

Integrity in to kill a mockingbird

Literature, American Literature



Integrity is having a standard of morals and ethics, and living by them. It is a willingness and ability to do the right thing even when it is hard. The story *To Kill a Mockingbird* is filled with integrity. For example, many of the people in Maycomb share a prejudiced sense of integrity when it comes to its racist views. However, it is Atticus Finch's integrity throughout the novel that really embodies the idea of moral and ethical principles. He puts into action every moral idea that he supports.

Atticus is a role model to not only his children, but to the whole town of Maycomb, and his integrity is a great part of what makes him such a good example. Integrity breeds integrity. Harper Lee is suggesting that integrity within ourselves helps others to have integrity. Atticus brought up Jem and Scout by example.

His show of integrity instilled within his children their own sense of integrity. Both Jem and Scout are exposed to experiences throughout the novel that shape their perception of right and wrong.

For example, Atticus took up the case of Tom Robinson not only because he had to, but because he was fighting for an innocent life against injustice and racial prejudice. His display of integrity in Tom Robinson's case was reflected onto his children. They soon came to know their father as a hero full of moral courage, and did their best to do him right in their own ways. Though they could have fought against their peers' insults against them and Atticus, they showed adversity by not reciprocating. "As it was, we were compelled to hold our heads high and be, respectively, a gentleman and a lady." (Lee, pg. 247)

Furthermore, Scout shows integrity through her wisdom and compassion that goes beyond her years. Atticus is a strong role model to his children with his strong sense of integrity, and Scout and Jem develop their own integrity throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird* with his lead. Atticus's integrity extends not only to his family, but to the whole community of Maycomb. The community of Maycomb was heartedly against Atticus defending Tom Robinson, a black man. Yet, once again, Atticus's integrity shines through as he stands strong through the adversity.

During the trial, Atticus speaks firmly of the truth, and forces Maycomb to examine their conception of race and the equality of man. As Christians, they know that all men were equal. As Atticus finishes his speech, he says " In the name of god, believe him [Tom Robinson]" (Lee, Pg. 209). In saying this, he is reminding the jury of this integrity they are supposed to uphold. Though Maycomb convicted Tom Robinson, as Miss Maudie said " We're making a step-it's just a baby-step, but it's a step." (Lee, Pg. 220) She is referring to the fact that Atticus had been able to force the jury to examine their views of race, as they were kept out so long. In this way, Atticus's integrity got to every person of Maycomb.

Another example is when Reverend Sykes says to Scout " Miss Jean Louise, stand up, your father's passin'."(Lee, Pg 215) Reverend Sykes is demonstrating his respect for Atticus by telling Scout to show the same respect. Atticus's integrity had a strong impact on the black community of Maycomb, and they demonstrated a great deal of their own integrity because of him. Atticus's integrity reflects onto all of Maycomb county's citizens. Today's society can easily relate to the pressures on the individual's

and community's integrity that is found in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Every day peer pressure instils within us the desire to be bigger and better than what we are. The media, how other's view us, and the pressure put on us by others will all test our integrity on a daily basis.

Atticus and his children both had to deal with the adversity against them because of the communities differences in opinion. They kept their integrity through it all with Jem and scout having their father's moral advice and support to help them. Though many succumb to the pressures put on us, there are also many Atticus's out there that have a moral and ethical conscience backing them up. They become a role model that breeds integrity through their moral practices. " Before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience." (Lee, pg. 108)

To conclude, Atticus is a strong moral figure in the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* that demonstrates the quality of integrity to the fullest. His integrity helps others to have integrity. To explain, Atticus instils a strong sense of integrity within his children by teaching them by example. Furthermore, his example of integrity also extends to the community of Maycomb, as Atticus forces them to reflect upon their prejudiced racial views. We ourselves are every day tested with our own integrity, and the Atticus's of the world and in ourselves can help strengthen our moral values. All in all, Integrity within ourselves helps others to have integrity.