

Scout and Atticus

Last week we began watching "To Kill a Mockingbird." The movie is narrated by a little girl called "Scout." "Scout" is a nickname, not the girl's real name. I think it's an unusual nickname. I've never met a little girl in the U.S. who was called "Scout." The word "scout" means "to look for something." So, perhaps Scout's father decided to call her "Scout" because she was always looking around for things.

Scout calls her father "Atticus." This is also unusual because "Atticus" is her father's first name and most American children don't call their parents by their first names. Dill, the little boy that Scout and her brother Jem meet early in the movie, wants to know why Scout calls her father "Atticus" because it's so unusual:

Dill: Why do you call you daddy Atticus?

Scout: 'Cause Jem does.

Dill: Why does he?

Scout: I don't know. He just started to ever since he began talking.

On the other hand, I have heard of other children calling their parents by their first names. As a matter of fact, my sister's children called her "Marti," which is her first name. Still, most American children call their parents something like "Mom" or "Dad."