To Kill A Mockingbird Essay: Critical Analysis of Essential Characters

Throughout the book To Kill a Mockingbird there are many essential characters that come into play, but one is much more important than the rest. That character happens to be Atticus Finch. He is the father of Jem and Scout. He is also a lawyer in the town of Maycomb. The reason of which Atticus is so essential to the text is because he believes that no matter what shade your skin is, you should have the same equal rights and opportunity as everyone around you.

In chapter 9 of To Kill a Mockingbird it states, “A n*****-lover. I ain’t very sure what it means… Uncle Jack, I’ll be—I swear before God if I’ll sit there and let him say somethin‘ about Atticus.” This quote gives the audience a clear visualization of how the Finch’s get treated because of Atticus’s beliefs. Scout does not fully understand the insult, but it still makes her furious. This also puts into perspective how much drive and motivation Atticus has when doing his job. He knows his chances of winning this trial are slim to none, but that does not stop him from standing in front of the jury and presenting his case for Mr. Tom Robinson. Furthermore, on chapter 25 of To Kill a Mockingbird it states, “Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men’s hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.” Atticus firmly believes in the rights of equality for every man, woman, and child, no matter the ethnicity. The quote above also depicts how hard Atticus fought against the all white jury for Tom Robinson's case. Atticus knew Tom was not guilty and tried his very best to prove that, but going against an all white jury with a case like this, he knew Toms’ chances of being proven “innocent " were almost none. What Atticus did was he made the jury think. Instead of taking 3 or 4 minutes to come up with a verdict, it took the jury quite a while; although Tom was “guilty” Atticus knew he tried is very best for a unjust trial that he knew he had no chances of winning.

During Atticus’s closing argument he uses the rhetorical appeal of Logos. He proves that Tom could not have hit Mayella Ewell with his cripple left hand and that Tom also happened to be right handed, which would make it unlikely for him to hit her with his left hand causing the bruise on the right side of her face. He also has Bob Ewell write his name on a sheet of paper and sure enough he’s left handed. Atticus very clearly proves Tom’s innocence with this closing argument, but again he knows that going up against an all white jury Tom has no chance of being proven innocent.

Next, in chapter 20 of To Kill a Mockingbird it states, “‘I’m no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system—that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up.’” In this quote one jury man is speaking out talking about how the court is no better than the men that are sitting in it. This act of citizenship is extraordinary considering the jury man who said it was not taking the jury side nor Tom Robinson’s. The jury man portrays citizenship because he is a white man apart of a white jury and is speaking of equality. Citizenship is the role you take in your city, town, or even neighborhood. The responsibilities of a citizen are simple: obey laws, defend, and defend on a jury honestly when needed. This is what the one jury man is doing. In chapter 22 of To Kill a Mockingbird it states, “Atticus looked up at her, puzzled, and she said,

“You better step out here and see what’s in the kitchen, Mr. Finch.” We followed him. The kitchen table was loaded with enough food to bury the family… Calpurnia said, “This was all ‘round the back steps when I got here this morning. They—they ’preciate what you did, Mr. Finch. They—they aren’t oversteppin‘ themselves, are they?” Atticus’s eyes filled with tears. He did not speak for a moment. “Tell them I’m very grateful,” he said. “Tell them—tell them they must never do this again. Times are too hard…” Atticus shows his citizenship many times throughout this novel, but none of those compare to this act. He knows times are tough for even the wealthiest of people during The Great Depression so he declines the food with a tear in his eye. The amount of thought Atticus puts into everything he does is incredible and part of the reason why he is such a great citizen and portrays citizenship perfectly.

To conclude, the novel To Kill a Mockingbird the audience discovers who the most essential character is, why Atticus’s closing argument has so much meaning, and what it means to be a citizen.