

Taking a stand

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



Jessica Pratt Taking a Stand Dear ladies and gentlemen of the court, today I stand before you to debate whether or not Atticus should have defended Tom Robinson. I assure you that you can place all of your trust in me because I am completely unbiased since I am not racist and I am in no way related to Atticus. While it is true that Atticus Finch caused dissension by defending a black man, he had no choice but to defend Tom Robinson, a man created in the image of God and therefore equal to his fellow white and black brothers. Today, the prosecutors will point out some facts about Atticus that even I, his defender, cannot deny.

I cannot in good conscience begin to defend Atticus until I acknowledge his weaknesses. To begin with, the truth remains that Atticus put his family and himself in emotional and physical danger. Because Atticus chooses to defend Tom Robinson, Scouts classmates pick on her at school. For instance, Cecil Jacobs says, " My folks said your daddy was a disgrace an' that n***** oughta hang from the water-tank. " (Lee 102). He also called Scout a coward when she refuses to fight him. In addition, Atticus places himself in physical danger by defending Tom Robinson when a mob threatens him because he camped out at Tom's jail cell (202).

If Jem and Scout would not have stepped in, injuries and maybe death could have occurred. No doubt, Atticus put his family and himself in emotional and physical danger. Furthermore, the prosecutors will argue that Atticus should not have defended Tom Robinson since he knew he would lose. Atticus tells Scout that he will not win this case since Tom Robinson is a black man accused by a white family (101). A black man is considered dishonest and

the chance of the jury to believe a black man's word versus a white family was extremely unlikely.

As I stated earlier, no one can deny these facts or the logic behind the reasons. Not even I can. However, in spite of these facts, I ask that you consider the reasons why Atticus puts his family and himself in physical and emotional danger. When you hear these, I believe you will see his actions as justifiable and acquit him of any guilt. Although Atticus loves his family and would never want harm to come to them, if he did not defend Tom Robinson he could be considered a hypocrite. Instead, Atticus continues with his job and defends Tom Robinson the best he can (218).

For instance, most of the town is upset with Atticus since he is defending Tom Robinson. One townsman said, " But Atticus aims to defend him. That's what I don't like about it. " (218) Most importantly, Atticus should have defended Tom Robinson because he knew it was the right thing to do. He knew deep down in his heart that Tom was innocent. Therefore, he deserved to be defended as if he were white. On the contrary, if Atticus did not defend Tom Robinson, he would be portraying himself as a racist. Just like all of the others in Maycomb who are just as bad as a supposed Negro is.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, Atticus defended Tom Robinson for his kids. He needed to set a good example for Jem and Scout so that they would not become racist like most of the residents of Maycomb County. Atticus feels that he couldn't hold up his head in town, and he couldn't represent Maycomb County in the legislature if he did not defend Tom Robinson (100). Atticus believed he would be viewed as another racist if he didn't take this case. When Atticus is explaining this to Scout he says, " I

couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again. (100) Therefore, if Atticus did not defend Tom Robinson, he would not be a good example for his kids and they could turn into another prejudice resident in Maycomb County. Dear Ladies and gentleman of the court, today I stand before you pleading with you that you realize that the only thing Atticus Finch is guilty of is defending an innocent man. He had no choice but to defend Tom Robinson, a man created in the image of God and therefore equal to his fellow white brothers and black brothers. If Atticus didn't defend this man, who would?

Would anybody else have the courage, integrity, and moral character to come forward and defend him? Most likely no other man would defend Tom Robinson in the way he deserved to be defended. If Atticus did not defend Tom Robinson, then an innocent man would be hauled away to jail for a crime he did not commit. Furthermore, if Atticus would not have defended Tom Robinson, then Tom would not have a chance to go back to the normal life he once had. Tom has to provide for his family, he can't accomplish this if he is stuck in prison. He still has a loving wife, joyful children, and caring friends who need Tom in Their lives.

Not only will Tom Robinson be crushed, but the many hearts of others will be crushed also. In addition, Atticus is a lawyer because he wants to represent his country by defending the defenseless. Atticus is proud of his country and in America, all men are created equal despite their race. Since we are all created equal, every man deserves the right to a fair trial. By defending Tom Robinson, Atticus is portraying the love that he feels for his country.

Therefore, Atticus did the right thing and followed his heart. Works Cited Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Grand Central Publishing, New York; 1960.