

The character atticus
finch – to kill a
mockingbird essay
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Harper Lee, the writer, has created Atticus Finch to be a conscientious, considerate character; that is a good father to his children and is greatly respected throughout Maycomb County. He treats his children with the utmost respect and is always there to help them along in life. The character of Atticus Finch is a strong believer in equality for all, he is not racist or sexist and even though few people at the time had similar views, he is not one to be afraid of voicing his opinions. The reader sees Atticus to be a good role model to his children, making sure that they are his top priority.

Atticus and Scout have a pleasant relationship with each other. His character always seems to have time to sit down and listen to what she has to say and is always there to give a bit of advice:

“ Something wrong, Scout?”

Even though in the novel Atticus is at work most days, he will always have time for what really matters. The writer presents him as being generally concerned about what Scout is saying and listens intently. Then he waits until she has finished, and is ready for him to speak. This not only shows a great deal of respect in their relationship, but also that they have a special connection with each other, allowing them to communicate with little being said.

Atticus teaches Scout some of his character's moral codes and values throughout the novel. Thus, showing that he cares for her and is prepared to spend his free time teaching his daughter to grow up to be a mature, sophisticated woman:

“ You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view.”

Lee shows that Atticus is a wise and intelligent guider for his children. He wants to teach them the ‘ correct’ way to live life. What Atticus is trying to teach Scout is that you never really know somebody and what they are thinking unless “ you consider things from his point of view”. Once you’ve done so, your understanding of their thoughts and feelings will have changed. In this instance Scout probably does not understand what Atticus has said. But as the novel progresses, she comprehends the true meaning. A good example of this is when Scout stands on the Radley porch looking at the world from Boo Radley’s point of view.

Most of the time Jem and his father seem to get on very well, but there were parts in the novel where they did not agree on certain things:

“ I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, but I ain’t sure now!”

At times, Jem is rebellious towards his father and wants to voice his opinions, but he is worried of what the consequences might be and waits until “ Atticus was out of earshot”. Lee includes this in the novel to show the children growing up and also possibly to show how Atticus, as a father, would deal with the situation. He does not mention this again; instead he gives Jem time and space to clear his head. It is times like this that the character of Atticus demonstrates his sensitive side, which is yet another great characteristic that Lee has created for him.

At other times in the novel you can really feel the bond between them both:

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“ Atticus is a gentleman just like me”

Lee presents Atticus to be a good role model, and at points Jem idolizes him and wants to grow into a man just like Atticus. This emphasizes that Atticus's character is a worthy father to his children, and Lee makes sure the reader knows this by mentioning, on many occasions, how he is able to deal with his children's thoughts and feelings in a calm yet helpful way.

Atticus has very individual and unique characteristics, especially for the 1930s. Instead of following what everyone else is thinking, he sticks to his moral principles with great humility. This was a time when people were extremely sexist and racist. And, despite everyone else Atticus is not, he is different, he has integrity and sticks to his beliefs:

“ Anything fit to say at the table's fit to say in front of Calpurnia”

This quotation just highlights how strongly Lee presents Atticus to believe in equal rights to all. He does not think because Calpurnia is a Negro that she does not have the right to hear what is going on. He believes that whether you are black or white it does not matter. From this, the reader can really understand that the character of Atticus respects the equality that all humans should have. By reading the novel the reader can see that Atticus is a strong believer in human rights, he considers other people's feelings as well as his own, for example Calpurnia's feelings. If Atticus had made Calpurnia leave, then as a reader you would understand that her character would probably feel left out, and Atticus would not want that.

Not only that, but he has the quality of humility; Atticus does not boast or brag about his talents, he is so self-confident that he can go on with life without needing compliments from others:

“ I reckon if he'd wanted us to know it, he'da told us.”

This quotation stresses the fact that Atticus does not tell everyone about his talents. Humility is usually seen as a good characteristic to have, it shows maturity and individuality both of which the character of Atticus has. Harper Lee really tries to get the point across that Atticus is a well-meaning character. He always goes by what he thinks is best. Even though he is always willing to listen, I do not think that the character of Atticus would change his moral principles, he sticks by what he believes and what is important to him. In this instance, the reader can really see that even though his character may have great talents he is not one to flaunt and boast about them.

The writer shows Atticus to be very tolerant, both with work and at home with his children. He sums up the situation before speaking and he is ready to open his mind to the other side of the argument:

“ I wish Bob Ewell wouldn't chew tobacco,”

This is a case of when Atticus shows immense tolerance, instead of fighting back he simply walks away and does not hold too much of a grudge. He does not discuss the incident again; he feels there is no point. The writer suggests that Atticus probably has his opinions, but he keeps them reasonably to

himself. This is another one of Atticus's good characteristics which make up the character he is.

Not only is the character of Atticus passionate about life, he is also very passionate about his job as a lawyer and a representative of Maycomb County. The main part of the novel where you see Atticus in his role as a lawyer is the Tom Robinson trial:

"Is this the man that raped you?... How?"

This emphasises just how clever Atticus really is. He wants to find the truth, but in order to do this he knows he has to be clever about the situation. He most likely sees his job as a bit of a challenge. But, in my opinion Atticus is someone who likes a challenge. He wants to prove to Maycomb County that just because someone has accused a coloured man of a crime, it does not mean they have committed it.

By reading the novel, the reader realises that Atticus sees his career as an important part of life. If he did not then he probably would not have accepted the Tom Robinson trial in the first place. Not only that, but to "hold his head high" and progress with the trial with dignity and passion just shows how important he sees the role of being a lawyer is. In fact the way he goes about his career is very similar to the way he goes about life in general. His views and opinions shown outside the courthouse are shown in the courthouse as well:

"Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the public streets."

The character of Miss Maudie is saying that Atticus's opinions are the same wherever he is, he has nothing to hide. His attitude towards people never changes; he is consistent with his principles showing immense integrity. In his role as a lawyer he acts the same as he would at home. This is possibly why Atticus's character is such a good lawyer; he is confident in what he is saying and also very self-assured.

Harper Lee uses a variety of techniques to present Atticus's character to the reader. One way she does so is in the key events of the novel, which reveal his true personality and values:

"Mr Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man"

Even in difficult situations Atticus is still keen to see the better side of people. This may be a bit naïve of him, but that is just the kind of character that Harper Lee has created. Atticus is a proud father and is always willing to give people a second chance.

Not only does the reader get a view of Atticus by what happens, but also by what other people say and act around him:

"Mr Bob Ewell... spat in his face, and told him he'd get him if it took the rest of his life."

By the way that Harper Lee writes the novel; she makes sure that Atticus's character does not come across as the one being in the wrong. Of course the reader has to remember that the novel is written from Scout's perspective so she is always going to favour her father over others. Lee writes the novel so

the reader is on Atticus's side and makes the reader think that Mr Bob Ewell is the one doing the wrong thing.

Another technique the writer uses to present his character to the reader is selecting the things that Atticus says carefully:

" You just hold your head high and be a gentleman."

Anything that Atticus says is always from the good of his heart. He is very supportive to his children and respectful of others. The writer presents him as a person with a " civilised heart", with peace at mind and someone who takes life as it comes.

Towards the end of the novel Atticus plays a major role in the events. Harper Lee has tried to make his character's reactions as believable as possible:

" I thought he got it all out of him the day he threatened me. Even if he had not, I thought he'd come after me."

Atticus is a naive character, but it's just the way he has been made out to be by Lee, and this quotation just emphasises that fact. This could have been classed as one of the few mistakes that Atticus made throughout the novel. He took no precautions for his or his children's safety even though he had received threats from Bob Ewell. From these events I think Atticus learnt that some people are not worth giving a second chance to.

Even though everything said and done shows and develops the readers' opinion of the character of Atticus, you have to remember that it is seen through Scout's eyes, and the events are interpreted by Scout:

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“ It was times like these when I thought my father... was the bravest man who ever lived”

Because the novel is narrated by Scout it influences the readers' thoughts of what is going on. Scout is just a young girl in the novel and does not always understand everything to its true meaning. If you look at the shooting of the dog from a different perspective, other than Scout's, then you might think otherwise. Also because the novel is narrated by Scout you do not really see the other side of the argument, the reader just follows Scout's opinions and thoughts.

In conclusion Atticus Finch is presented by Harper Lee to show professional qualities of high standards, never pre-judgemental and personal traits of non-racism, equality to all and a strong father figure. In my opinion, I think Atticus is a man that we should all look up to. Even though he is only a character created by Harper Lee, he is still a man that many of us would aspire to be like. He is kind-hearted and always there to stand up for righteousness in what he believes is justice. Also, he is strong minded, self confident and quite self dependant, which I see as many qualities I would like to have. If everyone had characteristics like Atticus Finch the world would be a better place.