

To kill a mockingbird
loss of innocence
essay



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Whether in the form of a living person or a fictional character from a book or movie, heroes are prevalent in everyone's life. The typical view of a hero is someone who fights crime or saves people from mortal peril, but the true definition of a hero is a person of distinguished courage admired for their brave deeds and noble qualities. In the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, Atticus Finch is the true definition of hero.

Although he wasn't seen as a hero during the time the book took place, Atticus Finch is considered to be one of the most heroic figures in American Literature because of his courage, intelligence, and sense of what is right and what is wrong. In the novel, Atticus' courage is tested to the extreme. There is one question that is persistent throughout the trial part of the novel, and that is whether or not Atticus would have defended Tom had he not been appointed to do so by Judge Taylor. This question is answered by Atticus' response to Scout's questioning as to why he chose to defend Tom Robinson.

Atticus responds to Scout's questions with, " For a number of reasons. The main one is, if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again. Simply by the nature of the work, every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess.

This could lead you to believe that even if he hadn't been appointed to represent Tom in court, he most likely would have anyways, because of his belief that everyone should be treated equally. Atticus goes through a

personal struggle in *To Kill A Mockingbird* where he battles with himself over doing what he knows is the ethical thing to do, and what is the easiest thing to do. In the end, he decides to stick to his morals and defends Tom Robinson in court, which proves his level of courage is much higher compared to anyone else's at the time. From the list of many quotes by Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, it is clear that he is wise and intelligent beyond his time. The way he speaks and the amount of thought he puts behind every word he says is proof of how knowledgeable he is.

In the novel Atticus says, " You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view-until you climb into his skin and walk around in it. " This is an important quote to think about while reading the rest of the book because it also applies to Tom Robinson, Mrs. Dubose, and Boo Radley. It shows that Atticus is almost ahead of his time with the way he talks. Atticus' intellect shows in the way he addresses others and answers Scout and Jem's questions, as well as his perception of what others are thinking and how he avoids potentially sticky situations. Determining the difference between what is right and what is wrong is an issue for many characters in the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

For Atticus, choosing the right path is a constant problem. He's first faced with defending Tom Robinson which could not only give him trouble, but also cause trouble for his children. The decision to make Jem read to Mrs. Dubose wasn't a great problem for Atticus, because he knew in the long run it would benefit Jem. The most difficult decision between right and wrong for Atticus was when he thought Jem stabbed Bob Ewell, and he was going to allow him to be prosecuted instead of fighting it. This proves that Atticus knew the

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differences between right and wrong and was going to make no exceptions for it, not even for his own son.

The quote, "There is no right way to do wrong," by an unknown author fits *To Kill A Mockingbird* perfectly. It states that you can't decide to do the wrong thing because it's easier than doing what is right and expect to be the same as you were before, or, "you can't have your cake and eat it too." As Atticus is seen as a heroic figure by the town of Maycomb, neither Scout nor Jem idolizes or admires him at the beginning of the book. Eventually, as the plot progresses and the characters develop, they start to see how amazing Atticus really is and how lucky they are to have him. It's almost ironic how at the beginning, Atticus is respected by the people of the town and unnoticed by his own children, then at the end of the novel the citizens of Maycomb have no respect for him and his children have gained an enormous amount of respect for their dad. The views of the children and the citizens gradually switch as the novel moves on.

No matter what views others have about him, Atticus is determined to see the good in every person he meets, which fits him perfectly into the definition of a hero.