that it is important for all of us to simply wonder what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes. This has been a controversial aspect of the novel's time in the limelight, she acknowledged. Some people see it as a dead-on portrayal of the 1960s Mississippi; others are critical of the notion that a white writer presents the story in the voice of black women; and some people find it thought-provoking and shame-producing, as they examine their own lives growing up in the Deep South half a century ago (Holt, 2011).

As reported in the website Famous Authors, Kathryn Stockett is a writer and editor of American origin. Born in 1969 in Jackson, Mississippi, she is best known for her critically acclaimed novel *The Help*. After five years of hard work on her personal writing project, she finally had *The Help* published in 2009. It was not easy for Stockett to find a willing literary agent to represent her work. After rejection from 60 literary agents consecutively, eventually agent Susan Ramer took upon the task. The novel became a milestone in Stockett's writing career earning a tremendous praise for writing on a unique subject matter. Her inspiration for the novel is Stockett's own childhood.

The Help highlights the relationship dynamics among white people and their African American domestic help in the South. At first, Stockett was reluctant to write about the dynamics of this relationship, as she knew it would be heavily criticized. In her interviews, she recounted her experience as a child in the South, where Jackson had equal population of white and black people, though she never saw any black receiving education. Her childhood memories are only of black people as the domestic help for white people, something that she assumed a customary affair. It was not until she moved to the North that she was able to see the bigger picture. She realized that she was living in an isolated place, where blacks were not considered equal race.

As she shared her childhood experiences of black domestic help in her family with other Southerners, she mulled the idea of writing down a story on it. The model for her novel was her close relationship with a black housekeeper, Demetrie. In an interview, Stockett sketched Demetrie's life, who was underprivileged and was treated somewhat like a slave despite the change in segregation's laws in 70's. Every family in Stockett's town had a black woman as a domestic help and they were expected to wear a white uniform, which granted them access to white people's markets. They were not allowed privacy or offered any sort of comforts.

During the initial process of writing, Stockett employed the first-person narrative of a black housekeeper, thinking her work would never have any readership. It was not until she let her friends read the book, in order to get their valuable feedback, that she felt concerned about her narrative technique and depiction of characters. Despite her apprehension, the novel won rave reviews from readers and critics alike. Over ten million copies of the book have been sold in over 42 different languages. In 2011, the novel was adapted into film by Walt Disney Studios.

After the publication of the novel, Kathryn Stockett professed that she felt mortified that it took her 20 years to see the unjust treatment of blacks. The sole reason for her writing *The*

*Help* was to understand why she could not see through the duplicity of things in the South. The memories of Demetrie still haunt her and make her wonder what her childhood's companion would think of present America, electing a black president twice.

In accordance to the information written by Napikoski (2017), *The Help* is set in Mississippi during the early 1960s, when the groundswell of feminism's "second wave" was still building. Kathryn Stockett's novel revolves around events in 1962-1963, before the women's liberation movement, before Betty Friedan and other feminist leaders founded the National Organization for Women, before the media invented the myth of bra-burning. Although, *The Help* is an imperfect depiction of the 1960s and the author stifles the budding feminism of some of her characters, the novel does touch many issues that were relevant to 1960s feminism.

### **1.5 Scope**

To eradicate these problems from society, so that there is more equality and respect.

To know the purpose the author had, when she wrote the novel.

To provide information on the subject under study, and let people to be more open-minded, as this is one of the best ways for people to acquire a more equal thinking.

Through this research, a solution to these social problems is sought in order to eradicate them completely.

To teach people all damage that these social problems can bring.

## Chapter II

### Theoretical Framework

The following chapter has the purpose of developing the analysis that will be carried out on the book *The Help*, which is related to racial segregation. In addition, this section will cover and explain the approach that will be developed, as it will be included the three theories linked to the three specific objectives. Likewise, the most important themes, symbols, and motifs of the story will be explained with a summary, as well as of the plot of this novel, and the biography of the author and the reason why the story took place.

#### 2.1 Literary Theories and Approaches

Literature is a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied 'to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution (Rexroth, 2018). Literature covers many topics, as this may include poetry, novels, bibliographic stories, youth stories, children, fiction, and many others; and it can be presented either orally or in writing. Moreover, it is the simplest way in which people, in this case writers, express either wishes, thoughts, and in the vast majority the story of their lives. It is also called art, since for many years it has been of great importance, as in this way, people learn more about history or simply enjoy the beauty of literature. Furthermore, it can be stated that there is a great amount of literary texts of all kinds; as for example the laws of Jim Crow, which when people read them, show all the segregation that African Americans suffered for centuries.

On the other hand, theory is a set of assumptions, propositions, or accepted facts that attempts to provide a plausible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect (causal) relationships

among a group of observed phenomena (BusinessDictionary.com, 2019). The idea is to demonstrate the reality of the topics related to the research that is taking place. This is supported by a hypothesis, which is the way it can be proved if the theory is true or false. Many theories have caused great damage in society for long time. For example, the theories related to racism, which have caused many deaths, and even today, it is difficult to understand how this could happen. Among these theories, it can be found is the theory of colored skin, which stated that for white Americans, black skin was a disease that had existed for generations. One of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Benjamin Rush, named this disease as "Negroidism," and he used this theory to oppose race miscegenation, since he believed that children born to these couples could have such disease (Notimérica, 2014).

The theories that will be included in this work are related to racism, discrimination, and segregation. An important document related to this topic is Jim Crow's laws that represent what life was like for each person with black skin in the social environment. However, first it is necessary to define literary theory, which is the body of ideas and methods used in the practical reading of literature. By literary theory, we refer not to the meaning of a work of literature, but to the theories that reveal what literature can mean (Brewton, n.d.). Below, three are theories that talk about racism. Each objective that was proposed in the work has the purpose of introducing the issue of racial segregation. Each objective is linked to a theory which explains what those topics have affected society.

The first theory presented in this analysis is related to black feminism, which explains how these women have survived the double discrimination that each of them experienced. Over time, racism has been a problem for black women; nevertheless, they also faced, besides segregation due the color of their skin, gender discrimination. This situation made these African

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American women to fight not only for race equality, but also for gender. The struggle of black feminism lasted years, as and the idea was to seek gender equality, so every woman could have more freedom and rights.

With reference to black feminism, Monaghan (n.d) expresses how this topic encompassed the struggle for gender equality of black women took place. The changes in black politics were both supported and challenged by the work of black feminist organizations in the last part of the twentieth century., For generations, black women activists had challenged such perceptions of gender inferiority. Initially, some black women attempted to distance themselves from the issues raised by the growing white feminist movement, arguing that black women, as a racial category, were subjected to greater oppression than white females. Others argued that black women were subjected to a form of sexual exploitation that was rooted within the experience of slavery and Jim Crow's segregation.

These women were also critical about the sexism of black male leaders, which was deemed destructive to the goals of black liberation. One of the most controversial of these writers was Michele Wallace. Before the age of thirty, Wallace authored a widely read manifesto condemning sexism within the black movement. Wallace argued that all political and economic power was based on a gender division and that this notion of "macho" would prevent black men from true liberation. Black women were exploited both, by race and gender, many times by the same black nationalists that were attacking racism. Despite her tendency to oversimplify complex issues, Wallace's manifesto forced the African American community to address issues of power, liberation, and what freedom would mean for all black people.

Moreover, this important feminist aspect suggested racial, gender, and class oppression, and thus, created a structure of domination, which the system's victims helped to perpetuate.

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Women like Angela Davis, Nell Irvin Painter, and Audre Lorde contributed to raising awareness of the confluence of issues of women and black people. Furthermore, most young black women found encouragement and reinforcement in the writings and public careers of such prominent feminists, as they raised issues with practical relevance for other women. A group of black feminist writers, artists, and intellectuals formed the Combahee River Collective in 1974. It sought to articulate a black feminist theory and practice. Combahee, like other black feminist organizations such as the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and Black Women Organized for Action (BWOFA), helped unifying an agenda of often disparate needs and concerns.

By the early 1980s, it was increasingly difficult for male leaders and intellectuals to dismiss the demands of women within their own formations, or to assert that gender oppression was irrelevant in the black community. The illusion that only males should make policy decisions was shattered by the dynamic examples of black women, who consistently were at the forefront of political and social reforms. Black female politicians, writers, lawyers, and social workers continued to make gains in their fields, all the while pushing for a more expansive goal of what black freedom would constitute.

The great disadvantage that black women lived made everything more complicated for them. Apart from discrimination by race that each African American suffered; gender discrimination was added. Black women lost their rights. Each of these women suffered the consequences of prejudice from the point of view of racism and sexism. Therefore, all black woman decided to raise their voice to end the injustice they were seeing. As a consequence of the big number of women who joined this struggle to fight for the rights of black women, the men of high rank and leaders could not ignore this situation and had to act.

The second theory is critical race, that explains how racism affected society. According to what racial theory explains, race is not created naturally, but it is created by society to maintain the interests of the white population intact. According to Curry (n.d), racial inequality emerged from the social, economic, and legal differences that white people created between “races” to maintain elite white interest in labor markets and politics and to create the circumstances that give rise to poverty and criminality in many minority communities. The United States Supreme Court began limiting and eviscerating precedents that once promised full equality to African Americans under the law.

On the other hand, Jones (2002) explains that Critical Race Theorists had as objective, ending exclusive reliance upon civil rights litigation, storytelling to broaden public consciousness racism and discrimination under the law and protest reminiscent of the civil rights movement of the 50’s and 60’s. In 1959, the civil rights movement was in crisis. The decade-long struggle for equal rights in the south had crested and the momentum that began with Brown Broad of Education dissipated. Although, the Congress had two pieces of legislation that promised to eradicate tee vis of Southern apartheid, the Civil Rights Act of 1954, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; the future looked bleak. Martin Luther King had been assassinated the year before and the attempts to bring the civil rights movement to the North had come to naught. Northern blacks had never experienced legal segregation and discrimination.

Consequently, American politics started to move right. White voters looked at “black power” with fear because for them the new nationalism had a sinister tone that resonated with violence in the city streets and disregarded law and order. Commenting upon well- known and controversial cases of the mid to late ’90s, Rodney King explained what seems to be inexplicable to many. At the time when African Americans thought they experienced a backlash against civil rights and

tolerance for racism seemed to be in vogue, the critical race theorists explained that the law upheld and provided justification for racist behavior. Political liberals thus, celebrated the critical race theory as literature that demonstrated why the civil rights struggle had not ended. People welcomed scholars of color, who explained the changing discourse on civil rights as it was being developed by formalist justices on the Supreme Court. The struggle for rights was difficult for society, especially for black people, since change came to happen little by little.

The last theory that will be described is related with the 4 types of racial discrimination that presented in society for many years and that, in most of the cases, are acts done unconsciously. According to Council (2004), most people's concept of racial discrimination involves explicit, direct hostility expressed by whites toward members of a disadvantaged racial group. Nevertheless, discrimination can include more than just direct behavior (such as, the denial of employment or rental opportunities); it can also be subtle and unconscious (such as, nonverbal hostility in posture or tone of voice). Furthermore, discrimination against an individual may be based on overall assumptions about members of a disadvantaged racial group that are assumed to apply to that individual (i.e., statistical discrimination or profiling). Discrimination may also occur as the result of institutional procedures rather than individual behaviors.

According to Council (2004,p.56) , the first type of discrimination is explicit and intentional discrimination, which explains that in 1954, Gordon Allport, an early leader in comprehensive social science analysis of prejudice and discrimination, articulated the sequential steps by which an individual behaves negatively toward members of another racial group: verbal antagonism, avoidance, segregation, physical attack, and extermination (Allport, 1954). Verbal antagonism includes casual racial slurs and disparaging racial comments, either in or out of the target's presence. Many times, people make comments, which are not taken with bad connotation, but in

many cases, these can affect different people and the person who made the comment may not even realize it.

Segregation occurs when people actively exclude members of a disadvantaged racial group from the allocation of resources and from access to institutions. The most common examples include denial of equal education, housing, employment, and health care based on race. For instance, 10% of those who do not support civil rights for all racial groups are likely to exhibit intentional and explicit discrimination by any measure. The data indicate that these hardcore discriminators view their own group as threatened by racial outgroups (Duckitt, 2001).

The second type of discrimination published by Council (2004, p.58) is Automatic Discrimination, Subtle and Unconscious, which informs that members of the ingroup face an internal conflict, resulting from the disconnection between the societal rejection of racist behaviors and the societal persistence of racist attitudes (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Katz and Hass, 1988; McConahay, 1986). People's intentions may be good, but their categories and cognitive associations with racial bias may persist. This means that on many occasions, people make rapacious comments in an unconscious manner without the intention of offending someone (Council., 2004).

The result is a modern and subtle form of prejudice that hides as not to conflict with antiracist norms, while continuing to shape the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of people. The subtle forms of racism are indirect, automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent. We discuss each of these manifestations of subtle prejudice in turn and then examine its implications for discriminatory behavior. "In short, the text refers to the fact that in most cases racism is hidden in simple comments that are made. This racism does not become as noticeable as in the past, but this racism is subtly reflected" (Fiske, 1998, 2002, p. 59). All manifestations of subtle

prejudice (indirect, automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent) constitute barriers to full equality of treatment. Subtle prejudice is much more difficult to document than more overt forms, and its effects on discriminatory behavior are more difficult to capture.

A third type of discrimination is the statistical discrimination or profiling. This is related to the prejudices that people have when they see another person briefly, without knowing him/her in depth. In general, this is the type of discrimination used in companies. “The text explains that in most cases the employer can judge a person by his resume or criminal record, since these describe whether the person is suitable or not, for the position or the company” (Council., 2004, p. 61). The following is an example of how this can influence an employer when hiring someone for a job: If an employer believes people with criminal records will make unsatisfactory employees, believes that blacks, on average, are more likely to have criminal records compared to whites, and cannot directly verify an applicant’s criminal history, the employer may judge a black job applicant on the basis of group averages rather than solely on the basis of his or her own qualifications.

When beliefs about a group are based on racial stereotypes resulting from explicit prejudice or on more subtle forms of in-group versus-outgroup perceptual biases, then discrimination based on such beliefs is indistinguishable from the explicit prejudice discussed above. Statistical discrimination or profiling, properly defined, refers to situations of discrimination based on beliefs that reflect the actual distributions of characteristics of different groups. Even though, such discrimination could be viewed as economically rational, it is illegal in situations as hiring because it uses group characteristics to make decisions about individuals (Council., 2004).

The last type of discrimination (Council., 2004) is called The Organizational Process. In the past, overt racism and explicit exclusionary laws promoted residential segregation. Even though, these laws have been struck down, the process by which housing is advertised and housing choices are made, may continue to perpetuate racial segregation in some instances. “An example of this is that of a person looking for a place to live, in many cases the person in charge of finding housing for that person immediately, with their history or even appearance, can choose the level of the place that person seeks, without consulting this situation. It reflects discrimination towards the customer” (Council., 2004, p.63) Likewise, banks and other lending institutions have a variety of apparently neutral rules regarding mortgage approvals that often result in a higher levels of loan refusals for people in lower-income black neighborhoods than for equivalent white applicants. Credit history irregularities that are overlooked as atypical in the case of white mortgage applicants, for example, are often used to disqualify blacks and Latinos (Squires, 1994; Squires and O’Connor, 2001).

As a summary, the above mentioned types of discrimination, occur unconsciously, which, in many cases or in most cases, the transmitter and even the receiver do not notice that it is present in the actions or orally in any comment that is done, without bad intentions. This is a way of realizing that in society, racism and discrimination are still present and hidden in the lexicon and in many actions that are carried out. It is important to be careful, so that this does not continue to be reproduced and that, at some point, a comment or action could harm someone.

## **2.2 Historical Approach**

The historical approach is one of the methods of literary analysis in which the author and the reader comprehend the message of the literary work by remembering the historic moment in which it was written (WIJAYA, n.d). This work will be done through the historical approach to

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understand the message and the teachings that the author transmits through this novel, as well as at the situations developed in the text that are of great importance to society. By doing this, the topic will cover all the social problems that presented in the book; for example, the racism that every servant who worked in Jackson, Mississippi, suffered; in addition, it will be present how these maids did to survive in a society that segregated them by the skin color and that classified them as less. At the same time, it, will be mentioned influential black people related to the defense of civil rights and those who fought against racism, segregation, and the mistreatment against people of color.

For many years, racism has been present in the history of humanity, which has been full of cruelty, discrimination, abuse, inhumanity, violence, and atrocity. African Americans have been rejected only for their skin color and this positioned them at a lower level compared to white people, due to problems of superiority. Even, this is seen in the book, as during those years white people were superior, leaving the best jobs to white people and black people as the servitude. The treatment that every African American in Mississippi went through was in many cases unfair, since due to their skin color, each black person was deprived of sharing stores, hairdressers, hospitals, supermarkets, and many other public places.

The buses had a rule, which was that white people sat in the front and black people in the back, since they could not share the same place; this also happened with bathrooms. Moreover, in one of the book's chapters it is suggested that every black employee needed to have a bathroom outside house they worked for, since they were not allowed to share the bathrooms, as some said that black people had diseases which could be contagious and dangerous. This triggered the fact that their lives were full of injustice. Many people have had come to the defense of the civil rights of black people, even African Americans themselves have fought for a

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better life. Thanks to these moments of courage, others have been inspired and their voices have been heard.

As already mentioned, there are many African Americans who have influenced the struggle to recover the civil rights and freedom of men and women of color. As follows, it will be mentioned some African American influencers who fought for the blacks' civil rights. The first influencer is Medgar Evers. According to Godos (2013), Medgar Evers was one of the most important people of the African Union, as he fought for the civil rights of African Americans. His death caused much impression even for the president who had the power in the United States in 1960, as even John F. Kennedy asked for a project related to the defense of civil rights. Moreover, Martin Luther King's dream was the same as the one of Medgar Evers. The latter was a black farmer's son and war veteran, whose murder in June 1963 triggered the March on Washington for civil rights. His murder made almost 300,000 people to gather at the Washington Hall and before whom, Martin Luther King would proclaim, his historic desire for equality and justice: "I have a dream."

In 1954, when the US Supreme Court annulled segregation in public schools, Medgar was one of the first blacks to apply for admission to the Mississippi University Law School, which was denied. Tired of the differences between blacks and whites, Evers went to NAACP for help, and ended up becoming one of its most important leaders. Medgar defended cases of black people who had received inhuman treatment. One of these cases was a 14-year-old child who lived in Mississippi. According to the story, a boy named Emmett Till was attacked by a group of white men, who decided to defend a white woman, because she said that till whistled at her. After the woman said what the child did, the group of men disfigured him and killed him with only 14 years old.

As reported by Godos (2013), weeks before his death, Evers was the subject of a series of threats. His public inquiries into Till's murder and his notorious support to other causes made him the target of extremists. The cause of more discomfort in white people was a small televised speech that Evers gave in a local station, as it was the first in Mississippi, where he laid out the objectives of the civil rights struggle.

Evers died assassinated on June 12, 1963, just hours after the televised speech of US President John F. Kennedy in favor of civil rights. Evers was shot in the back with a rifle when he returned home after a meeting with the National Association for the Advancement of People of Color (NAACP). Kennedy, who would also be murdered only five months later, traced with his words the start of the most radical social justice legislation in the history of the United States, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He could not see the dream that Evers shared with King fulfilled.

Another important Afro-American is Martin Luther King, who won a Nobel Prize. He was and continues to be one of the most important and recognized people who fought in a peaceful way for the rights of people of color. Martin also fought for the end of segregation in public transport and in general. According to Carson (2019), in 1944, at age 15, King entered Morehouse College in Atlanta under a special wartime program intended to boost enrollment by admitting promising high-school students like King. Before beginning college, King spent the summer on a tobacco farm in Connecticut. This was his first extended stay away from home and his first substantial experience with race relations outside the segregated South. Martin was shocked by how peacefully races mixed in the North. "*Negroes and whites go to the same church,*" King noted in a letter to his parents. "*I never thought that a person of my race could eat anywhere.*" This summer experience in the North only deepened King's growing hatred regarding of racial segregation.

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King was the pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama for slightly more than a year, when the city's small group of civil rights advocates decided to contest racial segregation on that city's public bus system following the incident on December 1, 1955, in which Rosa Parks, an African American woman, refused to give in her bus seat to a white passenger and, as a consequence, she was arrested for violating the city's segregation law. Activists formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to boycott the transit system and chose King as a leader.

In his first speech to the group as its president, King declared:

*"We have no alternative but to protest. For many years we have shown an amazing patience. We have sometimes given our white brothers the feeling that we liked the way we were being treated. But we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice."*

After saying these words, Martin continued to fight to eliminate bus segregation. Even though, his family was in danger, he continued the fight to change the crazy ones. Thanks to this fight, a year later the separation of the buses was achieved. King did marches that helped with the fight for civil rights; however, all African Americans felt identified as never before with one that, Martin decided to make. This movement was held in Washington DC, where King gave one of the best-known speeches called, *I Have a Dream*. This speech is the most inspiring and it shows the courage that Martin had no matter what, despite all the dangers that his family was living with, he never stopped and did not let fear win.

The following are the most important parts of Martin Luther King's speech. The *I Have a Dream* speech was delivered during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, in 1963.

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Martin gave the speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. This speech expresses King's notorious hope for America and the need of change. King talked about Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation one hundred years before the march; in addition, he called that proclamation "a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity," where "them" refers to those who were enslaved. Martin then comes to the problems faced by African Americans in 1963, saying that one hundred years later, people still are not free. Instead, people are "sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." King also discussed the poverty endured by black Americans. Martin stated that America defaulted on that check, where black citizens are concerned by denying them those rights. "America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds," Martin said.

King also promised that this protest was not going away. This is not about voicing grievances and then going back to the status quo: "The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges." Martin Luther King proved that real legal change could be made without resorting to violence. Even though, there was much violence during the Civil Rights movement, Martin was always peaceful, and urged others to protest peacefully. This was called "the high plane of dignity and discipline," in his speech. King also stressed the importance of recognizing white people who wanted to protest for the same cause, those allies that are necessary to its success. Moreover, Martin provided some specific goals, as people could not stop marching while everyone continued to, so long as blacks were turned away from hotels, confined to ghettos, subjected to segregation, and did not have the right to vote. King also recognized the struggles that many of the marchers had already endured

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and asked them to undertake that struggle again and to have hope that the situation could and would change. Then, it came the most famous part of this speech, for which it is titled.

*“King said his dream was “deeply rooted in the American dream.”*

This reinforced the protestors’ rights to equality in America. Martin said that his dream was

*“The sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”*

This emphasized the need for black and white Americans to work together. Central to the message of this speech, and the Civil Rights movement more generally, is this line:

*“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”*

*King talked about the importance of faith, and that “all flesh shall see [the glory of the Lord] together.”*

That faith, King said, would help them in the struggles they had faced, the struggles blacks still face, and those struggles yet to come as blacks peacefully fought for liberty and equality. In short, Martin Luther King was one of the African Americans who had the most influence for several years, not only because of the struggle, but also because of the courage maintained despite knowing that his and his family’s lives were in danger. Thanks to the struggle, African Americans became hopeful that one day they would be free and have a respectable treatment. In the novel *The Help*, it is showed King's struggle to defend the civil rights of blacks, even comes to appear in Washington DC. This part shows how blacks kept their hope of freedom.

Another black person that influenced the African Americans to fight for their rights was Rosa Parks, as she decided to fight to end segregation in the United States. The story of Parks is extremely interesting, since for many it all began with a simple bus seat for many, but for her it represented more than that. As it was already mentioned, the story began with a bus seat that Rosa Parks did not want to give to a white man. The most important to note is that in 1955, segregation prohibited people of color to walk freely. Blacks had to follow certain types of laws and if anyone broke the rules, legal measures would be taken.

This was the case of Park, a black seamstress who was sitting in a bus segregated in this way; therefore, white people went in the front and black people went in the back. According to the story, Rosa sat in the white people' seats, when a white man got on the bus, and she refused to give in her a sea. At that moment, as Rosa did not want to give in her seat caused the driver to call the police.

Based on the information (Editors, 2019), Rosa Parks (1913—2005) helped to initiate the civil rights movement in the United States. The leaders of the local black community organized a bus boycott that began the day Parks was convicted of violating the segregation law. Led by young Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the boycott lasted more than a year, during which Parks not coincidentally lost her job, and ended only when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. Over the next half-century, Parks became a nationally recognized symbol of dignity and strength in the struggle to end entrenched racial segregation.

Rosa and her husband Raymond became respected members of Montgomery's large African American community. Co-existing with white people in a city governed by "Jim Crow"

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(segregation) laws was fraught with daily frustrations. Blacks could attend only certain (inferior) schools, could drink only from specific water fountains, could borrow books only from the “black” library, among other restrictions. Although, Raymond had previously discouraged her out of fear for her safety, in December 1943 Rosa also joined the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. Rosa became chapter secretary. Parks worked closely with chapter president Edgar Daniel (E.D.) Nixon. Nixon was a railroad porter known in the city as an advocate for blacks who wanted to register to vote, and as president of the local branch of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union.

On Thursday, December 1, 1955, 42-year-old Rosa Parks was commuting home from a long day of work at the Montgomery Fair department store by bus. Black residents of Montgomery often avoided municipal buses if possible because they found the Negroes-in-back policy demeaning. Segregation was written into law; the front of a Montgomery bus was reserved for white citizens and the seats behind them, for black citizens. However, it was only by custom that bus drivers had the authority to ask a black person to give in a seat to a white person. Montgomery laws were contradictory. One said segregation must be enforced, but another, largely ignored, said that any person (white or black) could be asked to give in a seat even if there was no other seat on the bus available. Nonetheless, at one point on the route, a white man had no seat because all the seats in the designated “white” section, were taken. Therefore, the driver told the people in the four seats of the first row of the “colored” section to stand, in effect adding another row to the “white” section. The other three obeyed, but Parks did not, so two police officers took Parks in custody.

On November 13, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. The boycott ended on December 20, a day after the Court’s written order

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arrived in Montgomery. Parks, who had lost her job and experienced harassment all year, became known as “the mother of the civil rights movement.” In 1999, Parks was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor the United States bestows on a civilian.

Below an important quote from Rosa Parks

*“People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired,” wrote Parks in her autobiography, “but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically... No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”*

After all what Rosa Parks lived, she became a legend for not giving in her seat. For Parks, giving in her seat meant letting white citizens to be superior and she was already tired of that situation. With a simple action as to say “no” and fight for the rights that corresponded to blacks, Rosa made the blacks come together to stop the segregation that was being lived and showed that courage leads people to achieve great things.

## 2.3 Themes, Symbols, and Motifs

### 2.3.1 Themes

Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work, which may be stated directly or indirectly (Editors., n.d). In other words, themes are conflicts that take place among a group of individuals and society. These are the actions and thoughts of a character in a novel. In general, these actions are important facts which represent the purpose that is given to the story and identify each character that plays an essential role in its development. In general, the topics are related to ethics and history.

There are many themes present in the novel *The Help*, the first theme is related with Race, Racism, Discrimination, and Segregation, that are the main issues addressed in this novel. In one

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hand, the story shows what life is like for people of color in Jackson Mississippi, where society was guided by segregation and the laws of Jim Crow. In this story, society is divided into two; the white citizens who were superior and therefore had all the rights and ruled over blacks, and the blacks, who were considered a lower class and all of them had to work as a servant.

The novel focuses on how society, especially white women took advantage of segregation in the city by exploiting and verbally abusing black employees, to demonstrate the superiority that existed between white and black women. According to Plaue (2015), an example of this is when Miss Hilly openly expresses the belief that African Americans are figuratively and literally “unclean,” prone to moral depravity and infectious diseases not carried by whites. On a larger scale, almost every white woman in the novel performed social practices that reinforced the institutional separation of whites and blacks under Jim Crow-era law. White women did not let their maids touch them, sit at their table, or share their food.

The novel investigates and portrays how racism is not inherent to human nature, but it is instead passed down generation to generation. According to Plaue,

Blacks were inferior, children grew up with this idea and in the book is easy to see how Aibileen notes that Elizabeth's daughter loves her, but Aibi knows that when Mae Mobley grows up, like the other children that in the past Aibileen raised, that feeling will be forgotten as time passes, society will plant in the brains of each child the idea that blacks are different and will begin to see racial differences in an unhuman way, since parents and education will be responsible for enforcing racist attitudes. (2015)

The second theme is social class, which is one of the most represented topics in this novel, since high class women and their families were best known in the city, occupying positions of

great importance and attending extravagant places. A great example of this situation is the case of Miss Celia, as she was rejected by the ladies of the city for having-from a humble raising, also known as low “white trash”. Even though, Celia was married to a powerful man and had a huge house, this kept the ladies of the city from accepting her. However, it is important to note that since Miss Celia had a humble family, this made her treat Minnie, her maid, respectfully and as an equal.

This happened because Celia lacked knowledge on the largely unspoken rules of middle-class white conduct. Thus, Miss Celia treated Minnie, her maid, with more respect, since Celia was unaware of how white women were “supposed” to treat black people. Even though, this may seem culturally inaccurate, racism was not limited to the upper class or correlated to wealth at all. In the world of the novel, Celia’s low class meant she held fewer racist attitudes (Plaue, 2015).

Other theme that is in the novel is Gender. As written by Plaue (2015), *The Help* portrays how the home, a traditionally feminine space, was just as much a battleground for social change, as they were the courtrooms and rallies of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. While Aibileen describes how white men beat or kill black men, who “stepped out of line,” the novel also shows how white women used their social influence to ruin the lives of black maids in more indirect, but similarly devastating ways. During the story, all women, whether black or white, tried to defend themselves and their gender. This is the case of Aibileen, who used to work as a domestic worker, and raised white children, so she took advantage of this and tried to make children to learn to tolerate racial differences. Another example is Minnie, as with her personality, she tried to be seen as a human being who has identity and not only part of the servitude. These battles may not have been recorded by the news or in textbooks, but Stockett illustrates how the maids’

resistance to racism at home, the heart of Southern society, plays a vital part in changing the hearts and minds of women and children in the fight for civil rights.

Skeeter's character also shows the constant struggle white women went through as they were to be considered perfect women to find a husband and to form a family. The constant pressure that Skeeter received from her mother and her friend Hilly was for her to look more attractive and to follow the rules of gender. There is also a pressure that comes from Stuart Whitworth, who tried to convince Skeeter to drop out of school and the ideas of being professional, because this kind of ideas were outside the approved norms for women. All these situations made Skeeter angry with society's pangs, which was a sexist thought that white women must be at home waiting for their husbands, while white men can explore beyond.

Skeeter bucked the sexist conventions that dictated that her place was only at home; instead of participating in a domestic life as a wife and mother, she wrote a book that exposes the racial injustices in the South. Skeeter's sense of being oppressed by gender norms might make her more sensitive to even more powerful forms of racial oppression, inspiring her determination to address the racism faced by the black domestic workers. This personal rebellion against sexist and racist attitudes in Jackson empowered her, by giving her the inner confidence to reject her community and its expectations about her (Plaue, 2015).

### **2.3.2 Symbols**

According to [BusinessDictionary \(2019\)](#) symbols are a mark, sign, or word that indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship. Symbols contain meanings which are hidden and not understood by the naked eye. In general, the characters of a story seek to represent an idea, thought, or feeling that they have hidden and cannot express

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freely. This type of literary devices is very important for the development of the story and this makes sense.

The first symbols that is present in the novel is Minnie's "Special Ingredient" Pie. In the novel, Minnie is known for her cooking, since her meals are delicious. One of the most known desserts she was known for were pies, as when people carried out a meeting, they wanted her to cook a chocolate pie. Minnie used her delicious meals to avoid being fired, as it was also known as being "sass" and outspoken, which could make her to lose her job. In accordance with the information written by Plaue (2015), Minnie also used pies to subvert the power dynamics at home. After Miss Hilly jeopardized Minnie's chances of ever finding work again, Minnie made a chocolate custard pie including the "special ingredient" of her own feces.

Minnie watched Hilly savor two slices of it before telling her the truth, humiliating and degrading her as an act of revenge; however, she also gained a kind power over her. Now Minnie had something to hold over Hilly's head. Minnie could reveal the secret if Hilly continued to spread rumors about her. This act of subversion also targeted Hilly's racist belief that black people carried diseases. By feeding Hilly two slices of excrement pie without her getting sick, Minnie illustrated, in a decidedly extreme way, the simple truth that black people do not carry racially specific diseases. In the end, Minnie knew how to take advantage of the power she had with her food, which in a way this made her filled up with the courage and feel powerful among whites.

The second symbol that is present in the book is The Bitter Seed. Aibileen talked about the "bitter seed" that was paved inside her after the death of her son; this meant that the bitter seed was the feeling of bitterness after the death of Trelore. Aibileen emphasized that day by day, when treated inferiorly by white women, the bitter seed grew. The seed represents how racism

can make the most gentle and compassionate people justifiably bitter. Aibileen used this bitterness in a productive way. The seed gave her the motivation to get back at the white housewives by helping Skeeter to reveal their private lives in the book. If Aibileen stayed the timid, forgiving woman she was before her son's death, then she would never have had the internal impetus to fight back against oppression and racism in her society (Plaue, 2015). The bitter seed of which Aibileen speaks is a way to remember how hard life has been. It is a way of seeing all the painful situations that Aibileen went through and that little by little that bitterness has grown inside her.

The third symbol in the novel is The Mimosa Tree in Celia Foote's backyard, as it represents her repressed hatred of the gender norms that she internalized. Throughout the novel, Celia was confined to her home, unwilling to leave for fear she will have a miscarriage (Plaue, 2015)

This part is very difficult to understand, since Celia goes through two situations which bring her great suffering. The first situation is the rejection suffered by the white women of the city for not being of the upper class. The second situation is not being able to give a baby to her husband, so due to the constant abortions that Celia has, she does not want to leave the house because of fear and, at the same time, Celia believes that being at home with rest will help her to have a baby (Plaue, 2015).

Even though, she hated the mimosa tree, she was unwilling to get out of bed and chop it down for fear of losing the baby and letting her husband down. She even described the tree as having disgusting hairs like those of a baby. Her disgust at the thought of baby hairs revealed her repressed aversion towards motherhood, so cutting down the tree would represent her triumph over society's expectation that she become a mother (Plaue, 2015).

Celia was so strong in having a child and not disappoint her husband, that even hating the tree did not cut it, even in a part of the novel the husband decides to reduce the tree a bit, but in the end this does not happen. In an act of sisterhood that transcends racial barriers, Minnie gives Celia the strength to recover her strength and self-esteem. After the support Minnie shows Celia, she leaves the house and ends up with the tree she hated so much. This is a way to show that with courage you can cut the social expectations that were held in women and not let this envelop them and destroy them.

### 2.3.3 Motifs

Continuing with some of the literary devices, there are some motifs, in the novel, that have significant meaning in the story. In other words, a motif is a recurring symbol which takes on a figurative meaning. (...) This can be almost anything: an idea, an object, a concept, a character archetype, the weather, a color, or even a statement. Motifs are used to establish a theme or a certain mood; they have a symbolic meaning (Casano, n.d.). This means that a motive is an action, an image, words, phrases or even a sound that helps with the development of the themes. The motif explains the central idea of a literary work and contributes to the explanation of the themes that are in a novel or book.

The first motif that is presented in the novel is the title of the book, *The Help*. The title refers to the black servitude in Jackson, Mississippi, since black women must do all the household things, while whites met and talked about various topics. However, the phrase is also used to define the myriad relationships developed among white families and their maids (teachertaylor, 2010). As Skeeter and Aibileen complete the book with the other maids, it became evident that several families had become dependent on their maids.

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In many cases, in the novel, the owners of the houses became dependent on the servitude. Many of these white women were used to have a maid to do all the cleaning in the house and the food, which means that at the time, the servants left home, the owners immediately needed someone else to do the work. Teachertaylor (2010) shows that an example of this is that Minnie provided all care for Hilly's mother and when she was fired, Hilly's mother went into a senior facility. Other families were equally dependent on the maids, and others appeared to be indifferent to the maids and treated them with little civil regard, such as Hilly's treatment towards her maids. There are others who stood up for their maids, even in times of hardship such as Celia's standing up for Minnie even after she found out Minnie's terrible secret. These variations complicate the racial division in the Southern, which is one of the themes that Stockett explores in her novel.

A second motif is the Sheets. Minnie complained about having to change sheets in Celia's house, as the sheets were filled with hair, scabs, and other personal signs. For Minnie to change sheets was offensive and something that only family members should have to do. Sheets are a sign of the way in which the maids must do things that are repulsive for their white employers (teachertaylor, 2010). This motif shows that even though the maids were there to do the cleaning, in many cases, it was not good to do certain things, as that some maids perceived that those things were very personal and that owners had to do it by themselves, but at the end of the day, the servitude had no option but to do the work.

Finally, the bathrooms are another motif. During the development of the story, it is easy to see how the laws of Jim Crow governed the south. These laws were responsible for segregation, as they caused a great problem in the activities that people of color did. Miss Hilly was responsible for spreading a new way to avoid diseases, which consisted on all white people

should have a bathroom outside their homes, which should be used by black servants, since blacks were transmitters of unique diseases.

Based on the information written by Plaue (2015), Hilly used this blatantly racist belief to convince other white women to build separate bathrooms for their black maids. In this way, segregated bathrooms represent the private beliefs and social practices that reinforced and expanded institutional segregationist laws. Some other examples of these beliefs include the taboo in white communities against sitting at the same table with black people or sharing the same utensils.

Over the course of the novel, Skeeter realized that to overcome racism in the South, people must overturn Jim Crow's laws while also working to undo the private racist beliefs and social practices that would perpetuate racism and segregation even if the laws no longer existed. The bathrooms came to represent, how such a private place becomes a way to segregate more people of color. This also represents the great level of difficulty that was there in stopping segregation and finding equal rights.

### **2.4 Author's Biography**

Born in 1960 in Jackson, Mississippi, Kathryn Stockett studied English and creative writing in the University of Alabama. After that, Kathryn moved to New York City to work as a publisher. Nine years later, Stockett came back to Mississippi and started to write fiction and wrote the novel *The Help*. This book was rejected by 60 literary agents, until Susan Ramer decided to publish it in 2009. This book propelled Kathryn's career as a writer, as this story was taken with pleasure by many people. The story was based on Stockett's childhood, as she lived in the south with her family and the housekeeper.

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Moreover, during Kathryn's childhood people of color in the south were discriminated. Stockett was raised by a black woman named Demetrie, a woman who as, many other had a deprived life and, in many cases, were treated as slaves. Years later, Kathryn moved to the north, where she realized the different treatment that black people received. In the south, they were treated as servitors, but in the north, they were treated equally. During her life, Kathryn has written two literary works, the first and best known is *The Help*, and the second is the *Love Affairs for Grown-Ups the Help Water, Stone Heart* in 2009.

### 2.5 Plot

The story is set in Jackson Mississippi in 1962. This story talks about a group of black women who lived in this city under the Jim Crow's segregation laws were in force. The environment of the city was full of discrimination against people of color. The 34 chapters the experiences that black society had and focused on women and their work as servitors. These women, as they worked white women of high society, suffered from many injustices, which ranged from bad treatment, exploitation, low pay, segregation, and many others.

The story begins when Skeeter, a white girl who belongs to a recognized family in the city of Jackson, returned to study at the university. Skeeter returned with her dream of being a writer, but the only thing, she found was work as a writer of columns related to cleaning in the city's newspaper. As Skeeter knew nothing about cleaning, she asked one of the maids for help, as Elizabeth worked for one of her friends.

Skeeter was one of those people who did not support discrimination and sought equality between blacks and whites. Therefore, Skeeter eventually tried to convince Aibileen and her friend, Minnie, to write a book about the relationship of black servitude with southern society. At the same time, Skeeter tried to know the truth about the black maid, named Constantine, who

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worked for her family and was very special to her, since when Skeeter returned from the university, she realized that the maid was gone.

When Skeeter got back home, she began to look for a job as a writer, but her mother and friends pressured her to marry and have a family. After this, Skeeter met Stuart, with whom she tried to have a relationship, but it did not work as Stuart tried to change Skeeter's mind about being a writer.

Skeeter convinced Aibileen and Minnie, as well as other maids to write the stories and, in this way, Skeeter ended up writing the book and sent it to the editor in New York. Moreover, she discovered what happened to Constantine. After the book was published, the city of Jackson, Mississippi was not the same, as well as is the lives of Skeeter, Aibileen, Minnie, and the rest of the black maids.

## Chapter III

### Methodological Framework

In this chapter the design and the methods used to elaborate the investigation of the topic will be explaining. At the same time the instruments and data collection and the urges will be present.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

The research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is therefore, based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. Research approach is essentially divided into two categories: approach of data collection and approach of data analysis or reasoning. (Chetty, 2016). The research of the book “*The Help*” will be through a historical approach, which (Editorial, 2013) states:

“The historical approach, usually helps the critic and readers to understand all of the events and forces that might affect the author as he or she is composing the work, and this gives us a more comprehensive understanding to the work itself.”

In other words, Russell (1966) (as cited in (WIJAYA, 2012) assures:

“The critic interprets the poem within the history, or contemporary frame of reference, behind the poem (...) Historical approach is one of the method to analysis literary work in which the author and the reader comprehend the message of the literary work by remembering the moment/historic moment a long with the literary work written.”

For instance, the historical approach is described as the methods that contains the details, the background and the time of the story. This approach will help us to deeply understand, why the

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author wrote this and the effects that the story brought to this. The idea is to show and help the reader to understand some events and the background of all the story and how it is related to the decade that this describes.

It is necessary to mention that the historical approach is the most important of this investigation since, this is used to show how black women were discriminated and segregated enforced by Jim Crow Laws during 1960's. It shows the reality that many women and black people lived during those years and how courage was the most important action that helped these women to be heard. Every black person was treated inhumanly for years since white people considered black skin as less and without rights. For white people all the rights should be for them since for the color of the skin and the position.

It is also important since the objective of the investigation is to remind readers about the discrimination and all the consequences this brought to the society of the 60's and it affected both men and women.

All humans have the same rights and duties, no race is better than another and this is another point to be emphasized. Throughout history the feeling of superiority it has brought hatred on some groups and has also brought injustices as much as mistreatment or deprivation of rights, which makes people decide to confront and ask for justice and often causes unfair deaths.

Superiority has led to the extermination of certain groups of society, since for many people, they were not worthy of all the rights that they had, such as voting, clothing, work or the most valuable life. Groups with ideas of superiority believed that it was they who decided whether "inferior people" should live, give their opinions, have high positions of work, freedom and

many others. It is necessary to mention that in the 60's many laws led to the prohibition of basic rights.

At the same time, the idea is that the reader knows that there are no divisions of groups by skin color, beliefs or places of origin. Whatever happens, it is necessary to emphasize that each person is physically different, but each person has the same rights and not because there is a person with a different skin color means that they should be discriminated against and treated as less. For these and many more reasons, this investigation covers from discrimination to the deprivation of rights.

In this research work different methods were used which helped to carry out the development of each of the topics.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative Research**

The researcher looks at the historical context and the real events shown in the book, along with the social trends of the time (discrimination by race and gender, the idea that black people were transmitters of diseases that white people should avoid at all costs and above all the eternal idea of inferiority based on skin color and place of residence.

On the other hand, there is another method which is the qualitative and (DeFranzo, 2011) explains it as follows:

The qualitative Research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem (...) Some common methods include focus groups (group

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discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfil a given quota.

This method is mainly used in the analysis of topics which need to be thoroughly studied as it helps readers understand why certain events happened, the details and at some point, the reasons why some of the events occurred. The qualitative method makes a literary analysis of the research work.

This method allows the researcher to use his own knowledge, background and even life experiences to make a better exploration of the subjects involved in the investigation. It is about understanding the writer's story, his opinion and why this one took place the development of a story, which is of the utmost importance since it helped mark a before and after in society. Each of the instruments provides a description, answers and a great benefit to the explanation of the story.

Observational research consists of recording behavior in the subject's usual environment.

Characteristics: a) precise definition of the observation conditions, b) systematization and objectivity, and c) rigor in the behavior registration procedure. Observational methods can be with intervention or without intervention. Observation without intervention is intended to observe behavior as it occurs naturally, and in it the observer is limited to recording what he observes, without manipulating or controlling. (n.a, uv.es, n.d)

### 3.2 Research Design

The research design helps research planning and at the same time helps to know what type of method should be applied according to the topic being treated and developed. In this investigation the descriptive method will be apply.

According to (Bhat, n.d) the descriptive research is defined as:

A research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied. This methodology focuses more on the “what” of the research subject rather than the “why” of the research subject.

In other words, descriptive research primarily focuses on describing the nature of a demographic segment, without focusing on “why” a certain phenomenon occurs and it “describes” the subject of the research, without covering “why” it happens.

In a few words this method helps to investigate the subject embodied in the book more thoroughly. This means that the purpose of the book will be analyzed and what are the problems that this story shows us. Many of these problems are discrimination, racism, segregation and we could add others which show us injustice through history, years and decades. How it began, what happened, where it was that it had more impact and what consequences it had in the past and brought to the present will also be part of the development of this research with this descriptive method and the historical approach.

### 3.3 Information Sources

The sources of work are of great importance since this provides us with the material to be explained and will help to use information that is trustworthy for the researcher and in this way the research work will be developed and completed. There are 3 types of sources of information: the primary, secondary, and tertiary.

#### 3.3.1 Primary Sources

(Ullah, 2014) exemplify primary sources as:

Primary data means the raw data (data without fabrication or not tailored data) which has just been collected from the source and has not gone any kind of statistical treatment like sorting and tabulation. The term primary data may sometimes be used to refer to firsthand information. The sources of primary data are primary units such as basic experimental units, individuals, households. Following methods are used to collect data from primary units usually and these methods depends on the nature of the primary unit.

In this investigation the primary sources are the book *The Help* that is the most essential source since in this were found all the details of the story, the purpose, symbols and the story. This is important since gives a better explanation of different events that occur in the whole story.

#### 3.3.2 Secondary Sources

(Ullah, 2014) defines secondary sources as:

The data which has already been collected by someone, may be sorted, tabulated and has undergone a statistical treatment. It is fabricated or tailored data.

Some of the the secondary data may be available from the following sources:

Government Organizations

Teaching and Research Organizations

Research Journals and Newspapers

Internet

In other words, (Streefkerk, 2019) let us know that secondary sources provide second-hand information and commentary from other researchers. Examples include journal articles, reviews, and academic books. A secondary source describes, interprets, or synthesizes primary sources.

This investigation will be carried out through different resources. Internet is going to be one of them, but this will be used for necessary definitions. Most of the information used was taken from the same book.

### **3.3.3 Tertiary Sources**

As based on the information from University of Minnesota these are sources that index, abstract, organize, compile, or digest other sources. Some reference materials and textbooks are considered tertiary sources when their chief purpose is to list, summarize or simply repackage ideas or other information. Tertiary sources are usually not credited to a author.

Some examples of this are dictionaries/encyclopedias (may also be secondary), almanacs, fact books, Wikipedia, bibliographies (may also be secondary), directories, guidebooks, manuals, handbooks, and textbooks (may be secondary), indexing and abstracting sources.

### **3.4 Analysis Categories**

In this investigation there are different topics which have helped to create the different objectives of it. Each of them will be defined and analyzed according to how they were presented in this book.

#### **3.4.1 Racial Segregation**

The main issue is racial segregation which is defined in the webpage (Britannica, 2020) as:

The practice of restricting people to certain circumscribed areas of residence or to separate institutions (e.g., schools, churches) and facilities (parks, playgrounds, restaurants, restrooms) based on race or alleged race.

This means that many people of color during the 60s were deprived of many rights because they had different skin color. Both men and black women were banned from entering many places since it was believed that only white people had the privilege of entering and could not be mixed with each other because black skin made them inferior.

In the whole book racial segregation is the most important topic since it talks about “Jim Crow Laws” which were applied in the southern United States. These promoted the separation of white and black people in public transportation and schools. When referring to separation, it refers to prevent any contact between blacks and whites as equals.

#### **3.4.2 Racism**

The second issue that is shown in the book is racism that (Smedley, 2017) defines as:

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Racism, also called racialism, any action, practice, or belief that reflects the racial worldview—the ideology that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others.

Along with segregation racism is addressed throughout the history of *The Help*, since being people of color of

different skin was treated as less, as people who had no right to almost anything. The fight against racism is presented in this story with the speech that Martin Luther King, who was fighting racial discrimination and was struggling to have the same rights that white people had, such as the right to work, life, economy, I treat and most importantly the right to freedom and life.

## Chapter V

### Data Analysis

In this chapter, information collected from both the book and from different sources that were used for the development of the research work will be analyzed. Also included is the complete analysis of all the theories used along with that other literary device with which the work will also be better evaluated to achieve a better understanding of the book.

#### 4.1 Approaches to the Investigation

The research, which is an analysis of the book *The Help*, will be carried out through the historical approach which is the most appropriate to carry out the research.

According to (Crews, 2014) this is the definition of literary criticism:

Literary criticism, the reasoned consideration of literary works and issues. It applies, as a term, to any argumentation about literature, whether specific works are analyzed. More strictly construed, the term covers only what has been called “practical criticism,” the interpretation of meaning and the judgment of quality. Criticism in this narrow sense can be distinguished not only from aesthetics (the philosophy of artistic value) but also from other matters that may concern the student of literature: biographical questions, bibliography, historical knowledge, sources and influences, and problems of method. Criticism will here be taken to cover all phases of literary understanding, though the emphasis will be on the evaluation of literary works and of their authors’ places in literary history.

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There are different types of literary criticism that can be used, in this work the investigation follows is the historical approach. Which according to (Salirickandres, 2017)

The historical criticism relies heavily on the author and his world. In the historical view, it is important to understand the author and his world in order to understand his intent and to make sense of his work. In this view, the work is informed by the author's beliefs, prejudices, time, and history, and to fully understand the work, we must understand the author and his age.

This approach, the author's life is an important fact since will help the reader to understand why the story was wrote. Every event that happened to the author and every detail that surrounded to the author's life is important to know.

In many cases, when an author writes a story there is a background, which means that during his life these events happened to him which became very important. On the other hand, in some cases it can also be fiction and a lot of creativity to create these stories. The story told in *The Help* is real since in the author's biography, she tells us how she had some memories of her own childhood and the help named Dimitri who served in her house. The moment she moved north, she realized how black people, especially women, were treated differently, in a bad way, in the place where she grew up and wanted to show that in her book. He wanted to capture how society in many places is not fair and that it was necessary to find a solution to the problem.

The researcher will use the knowledge of the subject to explain and develop in detail the events of the story.

In this investigation, it is important to use the historical approach since the researcher wants to

provide more details about the history in the 60's and wants to detail the most important and most impactful events. The idea is also to remind readers about the social problem that existed for many years due to the idea of superiority of one ethnic group over another. The author does not suffer the discrimination told in the book, but the author understood the great difference in treatment between one city and another and knew that this situation should be discussed and should come to a change.

Using the historical approach, the researcher has the purpose of society reflecting on these problems that are being exposed in the investigation. We want to show how many black people suffered rejections, mistreatment, discrimination and deprivation. It is necessary for people to know that it is absurd to judge, insult and mistreat a person only for a difference in skin color.

### **4.2 Theories vs literary work**

Research support data was provided in this space. At the same time, selected parts of the work will be shown, which are backed by three different literary theories which according to (Brewton, n.d):

“Literary theory” is the body of ideas and methods we use in the practical reading of literature. By literary theory, we refer not to the meaning of a work of literature but to the theories that reveal what literature can mean (...)

It is literary theory that formulates the relationship between author and work; literary theory develops the significance of race, class, and gender for literary study, both from the standpoint of the biography of the author and an analysis of their thematic presence within texts. It offers varying approaches for understanding the role of historical context

in interpretation as well as the relevance of linguistic and unconscious elements of the text.

Literary theorists trace the history and evolution of the different genres—narrative, dramatic, lyric—in addition to the more recent emergence of the novel and the short story, while also investigating the importance of formal elements of literary structure.

These theories are used to support parts or quotes from the book *The Help*. It is important to mention that each theory relates to the objectives proposed at the beginning of the investigation

#### 4.2.1 Tables

**Table 1**

**Theory 1**

<b>Racism and Social Class</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p><b>Chapter 1</b></p> <p><b>Hilly Holbrook</b></p> <p>"A bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. I've even notified the surgeon general of Mississippi to see if he'll endorse the idea. I'll pass." (1.32)</p>	<p>Regarding the second theory, it is important to remember that racism has affected many people for decades. Every time the word racism appears, it reminds us that it is still present in society and that many people are fighting against it. It is necessary to reinforce respect no matter what. In this story, racism is shown in many phrases and together with social class it made racism worse.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 7</b></p> <p><b>Constantine Bates</b></p> <p>I could tell she don't understand why a colored woman can't raise no white-skin baby in Mississippi. It is a hard-lonely life, not belonging here nor there. (7.91)</p>	<p>An example of racism is present in this sentence. In the story Hilly made a proposal which was that every white person had to invest in an extra toilet for black employees since for Hilly black people could have contagious diseases which could be dangerous for white people. After this proposal was presented, many people decided to build separate, small and hot bathrooms in which practically a person could fit.</p> <p>For Constantine it was not an option to raise her white daughter since it was known that they were in the eyes of others and for the whole society was practically a crime. Constantine had to sacrifice the upbringing of her daughter Lulabelle and had to give her up for adoption. Society had a rule which should be respected. That was, whites belong to the territory of whites and blacks to the territory of blacks.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 11</b></p> <p><b>Aibileen Clark</b></p> <p>"Shame ain't black, like dirt, like I always thought it was. Shame be the color of a new white uniform your mother ironed all night to pay for, white without a smudge or speck a work-dirt on it." (11.99)</p>	<p>Each of the maids' lives was complicated by the lack of opportunity, which made losing a job difficult.</p> <p>Another factor that further complicated the life of the maids was that if one of them made a mistake related to the family they worked for; they could have a bad reputation since black maids were recommended among the same white women.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 5</b></p> <p><b>Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan</b></p> <p>I knew he wasn't married to Constantine's mother, because that was against the law. (5.121)</p>	<p>This phrase is related to the time Constantine told Skeeter that his father was a white man, which made her understand that it was impossible for Constantine's father to have married his mother, since in those times interracial marriage or relationships were prohibited for everyone. For that racist society there was no option for the colors to mix, the rule of whites with whites and blacks with blacks should be followed.</p> <p>Probably if society had learned Constantine's mother would have been tried and had serious consequences.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 7</b></p> <p><b>Mae Mobley Leefolt</b></p> <p>I want to yell so loud that Baby Girl can hear me that dirty ain't a color, disease ain't the negro side of town. I want to stop that moment from coming – and it come in every white child's life – when they start to think that colored folks are not as good as whites. (7.80)</p>	<p>Aibileen loved Mae Mobley with her life, but she knew that as the girl grew up she was going to find out what society was like and that at some point she was going to have the same thought that blacks were less, dirty and less valuable to society . Aibileen wished that this could be changed, and that Mae Mobley understood that blacks were not the bad side of society but were equal to whites. Aibileen’s idea was to teach children that black was a simple color and that that did not determine whether they were less valuable or less person. Every time they were alone, Aibileen told Mae Mobley equal stories, in a way that she understood that they should be treated with equality and that it doesn't matter what society says, but what she thinks and in a certain way That was going to help gradually erase racism.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 11</b></p> <p>"You know colored folks ain't allowed in that library." (11.21)</p>	<p>Segregation caused people of color to be banned from many places such as cinemas, supermarkets, restaurants and even libraries. It was normal to see posters around the city which indicated that black people were not allowed, and that rule should be respected. In the story there is an example of how a black man suffered a beating from entering a white bath. This and many more were the consequences they could have if they disobeyed the rules.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 12</b></p> <p><b>Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan</b></p> <p>Hilly raises her voice about three octaves when talking to black people. Elizabeth smiles like she's talking to a child, although certainly not her own. I'm starting to notice things. (12.57)</p>	<p>Skeeter realized how Hilly and Elizabeth changed their way of speaking towards blacks. Many of the people believed that black people had no education, for some blacks had the inability to read and write because of the lack of teaching of these abilities. The tone of voice they used or the way they spoke showed how white people understood that these people did have education and were not illiterate. Little by little Skeeter was noticing the big mistake and the injustice of treatment towards African Americans.</p>

<p><b>Aibileen Clark</b></p> <p>"These is white rules. I don't know which ones you following and which ones you ain't. (11.81)</p> <p>We look at each other for a second.</p> <p>"I'm tired of rules," I say. (12.82)</p>	<p>The purpose of the story that Kathryn Stockett had was to show how Jim Crow's rules of segregation impacted the life of many people. These rules enforced the racial segregation in public places. This phrase was said in the middle of a conversation between Skeeter and Aibileen, in which it shows how Aibileen is worried about breaking one of the famous rules and having serious consequences. Many more were the fears that these black women had when being with a completely different person.</p> <p>For Minnie and all the maids who participated in the creation of the book, it was difficult to tell Skeeter the stories, since they feared they would be betrayed at any time. Unfortunately, in these times if some target knew what they were doing it was going to cause great damage to every black woman and they were going to</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 17</b></p> <p><b>Minnie Jackson</b></p> <p>"What am I doing? I must be crazy, giving a white woman the sworn secrets of the colored race to a white lady. [...] Feel like I'm talking behind my own back." (17.50)</p> <p><b>Chapter 24</b></p> <p><b>Minnie Jackson</b></p> <p>Is this really happening? Is a white woman really beating up a white man to save me? Or did he shake my brain pan loose and I'm over there dead on the ground... (24.95)</p>	<p>have its consequences. At the same time Minny felt that she betrayed her people by telling all her secrets.</p> <p>At the time when Celia saved Minny this change of opinion about white women, since all black people had the prospect that if they were attacked by a white man, nobody would do anything about it. So when the white man attacked Minny and Celia hit him it was really impressive to see that not all white women were cruel like Hilly.</p>
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**Table 2**  
**Theory 2**

<b>Consequences of racism</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p>"What I care about is if ... a white lady will call my girls dirty."</p> <p><b>Mিনny, Chapter 17</b></p>	<p>One of the biggest consequences due to discrimination was that black people were listed as carriers of diseases that could be dangerous to all white people. At least this was what Hilly proposed to society through a committee and when this was accepted by all, the creation of a special bathroom for black workers, both men and women, emerged.</p> <p>Mিনny shows her concerns to know that as their daughters grow up, they will be listening to comments about black people being dirty and because of this, they are carriers of diseases. It was necessary to teach them since childhood to ignore such hurtful comments, which became "normal" in this Mississippi society. It was difficult for a mother to know that her children would continue to suffer the same discrimination that all black adults lived day by day.</p>

<p>"My boys are equally as smart, equally eager for an education. But we only had the money for one and I ask you, how do you choose which of your twin sons should go to college and which should take a job spreading tar? How do you tell one that you love him just as much as the other, but you've decided he won't be the one to get a chance in life? You don't. You find a way to make it happen. Any way at all."</p>	<p>In this part of the book Yule May decided to steal Hilly's earrings, which she did not use. Yule May's idea was to be able to send her two children to university, since they had money only for one. She expresses the sadness and pain she feels knowing that one of her children will not have the opportunity for education. However, Hilly, realizing that Yule May had the earrings, decided to put her in jail, without an opportunity to explain herself. Hilly did not give her a chance to explain why she did it and maybe just fire her instead of putting her in jail.</p>
<p><b>Yule May, Pg. 294</b></p> <p>"I used to be a good fighter.' She looks out along the boxwoods, wipes off her sweat</p>	<p>In Mississippi, not only blacks were discriminated, but low-income whites were also discriminated. Society was used to only high-class white people relating to each other, but when Celia appeared and married a</p>

<p>with her palm. 'If you'd known me ten years ago....'</p> <p>She's got no goo on her face, her hairs not sprayed, her nightgown's like an old prairie dress. She takes a deep breath through her nose and I see it. I see the white-trash girl she was ten years ago. She was strong. She didn't take no shit from nobody.</p>	<p>man of great importance, the women of the city who assumed Hilly's role rejected her because of her social class provenance. The most important fact for whites was to have power in everything and at the same time be the best class. Celia during the story shows that regardless of skin color, she respected everyone since she knew the importance of humility.</p>
<p><b>Minnie, Pg. 365</b></p> <p><b>Chapter 13</b></p>	
<p><b>Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan</b></p> <p>But then I realize, like a shell cracking open in my head, there's no difference between those government laws and Hilly building Aibileen a bathroom in the garage, except</p>	<p>For Skeeter, every one of Jim Crow's laws were absurd since the only thing they did, was discriminate and steal the rights of blacks. Like Hilly's proposals for the city were more absurd for the same fact, which meant that blacks and whites could not have contact and less share the toilet, since according to Hilly the large</p>

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<p>ten minutes' worth of signatures in the state capitol. (13.92)</p>	<p>number of diseases that had blacks were dangerous. For her, black skin meant dirt and disease.</p>
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**Table 3**  
**Theory 3**

<b>4 Types of Racial Discrimination</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p><b>Explicit and Intentional Discrimination</b></p>	<p>This refers to the types of discrimination that society carries out. Like verbal discrimination, avoidance, segregation and physical attack. This theory goes hand in hand with racist comments or jokes, which in many cases are comments that are made without offending but that at the same time can affect different people without the person who made the comment noticing. At the same time, segregation is related to the prohibition that members of a certain skin color, belief or nationality be banned from places and forbidden access because they are exclusive to a certain part of the population.</p> <p>In the history of <i>The Help</i> this is a present issue which shows how many people throw racist comments with intent to hurt and sometimes unintentionally, since the society of those times was normal racial discrimination against people of</p>

<p><b>Automatic Discrimination, Subtle and Unconscious</b></p>	<p>color. It is important to emphasize that on several occasions physical attacks were carried out, such as when white men attacked a black man for entering a bathroom, which did not correspond, to him.</p> <p>This type of racism shows us that behind a simple comment or a simple joke related to race, skin color, nationality, disability or belief, racism is found. This is often disguised as jokes and in many cases the people who say them do not realize that they can offend the people around them. This racism does not become as remarkable as in the past, but it is subtly reflected.</p> <p>Throughout history, discrimination in society is palpable and in many cases these irrespective comments made them indirectly colored people as simple comments without offense, which offended the employees who worked for the person.</p>
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<p><b>Statistical Discrimination or Profiling</b></p>	<p>This type of prejudice is catalog as when a person is judged by their appearance not by their personality.</p> <p>This is demonstrated in wel book when Skeeter looks for work and for the simple fact of being a woman, many of the interviewers deny him the opportunity. This happens since the interviewer assumed that because she was a woman, she did not comply with the standards and was not going to have the capacity to develop the work. It is there where she is given the opportunity to work as a writer of a section of the newspaper for homemakers, about tips on how to clean, undo stains and much more.</p> <p>Women in these times were seen as useful people to be in the house and accompany the husband; very few had the opportunity to have a high-ranking job since men occupied them all.</p>
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In summary, this discrimination is carried out when a person for only their appearance is classified as having a low economy.

A good example is when Aibileen travels home from the city. The society was in charge of separating the blacks and taking them to live in a city that showed low resources, which according to the whites went with the economy of each black person. There was not a single black who lived mixed in the city with whites since he was not allowed.

### **4.3 Themes, Motifs and Symbols**

In this section, the themes, motifs and symbols that stand out in the book *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, will be analyzed. These are tools that help in the analysis of the research work and make the reader understand it in a deeper way and understand what the point of view the writer wants to give in the story.

#### **4.3.1 Themes**

The first device that is going to be analyzed is the theme as stated by (Notari, 2014)

The theme in a story is its underlying message, or 'big idea.' In other words, what critical belief about life is the author trying to convey in the writing of a novel, play, short story or poem? This belief, or idea, transcends cultural barriers. It is usually universal in nature. When a theme is universal, it touches on the human experience, regardless of race or language. It is what the story means. Often, a piece of writing will have more than one theme.

The theme can be found throughout whole story or just in some parts of this.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p>Race, Racism, Discrimination and Segregation</p>	<p>In every action that is carried out and attentive against blacks is considered racism.</p> <p>The injustices that take place throughout history against African Americans show us how hate was present in these times. In the book, racism is clearly exemplified in each chapter, with every abuse that is done to a black person. Hilly's treatment of Yule May shows that no matter the needs that these people have, the only thing that mattered to most white people was for blacks to work as they should for a bad salary.</p>
<p>Social Class</p>	<p>As stated by me in chapter II, social class is one of the topics that is most present in this novel, since you can see how women and their high-level families are the best known in the city, occupy positions of great importance and attend extravagant places.</p>

Gender Inequality/Discrimination	In the whole book gender discrimination is present, not only talking about Black women. White women suffered inequality since only men can work in high positions. At the same time the character of Skeeter also shows the constant struggle that white women had to be considered the perfect women to find a husband and form a family.
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### 4.3.2 Symbols

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Symbolism can take different forms. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant. Sometimes, however, an action, an event or a word spoken by someone may have a symbolic value. (Editors, 2013) As mentioned, the symbol has a denotation but the author decides to give it the meaning according to the context.

Symbols	Interpretation
Minnie's "Special Ingredient" Pie.	<p>As mentioned by me in chapter II, in the novel Minnie is known for her cooking, since the meals are delicious. One of the main attractions of Minnie are the pies which at the time of making meetings, people wanted her to cook a chocolate pie. Minnie used her delicious meals to avoid being fired, as it is also known as being "sass" and outspoken which can make her lose her job.</p>

The Bitter Seed.	<p>After the death of his son Aibileen feels that it is not the same. Every day it is more difficult for Aibileen because she herself described how after the death of this, a bitter seed grew inside her and this caused her not to be the same woman with joy and energy.</p>
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<p>The Mimosa Tree</p>	<p>Aibileen describes that the bad treatment he receives every day makes this bitterness grow a little more. The seed is interpreted as racism can affect the sweetest person and how this can change the attitude day by day.</p> <p>On Chapter II, I mentioned my interpretation that is that Celia goes through two situations which bring her great suffering. The first situation is the rejection suffered by the white women of the city for not being of the upper class. The second situation is not being able to give a baby to her husband, the constant abortions that Celia has does not want to leave the house because of fear and at the same time Celia believes that being at home with rest will help her to have a baby.</p>
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### **4.3.3 Motifs**

A motif is a recurring symbol which takes on figurative meaning. (...) A motif can be almost anything: an idea, an object, a concept, a character archetype, the weather, a color, or even a statement. Motifs are used to establish a theme or a certain mood; they have a symbolic meaning. It's typically pretty clear when a writer is using a motif. They're not usually associated with hidden meanings because the writer wants you to recognize them. They play a role in defining the makeup of a narrative. (Casano, Study.com, n.d)

In other words, a motive gives the essence to the literary work. Helps the reader understand the way the story progresses and understand the development of the story.

<b>Motifs</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p>“The Help”</p>	<p>As mentioned by me in chapter II, it refers to the black servitude of Jackson, Mississippi, since black women must do all the household things and it refers to the relationships between white families and their maids. White women depended heavily on black maids, since each of the maids did all the housework and they dedicated themselves to meet to eat, talk and in the case of Hilly to organize future meetings</p>

<p>Sheets</p>	<p>The sheets represent how the maids had to do everything in the white houses, since in many cases they had to perform cleaning tasks which could become extremely repulsive, things that many times the same whites had to do for the fact that they were private things, but</p>
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<p>Bathrooms</p>	<p>it was still the work of the maids since for the whites it was not of importance and they already depended on them to maintain the cleanliness in their homes.</p> <p>Jim Crow's laws influenced the creation of bathrooms. The purpose of these was to avoid the greatest contact between whites and blacks and not to share service since for Hilly every black person could spread diseases and get them, so the law was carried out and in many houses this project was carried out.</p>
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## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

There are three objectives for a conclusion. The first is to present the conclusions that have been generated when researching and analyzing the book *The Help* and all the aspects that were developed.

The second is to show the objectives achieved in the development of research. At the same time, it is shown whether these proposed objectives were achieved or not. This process also included the analysis of certain fragments as theories that the researcher managed to relate to the objectives, including symbols, motifs and themes that complement the theories.

The third is to show what the recommendations are when carrying out a new investigation on this book.

#### 5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion

The purpose of the conclusion is to show the matter that the researcher found throughout the research, at the same time to highlight the importance of the events that occurred in the decade of the 60s and how this came to affect society.

According to (Labaree, 2009) the conclusion is intended to help the reader understand why your research should matter to them after they have finished reading the paper. A conclusion is not merely a summary of the main topics covered or a re-statement of your research problem, but a synthesis of key points and, if applicable, where you recommend new areas for future research. For most college-level research papers, one or two well-developed paragraphs is enough for a conclusion, although in some cases, three or more paragraphs may be required.

In this investigation, the researcher managed to conclude different problems that were discovered throughout the investigation, about the main objectives and many other aspects, which helped to learn and understand the situations experienced.

The researcher learned about concepts such as racism, segregation rules, violence and discrimination, both racial and gender.

At the same time, he learned about the fight of people of color and, day after day, regardless, they took the opportunity to find a solution and get ahead despite so many obstacles.

The researcher also discovered that as simple as a book can help a person to face their fears and with courage. Each one of the women who told their stories showed how to face racism without violence. Many of the people in the city liked to read, and that was how Skeeter's idea of putting together such a revolutionary book made white women read this book and learn the good and bad stories in a very indirect way.

Books can become a stimulus in those moments when a person with words cannot express what he feels, as in the case of Aibileen and Minny. In addition, the researcher discovered that for topics, such as racism, segregation and gender discrimination, there are approaches that can be used to carry out an investigation, for example, the historical is important because it provides background on the subject, which will support us at the time of development.

Another fact that the researcher noticed throughout the work was the gender discrimination that existed against both black and white women. The way Skeeter was judged to be single, to have other priorities, to dress differently and to have a different opinion shows us that in those days white women were deprived of certain activities and jobs. It was shocking to

read about all the Jim Crow rules and know that if someone broke any of those rules, they would suffer terrible consequences such as violence and even being in jail.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

In this section, we will explain how the researcher presents the achievement of the objectives proposed at the beginning of this research. All of these conclusions were based on the book and the historical approach that was chosen to carry out the research. The researcher will show how the objectives established at the beginning were analyzed through theories and the book.

#### **5.2.1. To determine how women's voices have influenced the fight against gender discrimination**

This objective was achieved through the complete analysis of the book, as well as through the search for information that the researcher carried out to obtain more information about this event. This objective achieved through the complete analysis of the book, as well as through the search for information. This objective was developed with the theme of black feminism, that shows the great battle that many black women have carried out in order to end not only racism, but with the fight for gender equality. This is how Skeeter shows with her character the importance of continuing to look for opportunities, get a job and seek gender equality.

Through the demonstration of events that occurred decades ago, the researcher seeks to make readers remember these topics and take them as a matter that must be left behind. Also, be remembered and kept in mind to avoid it and that at some point a person decides to carry out some racist action and affects certain groups in society again. It is highly relevant to point out the deprivation of rights that blacks suffered for many years and to know that all black people knew that they had to obey or were going to be punished.

The theory manages to show that gender discrimination was an event that really happened and that was how Skeeter managed to develop the book and help employees express themselves without consequences.

This objective had a positive result in society, since the fight that took place against injustices and inhuman acts against blacks was worth it. Let us emphasize that even though years have passed, there are still certain racist behaviors against people of color that must be corrected.

With this, the researcher expects each reader to create awareness in people about tolerance between different groups in society.

### **5.2.2. To describe the situation that women and black people lived in the 60's**

This objective was developed with the help of critical race theory. This showed us how society separated black people because of their skin color and their absorbed beliefs that black meant dirt and disease.

These and many others were the consequences of racism. We must emphasize the idea of the objective was to show how segregation arose through racism. The book focuses on the black race, but also on the lives of black women and their struggle to find an equal status for their color and gender.

Every black person was discriminated in many ways such as the deprivation of rights, the prohibition of entry to public places, which were considered only for the upper class and white, as in the buses there were divisions of whites ahead and blacks behind. Anyone who violated the laws was punished and it is here where the researcher unites the objective with the story told in *The Help*.

### **5.2.3. To establish the contrast of the negative and positive impact of racism and discrimination in the United States during 1962-1963**

This objective was of great importance since we evaluated the positive and negative aspects that it brought to society between 1962 and 1963. There are 4 types of racial discrimination that have been present in society for many years and that in most of the cases are acts done unconsciously. In many cases the racist comments that are made are made in an unconscious way since society has become accustomed to them therefore, they are difficult to eradicate.

It is important to mention how this situation was experienced so much in the book *The Help*. This showed us how there were comments like this daily. The researcher shows us how white people in many cases make racist comments all the time in an unconscious way.

### **5.3 Restatement of the Research Question**

The researcher carried out the investigation using the historical approach. This approach helped find a large amount of information for the development of the topic.

To better explain, it is necessary to ask, how did racism and segregation affect Aibileen during her lifetime and black people nowadays?

Throughout the investigation it can be seen how Aibileen suffered the consequences of racism and segregation. The treatment of white people towards Aibileen and blacks shows us the great suffering and injustices they lived through. But you must emphasize the strength of this to live your day to day and work.

She managed to have that strength because he knew that at some point this situation would end and everything would improve. That was the hope that both Aibileen and the other

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black people had in mind and in this way, they could continue their lives and could endure mistreatment and injustice.

Aibileen gained motivation by writing stories about the white female bosses she has had. This helped her get the resentment and bitterness out of her, distracting her and making her feel free. Also, the motivation to know that she was doing something that her son dreamed of made her take risks, even knowing that it could be dangerous if someone found out what they were doing.

With this research it was possible to know how even in the 21st century people continue to use racist comments in a conscious and unconscious way. You can still see how there are victims of discrimination, insults and abuse. It has all been the result of discrimination against blacks that started centuries ago.

Even though this situation took place decades ago, it is necessary for society to know about this past situation that influenced what is today. It is also better to know about these topics so that at no point in life do these situations happen again.

Every person who suffered decades ago struggled at some point to achieve equality. This is how the book shows that despite so much suffering, each of the black people knew that quality would come in due course.

Another important point that must be emphasized is how not only the fight of each person is shown, but also the fight that Martin Luther King was in and of course the great marches for the fight for equality.

Even in the 21st century there are victims of insults since for many people skin color is still a joke and they simply launch their comments, in which there is still a superiority of white

skinned people over black skinned people. And this as a result of past prejudices which have not been completely eradicated. For this reason, people must be informed so that they do not continue repeating themselves.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

At the end of a research it is important to give recommendations in case that in the future there is someone interested in researching “The Help” book or a book with a similar topic. This in order to help and teach how the analysis should be carried out, as well as advice on what should be included and what not, as well as what are reliable sources to search for information.

Another recommendation for the researcher is that when investing you have to have mental strength since you can find a bit painful and disturbing information about situations lived and told by people of color. As a last point, the researcher who is going to look for information on racism, segregation and discrimination should investigate thoroughly, since very valuable information could be found which would help the development of the work.

An important point is to look for information or stories that are related to these topics. They can be newspaper documents, history pages, books and even testimonies of people who went through the situation. Since it is important to acquire a good knowledge on the subject in order to know how to explain, develop and exemplify our work.

It is important to dedicate time to literary analysis since phrases, quotes, themes, symbols, motives and purposes of the author must be explained in detail. We must also analyze which are the most relevant characters, which will help us to understand the reader what the story is about and who it is focused on. Analysis involves a long process, but it is of great importance to carry it out.

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Another recommendation is that the researcher needs not only to know about the topic but also about the book or story that is going to be discussed. At the same time, the approach to the work must be carefully chosen, since this depends on the proposed topic.

Another important point is to look for the most important points in which the author wants to emphasize, for this it is necessary to know which approach is appropriate and with which a complete analysis of the story can be carried out. Since if an appropriate approach is chosen, this can influence and can cause that at the time of the development of the work the background cannot be explained, and we cannot help ourselves with stories related to ours. Simply put, you can limit the number of topics or documents that can be used.

It should also be emphasized that if someone wants to develop topics like this, it is necessary to maintain a neutral position which will help us develop the topics better. The idea is to inform readers about an event that happened decades ago which is of utmost importance. This will be done to inform and not to hurt readers in any way.

And finally, the researcher needs to keep in mind that the purpose is to inform, not to judge the way in which they acted.

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