

Example by StudyDriver

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Theme of to Kill a Mockingbird Example

Living in a society, humans have a great desire to fit in with the rest of mankind. It compiles them to go with the flow, even when the majority is irrational. The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, was set in the 60s in America, an era in which discrimination against African Americans was still a very prominent issue. Told from Scout's childlike perspective, the plot is centered around a rape case regarding Tom Robinson, an African American man, accused by Mayella Ewell, a white woman. Atticus, Scout's father, is Tom Robinson's appointed lawyer and makes a significant effort to defend Robinson's innocence. Through Atticus's solid stand of his ground despite opposition, firm personal belief, and persistence despite the low chances that he was going to win the trial, the theme that one should conduct righteous acts regardless of the odds against one for the greater good of humanity is demonstrated profoundly throughout the novel.

Near the beginning of the novel, Atticus was repeatedly challenged for his defense of Tom Robinson, seen as a controversial or even traitorous act by many white people in Maycomb, a small town he lived in. Atticus simply believed he was doing the right thing. His 7-year-old daughter, Scout, had heard multiple insults about her father: her peer announced, "Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers" (74), her cousin accused Atticus by saying he

“mortif[ies] the rest of the family” (83), and a dying neighbour commented that Atticus “lawed for niggers and trash” (103). However, Atticus was not slightly abashed by these disrespectful remarks and instructed Scout to not be tempted into fights. Atticus’s unmoving stand in defending Tom Robinson, an African American, even with the awful comments he got from the town, reflects the theme that one should keep their integrity in spite of the challenges they face.

The theme of standing firm with the right values through adversity was further developed when Scout asked Atticus why he had to defend a colored man when everyone else in the town despised the act. Atticus replied, “...before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself” (105). This quote demonstrates Atticus’s personal values and sense of morality as being opposed to the values of society. Because he believed that Tom Robinson was truly innocent, he defended him like he would defend any other innocent person, regardless of the color of their skin. At that time, the majority of white people assumed “that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around or women” (204). However, Atticus, a white man, was determined to defend Tom Robinson’s innocence despite what others thought thus exemplifying his bravery and his defiance of societal norms. Atticus’s boldness is just another example of standing up for the right thing despite of the judgement given by others.

Another attribute that made his actions even more courageous and admirable is that the likelihood of him winning this case was really small: the jury consisted of white men who grew up with the influence of racism. This instance further amplified Atticus’s persistence in doing right thing he believed in, in spite of the odds against him for the greater good of his society. Deep down inside, Atticus knew he was not going to win, but he still persisted with as much effort as he would devote to any other fair trial. When Atticus’s arrived in front of his house to tell him about the newest update on Tom Robinson, he calmly replied to the doubting crowd “that boy might go to the chair, but he’s not going until the truth’s told” (146). This shows his determination in defending a colored man, not just for his own belief, but for the truth to be heard. Even others understand that “Atticus Finch won’t win, he can’t win, but he’s the only man in there parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that” (216).

Because of the amount of effort he committed to the trial, he was able to shine a light on the truth and made some people realize that prejudice had blinded them: they had been convicting every black person guilty without properly thinking about the facts. Even though Atticus had only a small chance of winning, this only furthered a sense of respect for him; because he still took the case seriously even when he was more likely to lose, it further ties back to the theme of one doing the right thing despite the odds against them.

Together, Atticus's solitary act of standing up for the right thing in society delivered an important lesson of standing up for the right thing even when one is doing it alone. From offensive comments about his defense, his daughter's questioning, down to the inevitable loss of the trial, Atticus remained unmoved in his determination to defend Robinson. *To Kill A Mockingbird* teaches its readers to stand up for what they believe is right, even when they are doing it alone; despite not having immediate influence, the courageous acts will reflect on society over time. Atticus withholds his personal belief, remains unmoved by others in his determination in speaking for the voice of justice, and his persistence in defending of Tom Robinson despite such high chances of losing the trial is an inspiring example of doing the right thing regardless of the odds against them for the greater good of humanity.