

# To kill a mockingbird

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

To Kill a Mockingbird The writer Harper Lee purposefully created first impressions of the character Aunt Alexandra in the written text To Kill a Mockingbird to deceive or surprise us, as the readers. Our first Impression of Aunt Alexandra is that she is stern, austere and rather sanctimonious. She has a strong commitment to propriety and tradition which often leads to a clash of personality with Scout. This is illustrated when Aunt Alexandra comes to live in Maycomb with Atticus and the children.

It is not until the story progresses further that we see her in a more caring, protective and mother like character particularly during the tea party with the news of Tom Robinson's death and after Scout's Pageant. When Aunt Alexandra moves to Maycomb friction arises between her and the children particularly when she comments on the way Atticus has raised them. Aunt Alexandra is old fashioned and has the belief that children from a family of such ' calibre' as the Finches should act appropriately to the concept.

However because Atticus is a single father and Scout's main female role model has been her Negro house maid Calpurnia, she lacks the behaviour of the standard that has been set for her. " We decided that it would be best for you to have some feminine influence. " is the excuse used for why Aunt Alexandra moved in. Because of Scouts lack of femininity Atticus receives a lot of criticism from his sister in which he replied once " Sister, I do my best I can with them! " This is a point in which we see a major contrast in personality between Atticus and his sister.

Also Scout made her own observations commenting " It was plain Aunty thought I was dull in the extreme, because I once heard her tell Atticus that I was sluggish. " From this impression of Aunt Alexandra, Harper Lee wanted

us to see how the pressures of society forced people to act and conform to stereotypical views. Maybe if the expectations of females had been different we may have seen Aunt Alexandra in a completely different way. Whilst in the kitchen with Miss Maudie after the news of Tom Robinson's death, Aunt Alexandra finally opens up about her true opinion and worries about Atticus.

Throughout the text it is consistently shown how harsh Aunt Alexandra can be however this shows a more caring and compassionate side of Aunt Alexandra which we have not seen before, a genuine concern for Atticus's well being as he goes against the unwritten social code of his town. She says " I mean this town, they're perfectly willing to let him do what they're too afraid to do themselves... willing to let him wreck his health doing what they're too afraid to. " During this time she also says " It tears him to pieces.

What else do they want from him, Maudie, what else? This new Impression of Aunt Alexandra made her a more likable character as we finally got to see the selfless trait we see constantly from Atticus. Again as mentioned before the author wanted us to see how the stereotypical views of the Maycomb people forced Aunt Alexandra to hide her true feelings and opinions in regard to the Tom Robinson trial. Aunt Alexandra was fearful of rejection and becoming a social outcast. If the pressure had been non-existent she may have felt freer and had more courage to voice her true opinion.

After being attacked by Bob Ewell, after Scout's pageant, Aunt Alexandra is remorseful as she feels that she foresaw that night's events and should have accompanied the children. Remorse would be the emotion least expected from Aunt Alexandra and is a shock to the reader. We consistently see a sense of superiority from her throughout the text and for her to be rueful and

admit a mistake really humanizes her. This allows the reader to witness Aunt Alexandra in a tender light and catch a glimpse of who she really is.

She says to Atticus when the doctor is examining unconscious Jem, “ Atticus I had a feeling about tonight- I- this is my fault. I should have-” She blames herself as if she had accompanied the children the attack would never have occurred. Out of all the impressions we get of Aunt Alexandra this is one of the most significant as it is the point Aunt Alexandra realises that she does not have to conform to the societal pressures and also the point in which we see a significant resemblance between herself and Atticus.

She sees that it is more important to represent and stand for what she believes in rather than go with the crowd and pretend to be something she is not. From these numerous scenarios in which we see Aunt Alexandra during the text *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee surprises us, as the readers. Despite Aunt Alexandra giving the impression of someone who is unkind sanctimonious and spiteful, she proves that she does care for Atticus, Jem and Scout.

At the beginning of the text we see a significant contrast between Atticus and Aunt Alexandra and it is not until the end of the text we see a real resemblance between the two siblings. This is significant to the reader as it is unexpected. Throughout the text the way Aunt Alexandra treats her family is her own way of showing how much she cares for them. It is not her forte to show how she really feels and to share her opinion but every now and then she proves her love and compassion in subtle ways. No matter what her actions she always had Atticus, Jem and Scout’s best intentions at heart.