

# To kill a mockingbird by lee harper: courage is in the hearts of all

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



To determine the amount of one's courage, they first need to explore the many definitions of what it means to be courageous. *To Kill a Mockingbird* was written by Lee Harper in the 1960's during the Civil Rights Movement. In the book, Scout Finch talks about her adventures in her hometown of Maycomb County and all the events that unfolded in the summers before and after she started the first grade. The dictionary defines courage as strength to defeat fear and pain, but it is different according to the novel. Harper Lee uses the novel to show that true courage is fighting for what you believe despite the consequences through the characters Tom Robinson, Jem Finch, and Mrs. Dubose.

During the 1930's, racial injustice was the main part of society. Black people were discriminated against and considered trash. Tom Robinson, a Negro man, was accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a member of a family that is considered lesser to the black community. Her family is untrustworthy, but the police still believe Mr. Ewell when he accused Tom of raping his daughter. Atticus knows that Tom's case is doomed because any black man accused of raping anyone, especially a white woman, will get convicted because of racial injustice. Yet, Tom still testifies against Mayella. He tells the jury that he did not rape her, but in fact she came onto him. In his testimony, Tom says " I felt sorry for her" (197). Tom showed pity for Mayella. He was familiar with the prejudice of the world and did not want her to suffer through it as he had. Tom was courageous because he fought against the inequality by revealing the truth behind Mayella's accusation and disregarding the consequences. During the trial, Jem watched with young eyes as Tom was courageous. Just like Tom, Jem also had courage.

Jem started the book with a small sense of what courage was. In the beginning he considered touching the Radley house as courage. His acts proved the definition in the Webster's Dictionary, but later he would mature into a man of real courage, what Harper Lee would call courage. When the trial ends, Mr. Ewell swears vengeance against Atticus and all the others that tried to make him seem like a terrible person. The night after a school play when the children are walking home, they both get attacked by Mr. Ewell. He tries to stab Scout, but Jem pulls Mr. Ewell off of her even though Mr. Ewell is armed with a knife. Jem was a twelve year old boy, and would not win in a fight against a grown man with a knife. Even though he knew the possibility that he could die, he protected his sister. Jem knew what would happen, but still continued anyway. He believed that standing up for loved ones outweighs the possibility of death. When Scout needs comfort after her play, Jem helps her through and Scout comments " Jem was becoming almost as good as Atticus at making you feel right when things went wrong" (259). Atticus was Jem's symbol of courage. He went from a child with little knowledge of what courage truly was to a man that had all the traits of a brave individual. Jem adapted his courage from Atticus, and for Atticus, Mrs. Dubose was a lady that was courageous even though her morals were not the same as Atticus's.

Mrs. Dubose was a sick woman in both mind and body, but she was courageous nonetheless. She was diagnosed with cancer and took morphine to take the pain away. Back then, the morphine was a highly addictive drug that would keep people alive until, eventually, the morphine

took their lives. Mrs. Dubose was going to die, but she was determined not to die because of morpheme. She was in great pain, but she didn't want to have an addiction; she did not want morpheme to be the reason for her death. Atticus tells the kids, " You rarely win, but sometimes you do... According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody" (111-112). Her bravery came from deciding how she would leave this world. Mrs. Dubose knew that in the end, her cancer would destroy her body and life. But she wanted to set the stage for her demise without an addiction; just a death from an incurable disease. She struggled through the remainder of her life and with her courage, met an end that she desired.

Bravery is the knowledge of what will result from an action, but still going through with it despite the consequences. When facing racial injustice, there are some that will stand up for equality and risk the chance of imprisonment, persecution, or death. Most brothers' love their sisters with a great passion and will fight to the death to protect them and anyone else that they care for. Strong woman, with any belief, can overcome the craving for pain-stopping drugs, and leave this world free. People are courageous, because the things they are passionate for give them strength to fight.