



Following Atticus

Tom Ryan

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Following Atticus is the remarkable true story of a man and a dog embarking on the challenge of a lifetime. This is author Tom Ryan's inspiring tale of how he and his miniature schnauzer companion, the "Little Buddha" Atticus M. Finch, attempted to scale all forty-eight of New Hampshire's four thousand foot White Mountains twice in the dead of winter. It is a story of love, loss, and the resilience of the human and animal spirit that's as thrilling as *Into Thin Air* and featuring the most endearing and unforgettable canine protagonist since *Marley and Me*.

Following Atticus Details

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From Reader Review Following Atticus for online ebook

Mike says

I wanted to read something lighter and chose this book because of the high rating and good reviews on Goodreads. Have to say this book is not for me.

Part autobiography (Tom) and part biography (Atticus the dog) the book tells the story of the author who gets hooked on hiking and hooked on having a dog, then forces the dog to go on what he himself admits are dangerous winter hikes. There is another reviewer on here who said this book would have made a good magazine article – and I agree with that. Story was long and repetitive.

Here's the spoiler part of why I stopped enjoying this story. I got tired of reading about views from mountains that "changed everything for me". I "took a look and knew my life was changed forever". Really?

It was OK to hike because you enjoyed the time alone with your dog. But when his good friend dies (whose funeral you didn't go to because they didn't want you to speak at the ceremony) and (I think out of guilt) you decide to hike mountains in winter to raise money for a charity in her honor – that is kind of OK, but then to set a random challenging goal – and stop working to do it over the winter – seemed a little self indulgent and odd to me. Then to force a miniature schnauzer to do this, too? There were a few occasions the dog refused to go on the hikes – I think he was telling you something. I mean, really – did the dog have the option to opt out? The author keeps pointing out how dangerous the weather was, and how he kept checking for pending storms, etc. and complaining whenever it did snow and they couldn't hike. I think he added how conscientious he was so that people like me wouldn't say – what the heck were you thinking? My response – get a job, and if you can hike on weekends or days off – then go hike. The world isn't going to end because you don't successfully climb 49 mountains in the 40 days of winter, or whatever it was. Make some money, and donate it to the charity yourself.

I eventually felt like I was watching one of those TV shows where the overweight moms force their young daughters to enter beauty pageants. The dog was getting all this recognition, and the owner was preparing to write a book and a blog about the dog getting all this attention.

Cara says

The author's strong MA accent may have hindered my enjoyment of the book, but for whatever reason, I thought the book would never end. It's a nice little story, I suppose, but it's inflated to the point of self-indulgence, melodrama and sentimentality. I'm happy to move on.

That said, I did appreciate the quote he used from some excellent writers (Campbell, Wordsworth, other romantic poets.) The guy is clearly well-read, which always earns some respect from me.

Cheryl says

Tom Ryan is owner, writer, and editor of his own newspaper. Mr. Ryan's paper is called "Undertoad". Mr. Ryan was not really in the market for a dog when he became the new owner of a dog. A member of the city's zoning board had sent a mass email reaching out to everyone to see who could take a dog. Tom was going to just write back to he would be happy to advertise in his newspaper about the dog but the next thing Tom knows, he is responding that he will take the dog. Tom did not have Maxwell for very long before he passed away from seizures. It was at this time that Tom realized that he liked having a dog and the company that a dog brought. This is where Atticus Maxwell Finch enters Tom's life. You would not know it at first glance that such a small dog like Atticus would have such a big heart and determination but he does.

Tom and Atticus quickly formed a bond. Tom invited his brothers out to visit him. They had been estranged. That changed and the brothers were visiting each other. One of Tom's brother's David invited them to join him to hike all of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. There are forty eight of the mountains and they are over four thousand feet high. If you can accomplish such a great feat than you will be eligible to become a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Four Thousand Footer Club. Where you will receive a patch and a scroll. Tom and Atticus took on this task and soon they were hiking every mountain. It was during these times that Tom and Atticus really grew close and became good companions.

Reading this book reminded me of another great book about a man and the bond he shared with his dog, whom was a standard size black poodle named Charley. Yep, you guessed it. The book I am talking about is John Steinbeck's Travels with Charley. Only in this book, Charley is a mini schnauzer named Atticus Maxwell Finch. Atticus is the star of this book. He won me over when he and Tom were testing each other with the great cage and bath room incident. I knew then that Atticus was smart. To be honest at first I would not picture author, Tom Ryan with such a small dog but as I got to know both Tom and Atticus better, I realized that they were meant to be together and made a perfect fit. The best choice I made was Following Atticus!

Beth Maddaus says

"It's like looking into the face of God" is Tom's response as to what he sees when he and his little dog Atticus climb the rugged peaks of New Hampshire's 4000 footers. For Tom, and for his readers, the climb is more than an exciting adventure filled with difficult terrain, wildlife, and fearsome weather; the climb is about discovering who we were meant to be and how to find and nurture the inner self that leads us there.

I met Tom and Atticus on a trail one cool September morning in 2006. I had begun hiking the summer before as a way to heal my own wounds and to confront my own demons. The mountains had given me peace and self confidence and in Tom and Atticus I found fellows on the same journey. Through the years I followed Tom's mountain writing and it felt like windows into my soul. He saw the mountains--not as athletic pursuits or challenges to conquer but as stately, stalwart places where he could return over and over again in every possible condition and always feel as if he was looking into the face of God. I understood that, because I did the same.

This book is about love, healing, growth and home. If you have ever loved or been loved or wish that you had been loved differently; if you are ready to confront sadness, fear and disappointment; if you wonder what makes a home--then let Tom and Atticus show you.

Louis says

Before reading 'Following Atticus' I would suggest watching the video trailer for it. I was lucky enough to be at a recent book signing event on their tour and Tom has a wonderful soft spoken articulate tone that is nice to hear over the narrative of the book as you read.

I am a dog lover, my dogs are my best friends. I hike some of the White mountains with my dogs. This however, believe it or not, has nothing to do for how much I enjoyed Following Atticus. OK, maybe the dog part had an influence. Although I am quite exhausted of all the 'Marley & Me' blah and didn't even enjoy that read.

I recently read a review where it mentioned the words 'a quiet triumph' upon Tom & Atticus climbing Mt. Washington. That is a key point to the book. Tom writes with a wonderful restraint. Never does the book embellish their achievements nor gives the impression that he is trying to say 'Look how great we are'. He did not set out to write the next Hollywood screenplay. He simply wanted to tell a story and a great story it is.

I constantly ask myself while reading this "How do Tom and Atticus do this?". The answer is ... They just do.

What makes the book so compelling is that although Atticus is a catalyst for almost everything Tom is and has become in the past decade, the book is not solely about Atticus. It is about so much more. It is about a man not happy who he is, about who he becomes, about his relationships, about his town, about nature, about his past, about working through things, about friends both human and animals.

Janice Nelson says

Received my book and could not put it down. So well written and moving, so honest without any nonsense that weighs it down. A book that goes beyond all other dog books and is a guide for life. Very well written, quite readable and soon to be a bestseller.

We have a home in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Tom's beautiful descriptions make me feel like I am there, even though I am stuck here in our boring Boston suburb instead. Cannot wait to get back to the mountains this weekend. He inspires me to get my out-of-shape 50-something body back on the move in the most beautiful place in New England that I, sadly, often neglect.

The book is a page turner from beginning to end. A great book about hiking, a special dog, a change of direction in life, the breathtaking beauty of the mountains, an act of charity and a moving perspective on family relationships. Something for everyone to take hold of. Read it soon.

Kathleen (Kat) Smith says

Middle-aged, and overweight, Tom Ryan and miniature schnauzer Atticus M. Finch are an unlikely pair of mountaineers, but after a close friend dies of cancer, the two pay tribute to her by attempting to climb all forty-eight of New Hampshire's four-thousand-foot peaks twice in one winter while raising money for charity.

In a rare test of endurance, Tom and Atticus set out on an adventure of a lifetime that takes them across hundreds of miles and deep into an enchanting but dangerous winter wonderland. Little did they know that their most difficult test would lie ahead, after they returned home...

At the heart of this remarkable journey is an extraordinary relationship that blurs the line between man and dog, an indelible bond that began when Tom, following the advice of Atticus' breeder, carried the pup wherever he went for the first month of their life together.

In his debut novel, *Following Atticus*, by Tom Ryan, is ultimately a story of transformation: how a five-pound puppy pierced the heart of a tough-as-nails newspaperman, opening his eyes to the world's beauty and its possibilities. It was a change that led to a new life among the mountains; an unforgettable saga of adventure, friendship, and the unlikely of family; and an inspiring tale of finding love and discovering your true self.

I received this novel compliments of Harper Collins Publishers for my honest review and for anyone who has a deep admiration for pets and the remarkable chemistry that comes out when you are with your pet, you will find nothing but pure, unconditional love between Tom and Atticus. This just goes to show us all that nothing is impossible, it just needs to be attempted. He shows us all the unique ability of communication we have with the pets we love goes well beyond words we can understand, they have to be felt! I would rate this book a 5 out of 5 stars.

Linda Martin says

I don't usually read animal books and have no idea why this book got my attention---but I surely am glad it did. I don't have a dog and haven't wanted one, even though my friends say I need one for company. I always say, "No, I would rather not have anything to be responsible for." My time away from work is my own. Well, Tom Ryan you have almost changed my mind. Tom Ryan took a chance on getting a dog and it changed his outlook. Then Tom went on a journey "Following Atticus" and it changed his whole life. This very amazing journey made me laugh and cry; sometimes at the same time. What is the book about? I'd say it is about friendship, love and making memories. If you are a dog-lover, hiker, mountain climber, adventurer...or none of the mentioned...you are bound to love this book. Atticus changed Tom's life and his story may have changed mine. We'll see if I get a dog. It'll be the fault of Tom Ryan and Atticus if I do. I don't think it would be a mistake after reading this book.

Diane says

This was an ok read for me; I did love Atticus and Max (his predecessor) and I wanted to love Tom...but didn't. I guess he was likeable enough...

I enjoyed reading about the White Mountains in New Hampshire and I was reminded of my childhood. I also think Tom was very noble to make his climbs as fund raising efforts for cancer victims and survivors; and I was very touched how everyone was remembered (including Max) whenever he reached a peak. The relationship between Tom and his Dad was extremely strained for Tom's entire life, but I was very happy that Tom never gave up on his dad.

Being a pet owner and on a first name basis with a number of vets (not necessarily a good thing, as it must mean my critters are there often!) I have to say I was very annoyed by some special treatment that Tom expected (and got) when Atticus needed veterinary care. And while some may disagree with me, I don't believe in having a dog off-leash ever (view spoiler)

All in all, not sorry I read it. I do plan to see if Tom has kept up his blog and if so, I will follow and enjoy it. Perhaps that would have been enough for this story, rather than a full-on book.

Karen says

Fortunate to have an ARC copy. Loving it so far! Great appeal here - not just for hikers. Animal lovers, those interested in family relationships, the small town newspaper business, and the ability and courage to make life style changes. Should appeal to fellow middle agers out there that anything is possible if you persevere and follow your dreams!

Finished the book in october. A fantastic read for people of all ages, both male and female! A privilege to have Tom and Atticus at our library! A jam packed room.

Maria says

This book was on the reader's choice table at the library, so I picked it up. It's about the author and his little dog and how the dog impacted his life and how he came to get the dog. It's a pretty good story. At first, it's about how he got the dog and how they became a part of each other's lives and how Atticus taught him a lot about himself. He's the editor/reporter of his own newspaper in a small city. Then he gets into hiking the mountains of New Hampshire, setting records in hiking all of the peaks over 4,000 feet in a certain amount of time, and Atticus loves the hikes. I guess I need to go to New Hampshire, because there is no WAY you could climb 3 or 4 mountains HERE in one day, which he does. So I have no frame of reference to understand what it was like. Atticus develops health problems and the whole town and hiking community rallies together to help pay for his medical expenses. It's a pretty good story, but not compelling. The first 2/3 is good, and there are pictures. But the last part of the book was just more of the same, so I skimmed over it. More climbing, more snow, more walking, more blah blah blah, throw in an injury and dad dying, the end. I just got bored of the endless hiking up and down the same mountains over and over again with the The Most Remarkable and Wonderful Dog to Ever Walk the Face of the Earth. And if he's doing all this hiking and neglecting his newspaper (he's the only "employee"), how is he doing this with no income, I'd like to know? So I'm giving it three stars for being an okay story, but taking off points for dragging out the details.

James Field says

Have you ever wondered why some people drop out of conventional society and flee to a life of isolation in the wilderness? In this novel, Tom Ryan explains with fascinating detail how and why it happened to him. It

wasn't a sudden decision, but a gradual process inspired by his remarkable and tough little dog Atticus. Together, they headed for solitude in the mountains of New Hampshire, and the mountains seduced them in a way that changed their lives forever.

Tom Ryan was a newspaper editor which is evident at times in his writing, something I found mildly tedious.

Biographical books of spiritual rediscovery are not my usual style, but this book was presented to me for my birthday, otherwise I would never have chosen to buy and read it. Now, I am thankful to Tom Ryan for sharing his experience and thankful to my sister for bringing it to my attention.

This is an exceptionally inspirational novel which found a place in my heart and left me feeling warm and snug. I recommend this book to all those who struggle with a nagging inner voice that questions what is missing in their lives.

Bryan Flagg says

First off, I must say I was one of the very lucky people to receive an advanced copy of this book. Tom Ryan has one of those gifts not given to all writers. He has that gift of being able to play with your emotions within a short span of time. He'll have you concerned, crying, excited, tense, crying again, yet smiling, and all before the chapter's end. Tom has allowed us in to a world of what some might think make believe, but in the White Mountains of NH, there is no make believe - it's all true! It's dangerous, it's fascinating and to the right people, it's a very magical place. Notice I say "right people." There are many who come to conquer, but few who honestly find its true magic. Well, Tom found his magic in the Whites of NH, yet did it by following his little dog named Atticus.

Whether it's the mountains you enjoy, the hiking, the torment of sore feet, the enjoyment of the outdoors, the thought of following a little dog up some pretty big mountains against some substantial obstacles along the way, or just plain want to take an amazing journey with an incredible person named Tom and one incredible little dog named Atticus, this book is simply a must read.

Be ready for a fun filled roller coaster ride of emotions that will have you finding it difficult to put this book down until you are completely finished. Enjoy this one. It's a keeper for certain. Following Atticus: Forty-Eight High Peaks, One Little Dog, and an Extraordinary Friendship

Cathrine ?? says

5★

I have not written reviews of books I read prior to joining GR. In this case I wish to make an exception, although it's more of a homage.

My husband and I read this one out loud together over morning coffee. It is still one of the best human-reinventing-his-life-with-his-dog books I have ever read. I continued to follow Tom and Atticus' adventures through their blog and Facebook page. Anyone who loves dogs (especially miniature schnauzers), hiking, or heartwarming, life affirming adventures would love this story.

Not long ago just prior to setting out on another trip, Atticus, the dog, fell seriously ill with a stroke. While seeing to his care, Tom, the human, was unexpectedly hospitalized with a heart attack and complete loss of kidney function. Recently his kidneys, again unexpectedly, returned to full function and he was released and reunited with his beloved companion. A few days ago a picture of the two of them taking a gentle walk in the woods was posted.

Today it was announced that Tom held Atticus for the last time this evening as his vet put an end to the suffering. Apparently he had a brain tumor. The doctor said it was clear he waited for Tom to return home so they could share one more week together and say goodbye.

If I live long enough, I will have to go through this scenario myself at least three more times. Like Atticus, my dogs have had the best life possible. The problem is, it's just not long enough.

Thank you Tom for sharing your love and adventures with us. I wish you physical and emotional healing.

“If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went.” Will Rogers

?Karen says

How can one help but love this 20 pound furbaby? This powerhouse known as Atticus M. Finch (love that), Little Buddha, or Little Giant in and around his home town of Newburyport, MA, led his best friend Tom Ryan hiking the White Mountains of New Hampshire, making history one winter summiting over 48 peaks in honor of a friend who had died of cancer. As Atticus and Tom reached each peak, they would pause at the summit and bond while gazing out at the beauty of the landscape. They grew famous and beloved through news of their treks, by the amazement at a small dog's ability to accomplish such feats and overcome adversities. Through the power of their friendship, light prevailed over darkness when tragedy struck.

I first learned of this dynamic duo watching an Animal Planet special several years back. Then I read a heartbreaking review of the book following Atticus' passing last year. The audio book is narrated by Tom Ryan--New England accent and all. (Who knew that Newburyport was pronounced New Breport?) Atticus M. Finch changed Tom Ryan's life and that of all who knew him and who continue to learn of him. I loved how Tom trained him from a pup not with punishments or rewards, but with the respect deserving a Please and Thank you for each favor granted. Atticus taught Tom how to love and how to live, about kindness, and how to dream. Tom gave Atti selfless adoration and a good life mingled with beautiful nature.

I checked out Tom's blog and learned that he is still writing (great news!) and has a new companion, Samwise, with whom he already hikes as he did with Atticus. Last month atop a summit they watched Mars, the moon, and Venus align. From Tom's blog:

"As Emerson would say in his Transcendental way..., Samwise and I were with our peers out in that snowy field, with stars so brilliant, so bewildering, and humbling, I couldn't help but feel I was part of all we saw. And that little line that divides man and beast vanished and what we shared was the sacrament of communion.

Nature has a way of bringing us home..."

Two more books are forthcoming!
