

How Atticus Finch Opened Doors

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Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* is one of the most profound characters to ever be written. Atticus was a minority within his community. Not only was he not racist, unlike his peers, he was defending a black man in court.

To begin, when Atticus Finch is presented with the case to defend Tom Robinson, he doesn't shy away and refuse to help him. This is significant to the overall message of the book because throughout the novel he is encouraging his children to develop their own opinions and make decisions based on their past experiences. He is able to teach his kids to be open minded and kind to others. This shows that even though Atticus had the theoretical "door" shut on him when he was given the task to defend Tom Robinson, he uses the opportunity to teach his children an important life lesson. In addition, even though Atticus Finch does not win his case his children still learn a very important life lesson: all actions have their consequences.

Besides teaching his children, he was able to learn himself. He learned that he wasn't always going to win his cases. Because of the trial of Tom Robinson, people in his community started to criticize and disrespect him. Now he could've refuted their point and been outright disrespectful back; however, he chose a different route. He chose to respect others opinions and to hold his tongue at the appropriate times. He makes choices that show that sometimes silence is stronger than one's own opinions. And because of his age he is able to make these wise decisions based on his past.

This life lesson is one that every reader can learn from, myself included. Because Harper Lee was able to present a universal lesson that many can connect with, Atticus Finch becomes an increasingly influential character. Atticus has taught me that not only do all actions have consequences, but there is also another person on the other side of that action. My actions equally affect myself and those around me. This has made me more aware of those I affect. It also makes me consider my words more carefully as they usually have the same, if not greater effect on someone. However, while I might have this philosophy, and value how others feel, others may not. It seems now more than ever people are becoming less considerate to one another.

Furthermore, due to the political climate that exists today, numerous similarities can be drawn between the 1930s and today. While the political climate today is nowhere near as racially divided as the 30s parallels can still be drawn between both time periods. For example, today people can be ostracized from small interest groups/single issue groups if they have a small differing of opinion. While they might've held beliefs similar to those around them, along with others respect they can still be called out for a minute disagreement. This is similar to Atticus Finch and his defense of Tom Robinson in the fact that Atticus had the respect of those around him, and he was well liked within his community. Nevertheless, he is still cast out when the community finds out that he is defending a black man. So, while I personally cannot connect to being ostracized from my community, there are still plenty of examples from present day life of people having doors shut on them.

Finally, it is still possible for others to open doors for their peers. While the "opening of doors" does not have to be as dramatic as in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they can be small and have

a big impact. By being friends with those who seem lonely, sticking up for your peers, or something as simple as sticking up for yourself, more doors can be opened. In this every increasingly polarized society it would do good to help others "open doors".