

**For citation / Atf için:**

UYANIK, Y. İ. (2024). The true path leading to authentic individuality: Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. *Kastamonu İnsan ve Toplum Dergisi – KİTOD* 2(4), 305-326.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14131441>, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/kitod>

## The true path leading to authentic individuality: Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Esas Benliğe Giden Gerçek Yol: Harper Lee'nin *Bülbülü Öldürmek* Eserinde Atticus Finch

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Makale Türü / Article Type:	Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Gönderilme Tarihi / Submission Date:	12/10/2024
Revizyon Tarihleri / Revision Dates:	13.10.2024 (Editör r.), 21.10.2024 (Major r.)
Kabul Tarihi / Accepted Date:	13/11/2024

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### Araştırmacıların çalışmaya katkısı / Researchers' contribution to the study

1. Yazarın katkısı: Makaleyi yazdı, verileri topladı ve sonuçları analiz etti/raporladı (%100).  
Author contribution: Wrote the article, collected the data, and analyzed/reported the results (%100).

### Çıkar çatışması / Conflict of interest

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**The true path leading to authentic individuality: Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird***

**Abstract**

Atticus Finch, a talented lawyer, of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is brave enough to stand against an unfair judgement. The novel depends on the story of Tom Robinson, who is judged by the court for his so-called crime only because of his skin color and position in the society. Although there is the lack of concrete evidence and Atticus Finch's rightful support as a powerful white male, Tom is found guilty. As the novel explicitly indicates, he is intentionally misjudged since he is within a lower position as a black person in the community. Namely, the issue is about his being lower and black without any logical consideration. However, Atticus, as the voice of justice and embodiment of true personality, both plausibly defends Tom's innocence and struggles to teach his children how to behave in life about justice and rationality. Therefore, Atticus is a remarkable individual to be ideal in a society in which the white superiority overwhelms the black people and thus virtue loses its actual meaning. In this context, this study aims to discuss Atticus Finch of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by reflecting his strong posture as a true individual regarding both his family and the corrupt community.

**Esas benliğe giden gerçek yol: Harper Lee'nin *Bülbülü Öldürmek* Eserinde Atticus Finch**

**Öz**

*Bülbülü Öldürmek* eserinin yetenekli avukatı Atticus Finch, haksız bir yargıya karşı duracak kadar cesurdur. Roman, yalnızca ten rengi ve toplumdaki konumu nedeniyle sözde suçu için mahkeme tarafından yargılanan Tom Robinson'ın hikayesine dayanmaktadır. Somut kanıt eksikliği ve Atticus Finch'in güçlü bir beyaz erkek olarak haklı desteği olmasına rağmen, Tom suçlu bulunur. Romanın açıkça belirttiği gibi, toplumda Tom siyahi bir kişi olarak daha düşük bir konumda olduğu için kasıtlı olarak yanlış yargılanmıştır. Yani konu, mantıksal bir değerlendirme olmaksızın onun daha düşük bir konuma sahip olması ve siyahi olmasıyla ilgilidir. Ancak Atticus, adaletin sesi ve gerçek kişiliğin vücut bulmuş hali olarak, hem Tom'un masumiyetini makul bir şekilde savunur hem de çocuklarına hayatta adalet ve rasyonellik hakkında nasıl davranmaları gerektiğini öğretmek için mücadele eder. Bu nedenle Atticus, beyaz üstünlüğünün siyahi insanları ezdiği ve böylece erdemin gerçek anlamını yitirdiği bir toplumda ideal olması gereken dikkate değer bir bireydir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, *Bülbülü Öldürmek* romanındaki Atticus Finch'i, hem ailesini hem de yozlaşmış toplumu ele alarak gerçek bir birey olarak güçlü duruşunu yansıtarak tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Adalet, *Bülbülü Öldürmek*, Atticus Finch, Birey, Ten rengi

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* tells of Tom Robinson's unfair trial and conviction. Although Tom Robinson is not included in raping and beating the character Mayella Ewell, he is blamed for conducting these actions. Even Mayella's father Bob Ewell, together with Mayella, falsely points Tom as the guilty person. The reason behind this deliberate accusation is connected to overwhelming supremacy of the white priority before the black people. The historical background of the specific time obviously indicates how difficult a black person experiences his or her life in a society in which the words of white people were priceless. The interesting part comes into prominence when the white people accusing Tom are aware of the fact that he did not commit the crime. In this situation, instead of handing over the actual guilty, they choose to put the blame on a black man, who lives his life in a moderate and decent manner. Even if Tom's manners are to support the truth and thus defendant Mayella and Bob Ewell, there is almost nothing to get out of the trap set by the whites or constructed understanding of the community. If a white person had been charged with any crime, in this case, it would have disrupted the reputation of the white person, which could have resulted in a total shame. Still, while this kind of an atmosphere is demonstrated, the novel also succeeds to depict a true individual, Atticus Finch, who is striving to save Tom from his unjust treatment. Much as Atticus, both as a defender of law and authentic individual, fails to accomplish his duty, it is very considerable to regard his sentences and behaviors throughout the novel. Having pursued the right way, Atticus aims to stand together with innocent Tom now that Tom does nothing wrong about the crime he is

charged with. In this respect, Atticus, as the representative of innocence, rationality, and justice, turns out to be an individual whom one can really admire. Hence, even though Tom cannot escape from the whites' supremacy suppressing the blacks or from his "destiny," Atticus surfaces himself as the embodiment of an original individual that tracks the rightness. Moreover, he is not only presenting a decent posture for Tom during the trial but also portraying a proper picture for his children, which supports what it is to be done and undone in life in terms of many virtual issues such as moderation, logicity, and particularly justice. Thus, the topic of this research is to analyze and display Atticus Finch's behaviors and words considering Tom's trial process and his family environment in the light of the authentic individualism that requires knowing the self by acting in accordance with the self's own opinions and determination especially when it comes to the issue of an unfair conviction of a black person. Once Atticus' posture is scrutinized, some people can argue that he acts in an incorrect way within some certain scenes in the novel. Nonetheless, when one looks through the lens of individualism in its true sense, the importance of this study indicates itself. His most actions and words have significant indications pertaining to almost every issue, which in a way proves what it is to be a real person, who completed his inner journey and reached the ultimate goal of defending the side of the innocent as opposed to the whites' side that is meaninglessly supported merely for convicting an innocent black man or for protecting the reputation of the white skin's "importance." For that reason, the concept "individual" can be defined as a person that has many positive characteristics like bravery, self-consciousness, honesty, and rationality. All of these engender that specific person to be a nonconformist as well. "Nonconformity," as another concept, represents the person's capability of discovering and following his own way of thinking and decisions but for any fear or expectation from other people around him, that is, his society. In this sense, nonconformity allows Atticus to "rebel" against the established comprehension of his society where the blacks are suppressed by the white majority. Additionally, in this study, all available sources of individualism and Harper Lee's novel and the other sources associated with the topic are utilized. The method that is carried out within the research is literature review. Crucial information as to the characters, individuality, and other related sources is provided. Accordingly, the study's target is to describe Atticus Finch's individually posture in its real sense in the novel, and therefore, the study is based upon how the character Atticus can be able to embody a true personality thanks to his actions against Tom's unjust conviction and his lecturing his children, Scout and Jem. In addition, since there have been countless sources written about individualism and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, this research cannot fully deal with all details associated with the characters and their all actions. In this context, this study aims to analyze and project Atticus Finch's true individuality including his specific fateful actions and sayings both within the process of Tom's trial and within his relationship to his children.

**Keywords:** *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Individual, White majority, Oppression, Unfair treatment, Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson

## INTRODUCTION

Individuality or individualism, as a concept and reality, is definitely difficult to acquire for a person that is surrounded by many constructed traditions, ideologies, and understandings. These are represented in almost every community depending on the location and customs of that specific society. One of the members of the "many" supporting the established beliefs is always afraid of having an action, saying a single word or projecting a behavior contrary to those beliefs because "...[they] do not treat people as individuals: instead [they] treat the individual as a social networking site" (Miller, 2016, p. 183). Accordingly, the "many" people think that every person is to have same ideologies and beliefs just like them in the common society, and therefore, a person is seen a binding social creature to "save" what is already accepted. In this vein, the fundamental reason for the one to avoid contradictorily acting against established norms lies behind the fear of the person, which is being an outsider or outcast. It means that the one who is acting against his society's rules and norms can be excluded from his environment and relationships. The situation, then, turns into a position in which he is not accepted within the surroundings of his society owing to his "contradictory" actions, sayings or behavior. That

is exactly why it is a very harsh and tough process to be a genuine individual. Most people, because of the fear of exclusion and losing reputation, cannot be capable of offering their own opinions and beliefs in front of anyone adapting himself to the constructed comprehension.

However, there is always exceptions in these kinds of situations. The ones that can succeed in permanently conveying and defending their own visions are true individuals simply because they do not scare majority of people's judgement or exclusion. They also ignore getting victory or defeat resulting from their own actions. Therefore, they pass one of the initial phases of becoming an individual. As they can be able to accomplish such kind of a hard decision, they complete their inner journey, too. This journey is a metaphorical trip taken inside the mind of the individual, which processes nearly every detail and thus progresses in the end. Accordingly, they figure out their "self" and continue their lives in accordance with the self-decision making, self-conscious way, and self-confident sense. In this respect, nothing can stop their "growth" since they are the ones who prefer to use their own road rather than the one used by the other people. Having been used and corroded by the others, the road seems safe to proceed due to the idea that it was already tested and thus no one got hurt while "wandering" within the way. Even so, another primary part shows itself once an individual chooses to walk through the other road that is never taken beforehand, creating an absolute danger given that no one has ever checked the safety of the way. Hence, it is the actual "...individual moving away from...social roots to mature by standing alone as he makes a series of free, individual choices" (Mount, 1981, p. 364). While the individual's road can be hazardous, he follows its guide, the guide that is actually formed by the individual himself and thus his own liberal decision differentiating from the other road used by other people abiding by constructed ideas. For this reason, he does not look for any safety or expectation not to be harmed during the way, which composes the individual's "backbone." As Walt Whitman states "Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you / You must travel it for yourself" (Whitman, n.d., p. 43), the road is merely for its owner or creator to better know his "self" and to complete his soul-body harmony. Even if the individual, together with himself, wants to include someone in the way, it is through not sharing the road but offering a partnership as to ideologies. The only thing he can do in this sort of a situation is to share his truths and opinions resulting from experiencing his road, which may eventually engender others to question and think about what is wrong and right.

Atticus Finch, a significant character exemplifying authentic individuality, pursues his own road having dangers in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When we think of the period the novel covers, there is a precise and definite supremacy of white people over black people. The

ones having white skin, particularly men, dominate the society and create a hegemony. Whatever they say or however they act is acceptable in every scene and sense. "...[T]here have been wide divergences concerning the nature...of the social order they are held to threaten, as well as in the historical frameworks within which they are conceptualized" (Lukes, 1971, p. 49). Black people are to be oppressed by the white majority, and therefore, they are considered as an object to work and serve for the whites' prosperity and reputation since blacks are "conceptualized" and shaped by the white power. In this sense, the white skin can be said to represent "the mind" whereas the black skin symbolizes "the body," that is, labor power managed and directed by the opposite skin color. Even though Atticus is also a white person, he gets rid of the chains of constructed ideology and prefers to defend the rightful cause. His preference of defending a black man named Tom Robinson damages his reputation among people in his society, yet Atticus exactly knows his support could bring about a highly risky path just like his inner road. The premier issue is to be dedicated to his decisions as a true individual all the time, which Atticus can manage. Although his carrier of being a talented lawyer as a white man is compromised, he barely takes his steps back throughout the novel. Besides, he is not solely defending a suppressed black man but also trying to lecture his children about life in general. Every conversation a reader witnesses between Atticus and Scout or Jem leads to positivity and valuable teachings. It is either associated with being moderate and plausible or pertaining to being trustworthy and honest.

Having evaluated all of those remarkable issues, this study seeks to concentrate on the questions of "how can a person embody the true individuality in case of an unjust treatment?" and "what priceless lessons can a genuine individual offer to his environment in terms of justice, trustworthiness, honesty, and self-consciousness?" Hence, the main aim of this study is to question and analyze whether Atticus Finch, by accomplishing to represent true individuality, can provide "responses" to such questions. In this context, this study initially focuses on the actual meaning and value of individuality or being an authentic personality. While doing so, the paper includes cardinal literary names such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau along with some of their sayings helping the reader to understand the topic in a better way. After, the study discusses, in order to evaluate if he succeeds in exemplifying a true individual in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, what ways and how Atticus Finch, as a white male and skillful lawyer, behaves towards events and people.

In this study, the method that is utilized is literature review or qualitative research method. This method is the process of collecting non-numerical data, each of which can be widened with distinct research designs, grouping them according to diverse criteria and finally making them

usable. The qualitative research method can be regarded as an umbrella method. In the processing of the data acquired while researching certain issues, techniques and sub-methods relying upon the need are used. In this research, the explorative interpretation or close reading technique is also employed to grasp the terms “individualism,” “individuality,” “individual,” and “personality,” which are the backbones of the study. Accordingly, Atticus’ manners are carefully assessed throughout the novel whether he can be regarded as a true individual or not.

### **COMPREHENDING INDIVIDUALISM**

When we concentrate on the term individuality or authentic personality, it is primary, while scrutinizing Atticus Finch, to comprehend what we mean by the word and how an individual can be named after an “individual” in its true sense. Initially, “...the individual’s constitution is established by the relationships that he/she establishes with other people and with the surrounding natural environment” (Filippini, 2017, p. 27). Awareness of these relations creates the relationship the individual builds with the environment or other people, which emerges organically rather than by juxtaposition and thus corresponds to the comprehension that each person has of them. The one, then, is involved in his own nascence as well as that of his fellow men, and he does so within a conscious manner, which describes individuality. Once individuality, namely, the specific material of every person, is unified with sociality, that is, the connection determining individual, and when their combination is realized as the battleground on which an individual is efficiently constituted, then, individual attains his own personality. To acquire one’s personality means acquiring consciousness of the relations, and to change one’s own personality means modifying the ensemble of these relations. The acquisition of personality and the vital comprehension of one’s own constitution is a necessary precondition to understand that “...individualism signified the autonomy, freedom, and sacredness of the individual-values...within a cooperative and rationally-organized social order” (Lukes, 1971, p. 51). To find the meaning of individualism or to be an individual requires appreciating other individuals’ liberty, rights, and values in a community. It is an important condition before reaching or discovering true individualism and authentic individuality. It is also significant that there are various definitions or approaches about individualism, too. “For some, individualism resides in dangerous ideas, for others it is social or economic anarchy, a lack of the requisite institutions and norms, for yet others it is the prevalence of self-interested attitudes among individuals” (Lukes, 1971, p. 49). Individualism can be associated with hazardous opinions, social anarchy excluding established customs and institutions, and self-dependent behavior in a crowded community. Either way, it leads to the same gate, which makes an individual self-

conscious, eccentric, and different from other people even if his ideas can be risky to pursue simply because the individual depends on only himself rather than any institution rules or established social rules.

From this point, an individual also requires his personality to have many positive characteristics such as being brave, moderate, logical, fair, self-conscious, nonconformist, defender of equality and justice, trustworthy, honest, and empathetic. A person, provided that he or she has these general characteristics within his or her nature, can become an individual in its true sense. In this way, an individual can understand the things and other people around him because that individual is the unique one who has his own way of thinking and does not resemble any of the other individuals in the world. It is achieved, at first, through being true to oneself since the first stage, before grasping the external world, is to take an inner journey to discover and know the self. In other words, an authentic individual ought to discover his own thoughts and perspectives as to things, and he should not hesitate to share his opinions with other people. The individual accomplishes this in such a manner that he is comfortable projecting his ideas but for any expectation to persuade others he is right about the thing he shares, which definitely indicates that the individual is a self-conscious and self-confident one in the first place. That's why, this situation directs the individual to his own path and purpose in life. One's detecting his own beliefs and opinions is not undoubtedly an easy work now that the conclusion of this process can conflict with the accepted beliefs, standards, and understandings of the families, cultures, and societies where the person lives. At this point, just as Ralph Waldo Emerson asserts in his essay *Self-Reliance* "Whose would be a man must be a nonconformist. He...must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (Emerson, 2007, p. 2), being a nonconformist is the key to overwhelm the obstacles built by the majority of people in a society.

Nonconformity allows a person to "revolt" against the established comprehensions of the culture or society by genuinely depending on his own ideas and perspectives towards things and by truly sticking to his own way of thinking regardless of what other people say or think about his point of view. It does not mean that one should completely neglect other people and their thoughts and rights because "Patterns of behavior that reveal lack of regard for others' rights...ought not to be seen as manifestations of an individualist ethos" (Mack, 1999, p. 88). Otherwise, there would be no empathy to consider people's feelings and ideas, which seriously obstructs the one to become a true individual. Besides, authenticity or originality providing precise personal distinction from any other person is not only associated with one's thoughts and sayings but also his doings, that is, his actions. A true individual makes his own inner

compass to avoid the traditional ways other people have already accepted for their goals. For that reason, he seeks to take a metaphorical journey along his own unprecedented path of following his passions and purpose.

The path the individual chooses for himself is the one that is either never taken before or less taken. Robert Frost, in his poem of "The Road not Taken," accentuates (Lathem, 1969, p. 105):

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

As implied, these lines are to depict that the choice is in the hands of the individual, which ultimately creates the distinction from other roads. It must not be forgotten that the "less traveled" road stands for the pernicious alternatives, which means the road has been scarcely used and has almost never been answerable and predictable. Although the individual taking this road is alone and within despair in the face of dark and unknown powers, his own decision not to choose "more traveled" road is an irreversible fact of individual's posture, particularly and most probably causing his life and others' life to change. Accordingly, it is purely a new path that true individual manages to create on his own. This way can also be harsh and difficult to experience given that it is a road taken by individual's opinions and beliefs, which means that the end of the path cannot necessarily be a successful conclusion. However, authentic individuals are rarely afraid of losing or failure. Instead, they are aware of the fact that forging a new way brings the risk that their efforts, while chasing a belief or opinion, can be for nothing in the end, which proves their courage for both embracing the victory and the defeat in a sense. They even regard failure as instructive, instead of viewing it threatening, owing to its being a source of their learning and a fundamental experience from which they can internally improve.

As Henry David Thoreau's one of the important sayings highlights that "it is not what you look at that matters. It's what you see" (Thoreau, 2013, p. 87), a true individual should not look things but see through things since looking is a passive act that is a sole scanning of one's around without actively using the mind. Seeing, on the contrary, is related to awareness and consciousness including an observation and interpretation of the world by having empathy and curiosity. In this way, Thoreau underlines the subjective nature of perception, which means that each authentic individual sees things through their own inimitable lens based on their ideas and beliefs. Thus, there might be some differences among individuals because one sees things in one way whereas the other believes otherwise. Still, the important thing for a true individual is to pursue the unique path counting on his own understandings and values even if the failure



waits for him at the very end. Having succeeded to be honest as to the distinctions among people's opinions and to embrace the risk of losing, the authentic individual does not judge people around him, either. The prejudice is something to be dismissed from life for him due to his primary approach that every person is valuable.

In this respect, the individual, who does not pay attention to the race, gender, and physical appearance, never judges another person. Rather, he is the voice of honesty and supporter of equality, and therefore, he treats other people in accordance with an empathetic and respectable manner. It also means that this individual critically thinks by assessing all possible aspects of a circumstance before acting or reaching a deduction, and he strives to make sure that he reaches the best conclusions rather than counting on an incomplete way of thinking or what he hears from the other people. The authentic individual, for that reason, struggles to have a wider knowledge through reading a lot since he is aware of the fact that the more he reads, the better conclusions he gets. After gathering knowledge and broadening his information as a real individual, he becomes more comfortable with asserting the truth and avoids lying although the circumstances are difficult to handle. Consequently, Atticus Finch, once we take all of these indications into consideration, is a true individual and role model in its real sense within Lee's novel. He not only reflects his opinions in a comfortable and honest manner but also exhibits his defense of equality when the other people accuse somebody of rape with a false testimony. Accordingly, "...his job is to challenge minds and to display the truth" (Holland, 2016, p. 81) in such a way that he, according to his state of mind, consciously supports what the truth is though some others intentionally aim to make a moral person a victim.

### **Atticus Finch's Individually Posture**

Atticus Finch, as a genuine individual, plays a significant role in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel is based on a story in which a black person called Tom Robinson is wrongly accused of raping Mayella Ewell and found culprit after a trial conducted by the whites. While the Ewells are drunk, illiterate, and filthy, Tom's only "guilt" within the novel is to be an honest worker and decent individual; even so, he could not escape the unequal judgement resulting in his conviction and death because Mayella and her father Bob Ewell deliberately deliver false testimony in the court. Much as Tom is not the guilty person but the victim of a system that is created upon the white supremacy over the blacks, Atticus, who is a talented and respected lawyer in Maycomb community, reflects an authentic posture against the wrong judgements made on behalf of Tom. The main reason of his firm posture is that "Individual rights and the correlative obligations to respect those rights provide the fundamental,

interpersonally valid rules for an individualist social and political order” (Mack, 1999, p. 96). In this respect, Atticus does not consider Tom’s skin color while preferring to defend him; rather, he is aware of the fact that respecting and supporting an innocent person’s rights are for necessary order to live in peace. Nevertheless, Tom has been shown no respect by any other white person resulting in his eventual tragic end and thus broken social order.

Atticus’ being a white person is also important in this situation since it is really a difficult job to defend a black individual within a society where the blacks are neglected and oppressed due to just their skin color. Within this framework, once we think of the novel’s being set in a 1930s Southern small town in Alabama and its publication year of 1960, we can assert that both dates remark profound historical context. Initially, the Jim Crow era was an important period covering the late 1880s and the mid-1960s when state and local laws, primarily within Southern states of the United States, seriously promoted racial segregation in all public facilities and voting requirements that disenfranchised black population in general. This situation obviously implies that the white skin rapes the principles of democracy by using the practices of capitalism, which puts black people into the bottom level of the triangle. As stated by a black person, “we have no law of our own and no protection from the law of white America which, by its intention and by the very nature of the cultural values which determined it, is inimical to blackness” (Chrisman, 2013, p. 34). Even though laws needed to support every single individual without regarding any differences, a majority of white people hypocritically and deliberately oppressed black people. Therefore, the state “successfully” followed constant racial segregation by establishing divided schools for both whites and blacks. Black people were also not permitted into hotels and banks for white people, and the white and black residential areas were kept apart. Ironically, the expression “separate but equal” was used by Southern states to justify this discriminative policy. Indeed, the public facilities ensured to black people were noticeably worse than those provided to white people. Equality, therefore, is nothing more than a materialistic teaching; nevertheless, it is “sold” as a liberating creed to provide and even show off social justice. Accordingly, we must stay firm in our conviction that the suppression of blacks is due to equality. “The proposition of equality is true because it is useful” (Myers, 1955, as cited in Willhelm, 1983). Blacks are subordinated by the promise of equality that was employed as a racist strategy, as a fundament for class unity among whites during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and as a tactic to sink blacks in the “great” white ocean in the twentieth century. In this respect, black people, by having to be exposed to the “separate but equal” game, must obtain their spot in the social order below whites. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one can witness that the Jim Crow laws are displayed in the setting, and a representation of this is in

Jem and Scout's cluelessness as to black people's lives when they follow Calpurnia to the black people's church that is located within the secluded section of town meant solely for blacks. They are seen socially defective and disadvantaged to live in accordance with the general social expectations that are created by the white supremacy.

Additionally, The Great Depression was a time of severe economic depression that began in the United States at those times. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the narrator Scout specifies that everyone is impoverished but the farmers, when compared to others, are the poorest during the economic depression. To illustrate, The Cunningham family, who are farmers, are depicted to be so miserable that they could not even afford to pay for legal services or to feed themselves well. This portrayal is realistic now that farmers were harshly hit by the depression owing to crop prices' falling. Besides, some Southern white people had hypocrisy and multiple moral standards as for race or racism. The unemployment rates were so high during those years, and "Whites interpreted high black unemployment rates as evidence of indolence. The dramatic increase in youth unemployment was, in their view, a consequence of black behavioral and cultural deficiencies, not the result of massive economic restructuring" (Sugrue, 1997, p. 24). In the novel, we behold the character Miss Gates symbolizing a posture similar to this hypocritical face when she passionately condemns Hitler's anti-Semitic deeds of Hitler's dictatorship but also ambitiously defending inequity and differentiation against blacks in her society. Her belief simply depends upon the idea that it is their fault to have a black skin in culturally and politically constructed white community because blackness does mean laziness, which shows, from her point of view, that the law or economic restlessness cannot even get closer to mention racial injustice in the first place.

When we look at justice system in the 1950s, the justice system was equally prejudiced given that black individuals were excluded from jury service, and then, they were facing arrest, trials, and convictions with nominal justification. A premier case from 1955, as an example, involved two white men accused of killing Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African American boy who allegedly harassed a white woman. Similar to Tom Robinson's trial, the jury in Till's case was entirely white and male, and the trial actualized in a segregated courtroom. Like Tom's situation, despite the defense's illogical claims that the body cannot be positively spotted as Till, the jury took merely an hour to acquit them of all charges. That's why, "'Race' is not something simply given in nature. Rather, it is socially produced; it is an equilibrium outcome; it is something we are making; it is endogenous" (Loury, 2020, p. 194). It is the exact point where white skin color "really" matters when conflicting against the black one since the concept or term "race" is socially established, and a black person, even if a murder is on the table, cannot

possibly change anything. On the one hand, it is the constructed racial system that exploits the blacks, and on the other, that rewards the whites. In addition, the lynching practice was widespread in the South during the early 1930s. At that time, only some regions such as North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Alabama had certain laws particularly outlawing lynching; however, the laws were not always deterrent. The reader can see the exemplification of this circumstance within Lee's novel when the local sheriff strives to warn Atticus Finch of a possible lynch mob, which would have happened if Atticus had not been there for protecting Tom. In relation to this, the novel literally portrays the reality of racism in segregated southern towns. African Americans are frequently labelled as "niggers" and are considered as beneath the law although the law is not necessarily working. Many white community members seek to impose their own mold of justice upon blacks. For instance, having explained his sympathy for Mayella, Tom Robinson, a black man who "ventures" to feel sorry for a white woman, offends the town's ignorant and narrow-minded white people. Thus, a mob assembles at the jail to drag Tom from his cell and to lynch him so that they can apply their own justice understanding on a black individual.

Atticus Finch, in spite of all of those facts, decides to support Tom in the court although Scout, as the narrator of the story, stresses that "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" (Lee, 1960, p. 245). Thus, a racist discrimination appears in the field, and a white woman's words just work in the way that the black is eventually going to lose even though he is right or he has done nothing to deserve the wrong verdict. Besides, as we all know, "The "code" of his time and place required that a white woman's word always be accepted and that a black man was never to be trusted" (Lubet, 1999, p. 1360). Yet, Atticus' decisions and efforts are worth to describe how an authentic individual must act notwithstanding these circumstances and even "facts." In this sense, he is not only good at, as a lawyer, stating the truth in a self-confidential way without regarding incorrect accusations but also good at being a benign father teaching his children Scout and Jem about every aspect of life. However, there are some people arguing that Atticus is not a hero or role model and that he is not always following the requirements of the law. Even though their perspective is to be respected and can relatively and slightly be true, we believe that Atticus, once we consider the things, events, and his behaviors and sayings through a general point of view, can be truly accepted as an individual who actualizes whatever the situation requires in the first place. He sometimes can undoubtedly decide or speak in a wrong way as to some issues such as Scout's continuously going to school while another kid is not required to continue the school days because of the hierarchical position of the family. It is,

nonetheless, absolutely a part of being an authentic individual since mistakes are the ones contributing to true personality. Consequently, we can analyze Atticus Finch's individuality from his actions and sayings in the novel, which actually interconnects his manner towards his children with his love, honesty, and logic along with his defense of Tom Robinson in terms of the notions of justice, courage, and empathy.

When we look through the lens of authentic individuality considering Atticus Finch, there are many implications that indicate Atticus' bravery, rationality, empathy, and several other features while he is striving to educate his children as well as defending Tom Robinson as much as possible. He realizes in an empathetic way that people have not only good characteristics but also bad qualities, and he is determined to appreciate the good while comprehending and forgiving the bad. As he struggles to pass this moral lesson of feeling empathy towards other people on to his children, he firstly declares (Lee, 1960, p. 30):

if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.

In this way, Atticus, as a father, reflects his individual posture with his own unique ideas, which emphasizes the importance of having empathy to really understand people's opinions and feelings. This perspective also helps to protect an innocent person from being demolished by touch with the evil. Atticus, accordingly, manages to highlight how significant it is to support an innocent individual, who is blamed for something he did not commit. It is both about defending Tom by feeling empathy towards him and about a life lesson for the future lives of his children. That's why, Atticus advocates himself not only for teaching young children but also for preserving his consistency throughout the story. Indeed, this consistency is the true path causing us to regard him as an authentic individual because Atticus stays firmly committed to be a defender of justice and to see events from the point of view of other people. Therefore, he becomes the novel's voice of equality and truth along with being a moral pioneer, and he is ultimately volunteer to protect Tom Robinson. This decision engenders ugly descriptions pertaining to Atticus and his family and the risk undermining his reputation in Maycomb community. Nonetheless, the following conversation between Scout and Atticus, particularly his approach and ideas, presents how logical he is (Lee, 1960, p. 78):

Scout, simply by the nature of the work, every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess. You might hear some ugly talk about it at school, but do one thing for me if you will: you just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change... it's a good one, even if it does resist learning."

“Atticus, are we going to win it?”

“No, honey.”

“Then why—”

“Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win.”

He explicitly teaches Scout to ignore the ugly sayings coming from other people and to stand as an individual against those who verbally attack her now that Atticus experiences such verbal attacks such as being called “nigger-lover.” In addition, even if Atticus stresses he is not going to win the case to save Tom from the unjust judgement, he believes he has to struggle to win by supporting him in the trial, which projects his authentic individuality both as a father and as a lawyer. The reason behind this is that he knows it is his duty to stand for an innocent man oppressed by a false accusation, and therefore, he is an honest individual, who does not give a false hope both to himself and to his children. Having felt empathy towards Tom, Atticus not merely pursues the truth but also wants his children to understand why he decides to take the job in the first place.

Although Scout thinks her father is wrong according to the idea of other “folks,” it is actually the conscience or empathy directing Atticus to defend the black person just as he explains to Scout that “...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, 1960, p. 108). Thus, Atticus initially pays attention to his personality before regarding the others, and he is willing to teach this, in a lovely manner, to Scout as well. “When a person comes to think as an “individual,” he believes he should be the master, not the prisoner, of culture” (Mount, 1981, p. 368). Accordingly, one fundamental thing about Atticus’ behavior is that he does not judge or blame most people for their different way of thinking about him. Instead, he, as a master of controlling his perspective and established culture’s norms, respects those who imagine Atticus as wrong, which embodies his utmost empathetic manner as a true personality. In this sense, he not only exemplifies himself as a role model and authentic individual before his children, who feels empathy and respect towards other people, but also tries to show his children the significance of the courage, which is very harsh to have against numerous people that believe the direct opposite to Atticus’ belief. Otherwise, it would be almost impossible to keep himself away from other people’s standard and stable ideology and to create his own unique area. It is the exact point in which a real individual occurs in the field since Atticus becomes a nonconformist that cares for his own beliefs and opinions and that opposes against the established understanding of the community, which is that the whites always have a powerful hegemony over the blacks.

Moreover, he tries to educate Jem and Scout how to be an individual in its real sense by presenting himself as a role model before them. He shares his intelligence and emotions or intuition with them demonstrating the true way to trace because the unpopular way is the true road. As "...prudence is learned through observing and being in relationship with prudent person" (Osheim, 2011, p. 212), Atticus aims to be a leading figure in life. For example, his habit of reading newspaper to Scout and Jem every night after the dinner indicates his maintaining of a primary balance between spending time with them and employing an intellectual encouragement.

Additionally, even though he could not reject the assertions of unjust judgement and the inequalities within the white community, he has faith towards the goodness by not hiding the truth from his family as a parent. Rather, he utilizes his accumulated knowledge in order to educate his children how to be themselves, which eventually enables them to be guided through tough circumstances. Hence, just as he remarks in the novel while chatting with Jack "When a child asks you something, answer him, for goodness' sake. But don't make a production of it. Children are children, but they can spot an evasion quicker than adults, and evasion simply muddles 'em" (Lee, 1960, p. 90), Atticus is always enthusiastic to answer the questions asked by either Scout or Jem no matter how difficult or ridiculous the question is. To illustrate, Scout asks Atticus whether it is okay to abhor Hitler for his execution the Jews. He mildly responds to the question by suggesting that it is not okay to hate anybody (Lee, 1960, p. 250). More importantly, Scout's another question can be considered challenging but not for Atticus. She wonders what the rape is, which Atticus says that "...rape is a carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent" (Lee, 1960, p. 136). Even answering this kind of a question in an honest and confidential sense destroys the general comprehension that such questions do not need to be responded for a young child.

Someone else can avoid doing that since he or she would believe children could not bear it; however, Atticus is aware of Scout's maturity being sufficient to handle with it as well as the fact that it is the best thing to reflect an honest answer instead of deceiving her. In this way, Scout, thanks to him, realizes that rape is simply a bad thing. In addition to this acquisition, Atticus manages to prepare her for life in case she would confront such a condition in which the answer would be beneficial to remember what the rape means. Furthermore, Atticus' punishment for Jem is important now that it is not a punishment but a reward in the real sense. When Jem cannot handle with Mrs. Dubose's mocking words like "lawing for niggers" (Lee, 1960, p. 105), he goes and destroys the old woman's flowers. Atticus, considering Jem's wrong behavior, teaches Jem to be empathetic and patient with her simply because she is old and ill

due to her addiction to drugs. Accordingly, he makes Jem to read her every afternoon for two hours for a month, which illustrates an almost perfect example that Atticus is an authentic individual. Lastly, after Tom is convicted guilty, Jem asks how the jury can find him guilty, and Atticus, both as a father and as a lawyer, specifies “They’ve done it before and they did it tonight and they’ll do it again and when they do it—seems that only children weep” (Lee, 1960, p. 216). This intelligent reply actually reflects the fact itself because it suggests that the racist approach is something inherent and is a part of not only past and present but also future of the community, and therefore, it is explicit that “...the subordination of blacks was a great injustice imposed by white society, not a result of inherent inferiority of African Americans” (Schuman & Krysan, 1999, p. 853). As whites create such kind of an atmosphere of unevenness, blacks are always “available” for whites to be submerged whether they are innocent or not. Atticus’ reply also emphasizes that the ones who feel sad about this issue are just children like Jem but not the members of the jury or the white majority in the society, which makes children unbiased enough to distinguish the unjust conclusion of the verdict. In short, Atticus, as a true individual in his own unique path, facilitates his children to flourish their conscience, empathy, intelligence, and individuality as a whole by teaching them the ever-lasting social hypocrisies and concepts of convenience.

### ***Rightful support for Tom Robinson***

We can specifically focus on Atticus’ acts and thus individuality within the process of Tom’s conviction by showing his logicity, faith, bravery, and politeness. First, Atticus accentuates the significance of mockingbirds by saying “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens...they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee, 1960, p. 93), which is obviously a symbol representing Tom himself as he does not do anything wrong but just “sings” for people. However, the white superiority makes him a victim for something he did not even involve. Hence, the all-white jury and the Ewells achieve to murder an honest and good “mockingbird,” resulting in their committing sin. Atticus, as already mentioned, knows that Tom will be convicted in any circumstances because it “is a black man’s word against the Ewells’. The jury couldn’t possibly be expected to take Tom Robinson’s word against the Ewells” (Lee, 1960, p. 91). This is the precise reason why Tom is found guilty in spite of Atticus’ efforts and concrete evidence. Still, it is a significant act to assert this fact with the words as a true individual since it “...was a new self-assertion, a new independence of traditional structures and rejection of Authority...” (Lukes, 1971, p. 51). He, as a self-conscious



individual, succeeds in breaking and denying conventional understanding and authority figure by standing next to innocence before an entire white superiority. In addition, before the day of Tom's trial, he is sent to the local jail where a mob of lynching emerges; nevertheless, Atticus, since he is aware of this risk, prepares himself to physically defend Tom even if he puts his own life at risk. It is his genuine individuality providing him such courage owing to his commitment to his belief of truth and his support of justice no matter what happens. In this sense, Atticus, as a lawyer, strictly relies on the idea that each person deserves just treatment as an individual. For that reason, he, recognizing the fact that racism is an enormous trouble in Maycomb community, admits taking Tom's case, and then, Atticus accepts a heavy responsibility as the voice of justice and equality. He does not want to eliminate the last fair chance Tom can get, and therefore, Atticus, by becoming the representative of Tom but for holding any opinion as to his skin color, neglects the risks that his family along with himself can encounter. In addition, Atticus is successful to offer clear and true evidence in the courtroom. For instance, he firstly alleges that there is no medical examination of the accuser Mayella and that it only depends on the Ewells' witnessing (Lee, 1960, p. 207). In this regard, there is no tangible evidence that a rape including Tom even occurred. More significantly, "Mayella's blackened right eye, bruises, and other injuries were inconsistent with Tom's crippled left arm" (Lubet, 1999, p. 1346). All of this is sufficient to give a credence to Tom's innocence in the first place. Besides, Atticus, as a lawyer, is capable of reflecting the actual fact what is going on in the court by claiming that the judgement is based on "...—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..." (Lee, 1960, p. 208). It is very true that the blacks are treated in the way they are always regarded as liars and unethical human beings, and Atticus accomplishes to bravely display this truth in the court. Nonetheless, he does not forget to remind what the truth should be, either. He explains that some Negroes can lie, some of them can be immoral, and some others cannot be trusted for black or white women. "But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men" (Lee, 1960, p. 208), which definitely underlines a good point that the issue is not about a specific race of a person but about a human being in general.

These expressions made by Atticus are genius ones indicating how clever and honest individual he is. Moreover, his kindness towards Mayella, even though she is one of the accusers of Tom, projects Atticus' authentic individuality, too. He uses polite words like "Miss Ewell" and "ma'am" throughout the judgement process in the courtroom. In this way, Atticus seems to be kind even for a white woman who intentionally blame Tom for raping her within a wrong sense. Still, she never witnesses such courtesy before, and therefore, she ironically finds those words

insulting and humiliating. This is the time where a white jury, called Judge Taylor, supports Atticus' politeness by expressing that Atticus, as he naturally treats, is always kind to everyone and that he does not aim to ridicule Mayella (Lee, 1960, p. 184). Even a judge, thanks to the years that he has been working with him in the court, confirms Atticus' mild behavior and speaking style. Furthermore, Atticus' intelligence and ever-lasting defense of Tom within the rape case is well reasoned. He promotes the jury to consider things once more by providing the proof that Bob Ewell is left-handed and the girl is apparently a liar, which indeed indicates Tom's innocence because Tom cannot be able to use his left arm due to an incident experienced in his childhood. Much as Atticus presents clear and overwhelming evidence refuting false accusations made against Tom, the judgement's end is not the one he is looking for since the jury convicts Tom. After the trial, Jem cries for Tom whereas Atticus is "...standing under the street light looking as though nothing had happened: his vest was buttoned, his collar and tie were neatly in place..." (Lee, 1960, p. 215). This situation seems not to make Atticus sad. However, Atticus feels the sadness inside and tries to continue his own life as if Tom was not convicted at all, which proves how to be an authentic individual since he knows failure is not an end; rather, it is a tool to teach his children and Maycomb community about how easy it is to kill a mockingbird, especially when the bird has a black skin. As Atticus himself illustrates "In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life" (Lee, 1960, p. 224), it is like a trap from which no black man can even save himself, and it is actually the reality that needs to be fixed. After these events, Tom is murdered while he is trying to escape from prison now that there is no other choice resulting from wrong accusations and sentence. His effort actually symbolizes the fact that a black man can never escape from the white supremacy. Yet, as we concentrate on individuality, the important thing is that Atticus accomplishes to obtain the respect and gratitude of a few white people and almost all the blacks because of his bravery that he demonstrates for Tom.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, Atticus Finch can be regarded as the hero or role model of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Within this framework, Atticus proves his authentic or true individuality by highly protecting his inflexibility about both Tom Robinson and Scout and Jem. Even though he cannot achieve the “impossible” and save Tom Robinson from unjust conviction, he accomplishes to touch the significant values that matter in people’s lives, which means he overcomes such a difficult duty that he gives precious lessons in terms of honesty, justice, and moderation. For example, Atticus educates his children as to several fundamental life lessons such as abstaining from racial bias, being an empathetic and patient person, and defending equality. Besides, practicing courage is another important act for an individual as Atticus embodies this courage by intentionally risking his own life when he prefers to face the racist mob of lynching on behalf of Tom’s defense before the trial. The reason of his courage in such a racist society is his honesty and being the voice of justice no matter what happens. Accordingly, his brilliant philosophy highlighting the truth and his motto in life is that “white men cheat black men every day...whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash” (Lee, 1960, p. 224). Atticus, in this way, not only strives to teach his children about incorrect treatments and judgements but also struggles to exhibit what he believes in the face of enormous insults coming from Maycomb community. One can infer from these acts of Atticus that the more authentic individuals following their own path in order to protect and disseminate the actual morality the world has, the fewer social troubles there appear. His posture throughout the novel pictures the characteristics of a truly ethical lawyer and considerable human being as a parent, which makes him an admirable individual. Thus, Atticus’ one of the most important goals, while defending the innocent, is his belief and hope that his moral support will be instilled to human beings and will cause the disappearance of racial inequality, which is “...to move toward a world where no person’s worth is contingent upon racial inheritance” (Loury, 2020, p. 201). Tom Robinson will never see this kind of a world in which the skin color does not matter at all. However, just as Scout accentuates that her father “...was the bravest man who ever lived” (Lee, 1960, p. 104), Atticus’ teachings and exemplifications he provided for his children as well as his courageous acts against a whole town to defend Tom’s rights are priceless. For that reason, the hero opens a novel gate that enlightens the importance of being an authentic individual and that responds what difficulties can be confronted during the process. As a result, Atticus Finch apparently exemplifies or embodies what the actual meaning of authenticity and true individuality stands for regardless of those difficulties throughout the novel and the consequences in the end.

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