Compassion Vs. Insensitivity Essay, Research Paper

Compassion vs. Insensitivity

In the novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, Scout learns a valuable lesson about

compassion in dealing with the prejudices and insensitivities present in her southern town

of Maycomb. Although the majority of her hometown is prejudiced, Scout’s mind remains

non prejudice and caring of others. To her, all people are equal, so therefore, should be

treated equal. Scout is an individual and someone who will stand by her own perspectives

no matter how cruel other people can be. In her life, Scout learns to treat all people fairly

with dignity and respect.

One of the most important people in Scout’s life, is her father, Atticus. Atticus is a

lawyer who deals with a very tough case involving a black man and his rights. Although

Atticus is a single father, he manages to teach his children right from wrong. He makes it

a common practice to live his life as he would like his children to live theirs, and displays

the characteristics of an honest, respectable, and kind man. Atticus demonstrates his

feelings by showing the highest respect for everyone in Maycomb, regardless of their color

or class. His serious defense for Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white

woman, proves his high ideals. Throughout the trial, Atticus shows Jem and Scout that all

human beings, despite their race, deserve respect.

Throughout her life, Scout understands what it means to be courageous. In the

beginning of the novel, Scout faces terrible encounters with her neighbor, Mrs. Dubose.

Mrs. Dubose often shouts vicious comments and criticizes the children as they pass,

though they have tried in every way to treat her in the kindest manner. One day, however,

after Mrs. Dubose’s comments get out of hand, Jem cuts off the tops of her camellias in a

rage. Atticus finds out about it and orders him to apologize immediately. Unfortunately,

for Jem, his punishment is to read to Mrs. Dubose for an hour each day for a month.

Scout sticks to her brother’s side and makes the horrible trips with him. Shortly after the

end of Jem’s punishment, the children find out that Mrs. Dubose had passed away from

morphine addiction. Atticus explains to the children that Mrs. Dubose acted in such a

mean manner because she was going through such pain. As a result, Jem and Scout gain

an understanding for the type of person Mrs. Dubose was and her views of life.

When Scout and Jem meet Dill, their daily adventures become more exciting. After

hearing the horrible tales of Boo Radley from Jem, Dill creates games about Boo. The

children wonder about Boo and his strange way of life, but really have no idea of who he

is. At one point, the children trespass the Radley property in hopes of finding some clue

which will better explain Boo’s character. As the story progresses, Boo becomes more of a

symbol of kindness and bravery than that of a freak, which he is thought to be. He leaves

treasures for the children in the hollow trunk of a tree, and watches out for Jem and Scout

whenever possible. In the end, Scout realizes that Boo is not a monster at all, but simply a

person who is misunderstood by the people of Maycomb.

At the end of the story, both Jem and Scout have better perspectives on racism and

human dignity. They learn about prejudice, courage, and judging others. Though racism is

a controversial matter in their town, Jem and Scout manage to escape from other peoples’

ideas and secure their own. For example, throughout Tom Robinson’s trial, Jem and Scout

keep their beliefs about his innocence. They saw him for who he was, not for the color of

his skin. Later on, Scout also realizes that she was the same towards Boo Radley. When

she first meets him, she learns how unfair she had been to him, believing all the horrible

stories without actually knowing him.