
The Courage of Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

“Every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one’s mine, I guess.” To Kill A Mockingbird, an award winning book by Harper Lee is about Atticus Finch, a lawyer in Maycomb, Alabama trying to defend Tom Robinson. Tom, who was accused of rape by a white woman named Mayella Ewell in the 20th century is having great difficulty in winning the case. Atticus Finch is showing great courage and confidence when he decides to help Tom Robinson with his case.

Atticus is defending Tom because he values equality and justice. He believes that everyone is equal and therefore just because Tom Robinson is black, does not mean that he should not defend him. Before the trial, Atticus states, “Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason not to try to win.” Atticus is pointing out that simply because ingrained racism will probably lose them the trial, does not mean they can not do the right thing to fight for justice anyway.

Another reason why Atticus defended Tom because he wanted Jem, his son to look up to him and keep his respect for his dad. Atticus states, “Before Jem looks at anyone else, he looks at me. I’ve tried to live so I can look squarely back at him... If I connived at something like this, frankly, I couldn’t meet his eye, and the day I can’t do that I’ll have lost him. If Atticus didn’t defend Tom, Jem would no longer have respect for his father and he wouldn’t be able to look at him in the same way.

Even though Atticus showed courage in helping Tom, people could not take a black person’s word over a white’s. It was extremely hard for the court to take Tom Robinson’s story for the truth. Atticus’ neighbor states, “... don’t see why you touched it in the first place... You’ve got everything to lose from this Atticus. I mean everything.” He is stating that Atticus has no chance in winning the case because Tom is black. Even though his neighbors didn’t support him helping Tom, he knew that it was the right thing to do.

Atticus showed great courage in doing the right thing by defending Tom because he believed everyone should be treated equally and he wanted to keep the respect of his son. Since Atticus values equality and justice, he still had the courage to defend a black man in court even if he knew that it wasn’t going to go their way. In reading the book, the reader sees how people should always be treated equally no matter the outcome and the difficulty for a black man to win a court case in the 20th century..

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