

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (EXCERPTS)

Demonstration During State's Case

Atticus: Thank you. Now will you identify the man who beat you.

Mayella: I most certainly will. Sittin' right yonder.

Atticus: Tom, will you stand up, please? Let Miss Mayella have a good long look at you. Tom, will you catch this, please? Thank you. Now, then, this time, will you please catch it with your left hand.

Tom: I can't, sir.

Atticus: Why can't you?

Tom: I can't use my left hand at all. I got it caught in a cotton gin when I was 12 years old. All my muscles were tore loose.

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Cross Examination of Mayella Ewell

Atticus: Miss Mayella, is your father good to you? I mean, is he easy to get along with?

Mayella: Does tolerable. Except when he's drinking.

Atticus: When he's riled... has he ever beaten you?

Mayella: My pa's never touched a hair on my head in my life.

Atticus: You say that you asked Tom to come in and chop up a... What was it?

Mayella: A chifforobe.

Atticus: Was that the first time that you ever asked him to come inside the fence?

Mayella: Yes.

Atticus: Didn't you ever ask him to come inside the fence before?

Mayella: I might have.

Atticus: Can you remember any other occasion?

Mayella: No.

Atticus: You say, "He caught me, he choked me, and he took advantage of me." Is that right? Do you remember him beating you about the face?

Mayella: No. I don't...recollect if he hit me. I mean, y-yes! H-He hit me! - He hit me!

Atticus: Thank you. Now will you identify the man who beat you.

Mayella: I most certainly will. Sittin' right yonder.

Atticus: Tom, will you stand up, please? Let Miss Mayella have a good long look at you. Tom, will you catch this, please? Thank you. Now, then, this time, will you please catch it with your left hand.

Tom: I can't, sir.

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Tom: I can't use my left hand at all. I got it caught in a cotton gin when I was 12 years old. All my muscles were tore loose.

Atticus: Is this the man who raped you?

Mayella: It most certainly is.

Atticus: How?

Mayella: I don't know how. He done it. He just done it.

Atticus: You have testified...that he choked you and he beat you. You didn't say that he sneaked up behind you and knocked you out cold, but that you turned around...and there he was. Do you want to tell us what really happened?

Mayella: I got something to say...and then I ain't gonna say no more! He took advantage of me! And if you fine, fancy gentlemen...ain't gonna do nothing about it, then you're just a bunch of lousy, yellow, stinkin' cowards! The whole bunch of ya! And your fancy airs don't come to nothin'! Your "ma'am"-ing and your "Miss Mayella"-ing, it don't come to nothin', Mr. Finch! N-N...

Judge: You sit down now. Atticus. Mr. Gilmer.

Gilmer: The State rests, Judge.

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Direct Examination of Tom Robinson

Clerk: Tom Robinson, take the stand. Put your hand on the Bible. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Tom: I do. Sit down.

Atticus: Now, Tom... were you acquainted with Mayella Violet Ewell?

Tom: Yes, sir. I had to pass her place going to and from the field every day.

Atticus: Is there any other way to go?

Tom: No, sir. None's I know of.

Atticus: And did she ever speak to you?

Tom: Why, yes, sir. I'd tip my hat when I'd go by. One day she asked me to come inside the fence...and bust up a chifforobe for her. She give me the hatchet, and I broke it up. And then she said, "I reckon I'll have to give you a nickel, won't I?" And I said, "No, ma'am. There ain't no charge." And I went home. Mr. Finch, that was way last spring. Way over a year ago.

Atticus: Did you ever go on the place again?

Tom: Yes, sir.

Atticus: When?

Tom: Well, I went lots of times. Seemed like every time I passed by yonder, she would have some little something for me to do: chopping kindlin' and totin' water for her.

Atticus: Tom... what happened to you... on the evening of August 21 of last year?

Tom: Mr. Finch, I was going home as usual that evening. When I passed the Ewell place, Miss Mayella were on the porch, like she said she were. She said for me to come there and help her a minute. Well, I went inside the fence, and I looked around for some kindlin' to work on, but I didn't see none. Then she said to come in the house, she has a door needs fixin'. So I follows her inside, and I looked at the door... and it looked all right. Then she shut the door. All the time I was wondering why it was so quiet. Then it come to me. There was not a child on the place. And I said, "Miss Mayella, where are the children?" She said, "They all gone to get ice cream." She said it took her a

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year to save seven nickels, but she'd done it. And they'd all gone to town.

Atticus: What did you say then?

Tom: Well, I said something like..."Why, Miss Mayella, that's right nice of you to treat 'em." She said, "You think so?" Well, I said, "I best be goin'." I couldn't do nothin' for her. And she said I could. I asked her what. And she said to just step on the chair yonder... and get that box down from on top of the chifforobe. So I done like she told me, and I was reachin'... when the next thing I knows, she grabbed me around the legs. She scared me so bad, I hopped down and turned the chair over. That was the only thing... only furniture... disturbed in the room, Mr. Finch, I swear, when I left it.

Atticus: And what happened after you turned the chair over? Tom? You've sworn to tell the whole truth. Will you do it? What happened after that?

Tom: Mr. Finch, I got down off the chair, and I turned around... and she sorta jumped on me. She hugged me around the waist. She reached up and kissed me on the face. She said she'd never kissed a grown man before... and she might as well kiss me. She says for me to kiss her back, and I said, "Miss Mayella, let me outta here," and I tried to run. Mr. Ewell cussed at her from the window. He said he's gonna kill her.

Atticus: And what happened after that?

Tom: I was runnin' so fast, I don't know what happened.

Atticus: Tom, did you rape Mayella Ewell?

Tom: I did not, sir.

Atticus: Did you harm her in any way?

Tom: I did not, sir.

Cross Examination of Tom Robinson

Gilmer: Robinson, you're pretty good at bustin' up chifforobes and kindlin' with one hand, aren't ya? Strong enough to choke the breath out of a woman and sling her to the floor?

Tom: I never done that, sir.

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Gilmer: But you're strong enough to.

Tom: I reckon so, sir.

Gilmer: Mm-hmm. How come you so all fired anxious to do that woman's chores?

Tom: Looks like she, she didn't have nobody to help her. Like I said, she...

Gilmer: With Mr. Ewell and seven children on the place? You did all this choppin' and work out of sheer goodness, boy? You're a mighty good fella, it seems. Did all that for not one penny?

Tom: Yes, sir. I felt right sorry for her. She seemed...

Gilmer: You felt sorry for her? A white woman? You felt sorry for her?

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Closing Argument for Defense

Atticus: To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. The State has not produced one iota... of medical evidence... that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with... ever took place. It has relied, instead, upon the testimony of two witnesses... whose evidence has not only been called into serious question... on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant.

There is circumstantial evidence to indicate that... Mayella Ewell was beaten savagely... by someone who led, almost exclusively, with his left. Tom Robinson now sits before you having taken the oath... with the only good hand he possesses, his right.

I have nothing but pity in my heart... for the chief witness for the State. She is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance. But my pity... does not extend so far... as to her putting a man's life at stake, which she has done in an effort to get rid of her own guilt.

Now I say "guilt," gentlemen, because it was guilt that motivated her. She's committed no crime. She has merely broken a rigid and time-honored... code of our society... a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst... as unfit to live with. She must destroy the evidence... of her offense. But what was the evidence of her offense? Tom Robinson, a human being. She must put Tom Robinson away from her. Tom Robinson was to her a daily reminder... of what she did.

Now, what did she do? She tempted a Negro. She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that, in our society, is unspeakable. She kissed a black man. Not an old uncle, but a strong, young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards.

The witnesses for the State, with the exception of the sheriff of Maycomb County, have presented themselves to you gentlemen, to this court... in the cynical confidence... that their testimony would not be doubted. Confident that you gentlemen would go along with them... on the assumption... the evil assumption... that all Negroes lie, all Negroes are basically immoral beings, all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women. An assumption that one associates with minds of their caliber, and which is, in itself, gentlemen, a lie, which I do not need to point out to you.

And so, a quiet, humble, respectable Negro, who has had the unmitigated temerity... to feel sorry for a white woman, has had to put his word against

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two white people's. The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is.

Now, gentlemen, in this country, our courts are the great levelers. In our courts, all men are created equal. I'm no idealist to believe firmly... in the integrity of our courts and of our jury system. That's no ideal to me. That is a living, working reality!

Now I am confident that you gentlemen will review... without passion... the evidence that you have heard, come to a decision... and restore this man to his family. In the name of God, do your duty. In the name of God, believe...
Tom Robinson.