

Importance of knowledge in still i rise poem

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Character education is not only expedient, but essential, because “ Knowledge gives you power, character respect” (Lee 46). The fundamental traits that develop children into healthy, moral and successful beings are not only directly taught, but also caught on indirectly through interactions with people, events in life and, literature. “ Still I Rise” is a poem by Maya Angelou, civil rights activist, author, writer, and poet. The poem itself is about Angelou ending up on top against many forces, such as her own history and background, and those who dislike her for her stellar character traits. The poem’s theme of self-respect, confidence and persevering through a struggle is also prevalent in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Jean-Louis “ Scout” Finch and Jeremy “ Jem” Finch grow up in Southern America in the 1930s. Their coming-of-age story is one filled with adventures and experiences, some which exposes them to the rough and unpleasant society. Racism, poverty, unemployment, domestic abuse, and sexism are all issues very prevalent at the time. Atticus Finch, the father of the two children, although not a mogul, had dealt with these issues first hand, and remain determined to continue taking the path he believes to be morally correct. This decision allow his children to receive a good moral education, but also often put him in undesirable and hapless situations. One such example of this occurs when he defends Tom Robinson. Atticus know it is unlikely for Tom to win, yet he do what he could within his capabilities, putting a together a logical and rational argument base on the evidence. Tom Robinson do not win, but Atticus would not be able to live with himself if he had not try, shown when he states: “ They’re certainly entitled to think that, and they’re entitled to full respect for their opinions...

but 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 54-57)

When Atticus chose to defend Tom Robinson, his reputation change, people start treating him differently: children at the school taunt Scout that her father is a "nigger-lover." An attempt on his children's life is made. He is spat in the face. What do not change was the type of man Atticus is. One with prodigious amount of self-respect and dignity as well as tolerance and understanding of those around him.

Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise" also describes her struggles. Like: "You may write me down in history, with your bitter, twisted lie," (Angelou 1-2) or "you may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes" (Angelou 21-22) and "Did you want to see me broken?" (Angelou 13) Yet she triumphantly rises above all those that wanted to see her destroyed. She then responds by displaying how harmless the insults are and how unaffected she is, rather cheerful, confident and full of pride. She displays her incredible self-respect, rising back up despite in whichever way she was hurt, because she also has the confidence to believe she is strong and capable and have a purpose, and whatever thrown at her cannot be allowed to affect her.

The two pieces of literature are both written in the 1960s when the Civil Right Movements are taking place. A time when people rises above racism. Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and "Still I Rise" includes the theme of self-respect, confidence, perseverance and follow the righteous and virtuous path

one believe in. This does indeed seem like a good maxim to follow, as Maya Angelou and Atticus Finch are both very well received because of what they do, which shaped who they are.