



صراع الطبقات والقوة الاجتماعية: تحليل ماركسي لرواية "المساعدة" لكاثرين ستوكيت
Class Conflict and Social Power: A Marxist Analysis of Kathryn
Stockett's The Help

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Abstract

This article examines Kathryn Stockett's The Help through a Marxist lens, analyzing how class struggles and power dynamics influence the experiences of Black domestic workers and their white employers in 1960s Jackson, Mississippi. It investigates how capitalist structures reinforce racial and economic oppression, particularly through the exploitation of Black maids, whose labor is indispensable yet persistently undervalued. Drawing on Marxist concepts such as alienation, surplus value, and ideological hegemony, the study reveals how the novel critiques systemic inequality, highlighting the challenges of resistance and cross-class solidarity. The analysis focuses on the role of the white bourgeoisie, represented by characters like Hilly Holbrook, in sustaining racial and economic hierarchies through dominant ideologies that justify the subjugation of Black workers. At the same time, it examines how the maids assert their agency—most notably through their participation in Skeeter Phelan's book project—as an act of defiance against the oppressive system. However, the study also critiques the novel's reliance on the "white savior" narrative, arguing that Skeeter's prominence risks overshadowing the maids' resistance and inadvertently reinforcing the very structures of power the novel seeks to challenge.

By situating The Help within a Marxist framework, this study highlights the novel's dual role as both a critique of and a product of the class hierarchies it depicts. While the story sheds light on the intersections of race, class, and gender in perpetuating systemic oppression, it also underscores the difficulties of achieving meaningful change within a capitalist society. Ultimately, this study contends that The Help offers a nuanced yet problematic exploration of class conflict and resistance, encouraging deeper reflection on the complexities of solidarity and the enduring impact of racial and economic inequality.

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المخلص

تستعرض هذه المقالة رواية "المساعدة" لكاثرين ستوكت من خلال منظور ماركسي، حيث تفحص كيف يشكل صراع الطبقات وديناميكيات القوة تجارب الخادمت السوداوات وأرباب العمل البيض في مدينة جاكسون بولاية ميسيسيبي في ستينيات القرن الماضي. كما تتناول كيف تعزز الهياكل الرأسمالية القمع العرقي والاقتصادي، لا سيما من خلال استغلال الخادمت السوداوات، حيث يُعتبر عملهن أساسيًا ولكن يتم التقليل من قيمته باستمرار. بالاعتماد على المفاهيم الماركسية مثل الاغتراب، والقيمة الفائضة، والهيمنة الإيديولوجية، تكشف الدراسة كيف تنتقد الرواية عدم المساواة النظامية، بينما تبرز أيضًا التحديات التي تواجه المقاومة والتضامن عبر الطبقات.

يركز التحليل على دور البورجوازية البيضاء، التي تمثلها شخصيات مثل هيللي هولبروك، في الحفاظ على التسلسل الهرمي العرقي والاقتصادي من خلال الأيديولوجيات السائدة التي تبرر خضوع العمال السود. في الوقت ذاته، تستعرض كيف تؤكد الخادمت وكالتهن – خاصة من خلال مشاركتهن في مشروع الكتابة الذي تقوده سكينر فيلان – كعمل تحدي ضد النظام القمعي. ومع ذلك، تنتقد الدراسة أيضًا اعتماد الرواية على السردية "المنفذ الأبيض"، حيث تجادل بأن بروز سكينر قد يطغى على مقاومة الخادمت ويعزز بشكل غير مقصود الهياكل نفسها للقوة التي تسعى الرواية إلى تحديها.

من خلال وضع "المساعدة" ضمن إطار ماركسي، تبرز هذه الدراسة دور الرواية المزدوج ككل من نقد ومنتج للهياكل الطبقيّة التي تصورها. في حين أن القصة تسلط الضوء على تقاطع العرق والطبقة والجنس في استدامة القمع النظامي، فإنها تبرز أيضًا صعوبة تحقيق التغيير الجذري في مجتمع رأسمالي. في النهاية، ترى هذه الدراسة أن "المساعدة" تقدم استكشافًا دقيقًا ولكنه إشكالي لصراع الطبقات والمقاومة، مما يشجع على التفكير العميق في تعقيدات التضامن وأثر عدم المساواة العرقية والاقتصادية المستمر.

Introduction

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* represents a noteworthy contribution to contemporary American literature, illuminating the complex interplay of race, gender, and class. Although much of the discussion surrounding the novel centers on its racial themes, it also provides a robust critique of class-based oppression. This study employs a Marxist critical framework to analyze the economic and ideological structures influencing the relationships between domestic workers and their employers.

As Terry Eagleton articulates, Marxist criticism views literature as "not merely a reflection of historical processes but an active intervention in them" (Eagleton, 2013, p. 6). Within this context, the article examines the mechanisms of exploitation, the function of ideology, and the potential for resistance depicted in *The Help*.

According to Karl Marx, class conflict is central to his critique of capitalism; history has been defined by the struggle between two principal classes: the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and the proletariat, or the working class. The bourgeoisie exploits the labour of the proletariat by extracting surplus value from their work while maintaining power through economic and social

structures (Marx, 2022). For Marx, the inherent inequality between these two classes gives rise to economic and ideological class struggle. He argued that the ruling class employs ideology to sustain their dominance, presenting their position as natural and inevitable. Ideologies, such as the racial ideologies depicted in *The Help*, serve to legitimize the economic exploitation of the working class and to suppress any potential movements toward resistance.

According to Marx, social power is not only a product of economic wealth but is also shaped and perpetuated by social structures and institutions that maintain class divisions. These institutions—such as the family, religion, and education—serve to reinforce the dominant position of the ruling class and perpetuate the subjugation of the working class. Marx referred to these as ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), which help shape individuals' worldviews to align with the ruling class's interests (Althusser, 2014).

In the context of *The Help*, social power is manifested through the white families' control over the black domestic workers. Even though the maids are essential to the functioning of the households, they remain economically dependent and socially inferior. The capitalist system relies on racialized class structures to maintain control, ensuring that black workers remain subordinate, both economically and socially.

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* has garnered considerable academic attention since its release, particularly for its portrayal of the intersecting issues of race, class, and gender within the context of the American South during the Civil Rights Movement. Scholars have approached the novel through a range of theoretical frameworks, including Marxism, feminism, and intersectionality, offering a variety of critiques that engage with the narrative and its representations. While these critical discussions have provided valuable insights into the novel's exploration of social dynamics, several key areas remain underexplored. This review examines the existing literature and outlines how this study aims to contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation surrounding *The Help*.

Elizabeth Abel (2012), in her *Black and White Women's Narratives in Southern Fiction*, provides a critical lens on Stockett's portrayal of Black women's voices in *The Help*. Abel critiques the novel for prioritizing the white protagonist, Skeeter, at the expense of allowing the Black maids to articulate their own stories fully. She argues that while the novel offers some insights into the lives of

Black maids, it ultimately casts Skeeter as the heroic figure, thereby marginalizing the voices of the very women whose experiences are meant to be illuminated.

Abel suggests that this narrative dynamic reflects a broader issue within Southern literature, where white authors often dominate the storytelling, inadvertently reinforcing the racial hierarchies they intend to critique. She posits that *The Help* could have served as a more powerful critique of race and class in the South had it prioritized the experiences and perspectives of Black women. By foregrounding the white perspective, the novel risks oversimplifying the historical and political complexities of racial oppression, which ultimately undermines its potential to effectively challenge the status quo.

Dana Williams (2011) in her article *Intersectionality in Contemporary American Fiction* deepens the exploration of intersectionality by examining how race, gender, and class intersect in the lives of the Black maids in *The Help*. Williams emphasizes the systemic oppression these women endure, yet her analysis predominantly centers on the individual experiences of Black women as they are framed through the perspective of the white protagonist. While this focus is valuable, it tends to overlook a more comprehensive investigation of class as a pivotal element in the novel's portrayal of racial hierarchy.

Although the interplay of race and gender is addressed, the specific influence of class—particularly the economic forces that underpin the oppression of Black maids—is not sufficiently developed. This study aims to fill that void by offering a Marxist analysis of the novel, specifically examining how capitalism shapes the relationship between white employers and Black workers and how class dynamics intensify racial and gender inequalities. By scrutinizing the economic structures at play, this research underscores the dual invisibility and essentiality of the Black maids' labor, thereby enriching our understanding of their lived experiences beyond individual narratives.

Terry Eagleton (2013), in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, explores how literature can illuminate the class-based structures that underpin society. His insights are particularly relevant for understanding *The Help*, as they underscore the role of economic exploitation in perpetuating social hierarchies. However, much of the existing scholarship on the novel has concentrated on the individual

experiences of oppression encountered by the characters rather than critically examining how the broader economic system—especially capitalist relations—sustains racial inequalities.

While many critiques of *The Help* provide valuable insights into its exploration of race, they often overlook the economic systems that support racial oppression. This study differs by focusing on the novel's treatment of labor, class struggle, and capitalist exploitation. Rather than interpreting *The Help* solely as a racial commentary, this paper examines how economic structures perpetuate oppression and hinder meaningful resistance. By applying a Marxist framework, this analysis highlights the ways in which class conflict and racial discrimination intersect, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics portrayed in the novel.

1.1. Social Classes: Wealthy White Individuals vs. Black Maids

In *The Help*, the divide between wealthy white families and Black maids is striking. The white families enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, benefiting from the hard work of their domestic staff, while the Black maids represent the working class, facing daily struggles for survival.

The novel meaningfully shows how essential the maids' labor is to the well-being and success of these households. They cook, clean, and care for children, all crucial tasks that keep everything running smoothly. Yet, despite their vital roles, the maids receive low wages, endure tough working conditions, and are often treated as less than human.

Their contributions, though significant, are frequently overlooked, highlighting the deep-seated oppression and discrimination they face. This dynamic not only reveals the economic disparities between the classes but also sheds light on the social hierarchies that devalue the lives and experiences of these incredible women. Through the stories of the maids, the novel encourages us to confront the realities of race and class in the South, prompting us to reflect on the inequalities that continue to affect society today.

Marxist scholar Raymond Williams (1983) also asserts that class is more than just an economic status—it's a relationship between people. This dynamic is evident in *The Help*, where black maids like Aibileen perform essential emotional and physical labor without receiving respect or recognition. Aibileen questions why, despite the importance of her work, she has no autonomy:

“I raise them children, though, they do not belong to me. They are the Phelans.” (Stockett, 2009, p. 42). Her words reflect the kind of alienation Marx described, where workers are separated from the fruits of their labor and the benefits that come with it. Aibileen’s work is invaluable to the white families she serves, yet she has no claim over her efforts or even a lasting bond with the children she raises. The class hierarchy is also reflected in material conditions: white families live in grand homes, while maids reside in much poorer housing, reliant on the decisions of their employers. This economic oppression is rooted in racial ideology, as wealthy white families uphold their privileged status by invoking beliefs of racial superiority to justify their exploitation of black labor.

A central aspect of Marxist analysis is the concept of alienation, where workers become estranged from the products of their labor. In *The Help*, the Black maids experience this alienation not only from the material rewards of their work but also from the children they care for, who remain under the control of their white employers. For instance, Aibileen’s deep emotional connection with the children she raises is complicated by the strict boundaries of race and class that define her role within the family. In a poignant moment, Aibileen reflects, “I’m the one that’s raisin’ that baby, but she don’t belong to me. She belongs to the Phelans” (Stockett, 2009, p. 42). This statement powerfully encapsulates the economic and emotional alienation faced by Black domestic workers, who are made to feel that their labor and emotional investment hold little value in the eyes of their employers. Through Aibileen’s perspective, the novel highlights the profound disconnection that arises from systemic exploitation and reinforces the notion that, despite their vital contributions, these women remain marginalized and undervalued.

The Black maids in *The Help*, like Aibileen and Minny, carry out essential work for the white families they serve, yet their labor is consistently undervalued and underpaid. Aibileen’s daily mantra to Mae Mobley, “You is kind. You is smart. You is important” (Stockett, 2009, p. 106), is a poignant example of the emotional labor she pours into caring for her employer’s child—a form of work that goes largely unnoticed and uncompensated. This mirrors Marx’s concept of exploitation, where the labor of the working class generates value for the wealthy elite, who control the resources and reap the benefits (Marx & Engels, 1848). Similarly, Minny’s exceptional cooking is described as “the only reason Mister Johnny

married Miss Celia in the first place” (Stockett, 2009, p. 45), underscoring how the maids’ labor is the backbone of the white families’ comfort and stability, even as they remain economically marginalized and overlooked. Their work sustains the lives of others, yet their contributions are rarely acknowledged or rewarded fairly.

1.2. Class and Racism in *The Help*

In *The Help*, the intersection of class and race creates a complex situation that challenges a straightforward Marxist view of class conflict. This dual form of oppression—economic and racial—makes building worker solidarity difficult. Racial hierarchies often divide the working class, strengthening the ruling elite’s power (Harvey, 2007). The novel shows how racial ideas justify economic exploitation, revealing the close ties between race and class in keeping systemic oppression alive. By showing the struggles of Black maids and the challenges in cross-class alliances, the story critiques how class and racism combine in the social and economic systems of the American South.

Skeeter Phelan tries to tell the maids’ stories and symbolizes hope for solidarity across races. But her good intentions are blocked by racial and class tensions that separate her from the maids, showing the difficulties in forming alliances. The novel highlights the maids’ exploitation and the challenges of organizing resistance when ideology and material conditions divide them. *The Help* invites readers to think about the complexity of solidarity under systemic oppression.

The Black maids face both economic exploitation and racial dehumanization, which highlights the intersectionality of their struggles. Aibileen Clark, for example, works hard for Elizabeth Leefolt, doing both physical and emotional labor. She tells Elizabeth’s daughter, “You is kind. You is smart. You is important” (Stockett, 2009, p. 106), showing the emotional effort, she gives—work invisible and unpaid by her employer. This fits Marx’s idea of alienation, where workers are cut off from the value of their labor and treated as tools (Marx, 2023). For Aibileen, alienation is worse because of racial prejudice. She is exploited as a worker and dehumanized as a Black woman, her dignity attacked by the very system that depends on her work. This mix of economic and racial oppression reveals the layered injustices the maids face, showing their exploitation as both material and personal.

The maids' low wages and insecure jobs show their economic exploitation clearly. Aibileen earns less than a dollar an hour and fears losing her job. This fear controls them, making them stay quiet even when treated unfairly. Marx said the working class depends on the wealthy for survival, which keeps exploitation going (Marx & Engels, 1848). In *The Help*, the maids hesitate to challenge their employers despite harsh treatment. Minny Jackson admits, "I ain't saying I'm proud of it, but I'm saying it's the truth" (Stockett, 2009, p. 45). Her words show their painful compromises in a system that undervalues their work and denies their humanity. Economic oppression mixed with racial discrimination makes it very hard for the maids to claim dignity and justice.

Racial ideology supports the class hierarchy in *The Help*, justifying the split between white elites and Black maids. Hilly Holbrook, a white socialite, uses racist ideas to keep the status quo. Her push for separate bathrooms, claimed to be about hygiene, hides her real goal: keeping racial and economic inequality (Stockett, 2009). Hilly says, "It's just plain dangerous for a white woman and a colored woman to go... mixing like that" (p. 180), showing her fear of upsetting the racial and class order that benefits her. By calling segregation a health issue, Hilly justifies Black maids' exploitation and keeps her own power. This fits Gramsci's idea of hegemony, where the ruling class controls culture to keep power (Gramsci, 2020). In *The Help*, racial ideology works as a tool of hegemony, making Black maids stay dependent and submissive.

The novel also criticizes white women like Elizabeth Leefolt, who quietly accept and support racist ideas while relying on Black maids. Elizabeth's silence about Hilly's racism shows society's acceptance of racial and class exploitation. The white elite use social power to keep things as they are, and even the oppressed sometimes accept their own oppression. Gramsci (1971) said hegemony works not just by force but through the oppressed's consent, who accept the ruling class's ideas. This happens in *The Help*, as the maids hesitate to challenge their employers because they've accepted their labor as less worthy. This internalized oppression shows how deeply power systems shape thoughts and actions. The novel sharply criticizes how racial ideas are used to keep inequality.

Skeeter, a white woman who supports the maids, shows the chance for solidarity. But racial and class divides limit her role as an ally. As a privileged white woman, Skeeter can't fully understand the

maids' experiences. She says, "I'm not saying I'm perfect. I'm not saying I'm brave" (Stockett, 2009, p. 400), showing her awareness of privilege and limits. Though her work with the maids is resistance, the novel shows how hard it is to build alliances across race and class.

The maids' caution about sharing their stories with Skeeter shows this challenge. Aibileen says, "We're just telling stories. That's all" (Stockett, 2009, p. 320), revealing their fear of consequences. This fear is material—they risk losing their jobs. Harvey (2007) explains that racial oppression divides workers, helping those in power. In *The Help*, the maids' mistrust of Skeeter reflects this. Though Skeeter wants to fight injustice, the novel shows how deep inequalities block unity.

Still, the maids sharing their stories is a strong act of resistance. Aibileen says, "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" (Stockett, 2009, p. 250), showing her will to fight racist ideas. Her speaking out fits Marxist ideas of cultural resistance, where storytelling challenges dominant ideas and inspires change (Eagleton, 2013). Their stories assert humanity and expose systemic injustice.

The maids' resistance is powerful but limited by systemic oppression. Their choice to share is brave but the novel has been criticized for making Skeeter the central figure, which fits the "white savior" trope. Skeeter's role risks overshadowing the maids' agency. Though well-meaning, her leadership raises questions about whose voices matter.

Bell Hooks (2014) warns that stories focused on white heroes can reinforce power structures they oppose. In *The Help*, Skeeter organizing the project suggests change needs privileged intervention, not collective action by the oppressed. This risks implying Black women need white help to fight injustice, limiting recognition of their strength.

The novel shows the difficulty of individual resistance in a divided system. The maids act bravely but face limits set by larger structures. Harvey (2005) notes racial oppression divides workers to help the powerful. This is clear in the maids' distrust of Skeeter, knowing the risks of working with a white woman. Though Skeeter tries to help, the novel shows how inequalities complicate alliances. The maids' resistance sparks a necessary conversation about race,

class, and power, emphasizing that genuine change requires collective effort.

1.3. The Role of the Capitalist Class in Shaping Ideology

In *The Help*, Hilly Holbrook exemplifies the ways the white upper class reinforces capitalist exploitation by sustaining racial hierarchies. From a Marxist perspective, the bourgeois class maintains power not only through control of the means of production but also by manipulating dominant ideologies to justify existing social orders (Althusser, 2006). Hilly embodies this function. She exerts moral and cultural authority over her community, presenting segregation as common sense rather than systemic oppression. Her push for separate bathrooms for Black maids—"You can't trust them, Skeeter. Not ever" (Stockett, 2009, p. 91)—serves as a clear example of this ideological project, which naturalizes racial inequality under the guise of public health and safety.

This reflects what Antonio Gramsci (2020) refers to as cultural hegemony—the process by which ruling-class values are internalized by society and perceived as universal. Hilly's ideology spreads not through direct coercion, but through everyday norms, church values, and social interactions, where segregation and Black subservience are seen as moral, hygienic, and even benevolent. Characters like Elizabeth Leefolt adopt this worldview passively. Her dismissal of Aibileen's intelligence—"She's just a maid. She's not smart enough to know" (Stockett, 2009, p. 34)—is not framed as cruelty but as ignorance shaped by hegemonic thought. Elizabeth's behavior exemplifies false consciousness (Marx, 2023), where even members of the oppressed class may fail to recognize their exploitation due to dominant ideological conditioning.

However, critics argue that *The Help* reinforces rather than subverts the power structures it portrays. Bell hooks (1992), for instance, cautions against sentimental narratives that center white perspectives while using Black suffering as emotional capital. In her critique of popular media, hooks argues that stories like *The Help* risk turning systemic injustice into digestible morality tales that ultimately comfort white audiences rather than challenge them. She asserts that when the mechanisms of white supremacy are portrayed through individual cruelty—such as Hilly's behavior—structural critique is displaced. Hilly becomes the "bad apple," allowing white readers to

distance themselves from her racism without confronting how they benefit from the broader system.

Similarly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009, 2017) warns against “the single story,” where Black characters are flattened into figures of suffering whose stories only gain legitimacy when mediated by white narrators. *The Help* follows this pattern. Though Aibileen and Minny are given voices, their narratives are edited, organized, and published by Skeeter—a white woman whose class privilege gives her access to tools of resistance unavailable to the maids. Adichie critiques this narrative structure, suggesting that it reasserts racial hierarchy even as it appears to challenge it. By placing Skeeter in the center of the resistance, *The Help* subtly upholds the logic of white paternalism: justice must be delivered through the goodwill of privileged actors.

From a Marxist lens, this is not a neutral narrative choice. It aligns with Althusser’s (2014) concept of ideological state apparatuses, where media and literature play a key role in reinforcing class and race structures. When a novel like *The Help* frames white allies as the key to liberation, it reproduces bourgeois ideology under the mask of empathy. It reassures readers that structural change can occur without disrupting the status quo. The capitalist class, including educated liberal whites like Skeeter, remains at the moral center of the story.

Moreover, the commodification of such narratives points to the market’s role in neutralizing radical critique. As hooks (2014) argues, popular representations of race often present “resistance” in forms palatable enough to be profitable, thereby stripping them of revolutionary potential. *The Help*, with its feel-good arc and emotional resolution, allows readers to engage with injustice without being implicated in it. This is a key feature of what Terry Eagleton (2013) describes as the material practice of ideology, where beliefs are shaped not only by language but also by market dynamics, publishing standards, and patterns of cultural consumption.

Critics like Adichie and hooks force us to ask: can a novel mediated by white characters, shaped for a white readership, and written by a white author truly function as resistance fiction? Or does it repackage oppression into a product, reaffirming the very structures it claims to expose? These critiques deepen the Marxist reading by revealing how cultural texts can reproduce bourgeois ideology, even while appearing to oppose it.

1.4. Resistance and Revolution: Breaking the Chains of Domination

In *The Help*, Skeeter's decision to document the experiences of Black maids through a secret book project represents a form of counter-hegemonic discourse, as Gramsci (2020) explains. This act seeks to challenge dominant ideologies by offering an alternative narrative. Skeeter says, "I want to be part of the change. I want to do something that matters" (Stockett, 2009, p. 405), reflecting her wish to disrupt existing power structures. However, this desire emerges from her privileged position. She utilizes her race, education, and social status to mediate the maids' stories, demonstrating both the promise and limitations of literary activism.

From a Marxist angle, this cultural resistance aligns with Althusser's (2014) concept of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). While Skeeter's mediation appears subversive, it also upholds white oversight by turning real testimonies into marketable products. Walter Benjamin's critique of revolutionary aesthetics is relevant here: revolutionary acts risk becoming consumable content that pacifies rather than transforming society.

Critics like Bell Hooks (1992) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) highlight this problem. Hooks critiques the "sentimental white savior" trope, where white characters appropriate marginalized voices to serve their own moral growth. Skeeter's admission, "I'm not saying I'm perfect. I'm not saying I'm brave" (Stockett, 2009, p. 400), seems self-aware but keeps the focus on her journey, not on Black liberation. This raises a key question: Who truly benefits from this kind of resistance?

The maids' own resistance complicates the picture. Aibileen's cry, "I want to yell so loud... that dirty ain't a color..." (Stockett, 2009, p. 250), rejects racialized oppression outright. Minny's "Terrible Awful" revenge—poisoning Hilly's pie—is a raw, direct act of rebellion rooted in personal justice, not mediated storytelling. These acts reflect Gramsci's "war of position," contrasting with Skeeter's intellectual resistance.

Still, both narrative documentation and everyday rebellion remain limited. Neither changes the economic conditions that bind the maids to their roles. Marx (2023) emphasizes that raising awareness alone cannot liberate workers without accompanying structural shifts, such as labor solidarity and economic redistribution.

Furthermore, Hooks (2014) and Adichie (2009) caution that dissent absorbed into white liberal culture often becomes domesticated and softened. *The Help* offers a feel-good ending of reconciliation without real upheaval. Skeeter returns to privilege, while Aibileen remains in low-wage work, indicating no significant structural change. The story comforts readers while avoiding disruption of the status quo.

Therefore, *The Help* engages with cultural resistance but also reveals the limits imposed by capitalist and racialized publishing. Calling it revolutionary demands moving beyond individual acts toward collective class struggle and solidarity across race and class. The novel hints at this but ultimately delays.

Conclusion

The Help delivers a complex message. It highlights the voices of Black domestic workers and critiques both racial and class inequalities. However, it tells this story mainly through a white character, which ultimately supports the very power structures it critiques. Drawing on Marxist theory by Althusser, Gramsci, and Marx, this analysis demonstrates that the novel exposes profound social issues but fails to address the underlying causes. The acts of resistance by Aibileen and Minny demonstrate courage and defiance, yet they occur within a system that still controls their work and lives. Skeeter's effort to tell their stories, though well-intentioned, focuses more on her own growth and perpetuates white savior ideas. This reflects how stories of resistance can become safe and comforting for white audiences, without pushing for real change. In the end, *The Help* encourages sympathy but stops short of fundamental transformation. For literature to support true social and racial justice, it must go beyond safe stories. It should challenge existing power and inspire collective action. Only then can resistance move from a story to meaningful change.

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