

# How does harper lee portray atticus finch as a good parent?

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Mufasa, the father of Simba, from Disney's *The Lion King* is a perfect example of many desirable qualities. Whenever Simba needs someone to comfort him, Mufasa knows what to do to make Simba feel better. Likewise, when Simba acts out of hand, Mufasa knows when he should reprimand Simba and when Simba is just being a goofy cub. Mufasa comes off as strong, brave, wise, patient and, most importantly, a model of a respectable parent. Just like Mufasa, Atticus Finch also possesses many desirable qualities such as patience, understanding, and bravery.

In *TKaM*, Harper Lee uses the character of Atticus Finch to illustrate the qualities of good parenting. Atticus realizes that losing his temper with Jem and Scout over small incidents is not part of the qualities of good parenting because, throughout *TKaM*, he does not lose his patience with his children. While on the other hand, there is suspicion that Bob Ewell does the opposite by beating Mayella Ewell, his daughter. From the beginning itself, Harper Lee makes it clear, through a conversation between Miss Maudie Atkinson and Scout, that Atticus does not treat his children like Bob Ewell does.

Miss Maudie explains to Scout that most people have split personalities; one for at home and one for in public. Scout cuts her off by saying, "Atticus don't ever do anything to Jem and me in the house that he don't do in the yard" (46). Scout defends Atticus because she gets into trouble quite a lot, but, even then, Atticus would never lift a finger against her or Jem. Not only does Atticus rarely ever have a fit over Jem and Scout, but he also can maintain his composure and patience with them. Scout, like most young children,

always wants her opinions heard until she either receives an explanation or has her way.

An example of this would be Scout's first day of school where she finds herself frustrated from her teacher constantly reprimanding her. When she gets home, Scout recaps the day for Atticus and tells him that her teacher does not want Atticus to read with her at home. She channels her anger by complaining about her distaste for school while Atticus patiently hears her out and replies by calmly saying, " If you'll concede the necessity of going to school, we'll go on reading every night just as we always have. Is it a bargain? (31) Atticus could have easily lost his temper with Scout, but, instead, he appealed to her interests. This shows that Atticus likes to make his children happy and that, as a parent, he knows when he must be angry, and when he must show compassion. Showing Atticus as a father who does not lose his patience with his children over silly things is just one of the many ways that Lee portrays Atticus as a good parent. Atticus wants Jem and Scout to grow up with good morals, and one way he does this is by exposing them to an important quality, bravery.

An example of this is when Atticus goes against the townspeople's beliefs by accepting the case of Tom Robinson. This results in negative comments towards Atticus' family, and his children have to put up with it. One insult from Mrs. Dubose makes Jem so mad that he destroys her Camilla bushes, and his punishment is to read to her for a month. Old and addicted to morphine, Mrs. Dubose wants to try to overcome her addiction before she

dies. Sadly, Mrs. Dubose passes away shortly after Jem's punishment ends and, in an attempt to explain why he made Jem read to Mrs.

Dubose, Atticus says, "...I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea the courage is a man with a gun in his hand...Mrs. Dubose won... She was the bravest person I ever knew" (112). Atticus, as a respectable parent, wants Jem to see that true bravery is facing up to life's problems and fixing them in the best way possible. In the same way, Atticus shows his children the meaning of bravery when he turns the other cheek to Bob Ewell. Even though Bob Ewell has won the case, he wants to make his distaste for Atticus clear.

So Bob Ewell spits in Atticus' face and says that he will get him, even if it takes him the rest of his life. The children hear of this incident through Miss Stephanie and are concerned about Atticus' safety. When they question Atticus about it, Atticus does his best to comfort them by saying, " We don't have anything to fear from Bob Ewell, he got it all out of his system that morning" (218). Knowing that Atticus, their parent and example, can be brave at a time like this gives Scout and Jem the encouragement to let go of their worries and not let the tension in town affect them.

Lee has Atticus expose his children to true bravery through Mrs. Dubose and Bob Ewell to show that Atticus does have good parenting qualities. Through Atticus Finch, Harper Lee illustrates the qualities of good parenting in TKaM. Such as when Scout explains to Miss Maudie that Atticus would never raise a finger against either her or Jem because he does not act differently in public

than at home. Also, when Scout whines, Atticus does his best to please her because he understands that losing his temper will not help the problem.

In addition to that, Atticus exposes his children to true bravery through Mrs. Dubose by showing them to face up to their problems. In the same way, when Atticus turns the other cheek to Bob Ewell, he teaches his children to be brave and not let anything negative affect their lives. Atticus Finch, just like Mufasa from The Lion King, is a patient, wise, and brave father, and he definitely does portray the qualities of admirable parenting.