

To kill a mocking bird "one shade of gray"

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Have you ever heard someone saying that they have a heart of gold? Well what does it really mean to have a "heart of gold"? It means that you are pure good. What about being "pure evil"? That would require someone being completely evil, with absolutely no good. However, no one is actually all good or all bad, though you may be more of one than the other. Most people are neither good nor bad, which could be described as a "shade of gray". In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, characters surprised readers by starting off bad and ending good and overall, in a shade of gray. One character that falls into the shade of gray is Aunt Alexandra.

The first time she appears in the book, it is discovered that even she, Atticus' sister, doesn't want him defending Tom Robinson because it's bad for the Finches' reputation. All she seems to care about is how important your family is or seems, how strong your family ties are, and also cares a great deal about acting the way that society is right, not what is morally right. We see these things occur at multiple times throughout the book, and at first, this makes her seem like a terrible person who cares more about what society says is okay than what actually is.

Once, when Scout was talking to Francis, he said, "'Grandma says it's bad enough he lets you run all wild, but now he's turned out a nigger-lover we'll never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb again. He's ruinin' the family, that's what he's doin'" (110). This quote demonstrates how she feels about Atticus defending a black person, despite the fact that he's her own brother. Eventually though, we see her start to care more for Tom Robinson and Atticus defending him. During her missionary circle, Mrs. Merriweather and

Mrs. Gates were saying bad things about Atticus, so Miss Maudie stood up for him.

After that, Scout said that Aunt Alexandra, “ gave Miss Maudie a look of pure gratitude” (312) and later goes on to say to Miss Maudie in the kitchen, “ I can’t say I approve of everything he does, Maudie, but he’s my brother, and I just want to know when this will ever end” (316). The first quote lets us see that she wanted to defend her brother, but she couldn’t since she was the host of the missionary circle, and was happy that Maudie did. Then in the second quote, we can see that even though she doesn’t totally approve, she doesn’t want him to suffer.

This shows that at times she seems very focused on what others think, and other times, she does care about those she loves, so she is neither pure good or pure bad. Like Aunt Alexandra, Mrs. Dubose is also in that shade of gray. When we first meet Mrs. Dubose, Scout says that, “ Jem and I hated her. If she was on the porch when we passed, we would be raked by her wrathful gaze, subjected to ruthless interrogation regarding our behavior, and given a melancholy prediction on what we would amount to when we grew up, which was always nothing” (132).

This quote explains how every time they passed by, she felt the need to constantly insult them, question them, and stare at them, which is extremely rude of her. However, by the end of chapter 11, when she has passed away, we discover that she had been fighting a morphine addiction and only insulted them because she was struggling with the addiction, and insults them while Jem reads to her to help take her mind off of it. Atticus even says, “ Mrs.

Dubose won, all ninety-eight pounds of her. According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody. She was the bravest person I ever knew" (149). What this means is that, while she was being rude to Jem, Scout and Atticus, she was only trying to think about other things so she wouldn't die addicted to morphine. That determination makes her a good person, because she is actually a good role-model and had a good reason for insulting them, though she still said many hurtful things.

It is safe to say that most people are normally somewhere in the middle of 'pure good' and 'pure evil', or a gray area. Throughout To Kill a Mockingbird, we see many characters in that shade of gray. This makes them more realistic and therefore, more relatable for the reader. If we can relate with them, then we will understand them better, making us enjoy the book more. In To Kill a Mockingbird, characters surprised readers by starting off bad and ending good and overall, in a shade of gray.