To Kill A Mockingbird: The Influences Parents Have On Thier Children Essay, Research Paper

Throughout our lives we’re influenced by many. It can have an effect on the way we view issues within societal boundaries. One of the major influences children have in their lives comes from their parents. The parents of a child can have both a positive and a negative influence on their lives. In the novel “To Kill A Mockingbird”, there are two excellent examples of how parents can be a major influence on their children. Atticus Finch, father of Jem and Scout Finch, plays the loving, kind and knowledgeable father. He is an example of how parents can have a positive influence on their children. Bob Ewell, father of Mayella Ewell, plays the drunken, abusive, and neglectful father. He is an example of how a parent can be a negative influence on their children’s lives. Both fathers are very influential on the psychological development of their children.

Parents can influence how their children behave, feel, and act towards the outside world. If a child is brought up with hatred and anger, they can learn to view the world in a very negative way, by being critical and prejudice towards other people. However if a child is brought up with caring and nourishment, they can learn to see the world from all different angles. Atticus Finch raises his children with love and care, and teaches them to consider all angles of a situation before you judge someone; “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” (Lee, pg. 34). Using this belief Atticus is trying to educate Jem and Scout on principles of moral judgment. Bob Ewell however, neglects his children and fails to provide his children with much needed love and care. He indirectly teaches his children to hate and be critical towards people of colour. In chapter 17, Bob Ewell is cross-examined in the courtroom, and is asked several questions. When he is asked if he is the father of Mayella Ewell, he replies, “Well, if I ain’t I can’t do nothing about it now, her ma’s dead” (Lee, pg.174). This is one example of how Bob Ewell does not display emotion towards his children and their well-being.

Many important characteristics of one’s personality can be passed down to their children. A child can learn to be courageous from examples that are set by the people that surround them. True courage is taught to Jem after Mrs. Dubose dies. Atticus reveals to Jem that he was using her as an example to teach him about true courage; “Mrs. Dubose won, all ninty five pounds of her. According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody”… “I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It’s when you know that you’re licked before you begin, and you begin anyway” (Lee, pg.116). In saying this, Atticus teaches Jem that true courage is when you know that your chances of accomplishing somthing are very slim, but you try anyway. Atticus sets examples himself when he defends Tom Robinson even though he knows that he will not win. The children of Bob Ewell however are scared of him, and have no sense of what true courage is. In chapter 18 Mayella is called to the stand to testify. She is asked a series of questions, but fails to be courageous enough to tell the truth and stand up to her controlling father; “My paw’s never touched a hair o’ my head in my life”… “He never touched me” (Lee, pg. 186). This statement is clearly not true, but she feel’s somewhat forced to lie because she is intimidated by her father. Since Bob Ewell abuses his children and possbly molests them, he has a hold on them and is able to controll their minds.

Parents should provide for their children by giving them a sense of stability. Not only should they provide them with love, and care, but they should also provide them with the bare essencials in life. Atticus succeds in doing this by providing his family with food, clothing, and shelter. Their household is an example of the the security children need in thier up-bringing. Bob Ewell however does not provide his children with any kind of stability, but rather provides only for himself and his drinking habits. Thier household is described as being a dump. Nobody really knew how many Ewell children there were, “Some people said six, others said nine; there were always several dirty-faced ones at the windows when anyone passed by” (Lee, pg.172). The Ewell family is described to be low lives and the poorest family in Maycomb.

Parents have the most important task in a childs life by helping them correctly develop their mentality. Not only should they teach them good moral values, but they should also provide them with examples of courageousness, and how to support a family. Every one of these aspects of parenthood are extramly important and can reflect on the entire life of a person. They will most importantly determine the examples and influences that will be passed down from generation to generation.

BiblographyTo Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee, Warner Books 1960.