

Atypical Courage

The definition of courage varies from individual to individual. Some may see it as evoking violence and portraying physical strength frequently, while others may refer to courage as the ability to defend oneself from verbal attacks. Both of these instances share one thing in common: these people are forced to overcome obstacles they experience in their lives. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a story of a courageous lawyer who attempts to defy systematic racism, but there are numerous other characters who display courage in smaller manners. Therefore, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, author Harper Lee depicts that when an individual is burdened with challenges, it requires courage to overcome, which is evoked through past experiences.

Lawyer Atticus Finch is afflicted with the task of defending a black man in a predominantly white society, in which his obligation as a father invokes courage to pursue. When his daughter, Jean Louise (Scout), complains about the bullying she is facing and questions why her father must defend someone who is receiving hate, Atticus responds with: They're certainly entitled to think that, and they're entitled to full respect for their opinions... but before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience. (Lee, 139-140). Atticus is fully aware of the discrimination towards black individuals in his society, but he still chooses to defend Tom Robinson. He is willing to dissipate his reputation as a poised lawyer, simply because his conscience will not be able to handle the weight of knowing an innocent man was not saved. As a father, Atticus preaches equality to his children. If he does not defend Tom, he becomes a hypocrite. He cannot proclaim fairness if he does not pursue it himself. In a society where individuals outside the norm are considered lesser than, Atticus shows courage by accepting a task that may destroy his life. His daughter asks him,

“... Are we going to win [the trial]?” and Atticus, nonchalantly responds with, “No, honey.” (Lee, 101). Even while knowing he will undoubtedly lose the trial, he still strives to reduce the injustice Tom is facing. Enduring losses is difficult. However, enduring guaranteed losses is excruciating, and entails tenacity to accept. Atticus possesses this. His obligation as a father and his morals he has acquired from past experiences, prompts him to take this challenge. Without the aid of the previous events he endured, he would not have chosen to defend Tom Robinson.

Arthur Radley, a forced recluse from Maycomb, is notorious for his supposed monstrous demeanor and gruesome habits. He is portrayed as a monstrosity - any crime that occurs in the city is thought to be premeditated by him. Even children, such as Jem Finch, who are considered far more moral compared to the corrupted adults, presume that he “dine[s] on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that’s why his hands were bloodstained—if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off.” (Lee, 16). The description itself instills fear within people. He is narrated as someone who is evil - although the truth is far from that. Continuous hatred requires bravery to cope with. Boo encounters and abides by these speculations, finding comfort in isolation. As he undergoes these malicious assumptions, his choice to live becomes courageous. It is not until Scout tells her father that, “... Mr. Ewell was tryin’ to squeeze me to death, I reckon... then [Boo Radley] yanked Mr. Ewell down.” (Lee, 361), after Jem is almost murdered, he is recognised as someone more than a monster. The experiences and backlash he faces throughout the course of the novel cause him to believe that he must prove himself as someone who is not evil. The trauma he went through, from being accused of crimes he did not commit, to being feared by children and adults alike, shapes his character. It evokes courage within him and saves Jem and Scout from their untimely demise.

Finally, Dolphus Raymond, a believed alcohol addict, presents courage in an unusual way. Maycomb's society is one that is conservative, along with its integrated racism. Although Mr. Raymond is a typical white male, his normalcy ends when he weds a black female and reproduces. Mixed children - during the time - do not belong anywhere. He is constantly thought of as mad, for why would a privileged white male discard his advantages like that? None of the residents can understand that Mr. Raymond simply does not want to conform with their society's beliefs. They continue to speculate and assume that he is nothing more than a fool. However, when Dill Harris and Scout encounters Mr. Raymond behind a tree-trunk during the trial, Mr. Raymond reveals that, "Secretly, Miss Finch, I'm not much of a drinker, but you see [Maycomb's residents] could never, never understand that I live like I do because that's the way I want to live." (Lee, 268). The whispers about his madness and judgement evoke courage within him. He finds the courage to hide his true self - for the sake of his life. Although it is an unusual form of bravery, it is valourous nonetheless. Dolphus knows that marrying a black woman will diminish the respect the society has for him. He is fully acquainted with the struggles minorities face on a daily basis, but his passion for living his life as he wishes is greater than his concern. Atticus defines, "Real courage [as]... when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what." (Lee, 149), and Mr. Raymond portrays that in every sense. His experiences as a condemned and mocked man evokes the courage within him to behave as an alcoholic. He continues to take on the persona of an addict, and will continue regardless of the discernment. By doing so, he frees himself from the bindings of Maycomb's beliefs - and that is courageous.

It necessitates courage to conquer the hindrances an individual faces, which is induced through past experiences. Atticus Finch, Arthur Radley, and Dolphus Raymond have all suffered

through societal judgement, but the bravery they present throughout the novel has been cultivated by those events. Because of their past experiences, they feel obligated to pursue their lives as they do. Although many individuals perceive courage as slaughtering enemies through violence and defending countries with their valour, courage can also be found in smaller ways. Going against societal pressures is courageous. Acknowledging perceptions of oneself, good or bad, is courageous, but pursuing oneself as they most desire is the truest form of courage.