

# To kill a mocking bird- character description essay



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Scout is a very unusual little girl, both in her own qualities and in her social position.

She is unusually intelligent (she learns to read before beginning school), unusually confident (she fights boys without fear), unusually thoughtful (she worries about the essential goodness and evil of man kind), and unusually good (she always acts with the best intentions). In terms of her social identity, she is unusual for being a tomboy in the prim and proper Southern world of Macomb. One quickly realizes when reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* that Scout is who she is because of the way Attic's has raised her. He has nurtured her mind, conscience, and individuality without bogging her down in fussy social hypocrisies and notions of propriety. While most girls in Scout's position would be wearing dresses and learning manners, Scout, thanks to Attic's hands-off parenting style, wears overalls and learns to climb trees with Gem and Dill.

She does not always grasp social niceties (she tells her teacher that one of her fellow students is too poor to pay her back for lunch), and human behavior often baffles her (as when one of her teachers criticizes Hitter's rejoice giantesses while indulging in her own prejudice against blacks), but Attic's protection of Scout from hypocrisy and social pressure has rendered her open, forthright, and well meaning. At the beginning of the novel, Scout is an innocent, good-hearted five-year-old child who has no experience with the evils of the world. As the novel progresses, Scout has her first contact with evil in the form of racial prejudice, and the basic development of her character is governed by the question of whether she will emerge from that contact with her conscience and optimism intact or whether she will be

bruised, hurt, or destroyed like Boo Raddled and Tom Robinson. Thanks to Attic's wisdom, Scout learns that though humanity has a great capacity for evil, it also has a great capacity for good, and that the evil can often be mitigated if one approaches others with an outlook of sympathy and understanding. Scoffs development into a person capable of assuming that outlook marks the culmination of the novel and indicates that, whatever evil she encounters, she will retain her conscience without becoming cynical or jaded. Though she is still a child at the end of the book, Scout's perspective n life develops from that of an innocent child into that of a near grown-up. As one of the most prominent citizens in Macomb during the Great Depression, Attic's is relatively well off in a time of widespread poverty. Because of his penetrating intelligence, calm wisdom, and exemplary' behavior, Attic's is respected by everyone, including the very poor.

He functions as the moral backbone of Macomb, a person to whom others turn in times of doubt and trouble. But the conscience that makes him so admirable ultimately causes his falling out with the people of Macomb.

Unable to abide the town's comfortable ingrained racial prejudice, he agrees to defend Tom Robinson, a black man. Attic's action makes him the object of scorn in Macomb, but he is simply too impressive a figure to be scorned for long. After the trial, he seems destined to be held in the same high regard as before.

Attic's practices the ethic of sympathy and understanding that he preaches to Scout and Gem and never holds a grudge against the people of Macomb. Despite their callous indifference to racial inequality, Attic's sees much to admire in them. He recognizes that people have both good and bad ululates,

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and he is determined to admire the good while understanding and forgiving the bad. Attic's passes this great moral lesson on to Scout-? this perspective protects the innocent from being destroyed by contact with evil. Ironically, though Attic's is a heroic figure in the novel and a respected man in Macomb, neither Gem nor Scout consciously dollies him at the beginning of the novel.

Both are embarrassed that he is older than other fathers and that he doesn't hunt or fish. But Attic's wise parenting, which he sums up in Chapter 30 by saying, " Before Gem looks at anyone else he looks at me, and I've tried to live so I can look squarely back at him," ultimately wins their respect. By the end of the novel, Gem, in particular, is fiercely devoted to Attic's (Scout, still a little girl, loves him uncritically). Though his children's attitude toward him evolves, Attic's is characterized throughout the book by his absolute consistency. He stands rigidly committed to justice and thoughtfully willing to view matters from the perspectives of others. He does not develop in the novel but retains these qualities in equal measure, making him the novel's moral guide and voice of conscience. If Scout is an innocent girl who is exposed to evil at an early age and forced to develop an adult moral outlook, Gem finds himself in an even more turbulent situation.

His shattering experience at Tom Robinsons trial occurs just as he is entering puberty, a time when life is complicated and traumatic enough. His disillusionment upon seeing that justice does not always prevail leaves him vulnerable and confused at a critical, formative point in his life. Nevertheless, he admirably upholds the commitment to justice that Attic's instilled in him

and maintains it with deep conviction throughout the novel. Unlike the jaded Mr..

Raymond, Gem is not without hope: Attic's tells Scout that Gem simply needs time to process what he has learned. The strong presence of Attic's in Gem's life seems to promise that he will recover his equilibrium. Later in his life, Gem is able to see that Boo Raddled unexpected aid indicates there is good in people. Even before the end of the novel, Gem shows signs of having learned a positive lesson from the trial; for instance, at the beginning of Chapter 25, he refuses to allow Scout to squash a roll-poly bug because it has done nothing to harm her.

After seeing the unfair destruction of Tom Robinson, Gem now wants to protect the fragile and harmless. The idea that Gem resolves his cynicism and moves toward a happier life is supported by the beginning of the novel, in which a grown-up Scout remembers talking to Gem about the events that make up the novel's plot. Scout says that Jeer pinpointed the children's initial interest in Boo Raddled at the beginning of the story, strongly implying that he understood what Boo represented to them and, like Scout, managed to shed his innocence without losing his hope.