

Atticus finch and silas marner – good parents? essay sample

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



To Kill a Mockingbird was written by Harper Lee in the 1960s, commenting on the events 100 years ago when racial tensions were being pushed to the limits. As the South of America was anti-black, racial tensions were high. The story centres on a small, inbred town called Maycomb, which has a population dominated by whites, which look down on the blacks. Both To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee and Silas Marner by George Eliot are social comments on what was happening at that time. To Kill a Mockingbird deals with racial issues. Silas Marner talks about the social standard in England at the time of industrialization.

Atticus is a good father to Jem and Scout, but he has to gain their respect, in their eyes they see him as an ageing man who has little or no value to them, because of this, Jem and Scout don't see him as a role model until a string of events puts it into perspective.

Atticus buys Jem and Scout a gun when he thinks they are responsible enough to look after it; he gives them one piece of advice, "Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird," he is referring to the notion that a mockingbird is a harmless creature, and does nothing but sing and bring happiness to the world. This advice given by Atticus could be seen as his way to explain the treatment of Boo Radley and Tom Robinson. Both Boo Radley and Tom Robinson are treated with little respect in the town, and are sinfully destroyed or neglected by the people. They could be seen as "mocking birds".

Atticus Finch is used to convey Harper Lee's feelings about race, society as a mass, and morals. Atticus teaches the children in three simple ways which

are; the use of examples, verbal statements, and learning through experience. Atticus uses these techniques to help his children to become upholding members of the local society. Jem and Scout are subjected to a sharp learning curve; at the start of the novel they have innocence about them and are naïve to what is happening with race. They play and act like regular children, until the court case against Tom Robinson. There is a sharp contrast between Scout and Jem at the start of the novel compared to the end. Maturity and a feeling of self-pride are installed into them thanks to Atticus.

Atticus Finch uses examples to teach Scout and Jem, he lets the maid who is black to eat with them, something that is frowned upon in their town, also he treats everyone with courtesy if they are black or white. A good example of this is when Mr. Ewell spits in Atticus's face he stays calm and wipes it off the slaver and does not react. This shows to Jem how he would stay calm even if he was attacked or hurt by someone. Atticus makes it a common practice to live his life, as he would like his children to live theirs, by doing this he is honest, respectable and, kind man.

Atticus shows his character by defending Tom Robinson, a black man on trial for the rape of a white woman. Throughout the trial process, Atticus shows Jem and Scout that true courage is standing up for what you believe in, and all humans deserve respect, despite their colour or race. Atticus also tries to be a perfect southern gentleman, again, teaching Jem and Scout to care for all people.

Since Atticus possesses a strong trusting relationship with Jem and Scout, his word becomes valuable to them. Therefore, the statement of his beliefs is a highly effective way of communicating with the children. Early in the novel, Scout overhears Atticus having a discussion with Uncle Jack. She discovers some of his hopes for Jem and herself when Atticus states

“ Well, most folks seem to think they’re right and you’re wrong...” “ They’re certainly entitled to think that, and they’re entitled to full respect for their opinions,” said Atticus, “ but before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” Atticus believes that a person’s courage stems from their soul. He also implies that courage can be found in those that hold on to their values and not get influenced by other people’s thoughts, this thought is strongly pressed by Atticus all the way through the novel. He teaches Jem and Scout that an open mind is necessary to form true opinions of someone; also opinions of others should be respected. Atticus uses two of the most effective forms of teaching to demonstrate his beliefs for his children. The first being the simple statement of what he believes...” but before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself.” The other method of teaching he uses is trial and error.

One example of this is the time Atticus allows Jem and Scout to spend with Mrs. Dubose. Well aware of Mrs. Dubose’s addiction to morphine and her disapproval of Atticus’ representation of Tom Robinson’s case, Atticus encourages Jem and Scout’s visits to her. He treats Mrs. Dubose with respect even though she is being spiky to him and his children, he still manages to

treat her in the kindest manner. He compliments her appearance, also helps her into her chair. He understands the children's impressionability, and realizes the learning value of such an experience. Not only do the children leave "the Mrs. Dubose situation" with a better understanding of death and the importance of companionship, Jem and Scout lay down foundations for their own belief system in regards to respect and courage. After Mrs. Dubose's death, Atticus takes his parenting role to a verbal level and states his reaction to what the children have learned. "I told you that if you hadn't lost your head I'd have made you go read to her. I wanted you to see something about her, I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand." By stating this, Atticus reinforces the main themes of the novel, courage and respect.

"Everybody in Maycomb, it seemed, had a streak: a drinking streak, a gambling streak, a mean streak, a funny streak." Aunt Alexandra is a typical townswoman she likes to get involved with the gossip of the town. There seems to be a lot of talk in Maycomb. Atticus is a man who won't listen to the gossip and only cares about matters that concern himself and his family. This fact also helps him to decide to defend Tom Robinson in court.

There are two major events in the novel in which Atticus is forced to confront the racism of the Maycomb community. The first instance occurs when Atticus is faced with a lynch mob outside of the jail in which Tom Robinson is being held. The second example is the trial of Tom Robinson. The entire town is present to hear Atticus' defence of Tom. He professes Tom's innocence; by

doing this Atticus tells the people of Maycomb blacks have rights that should be respected.

Atticus Finch chooses to fight against the tradition of Maycomb with traditions of his own. Atticus is able to honourably defend Tom Robinson and promote new traditions for himself and his children. Respect, dignity, and equality form the backbone of Atticus' belief system, a belief system containing qualities that are often overlooked in the traditional South. By doing this Atticus thinks he can give his children a real chance in life and he knows they can overlook the racial tension in the air.

Like in Silas Marner there is conflicting beliefs between locals. The main example of this is the inn in the town of Ravelo with its split class system, and the split racial thoughts in the town of Maycomb. Silas and Atticus both leave the major decisions in life to their children. Eppie is given the chance to leave her foster father Silas and, is given the chance to live with her newfound real dad Godfrey. Eppie has to choose to live with Silas bordering on poverty or with Godfrey in the upper class circle. Silas leaves the decision to Eppie showing he cares for her daughters decisions, you feel as though Silas knows that she will choose him because of the bond that has been made between them. In the same way Atticus leaves the choice to his children regarding the feeling of race. He lets them decide whether to join the masses in racial hate, or become decent members of the town.

Even though the values of the local people are the opposite with Atticus' strong character, Atticus is not given a choice in defending Tom Robinson, he

does not approach his task half-heartedly. He shows to Jem and Scout that he believes in pride, by doing this he knows he can hold his head high in the town and not feel like he let Tom Robertson die without trying to salvage his life. Traditionally the trial would have been a for-gone conclusion condemning a black man, a bit like a gladiatorial mach with a weakened man. Atticus tries to fight to the end to save Tom Robertson, even though it seems like a lost cause.

Atticus attempts to explain to Scout “ I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man.” He behaves honestly and never compromises his beliefs. Atticus admits, “ I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” After the verdict is read and Atticus is leaving the courtroom, he is rewarded with the respect that a true gentleman of his stature deserves. As all the supporters of Tom Robertson in the balcony rise to they’re feet in silence recognising a noble man.

Many adults tend to underestimate the capabilities of children. Mrs Merryweather finds it necessary to ‘ talk down’ to Scout and thus assumes that Scout is unable to understand the conversation. There are many times in the novel where other adults question the ability for children to understand a particular situation. Rev. Sykes tells Jem to take Scout out of the courtroom during the trial because some of the testimony would not be fit for a young lady’s ears.

Jem, who has reached adolescence, begins to think more like an adult and insists that Scout can't understand what is going on anyway, so she might as well just stay. The number of times that children are 'talked down' to in the novel has no consequence on the underlying theme that children have a different and sometimes higher understanding of situations than adults do. Although disappointed by the verdict, Jem and Scout both learn valuable lessons. Atticus succeeds in conveying his simple message that when a white man cheats a black man, "no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash." After the trial, Jem and Scout don't care what people say about their "nigger-loving" father. It does not matter because he has given them a new tradition of thinking, a way that breaks them from the others of Maycomb.

Jem and Scout do not think in terms of class and race. Scout does not have to think hard to know that she would "let Tom Robinson go so quick the Missionary Society wouldn't have time to catch its breath." If it was up to her, and if Jem had been on the jury "Tom would be a free man." Atticus is pleased by his children's' views, he starts to relies that Jem and Scout are starting to transform into adults in their values. Atticus is glad that Jem and Scout don't catch, "Maycomb's usual disease." The "disease" Atticus does not want them to catch is the set of the traditional views that will interfere with their reasoning process. Atticus' comment for the jury is that "There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads..... they couldn't be fair if they tried." The "something" is tradition, and Atticus does his small part in attempting to reshape it, he hopes that Jem and Scout will carry on

his way of thinking when he is gone. By the end of the book Atticus knows that Jem will become a gentleman after himself, and Scout will become a woman who has her own views and not take the views of her husband. In this way even though they are still children they act and value things like adults, the world has been opened for them by Atticus.

Silas Marner wrote by George Eliot in 1861 is focused on the period of the industrial revolution in the 1790-1820. In this period of industrialization the population in the towns became bigger and the people from the country came looking for jobs. Because of the factories the town became dirty and overcrowding, you can see this mainly when Silas returns at the end of the novel to see how the town of Lantern Yard had changed since his exile.

The locals in Lantern Yard respected Silas. Until one day when Silas was framed of murder. Silas was heavily involved with the church, but the locals used to talk about him when he slipped into states of paralysis now and again. While looking after the sick bishop Silas slipped into anaphylactic shock leaving him dead to what was going on around him. While he was in this state his best friend killed the bishop and took his money, with no one, but Silas there he was tried and exiled from the town.

Silas left to the countryside where he lived a coma-like existence by not talking to anyone and living on his own. Silas lived and worked in his home only occasionally going into town to sell his home-woven cotton goods.

A main symbol of Silas's existence before Eppie was when his favourite pot broke, he was attached to the pot and felt like a great hole in his life was

opened. Normally people would throw out the pot but Silas kept it so as he could mend it, showing his will to keep hold of what he finds dear.

When the squires' son Dunston had stolen all of his money, Silas has nothing to live for; his life and his money had been taken away from him. He was left a ghost with nothing meaningful in his life. Silas went to the local tavern to tell of his misfortune, by doing this he was accepted into the outer circle of the community. When a woman, committed suicide, and her child who was meant to die to survived and found her way to Silases house. This child was to be Eppie. Finding the child made Silas think that she was a replacement for his gold. In some ways I think that the child is a far greater gift compared to the gold, this is because Eppie acts as a way for Silas to become accepted into the community again. She helps to build bridges and Silas becomes alive again. What makes Silas such a good father is his loving relationship with Eppie. He takes advice from the locals, and accepts their gifts. Silas refuses the offers for Eppie to be taken away when he first finds her and feels he is a fit enough person to look after a child. In some ways his comments are right the child would be loved and never left, where as if she was given to a higher class mother it would be the nanny to look after the child leaving it to feel unloved.

Silas takes most of his advice from Dolly a friend to Silas, in some ways she acts like his mother telling him how to do everything for Eppie, Silas like a child takes note but you get the feeling he wants to do things his own way. This makes me think that Silas himself was brought up in a strict family, but he wants to bring Eppie up differently. This shows that Silas like the times is

changing into a much newer way of looking at things. When Dolly is talking about discipline Silas also wants to do things in his own way.

Silas wants to bring Eppie up in the best way possible and there is a bond forged between them when Eppie goes missing. This is a main part of the story because up to now Silas had reframed from punishing Eppie but, when she run off to the stone pits Silas is worried and its like his brown pot is missing again. He feels the relief when he finds her but has to punish her because of the way it made him feel, because Eppie does not know what she has done wrong. Silas puts her in the coalhole. This was advice given to him by Dolly, this shows he is willing to change his ideas to help Eppie learn. In a way both Eppie and Silas are learning together, Eppie is learning right and wrong, and Silas is learning new responsibilities.

The defining part of the novel is when Godfrey returns for his daughter years later wishing for her to return. Silas lets Eppie make her own decision if she wants to stay or go. This shows that Silas is willing to put his life aside to let Eppie be happy, which most people would find difficult to do. When she rejects Godfrey offers to expand their house at no extra cost, this is because he is feeling guilty. Silas turns down the offer, I think he does this because there might be strings attached and by not accepting, he feels safe with Eppie.

Silas is a character in village, which people know very little about, but when Eppie arrives it starts to build bridges between the public and him. Children are scared of Silas when he first comes to Ravelo because of his mysterious

upbringing. Not much is known about his parents. Silas is looked upon by the children of Ravelo, as a local “cook,” a figure to poke fun at.

Silas’s upbringing leaves him with a blank canvas for Eppie. He can influence her how he sees fit this makes him a good parent, because she grows up to be very much like him. Eppie becomes a humble girl who takes nothing for granted, and try’s to help in any way she can. Eppie has few hopes for the future; thanks to Silas she has her feet on the ground, what dreams she has are humble like her. “Silas can we have a garden, wouldn’t it be lovely.”

Silas and Eppie are almost alike at the end of the novel, and both are accepted by the local community, and are very much part of the inner circle. When Eppie is married to Aaron Silas, feels his job of being a complete father is done. When Eppie wants Aaron to move in with her and Silas I think she does this to repay him for all the care he gave her. By this Eppie will look after Silas for the rest of his life.

Silas is a good parent because he lets Eppie grow into her own person, he lets her make her own decisions and does not shade her from the world. Where as Atticus Finch who is also a good father, hides his children from the bad things I Maycomb, until he thinks they are ready for the responsibility.