

Atticus finch is an
exemplary father



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Atticus Finch, a lawyer and devoted father, is an intelligent man whose wisdom, consistency, and ability to see past the ill in people prove him to be a respectable and exemplary father. He teaches his children and the people of Maycomb how to stand up for one's belief in the face of prejudice and ignorance even when faced with the possibility of being looked down upon and scorned. His personality and character is retained throughout the entire book, making him an ideal moral guide and voice of conscience.

In her novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee presents the character of Atticus Finch to convey her feelings and thoughts about race, morals, and society as a mass. In the difficult times of 1930's Alabama, the county of Maycomb is a society divided by prejudice, where racial discrimination and injustice is common. In spite of these complexities, Atticus Finch is a determined father who aims to nurture his children free of narrow-minded influences of Maycomb, but instead with the non-judgemental and tolerant concepts which he so strongly has faith in.

He instils in his children his strong sense of morality and justice, aspiring for them to mature with good ethics and beliefs. As a parent, Atticus proves to divert from the Maycomb society. The general community disregard the proposals of children and considers their thoughts irrelevant. However, Atticus contradicts this principle in the way that he raises Jem and Scout. Atticus portrays the not-so-typical father, yet as he expresses his beliefs and imparts his wisdom to his two children it becomes clear that his parenting skills are exemplary.

In three simple methods does Atticus bring up Jem and Scout with good morals: through education, ideal examples and communication. Atticus plays a significant role in the education of Scout and Jem. However, the manner in which he does this is unlike any typical father – through experiences and meaningful encounters, Atticus tutors Jem and Scout to understand and consider the concealed aspects of the Maycomb community.

The life lessons which he communicates to his children are exceptional teachings which cannot be found in books or schools, and are important factors of their development and understanding: “ You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it”(33). His lessons of tolerance and open-mindedness have vital effects on the maturing of Scout and Jem, and their learning and understanding can be observed through the progression of the book.

As the two children develop during the book, the reader begins to see the impact of Atticus’ advice as they begin to grow in his image. Such as observed in the early chapters when Walter Cunningham is invited to the Finch’s for lunch, Scout immediately judges Walter as lower-class, and sees it as a “ wonderment” that he and Atticus can converse “ together like two men” (26). Once again, in narrow-mindedness, Scout has little acceptance and lenience for his style of eating, and protests to his gravy-soaked dinner.

While initially not understanding the different way of life Walter experiences, Atticus soon educates her to comprehend the struggles and difficulties which the Cunninghams must endure. Following this incident, Scout perceives the

Cunninghams as ‘fine folks’ to the extent where she aspired to befriend Walter and invite him over. This impression of ‘fine folks’ differentiates from the remainder of the Maycomb society, who believe the ideal persona is based on wealth and family connections.

Scout’s classification of “fine folks” is a belief she holds strongly, and defends stubbornly when contradicted by Aunt Alexandra in chapter 23. It is in this way that we can observe Atticus’s exemplary teachings and beliefs of tolerance being passed on to Scout. Atticus again teaches an important lesson of courage and seeing beyond the obvious to his children through the illness of Mrs. Dubose. By forcing Jem to read to her, Jem was able to learn to respect Mrs. Dubose and understand that despite her faults, she possessed many strengths and good qualities.

Behind Mrs Dubose’s rudeness, cruelty and scowling comments laid true courage. By distancing herself to the world and all the things she once loved before her expected death she had exemplified true strength. Atticus intended for Jem to comprehend this and observe how strength and courage doesn’t come from a “man with a gun in his hand.” (124). Atticus’s message is conveyed successfully, as Jem is “fingering the wide petals” of the flower from Mrs. Dubose’s garden, which indicates a level of respect, understanding and consideration which he initially didn’t have.

Atticus also teaches a strong lesson in tolerance and indiscrimination. By instructing his children to consider the actions of someone in their shoes, Jem and Scout learn not to judge or presume something without reason. Atticus’s lessons in morality and ethics are put into action at the trial of Tom

Robinson: “ You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women- black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. (226).

Atticus’s closing statement to the court presents to Scout and Jem the notion that racial discrimination is wrong; that the colour of a man’s skin has no effect on their personality or character; that justice is not done if a black man is convicted because he is black, and a white man walks free because he is white. Atticus furthers his exemplary raising of Scout and Jem by presenting himself as a role model with ideal beliefs and views. One of the ways in which he does this is in the means that he rejects insincerity, but instead practices what he preaches: “ Atticus is the same in his house as he is on the public streets” (51).

In a time period and a town that endorses hypocrisy, Atticus stands for truth, and teaches others by his example that it is possible for them to do the same. With typical Maycomb influences – such as Aunt Alexandra – surrounding Jem and Scout, Atticus’s constant genuineness in public and private presents an essential example of honesty for his children to follow. Once again, Atticus provides an exemplary example of humbleness in the modest manner of which he shot the stray dog.

Despite having a commendable shooting talent, Atticus chose to keep this hidden, and was not eager to call attention to it. While Scout does not understand why, Atticus’s line of reasoning is clear to Jem, who now aspires to be a humble and modest “ gentleman” such as his father. Atticus

educates his children in standing up for what they believe in, and influences Jem and Scout to mature with a strong sense of justice and equality. By accepting Tom Robinson's case, Atticus provides a clear example of standing up for one's beliefs – a model which his children can observe and follow.

As Atticus was a firm believer in justice and equality for all men, he rightfully provided Tom Robinson with a chance of a fair trial. He believed that Tom was innocent, but was simply on trial as it was a white man's word versus a black man's. Atticus therefore decided to defend Tom to his full potential. " If I didn't I couldn't hold my head up in town ...I couldn't even ask you or Jem not to do something again. ' Knowing he could not be an honest example of defending one's values had he not do it himself, Atticus accepts the case of Tom Robinson to demonstrate the importance of supporting one's beliefs, presenting to his children the notions of integrity and resistance. Atticus role models his sense and beliefs of bravery in the fact that he refuses to carry a gun on two occasions: one, at the jail cell of Tom Robinson, and two, following the threats of Bob Ewell. Standing by his definition of bravery – how it is not a man with a gun in his hand – Atticus provides a unique and extraordinary example of courage and supporting what one believes in.

As observed later in the book, Scout and Jem are able to reflect on this demonstration of bravery and exhibit this quality themselves: Jem, showing heroism and defence of his values when facing the showdown at the jailhouse, and Scout, while still managing to stand up for her morals, displays true courage in declining to fight with other students at school, especially when they antagonize her. Atticus aims to act as a role model and provide

the best examples for his children to follow: “ Before Jem looks at anyone else he looks at me, and I’ve tried to live so I can look squarely back at him. Atticus recognises his importance as a father figure in his children’s lives, and ensures that he behaves in such a manner in which his children can reflect and base themselves upon. Atticus’s final manner of exemplary parenting is through communication and strong relationships. We are able to gain a lot of insight into his character and wisdom through his dialogue with his children. Since Atticus possesses a strong and trusting relationship with Jem and Scout, his words become valuable to them. Therefore, the statement of his beliefs is a highly effective way of communicating with the children.

During a difficult time in Maycomb, only augmented by the trial of Tom Robinson, Atticus chooses not to shelter his children from the reality of their situation, but instead describes to Jem and Scout the causes and explanations behind all that is occurring. Atticus is upfront and honest with his children, even in difficult and challenging situations. As a father and an attorney, he lives by honesty and he knows how important it is to tell the truth. This is shown in a conversation that Atticus has with his brother, Jack, in which Atticus states, “ When a child asks you something, answer him, for goodness’ sake” (97).

Atticus respects the thoughts and ideas of children, and therefore treats them as equals. The simple act of calling their father ‘ Atticus’ rather than ‘ Dad’ is only a small, yet significant point, as it shows the equality between father and child. This sense of equivalency is significant in that the openness and honesty of their communication is very much based upon the

corresponding levels of equality between Atticus and his children. Atticus's understanding of the importance of honesty is evident when he converses with Jem and Scout.

As Atticus understands the curiosity of children, he is willing to explain and answer whatever questions they may ask. "Children are children, but they can spot evasion faster than adults." (97), while he comprehends the intelligence and knowledge of children, Atticus also respects the fact that they are still of a young age, and that a full and detailed definition is not always necessary. For example, when Scout questions the meaning of rape, Atticus straightforwardly replies that it is the "carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent. However, he ensures that it is an appropriate answer to give her given her age, as it doesn't fully explain the violence of such an act, but satisfies Scout's curiosity. Atticus does not shield the children from tragic events as he knows that to do so would not help them mature, and would only diminish their honesty-based bond. He is genuine and upfront with Jem and Scout to a respectable level; consenting them to hear and do certain things, but only to adequate and age-appropriate detail.

However, while Atticus allows his children to experience a bond of equality, he also maintains his respected and admired parental control. Rather than strict and harsh discipline, he aims to lead Jem and Scout through discussion so that they may learn their error of their ways and gain experience from it accordingly. It is in this way we can observe Atticus's distinctive and exceptional style of fatherhood. The success of any father can be observed and measured in many ways, but can most easily be recognised by the attitudes and actions of his children.

Atticus is an exemplary parent, and has raised his two children to be understanding and earnest, providing them with life changing experiences and meaningful lessons. Throughout the novel Scout and Jem consistently display the tolerance and respect that Atticus has instilled in them. They are curious, intelligent and polite, but most importantly of all, are broad-minded, indiscriminative people. In a time of rumour, prejudice and bigotry, Atticus's exemplary parenting skills have proved strong, and consequently, Jem and Scout have developed into sincere, unbiased citizens of Maycomb.

His methods of teaching, exemplifying and communication make his role in *To Kill A Mockingbird* one of the most important. His children are at a critical turning point in their lives, with many confusing and complex incidents occurring around them. He is the one who acts as and influences his children's consciences, helping them to develop their own reasonable and unbiased beliefs. Atticus is an exemplary father, and combines an equal balance of education and care as he raises Scout and Jem to be civil, broad-minded and compassionate