***To Kill a Mockingbird***

***Chapter 10***

***Summary:***

* Jem and [Scout](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/scout-jean-louise-finch) think their father is super uncool, not to mention old. He can't even play football, like the other kids' fathers do.
* Plus, kids at school are giving them grief about the [Tom Robinson](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/thomas-robinson) case, and Scout can't even fight now that she's promised her dad not to.
* And [Atticus](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/atticus-finch) refuses to teach Scout and Jem how to shoot their shiny new air rifles. Luckily, Uncle Jack steps up.
* Atticus tells Jem that "it's a sin to kill a [mockingbird](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/analysis/mockingbirds)" (10.7). Although apparently bluejays are okay.
* Scout grumps about how their neighborhood is all old people, and Miss Maudie acknowledges that there aren't any 20- or 30-somethings around to be role models.
* [Miss Maudie](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/maudie-atkinson) tries to defend Atticus (he's a checkers grand master! he can play the Jew's Harp!), but Scout is not impressed.
* Then Jem is all depressed when his father refuses to join in on the town's Methodists vs. Baptists football game. Seriously, worst dad ever. Right?
* One day Jem and Scout go off to find local wildlife to kill when they see a dog acting kind of strange.
* [Calpurnia](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/calpurnia) dashes for the phone to tell Atticus that there's a mad dog (i.e., rabid) on the loose.
* Then she talks to Miss Eula May, the town telephone operator, to tell her to let everyone else on the street know that they should stay out of the way of the rabid animal.
* The Radleys don't have a phone, so Calpurnia runs over to their place, bangs on their front door, and shouts, "Mad dog's comin'!" (10.72).
* Everyone hunkers down inside to watch the dog.
* The dog finally gets within range of [Heck Tate's](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/heck-tate) rifle, but he wants Atticus to make the shot. See, if he misses, the bullet will hit the Radley Place. And Mr. Tate knows he can't shoot that well.
* Atticus reluctantly takes the weapon, walks to the middle of the street, aims, fires, and kills the dog.
* [Jem](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/jem-jeremy-atticus-finch) is flabbergasted. This is apparently like all of a sudden seeing your dad make a perfect three-point jump shot or make it through the Expert level of a Guitar Hero song you've been failing.
* [Miss Maudie](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/maudie-atkinson) tells Jem and Scout that Atticus "was the deadest shot in Maycomb County in his time" and his nickname was "Ol' One-Shot" (10.137).
* So why have Scout and Jem never heard their dad talk about it?
* Well, Atticus feels that his marksmanship is a God-given talent that gives him an unfair advantage over other living creatures, and that he shouldn't use it unless he has to.
* Scout wants to brag to everyone at school about her father's shooting skill, but Jem tells her not to, because he thinks Atticus wouldn't want her to, since he's never mentioned it before.
* Jem says that he wouldn't care if Atticus couldn't do anything, because, as he says, "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me!" (10.152).
* Sounds like someone (Jem) has learned a valuable lesson.

***Brief Summary:***

Scout explains that Atticus is feeble; he is almost fifty. They have the opinion that he can't do anything like the other father's do. They play sports and do other things, but Atticus just reads. When Scout and Jem are getting ready for target practice, Atticus tells them that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird, since all it does is make sweet music. Cal and Miss Maudie both agree with Atticus that killing a mockingbird is a sin.

Miss Maudie urges Scout to see that Atticus has many fine qualities, but Scout doesn't understand. Later, Jem notices Tim Johnson, a neighbor's dog. The dog is walking funny and Jem runs to get Cal. When she finally comes with the children, she realizes the dog is very sick and she calls the operator to get the sheriff and warn the neighbors to stay indoors.

Atticus and Sheriff Heck Tate drive up and see the dog. The sheriff insists that Atticus has to shoot the dog. It must be killed in one shot, and the sheriff knows Atticus can do it. Atticus argues, but the sheriff insists. He drops his glasses, lefts the gun and shoots Tim Johnson with one shot. He's a little to the left, but he still kills the dog. Scout and Jem are speechless about what they saw. Their father killed the dog and saved the neighbors.

Scout and Jem wonder why Atticus never told them he was "'Ole One Shot." Jem makes the decision that he's proud of Atticus whether he can do "anything or not."

We see Atticus' style as a parent in this chapter. While the townsfolk are being cruel to Jem and Scout, Atticus still insists that they not fight. His subtle courage is a quality he tries to instill in his children. Most days this is much harder for Scout than for Jem. The incident with Tim Johnson may seem irrelevant, but it shows how the town counts on Atticus to protect it from harm and from evil that may be hidden for a time. The evil deep inside Tim Johnson was revealed when he became sick. Unfortunately, the evil within the town is being revealed in stages.

***Synopsis:***

Atticus, Scout says, is somewhat older than most of the other fathers in Maycomb. His relatively advanced age often embarrasses his children—he wears glasses and reads, for instance, instead of hunting and fishing like the other men in town. One day, however, a mad dog appears, wandering down the main street toward the Finches’ house. [Calpurnia](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/calpurnia/) calls Atticus, who returns home with Heck Tate, the sheriff of Maycomb. Heck brings a rifle and asks Atticus to shoot the animal. To [Jem](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/jem-finch/) and Scout’s amazement, Atticus does so, hitting the dog with his first shot despite his considerable distance from the dog. Later, Miss Maudie tells Jem and Scout that, as a young man, Atticus was the best shot in the county—“One-shot Finch.” Scout is eager to brag about this, but Jem tells her to keep it a secret, because if Atticus wanted them to know, he would have told them.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Jem](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Jem) and [Scout](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Scout) can't make sense of why people are so critical of [Atticus](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Atticus) just because of the [Tom Robinson](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Tom_Robinson) case when Atticus has been nothing but nice to everyone he meets. He doesn't hunt, smoke, fish, or play poker, as do all the other dads of Maycomb. Even so the Robinson trial has made Atticus a focus of the town's gossip.

Scout starts thinking about the air rifles they got for Christmas. She recalls that Uncle Jack taught her and Jem to shoot, but Atticus reminded them to never a kill a mockingbird because it was a sin. Miss Maudie explains that mockingbirds do nothing but make music for people to enjoy, which is why it is a sin to kill them. From there the conversation turns back to Atticus. Miss Maudie, who grew up with Atticus, starts listing things he's good at: playing checkers, playing the Jew's harp, and having an airtight will. Scout is unimpressed.

Shortly afterward Jem and Scout spot a neighborhood dog named Tim Johnson stumbling down the street with a strange look on its face. Scout and Jem go home to tell [Calpurnia](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Calpurnia). She calls Atticus about the dog, and it is revealed that the dog is rabid. Atticus arrives with Sheriff Tate, who aims his gun at the dog. Tate says that if he misses, the shot will go straight into the Radley house. Instead he gives the gun to Atticus, who takes aim and kills the dog with a single bullet.

As Atticus and Sheriff Tate leave, Scout and Jem hear Miss Maudie call him "One-Shot Finch." She later tells Jem and Scout that, among Atticus's other attributes, he was the most accurate shot in Maycomb County.

[Scout](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Scout) and [Jem](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Jem), startled to find people critical of [Atticus](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Atticus), find their perspective of their father altered; he is not only their father, he is also a human being, with different roles to play outside of their family circle. Perhaps it is the anger generated against Atticus by his defense of [Tom Robinson](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Tom_Robinson) that causes Scout to wish he had some of the same hobbies as the town's other dads.

After Scout and Jem learn more about Atticus's past from Miss Maudie, they realize their father is human, just like all the other dads in Maycomb. But to Scout, her father's hobbies of reading and playing checkers are boring compared to other parents who smoke, fish, and hunt.

Scout and Jem's perspective changes when Atticus kills a rabid dog with one shot. They wonder why they never knew this side of their dad before. Atticus explains that shooting a gun well is not a talent to be proud of and should be used only when necessary. The fact that Sheriff Tate trusted Atticus with his gun symbolizes the high esteem the townspeople have for him. Jem and Scout learn a valuable lesson in the importance of humility.

***Critical Study:***

This chapter opens with the humorous line, "Atticus was feeble: he was nearly fifty." This serves as the premise of the chapter, which Atticus later disproves through his actions. In the beginning of the chapter, Scout and Jem are embarrassed by Atticus because he's old, doesn't play football, works in an office, wears glasses, and intends to defend Tom Robinson in court. What's more, he won't teach them how to shoot their new air rifles. He does, however, tell them not to shoot down mockingbirds, because it's a sin. Miss Maudie elaborates: mockingbirds don't do anything but fly around and make music for us to enjoy. She also says that Atticus was a master checker player (a fact that Scout finds even more embarrassing). Irritated, Scout aims her air rifle at Miss Maudie's behind that evening, but Atticus stops her from shooting.

One Saturday, a rabid dog by the name of Tim Johnson comes twitching slowly down the road to the Finch house. Calpurnia rushes the children inside and calls Atticus at the office. He drives up with Heck Tate, the Sheriff, who confirms that Tim Johnson does indeed have rabies. Jem makes the grim observation that the dog is "lookin' for a place to die." Heck Tate can't make the shot, so he hands the rifle to Atticus, who protests at first, because he hasn't shot a gun in thirty years. His children are surprised to learn that he was once called One-Shot Finch because of his deadly aim, and they have a hard time processing it when Atticus shoots Tim Johnson. Miss Maudie explains that Atticus gave up shooting when he realized that it gave him an "unfair advantage" over other living things. Jem later calls Atticus a "gentleman" because of it.

**Alliteration**

Some examples of this would be Miss Stephanie Crawford's "face framed" in the window or the idea that mad dogs "leaped and lunged at throats."

**Motifs**

**Swimming.** In Chapter 4, Jem was described as "treading water" at the Radleys' gate, pausing a brief moment before running in after the tire Scout left on the Radley lot. Lee uses a second swimming-related image in Chapter 10 when Scout says Atticus moved slowly, "like an underwater swimmer." The swimming motif thus becomes linked to the theme of time, which appears in the novel to ebb and flow like water.

**Simile**

One example of this would be Tim Johnson shivering "like a horse shedding flies."

**Symbols**

**Guns.** In this chapter, guns are both symbols of death and (occasional) sources of amusement, as when Scout aims her air rifle at Miss Maudie's behind. These air rifles are toys and downplay the more traditional symbolism associated with guns (that of death and destruction). When Atticus shoots Tim Johnson, that symbolism comes to the forefront, but is tempered by the fact that Atticus has to kill Tim Johnson to keep his family and the rest of Maycomb safe from the dog's rabies. Thus, guns are also methods of protection and symbolize the need for safety.

**Mockingbirds.**When Atticus tells the children that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird, he establishes it as a symbol of innocence and, ultimately, of vulnerability, because the mockingbird can't defend itself. Miss Maudie explains that the mockingbird is innocent because it doesn't do anything but make music for people to enjoy. Later, we'll see how Tom Robinson and Boo Radley themselves become the symbolic mockingbirds of the book.

**Themes**

**Age.** Scout's erroneous assumption that Atticus is feeble because he's fifty further emphasizes the age differences between Scout, Jem, and Atticus. Jem, who is five years older than Scout, has pulled away from her, in terms of interests and maturity level, but when compared to Atticus and other adults in the novel, the two seem more alike, thus proving that age, like time, is relative.

**Death.**Tim Johnson's death isn't the first in this novel, in which both Mr. Radley and Mrs. Radley have already died without Scout so much as batting an eyelash, but it is the first death that has a real effect on the Finch children, who are shocked by their father's skill with a gun. Tim Johnson, an innocent dog who happened to be infected with rabies, is sometimes considered a mockingbird, like Tom and Boo, but the fact of his disease muddies the symbolism considerably.

**Innocence.**Mockingbirds are symbols of innocence, which makes this one of the most important themes in the novel. In addition to the symbolic mockingbirds of Tom and Boo, innocence can be found in Scout, Jem, and Dill, who undergo a loss of innocence later in the novel, when they watch Tom's trial. Unsurprisingly, Lee associates innocence with youth and the natural world—two things that are traditionally considered innocent and pure.

**Sin.**In previous chapters, Lee established sin as a theme in relation to Christianity and the sometimes extreme beliefs of Christians in Maycomb. Here, Atticus reorients the theme of "sin" to a purely moral or personal belief in what's right and wrong, effectively eliminating the extreme religious connotations of the word "sin." This is an important change, because it allows Scout and Jem to develop their sense of morality independent of their religion.

**Time.**Thus far in the narrative, the pocket watches have hinted at the theme of time, which has by and large had little effect on the novel, except where Scout has dipped into flashback and employed foreshadowing. In this chapter, time becomes an important theme, both in relation to age and to the speed of events, as when it slows to a crawl while Atticus prepares to shoot Tim Johnson. In the beginning of the chapter, Scout makes a point of saying that Atticus is old and feeble, but her perception of time and age changes when Atticus shoots the dog. Suddenly, she realizes that time is relative and that the way she perceives time can be affected by her emotional state.

***Significance:***Scout doesn't think her father can "do" anything besides be a lawyer - he doesn't do hands-on physical work and he doesn't play football. He's much older than the parents of her peers, which makes it difficult for him to take part in such activities. In addition, Atticus wears glasses because he's nearly blind in one eye. Instead of hunting, he sits and reads inside. Scout is slightly ashamed of her father, because it seems like he can't do anything noteworthy. Atticus tells Scout and Jem they can shoot their air guns at tins cans and bluebirds, but that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird. Miss Maudie affirms this, saying to Scout, "Your father's right. Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

One day a dog named Tim Johnson appears in the neighborhood, down the street from the Finch house. He looks strange appearance and walks slowly, with a twitch. The children tell [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia), who takes one look at the dog and immediately calls Atticus to tell him that there's a rabid dog in the neighborhood. Next Calpurnia gets the town operator to call everyone in the neighborhood to warn them. She even runs over to the Radley house and yells a warning to them. Atticus and the sheriff, [Heck Tate](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#heck-tate), drive up, and the sheriff gives Atticus the gun. The dog is so close to the Radley house that a stray bullet might go into the building. Atticus reluctantly takes aim and shoots the dog. The dog crumples into a heap. Jem is dumbstruck with the accuracy of his father's shot. Miss Maudie tells the children that their father used to be known as "One-Shot Finch," the best dead-shot in the county. She says he doesn't shoot unless he has to, because he feels that when he holds a gun, God has given him an unfair advantage over living beings. Scout wants to tell everyone in school about the incident, but Jem tells her not to. Jem explains that he wouldn't care if Atticus "couldn't do a blessed thing," because Atticus is a gentleman.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) and [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) are disappointed that Atticus, at 50, is older than their classmates’ parents and doesn’t do anything, like farm or drive a dump truck. He also wears glasses and never hunts, drinks, or smokes. Despite how innocuous he seems, everyone talks about him defending [Tom Robinson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/tom-robinson). People tease Scout after she commits herself to “a policy of cowardice.” He refuses to teach Scout and Jem to shoot their air rifles and tells them that it’s a sin to kill a [mockingbird](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/symbols/the-mockingbird). This isn’t a normal thing for Atticus to say, so Scout asks [Miss Maudie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/miss-maudie-atkinson) about it. She agrees with Atticus and says that mockingbirds just sing for people. Scout complains that Atticus is too old and can’t do anything. Miss Maudie points out that Atticus can write fantastic wills, play checkers, and play the mouth harp. Scout is even more embarrassed.

***Analysis Part 1:***

When Scout refers to her choice to follow Atticus’s request as a “policy of cowardice,” it shows that she still thinks courage and bravery have to do with the way a person fights physically or verbally for what they believe in. In other words, it hasn’t yet crossed her mind that it might be more courageous for her to walk away from others’ taunts. Atticus’s request that the children not kill innocent mockingbirds hearkens to his defense of Tom Robinson, who is being persecuted by the community. When Miss Maudie echoes what Atticus said, it helps the children see that within Atticus’s sense of morality is based on universal concepts of right and wrong that everyone can apply.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Miss Maudie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/miss-maudie-atkinson) sends [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) home, so the construction crew doesn’t crush her. Scout finds [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem)’s attempts to shoot tin cans boring, so when [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) gets home, he finds Scout pointing her rifle at Miss Maudie’s backside. He warns Miss Maudie, who good-naturedly insults Atticus, and tells Scout to not point her gun at people. Annoyed, Scout asks [Calpurnia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/calpurnia) what Atticus can do. Calpurnia insists that Atticus can do lots of things but can’t list any. Later, Scout feels even worse when Atticus is the only father not playing in the inter-church football game.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Scout and Jem’s disappointment with the fact that Atticus apparently can’t do anything again suggests that both of them think of courage and personal worth as coming from an individual’s tangible capabilities. As a lawyer, there’s not much to directly see of Atticus’s work, which makes it harder for his children to understand that he performs important services for his community through his profession.

***Summary Part 3:***

On Saturday, [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) and [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) take their air rifles out, but just past the Radley Place, Jem spots old Tim Johnson, a beloved local hound dog. He drags Scout home and asks [Calpurnia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/calpurnia) to come look at Tim. Jem mimes how Tim is moving—like his right legs are shorter than his left, twitching and gulping—and Calpurnia comes outside to look. After a minute, she rushes Jem and Scout back inside, gets [Eula May](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) to warn everyone on the street that a mad dog is coming and ask [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) to come home. She runs to the Radley Place to warn [Nathan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/nathan-radley) and [Boo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/arthur-radley-boo), but they don’t open their door.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Keep in mind that to Jem and Scout, Calpurnia’s willingness to run right up to the Radleys’ front door may look either wildly misguided or very courageous, since they’re still wary of Boo. Calpurnia’s actions also make the case that she feels as though she’s an essential part of Maycomb and, just like Scout’s other neighbors, can and should do everything in her power to protect others from the rabid dog.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) and [Mr. Heck Tate](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/heck-tate), the sheriff, arrive in the car. [Calpurnia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/calpurnia) explains that Tim is just twitching, not running, so they decide to wait for him to get closer. [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) is terrified—she thought that mad dogs foamed at the mouth and lunged at people’s throats, and only do so in August. Tim’s behavior in February, combined with the deserted and silent street, is eerie. Tim comes into sight, looking dazed, and Mr. Tate breathes that Tim is definitely ill. At the bend in the road in front of the Radley Place, Tim hesitates. As [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) and Scout watch from behind Calpurnia, Mr. Tate shoves his rifle at Atticus to shoot Tim.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Scout’s aside that Tim’s behavior is scarier because it’s not what she expected from a rabid dog shows again that what Scout fears most of all is the unknown—even outright threats aren’t as frightening as something that’s entirely surprising. The fact that the street also looks eerie when it’s empty and closed-up nods to the idea that even in February, Scout expects her neighborhood to be open and welcoming—seeing that it has the potential to not be is very off-putting.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) tries to refuse, but he takes the rifle and steps into the street. He pushes his glasses up, but they fall back—he drops them, and they crack. As Tim catches sight of Atticus and goes rigid, Atticus swiftly lifts the gun and shoots. Tim crumples. [Mr. Tate](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/heck-tate)’s inspection reveals that Atticus shot a bit too far to the right. Atticus isn’t surprised. He grinds his broken lens into powder as the neighborhood comes back to life. [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) tries to talk to Atticus, but he can’t formulate words. Atticus warns Jem and [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) to stay away from the body, and [Miss Maudie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/miss-maudie-atkinson) calls Atticus “One-Shot Finch.”

***Analysis Part 5:***

Atticus is very clearly comfortable handling a rifle, thereby throwing a wrench into Scout and Jem’s belief that he can’t do anything. This begins to suggest that Atticus may have any number of skills, but that he doesn’t choose to use them unless it’s wholly necessary to do so in order to protect his family and his community.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) and [Mr. Tate](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/heck-tate) head back to town. [Miss Maudie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/miss-maudie-atkinson) silences [Miss Stephanie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/miss-stephanie-crawford) and tells [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) that Atticus used to be the best shot in Maycomb County. He stopped shooting when he realized he had an unfair advantage over other living things. She tells [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) that people in their right minds don’t take pride in their talents as they watch [Zeebo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) remove the dog’s body. Later, Jem tells Scout to not mention what happened—he believes if Atticus wanted them to know he was a good shot, he would’ve told them. Jubilantly, Jem shouts that Atticus is a gentleman.

***Analysis Part 6:***

It’s telling that Jem is so ecstatic to learn that Atticus is a good shot, as it falls into line with what Jem believes about courage and worth coming from easily demonstrable skills, like shooting. The idea that it’s a choice to use skills like this, however, suggests that there’s more to this than Jem realizes—such as the possibility that Atticus might feel as though showing off his shooting skills would be incompatible with his morally upright image.