

IGCSE English literature: To Kill a Mockingbird characterization

Major characters:

Atticus

- Respected by everyone
- Moral backbone of Maycomb
- Recognises that people have both good and bad qualities, tries to admire both
- Believed that he should treat his african-american housekeeper with respect
- He treats his children as individuals

Symbolism:

1. Tim Johnson –

Atticus = protecting the community from something dangerous. Later, is he also able to protect someone innocent (Tom Robinson) from the 'madness' of society – drawing parallels between the cases

2. Scout and Jem know very little about the Finch family background:

→ Atticus wanted them to form their own views about the world

→ not to take advantage of their families position in society

"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."
-Atticus

- Empathy
- Atticus teaches Scout and Jem this, but also tries to guide himself with this piece of advice
- Metaphor Shows his ability to relate and teach his children

"Atticus seemed to have forgotten my noon-time fall from grace" -Scout

- Idiom → Scout's language and intelligence
- Tries to leave his children to think for themselves
- Doesn't punish them for what he thinks is wrong
- Gives them space to learn and grow as individuals

Are you a nigger lover?
"I certainly am. I do my best to love everybody."
-Scout/Atticus

- Short, minor sentence → shows no hesitation
- Declarative: Atticus is certain of his views
- Maintains his morals even if everybody else is against them – shows he is wise and righteous, not self-preserving
- He is fair, like a good lawyer would be
- He doesn't try to hide anything from his children, wants to set a good example so they can decide for themselves how to judge people

"How would we like it if Atticus barged in on us without knocking, when we were in our rooms at night." -Scout

- Empathy
- Atticus knows how to explain facts to his children and make them understand 'stepping into someone's shoes and walking around in them'
- Parenting style – wise and knowledgeable

"When a child asks you something, answer him, for goodness sake" -Atticus

- Understands that children can be quite clever, and telling them lies will just confuse them
- Parenting style – shows how he raises Scout and Jem, answering any questions they ask him to the best of his ability

Scout

- First person narrative from Scout (6-9 years old)
- She is unusually intelligent, confident and good
- Tomboy
- Scout is who she is because of the way Atticus raised her
- He allowed her to develop her own mind, conscience and individuality
- Most girls → wearing dresses and learning manners
- Scout → wears overalls and learns to climb trees

"I drew a bead on him, remembered what Atticus had said, then dropped my fists and walked away[...] It was the first time I ever walked away from a fight" -Scout

- Metaphor – "I drew a bead on him"
- Scout is like a boy, keeps grudges
- Scout's obedience to Atticus- she tries to please him
- Tomboy, doesn't act like a girl normally would
- Hot tempered, persistent → She normally doesn't walk away from a fight, stays strong to her feelings

·“Atticus was at the post office when Bob Ewell approached him, cursed him, spat on him, and threatened to kill him.” -Scout

→Parallel structure makes it seem like Bob Ewell did many insulting things to Atticus, all in a row

→The Ewells had a lot of hatred towards the Finch's because Atticus humiliated them in court

→Highlights and emphasizes on his rude and uncivil character

→Shows that he is a violent man who is not well-mannered

→He does not try to settle things in an orderly manner, but chooses to face the situation with threats

Mayella Ewell

·“Mayella Ewell must have been the loneliest person who ever lived” -Scout

→Scout realizes and empathizes with Mayella Ewell

→Hyperbole – who “ever” lived, but it shows how lonely Scout thinks Mayella is

·“You keep on makin’ fun o’ me” – Mayella Ewell

→Mayella says this to Atticus after he repeatedly calls her “ma’am” and “Miss Mayella”

→Shows that nobody has ever treated her with respect, making us sympathize with her to some extent

The Cunningham family

- Poor family in the community
- They are country folk unlike the Ewells, who are city folk

- However, they try to maintain their dignity and refuse to accept things they cannot repay

“Where are your britches today?”...
“Under my dress.” -Scout

- Humour → in Scout's character
- Scout is trying to be more like a girl
- But she still isn't very comfortable wearing her dress

“It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived.” -Atticus

- Scout still has a child-like opinion and view on bravery
- Relates courage to guns and wars
- As she grows up, she begins to learn

“She (Cal) seemed glad to see me when I appeared in the kitchen, and by watching her I began to think there was some skill involved in being a girl.” – Scout

- Coming of age
- Begins to consider what it would be like acting more like a girl
- She is growing up and appreciating feminism

“I think there's just one type of folks. Folks.”
– Scout

- Short, minor sentence → to Scout, people are simple, there are no complications
- Repetition of “folks” for effect – shows simple mind
- Scout is less judgmental of everyone else, judges people on their morals

Jem

· Loves and admires Atticus

· More mature than Scout

· Also quite intelligent – he spots the mad dog, he knows that the ground is cooler under a tree

· However, he is very affected by the trial and starts to lose faith in the goodness of humanity and the justice system

“Atticus ain't never whipped me since I can remember.” -Atticus

- Coming of age
- Scout thinks its better to face the punishment and get it over with
- Jem would rather do it the hard way than have Atticus be disappointed in him
- Atticus is a role model to him
- Jem wants Atticus's approval

"It ain't right, Atticus" -Jem

Jem sees the extreme racism present in the Maycomb society

- Manages to look past views of the society and have a mind of his own
- [PREJUDICE]

"I wouldn't care if he couldn't do a blessed thing"
– Jem

- Coming of age

Jem's maturity showing that he understands the idea of courage a little bit better

- Understands that Atticus's job isn't easy, and starts to acknowledge that his father is trying to stay righteous in an unrighteous society
- Looks up to his father in that he is a morally correct man who does not give in to the racist ideas buried into the roots of Maycomb

"He was now positively allergic to my presence when in public." – Scout

- Coming of age → he was growing up quickly, and we start to see the age gap between him and Scout → Metaphor "allergic" for effect – to show his feelings of annoyance towards Scout
- Jem growing up – outgrowing his sister
- Increasing distance in relationship court case and the severe racial prejudice in Maycomb
- His maturity later on leads to his understanding of the

"I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo stayed shut up in the house all the time. It's because he wants to."
– Jem

- Empathy → he has learnt from Atticus's teachings and sees things in other people's perspectives
- Coming of age – he is no longer scared of Boo, but tries to understand why Boo is the way he is
- Understands the horrible prejudice present in society and knows why Boo might have wanted to stay in the comfort of his own house

Boo Radley

"Mockingbird" of the novel

- Shows kindness – to the children
- He is innocent
- Victim of prejudice
- Imprisoned (in a separate world to protect him from prejudice and attention)

“I think I’m beginning to understand why Boo Radley stayed shut up in the house all the time...it’s because he wants to stay inside.” – Jem

- Empathy, Coming of age (Jem)
- Jem sees all the horrible prejudice in society – he is very affected by the trial
- Boo choosing to stay out of life in Maycomb doesn’t actually seem like such a strange thing to do after all
- begins to understand that reality is cruel and unfair

“Atticus, when they finally saw him, why he hadn’t done any of those things... Atticus, he was real nice...[...]Most people are, Scout when you finally see them.”- Scout/Atticus

- This sentence concludes the novel
- Atticus’s compassion and willingness to look past people’s undeservingness
- If one lives with sympathy and understanding, it is possible to remain faithful in humanity despite its capacity for evil (most people are real nice)If one lives with sympathy and understanding, it is possible to remain faithful in humanity despite its capacity for evil (most people are real nice)
- However, the Tom Robinson case shows that it’s still possible to look at someone and still not see them as equal human beings.
- Boo starts out as a monster and ends up a man
- He never rejoins the community

“Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels...” – Scout

- Prejudice and rumors in the society
- they haven’t even met him before
- Generally fear associated with Boo

“Arthur Radley just stays in the house, that’s all...Wouldn’t you stay in the house if you didn’t want to come out?” – Miss Maudie

- Miss Maudie isn’t prejudiced – understands/respects Boo
- Hiding from all the prejudice in the society

“Will you take me home?”...in the voice of a child afraid of the dark. -Boo Radley

- Despite his age, he possesses the mentality of a child
- Innocence- mockingbird, he has been separated from all the prejudice in Maycomb

Minor characters:

Calpurnia

- tries to teach the children tolerance and social manners (When Walter Cunningham goes over to eat at their house)
- She is a “faithful member” of the family

·**“She tried to bring them up according to her lights, and Cal’s lights are pretty good.”**

– **Atticus**

→ Atticus has respect for Cal and treats her as an individual

→ Also shows Atticus’s wisdom and willingness to overcome racism

·**“Asked (Atticus) Calpurnia if she wanted to stay with us for the night” – Scout**

→ Further shows the respect he has for Cal and how he actually cares about her

→ He is very different to anyone else in society, and he is the perfect role-model for Scout and Jem

·**“Atticus said Calpurnia had more education than most colored folks” – Scout**

→ Shows that most coloured people didn’t even have the right to education

→ proves that they are not valued and miss out on the most basic rights

Dill

- We don’t really see the character of Dill mature like Scout and Jem do
- His sensitive character is used in contrast with Jem’s logical way of thinking at the trial
- He chooses to accept things in society rather than confront it

·**“I don’t care one speck. It ain’t right, somehow it ain’t right to do ‘em that way.”**

→ Repetition of “it ain’t right” shows that Dill doesn’t see a difference between races

→ He is even more innocent and pure than Scout

→ Maybe it's because he is an outsider and doesn't know about Maycomb's views

·**“The more we told Dill about the Radleys, the more he wanted to see him.”**

→Curious

→Childish bravery

Tom Robinson

·“Mockingbird” of the novel

Uses very polite language in the court house

“ She’s mistaken in her mind”

→ euphemism

·contrasts with Mayella Ewell’s language

·**“Tom Robinson was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed”**

→ It was not a fair trial

→The racism in society meant that Tom had a very slim chance because he was trying to win against a white person

→Represents Atticus’s idea of courage – starting anyway even though he knows they will probably lose

·**“yessir” – Tom Robinson**

→His language is very polite, and this contrasts with Mayella Ewell's language

→Harper Lee wants to show that the black community are very well-behaved, and they are brought up with good manners

·**“You felt sorry for her, you felt sorry for her?” – Mr. Gilmer**

→Negroes could not even feel sorry for a white person

→Shows how much prejudice there is in society

Miss Maudie Atkinson

- unusually open-minded
- Another standard for Maycomb

·**“A lady who worked in...men's overalls”**

→ Miss Maudie also goes against the typical stereotypical views of females, and therefore respects Atticus's decision to raise Scout in the way he did

→She does not owe it to anyone to do anything

→Everything she does is for her personal enjoyment

·**“Mockingbird's don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why its a sin to kill a Mockingbird.” – Miss Maudie**

→This is the explanation of one of the motifs of the book – the idea of not hurting innocent beings

→You don't hurt the innocent, you protect them because they need out care

→Miss Maudie understands Atticus's teachings, shows that Scout will go to her for help as well

→Foreshadows the end of the novel when Tate protects Boo

·**“We’re taking a step. It’s just a baby step, but it’s still a step.” -Miss Maudie**

→Minor sentence and repetition emphasizes on “step”

→The society is coming closer to breaking the barriers of prejudice, and the trial was the first step towards this

Aunt Alexandra

- Could be said that she is brave – she chose to go live with her brother in the difficult times of the trial

·**“Jean Louise, there is no doubt in my mind that they’re good folks. But they’re not our kind of folks.” – Aunt Alexandra**

→ Minor sentence places emphasis on “not our kind”

→ shows that she bases morality and personality on class, and thinks that different classes should be separated

→ She values social status very highly

→ Even though they’re good people, they are of a lower class, so Scout can’t play with them

Mrs Dubose

·**“She was the bravest person I ever knew” – Atticus**

→ Even though nobody would have blamed her for dying in narcotic bliss, she did what she thought was right

→ She knew that she would have a lot of trouble doing it, but she went ahead with it anyway

→ Start of Scout and Jem's realization of the meaning of real courage

→ Courage can be physical and mental, and it is not someone holding a gun in his hand

Dolphus Raymond

· A white man from a rich family who lives with a black woman and their children

· Dolphus Raymond chooses to live the way he does, but the white community frowns down upon them

· By pretending to drink, he gives the community a "reason" for his decisions

· We learn that we should not judge a person by their appearance

· "Cry about the simple hell people give other people, without even thinking. Cry about the hell white folks give colored folks, without even stopping to think they're human too." -Dolphus Raymond

→ parallel structure "cry about" emphasizes why people deserve to be saddened about the situation in society

→ repetition of "hell" shows the extreme prejudice of white people towards negroes

→ biblical reference to "hell" suggests how terrible the prejudice is and how coloured people feel that they have no place in society

The Ewells

- Known as "white trash" in the Maycomb society
- represent the prejudiced element in the community
- Bob Ewell's death at the end may represent hope, or that justice was served