

## To Kill a Mockingbird - Atticus Finch's closing argument

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOocTXKPVVU>

### I. Watch the video and complete the gaps in the text



To begin with, this case should never have come to <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. 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 <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. Now there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that Mayella Ewell was <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ savagely by someone who led, almost exclusively, with his left. And Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken "The Oath" with the only good hand he <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ – his right.

I have nothing but pity in my heart for the Chief Witness for the State. She is the <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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 <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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-honoured code of our society, a <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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 <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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 <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_: 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 <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_.



The witnesses for the State, with the exception of the sheriff of Lincoln County, have <sup>11</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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 <sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ assumption, that all negroes lie; all negroes are

basically <sup>13</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ beings; all negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption that one associates with minds of their calibre, and which is in itself, gentlemen, a lie – which I do not need to <sup>14</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to you.

And so, a quiet, <sup>15</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, respectable Negro, who has had the unmitigated TEMERITY to feel sorry for a white woman, has had to put his word against two white peoples. The defendant is not guilty. But somebody in this <sup>16</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ is.

Now, gentlemen, in this country our courts are the great levellers. In our courts, all men are created <sup>17</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. I'm no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and of our <sup>18</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 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 <sup>19</sup> \_\_\_\_\_.

In the name of God, do your <sup>20</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. In the name of God, believe Tom Robinson.

II. **Watch the video again and answer the following questions.**

1. What allegations does Atticus Finch give against bringing this case to court?
2. What is the crime Tom Robinson is accused of?
3. Why does Atticus say that Tom Robinson couldn't commit that crime?
4. Why does Atticus feel a certain degree of pity for Mayella Ewell?
5. What "rigid, time-honoured code" had Mayella Ewell?
6. With the exception of the Sheriff of Maycomb, what criticism does Atticus make about the witnesses for the State?
7. Describe how Atticus evokes empathy for Tom Robinson?
8. What was the temerity that Tom Robinson had?
9. Why do you think that Atticus refers to courts as "the great levellers"?

III. **Taking into account the Atticus's speech do you believe that Tom Robinson is guilty or innocent? Explain your answer.**