

# To kill a mockingbird theme essay

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Courage is shown within the characters of *To Kill A Mockingbird* in several situations. The characters are challenged to face danger or pain without fear. The courage they display gives them strength and deepens their self-understanding as the novel progresses. Early in the novel, Scout illustrates the courage she demonstrates. On her first day of school, Scout acts as an advocate for the entire class. She takes the duty of informing Miss. Caroline of Walter Cunningham's situation. Miss. Caroline had just scolded Scout for her ability to read, however, Scout still feels the classes need for leadership. Most children at her age would fear speaking to the teacher in such a fearless fashion. Walter Cunningham, himself, was shy and fearful of speaking to the teacher. Scout overcame the fears that haunted the remainder of the class, and acted out of Walter's best interest. Her courage spoke in Walter's absence, and inability to express his situation. A good representation of courage is seen within Atticus. Throughout *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Atticus speaks of the Tom Robinson trial as a trial all lawyers fear. He must face a court case that will have a deep personal effect upon himself and his family. Atticus calls the courage to recognize that there is a need for justice, and that it is his duty to achieve this. Maycomb is a town corrupted with stereotypes and racism. Atticus has the courage to overcome the fear of other people's dislikes. He must face the fear of weakening the lives of his two young children and family name. The courage Atticus shows comes from his pleasing character. Atticus is devoted and unable to turn his back on those who truly rely upon his ability to show empathy. He overcomes the heartless comments of those around them, to see the necessity of his involvement.

Courage within Atticus is not only in his professional life, but also shown in his family life. It is hard for Atticus to raise his children without a wife, and to face the constant family ridicule. At one point, I was convinced Atticus had lost his courage, and had broken down to Aunt Alexandra's opinions. However, as the scene progresses, I saw the courage of Atticus and his decision to withdraw the false statements made to his children. A single father, he does not look to others to gather his parenting skills. Atticus has the courage to do what is morally right, and to allow Scout and Jem to be themselves.

The largest example of courage is displayed within the life of Mrs. Dubose. She was a sick, old woman, waiting for death. However, she had one more goal to achieve before her life came to an end. She wished to free herself of a morphine addiction. Mrs. Dubose displayed courage in a situation where most people would just surrender to the drug. She was also courageous in the secrecy in how she covered up her addiction in. No one was aware that the drug caused her to be mean. She chose not to burden anyone with her problems. Mrs.

Dubose did not fear death, but challenged death through her perseverance to leave this world free of addiction. It was only after Mrs. Dubose's passing did the people she affected become aware of her courage. She surprised those around her, who found it far too easy to pass her off as a sick, old lady. She remained strong in spirit and belief. Throughout the novel, Atticus defines courage as " instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you

begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do. " (112).

Within all the examples of courage there is not a situation when the courage did not stem from a need within the character. Courage is the inner desire to succeed and to do what is righteous, no matter what humiliation or consequences that haunt you because of your decision. Scout, Atticus, and Mrs. Dubose understood the risks they faced, but continued with their actions because it was moral. They didn't all enter their personal situation expecting to win. Scout still faced further scolding from Miss. Caroline. There were winners and losers but they do not regret the courage they showed for the sake of good intentions.