Atticus in To Kill A Mockingbird

Atticus and his reading are a symbol of education. Throughout the novel, Atticus acts as a moral educator for the children in many ways, such as making Scout empathise with Boo Radley. Furthermore, he demonstrates to them that courage is not a man with a gun, but "when you know you're licked before you begin…. and you see it through no matter what". Atticus himself portrays this lesson as he agrees to defend Tom Robinson, a black man, against Maycomb's so deeply ingrained racial prejudice. Although his actions make him despised by many in Maycomb, even after the trial, he seems to be held in the same high regard as before. His name originates from the Roman nobleman Atticus Titus Pomponius, who was renowned for his wisdom and interest in books, hence reflected in his character. Atticus encapsulates the themes of courage and resilience, while also exhibiting great empathy and tolerance for others.

FOCUS	KEY IDEAS	CONTEXT	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS
Father Figure	Firstly, Atticus is portrayed as a moral compass for the children, as he helps Scout understand the truth behind Boo Radley.			
	Teaching Scout to empathise with Boo		"you never really understand a person until you climb into his skin"	Central metaphor in the novel - teaches Scout that if we try and empathise with others, we can eliminate prejudice. The novel is a plea for tolerance and this metaphor is a part of the children's (and our) moral education of understanding others.
			"stop tormenting that man" "most people are when you finally see them"	This imperative is not out of anger but simply explaining Boo's rights as an individual to stay inside. The children here are not being malicious but are falling into the trap of prejudice "finally see them": this lesson is demonstrating that prejudice is based on ignorance and now Scout has no fear or ignorance, she can understand his benevolence
	Similar to how Scout doesn't appreciate Atticus' valuable lessons until later on, she underestimates his talents.			
	Children are educated about Atticus		"was feeble: he was nearly fifty" "he wasn't interested in guns" "deadest shot in Maycomb" "Jem was paralysed"	Children consider Atticus as useless and reduce him down to the adj "feeble". However, it is Maudie he informs that he was "the deadest…": superlative demonstrates that Atticus has skills far beyond their understanding; further highlighted by the verb "paralysed".
	However, Atticus, as a father, isn't without faults. Firstly, he doesn't believe that Ku Klux Klan or mobs will get in the way of the trial: …			
	KKK	as in 1923, the KKK's revival reached a peak of 5 million members.	"the Ku Klux is gone"	Here, this can be interpreted as his naivety, as … However, this could be just logical as in 1930,

				when this novel was set, one of the predominant KKK leaders was arrested.
	He doesn't anticipate, then, the mob at the jail and the danger he places himself and his children in:			
	Lynch Mob	Lynching was carried out by a mob, often by hanging, in order to punish an 'alleged' transgressor, or to intimidate a population of people. It was essentially a means of social control and approximately 3,500 Afri Ameri were lynched in the US between 1882 and 1968. Just as in the novel, a lynch mob gathered outside the jail in the Scot, demanding the boys be surrendered	"solid shapes moving towards the jail"	Here, Atticus fails to take account of the potential for extra judicial execution even in a small town like Maycomb.
	Equally, he doesn't take the threat of Bob Ewell seriously. When Bob spits at him, he asks his sister …			
	Bob Ewell attack		"What on earth could Bob Ewell do to me?"	Atticus, with hindsight, makes a mistake as later on, Bob attempts to kill the children. However, in a logical sense, he may have thought the threat was on him, hence his lack of seriousness. The fact that Boo saves Scout and Jem means that Atticus has to acknowledge that the law must mete out justice in ways that best serve its community.
Furthermore, Harper Lee utilises the character of Atticus to demonstrate that courage isn't necessarily physical bravery or strength, but also mental toughness and determination.				
Courage	Firstly, Atticus takes Tom's trial despite knowing of the damage it will do to his image. As a result of this, Mrs Dubose comments: …			
	Damaging to his image	Judge James Edwin Horton of the Scottsboro case in 1931, is said to be "Southern judge - who risks the scorch of his beloved state to deliver justice."	"Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for"	Lexical choices like "niggers and trash" are made synonymous, emphasises low respect ppl have for him because he tries to serve Tom justice. Class struct - been downgraded. Tone: deliberately malicious / disgust in voice
			"You've got every-thing to lose from this, I mean everything"	Repetition of "everything": underlines the stakes of taking on this trial
	In addition, he was also fully aware that the trial that could destroy his reputation was also bound to end in failure.			
	Knowing he will fail	Trials of Scottsboro Boys - Ruby Bates admitted that she fabricated the	"It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin	Asserts what true courage means to Atticus - Tom case - result inevitable

		story, but defendants were still found guilty.	anyway and you see it through no matter what"	
	Despite all of this failure that seems to grasp Atticus throughout the novel, he demonstrates courage by sticking to his deeply rooted morals.			
	Sticks to his morals, gentleman		"Bob Ewell spat in his face …." // "Atticus didn't bat an eye… wiped his face"	Severe disrespect from spitting on his face shows how Bob sees Atticus as almost nothing that he deserves no respect. As a gentleman, Atticus deals with it without retaliating, shows how much emphasis he has on sticking to moral grounds.
	Due to his calm approach to hatred, Atticus is bestowed with a difficult responsibility in Maycomb, which is to destroy the prejudice within it.			
	Expected to destroy prejudice	Samuel Leibowitz was chosen in hopes Scottsboro case could be won because he was a well-known and successful lawyer, however, even he couldn't win the case.	"Take him, Mr Finch …. You're It."	Imperative of "Take…" shows how he is expected to take on such a huge task and everybody known he is only one able to. Unreasonable - too much prejudice to shoot down Childish imagery shows how this is almost a game, only Atticus is destined to lose Capitalisation emphasis on childish img - makes it definite
	One of the key incidents in which Atticus is made to destroy the prejudice, is the incident with the sick dog.			
	Mad Dog		"Tim was a liver-coloured bird dog, the pet of Maycomb"	Personification: Tim represents prejudice of Maycomb, May nurtures him, therefore nurturing racism Noun "bird": relates to mockingbirds and how Maycomb shoots them down
			"walking dazedly" "moseyin along" vs "movements so swift"	Adv "dazedly" emphasises lack of clarity, suggests that prejudice is stupid, almost mocking its movements Verb "moseyin" sense of no stability, nosiness Sibilance "so swift" emphasises the clarity and fluidity of his movements Contrast between stupidity of prejudice and an educated man
	Despite the rash and violent way Atticus had to get rid of the sick dog, he demonstrates his pacifism throughout the storyline			
	Anti violence	History of violence in South: Emmett Till case - notorious example of unjust violence - body found on 31st August 1955 with torture wounds, shot in the head - 14 year old boy.	"See what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand"	Adj "real": shows us that Atticus doesn't view the dog incident as courageous because he views courage as mental strength rather than violence.
			"put his gun down … God had given	His white skin and gender automatically makes him

			him an unfair advantage" "civilised in the heart"	privileged, shows he has a moral duty to help black ppl with the prejudice they receive constantly. Adj "civilised": he doesn't need violence as an aid for this as he has education and morals Noun "heart" - deeply rooted in
	Due to his many views, like his passiveness, he is slightly casted at times in the novel, and hence becomes an individual in a crowd of prejudice.			
	Individual		"solitary light burning in the distance"	Adj "solitary" stresses his individuality Noun "light": benevolence, morality and hope for Maycomb to get better / guardian angel for Tom
Moreover, Atticus is portrayed as a strong lawyer, who provides a persuasive and effective speech in order to give Tom the best chance he could possibly have.				

Atticus' summing up is, in many way, the **climax** of the chapters centred around the court case, and as such, Lee employs a variety of rhetorical techniques to make his speech to the jury as persuasive as possible. Firstly, he uses simple **declaratives** like, "this case should never have come to court" and "the state has not produced one iota of medical evidence", both of which create a tone of certainty and definitiveness. Stressing words like 'never' (the only **polysyllabic** word in a sequence of simple monosyllables) highlights the injustice of this case, which is enhanced by the **irony** of "this case is as simple as black and white." The fact is, that in Maycomb, there is nothing simple about the relationship between black people and white, and whilst Atticus is using this **metaphor** to convey the fact that based on the evidence alone, this case *should* be clear cut, the metaphor is also pointing to the complexity of race relations in the region. Because of the deeply engrained racial prejudice in the 1930s, evidenced by the Jim Crow laws, for instance, it is quite clear that this case will not be 'as simple as black and white'.

Emotive diction like 'pity' and 'guilt' highlights Atticus' compassion towards Mayella whilst also illustrating his fair-mindedness, in weighing pity for her against pity for Tom. Ultimately, he asserts that he "*cannot pity her: she is white.*" The colour of her skin already gives her an unfair advantage and reminds us of the **motif** of the scales of justice which *should* be evenly balanced, but most certainly are not. The fact that Mayella has broken "a rigid and time hononoured code of *our* society" brings up issues of taboo and fears of miscegenation but the **collective pronoun** 'our' points to a collective blame. Mayella's desire to hide her attraction is understandable when one comprehends that it would cause her to be "hounded from our midst". The **verb** 'hounded' creates the image of humans behaving as animals, preying on those who don't conform to Maycomb's rules and the **repetition** of the verb 'must' in "she *must* put him away from her – he *must* be removed from her presence...she *must* destroy the evidence" shows how society dictates these notions, so much so, that they become **imperatives**. It also shows how a black man could be dehumanised to such an extent, that he simply becomes a piece of 'evidence' that must be destroyed.

Indeed, in his recount of events, he presents Mayella as very much the **active** participant: "she tempted a Negro…she kissed a black man". She is the subject of these sentences, carrying out the actions and Tom simply seems passive – countering the stereotype of the black man as hypersexual, animalistic predator that have percolated down the centuries (ideas that even have biblical 'authority' when we consider the story of Ham's offspring being cursed with blackness as a punishment for his sexual impropriety – even though in Genesis, the precise nature of this 'crime' is unclear). Atticus then **reverses the Self/Other and civilised/savage dichotomy** when he mentions Mayella being beaten "savagely". Traditionally, in Western discourse, savagery has been associated with blackness and varied cultural 'Others' but here, it is quite clear that it is Bob Ewell, a white man, who has beaten his daughter. In **contrast** to such savagery, Tom is a "quiet, respectable, humble Negro", the **triplet** simply emphasising these positive **adjectives**.

Atticus is at pains to counter the negative stereotypes of blackness that are prevalent in the "evil assumption that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women…" The **anaphora and triplet** adds a rhetorical flourish, really hammering these points into the jury's head. What Lee does so successfully, is to replace the homogenous determiner 'all' with the much more unspecific **determiner** 'some': "some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women – black or white." This **parallelism** shows how ridiculous it is to give all black people the same negative identity; the first **triplet** highlights the lies that are perpetuated by prejudice and intolerance, and the second triplet conveys the realistic truth: some black men are *not* to be trusted, just as some white men are too. Atticus is emphasising our common humanity, blurring black and white lines as "this is a truth that applies to the human race and no particular race of men." The **nouns** 'truth' and 'lies' are **repeated** multiple times, reflecting a key theme of the text, as is the word 'equal'.

Lee deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence when she has Atticus quote Thomas Jefferson: "all men are created equal." Whilst he undermines the notion of equality in all areas, such as education, he stresses the equality that *should* be upheld by the legal system, not as an ideal but as a "working reality" ("our courts are the great levellers"). Ironically, the Jim Crow laws legally mandated racial segregation in all public facilities in Southern states of the former Confederacy, starting in 1890 with a "separate but equal" status for African Americans. This separation led to conditions for black people that tended to be inferior and it systematised a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages – not least in the judicial system.

Atticus has already used **pronouns** to great effect to engage the men of the jury directly ("you gentlemen"), particularly when he attempts to make allies of them by using **collective pronouns** ("we know") or **paralipsis** ("I need not remind you…"). Here, he appeals to their sense of moral duty and responsibility: "a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me…" before ending with a very emotive imperative: "In the name of God, do you duty…in the name of God, believe him." By calling on God, there is almost a sense of desperation, a final plea to do the right thing, and the fact that his voice has "dropped" shows just how much of a toll this case has taken on Atticus.

Throughout the novel To Kill a Mockingbird, the presence and influence of Atticus is felt, both on the children and the people of Maycomb. Atticus is the one to teach the children one of the most important lessons in the novel, to empathise and understand one's situation. Moreover, by arguing the Tom Robinson case so strongly and effectively, he is able to open a few people's eyes, namely Mr Cunningham. To conclude, Harper Lee purposefully uses the character of Atticus to demonstrate how unjust the legal system is and the unfair treatment of black people.