

”to kill a mockingbird”  
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sample



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Courageous people are the individuals that are influential and our role models. These people are known to be brave, confident and gallant. In the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, Jem and Scout understand the true nature of courage by observing many characters in the novel who clearly demonstrate this theme. Courage is shown through the actions of Mrs. Dubose, Arthur (Boo) Radley and most importantly Atticus.

Harper Lee shows the true nature of courage to Jem and Scout through the actions of the iconic character Mrs. Dubose. Mrs. Dubose is an ill and old lady who has had an addiction with morphine all her life. Atticus tells the Finch kids that, " She said she meant to break herself of it before she died and that what she did" (Lee 148). This clearly shows that Mrs. Dubose is courageous because she recognizes that she has a flaw and that she has to fix it. She makes it her goal to die free of this addiction and goes through so much, but in the end accomplishing this difficult goal. Moreover, it is very courageous of Mrs. Dubose to be able to recognize her weakness and even better, doing something about it instead of leaving it. This is what Atticus wanted to teach Jem and Scout, but not only that, he wanted to teach them that courage comes in many forms. There are many ways courage is demonstrated and he explains this by saying, " I want you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand," (149) by using the example of Mrs. Dubose. Atticus says this because he wants to tell Jem and Scout that Mrs. Dubose displays a type of courage not seen very often; it is called intellectual courage.

He wants the kids to understand that it is not always about being courageous enough to fight back, it can also be a simple goal or challenge that one

needs to accomplish by taking risks and this is exactly what Mrs. Dubose had shown in the novel. As a result, Harper Lee shows through the actions of Mrs. Dubose what Jem and Scout learn about the true nature of courage. Another character that helped open Jem and Scout's eyes to understand about the true nature of courage is Arthur (Boo) Radley. Arthur is a good example of someone who is risk-taking and brave, which are the two characteristics commonly associated with courage. He is someone who shows the true nature of courage because he leaves his own comfort zone to come and save the lives of Jem and Scout when they are attacked by Bob Ewell. As recalled by Scout, " Mr. Ewell was tryin' to squeeze me to death, I reckon...then somebody yanked Mr. Ewell down," (361) the person he speaks of is Arthur. This shows that Arthur has a great amount of courage because he noticed the people he cared for were getting hurt so he left the security of his own house and risked his life to save Jem and Scout's lives.

Arthur is a great example of someone doing a courageous act because not only did he leave his room to save Jem and Scout, he needed to bring Jem to safety, so he was courageous enough to communicate with people, without being shocked or scared. Scout describes Arthur carrying Jem inside the house, " The man was walking with staccato steps of someone carrying a load too heavy for him...he ran down the steps, and together he and the man took Jem inside" (352). The author's intent here is to show that people forget about everything in the world, just to rescue the people they care about who have been hurt. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Arthur shows this by leaving his house, forgetting about his fear of being in contact with the outside world, and saving Jem and Scout's lives. He showed true courage because he didn't

care about being scared of people, he showed bravery, and confidence and he is gallant. All in all, Arthur (Boo) Radley clearly demonstrated the true nature of courage through the many events and his actions.

Lastly, it can be seen that Atticus Finch, who is one of the most influential and important people in the novel, teaches Jem and Scout the true nature of courage through his many actions. This strong and confident individual illustrates courage in the novel when he gets spat on by Bob Ewell. Mrs. Stephanie Crawford recalls the scene by saying that, " Atticus was leaving the post office when Mr. Ewell approached him, cursed him, spat on him and threatened to kill him...Atticus don't bat an eye, just took out his handkerchief and wiped his face" (291). The readers can see that Atticus is very courageous in that scene because he didn't respond back by spitting on him to or hitting him; he holds his feelings back and ignores him. In other words, he believes in moral courage and that fighting will never fix anything. It is very courageous of him to imitate the actions of Bob; it takes a lot of confidence to do what Atticus did in the novel.

From this situation, Jem and Scout learn that to be courageous, one doesn't need to respond the same way the other person has approached; you need the courage to just ignore it and walk away. Similarly, Atticus displays true courage when a group of men plan to hurt Tom Robinson, but Atticus goes to defend him. Atticus sits in front of the jail cell for the group of men to arrive and when they do Atticus responds, " you can turn around and go home again, Walter" (202). Although, Atticus knows that he will easily be attacked by the group of men after saying that, he doesn't care because he is defending someone that deserves to be treated as an equal. This shows

great courage because he is standing up for a friend so they don't get hurt. Jem and Scout learn how to stand up for people you care about by watching their father in this difficult situation; they learn the true nature of courage. Therefore, the actions Atticus Finch is a way Harper Lee displays the true nature of courage so the Finch kids learn the true meaning of it in the novel.

In the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Jem and Scout understand the true nature of courage by observing many of the characters in the novel who clearly demonstrate this theme. The theme is clearly shown through characters like Mrs. Dubose, Arthur (Boo) Radley and Atticus Finch who are great examples of courage. In life, this characteristic of courage is seen very often by people who are strong and fearless. These people are usually the individuals we look up to or are very influential in our lives. The real meaning of courage is clearly stated by the very influential Atticus Finch, " it's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what" (149).