

Who's afraid of boo radley?: an essay on to kill a mockingbird

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout's feelings and notions regarding Arthur "Boo" Radley change from her initial preconceived impression that he was a monster, to accepting Boo as a person and empathizing his perspective of the world. In the beginning, Scout was a victim of the neighborhood legend that Boo was a sort of baleful, strange phantom. Later on, Scout dismisses her depiction of Boo when she learns that most of the rumors were products of imagination. As a result, her feelings are altered and she gradually starts to not fear Boo. Towards the end of the novel, when Scout had matured, she accepted Boo as a person, disposed of childhood biases, and treated Boo like a friend whom she had known for years.

Scout is deeply influenced by the legend that there was a spooky menace named Boo Radley who plagues her neighborhood. Such rumors, spread by gossiping neighbors, caused Scout discomfort and prompted her to grow fearful of Boo. As Scout mentioned, "...the mere description of whom was enough to make us behave for days on end," (Lee, 7), shows how intensely she was affected. From this, we can understand that even though she's never interacted with Boo, she's built a partisan towards him in which she avoids anything that has to do with him. With regard to that, it's easy to see how Scout is being negatively swayed by the fictitious stories about Boo. This constant distress also has an effect on her day-to-day decisions. For instance, when Scout's released from school, she "...ran by the Radley Place as fast as I [she] could...", (Lee, 44). Here we see how her superstition-derived opinions of Boo Radley frighten her so much, that she feels the need to sprint past the Radley house to get a sense of safety from the supposed "

dangers” of the Radley Place. Thus, the rumors of Boo Radley unjustly biased Scout’s opinion and feelings, in ways that sometimes affect her daily decisions.

In the middle of the novel, Scout’s fears regarding Boo slowly disappear while her interest in him remains unchanged. Scout’s curiosity leads her to Miss Maudie to discuss her thoughts about Boo. One afternoon, Scout asks Miss Maudie, “...do you think Boo Radley’s still alive?” (Lee, 57). Clearly, we can tell that Scout wanted to confirm her doubts on the rumors of Boo with Miss Maudie. From this, we can also deduce that she wants to be able to communicate and connect with Boo by mentally disproving the stories about him. As the novel progressed, Scout’s terror of Boo Radley slowly faded away but she still remained intrigued to meet him someday. An example of this was when Scout declares, “...Boo Radley was the least of our fears” (Lee, 326). From that comment, it was a clear sign that Scout was losing her prejudice towards Boo. She didn’t need to fear Boo Radley since most of the rumors were a product of neighborhood superstition. Scout’s curiosity regarding Boo led her to learn that the neighborhood rumors were all speculative fiction. This realization ultimately caused her to lose the fear of Boo Radley and to have neutral feelings about him.

During the final chapters, Boo finally becomes human to Scout when he saves Jem and Scout from Bob Ewell. This mysterious figure, about whom she’d heard so many legends describing him as a supernatural monster, was beside her. When she’d escorted Boo to the front porch, she “...found it incredible that he had been sitting beside me [her]...,” (Lee, 371). As he had

been a legend that scared her for years, it was remarkable to have met him at long last. Finally, in the last couple pages of the novel, Scout comes to understand Boo's perspective of the world. When Scout was standing on the Radley porch, she remarked: "...you never really know a man until you stand in his and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough," (Lee, 374). By saying this, Scout shows that she had seen the neighborhood from Boo's point of view. Now that Scout had accepted Boo Radley's existence and had seen the world from his point of view, she was able to empathize Boo.

Scout's opinion on Boo Radley matures from that of an innocent child who thought Boo was a frightening, hostile monster, into that of a near grown-up who could understand Boo's view of the world. In the first place, Scout's depiction of Boo was a product of speculation that was spread at school and in the neighborhood. In effect, Scout became alarmed and distressed which resulted in changes in her behavior. Continuing on, thanks to Miss Maudie, Scout learned that many of the legends of Boo Radley were false.

Consequently, her fear of Boo started to fade but she remained curious about his activities and to one day meet him. Lastly, Boo finally became real to her when he had come out of the shadows to rescue her and Jem. In addition, when escorted Boo to his front porch, she was able to see the world from his perspective. Scout's newfound ability to be able to imagine an event from someone else's point without any sort of bias ensures that she will not become jaded, even as she loses her innocence later on in life.