

Leadership of atticus finch

Literature, American Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch exemplifies leadership. Finch is a soft spoken attorney in the post depression South who agrees to represent a black man charged with raping a young white woman. In a prejudiced region, during an oppressive era, Finch boldly chooses the path less taken. Though he may have upset a good many in challenging the values of the time period, throughout the novel, Finch displays leadership by bravely acting on his principles, as well as in the way he raises his children. Atticus Finch is a progressive literary figure who has helped shape culture and thought by doing what he knows is just regardless of opposition. Finch's actions in opposing the majority's mindset proved powerful, even if they weren't successful in the end. In speaking to his son, Jem, about representing the innocent Tom Robinson, he says, " I wanted you to see what real courage is, 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. " (pg. 124) Atticus Finch believes in doing what is ethically right, regardless of the criticism that befalls him. He knows that changing cultural thought may not happen overnight, but his willingness to take on this hopeless court case, could begin the pendulum of change. This tenacity is characteristic of true leadership. Atticus refuses to be swayed by those who angrily disagree with him. When Bob Ewell, the father of the 'victim', spits on him, he simply pulls out his handkerchief and wipes his face. Atticus maintains his intense stare at Mr. Ewell who is the first to back away, calling Atticus a " nigger lover". Atticus sticks to his pacifism even in the face of danger. His calm reaction illustrates that he will stick to his

ideals, even when faced with irate opposition. Atticus Finch also demonstrates leadership in how he raises his children, Scout and Jem. When Atticus' daughter, Scout, begins school, she is punished for being a precociously adept reader. Conventional teaching standards ask educators to tackle reading instruction assuming their students have never previously read. For this reason, Scout's teacher, albeit strangely, punishes Scout for being ahead of the class. Scout is smart, in a setting where intellectualism is discouraged, especially for a girl. Atticus, who teaches Scout to read by sparking curiosity, rather than by force-feeding her, decides that he must continue to promote good values in his daughter, and agrees to secretly continue reading with Scout. He goes against typical wisdom of the era, which looks down upon intelligence or empowerment of females. Atticus represents a progressive minority of heretics, fighting for a new type of societal standard. Later in the novel, Atticus Finch's parenting methods are again challenged when he is visited by his sister, Aunt Alexandra. Alexandra voices her outrage at how Atticus raises Scout and Jem, and is particularly adamant in trying to enforce ladylike customs in Scout. Scout's aunt requires that she wear a dress and forbids her to play with her male friends. Atticus again defends his actions and refuses to let his sister have any say in the upbringing of his children. He does not want to let Scout be a typical lady, who doesn't have the need or will for "doing things that require pants." (pg. 81) He wants Scout to be raised by letting her own curiosity and desires form her personality, rather than having predetermined societal expectations for women determine her behavior. For raising his children against social norms, allowing them to grow freely and naturally, and by resisting opposition to his

unorthodox values, Atticus personifies leadership. Throughout the novel, Atticus displays the characteristics of a leader. He holds values and ideals that are progressive for his era. Atticus believes in equality for women and blacks, as well as in pacifism and humility. But above all, Atticus' determination to maintain his ideals makes him a strong leader. Atticus is constantly countered by the citizens of Maycomb County, but he persists through this adversity. As he says, it takes real bravery "when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway." (pg. 124) Atticus shows this courage throughout the novel, and in doing so, personifies leadership. He sets the stage for change with his progressive ideals and determined mindset, leading the charge as an example for his children and for Maycomb County. Not only was Atticus a strong leader in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but, as an extremely inspirational character, he led a real change of thought for the novel's broad base of readers.