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## A Character Analysis Of Atticus Finch

In Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the reader is introduced to an admirable father figure within the first chapter. Atticus Finch, a single father of two, lives in rural 1930s America working as a lawyer and state legislator. Being older than most parents in Maycomb, his children perceive him as not doing anything of particular interest; nevertheless, he remains attentive to their needs and takes their frivolous concerns seriously. Atticus is seen as honorable and principled by all members of the community, from poor rural farmers to municipal officials and businessmen. One day in his casework as a defense attorney, Atticus encounters a seemingly unwinnable case due to deep-seated prejudice among the community populace, yet he takes the case anyways due to his innate sense of integrity. Throughout the novel, Atticus Finch presents himself to be an ardently ethical lawyer, a deeply compassionate friend to all, and a patiently loving father.

This story consistently depicts Atticus as a man of ethics, and this is very clearly shown by his work as a defense attorney. Atticus' morals can be reflected in the fact that he took a case he knew wasn't going to win; nevertheless, he persevered and took the case to defend an honorable man wrongly accused due to racial tension in his area. As a state legislator, it can also be said that he used his values to accurately represent every citizen of Maycomb--not just white males--as he believes that every person has goodness at heart. A prime example of Atticus' dedication to justice can be seen immediately before Tom Robinson's trial. This indirect characterization takes place in a conversation between two prejudiced townspeople saying:

"Lemme tell you somethin' now, Billy," [one man] said, "you know the court appointed him to defend [that man]."

"Yeah, but Atticus really aims to defend him. That's what I don't like about it." (Lee 165)

These events highlight Atticus' role as a just lawyer, making the reader more inclined to find him one of the most respectable characters in the novel. Lee describes in detail how Atticus chooses to see the good in every community member and goes out of his way to care for his community as well, regardless of skin color. The Finch's family caretaker, a strict-yet-loving woman of color, Calpurnia is highly valued among the family, yet when Aunt Alexandra questions her presence, Atticus defends her, even stating, "Calpurnia's not leaving this house until she wants to" (Lee 138). Atticus' outgoing personality can be observed in Chapter 8 when he goes into Miss Maudie's burning house to retrieve her favorite wooden chair. The most poetic example, however, of Atticus' kind spirit is outlined in Chapter 11 when he sends Jem and Scout to read to Mrs. Dubose. As a morphine addict who wished to be sober in her last moments, Mrs. Dubose was particularly nasty to members of the Finch family, yet Atticus saw through the insulting words and chose to have his kids read to her every day for comfort. Through all of these actions, Atticus continually proves himself a humble man who remains kind and caring to all members of the community, no matter what they have said about him.

Although Scout and Jem tend to view Atticus' age as a downside, Atticus is able to use his age to his advantage, utilizing his time and knowledge to both patiently answer their trivial questions

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and teach valuable life lessons; moreover, it can be said that he treats both of his children with respect. The most blatant example of Atticus and his children's mutual respect can be found in that he refers to both of his kids strictly by their first names; similarly, they call him 'Atticus,' rather than 'Dad' or any other endearing term. He also answers their continuous questions and even teaches them how to make compromises with him, as modeled in a conversation of his with Scout one day after school. One of the first distinctions we first draw with Scout when compared to her peers is the fact that she is incredibly literate, going on to read stock-market quotations and articles instead of struggling to read through the alphabet. Her elevated abilities show that her father's age is really an advantage, as he is able to read with her on a daily basis. One can find Atticus passing down his fatherly wisdom to Scout by saying:

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." (Lee 30).

Although Scout and Jem can see the downsides to Atticus' age, his wisdom has helped them in many ways, and his mutual respect with them is one of the things they like best about him.

In this story, Atticus can become one of the reader's favorite characters due to his critical roles as a respectable lawyer and representative, an outgoingly kind friend to the community, and a devoted father figure. Even after Tom Robinson's controversial trial, Atticus still remains a well-regarded man in Maycomb because everyone in town knows that he holds his morals close. After remaining true to his beliefs during such a trying time in America, one could say that everyone could learn something from Atticus Finch, even in present times as his work remains an embodiment of racial equality for all.