

The courage of atticus finch essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Atticus is brave to defend a black man in the face of criticism and threats of violence. He also is brave in the face of danger, both when he kills the rabid dog with a single shot and when facing the mob of men outside the jailhouse. It takes courage for Atticus Finch to go against people's beliefs in order to do what he believes was morally right. The racist views of the town are against Atticus defending Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman, and Atticus is often discriminated against for not agreeing with them. His children, Scout and Jem, also feel the hatred of others against them because of what their father's beliefs are. " But Mrs. Dubose held us: " " Not only a Finch waiting tables, but one in the courthouse lawing for niggers' ... ' Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for.'"

Although Atticus is criticized for what he decides is right, he bravely ignores the disapprobation. Atticus Finch is a courageous person because he does what he believes is right, and does not follow Maycombs racist way.

Defending Tom Robinson, an African- American man accused of raping a white woman proves Atticus' integrity. His children Scout and Jem feel the repercussions of their father's actions in defending Tom Robinson, " But Mrs. Dubose held us: " " Not only a Finch waiting tables, but one in the courthouse lawing for niggers' ... ' your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for.'" Atticus stays strong and does what is truly right despite the public's beliefs. " Real courage" is when you fight for what is right regardless of whether you win or lose. Atticus Finch defines " real courage" and demonstrates it several times throughout the novel, in addition to the lessons that he teaches his children. The largest and most important example would be the Trial of Tom Robinson.

When Atticus took the case, he went against Maycomb, a generally prejudiced town, in order to defend Tom. He understood that taking the case would make him an object of ridicule and that no one would forgive him for believing in a black man's word rather than a white man's. Even his own sister expresses disapproval of his decision, practically telling him he was bringing disgrace on the family. Nevertheless, no matter how much his reputation suffered, he did not change his mind. Standing up for his morals and ethics was more important than what people thought about him. Atticus knows he will not win the case and like Mrs. Dubose in her battle against morphine, he is "licked" (121) before he begins.

Atticus's strong sense of morality and justice motivates him to defend Tom Robinson with determination, and giving it all he has. He shows this when he says, "Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try and win." (80) He says this to Scout after she comes home from school angry at Cecil Jacobs for making fun of Atticus in the schoolyard. Atticus tells her to fight with her head instead of her fists. He wants the people of Maycomb to hear the truth about Tom, "That boy may go to the chair, but he's not going till the truth's told." (146) Atticus later shows bravery when he goes to the jailhouse to protect Tom from a mob. Without thinking twice, he rushed to Tom's aid. He went willingly, knowing that if a mob did form he would be greatly outnumbered and would easily be beaten. Still, he put Tom's well being ahead of his own welfare.

In conclusion, Atticus shows praiseworthy courage and behaviour in many instances throughout the story, not by fighting or killing, but by standing up

for what he believed in a civilized and determined way. His strongest motivation, however, were his kids. He wants to be a good example for his kids and instill in them a strong sense of moral values. One time Scout asks him why he had taken a case he knew he was not going to win and he responded by saying, " For a number of reasons. The main one is, if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again." (75) In other words, he would not have been able to talk to his kids about justice and standing up for what one believes when he himself had not stood for what he believed in. He wants to know that there is no reason for him to hang his head in shame and shy away when he is walking down the streets. Harper Lee portrays the idea of courage by first having Scout observe her father perform a physical act of courage when he shoots the mad dog. Although Atticus didn't consider the act very courageous and was completely uninterested in proving anything to his children, Jem and Scout were proud of, and impressed by, his courage in such a precarious situation.

But shooting something wasn't really Atticus' idea of courage. He viewed courage on more of an intellectual level, as a moral thing, not as something that can be proved with a weapon. The greatest demonstration of courage of all though, is Atticus' fight for Tom Robinson's life. He is wise enough to know that the prejudices of people will never allow justice to be done, but at the same time, he is determined that the truth be told so that those who convict Tom Robinson will be aware that they are convicting an innocent man. Just like Mrs Dubose, Atticus knew that he could never win the case, but he tried anyway. This realisation forces Scout to stop fighting with her

fists and try to overcome opposing opinions with her head, rather than with physical violence. Atticus has strong views on courage. He shows this when he taught Jem and Scout to be brave; for instance, when he told Scout to stop fighting the people that mock her, Scout had to be brave enough to ignore the harsh remarks and put herself above them.

He also is brave in the face of danger, both when he kills the rabid dog with a single shot and when facing the mob of men outside the jailhouse. Atticus showed his children that he was a courageous man when he stepped into the street to face down a rabid dog. Although he didn't consider the act particularly courageous and was completely uninterested in proving anything to his children, Jem and Scout were proud of, and impressed by, his courage in such a precarious situation. But shooting something wasn't really Atticus' idea of courage. He viewed courage on a more intellectual level, as a moral thing, not as something that can be proved with a weapon. The most common definition of bravery is being strong in the face of physical danger. Atticus demonstrates this when he stops in the path of a rabid dog and drops it with one rifle shot. Other kinds of courage, however, rely more on moral fortitude. For instance, Atticus talks pleasantly to Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, even though she regularly heaps verbal abuse on him and his children. At times like these, Scout says, she thought "my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived."

Nevertheless, no matter how much his reputation suffered, he did not change his mind. Standing up for his morals and ethics was more important than what people thought about him. Atticus's strong sense of morality and

justice motivates him to defend Tom Robinson with determination, and giving it all he has. He shows this when he says, " Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try and win." Throughout the novel, Atticus has been portrayed as the model of moral courage. Atticus showed that he was a courageous man when he stopped in the path of a rabid dog and dropped it with one rifle shot. Despite the fact that he could be attacked by the mad dog, he still stood up for the sake of other people in town. The children was shocked by his shooting skill because he had never showed off his talent. Atticus wanted the children to see that " real courage" is not " a man with a gun in his hand" or being able to fight with fists but to fight with knowledge and dignity. The greatest demonstration of courage of all is Atticus' fight for Tom Robinson's life. He went against the whole town to protect the innocent black man, Tom Robinson.

Before the trial, he had already been insulted by the term " nigger-lover" by many people, including his own family members. Nevertheless, no matter how much his reputation suffered, he did not change his mind. Before the case, Atticus had already known that there was no way for Tom Robinson to be proven innocent because prejudice had been deep-rooted in Maycomb. Everybody had an assumption that a Negro was not to be trusted, while a white man would never lie. He knew that he would lose anyway, but Atticus kept trying to defend him " simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try and win." For what he did, Atticus Finch is one of the most courageous and respectable characters in To Kill a Mockingbird. Moral courage is Atticus's best asset, making him the

most respectable keeper of justice in Maycomb. . The fear or failure was not strong enough to discourage him from his principle; it was like “ you know that you are licked before you begin, but you begin no matter what”.

The greatest demonstration of courage of all though, is Atticus’ fight for Tom Robinson’s life. He is wise enough to know that the prejudices of people will never allow justice to be done, but at the same time, he is determined that the truth be told so that those who convict Tom Robinson will be aware that they are convicting an innocent man. Just like Mrs Dubose, Atticus knew that he could never win the case, but he tried anyway. He knows he will never win the Tom Robinson case, yet he continues to give it 101%. The last character which illustrates forms of courage in this novel is Atticus. Atticus is a principled lawyer who was a role model in the novel. Despite being called “ nigger-lover” by many people in Maycomb, he still had the moral courage to take up the Tom Robinson case and defend Tom Robinson. He even mentioned that he would not be able to tell Jem and Scout “ to not do anything” anymore should he give up on the trial case.

This shows his determination to continue with the trial. Similarly, despite also having “ one black man’s words” as evidence against the Ewells(whites), he knew he was fighting a losing battle, and had “ everything to lose” according to Link Deas and even Francis echoed Aunt Alexandra’s rant about being “ never be able to walk on the streets on Maycomb again”. Despite setbacks after setbacks, Atticus still managed to muster enough moral courage to take up the case head-on, and persevere until truth be told. Another incident of Atticus’ bravery can be seen from the Tom Robinson lynch mob

confrontation when he was confronted by Mr. Cunningham and his gang. He practically used himself as a human shield to protect Tom Robinson at all cost, being his "client". Even Mr. Underwood had to cover Atticus with his "double-barreled shotgun" from his office above the jail, which depicts the seriousness of the confrontation, but despite that, Atticus remained strong and steadfast. Were it not for Scout's innocence which diffused the tension later, it could have ended in a bloody fight. This shows that Atticus is not afraid of dire consequences such as death, as long as he does what is morally right.

Atticus tells the children, "I wanted you to see what real courage is instead of the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. In fact, courage is when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what." In Atticus' opinion, it is not being able to fight with fists but to fight with knowledge and dignity. The "mad-dog incident" occurred when a sick, possibly rabid dog, was spotted wandering aimlessly through Maycomb. Heck Tate, the sheriff, requested that Atticus be the one to do away with the animal. This shocks the children, when they soon learn that although Atticus is known to have the best shot with a gun in town, he chooses not to practice or show off his talent. He went against the whole town to protect the innocent black man, Tom Robinson.

Before the trial, he had already been insulted by the term "nigger-lover" by many people, including his own family members. Francis echoed the ranting of Aunt Alexandra, saying that Atticus was a disgrace for the family, that "he would never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb". He was even confronted by his friends trying to talk him out of it, as Link Deas said,

"[Atticus] has everything to lose". Atticus did realise this problem; he knew that he was "fighting [his] friends"; "no matter how bitter things get, they are still [his] friends and this is still [his] home". Despite all the pressure, he determined to carry on so as to justice.

Before the case, Atticus had already known that he had little chance to win. He knew that with only "a black man's words against the Ewells", the white, "in the heart of men he had no case". There was no way for Tom Robinson to be proven innocent, for prejudice had been deep-rooted in Maycomb; everybody had an evil assumption that a Negro was not to be trusted, while a white man would never lie. He knew already that he would lose anyway, but Atticus kept trying to defend him, to bring the light of justice into Maycomb. The fear of failure was not strong enough to discourage him from his principle; it was like "you know that you are licked before you begin, but you begin no matter what".

Even when Atticus faced danger, he did not back off. In front of the Maycomb Jail, he was confronted by the lynch mob, without any weapon or protection from Heck Tate, who had "been called off a snipe hunt". The situation was so alarming that Mr. Underwood had to use his double-barrelled gun to try to cover for Atticus from his office on top of the jail. Atticus was not obligated by law to protect his client but he took on the responsibility so that his client could be judged in court, not by physical action, the kind of courage that Maycomb took as priority. Atticus put himself in danger's way to let the truth be told. Moral courage is Atticus's best asset, making him the most respectable keeper of justice in Maycomb. Atticus Finch serves as a sort of

moral compass for the children Scout and Jem, and it is only fitting that he takes the incredibly unpopular position in defending Tom Robinson against the false accusations of rape.

Maycomb, although quaint and quiet, was quite similar to nearly every other town in the Deep South during that period, hiding a revolting sense of racism beneath the surface. Robinson's trial seemingly brought out the racial sentiments of the townspeople, and in defending a Negro, Finch knew that he would be risking not only his social status, but also his life and the lives of his children. This commitment and sense of justice displays perhaps one of the purest forms of courage in the novel. Courage to Do the Right Thing Atticus Finch shows courage by continuing to provide the best possible defense for Tom Robinson despite discouragement and suggestions to do otherwise. His courage is the same courage that Mrs. Dubose shows, the courage to attempt an impossible feat when you know you will probably fail.

He explains his actions to the children by saying " This case, Tom Robinson's case, is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience—Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man." (104) Atticus' explanation reveals that his courage is based in a strong sense of honor and justice. Harper Lee's portrait of Ewell reveals that cowards prey on the weak. Lee's diverse portraits of bravery reveal that bravery is found in many people and is manifested in different ways for different reasons. However, perhaps the most important aspect of bravery that Lee reveals in her characters is that the bravest are often the weakest.

Atticus

Atticus shows courage in different forms in the book. Atticus is a dedicated father. Although, it may be argued, Atticus was actually given the case by the court and couldn't have rejected it without being frowned upon by the professional lawyers of Maycomb, he still showed courage when passionately fighting for Tom Robinson, and showing people openly how much he was willing and wanting to fight for Tom Robinson. He stood up against the will and wanting of everyone in Maycomb, and challenged their morals and ethics. During the trial, Atticus challenged the jury's consciences, and tried to show them how there was no basic evidence to prove anything, apart from their racist prejudices, taking the word of a white man above the word of a black man.

He fought for Tom Robinson, and fought in a way where he challenged the jury to look at all people as equal, and decide the correct verdict based on what was so obviously in front of them. He was trying to prove to the court and the jury that they were racist, and had to look at the basic evidence, which was minimal anyway. It is clear that Atticus is probably the main protagonist in the book in the sense that he is always seen to be a morally correct person. Whenever Scout and Jem fall, he manages to bring them up again and correct their faults. He knows what is right, and this is illustrated through the trial. Shooting Tim Johnson proves to the children Atticus is anything but feeble, he is indeed courageous. As the reader can clearly see, Atticus epitomizes the definition of courage.

Courage, in Atticus' opinion, is not being able to fight with fists but to fight with knowledge and dignity. Atticus tells the children, " I wanted you to see what real courage is instead of the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. Its when you known your licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do." Atticus acknowledges this as courage. He knows he will never win the Tom Robinson case, yet he continues to give it 101%. One of the most courageous and respectable characters in To Kill a Mockingbird is Atticus Finch, Jem and Scout's father. Atticus is a lawyer who is defending a black man accused of raping a young Maycomb girl. His client did not do it and Atticus seems to know it. He is determined to seek justice to the best of his ability, despite the fact that he is being targeted for his anti-racist views. Atticus Finch is one of the most courageous characters in the history of fiction. The words and actions of Atticus Finch prove to be truly courageous.

A man who has seen more of the world than most of the people of Maycomb combined, Atticus struggles against the close-minded views of the small southern town. An example of his brave deeds could be either physical or psychological, furthermore; two of his main doings are connected and entwined internally within the plot. The ? mad-dog incident? occurred when a sick, possibly rabid dog, was spotted wandering aimlessly through Maycomb. Heck Tate, the sheriff, requested that Atticus be the one to do away with the animal. This shocks the children, when they soon learn that although Atticus is known to have the best shot with a gun in town, he chooses not to practice or show off his talent. As Miss Maudie, a close neighbor, states ? I think maybe he put his gun down when he realized that God had given him an

unfair advantage over most living things. I guess he decided he wouldn't shoot till he had to, and he had to today. Thus, Atticus does have the courage to do away with the creature in one shot, after many years without practice.

Another deed that Atticus takes on is to defend a black man, Tom Robinson, in a trial against a white man, Bob Ewell, who claims Tom raped his daughter. One would think that the evidence proves Tom's innocence, furthermore; the Ewell family have a horrible reputation, and live like animals, on the outskirts of town. However; this case isn't as simple as it seems, for although Mr. Ewell isn't respected, he still remains on a higher level than the black population, because of the segregated views of the white community. Atticus knows that this will be a difficult trial, and that the chances of winning are many against one, yet he is a respected lawyer, and will defend people of any colour. I'm simply defending a Negro? (p. 75) Scout relates the trial to the dog incident by saying it was like watching Atticus walk into the street, raise a rifle to his shoulder and pull the trigger, but watching all the time knowing that the gun was empty. (p.) This points out to the reader that while Atticus knew he was not going to win the trial, he went through with it, and tried his hardest, giving it all that he had; moreover, proving his statement to try one's hardest even if one knows that he/she has been defeated long before he/she begins.