

# To Kill a Mockingbird

by Harper Lee



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# Introduction

When *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published in 1960, it brought its young first-time author, Harper Lee, a startling amount of attention and notoriety. The novel replays three key years in the life of Scout Finch, the young daughter of an Alabama town's principled lawyer. The work was an instant sensation, becoming a best-seller and winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Scout's narrative relates how she and her elder brother Jem learn about fighting prejudice and upholding human dignity through the example of their father. Atticus Finch has taken on the legal defense of a black man who has been falsely charged with raping a white woman.

Lee's story of the events surrounding the trial has been admired for its portrayal of Southern life during the 1930s, not only for its piercing examination of the causes and effects of racism, but because it created a model of tolerance and courage in the character of Atticus Finch. Some early reviewers found Scout's narration unconvincing, its style and language too sophisticated for a young girl. Since then, however, critics have hailed Lee's rendering of a child's perspective—as told by an experienced adult—as one of the most technically proficient in modern fiction. A regional novel dealing with universal themes of tolerance, courage, compassion, and justice, *To Kill a Mockingbird* combined popular appeal with literary excellence to ensure itself an enduring place in modern American literature.

# Overview

## Background

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in Maycomb, a small Southern town in Alabama in the 1930s. The reader is not told the date until more than halfway through the book, but the references to the NRA, Hitler, and the quote “we have nothing to fear but fear itself” set the time in the reader’s mind. The racially divided town and the strict class system help the reader to visualize life in the South during this time period.

## List of Characters

Atticus Finch—A Southern lawyer and the father of Scout and Jem.

Scout Finch (also known as Jean Louise)—Atticus’ daughter. She is six years old when the story begins.

Jem Finch (also known as Jeremy Atticus)—Atticus’ son, who is ready for fifth grade when the story begins.

Charles Baker Harris (Dill)—A six-year-old who visits his Aunt Rachel Haverford in Maycomb.

Calpurnia and Zeebo—The cook for the Finch family and her son, who also drives a garbage truck.

Aunt Alexandra Hancock—Atticus’ sister, who is married to Jimmy Hancock. She has one son named Henry and a seven-year-old grandson named Francis.

Mr. and Mrs. Radley—The parents of Arthur and Nathan Radley.

Arthur Radley (a.k.a. “Boo Radley”)—A recluse in the neighborhood and the younger brother of Nathan Radley.

Mr. Walter Cunningham and Walter Cunningham—A proud but poor father and son. The son is Scout’s classmate.

Cecil Jacobs—Scout’s classmate.

Mr. Robert Ewell—The irresponsible father of Burns and Mayella. He spends his welfare checks on alcohol.

Burns Ewell—Robert Ewell’s son who attends Scout’s class for one day.

Mayella Ewell—Robert Ewell’s daughter; she accuses Tom Robinson of raping her.

Little Chuck Little—A well-mannered classmate of Scout.

Miss Carolina Fisher and Miss Gates—Scout’s first and third-grade teachers.

Miss Maudie Atkinson—A friend of Jem and Scout who lives up the street.

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose—An elderly woman on Jem and Scout’s street. They call her the “meanest old woman in the world.”

Miss Stephanie Crawford and Mr. Avery—Two neighborhood gossips.

Dr. Reynolds—The family doctor.

Eula May—The telephone operator.

Tom Robinson and Helen Robinson—Husband and wife; Tom is accused of rape.

Jack Finch—Atticus's brother, who is a doctor.

Heck Tate—The sheriff.

Lula—An argumentative member of Calpurnia's church.

Reverend Sykes—Preacher of the First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church.

Mr. B. B. Underwood—Editor of Maycomb Tribune.

Dolphus Raymond—A white man who lives with blacks.

Judge Taylor—The judge who presides at Tom Robinson's trial.

Mrs. Grace Merriweather, Mrs. Gertrude Farrow, Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Gates—Members of the missionary circle.

Sarah and Frances Barber (also known as Tutti and Frutti)—Two deaf sisters.

### **Summary of the Novel**

Two plots run through the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The first is the mystery of the Radley Place and its inhabitant Boo Radley. The children work throughout the first part of the novel to bring him out or to see him inside the house.

The second plot is that of the accusation of Thomas Robinson as a rapist, his trial, and his conviction. Even though Tom is convicted, Mr. Robert Ewell and Mayella are not believed; Robert Ewell is determined to seek revenge on Atticus.

When Bob Ewell seeks to kill Jem and Scout, Boo Radley hears the commotion and manages to kill Ewell before he can harm the children further. The sheriff refuses to tell the story of Boo Radley to the community; he protects him and his privacy.

### **Estimated Reading Time**

The total reading time for the 281-page book should be about 9 1/2 hours. Reading the book according to the natural chapter breaks is the best approach.

# Harper Lee Biography

Although Harper Lee has long maintained that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not autobiographical, critics have often remarked upon the striking similarities between the author's own childhood and that of her youthful heroine, Scout Finch. Nelle Harper Lee was born in 1926, the youngest of three children of Amasa Coleman Lee, a lawyer who practiced in the small town of Monroeville, Alabama. Like Scout, who could be bullied into submission with the remark that she was "gettin' more like a girl," Lee was "a rough 'n' tough tomboy," according to childhood friends.



## Harper Lee

Summers in Monroeville were brightened by the visits of young Truman Capote who stayed with the Lees' next-door neighbors and who would later become well-known for his book *In Cold Blood* and for his short stories and novels, including *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The games young Nelle and her brother played with Capote were likely the inspiration for the adventures Scout and Jem had with Dill, their own "summer" friend.

After graduating from the public schools of Monroeville, Lee attended a small college in nearby Montgomery before attending the University of Alabama for four years. She left school six months short of earning a law degree, however, in order to pursue a writing career. In the early 1950s, the author worked as an airline reservations clerk in New York City, writing essays and short stories in her spare time. After her literary agent suggested that one of her stories might be expanded into a novel, Lee quit her airline job. With the financial support of some friends, she spent several years revising the manuscript of *To Kill a Mockingbird* before submitting it to publishers. Several more months of revision followed the feedback of her editors, who found the original version more like a string of short stories than a cohesive novel. The final draft was finally completed in 1959 and published in 1960. The novel was a dramatic success, earning generally positive reviews and achieving bestseller status. Lee herself attained considerable celebrity as the novel won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961 and was made into an Oscar-winning film in 1962.



Horton Foote adapted the book into the 1962 film. *The Motion Picture Guide*, Volume T-V, 1927-1983, states that the screenplay

so wonderfully followed the spirit of Lee's novel that it prompted the author to remark, "I can only say that I am a happy author. They have made my story into a beautiful and moving motion picture. I am very proud and grateful."

The Academy of Motion Pictures presented Foote with the academy award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Gregory Peck starred as Atticus; he took the Academy Award for Best Actor.

Since then, aside from a few magazine pieces in the early 1960s, the reclusive author has published nothing, although she has been reported to have been working on a second novel. Despite the lack of a follow-up work, Lee's literary reputation remains secure and even has grown since the debut of her remarkable first novel.

# Summary

## Part One

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* depicts the life of its young narrator, Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, in the mid-1930s. Scout opens the novel as a grown woman reflecting back on key events in her childhood. The novel covers a two-year period, beginning when Scout is six and ending when she is eight. She lives with her father, Atticus, a widowed lawyer, and her older brother, Jem (short for Jeremy). Their black housekeeper, Calpurnia, tends to the children. Scout and Jem's summer playmate, Dill Harris, shares the Finch children's adventures and adds imagination and intrigue to their game playing. In the novel, we see Scout grow in awareness and come to new understandings about her town, her family, and herself.

## Image Pop-Up

### [Map of Maycomb](#)

During the summer before Scout enters school, the children become fascinated with Arthur "Boo" Radley, a reclusive neighbor. Radley's father, a religious fanatic, confined Boo to the house because he was arrested for youthful pranks as a teenager. Some years later, Boo casually stabbed his father in the leg with a pair of scissors, confirming people's worst fears about him. The children are naturally afraid of and intrigued by such a "malevolent phantom," as Scout calls him. Yet they only approach the house once, when Jem runs and touches the porch on a dare.

Scout enters first grade the following September and must confront new challenges and learn new ways to deal with people. She cannot understand, for instance, her young teacher's lack of familiarity with the town families and their peculiarities, such as the Cunningham children's poverty and pride. Later, Atticus explains to Scout that she must put herself in others' places before judging them, one of the many lessons she learns by making mistakes.

With summer's return, Dill arrives and the children's absorption with Boo Radley begins again in earnest. Ultimately, they attempt to look in the house to see Boo, but a shotgun blast from Nathan Radley, Boo's brother, drives them off. In their panic, Jem catches his overalls in the Radley fence and must abandon them. Later that night, he returns to retrieve them and finds them neatly folded on the fence with the ripped fabric poorly resealed.

Their contact with Boo Radley continues into the school year. Before the previous summer, Scout and Jem had discovered gum and Indian head pennies in a knot-holed tree by the Radley house. Now more objects begin to appear in the knothole, including replicas of Scout and Jem carved in soap. They decide to leave a note for whoever is leaving the objects, but before they can, Nathan Radley fills the hole with cement, upsetting Jem.

Scout soon encounters trouble at school when a schoolmate condemns Atticus for "defending niggers." Atticus confirms that he is defending a black man named Tom Robinson, who is accused of raping a white woman, and that his conscience compels him to do no less. He warns her that she will encounter more accusations of this kind and to remember that despite their views, the people who cast slurs at them are still their friends. Atticus later tells his brother Jack that he hopes he can guide his children through this time without them becoming bitter and "without catching Maycomb's usual disease" of racism.

That Christmas, Atticus gives the children air-rifles and admonishes them to shoot no mockingbirds. Miss Maudie Atkinson, their neighbor, explains Atticus's reasons when she says that "Mockingbirds don't do one

thing but make music for us to enjoy." Hence, it is a sin to kill them. At this time, the children feel disappointed in Atticus because he is old (almost fifty) and does nothing of interest. They soon learn, however, about one of their father's unique talents when he shoots a rabid dog that threatens the neighborhood, killing the beast with one shot. The neighbors tell them that Atticus is the best shot in the county, he just chooses not to shoot a gun unless he must. Scout admires Atticus for his shooting talent, but Jem admires him for his gentlemanly restraint.

## **Part Two**

The family's involvement in Tom Robinson's trial dominates Part Two of the novel. One personal inconvenience of the trial is the arrival of Aunt Alexandra, Atticus's sister, who comes to tend to the family. Scout finds her presence unwelcome because Aunt Alexandra disapproves of her tomboyish dress and activities and tries to make Scout wear dresses and attend women's socials.

The time for the trial arrives, and Atticus guards the jail door the night Tom Robinson is brought to Maycomb. The children, including Dill, sneak out to watch over him and soon become involved in a standoff. Carloads of men drive up and demand that Atticus let them have Tom Robinson, and he gently refuses. Scout recognizes a schoolmate's father, Mr. Cunningham, and asks him polite questions about his legal debt to Atticus, who did work for him, and about his son. Scout's innocent questioning of Mr. Cunningham shames him, and he convinces the men to leave.

The children also sneak to the courthouse to attend the trial. They sit in the balcony with the black townspeople because no seats are available on the ground floor. Atticus's questioning of Bob Ewell and Mayella Ewell, both of whom claim Tom Robinson beat and raped Mayella, reveals their lies. Mayella was beaten primarily on the right side of her body by a left-handed man. By having Bob Ewell sign his name, Atticus shows him to be left-handed. Tom Robinson's left arm, however, is crippled from a boyhood accident. Tom's story rings truer. He contends that Mayella invited him into the house and tried to seduce him, a story made credible by Mayella's and Tom's descriptions of her lonely life. Tom resisted her advances, but before he could leave Bob Ewell discovered them. Tom ran and Ewell beat Mayella. To avoid social disgrace, the Ewells claimed Tom had raped her.

Despite the evidence, Tom is convicted. Atticus has expected this verdict and believes he can win on appeal. Jem has difficulty accepting the injustice of the verdict. Others, however, remain angry over Atticus's sincere defense of Robinson, particularly Bob Ewell. Ewell confronts Atticus, threatens him, and spits on him. Soon after, Tom Robinson's story ends in tragedy as he is shot trying to escape from prison. He ran because he believed he could find no justice in a white-dominated legal system.

The following October, Scout dresses as a ham for the school Halloween pageant. On the way home from the pageant, she and Jem are followed, then attacked. Scout cannot see their assailant because of her costume, but she hears Jem grappling with him and hears Jem being injured. After the confused struggle, she feels a man lying on the ground and sees another man carrying Jem. She follows them home. The doctor arrives and assures her that Jem is alive and has suffered only a broken arm. The man who carried him home is standing in Jem's room. To Scout's tearful amazement, she realizes that he is Boo Radley. Sheriff Heck Tate informs them that Bob Ewell attacked them and that only Scout's costume saved her. Ewell himself now lies dead, stabbed in the ribs. Atticus believes Jem killed Ewell in self-defense, but Tate makes him realize that Boo Radley actually stabbed Ewell and saved both children's lives. The men agree to claim that Ewell fell on his knife in order to save Boo the spectacle of a trial. Scout walks Boo home:

He had to stoop a little to accommodate me, but if Miss Stephanie Crawford was watching from her upstairs window, she would see Arthur Radley escorting me down the sidewalk, as any gentleman would do.

We came to the street light on the corner, and I wondered how many times Dill had stood there hugging the fat pole, watching, waiting, hoping. I wondered how many times Jem and I had made this journey, but I entered the Radley front gate for the second time in my life. Boo and I walked up the steps to the porch. His fingers found the front doorknob. He gently released my hand, opened the door, went inside, and shut the door behind him. I never saw him again.

Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it; we had given him nothing, and it made me sad.

She returns home to Atticus, who stays up all night waiting for Jem to awake.

# Summary and Analysis

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Atticus Finch: a Southern lawyer and the father of Scout and Jem.

Scout: the six-year-old daughter of Atticus and the innocent narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Dill: a six-year-old summer visitor to Maycomb and a friend of both Scout and Jem.

The Radley Family: Mr. and Mrs. Radley and their sons, Arthur and Nathan, who are the antagonists for the first 11 chapters of the novel.

Jem: the ten-year-old son of Atticus and the brother of Scout.

Miss Stephanie Crawford: the neighborhood gossip, a woman in her late sixties who has never been married.

Calpurnia: the cook for the Finch family.

Miss Rachel Haverford: Dill's aunt with whom Dill is spending the summer.

### Summary

Scout is the narrator of and a main protagonist in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Scout's real name is Jean Louise Finch, and she is the only daughter of Atticus Finch. She is a very precocious child, but she still has an air of innocence about her. In Chapter 1 she is six, but she is recalling the events of the novel from a later time in her life.



Mystery surrounds the Radley Place.

Ten-year-old Jem is the only son of Atticus Finch. Jem was six when his mother died and Scout believes he still misses her badly; but since Jem is at times secretive, Scout cannot be sure. Scout says she reckons time from when 13-year-old Jem broke his arm, but she does not give the complete details. To find out more about this event, one must read further.

Calpurnia, the cook for the Finch family, is described through Scout's eyes as "a tyrannical presence as long as I can remember." Scout explains that Calpurnia calls her home before she is ready to come and is always supported by Atticus. The children call Calpurnia and Atticus by their first names; they address all other adults with a title.

Charles Baker Harris—better known as Dill—is the nephew of Miss Rachel Haverford, the next-door neighbor of the Finch family. In Chapter 1, Dill is seven when he comes from Meridian, Mississippi, for his first summer visit in Maycomb. Dill is described by Scout as a "pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies." It is Dill who challenges the others to help draw Boo from his home.

The Radley family—Mr. and Mrs. Radley, their older son Nathan, and "Boo," lives next door to the Finch family. The Radley family, which is headed now by Nathan, is a very aloof one. Mr. Radley is described by Miss Stephanie Crawford as being "so upright he took the word of God as his only law. . . ." When Boo breaks the law and resists arrest as a teenager, Mr. Radley no longer allows him out of the house; even the death of Mr. Radley cannot free Boo, because Nathan assumes his father's role.

Miss Stephanie Crawford is the "neighborhood scold." It is from her that Scout is able to find out most of the information about the Radley family—including the fact that Boo stabbed his father in the leg. Miss Stephanie even declares that Boo looked straight through her window one night.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Chapter 1 sets the stage for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It introduces the characters who live on the main residential street in Maycomb and lets Dill and the reader know of the mystery surrounding the Radley Place. The reader finds out that Boo has been inside his home for years. Through Miss Stephanie the children have learned how Boo ran with the wrong crowd when he was a teenager. On one occasion Boo and his friends drove backwards around the courthouse square and resisted arrest. Mr. Radley asked to handle the matter himself, promising that his son would give no further trouble. He confined his son to the house where he became a recluse. According to local gossip, the next time Boo was seen or heard was the day he stabbed his father in the leg with a pair of scissors while cutting items from the newspaper for his scrapbook. Mr. Radley ran screaming into the street, and the sheriff locked Boo in the courthouse basement. After a short while he was returned to the Radley home and was never heard from again. When Mr. Radley dies, Nathan moves back home to take charge. Dill is fascinated with the story and determined to draw out Boo Radley.

As we learn the story of the Radley family, we also learn of certain conflicts between and even within the characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The children, provoked by their curiosity about the reclusive Boo Radley, concentrate on learning as much as possible about him. They spend the long, slow summer days thinking of ways to catch a glimpse of him. As they become caught up in the stories and superstitions surrounding him, they seem to lose sight of him as a person and think of him instead as a ghost or a hidden spectacle. They even use him to compete with each other, as they try to prove who can get closest to him and who is least afraid of him. Throughout the book characters struggle to overcome inner fears, and in Chapter 1, we encounter a childish version of this. For the children, approaching Boo's house despite their fear is a thrill or a game. Later in the novel characters acting despite their fear will have much more serious results.

The Radley family, in cutting itself off from society, also forms a pattern that will become more important later in the novel. All of the many kinds of people in Maycomb fit together to form an intricate social balance. When a family becomes cut off from this, they seem to have trouble surviving on their own.

Harper Lee (through Scout's narration) uses many stylistic devices in Chapter 1. Scout uses personification, which is the representation of a thing, quality, or idea as a person. She does this when she describes the picket fence at the Radley Place as drunkenly guarding the yard and when she states that "pecan trees shook their fruit. . . ." Lee uses simile when she likens one thing to another through the use of the words as and like. For instance, Scout says that the Radley Place drew Dill "as the moon draws water" and that "by nightfall the ladies were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum." Scout uses a metaphor when she calls one thing something else. For example, she says that the Radley home is occupied by a "malevolent phantom." Humor is another stylistic device employed. For instance, when Miss Stephanie describes Mr. Radley as being "so upright that he took the word of God as his only law," Scout does not understand and agrees that Mr. Radley's posture was indeed "ramrod straight." Scout uses excellent grammar and has an extensive vocabulary for her age. The characters she quotes, however, often use the everyday speech or Southern dialect of the 1930s. For instance, a reference is made twice in Chapter 1 to the occupation of buying cotton, which Scout explains is "a polite term for doing nothing"; another time Jem tells Dill, "You look right puny for goin' on seven."

The plot order employs flashback, an interruption in the continuity of a story by the narration of an earlier episode. Scout begins by saying, "When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow." She then states that, "When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to the accident." Lee then uses flashback when she refers to the days of Andrew Jackson.

Dill serves an important role in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Upon his arrival, Scout tells him about Maycomb, the Radleys, and some of the other residents of the town. Through Dill's introduction, the reader can meet the characters and tour Scout's and Jem's territory—the boundaries of which have been set by Calpurnia's calling voice. The education of Scout and Jem is a major theme running throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In Chapter 1 Atticus teaches two lessons. First, he tells the children to mind their "own business and let the Radleys mind theirs, they had a right too. . . ." His second lesson to the children is that there are many ways "of making people into ghosts." The children, however, do not immediately understand.

This idea of ghosts, superstitions, and the sober, haunted atmosphere of the Radley Place is a secondary theme which permeates Chapter 1 and appears in other chapters throughout the book.

Bravery versus cowardice is another theme that appears in the chapter. Scout states that Jem passed the Radley Place "always running" and that, "A Negro would not pass the Radley Place at night. . . ." Dill's aunt locks up tight at night because of her fear of Arthur. Dill dares Jem to touch the house and contrasts the bravery of the folks in Meridian with the cowardliness of the people in Maycomb.

The chapter ends with a sense of foreboding; the last words are that the Radley "house was still."

## Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Miss Caroline: the new first-grade teacher and Scout's antagonist.

Walter Cunningham: a poor but proud member of the Cunningham family and Scout's classmate.

## Summary

Chapter 2 describes Scout's first day in school. The new teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, spans Scout's hand before the morning is over. The conflict between Scout and Miss Fisher begins when Miss Fisher finds out that Scout can read; Miss Fisher tells Scout not to allow her father to teach her anymore. Scout says that her father did not teach her to read and proceeds to tell Miss Fisher of Jem's belief that Scout was swapped at birth and that she was born reading *The Mobile Register*. Miss Fisher closes the conversation by saying that Atticus does not know how to teach.



Scout's first day in school.

Miss Fisher next comes in conflict with Walter Cunningham. She tries to get him to take a quarter to buy his lunch. Scout explains that Walter is a Cunningham who will not take “anything off of anybody,” but Miss Fisher will not listen and spans her hand. The class does not understand what has happened at first, but when they realize that Scout has been whipped, they begin to laugh. Miss Blount, the sixth-grade teacher, threatens the whole first-grade class because her class cannot concentrate with all the noise in Scout's class.

As the morning—and the chapter—end, Scout leaves for her lunch and sees Miss Fisher crying. Scout concludes by thinking, “Had her conduct been more friendly toward me, I would have felt sorry for her.”

## Discussion and Analysis

There is a conflict between Scout and Miss Caroline when the new teacher discovers that Scout can read. She shames Scout by saying that Atticus should not teach her anymore because he does not know how to teach. Miss Caroline vows to undo the damage Atticus has done with his teaching.



Miss Caroline proves her insensitivity once again in a conflict with Walter Cunningham. When Miss Caroline inspects the children's lunches and finds Walter Cunningham does not have one, she tries to lend Walter money. Walter will not accept the loan. Although he is poor, he is proud. The conflict is heightened when Scout tries to explain about the Cunninghams and about Maycomb society to the new teacher, but the teacher—unlike Dill—is unwilling to listen. Miss Caroline tells Jean Louise that she has had enough of her, spansks her hand with a ruler, and threatens the class. The conflict reaches a climax when the sixth-grade teacher comes in and personally reprimands the whole class because they are too noisy.

In Chapter 2, Scout struggles with herself to stay quiet when she realizes she has annoyed her teacher. Later on, however, she abandons her resolve and tries to explain things to Miss Caroline. Scout has difficulty with her words; she wants to explain the Cunninghams' view as Atticus would have done, but she realizes it is beyond her ability.

Miss Caroline's ignorance about the workings of Maycomb prove once again how intricately the society is constructed. Even the Cunningham's poverty is part of this system. Miss Caroline, a stranger to this system, does not understand it, and causes chaos in the classroom when she tries to interfere with it. She does not recognize that Scout is trying to show her how it works.

In Chapter 2, Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. Foreshadowing, or a hint as to what is to come, is employed when Scout, in her narration, tells the reader that before "the first morning was over, Miss Caroline Fisher, our teacher, hauled me up to the front of the room and patted the palm of my hand with a ruler, then made me stand in the corner until noon." The reader is unsure why this happens and wants to read more. The statement also gives the reader a hint that more unpleasantness may be in store for Scout in the afternoon. The reader is hooked by the second chapter and must continue to explore the progressive plot to find out the answers to the many unanswered questions.

Harper continues to use simile. For instance, Scout says that her new teacher looks and smells "like a peppermint drop." The humor used by Scout in describing her first day helps the reader to endure with her the shame and mortification brought about by public education. For example, when the teacher asks if the students recognize the alphabet, the narrator (Scout) tells the reader that most of the students did; they had encountered them last year—their first year in first grade.

Scout does not recognize Jem's malapropism, a ridiculous misuse of words. The new teacher is using the Language Experience Approach of Experiential Learning; John Dewey, a prominent educator of the time, advocates this method. Jem, however, mistakenly refers to the method as the Dewey Decimal System, a system of cataloging library materials. Scout also believes Jem when he attempts to explain the meaning of the word entailment; Jem tells her it is "a condition of having your tail in a crack." These errors, however, serve to add humor to the chapter.

Scout continues to give examples of the 1930s Southern dialect in the speech of Walter Cunningham. At one time Walter responds to his teacher by saying, "Nome thank you ma'am." Another time he mumbles "Yeb'm."

Harper continues to use flashback. For example, Scout begins, "My special knowledge of the Cunningham tribe . . . was gained from events of last winter." Scout proceeds to explain the situation that gave her this information.

Lee also uses irony, an action which is unexpected or contrary to what one would expect. Miss Caroline says she uses experiential learning yet she tells Scout not to read at home. It is ironic that Miss Caroline tries to curb Scout's experiences with reading when she purports to teach through the use of experiences. The irony is increased when Miss Caroline tells Scout that her father does not know how to teach; since Scout is reading

easily and well, Atticus evidently does know how to teach.

Through Scout's explanations of Maycomb society to the new teacher (and to Dill in Chapter 1), the reader is apprised of the intricacies of the Alabama town. The reader, unlike Miss Caroline, is able to profit from the information presented to the new teacher.

The motif of education is continued in Chapter 2. The reader is made aware of the sharp contrast between Atticus's methods of instruction and those of the new teacher. The patience of Atticus is opposed to the impatience of Miss Caroline. The corporal punishment used by Miss Caroline is quite different from the gentle reasoning employed by Atticus. Scout learned to read at home by experiential learning: she sat on Atticus's lap and watched his moving finger as he read. Miss Caroline, however, forbids her to read anymore at home.

Bravery versus cowardice is found again in this chapter. Scout, though aware of the possible consequences, still comes to the aid of Walter, her classmate—a good example of bravery. When the teacher herself is faced with opposition in the form of Miss Blount, she buckles under the pressure. It is Scout who shows bravery and the teacher who shows cowardliness.

## **Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Characters**

Little Chuck Little: Scout's polite, brave classmate.

Burrus Ewell: Scout's surly classmate who attends school once a year.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 occurs over a six-hour period from lunchtime until nightfall of Scout's first day in school. Scout takes out her frustration with school and especially with Miss Caroline by rubbing Walter's nose in the dirt of the school yard as the lunch break begins. Jem stops the slaughter and Scout quickly explains that Walter made her start school "on the wrong foot." Jem serves as a peacemaker and invites Walter to their home for lunch. Scout pledges not to fight him again.



#### Scout and Atticus

On the way home, the three pass the Radley Place and a discussion of the fears and superstitions associated with the house ensues. Walter remembers eating pecans supposedly poisoned by Boo Radley and recalls how sick he was.

At home Atticus accepts Walter as an equal; there is no class differentiation in the Finch home. During lunch Calpurnia disciplines Scout for commenting on the way that Walter pours syrup on his food. Even though it means walking past the Radley Place alone on her way back to school, Scout remains behind to advise “Atticus on Calpurnia’s inequities.” Atticus, however, only reminds Scout of the trouble she causes Calpurnia who works so hard for her. Atticus refuses to fire the cook as Scout suggests.

A new conflict develops in the afternoon between the teacher and Burris Ewell, another student. Miss Caroline sees a louse on Burris and becomes hysterical. Little Chuck Little tries to smooth things out. When Miss Caroline asks Burris to sit down, he becomes angry. Little Chuck Little tells Miss Caroline to “Let him go ma’am. . . . He’s a mean one. . . . and there’s some little folks here.” Scout describes how Little Chuck Little’s hand goes to his pocket and he threatens Burris with “I’d soon’s kill you as look at you. Now go home.”

The end result is that Burris hurls insults at Miss Caroline and leaves the class. Miss Caroline cries but she manages to recover and tells the class a story about a toad and a hall, probably *Wind in the Willows*.

That night Calpurnia surprises Scout with crackling bread. After supper Scout asks Atticus if she can leave school like Burris, but Atticus says that she must obey the law. He tries to teach Scout a lesson about walking around in another person’s skin. Atticus and Scout do reach one compromise: if she will go to school, they will continue reading at night. As an aside, he asks her not to mention their reading at school.

#### Discussion and Analysis

Although every member of the Finch family understands the way Maycomb society works, they do not

conform to Maycomb's rules of class. Walter is welcomed into the home by Atticus. The Ewell family, on the other hand, in no way fits into Maycomb society. They even live on the edge of town. Burris and his father refuse to obey the school attendance rules and the hunting regulations of Maycomb. Society elects to turn a blind eye on these activities.

Scout learns several lessons in Chapter 3. Calpurnia teaches Scout that when people differ, Scout is not "called on to contradict 'em. . . ." Scout also learns from Calpurnia that guests in her home should be treated as such. Atticus teaches her to consider things from another person's point of view in order to understand that person. He indicates that sometimes it is better to bend the law a little in special cases. He also tells Scout that at times it is best to ignore things. He reminds her that Maycomb overlooks Burris's skipping school and Robert Ewell's hunting out of season. He applies this to Jem in the tree house; if Scout will ignore Jem, Jem will come down.

Harper Lee continues to use many stylistic devices in Chapter 3. The repetition of sounds, or alliteration, is used often. For instance, the reader finds words like "snorted and slouched" and "snot-nosed slut." Scout uses an idiom when she says that Walter made her start off "on the wrong foot." Walter's dialect is apparent as he says, "Almost died first year I come to school and et them pecans—folks say he pizened 'em and put 'em over on the school side of the fence."

Once again the children must prove their bravery in the face of many threats. Often, this is easier in a group. The children walk by the Radley Place when they are together, but go by "at a full gallop" when they are alone. The children fake bravado in front of their peers, but they allow free rein to their feelings when they are unobserved. Bravery versus cowardice also occurs with the confrontation of Little Chuck Little and Burris in the classroom. Little Chuck Little, one of the smallest children in the class, displays bravery and is able to confront Burris, "a hard-down mean one."

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose: "the meanest old woman who ever lived."

Cecil Jacobs: one of Scout's classmates.

### Summary

Scout's first-grade year finally ends; her conclusion is that she has been cheated out of something. Each day she runs by the Radley Place 30 minutes before Jem. One day she finds gum in the tree near the Radley home. When she tells Jem about the gum, he makes her spit it out. On the last day of school the two children walk home together. They find a package covered with foil and containing two scrubbed, Indian-head pennies in the tree near the Radley Place. The children cannot figure out the source of the treasures.



Scout and Jem find a package in a tree.

When Dill arrives for the summer, the children reestablish their friendship. Their conversations are centered around ghosts and superstitions.

On one of their first days of freedom, Jem gives Scout first push in the tire. Scout does not realize that Jem is angry with her until he pushes the tire with all the strength in his body. Dizzy and nauseated, Scout finds herself in front of the Radley house. Hearing the two boys scream loudly, Scout runs for her life and leaves the tire behind. It is Jem who finally retrieves the tire.

Dill invents a new game: Boo Radley. The children dramatize Boo's story from the bits of gossip and legend they have heard and from their own additions. If Mr. Nathan passes by, they immediately stand still and silent. One day when they are involved in the game, they fail to see Atticus approach. He asks them what they are doing, but Jem replies, "Nothing." Atticus takes the scissors from them and asks them if the game has to do with the Radleys. Jem denies that it does and Atticus goes inside.

The children debate whether to continue the game. Because Scout does not want to, Jem complains that she is acting like a girl. Scout reminds them that she believes Atticus knows about the game. She keeps to herself her second reason for wanting to quit the game: laughter she heard when the tire landed near the Radley house.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Chapter 4, the children still regard the Radley family with childish fascination. They act out their visions of the Radleys in much the same way they had previously acted out stories they had read. This shows that they regard the family as almost fictional. They give little thought to the fact that their game may be hurtful to

thinking, feeling humans behind the Radley windows. In his quiet way, Atticus tries to teach them about this. Later in the novel Atticus will try to teach a similar lesson to the inhabitants of Maycomb during the trial of Tom Robinson.

It is a good thing that Atticus is such a good teacher, because Scout is sorely disappointed with the formal education she is receiving. It seems to her that the school system, an arm of society, is devised to keep her from learning. This causes Scout to believe that she “was being cheated out of something.”

Fears and superstitions associated with the Radley Place comprise an important theme in this chapter. To further intrigue the reader, Harper Lee uses foreshadowing with the quotation, “There was more to it than he knew, but I decided not to tell him.” Chapter 4 is a cliffhanger; the open ending of the chapter is the sentence “Someone inside the house was laughing.”

Imagery is the predominant stylistic device employed in Chapter 4. Through the effective descriptions of Harper Lee, the reader is able to visualize Jem retrieving the tire. “Jem . . . ran down the sidewalk, treaded water at the gate, then dashed in and retrieved the tire,” is countered with the equally strong image of “Atticus standing on the sidewalk looking at us, slapping a rolled newspaper against his knee.”

Bravery versus cowardice (a secondary theme) is found throughout the chapter. The reader finds Scout running past the Radley Place in fear each day since she must go home alone from school; on the last day of school Jem and Scout walk together, rather than run, past the gloomy house. Later Jem conquers his fear long enough to go into the yard of the Radley Place to retrieve the tire while Dill and Scout look on at the performance. Bravery seems to occur when there are others watching rather than when the children are alone.

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Miss Maudie Atkinson: the neighbor who had grown up with Jack Finch.

Uncle Jack Finch: Atticus’s doctor-brother, ten years his junior.

### Summary

Scout begins to spend more time with Miss Maudie. The two talk about religion and anything else Scout wants to discuss. Miss Maudie treats Scout as an equal. She tells Scout to call Boo Radley by his real name: Arthur Radley, and she believes that Arthur does not come out of the house because he wants to stay inside. When Scout tells her that Jem believes he has died and been stuck up the chimney, Miss Maudie compares Jem to his Uncle Jack. It is apparent that Maudie and Atticus have similar views about the rights and dignity of the Radleys and of all people.

Jem and Dill (with Scout looking on) try to send a message to Boo by tying it on a fishing pole and casting it toward his window. Because Dill fails to ring the bell which he is to use at the first sign of anyone approaching, Atticus catches them. Atticus gives them several rules to obey: They are not to play the game he had seen them playing, make fun of others, or go to the Radley Place unless they are invited.

Jem is silent until Atticus is out of hearing. Then he yells that he is not sure that he wants to be a lawyer.

### Discussion and Analysis

Once again, in this chapter, we see how an individual who separates himself from society can become a spectacle for those who fit in. Furthermore, we see again that Atticus, though he himself is a member of society, does not chastise others for choosing not to be. He tries to understand why they choose to remain

apart. Boo Radley continues to be a recluse and continues to arouse the curiosity of Maycomb. Atticus, however, does not condemn Arthur for living alone. He reminds the children that “What Mr. Radley does is his own business.” Miss Maudie, also, reminds Scout that Arthur Radley is a human being despite the rumors spread about him. She says that he deserves to be left alone if he prefers. Their attitudes are not typical of the rest of Maycomb society which continues to condemn and whisper about Arthur.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a novel of maturation. The reader sees the growth and the coming maturity of Scout, Jem, and Dill. Chapter 5 emphasizes, however, that though Scout has grown, she still has innocence. For instance, when Miss Stephanie accuses Arthur Radley of looking in her window, Miss Maudie loudly asks Miss Stephanie if she moved over in bed for him. Scout misses the sexual implication and thinks it is Miss Maudie’s loud voice that shuts Miss Stephanie up for a while.

In Chapter 5, Harper Lee continues to stress the motif of fears and superstitions associated with the Radley Place. Scout discusses her fears and superstitions with Miss Maudie. Miss Maudie reflects that the stories about Arthur are “three-fourths colored folks and one-fourth Stephanie Crawford.” If Maycomb society cannot get him to conform, they will make him what they will through their stories. When the curious and frightened children try to deliver a note to Arthur and are caught by Atticus, they are given certain rules to follow—another evidence of the education motif that pervades *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

In this chapter, once again, the Radley Place serves as a challenge for the children, a chance for them to prove who is brave and who is cowardly. Scout admits to feeling terror just thinking of delivering a note to Boo Radley, but she suggests that Jem “just knock the front door down. . . .” Jem uses a pole to try to deliver a message to Boo; this shows his bravery is limited. Jem does not talk back to Atticus until he is out of earshot—a concession of cowardliness to the others who observe him. Who is brave and who is cowardly has not yet been established.

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

### New Character

Mr. Avery: a neighbor who boards across the street from Mrs. Dubose.

### Summary

On Dill’s last night in town for the summer, Jem and Dill decide to peep in the window at the Radley Place to see if they can see Boo. Scout comes along. A shadow appears and the children run in fear. When shots ring out, Jem leaves his pants caught on the barbed-wire fence. The children join the other Maycomb residents who have come out into the night to see what has happened. Later in the night Jem and Scout return to the Radley Place for Jem’s pants.



Scout, Jem and Dill peep in the window at the Radley Place

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The children have violated the trust of the adults in their lives. The only way they can explain Jem's missing trousers is to lie. Dill says that they were playing strip poker. Scout and Jem fear losing the respect of Atticus, and Dill faces the anger of his Aunt Rachel. The judgment of the whole neighborhood is upon them when Jem appears in the crowd without pants and Dill tells his falsehood before the neighbors.

In Chapter 6, for the first time, the children must face their fear of the Radley Place for a more serious reason than to prove their bravery to one another. The danger that Jem faces in retrieving his trousers is no longer ghostly and insubstantial, and in a sense, his bravery is more real as well. This chapter includes a major departure: Jem is the only one of the children to show bravery near the Radley Place even though he is not being observed by others. The reader will find later that he resists for a while his urge to tell Scout something that happens on this errand.

For the first time a child elects to approach the Radley Place without the direct observation of a peer. Jem shows bravery in going to the fence at night. The opinion of his father is more important than anything which might happen to him there. He is beginning to prioritize values in his life.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* continues to be a novel of maturation, or a bildungsroman. Although the reader has directly observed the growth and maturity of the narrator Scout, Chapter 6 emphasizes the maturity of Jem, her brother. When Jem insists that he must return for his pants despite his fears, Scout does not understand his compulsion. She recognizes that he is no longer following childish motivations. She admits, "It was then, I suppose, that Jem and I first begin to part company."

## **Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis**

### **Summary**

Scout starts second grade. The children continue to look in the knothole and find presents: a ball of twine, two dolls carved from soap which resemble Jem and Scout, gum, a spelling medal, and a watch and pocketknife on a chain. Jem becomes very quiet. He finally tells Scout that the trousers he retrieved had been mended and neatly folded when he returned for them.

After Scout and Jem write a thank-you note and place it in the knothole, they return to find the knothole in the tree has been filled with cement. Mr. Radley admits he filled up the hole, using the excuse that the tree was



sick.

Jem seems to be spending a lot of time thinking. Scout believes that on one occasion he was crying as he watched the Radley Place.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Chapter 7 the children find themselves pitted against Nathan—not Arthur—Radley. When Nathan fills up the knothole where the children have been finding presents, they are devastated. Their fears and superstitions about Boo Radley are beginning to fade. Their conflict with Nathan Radley is more real to them now. This marks a passing of invented childish fears. Instead of battling ghosts, they are learning the complexities of communicating with real people, as an adult must.

Jem, especially, is showing signs of growing up. He becomes moody and private as he tries to absorb all that he is discovering about the real world. For quite some time he keeps a secret: the trousers he lost on the fence had been mended when he returned for them. Jem is struggling to control his emotions. When he goes by himself to cry the night after the knothole is filled in by Mr. Nathan Radley, it is not a childish display, but a sign that he is maturing.

Stylistic devices are evident in Chapter 7. Harper Lee makes use of many hyperboles (exaggerations) to express the feelings that Scout is experiencing. For instance, Scout remarks that “if I had gone alone to the Radley Place at two in the morning, my funeral would have been held the next afternoon.” Symbolism is an important part of Chapter 7. Atticus continues to be the last word when any dispute arises. He is the symbol of stability in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The tree is a symbol of Arthur Radley. Nathan fills the hole in the tree because “Tree’s dying. You plug ‘em with cement when they’re sick.” Atticus, however, acknowledges that the “tree’s as healthy as you are, Jem.” Like the tree, Arthur, too, was treated by his family when he was not really sick. The tree, like Arthur, was a giver of gifts; Nathan prevented both from giving their gifts to others.

The bravery in Chapter 7 is that shown by the characters as they face everyday life—not ghosts and ghouls. Scout finds second grade is grim, but she endures and faces it each day with hope. Jem has told her that she will find things of value once she reaches sixth grade. Jem does not deny his feelings and expresses them—even to the point of crying when he is alone. He even bravely confronts Mr. Nathan Radley with his questions of why the tree was filled with cement.

## **Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Character**

Eula May: Maycomb’s leading telephone operator.

### **Summary**

Snow comes to Maycomb the day after Mrs. Radley’s death. Eula May lets the Finch children know that school has been canceled. The children build a snow character by borrowing snow from Miss Maudie. They combine this snow with mud to make the figure, which at first resembles Mr. Avery and then is changed when Atticus protests.



The children build a snow character.

That night Atticus wakes the children in the middle of the night and takes them outside. A fire is destroying Miss Maudie's house, and the sparks are threatening the Finch home also.

At dawn Scout finds that someone has placed a blanket over her shoulders. Atticus tells her that the person was Arthur Radley. The next day Miss Maudie begins to make plans for her new home.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In this chapter the children discover that most adults also have superstitious beliefs which they rely on to explain events that they don't understand. Mr. Avery blames the children for the bad weather since he thinks that children disobeying their parents, smoking, and making war on each other will cause the seasons to change. As residents of the town battle an unusual snow fall and later a fire which burns Miss Maudie's home, they try to find ways to explain these unnatural events. It is a common superstitious belief that unusual or unjust human actions can have repercussions on a natural level—causing disturbances or chaos.

The snowman (which later turns out to be a snow woman) is symbolic. It foreshadows events to come. The snowman is partly built with black Alabama soil. The colors—black, black and white, white, black again—foretell the racial unrest to occur later in the book. Chapter 9 will begin the development of a second plot involving Tom Robinson, Robert Ewell, and the court of law.

Scout's innocence is evident in this chapter. Scout misunderstands two words and Harper Lee derives much humor from this. The two words Scout thinks she hears are "characterature" and "morphodite"; the words that are actually used are caricature, which is the deliberately distorted imitation of a person, and hermaphrodite, which means a being with the characteristics of both sexes.

Suspense is another stylistic device employed in Chapter 8. The reader waits with bated breath to find out what will happen during the fire.

Despite all the action in Chapter 8, lurking in the background is the theme of fears and superstitions associated with the Radleys and the Radley Place and the superstitions Mr. Avery associates with the actions of the

children.

The whole neighborhood demonstrates bravery as they battle the blaze and wait in fear to find out if the fire will spread to their house.

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Tom Robinson: the accused rapist whom Atticus must defend.

Ike Finch: Maycomb County's sole surviving Confederate veteran.

Aunt Alexandra and Uncle Jimmy Hancock: Atticus' sister and her husband.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hancock and Francis Hancock: Aunt Alexandra's son, his wife, and their son.

### Summary

Cecil Jacobs and others complicate Scout's school life further when they say "Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers." When Scout asks Atticus about this, he says that he does. Atticus explains that he could not hold his head up again if he doesn't defend Robinson, but he does not expect to win the case.

Atticus' family meets Uncle Jack at Aunt Alexandra's for Christmas. Francis, a first cousin-once-removed, tells Scout that Aunt Alexandra says Atticus "let's you all run wild" and "now he's turned into a nigger-lover. . . ." Scout splits her knuckle on his teeth and Jack spanks her for fighting. Later, Scout talks to Uncle Jack about his unfairness in spanking her.

That night Scout eavesdrops on the two brothers. She hears Uncle Jack say half in jest that he is afraid to get married for fear he will have children. The chapter concludes with Atticus discussing the upcoming trial with Uncle Jack.

### Discussion and Analysis

This chapter marks the beginning of a very difficult time for Scout. It seems as though she faces criticism and conflict everywhere she turns. Her classmates criticize Atticus for defending Tom Robinson. Her own cousin Francis also criticizes Atticus and tattles on Scout. Even her Uncle Jack won't listen to her and spanks her.

Throughout all of these confrontations, Scout must struggle with her temper and try to obey Atticus' instructions to use her head instead of her fists. The result of her eventual loss of control is a spanking from her Uncle Jack. And even this proves a more frustrating experience as he won't listen to her excuses for her actions. As the events in Scout's life become increasingly strange and unpleasant, she feels as if she has no one to turn to for her comfort.

The cause of all the misery in Scout's life is the fact that Atticus agreed to defend Tom Robinson. This action is outside of the unwritten Maycomb social code. Atticus, perfectly aware of this code, realizes this, but he agrees to defend Tom anyway. He values a more fundamental set of human rights. He is aware that his actions will have unpleasant reactions from the community which will cause problems for his family, but he must remain true to what he feels is right.

Another instance of the social code appearing in this chapter occurs when Uncle Jack and Aunt Alexandra try to teach Scout how to be a young lady. They are trying to teach her the unwritten code so that as she matures, she will accept her proper role in society. In the face of the injustice being done to Tom, these concerns seem

trivial.

Many different kinds of education are explored in Chapter 9, and most of them cause problems for Scout. She is uncomfortable with the social education her aunt and uncle try to give her, and her school education does not suit her much better. She feels that she is learning useless things. From her classmates she is learning worse than useless things. She tells Atticus she learned the word “nigger” and he forbids her to use it. Scout also provides an education for another character in this chapter. She, Jem and Atticus teach her bachelor Uncle Jack about children and families and the complicated ways that they operate.

In this chapter Scout is finding that one can still be brave and yet fight one’s battles with the head—not the fists. Her bravery in fighting her own battles contrasts with the cowardice of Francis who, though older, gets his grandmother to fight his battles for him. Another type of bravery is demonstrated by Atticus when he resolves to follow through on a case he knows he cannot win.

Social realism is a dominant theme in Chapter 9. A family reunion with the less-than-ideal family members and ugly displays of prejudice at home and at school are some of the realistic scenes in Chapter 9.

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Mr. Heck Tate: the sheriff of Maycomb County.

Tim Johnson: Mr. Harry Johnson’s liver-colored bird dog.

Zeebo: Calpurnia’s son who drives a garbage truck for Maycomb County.

### Summary

Jem and Scout feel dissatisfied with their father. Because he is nearly 50 and wears glasses, they see him as feeble. They doubt his manliness. They worry that he has no exciting occupation and does not teach them to shoot their air rifles. It is in a discussion with their father about their rifles that the theme for the whole book—the mockingbird—begins to emerge. Atticus tells the children that it is a sin *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Scout reflects that it is the only time that she ever hears Atticus say it is a sin to do something. He explains that mockingbirds make music. They do not eat up gardens or nest in corncribs. They merely sing for others to enjoy.



Atticus with the rabid dog.

Miss Maudie tries to dispel the myth that Atticus is old because she is close to him in age. Even after Miss Maudie explains that Atticus can draw up an air-tight will, play a Jew's Harp, and beat others at checkers, Scout still wishes he "was a devil from hell."

When Calpurnia sees the rabid dog and calls both the sheriff and Atticus, it is Atticus who makes the fatal shot. Scout and Jem find out that Atticus was known as "One-Shot Finch." Their respect for him is increased tremendously.

The episode concludes with Jem calling out that "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me!"

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Scout believes that the family position in Maycomb could be raised if Atticus would only distinguish himself. She is beginning to seek the approval of society for herself and for Atticus. Her family is not getting as much recognition as she wishes. Perhaps all of the societal criticism of Atticus is beginning to have an effect on Scout and Jem. When Atticus kills the rabid dog, the children are surprised to learn that their father possesses the qualities they thought he lacked. Scout longs to tell others about his skills, but Jem forbids her to. It is a sign of his maturity that he understands why Atticus does not want to flaunt his talents, and why he is not particularly proud of them. Jem is beginning to recognize the quiet qualities which actually make Atticus a good man.

In Chapter 10 Harper Lee makes the reader aware that Atticus is a man to be reckoned with. The image of Atticus that Scout projects up to this point is a child's view; the characterization in Chapter 10 shows Atticus in action and Scout develops a new attitude toward her father. Both the reader and Scout now see that Atticus is far from weak and incapable of defending himself and his family. He is peace-loving because "he's civilized in his heart."

Harper Lee uses the element of surprise in Chapter 10. The reader is told of Scout and Jem's hunting trip to find birds; one expects them to find a mockingbird and deal with the choice of killing it, but instead they find the rabid dog. Lee also makes the reader experience suspense as the dog appears and as the sheriff and Atticus wait on the deserted street for him to walk toward them. The feeling evoked in the reader is expectancy, not unlike that the viewer of a western movie feels when the showdown on the main street of town is imminent. Lee employs symbolism when Atticus tells the children not *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The mockingbird is symbolic of Tom Robinson. Social realism is an important feature in Chapter 10; the discrimination that Atticus and the children face because of Atticus's agreeing to take the case is believable for a 1930s Southern town.

Several kinds of bravery are evident in Chapter 10. Atticus proves his bravery when he walks to the middle of the street to meet the rabid dog. But there is a more important kind of bravery that he demonstrates in hiding skills that he is not especially proud of. He is brave enough to live as a good and peace-loving man, honest to his values. It would be easy enough for him to flaunt his flashier abilities and be more popular. But he would probably consider this cowardly, and he would probably not value the admiration this would bring him. This is similar to the bravery he displays in defending Tom Robinson despite strong disapproval. The other prominent theme is that of maturation. Jem has discovered that if one feels satisfied with oneself, then it does not matter what others think. Jem has now reached a higher stage of moral development and maturity than his younger sister who seeks only the approval of her peers.

## Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Jem and Scout pass Mrs. Dubose's home on their way to the store. Because Mrs. Dubose makes sly remarks about Atticus, Jem returns to cut all the buds off her camellia bushes. Atticus confronts Jem with the cut flowers and advises Jem to talk with Mrs. Dubose. Atticus does not allow Scout to go with Jem on this visit, but he comforts her with the statement, "It's not time to worry yet." For punishment, Mrs. Dubose requires Jem and Scout to visit her six days a week for a month and read to her for two hours. She admits to Atticus and the children that she is requiring them to stay longer each day and that she is extending the total time by a week.



Jem, Scout, and Mrs. Dubose

About a month after their time is completed, Mrs. Dubose dies. Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict. After her death Atticus explains to the two children that they helped distract her and helped her die free of any drug addiction. Atticus explains to the children that continuing even when you know you're licked is true courage. He says Mrs. Dubose is the bravest person he knows.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Throughout the difficult weeks in which Atticus had been subjected to so much criticism from the community, Jem had been very careful to control his temper and to advise Scout to do the same. In Chapter 11, he finally snaps. The initial confrontation occurs when Mrs. Dubose hurls insults at the children. Jem returns to her house in a rage and cuts all of her prize camellia bushes. Atticus forces Jem to face up to his act and to go talk with Mrs. Dubose. She decides upon his punishment. For over a month he must visit her and read to her for two hours, six days a week.

Although Jem does not realize it at first, this pact requires inner strength from both Jem and Mrs. Dubose. Jem must fight with his anger at all of the cruel things that Mrs. Dubose says about the Finch family. It is difficult for him to be polite to her under these circumstances, but following his father's example, he manages to behave himself. Mrs. Dubose faces an even greater trial. She is forcing herself to overcome an addiction to morphine, a process which requires great willpower and bravery.

Because Mrs. Dubose is an old woman and because she is sick, she can speak her mind more loudly and honestly than most members of the community. Her age and infirmity place her slightly outside of the regular social codes. In this way she is free to express her disapproval of Atticus' actions. Many other people feel the way she does, but up until this point only children have been impolite enough to express their feelings. It is difficult for the children to hear this, and they rely on Atticus' strength and wisdom to help them through this difficult time.

The children's interaction with Mrs. Dubose becomes an important part of their education. Although at first she seems only to be cantankerous and antagonizing, through Atticus they learn of her considerable strength of character. They also learn by her example the true meaning of bravery.

Although Chapter 11 is an episode complete within itself, the plot of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is largely a progressive plot; the reader must complete the book to resolve all the conflicts.

The imagery used by the author helps give the experience of reading to Mrs. Dubose a Gothic air. Jem states that the inside of Mrs. Dubose's is "all dark and creepy. There's shadows and things on the ceiling. . . ."

Fears and superstitions are once again important in Chapter 11. However, in this case, the fear centers around Mrs. Dubose's home and its inhabitants, not the Radley Place and the Radleys.

## **Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Characters**

Reverend Sykes: pastor of First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church.

Lula: contentious member of First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church.

### **Summary**

Part Two of *To Kill a Mockingbird* begins with Chapter 12. The focus shifts from the ghosts and superstitions associated with the Radleys to Tom Robinson.



### The children at church

The children's growth and development are evident as time passes. Atticus has to spend time in Montgomery, so the children are left alone with Calpurnia more and more. One Sunday Calpurnia takes the children to church with her. The children find that they are not warmly accepted by all members of the First Purchase African M.E. Zion Church.

The children find similarities—and differences—between the church they normally attend and the church to which Calpurnia takes them. On the way home, the children get to know Calpurnia better. They begin to regard her as a fine friend and as a real person with a life separate from her life with them.

This chapter has an open ending. The children find Aunt Alexandra sitting in a rocking chair on their porch when they return from church.

### Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 12 there is a new sense of distance growing between Jem and Scout. Scout tells how Jem has “acquired an alien set of values and was trying to impose them on me.” Scout says that he has “acquired a maddening air of wisdom” and “several times he has even told me what to do.”

In this chapter, the children once again see evidence of the trouble which can ensue when someone tries to see the world outside of their social circle, or to defy the social codes which fit everyone neatly into an immovable place. They attend church with Calpurnia, and they are surprised at the resistance they meet. They are accosted by a woman named Lula. She questions, “I wants to know why you bringin’ white chilluns to nigger church.” The children find themselves in conflict with others. They are in a different segment of society. They, not Calpurnia or Tom Robinson, are the outsiders this time. They feel the sting of being “out of their place in society.” Jem asks to go home because “they don’t want us here.” Scout agrees. “I sensed, rather than saw, that we were being advanced upon.”

During the sermon Scout hears something which once again makes her feel as if she doesn't quite fit into her supposed place in society. Scout describes the image of the female presented in the sermon that day as the “Impurity of Women Doctrine.” The pastor explains that “Bootleggers cause enough trouble in the Quarters, but women were worse.” Scout believes this view seems to preoccupy all clergymen. Scout must find this image of women as confusing, when all around her are voices trying to teach her to accept her role as a woman. It is difficult for her to resist the urge of society to conform when even Jem tells her, “It’s time you



started bein' a girl and acting right." The reader finds that Scout may be weakening when she says, "I began to think there was some skill involved in being a girl."

Sometimes a character's separation from society is not as self-imposed as Scout's and has more deleterious effects. Helen Robinson has been feeling chastised by the community because of the accusations levelled against her husband. "Helen's finding it hard to get work these days. . . ." The reason for her inability to find work is "because of what folks say Tom's done. . . . Folks aren't anxious to—to have anything to do with any of his family."

Dialect is only one of the stylistic devices employed by Lee in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and particularly in Chapter 12. In this chapter the children discover that Calpurnia leads a double life and uses two languages. When Scout asks her "why do you talk nigger-talk. . . ." Cal explains that those in her church would think she was "putting on airs to beat Moses" if she spoke in her church as she did in the children's home. She further explains that she must change who she is to keep from aggravating them. Sometimes "there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language."

Irony is evident when the children—who have been unaccepted at times in their social groups because their father is defending Tom Robinson—are unaccepted in the very church that Tom attends. Lee uses metaphor (calling something by another name) on page 116:

summer was Dill by the fishpool smoking string, Dill's eyes alive with complicated plans to make Boo Radley emerge; summer was the swiftness with which Dill would reach up and kiss me when Jem was not looking, the longings we sometimes felt each other feel. With him, life was routine; without him, life was unbearable.

The children's education is continued in Chapter 12. This time, however, it is Calpurnia—not Atticus or a school teacher—who instructs Jem and Scout. She takes them to her church, tells them about herself and her education, and advises them on how to get along with others.

Chapter 12 reminds the reader that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a novel of maturation (Bildungsroman). The lessons the children learn in this chapter help them to grow and mature. Calpurnia begins to call Jem, "Mister Jem." She tells Scout that "Mister Jem's growing up. He's gonna want to be off to himself a lot now, doin' whatever boys do. . . ."

Prejudice is a dominant theme in Part Two of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In this chapter the children face discrimination at the First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church. They also note the different feelings about Atticus—for instance in the Montgomery paper and in the very church in which Tom Robinson is a member. Helen Robinson also feels the sharp edge of discrimination.

## Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Aunt Alexandra moves in with Scout, Jem, and Atticus "for a while" in order to give Scout some "feminine influence." When Atticus returns from Montgomery, he explains to the children why his sister is staying. Scout narrates, however, that Aunt Alexandra's presence is "not so much Atticus' doing as hers."

Maycomb welcomes Aunt Alexandra. She becomes a resident expert on the people of Maycomb and their ancestors, and she tries to instill in the children an appreciation for their own ancestors. Scout remarks that they have already heard of one of these: Cousin Joshua "who went round the bend."

After hearing Scout's opinion, Aunt Alexandra tries to enlist the help of Atticus in teaching the children to value their heritage. Atticus attempts to tell them of their ancestry, but he concludes by saying, "I don't want you to remember it." As he leaves the room, he says, "Get more like Cousin Joshua every day, don't I?"

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Chapter 13, we see Atticus trying to teach his children their place in society, but we also see that he is very uncomfortable with this task. Atticus tries to obey Alexandra and tell the children about the family, but he feels uncomfortable "bragging" about something over which he has no control. Scout is just as uncomfortable trying to follow Alexandra's instructions for realizing her place in society. But she follows Atticus' example and tries to control her temper.

In Chapter 13 Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. Repetition is used to drive home a point. It is significant that both Atticus and Jem use one phrase several times in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Both make use of the line, "It's not time to worry." We hear Jem using that line at the fire on two occasions and Atticus using that line as he discusses the trial with the children, as Scout asks him about Jem and Mrs. Dubose, and during the day that the rabid dog came to their street. The line used by Atticus tends to dispel any sense of foreboding on the part of Scout and the reader. Most readers trust Atticus because they have seen him at work when the rabid dog was in the neighborhood and when he tries to rush the sheriff into action. Like the children, the reader now believes Atticus will let the children (and the reader) know when it is time to worry.

The writer uses an element of surprise when she allows Atticus to take back his words in support of the family "heritage" at the end of Chapter 13. "I don't want you to remember it. Forget it." Atticus reappears in the doorway and adds humor to the otherwise tense situation. His raised eyebrows and slipped glasses add humor to his remarks, "Get more like Cousin Joshua [who was locked up] every day, don't I? Do you think I'll end up costing the family five hundred dollars?" Scout, too, adds humor to the chapter when Alexandra begins to explore seriously the family tree. Scout asks Aunt Alexandra if the "beautiful character" is the family member who was locked up so long when he "went round the bend at the University."

In this chapter we see two examples of Atticus' rejection of the standard social codes. First of all we see it in his lessons to his children. At first he attempts to teach them their accepted role in society, according to his sister's wishes. But he is uncomfortable with this, and he returns to his initial style of teaching by example, showing his children through his own actions the importance of being true to one's values. In his own life, this belief leads to his second kind of bravery. He prepares to defend Tom Robinson despite the opposition of most of Maycomb and despite the fact that he feels certain of the jury's verdict.

## **Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis**

### **Summary**

The previously serene Finch household is thrown into disarray. The townspeople oppose Atticus' defending Tom Robinson and are making comments. When Scout hears the word "rape" and asks Atticus what it means, he gives a legal definition. This delicate situation is followed by Scout's request to visit Calpurnia—which Aunt Alexandra immediately vetoes. When Scout tells Aunt Alexandra that she had not been asked, Atticus chastises Scout.



Jem and Scout find that Dill is hiding under the bed.

Jem motions for Scout to follow him upstairs where he explains to her that Atticus and Aunt Alexandra have “been fussing.” Scout realizes she has never heard anyone quarrel with Atticus. Jem asks Scout not to antagonize Aunt Alexandra since Atticus has “got a lot on his mind now, without us worrying him.” Jem tells Scout if she antagonizes their aunt, he will spank her. Scout curses Jem and a fight ensues which brings Atticus to separate them. Aunt Alexandra mutters “just one of the things I’ve been telling you about.”

The remark from Aunt Alexandra reunites the two children. When Scout walks to her bed she steps on something which she believes is a snake. When Jem brings a broom they find that Dill has run away from home and is hiding under her bed. The children get him a pan of cornbread and once he’s satisfied his hunger he weaves stories about how he came to Maycomb from Meridian. The children convince him to tell Atticus that he has run away. When Miss Rachel is told of Dill’s adventures, she raises cries of concern. Atticus sums up the night as going “from rape to riot to runaways.”

That night Dill climbs into bed with Scout. He explains to her why he ran away and how he actually got to the town of Maycomb. Their conversation concludes with speculations as to why Boo has never run away from home. They decide that he had no place to go.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The tension that the Finch family faces because of the Robinson trial is beginning to wear on their nerves and cause conflicts between them. One example is that Scout and Jem feel pitted against each other at times. Another example is that Dill competes with a new father-figure to win the attention of his mother. When Alexandra tries to tell Atticus to fire Calpurnia, once again we see character-against-character conflict. The children unite themselves against Alexandra when they overhear her remark to Atticus that their scuffling is “just one of the things I’ve been telling you about.”

In this chapter we see more evidence of Jem struggling to become an adult. At one moment he is trying to behave as a responsible adult and cautioning Scout not to worry Atticus. A few minutes later he is fighting with Scout, and Atticus has to come to separate the two. A little later Jem is behaving as a responsible adult by bringing Atticus into the room to show him that Dill is there.

Many of the people in Maycomb are opposed to Atticus's representing Tom Robinson. Atticus is determined to do what he himself thinks is right despite their opposition. He sets himself against Maycomb society. In the face of the serious problems, Alexandra continues to worry about more trivial ones and pushes for Scout to assume a more lady-like role and to remember her breeding. Dill's parents, too, expect him to behave like a boy and not be underfoot all the time. Scout, Atticus, and Dill all fail to live up to the expectations of society.

In Chapter 14 the reader continues to see the emergence of the maturational novel, especially through the character of Jem. Scout and Dill, however, continue to possess an air of innocence—which is especially evident when the two lie in bed and discuss where babies come from.

## Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Braxton Bragg Underwood: sole owner, editor, and printer of *The Maycomb Tribune*.

Mr. Walter Cunningham: the father of Walter Cunningham and a member of the mob which appears at the jail.

Dr. Reynolds: the family doctor of the Finch family and most of the people in Maycomb.

### Summary

After numerous calls, much pleading, and a letter, Dill finally receives permission to remain in Maycomb. Scout says that they only had “a week of peace together. . . . A nightmare was upon us.”



Atticus reads the paper

A group of men from Maycomb visit Atticus at home on Saturday night to tell him that they are uneasy about Tom in the jail. They question Atticus's motives for taking the case. Atticus tells them that he will continue to help Tom and will see that the truth is told in court. At this point the crowd approaches Atticus. Jem breaks the tension by telling him that the phone is ringing.

After a quiet Sunday afternoon, Atticus leaves the house. The three children follow him and find him at the jail, sitting outside with a long extension cord and a light at the end. A mob gathers at the jail just after the children arrive. As the men in the mob move menacingly forward, the children make the presence known. Atticus orders the children to leave, but they refuse. One of the men threatens Jem, and they give Atticus 15 seconds to get the kids out.

Scout defuses a tense situation by talking directly to Mr. Walter Cunningham—a member of the mob—and reminding him of his ties to the Finch family. She reminds him that his son Walter is her classmate. Mr. Cunningham orders the mob to get going.

After the mob leaves, the Finches and Dill find that Underwood had them covered with his shotgun the whole time. Dill carries Atticus's chair as they all walk home together.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In this chapter we see what a dangerous position Atticus has put himself in by defying certain social codes. This is especially evident during a confrontation in front of the jail. The mob which opposes Tom for his supposed "crime" and his color demands that Atticus move out of the way so that they can enter the jail. Atticus refuses to stir. A less violent example of character-against-society conflict occurs when the children want to look out the window at the company. Alexandra cautions Jem not to "disgrace the family." She also expresses her concern with "Southern womanhood." Atticus, however, relegates it all to its proper perspective when he says he is, "in favor of Southern womanhood as much as anybody, but not for preserving polite fiction at the expense of human life."

In Chapter 15 we see how people who constitute a mob often act very differently than they would alone—even to the point of defying their morals. Individual members of the mob must have felt pulled in varying directions. Walter Cunningham clearly faces a conflict of interests in the chapter. He is a member of the mob, but he is faced with his individuality when Scout singles him out and talks with him. He becomes a leader—not just a member—of the mob. He orders the men to leave and chooses right even though he is in the minority.

Repetition is an important device in Chapter 15. Scout tells the reader about Atticus's "dangerous question" which always precedes action on Atticus's part. The action may be jumping an opponent's game pieces in checkers or winning an argument. The question is "Do you really think so?" Each time the reader sees it, they know that something is going to happen. Atticus asks the question twice in the chapter.

In this chapter we see the bravery of children pitted against the cowardliness of mob members. Scout and Jem turn out to be the real heroes when they break the tension on two occasions. When the men begin to move ominously toward Atticus, Jem deliberately breaks the tension by telling Atticus that the phone is ringing. Scout breaks the tension when she singles out a member of the mob and talks with him about his child. Scout shows her bravery when she physically attacks the man who grabs Jem by the collar. Atticus is determined to protect the man he is defending even in the face of a mob; this is bravery. Mr. Cunningham's bravery is evident when he steps out from the mob and tells the group to go home.

# Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

## New Characters

**Judge Taylor:** presides over the session of court in which Tom Robinson is to be tried.

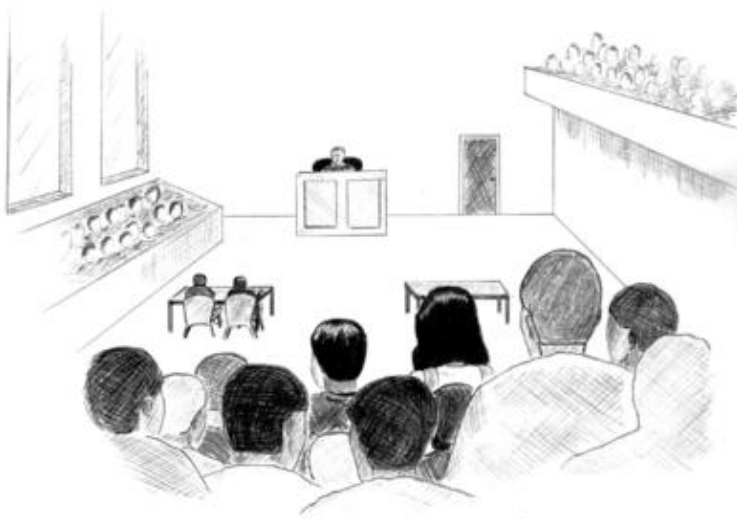
**Mr. Dolphus Raymond:** a white man who sits with the black people and who has “a colored woman and all sorts of mixed chillun.”

**Foot-washers:** a man and his wife who belong to a church which is conservative and practices the washing of feet.

**Idlers’ Club:** old men who spend their last days idling on benches on the town square and who serve as courthouse critics.

## Summary

Jem, Scout, and Atticus come home on Sunday night after Aunt Alexandra is in bed. They coast into the carhouse and enter the house without a word. As Scout begins to drift into sleep, she sees Atticus standing in the middle of an empty street pushing up his glasses. She begins crying, but Jem does not tease her about it.



## In the courtroom

The next morning appetites are very delicate. Alexandra complains that the children were out late the night before, but Atticus says that he is glad that they had come along. When Aunt Alexandra says that Mr. Underwood was there all the time, Atticus says that it was strange that Underwood was there since “He despises Negroes, won’t have one near him.” Alexandra chastises Atticus for talking “like that in front of them.” Atticus responds that Calpurnia knows how important she is to the family and that he is sure she knows about Mr. Underwood also.

Atticus talks about the fact that the mob is really made of people. He praises Scout’s actions and suggests that the police force should be made up of children.

Jem, Dill, and Scout stand in their yard after breakfast and watch the steady parade of people going to the trial. Jem calls their names and tells a bit about each to Dill. None of these characters actually speak except the foot-washers, who hurl Bible verses at Miss Maudie. She throws a verse back in their direction.

Miss Maudie is working in her yard, but Miss Stephanie says she is going to the courthouse. Miss Maudie smilingly cautions Miss Stephanie to be careful that she does not get a subpoena since she knows so much about the case.

Jem explains to the other two about Mr. Dolphus Raymond's habit of drinking whiskey and about his "colored woman and all sorts of mixed chillun." Jem advises the others that "around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black."

That afternoon the three slip away to the courthouse. Scout hears the Idlers' Club of old men sitting on benches in the square talking about Atticus. Scout finds out that the court appointed Atticus to defend Tom Robinson.

When the children find that there are no seats available downstairs in the courthouse, Reverend Sykes invites them upstairs. The children are able to see everything well from the balcony. Judge Taylor, they find, permits smoking in his courtroom and he munches on a dry cigar himself. When the children get to their seats, the first witness is already on the stand. Mr. Heck Tate is speaking.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Chapter 16, all of the tension that was mounting seems to burst, as the day of the trial finally arrives. This is apparent even between or among the characters. Atticus has tried to be patient and understanding with his sister, but in this chapter he almost gives in to anger. He restrains himself, however, and Scout notices his feelings only as a subtle change in his behavior towards Alexandra, a "digging in." Scout herself gives in to the fear and confusion she feels and bursts with tears. Jem recognizes her emotions, because although he hears her crying he "is nice about it" and does not make fun of her or remind her that she is too old to cry.

In this chapter we meet several characters who live outside of society because they choose to. Mr. Dolphus Raymond is one. He lives outside of town and he has "a colored woman and all sorts of mixed chillun." This opens him to much criticism and speculation from the community. Miss Maudie, although she functions comfortably in society, is not afraid to speak her mind when someone tries to criticize her. When the foot-washing Baptists openly harangue her as they drive by her house, she is quick to respond with their own ammunition—quoting pertinent Biblical passages to them.

A more tragic example of people who are outside of society through no power or choice of their own are the children of black and white parents. Jem describes how they don't quite fit any place in society. They are treated worse than even those who occupy the lowest positions in the social structure. They are ignored and neglected.

Jem and Scout find themselves out of their usual social position in this chapter, but comfortably so. When there is no room for them to sit downstairs in the courtroom, they are welcomed into the balcony where the black people sit. Both literally and metaphorically this gives them a new perspective on the trial.

In Chapter 16 Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. Repetition is used when Atticus says that Scout made Mr. Cunningham "walk in his shoes" or skin. Scout uses a comparison when she compares Atticus' meeting the mob with Atticus's meeting the rabid dog. Characters in the chapter continue to use 1930s Southern dialect. For example, Jem speaks of "Co-Cola."

The classroom for Chapter 16 is the yard as the children watch the people pour into town and the courtroom itself. The theme of maturation is evident when Scout asks for coffee, a symbol of maturation. Calpurnia says at first Scout is too little, but she relents and gives her coffee mixed with milk, a symbol of increased maturity.

# Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

## New Characters

Mr. Gilmer: the solicitor.

Robert E. Lee Ewell: the father of the victim of Tom's alleged rape.

## Summary

Chapter 17 is a record of the court proceedings as told from Scout's point of view. The reader hears Mr. Tate tell about the day he was called to see Mayella. Mr. Ewell, the father of the victim allegedly raped by Tom, is also cross-examined. He testifies that he saw Tom raping Mayella.

Reverend Sykes wants to send Scout home when Ewell describes certain explicit parts of the alleged rape, but Jem assures him that she does not understand.

The chapter concludes with Robert Ewell's testimony during which it is proved that he is left-handed. Scout comments that this shows that Ewell himself could have beaten Mayella and caused the bruises on the right side of her face, but she cautions Jem and the reader not to count their chickens before they are hatched.

## Discussion and Analysis

This chapter is very tense as witnesses are questioned. The reader senses the conflict and knows a life is at stake. At one point Atticus argues with Mr. Gilmer. The tension increases when Mr. Ewell testifies. He seems to be careful as he speaks so that he will not be caught in a lie. He seems to have trouble understanding Atticus's questions at many points. One wonders if he might be wrestling with his conscience, but such a struggle does not openly reveal itself.

Atticus is defending Tom against the white society in Maycomb. Like many Southern towns, they seem to hold white women on a pedestal. When the white "victim" says that Tom has beaten and raped her, he is pitted against the society which seems to take any white woman's word over that of any black person.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* continues to be a maturational novel. When the testimony becomes explicit, Judge Taylor receives a request that women be cleared from the courtroom, but he decides to delay. The Reverend Sykes is concerned that Scout should leave also, because she might understand. Scout is still innocent, but she tries to appear more mature than she is. She tells the Reverend she does indeed understand, but Jem is able to convince the Reverend that she does not; both the children are, therefore, able to stay.

In Chapter 17 Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. She uses a malapropism to create humor and relieve tension during the courtroom drama. For instance, when Mr. Ewell is asked if he is ambidextrous, he says that he can use one hand as well as the other. Lee uses onomatopoeia when Scout says the sound of the gavel is "pink-pink-pink." The 1930s Southern dialect (everyday speech) is the speech of the people in the courtroom. For example, "was fetched by Bob—by Mr. Bob Ewell Yonder, one night—"

# Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

## New Character

Mayella Ewell: the alleged rape victim.

## Summary

Chapter 18 is primarily an account of Mayella Ewell's testimony. When Mr. Gilmer begins his questioning, Mayella does not answer his questions about the alleged rape. She tells the judge that she is frightened by



Atticus. As she finally begins to tell her story of what she says happened, she seems to grow in confidence. When Atticus begins his cross-examination, he is patient and calm with Mayella. Mayella admits that her father “does tollable” except when he has been drinking. She contradicts this statement by saying that he has never touched a hair on her head. Mayella says she does not know how Tom did it, but he did take advantage of her. Atticus has Tom stand and asks Mayella to identify him. It is then that the full court can see that Tom has a bad arm.

Atticus concludes his questioning by asking Mayella if Tom or Mr. Ewell was the one who beat her. He asks what Mr. Ewell really saw in the window. Mayella does not answer. Finally Mayella says she has something to add. Her final words are, “That nigger yonder took advantage of me an’ if you fine fancy gentlemen don’t wanta do nothin’ about it then you’re all yellow stinkin’ cowards, the lot of you.”

Atticus says that he has one more witness and the chapter concludes.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Mayella’s testimony is as tense as her father’s was. Mayella seems to see Atticus as her accuser. She claims fear of him in the court.

Mayella tries to testify in a convincing manner. It seems evident to the reader that at times Mayella seems to want to tell the truth, but she struggles to keep to her story. For instance, she admits that her father is “tollable” except when he drinks, but she will not admit that he beats her.

The Ewell family does not really fit into Maycomb society. Mayella is conscious of her lower class background. She feels others are better than she and that they are laughing at her. She is very insecure. Mayella also brings racial conflicts into her testimony. She concludes by saying that “That nigger yonder” raped her and that the jury is a bunch of cowards if they do not find him guilty. She is making the conflict white against blacks, rather than truth against falsehood.

In Chapter 18 Harper Lee depicts faithfully Mayella’s Southern dialect. For instance, she says, “He does tollable. . . .”

The chapter ends as a cliffhanger; the reader must read on to hear Tom’s testimony.

## **Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Character**

Link Deas: the former employer of Tom Robinson.

### **Summary**

Chapter 19 tells of Tom’s examination and a part of his cross-examination. During the examination by Atticus, Tom tells how he helped Mayella on several occasions. He tells how Mayella hugged him about the waist on the day in question, how Mr. Ewell appeared on the scene, and how Tom ran in fear.

At that point Link Deas stands up and announces, “I just want the whole lot of you to know one thing right now. That boy’s worked for me eight years an’ I ain’t had a speck o’trouble outa him. Not a speck.” The judge tells Deas to shut up and throws him out of court.

Mr. Gilmer cross-examines Tom. During the questioning Tom says that he helped Mayella because he felt sorry for her. Scout believes these words are a mistake. Mr. Gilmer calls Tom “boy” each time he addresses him. Suddenly Dill begins to cry and Scout leaves with him. Outside the courtroom they see Mr. Deas. Dill

tries to explain that things do not seem right in the courtroom. Mr. Raymond, who is also waiting outside the courtroom, overhears Dill and approaches to talk with the children.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Tom's testimony and cross-examination is difficult on many levels. Mr. Gilmer adopts an air of hostility against Tom to capitalize on the prejudice already felt against him. This hostility is so strong that even Dill, who probably does not understand its source, can sense it. He breaks into tears and must be taken from the courtroom. In the face of this hostility, Tom attempts to restrain himself and answer the questions properly.

Clearly, Tom seems pitted against many members of the white society as he attempts to respond from the witness stand. Reference is made also to the fact that Mayella is a part of the society that others in Maycomb frown upon. Tom mentions that he feels sorry for her and Scout also makes reference to the fact that Mayella is a member of the lower class and has few friends.

The mockingbird theme is very evident in Chapter 19. Tom has not harmed anyone. Although he was being helpful, he has been treated cruelly.

Examples of Tom Robinson's dialect (everyday speech) abound in the courtroom interrogation. "She says she never kissed a grown man before an' she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don't count." Gilmer's dialect is also evident as he calls Tom "boy" and causes Dill to be sick by his treatment of Tom.

Lee makes use of many stylistic devices to tell her story. For example, Scout employs repetition when she says what Miss Maudie has said earlier about Atticus: "He's the same in the courtroom as he is on the public streets." Harper Lee uses irony subtly when Mayella and Bob Ewell accuse Tom of lusting after a white woman when the reverse is actually true.

Bravery versus cowardice is evident as Atticus and Tom continue to battle for truth and right even though the conclusion seems to be foregone. There is only one reference to Boo Radley and the motif of ghosts and superstitions: a comparison is made between the loneliness of Mayella and that of Arthur. This important theme in Part One has been replaced in Part Two.

## **Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis**

### **Summary**

After visiting with Raymond and finding out that he makes himself out "badder'n" he is already, Dill and Scout rush back into the courthouse. They find that Atticus is finishing up his summary. Atticus talks to the jury as if he were talking to an individual, concluding with the statement, "In the name of God, believe him." Just as he finishes, Calpurnia makes her way down the center aisle of the courtroom.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In this chapter we see a side of human nature which lies below the social codes that people are taught. No matter what role people play in society, they are probably similar underneath. Perhaps the rules of society were set up initially to hide these feelings. Atticus reminds the entire courtroom of the evil side of human nature which everyone faces: the tendency to lie, to do immoral things, and to look with desire on others.

Atticus tries to appeal to the humanity and morality of the jury when he reminds them to do its duty and return Tom Robinson to his home. The jury has a difficult decision to make. Many are fighting their consciences as they determine to convict Tom.

Society in Maycomb involves a caste/racial bias; this bias is evident in the “assumption—the evil assumption—that all Negroes lie. . . .” There is a sex bias in the society of Maycomb; most people in the South put the women on a pedestal. Mayella goes against the expectations of society with her actions. “She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man.” Another example of character-against-society occurs when certain persons try to get ahead. Getting ahead is difficult for them; they have to battle society. Others are able to get ahead more easily. “Some people have more opportunity because they’re born with it. . . .” All types of conflict are evident in Chapter 20.

In Chapter 20 Atticus uses a statement that he used before; this is an example of repetition. He tells the court that his pity for Mayella 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. . . .”

The theme of education is brought out by Atticus in his summation. He says on page 205 that the

most ridiculous example I can think of is that the people who run public education promote the stupid and idle along with the industrious—because all men are created equal, educators will gravely tell you, the children left behind suffer terrible feelings of inferiority.

Mr. Raymond also gives the children a lesson when he says, “Cry about the simple hell people give other people—without even thinking.”

Bravery versus cowardice (a secondary theme) is evident in this chapter as Atticus continues to work toward a goal that he knows is unachievable; according to his definition, he himself is the epitome of true bravery.

## Chapter 21 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Calpurnia comes to the courtroom to tell Atticus that the children are missing. The children go home to eat, but Atticus says that they can return to hear the verdict. Late in the night the jury convicts Tom. As Atticus leaves by the center aisle, Scout notices that “All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall the Negroes were getting to their feet.”

### Discussion and Analysis

As the jury breaks to make its decision, the reader and the characters have time to reflect on all that has happened. Many of the themes which have been explored throughout the novel come together here. This is the climax in Atticus’ long struggle. Because of certain laws in Maycomb society regarding rape and race, the jury’s verdict will undoubtedly be against Tom Robinson. Atticus’ action despite the predetermined result helps him to epitomize bravery. We know that the jury is torn as they cast their votes. They have to choose between what they know is right and what society has taught them to believe.

In Chapter 21 the fulfillment of the mockingbird theme comes to pass. Tom is convicted—but because of his color and not of his guilt. Atticus, who has struggled hard to help Tom, loses the case. The feelings that Scout has in waiting for the decision remind her of a cold morning when the mockingbirds were not singing, a foreshadowing of what is to come.

In Chapter 21 Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. Foreshadowing is employed when Reverend Sykes says, “Now don’t you be so confident, Mr. Jem, I ain’t ever seen any jury decide in favor of a colored man over a white man.” The reader is grateful for this foreshadowing which lessens the blow when the jury declares its verdict. Calpurnia’s 1930s Southern diction (everyday speech) is expressed. “—skin every one of you alive, the very idea, you children listenin’ to all that!”

The characterization is a strong point of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The reader cares what happens to Atticus, Tom, and even to Mayella. Most classics contain this type of characterization. It is the characters that keep classics alive; the plot alone is never sufficient to make a classic.

## Chapter 22 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Jem cries angry tears as Atticus, Scout, Jem, and Dill make their way home. Aunt Alexandra is waiting up for them and she tells Atticus, "I'm sorry Brother." Atticus tells his sister that it is fine that the children experienced the trial because it is as much a part of Maycomb County as her teas. He tells Jem that the thing that happened had happened before and would happen again. Then he asks not to be disturbed the next morning.

On the morning after the trial the Finch family discusses the events of the previous day. Atticus assures the children that there will be an appeal. Calpurnia shows Atticus the chicken that Tom Robinson's father has given to him, and asks the family to go into the kitchen to see the gifts from the community. Atticus wipes his eyes and instructs Calpurnia to tell the friends that times are too hard for them ever to do this again.

The children talk with Miss Maudie later in the morning. Miss Stephanie comes over with her questions and her opinions. Miss Maudie tells her to hush and takes the children inside for cake. She allows Jem to talk about the trial and then gives them some information. She tells them that Judge Taylor named Atticus to defend Tom Robinson for his own reasons. She explained that he could have named Maxwell Green, Maycomb's newest lawyer and one who needed experience.

When the children go outside with Miss Maudie, they see Miss Stephanie and Mr. Avery waving wildly at them. They learn from Miss Stephanie that Bob Ewell has threatened Atticus and has spat in his face.

### Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 22 we see how miserable someone can be if they don't fit into the role society prepares for them. Dill is unhappy and displeased with himself and his life. He wants to please others and himself but finds it very difficult to do both. He announces that his career plans have changed. He plans to become a clown and laugh at people rather than having them laugh at him. Truman Capote after whom Dill is modeled, also experienced the laughter of others because he was considered effeminate.

When Miss Stephanie and Mr. Avery gossip about Atticus and criticize the children for sitting in the "colored balcony," we see a different example of people causing trouble by moving beyond their societal boundaries. Although this seating arrangement was harmless and practical for Scout and Jem, it was shocking in the eyes of the community. In the town of Maycomb racism is a pervasive and poisonous social code.

Harper Lee makes use of stylistic devices in Chapter 22. Scout uses foreshadowing when she remarks the night of the trial that "things are always better in the morning." Harper Lee uses repetition to allow the reader and the children to draw strength from Atticus. He tells Jem and Scout before they go to bed that it is "not time to worry yet." Aunt Alexandra demonstrates sympathy, a side of her nature the reader has not seen before. Chapter 22 has a cliffhanger ending in the threat on Atticus' life.

The chapter presents many people's reactions to the trial of Tom Robinson. The children, especially, were confused and upset by it. The taunting of Mr. Avery and Miss Stephanie only made it more difficult for them. However, when Miss Maudie speaks to them, she tries to teach them a new way to look at the situation. She shows them the subtle ways in which people broke the rules of society in order to help Tom Robinson. She also reinforces once again the strength and bravery of Atticus. Compared to him, Miss Stephanie and Mr.

Avery seem even more cowardly and superficial.

Although some examples of people operating against the expectations society holds for them result in good behavior, Robert Ewell represents the opposite extreme. He lives, literally and figuratively, outside of the community. He seems to represent basest instincts of humanity and acts as a malevolent force when he threatens Atticus. It becomes clear that he considers himself outside the law as well.

## Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Atticus, Jem and Scout discuss the trial and Mr. Ewell. Atticus talks with them about the jury system in Maycomb. After Aunt Alexandra forbids Scout to play with Walter Cunningham, Jem shares his secret (a chest hair) with Scout. He also shares his philosophy of the kinds of folks there are in the world. They discuss Old Family and Scout reaches her conclusion: “there’s just one kind of folks: Folks.” Jem has also figured out that Boo stays inside because he wants to do so.

### Discussion and Analysis

Chapter 23 shows Scout and Jem trying to figure out the intricate construction of the community that they have been learning so much about lately.

The lesson Scout receives in this chapter proves to be extremely upsetting to her. Alexandra refuses to allow her to invite Walter Cunningham to their home. When Alexandra calls Walter “trash,” Scout loses control and Jem leads her sobbing to her room. Scout resists the idea that people are expected to act differently due to their class as strongly as she resists learning behavior that she is expected to adopt because she’s female. Jem explains that Auntie is “trying to make you a lady.”

Once again the Ewells prove how dangerous ignorance can be. Their prejudice is sweeping, they “hate and despise the colored folk.” And now they feel the same about Atticus for making them appear foolish. Bob Ewell responds by making crude and raving threats to Atticus, which Atticus receives with his usual grace and gentility.

In Chapter 23 Harper Lee continues to employ stylistic devices in her writing. Foreshadowing is used when Atticus says after the verdict, “this may be the shadow of a beginning.” Repetition is used when Atticus asks Jem “to stand in Bob Ewell’s shoes a minute”; when he tells Scout, “Not time to worry yet. . .”; and when Jem says again that “It ain’t right.” The chapter begins with humor when Atticus says, “I wish Bob Ewell wouldn’t chew tobacco.” Some examples of the 1930s Southern dialect occur in the speech of Mr. Bob Ewell. For example, Mr. Ewell asks, “Too proud to fight, you nigger-lovin’ bastard?” All conflicts are not resolved by Chapter 23 in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a novel with a progressive plot.

All of the drama and turmoil associated with the trial have given the children a new perspective on Boo Radley. Jem concludes the chapter by saying, “I think I’m beginning to understand why Boo Radley’s stayed shut up . . . it’s because he wants to stay inside.”

## Chapter 24 Summary and Analysis

### New Characters

Mrs. Grace Merriweather, Mrs. Perkins, and Mrs. Farrow: women in attendance at Aunt Alexandra’s missionary circle meeting.

## Summary

Chapter 24 describes the women's missionary circle meeting and the disruptions which occur. Aunt Alexandra has asked Calpurnia and Scout to help with serving at the event. Scout becomes the butt of two jokes. When Scout then asks Mrs. Merriweather about the topic of the meeting, the focus is drawn from Scout for a while. She begins to tell about J. Grimes Everett and his ministry to the Mrunas.



Aunt Alexandra has asked Calpurnia and Scout to help with serving at the missionary circle meeting. The topic of conversation moves to Tom Robinson and his family. Mrs. Merriweather says that she believes if the white folks can forgive that “darky’s wife,” things will blow over in Maycomb.

Mrs. Farrow says that she believes “no lady is safe in her bed these nights.” Mrs. Farrow says that she has shared that information with Mr. Hutson and he agrees with her.

Mrs. Merriweather criticizes the good but misguided people who thought they were doing right “but all they did was stir ‘em up.” She begins to complain about Sophy, her maid. Mrs. Merriweather says that the only reason she keeps Sophy as an employee is because the depression is on and Sophy needs the \$1.25 per week that she pays her. Miss Maudie remarks that Mr. Merriweather does not have trouble eating the food that Sophy cooks. Mrs. Merriweather claims not to understand.

Perfect hostess that she is, Aunt Alexandra begins to pass the food and change the subject, but Mrs. Merriweather begins an attack on Mrs. Roosevelt who tries “to sit with ‘em.”

Scout is thinking of Calpurnia and Calpurnia’s words to Miss Rachel’s cook. Calpurnia tells the cook that Tom is despondent and that Atticus has done all he can to help. Just then a door slams as Atticus returns home. He speaks to the ladies and asks Alexandra to come into the kitchen with him. Miss Maudie and Scout also go into the kitchen.

Atticus has come for Calpurnia. He has just found out that guards have shot Tom Robinson as he is trying to escape and Atticus wants Calpurnia to go with him to tell Tom's widow.

Miss Maudie orders Scout to stop shaking and tells Alexandra that they have left the women alone long enough. The three go back into the living room and the meeting goes on as if nothing happened.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Miss Maudie proves her strength and intelligence once again when she confronts Mrs. Merriweather. Mrs. Merriweather has just said that Atticus is misguided and that the only reason she keeps Sophy is because Sophy "needs her dollar and a quarter every week she can get it." Miss Maudie remarks the Merriweathers do not have trouble eating Sophy's cooking, or Mr. Merriweather's "food doesn't stick going down." She is not afraid to reveal Mrs. Merriweather's hypocrisy.

In this chapter Scout learns that the ability to control one's emotions is necessary not only to become a young lady, but to achieve a level of maturity as a human being. She must struggle with this several times throughout the chapter. Miss Maudie tells Scout to "Stop that shaking." Alexandra, Miss Maudie, and Scout continue with what must be done without regard for themselves and their feelings. At the beginning of the meeting Scout describes how she "sat quietly, having conquered my hands by tightly gripping the arms of the chair. . . ." and waited for someone to speak to her.

The ladies of the missionary circle prove how hypocritical and dangerous social rules can be. Mrs. Merriweather clearly puts her maid Sophy in a different category from her family. She is very opposed to "misguided people" who "stir 'em up." It is, of course, Atticus—a character-against-society—to whom she is referring. Although Scout is clearly not a part of this society, she recognizes that she "must soon enter this world, where on its surface fragrant ladies rocked slowly, fanned gently, and drank cool water."

Through stylistic devices, Harper Lee creates a visual picture of the circle meeting with the talk that goes along with it. One device used by Lee is the innuendo. For example, Scout tells Miss Stephanie that she wants to grow up to be a lady; the implication is that Miss Stephanie is not. Lee uses repetition in her writing to drive home a point. Miss Maudie tells Aunt Alexandra that Atticus is being paid the highest form of respect; the people are trusting him to do right, a point brought out before in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Humor is an important part of the chapter. One example is when Scout is asked where her pants are. She replies that they are under her dress. Irony is evident when the women in the missionary group behave in a cruel manner to Scout, their maids, and even one another. They are concerned with the Mrunas when there are groups in need in Maycomb. They overlook the "sin and squalor" (alliteration) at home and sought to get rid of the sin and squalor abroad. It is also ironic that Mrs. Merriweather says that the people should forgive Tom Robinson's wife.

Aunt Alexandra again demonstrates sympathy. Earlier the reader saw Aunt Alexandra show sympathy to Atticus after the verdict was given; this time her sympathy is in response to the death of Tom Robinson.

## **Chapter 25 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Characters**

Helen Robinson: Tom's wife.

Sam and a little girl: Tom and Helen's children.

## Summary

When Chapter 25 opens, Scout and Jem are on the back porch. Scout is playing with a roly-poly. Jem orders her not to kill the creature. Scout remembers what Jem had told her about his trip to Mrs. Helen Robinson's home.

On the way to the Robinson Place, Calpurnia and Atticus pick up Dill and Jem. Since much happens outside while they are still in the car, they are able to tell Scout exactly what happens. Sam goes to get his mother, Helen. When she asks them in, she sees their faces, knows what has happened, and faints. Atticus and Calpurnia stay inside a long time.

Mr. Underwood writes a bitter editorial in the *Maycomb Tribune*, comparing Tom's death to the "senseless slaughter of songbirds."

The chapter concludes with Ewell's remarks about the death of Tom Robinson: "it made one down and about two more to go."

## Discussion and Analysis

Chapter 25 proves that Maycomb's difficult time did not end with the trial. Tom's death almost seems to prove that it is impossible to oppose or to change the unwritten laws of society—no matter how unjust or dangerous they may be. Mr. Underwood shows great bravery and emphasizes this theme when he does not hesitate to write angrily in his paper about the injustices that have been brought upon the Robinson family—particularly Tom—by the community.

Atticus shows a different kind of bravery when he goes to inform Helen Robinson of her husband's death. This job is one of the most difficult one could have to do. Once again, Atticus shows bravery also in ignoring Bob Ewell's threats. Bob Ewell, on the other hand, proves his ignorance and insensitivity by responding to the news of Tom's death with the phrase "one down and about two more to go."

The theme of the mockingbird is very evident in this chapter. There is a hint of that theme at the beginning of the chapter when Jem will not allow Scout to kill the roly-poly. The theme is very explicit when Mr. Underwood writes of the sin of killing a songbird in his editorial.

The theme of maturation continues to be important in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The reader is made aware that Jem is cognizant of the meaning of many of the events of the past few weeks. They have aged him. Scout remarks on the change: "It was probably just a stage he was going through, and I wished he would hurry up and get through it." At another point Scout remarks upon Jem's charity: "Jem was the one who was getting more like a girl every day, not I."

## Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

### New Character

Miss Gates: Scout's third-grade teacher.

### Summary

Scout is in third grade and Jem is in seventh when this chapter begins. Scout is walking home from school by herself now. She finds that the Radley Place does not hold the terror that it did for her, but she still watches for Mr. Arthur when she passes.

Mrs. Gates uses current events in her third-grade class. On this day the teacher discusses the Jews, Hitler, and the harm that he has done. Scout begins to draw parallels between the Jews and the oppressed in Maycomb.



Scout remembers that Miss Gates was talking after the trial about teaching “em a lesson, and how they were getting way above themselves, and the next thing they will think they can marry us.” When she asks Jem about it, he says he never wants to hear about that courthouse again. Atticus tells her that Jem thinks he is trying to forget something, but he is actually storing it to think about later.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

In Chapter 26, Scout is once again pitted against her teacher as she recognizes her hypocrisy. With a childish clarity of vision, Scout recognizes injustice, but she is confused by the way people cover this up. She goes to Jem to try to understand it all, but he becomes angry and will not discuss it with her. Atticus explains that Jem is trying to forget, but he is actually storing it in his mind until he can sort it out.

It is ironic that Miss Gates opposes what Hitler is doing to the Jews, but she herself is opposed to Tom Robinson’s being acquitted. Scout tells Jem that she overheard Miss Gates saying after the trial that “it’s time somebody taught ‘em a lesson, they were gettin’ way above themselves, an’ the next thing they think they can do is marry us.”

The motif of education is continued in Chapter 26. Scout returns to school; she is now in third grade. Jem is in seventh grade and Scout often discusses things with him since she values his advice. Scout’s true education, however, continues to be outside the classroom. It is a sign of Scout’s own maturity that she is beginning to teach herself. When her teacher confuses her, and Jem refuses to help her, she tries to sort things out on her own. Another sign that she is growing is that she is no longer plagued with childish fears of the Radley Place.

Harper Lee makes use of symbolism. The tree is swelling around the cement patch and seeking to dislodge it. Mr. Radley put the patch on the healthy tree, just as his father tried to change his healthy son Arthur. Perhaps Arthur will reject the alteration just as the tree is rejecting its alteration.

Lee employs the simile when she compares the events of the summer hanging over them to “smoke in a closed room.”

## **Chapter 27 Summary and Analysis**

### **New Characters**

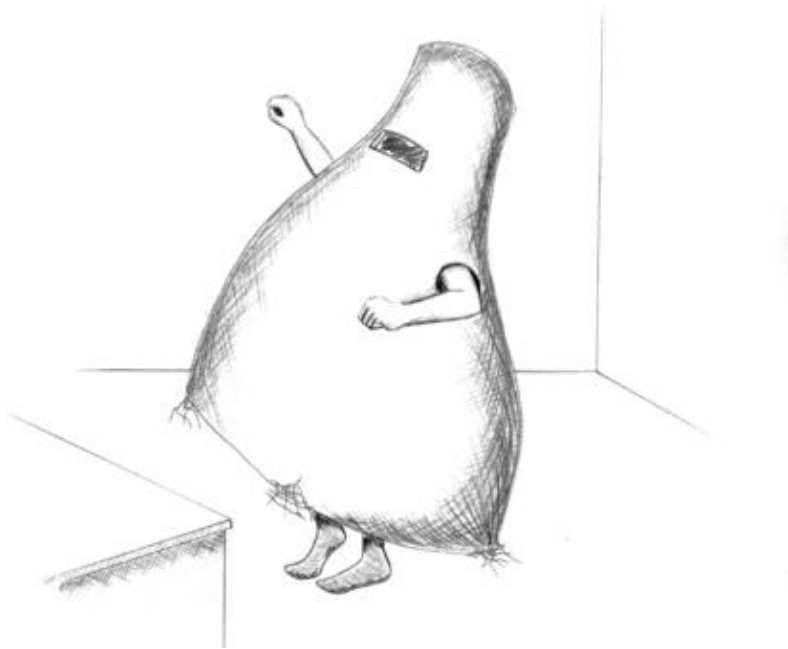
Ruth Jones: the welfare woman who says Mr. Ewell accused Atticus of getting his job.

Mrs. Crenshaw: the local seamstress.

The Barber sisters: two deaf and elderly women who live together.

### **Summary**

Chapter 27 describes three unusual events: Mr. Ewell gets a job and accuses Atticus of causing him to lose it; someone tries to break into Judge Taylor’s house; and when Helen Robinson goes to work for Link Deas, the Ewell family throws rocks at her as she walks past their home. Mr. Deas faces Mr. Ewell down and tells him to leave Helen alone.



### Halloween

Two changes have come to Maycomb. The first change is that the National Recovery Act Signs are being removed from the stores. The second change is that Halloween will be an organized affair because of the pranks played on the Barber sisters last year. Scout will be a ham in this year's pageant and will be escorted to the event by her brother.

### Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 27, Bob Ewell makes a futile attempt to become part of the Maycomb community. This is viewed as unnatural and has turbulent results. He loses the job and blames Atticus, although Atticus has nothing to do with it. Ewell also continues to punish those he feels are responsible for his humiliation by breaking into Judge Taylor's house.

Ewell's cowardly attempts to revenge are extended even to Robinson's widow. She has been given a job which leads her past the Ewell house, and he taunts her and follows her. Although her position in society does not give her the strength to defend herself, her employer, Link Deas, shows bravery in defending her. He threatens to bring in the law—the bastion society—and to stop Ewell's petty vigilante revenge attempts once and for all.

Atticus is still trying to understand things from Robert Ewell's perspective. Atticus "crawls in Ewell's skin" and explains to Aunt Alexandra why Ewell is not satisfied with the court decision.

Foreshadowing is used to create suspense as Scout says, "Thus began our longest journey together" and when Aunt Alexandra says, "somebody just walked over my grave."

## Chapter 28 Summary and Analysis

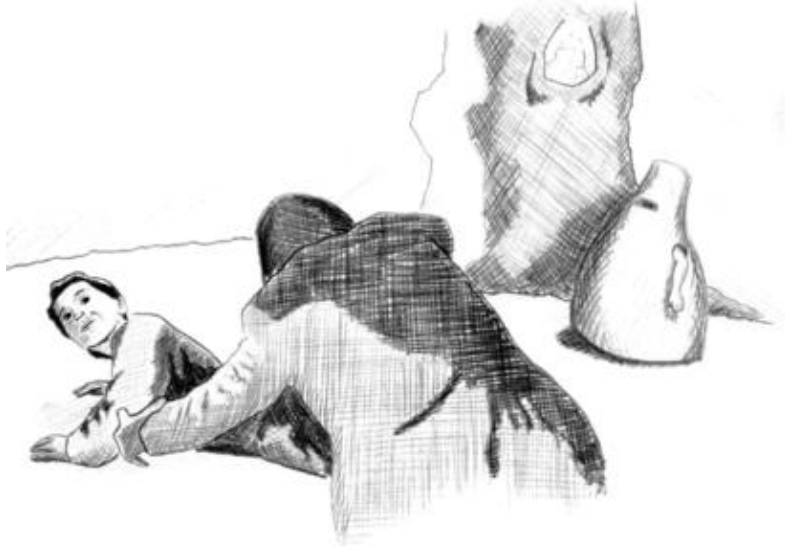
### New Character

Dr. Reynolds: the family physician who examines Jem and Scout after the pageant.

### Summary

Chapter 28 describes events before, during, and after the pageant. Jem and Scout are frightened by Cecil

Jacobs on the way to the Halloween celebration. Scout makes a late entrance on stage during the pageant. The children are attacked by Bob Ewell on the way home, but someone comes to their aid and carries Jem home. Scout follows. Aunt Alexandra calls the doctor who finds that Jem's arm is broken. Sheriff Tate finds Mr. Ewell lying under the oak with a knife in his chest.



The children are attacked by Bob Ewell on the way home.

#### **Discussion and Analysis**

Chapter 28 shows Ewell sinking to a new low in his desperate attempts for revenge. Because he lives outside of society, he cannot utilize the law. Because of his ignorance, he cannot engage Atticus in rational discussion. Instead, he strikes out at those whom Atticus cares about the most—his innocent and vulnerable children.



### Atticus and Boo

Harper Lee uses a false climax in her writing. On the way to the pageant, the children are frightened by someone. The reader expects danger but it turns out to be only Cecil Jacobs, a boy in Scout's class.

The theme of ghosts and the supernatural is evident from the beginning of the chapter. The first lines refer to the Radley Place and Halloween—with no moon. Harper Lee—through Scout—describes the scary walk to the high school auditorium and the even more frightening walk home.

The theme of bravery is evident in this chapter. The children show bravery through the walk to and from the auditorium, but the real hero—who is not revealed explicitly at this time—is the one who assists them in the scuffle after the pageant.

## Chapter 29 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

After Aunt Alexandra goes to bed, the sheriff, the doctor, Atticus, and Scout discuss the night's events. Only after Scout tells the story, does she notice Boo in the corner. She speaks to him face to face for the first time.

### Discussion and Analysis

Boo Radley has made the choice to appear in public to save the lives of the Finch children. His fight to remain apart from society has been subjected to his fight for right. Ironically, this is the opposite decision from the one Atticus had to make in defending Tom Robinson. Atticus' decision to fight for right didn't draw him into society but rather threatened to cut him off from it. For Boo, entering society is a powerful act of bravery.

Stylistic devices continue to be evident in Lee's writing. Aunt Alexandra makes mention again of the foreshadowing she had of the attack. "I had a feeling about this tonight—I—this is my fault. . . ." Mr. Tate's response is a simile: "why, if we followed our feelings all the time we'd be like cats chasin' their tails."

Scout's description of Boo is a hyperbole (exaggeration): "hands that had never seen the sun. . . ." Harper Lee uses imagery in her writing when she describes Boo Radley. At last the reader has an accurate mental image of this recluse, with his white face, his hollow cheeks, and his colorless, gray eyes.

## Chapter 30 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Chapter 30 takes place in Jem's bedroom until Dr. Reynolds appears with a package. Then Boo, Scout, Atticus, and Sheriff Tate go to the porch. Atticus and Sheriff Tate argue about Ewell's death. Atticus says that Jem killed Ewell, but Tate says that Ewell fell on his knife. At last they all agree to Tate's story. They decide on this story to protect Boo and to let the dead bury the dead.

### Discussion and Analysis

The theme of the mockingbird is prominent in Chapter 30. Scout makes an analogy, or a comparison, between putting Boo on trial and killing a mockingbird; she says: "it'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?"

In Chapter 30 we see that perhaps the best way to decide the fate of someone who has always separated himself from society is without the regular societal procedures. It would be possible for Atticus and Heck Tate to have another trial to determine the cause of Bob Ewell's death. Calling in the law would certainly be the conventional legal method. They choose to rely on a different form of justice, however.

Mr. Tate and Atticus know that Boo does not stand a chance against the community. One man is already dead because of Ewell. By his "investigation" of Ewell's death, Mr. Tate tries to make amends for his earlier mistakes which cost Tom his life. Atticus protects Boo by not making him appear in court. The reader sees Atticus willing to allow his son to face the charges of murder in order to hold his head up and to have no whispers about him. All these actions are brave ones.

Repetition figures prominently in the chapter. Atticus wants, in effect, for others to know that Jem lives in the dark as he does in the light—a statement reminiscent of Miss Maudie's earlier comments about Atticus.

## Chapter 31 Summary and Analysis

### Summary

Chapter 31 tells of Boo's visiting Jem and of Scout's taking him home. She remembers the past and realizes that they have in effect been Boo's children through time. She goes to Jem's room and falls asleep as Atticus reads to her. She knows, as Atticus tucks her in, that he will be there through the night and in the morning.

### Discussion and Analysis

The denouement (ending) of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a closed, settled one. There is nothing else to be resolved. All the conflicts are ended: Boo is a friend, Ewell is dead, Scout has given in to sleep, and for the moment the family is safe from society and its pressures.

The maturational motif is evident again when Scout says that "there wasn't much else left for us to learn, except possibly algebra." Scout has matured and has learned to stand in others' shoes. The repetition of a statement by Atticus is important here: "you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes." This statement serves to weave Part One and Part Two together.

# Quizzes

## Chapter 1 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Describe Calpurnia as Scout depicts her in Chapter 1.
2. What does Dill dare Jem to do?
3. What events led to Arthur's being shut into the house?
4. Pretend you are writing a description of Maycomb for a travel magazine of the 1930s. Describe the town in detail.
5. The townspeople of Maycomb have some fears and superstitions about the Radley Place. Describe these fears and superstitions.
6. Whose idea was it to make Boo come out of the house?
7. How important is bravery to Jem?
8. Mr. Connor is described as "Maycomb's ancient beadle." What is a beadle?
9. What goal do the children plan to achieve before the end of the summer?
10. Describe some of the customs of the town of Maycomb.

### Answers

1. Calpurnia has been the cook for the Finch family since Jem was born. Scout describes Calpurnia as all angles and bones, nearsighted, and owning a wide, hard hand which she used to discipline Scout. Scout says Calpurnia is "always ordering me out of the kitchen, asking me why I couldn't behave as well as Jem . . . and calling me home when I wasn't ready to come."
2. Dill dares Jem to touch the Radley house.
3. Arthur and some other boys formed a group which was the nearest thing that Maycomb had ever had to a gang. They hung around the barbershop, rode the bus on Sundays to go to the movies, attended dances at the "gambling hell," and experimented with whiskey.
4. Maycomb is a small Southern town where the residents all know one another. The citizens are primarily law-abiding people. The class system is in effect and there is segregation evidenced by the statement that the sheriff hadn't the heart to put Arthur in "jail alongside Negroes."
5. The people of Maycomb say that Arthur goes out at night after the town is asleep. Many people fear the Radley Place and cross the street to avoid it. Any lost ball in the Radley's yard remains there.
6. It was Dill's idea to make Boo come out of his house.
7. Scout says that Jem always takes a dare. Bravery is of great importance to him. It is because of his need to

be brave that Jem runs into the Radley yard and slaps the house.

8. A beadle is a crier or officer of the court. Mr. Connor is evidently a bailiff of the court.

9. Before the end of the summer the children run out of ideas for play. Dill gives them the idea to make Boo Radley come out of his house.

10. On Sundays the people of Maycomb go visiting; the ladies wear their Sunday best for this event. The Radleys do not participate, however; they keep their shades drawn to discourage visitors. The pace on Sundays in Maycomb is slow; the citizens scorn activities like picture shows on Sundays. When serious illness comes to a family, sawhorses are put up to cut down on traffic and noise. Straw is put in the street to cut down the noise of those who must use the street. The primary social events in the town are church-related activities.

## Chapter 2 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Who is Scout's first grade teacher?
2. What is the Dewey Decimal System?
3. What events lead to the conflict between Scout and Miss Caroline?
4. Why is Mrs. Blount, the sixth-grade teacher, angry with Miss Caroline?
5. How does Scout learn to read?
6. The students in the class show some prejudice against Miss Caroline when she tells the class she is from Winston County, Alabama. Explain this prejudice.
7. How does Miss Caroline contradict herself about the use of imagination?
8. How does Miss Caroline contradict herself in her views on teaching reading?
9. How does Scout learn to write?
10. Describe the Cunningham family.

### Answers

1. Miss Caroline is Scout's first-grade teacher.
2. The Dewey Decimal System is a way of arranging library books and materials. It is not a way to teach reading, as Jem mistakenly explains.
3. Scout finds disfavor with Miss Caroline, first of all, when she reads aloud from *The Mobile Register* and from *My First Reader*. Later, when Scout tries to explain the Cunningham philosophy, she angers Miss Caroline even more.
4. Miss Blount says the sixth grade cannot concentrate on their study of the pyramids because of the noise in the first-grade class. She is angry with Miss Caroline Fisher for allowing—and possibly contributing to—the

chaos.

5. Scout learns to read by climbing into Atticus's lap and watching his finger move underneath the print of whatever he might be reading.
6. Miss Caroline is from North Alabama, from Winston County. On January 11, 1861, when Alabama seceded from the Union, Winston County did not condone this action; it seceded from Alabama. The rest of the state was still angry with Winston County 70 years later. In addition, the rest of the state believed that the county "was full of Liquor Interests, Big Mules, steel companies, Republicans, professors, and other persons of no background."
7. Miss Caroline reads a very imaginative story to the students about chocolate malted mice and cats with clothes. The farm children are not at all impressed with the story. Later when Scout is telling about a change in her family name, Miss Caroline will not listen. Miss Caroline admonishes Scout; "Let's not let our imaginations run away with us, dear. . . ."
8. Miss Caroline says that Atticus "does not know how to teach"; yet Scout is reading well—even the stock-market quotations. She tells Scout that "It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind." Scout, however, is not a beginning reader but a good one. Miss Caroline advocates the Language Experience Approach which uses sight words on cards; she does not advocate the phonics method which uses the alphabet and has the students sound out words. Scout seems to know the letters and is reading by that method, but Miss Caroline wants to change her way of reading.
9. Scout learns to write at the kitchen table with Calpurnia setting her a writing task. Calpurnia would write the alphabet across the top of a tablet and then copy a Bible chapter beneath. Scout's task would be to copy the material satisfactorily. A reward of a bread, butter, and sugar sandwich would be doled out if Calpurnia considered the task well-done.
10. The Cunningham family is a poor family. They are so poor that Scout believes that Walter "had probably never seen three quarters together at the same time in his life." Despite the lack of material possessions, the Cunninghams have a reputation to uphold. They never take anything they cannot pay back. They even refuse church baskets and scrip stamps. The family does not have much, but they get along with what they have. When they use Atticus' services, they pay him back with stovewood, hickory nuts, smilax, holly, and turnip greens. The Cunninghams have pride in their land and go hungry to keep it and to vote as they please.

## Chapter 3 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Describe Burris Ewell.
2. Little Chuck Little tells the teacher that Mr. Ewell is "right contentious." What does this mean?
3. What events lead to Burris's leaving school before the day is over?
4. Why does Atticus say that Scout is not to mention the compromise they made when she goes to school?
5. What is a cootie?
6. Why does Walter think he almost died the first year in school?



7. Why does Atticus say Scout should ignore Jem in the tree house?
8. When Walter gets near the Finch house, Scout says he “had forgotten he was a Cunningham.” What does she mean?
9. What does it mean to “climb into his skin and walk around in it?”
10. Tell what a compromise is and give an example.

### Answers

1. Burris was the filthiest human Scout had ever seen. His neck was dark grey and his nails were black into the quick. He was rude to the teacher and said that she could not make him do anything he did not want to do.
2. He meant that Mr. Ewell was quarrelsome.
3. First, Miss Caroline saw a “cootie” on him. Then she dismissed him for the rest of the day to go home and wash his hair in lye soap and kerosene; she also reminded him—in front of the class—to bathe before coming back to school. After he tells her he will not be back, she asks him to sit down. Burris refuses and is confronted by Chuck. Miss Caroline tells him to go home or she will get the principal. Burris reminds her impolitely that she cannot make him do anything. He waits until he is sure she is crying, and then he shuffles off home. Burris always quits school the first day.
4. Atticus says at first that the learned authorities would receive their activities with “considerable disapprobation,” or disapproval. He translates it to mean that he does not want Miss Caroline after him.
5. A cootie is another name for a head or body louse.
6. Walter thinks he almost died from eating poisoned pecans.
7. He tells her one should ignore some things. This is a type of behavior modification.
8. Walter has quickly forgotten that the Cunninghams do not accept that which they cannot repay. He is eager to eat!
9. Atticus is merely trying to get Scout to put herself in someone else’s position.
10. A compromise is an agreement reached by two parties; often some concessions must be made by one or both of the parties. An example from *To Kill a Mockingbird* is when Atticus and Scout decide to continue to read each night if Scout will go to school.

## Chapter 4 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is the first present Scout finds in the tree?
2. When Dill says that he helped engineer the train, Jem says, “In a pig’s ear you did, Dill.” What does this mean?
3. Why has “Calpurnia’s tyranny, unfairness, and meddling . . . faded to gentle grumblings of general disapproval,” according to Scout?

4. What does Jem call Miss Caroline's teaching methods?
5. What is the second present found in the tree?
6. Who is the "meanest old woman that ever lived"?
7. When Atticus asks the children if their game pertains to the Radleys, Jem says "No sir." Atticus merely responds, "I hope it doesn't." Why does he stop the conversation at that point?
8. How do cowardice and bravery figure into Scout's taking part in the dramas about the Radley family?
9. What is the meaning of the following: "Dill was a villain's villain . . . "?
10. What is a Hot Steam?

### Answers

1. Scout finds chewing gum in the tree first.
2. The idiomatic expression "In a pig's ear" means "impossible."
3. Scout's attitude—rather than Calpurnia's behavior—may be the reason for the statement. Scout is spending less time with Calpurnia; possibly they miss each other. Scout is also growing and maturing; this is probably a principal reason for their improved relationship. Scout herself admits that she "went to much trouble, sometimes, not to provoke her."
4. He calls it the Dewey Decimal System.
5. Indian-head pennies are the second gifts found in the tree.
6. Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose is the "meanest old woman that ever lived."
7. Atticus may have been following his own lesson: ignore the behavior and it will go away. Atticus did not usually forbid the children to do anything. Rather he posed things in such a way that they could make their own decision.
8. Scout is at first frightened to participate in the dramas. Jem and Dill accuse her of being afraid. After the incident with Atticus, Scout is hesitant about playing again. Jem accuses her of "being a girl."
9. The statement "Dill was a villain's villain" means that Dill is good in the role; he can play a villain to the degree that even a real villain would be pleased with the performance.
10. A Hot Steam can be detected if one is walking along a lonesome road at night and comes to a hot place. The Hot Steam is actually someone who cannot get into heaven and just stays in lonely places. If a person walks through the Hot Steam, the person will become Hot Steam after death and perhaps even suck the breath from people.

## Chapter 5 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. When Scout begins to drift away from the boys, with whom does she spend much time?

2. Why does Miss Maudie hate her house?
3. Why do the children have faith in Miss Maudie?
4. How do the children try to send the message to Boo?
5. What does Miss Maudie mean when she says Atticus is the same in his house as he is on the public streets?
6. What does Uncle Jack yell at Miss Maudie each Christmas?
7. Atticus uses something like a threat when he finds the children trying to get a note to Boo Radley. What is the threat?
8. Uncle Jack Finch says the “best defense to her [Miss Maudie] was spirited offense.” What does he mean by that?
9. What does Miss Maudie mean when she says that the things told about Arthur Radley are “three-fourths colored folks and one-fourth Stephanie Crawford”?
10. What gesture of friendship cements Miss Maudie’s and Scout’s relationship?

### **Answers**

1. Scout begins to spend time with Miss Maudie Atkinson.
2. She considers time spent indoors time wasted. She prefers to spend as much time as possible working in her garden.
3. She has never told on them; she has always been honest with them; she does not pry.
4. The children try to send a message by tying it on a fishing line.
5. She means that Atticus is a man of integrity; the face he presents in public does not differ from the face he presents at home.
6. He yells for Miss Maudie to come out and marry him.
7. He threatens Jem with the possibility that Jem may not become a lawyer.
8. Jack means that he would tease Miss Maudie before she could tease him.
9. She means that most of the things told about Arthur are superstition and gossip.
10. Miss Maudie pushes out her false teeth for Scout to see.

## **Chapter 6 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What is Mr. Avery’s claim to fame?
2. What is the children’s new plan in Chapter 6?

3. Where do the children sleep in the summer?
4. What are some of the nicknames that Jem gives Scout?
5. Why do the children spit on the gate?
6. How do you know that Jem respects his father?
7. What does Jem lose when he goes to the Radley Place?
8. What false story does Dill tell about the missing pants?
9. What promise/understanding exists between Scout and Dill?
10. How does Atticus take care of the poker problem?

### **Answers**

1. He can urinate “ten feet” into the yard.
2. The children develop a plan to look in on Arthur Radley.
3. The children often sleep on the porch in the summer.
4. Jem calls Scout “Angel May” and “Little Three-Eyes.”
5. The children spit on the hinge to prevent it from squeaking.
6. The reader knows that Jem respects his father when he braves the Radley Place at night to retrieve his pants. Atticus has never spanked him, and Jem prefers to keep it that way.
7. Jem loses his pants when he goes to the Radley Place.
8. Dill says that the pants were lost in a game of strip poker.
9. They are engaged.
10. He tells the children to settle it themselves.

## **Chapter 7 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What secret does Jem share with Scout?
2. Describe the typical seasons in South Alabama.
3. What is the difference between carving and whittling?
4. What was unusual about Jem’s pants when he retrieved them from the fence?
5. What does Mr. Avery do with the stick of stovewood each week?

6. Why doesn't Miss Maudie chew gum?
7. What do the children leave in the knothole in the tree?
8. What does Mr. Nathan Radley do to the tree where the gifts are placed?
9. Atticus says the tree is healthy. Mr. Nathan Radley says it is sick. When Atticus is told that Nathan had said the tree was sick, what does Atticus say?
10. How does Jem respond to the tree being plugged with cement?

### **Answers**

1. He says that when he returned for his pants, he found them patched and folded on the fence.
2. There is little change in the seasons. Winters are more like autumn than in other parts of the country.
3. Carving is to shape by cutting; whittling is just cutting without trying to make a shape.
4. When Jem retrieved the pants, they had been mended and folded.
5. Mr. Avery whittles the stick of stovewood down to a toothpick.
6. Miss Maudie does not chew gum because it stuck (cleaved) to her palate (the roof of her mouth).
7. Scout and Jem leave a thank-you note in the knothole in the tree.
8. Mr. Nathan fills the hole with cement.
9. He says that Nathan probably knows more about trees than he does.
10. Jem tells Scout not to cry, questions Mr. Nathan, goes to Atticus, and finally cries himself.

## **Chapter 8 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. Who dies in Chapter 8?
2. What is the Rosetta Stone? Why does Scout think Mr. Avery gets his information from it?
3. Why do Jem and Scout feel guilty when Mr. Avery tells them that children who disobey parents, smoke cigarettes, and make war on each other can cause a change in the seasons?
4. Jem and Scout do not have enough snow to build a snow figure. What else do they use?
5. What does Scout ask Atticus after he returns from the Radley Place after Mrs. Radley died?
6. Jem is able to make a snow person without enough snow to build one. What is Atticus's first reaction? His second reaction?
7. How is Miss Maudie able to take an interest in Jem and Scout when her house has just burned?

8. Before the children begin the snowman, what do they borrow from Miss Maudie?
9. Why does Jem not want Scout to walk in the snow or to eat it?
10. Why does Atticus take the children out of the house at 1:00 A.M.?

### **Answers**

1. Mrs. Radley dies in Chapter 8.
2. The Rosetta Stone is a tablet of black basalt found in 1799 at Rosetta, Egypt. Because it has inscriptions in Greek and in ancient Egyptian characters, it is a key to deciphering the ancient Egyptian writing. Scout thinks Mr. Avery gets his outdated information from this stone.
3. Jem and Scout feel guilty because they were not perfect children and had at times disobeyed Atticus. Dill had rolled cigarettes at an earlier point in the book, so there is a possibility that Jem had smoked. The children had waged their own wars against others during the past year.
4. Scout and Jem combined the snow with mud from their own backyard.
5. When Atticus returns from the Radley Place, Scout asks if he had seen Arthur Radley.
6. Atticus praises Jem for the snow figure, but when he sees that it looks like Mr. Avery, he makes the children disguise it.
7. Miss Maudie is able to take an interest in Jem and Scout after her house burns because she values them more than her material possessions.
8. Before the children begin their snow person they borrow snow from Miss Maudie.
9. Jem does not want Scout to walk in the snow or eat it because he considers that a waste of the snow.
10. Miss Maudie's house is on fire and Atticus thinks the children would be safer outside than in the house. He is afraid the fire might spread to their home.

## **Chapter 9 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. Atticus is to defend a member of Calpurnia's church. What is this person's name?
2. What does Scout mean when she says "I was worrying another bone"?
3. Why does Atticus take a case which is causing so much dissension in the neighborhood?
4. How does Aunt Alexandra make Scout unhappy at meal time?
5. Who is Rose Aylmer?
6. Proponents of behavior modification believe that a way to reduce an undesired behavior is to ignore it. Can you think of an undesired behavior in Scout that Atticus sought to extinguish through ignoring it?

7. What is “Maycomb’s usual disease” that Atticus hopes that Scout and Jem will not contract?
8. Why does Jack say that he will never marry?
9. Compare and contrast the Christmas gifts that Jem receives and the gifts that Francis receives.
10. How does Jack punish Scout for fighting with Francis?

### **Answers**

1. Tom Robinson is the member of Calpurnia’s church whom Atticus has agreed to defend.
2. Scout is concerned with something else.
3. He is asked to take the case, but more importantly, he would be ashamed not to do so. He has respect for himself and others.
4. Aunt Alexandra makes Scout unhappy by making her eat at the small table instead of at the big table with Jem and the adults.
5. Uncle Jack’s cat has the name Rose Aylmer.
6. Atticus tries to eliminate Scout’s “cussing” by ignoring it. In fact he tells Jack not to pay any attention to her either.
7. Maycomb’s usual disease is prejudice.
8. He plans never to marry so he will never have children. Scout has been a trial to him over the holidays.
9. Jem receives a chemistry set and an air rifle. Both are things to play with. Francis receives clothes. He also receives one thing to “play with”—a red book bag to carry his school work in. Francis’s gifts are more practical than Jem’s.
10. Jack spansks Scout.

## **Chapter 10 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What action of Atticus’s makes him unpopular with the community?
2. What is a Jew’s Harp?
3. Why does Scout wish her father was “a devil from hell”?
4. Who does Calpurnia warn about the rabid dog?
5. What nickname did Atticus have at one time?
6. Who is Zeebo?
7. What does Atticus break when he went to face the dog?

8. Was it really “a policy of cowardice” that Scout follows when she agrees not to fight anymore about Atticus?
9. Why is Calpurnia supposed to go to the back door at the Radley Place?
10. Why is Miss Maudie upset when Scout talks about Atticus being old?

### **Answers**

1. Defending Tom Robinson against the accusation of rape is unpopular with the community.
2. A Jew’s Harp is a musical instrument played inside the mouth, against the teeth.
3. Scout wants her father to be a devil from hell so she can brag about him to others.
4. Calpurnia warns the Radleys about the rapid dog.
5. He was called One-Shot Finch or Ol’ One-Shot.
6. Zeebo is the driver of the garbage trucks.
7. Atticus breaks his glasses.
8. It is not a cowardly act, as it takes more strength to obey her resolution than to give in to anger.
9. At the time there were social rules that people usually followed. A visitor who was “beneath” the person being visited would use the back door.
10. Miss Maudie is upset because she and Atticus are about the same age.

## **Chapter 11 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. Why do Jem and Scout hate Mrs. Dubose at first?
2. What does apoplectic mean?
3. What is Atticus’s advice to Jem when Mrs. Dubose angers him?
4. Atticus has a special way of greeting Mrs. Dubose which pleases her. Describe the greeting.
5. What things does Atticus require Jem to do to make amends for his rage?
6. What does Atticus say is the one thing that “doesn’t abide by majority rule”?
7. Why do you think Atticus brings Scout two yellow pencils and Jem a football magazine after their first session with Mrs. Dubose?
8. Why is Mrs. Dubose lengthening the sessions each time?
9. What is Mrs. Dubose battling?



10. What does Mrs. Dubose give Jem before she dies?

### **Answers**

1. They hate Mrs. Dubose at first because she speaks rudely to them and criticizes Atticus and their family.
2. An apoplectic person is one who is likely to have a seizure or a hemorrhage.
3. He encourages Jem to take it easy and reminds Jem that Mrs. Dubose is old and ill. He tells Jem to be a gentleman.
4. He always says “Good evening, Mrs. Dubose. You look like a picture this evening.” (He does not say a picture of what!)
5. He requires Jem to visit with Mrs. Dubose and to read to her each day and work in her yard as she requests.
6. Atticus says that one’s conscience does not abide by majority rule.
7. He probably brings the gifts to thank them for the visit.
8. She is lengthening the time between her medicines.
9. Mrs. Dubose is battling morphine addiction.
10. Mrs. Dubose gives Jem a single white camellia.

## **Chapter 12 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What change does Calpurnia make in the way she addresses 12-year-old Jem?
2. What does Calpurnia permit Scout to do that she had not permitted before?
3. What does the political cartoon of Atticus chained to a desk and wearing short pants mean to Jem?
4. Why should one not tell all one knows—according to Calpurnia?
5. Why are hymnals not used in the First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church?
6. How is Zeebo related to Calpurnia?
7. Scout says she is confronted with the Impurity of Women doctrine in the First Purchase Church. What is the doctrine?
8. How does Calpurnia say that people can be changed?
9. Calpurnia says that “Colored folks don’t show their ages so fast.” What does Jem decide is the reason for this?
10. How is Tom’s wife Helen treated after Tom’s accusation?

## **Answers**

1. Calpurnia begins to call him “Mister Jem.”
2. Calpurnia allows Scout to come into the kitchen to visit.
3. Jem explained that it means that Atticus spends his time doing things that other people would not want to.
4. Calpurnia says one should not tell all one knows, firstly because it is not ladylike and secondly because folks don’t like to be around those who know more than they do.
5. Hymnals are not used in the First Purchase A.M.E. Zion Church primarily because most members cannot read.
6. Zeebo, the driver of the garbage truck, is Calpurnia’s son.
7. This doctrine, according to Scout, says that women are worse than men.
8. Calpurnia says that folks are not going to change because she is “talkin’ right, they’ve got to want to learn themselves, and when they don’t want to learn there’s nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language.”
9. Jem says “colored folks” age less quickly because they do not read.
10. Tom’s wife is shunned by white society after the accusation. She cannot find work.

## **Chapter 13 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. Why does Alexandra come to live with the Finch family?
2. What does the word amanuensis mean?
3. How does Maycomb receive Alexandra?
4. What does it mean when Scout says that Cousin Joshua “went round the bend”?
5. What is Atticus’ remedy for stomach problems?
6. What is Maycomb’s primary reason for being?
7. Why does Maycomb always remain about the same size?
8. What message does Alexandra ask Atticus to bring to the children?
9. What does Scout mean when she says that Alexandra has a preoccupation with heredity?
10. What does Scout mean when she says that Alexandra thinks that everybody in Maycomb had a streak?

### **Answers**

1. Alexandra stays with the Finch family in order to give a feminine influence to Scout.

2. The word amanuensis means stenographer.
3. Maycomb welcomes Alexandra and includes her in its social life.
4. Scout means that Cousin Joshua had a nervous breakdown.
5. He takes some soda.
6. Government is Maycomb's primary reason for being.
7. It grows inward. Because new people settled there so rarely the families intermarry.
8. Atticus asks the children to live up to their name, as per Alexandra's instructions. She asks that they try to behave like a little lady and a little gentleman.
9. Scout cannot understand why Alexandra is so concerned with a person's ancestry.
10. According to Alexandra, every family in town has some kind of habit such as drinking, fighting, or gambling.

## Chapter 14 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What does Scout find under her bed?
2. What does Atticus mean when he says, "rape to riot to runaways"?
3. Why does Dill run away?
4. What does Scout think is under her bed at first?
5. What is Scout's response to Aunt Alexandra when she tells Scout that she cannot visit Calpurnia?
6. What does Scout mean by "he bore with fortitude her Wait Till I Get You Home. . . ."
7. When Scout asked Atticus if she could go to Calpurnia's, what was Alexandra's reaction?
8. Whom does Atticus tell Scout to mind?
9. Why does Scout seem to be a very innocent child?
10. Why does Jem ask Scout not to antagonize Aunt Alexandra?

### Answers

1. Scout finds Dill under her bed.
2. In one night Atticus had dealt with Scout's questions about the word rape, had broken up a fight between Scout and Jem, and had dealt with the runaway Dill.

3. Dill says that he believes his parents get along better without him. He says that they expect him to behave like a boy.
4. Scout thinks at first that a snake is under her bed.
5. Scout says that she did not ask Aunt Alexandra.
6. This is a reference to the various “speeches” Dill’s Aunt Rachel gives when she finds Dill has run away.
7. Alexandra immediately says that Scout cannot go.
8. Atticus says Scout has to mind Calpurnia, Alexandra, and him.
9. Scout seems to be especially innocent when she and Dill lie in bed discussing where babies come from. She also seems innocent because she does not know the word rape.
10. Jem does not want Scout to antagonize Alexandra because Atticus has a lot on his mind thinking of the upcoming trial.

## Chapter 15 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What are the only two reasons grown men stand outside in the yard, according to Scout?
2. What is meant by a “change of venue”?
3. Who is the mockingbird in this chapter? Why?
4. Who does Scout recognize in the mob at the jail?
5. Contrast the way Atticus rises from his chair at the jail and the way that he normally rises from a chair.
6. What breaks the tension when the mob comes to the house?
7. Where is Tom during the time that Atticus faces the mob downtown?
8. What does Calpurnia mean when she says Jem has the “look-arounds”?
9. What attitude do most of the people in Maycomb have toward walking?
10. What is Atticus’s loaded question?

### Answers

1. Grown men stand outside for death and politics.
2. A change of venue is a change in the place where the jury is selected and the trial is held or where the events occur.
3. Tom is the mockingbird. Atticus could also be considered a mockingbird since he is endangered and he has done nothing to harm anyone. Since the reader is developing sympathy for Arthur, he might be a mockingbird

also.

4. Scout recognizes Mr. Cunningham.
5. Atticus normally rises from a chair very quickly, but at the jail he moves like an old man.
6. Jem shouts that the phone is ringing in order to break the tension.
7. Tom is in the Maycomb jail.
8. It means that he is curious.
9. People only walk if they have a place to go.
10. Atticus' loaded question is "Do you really think so?"

## Chapter 16 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Who presides over Tom's trial?
2. What does the word elucidate mean?
3. What makes one a Mennonite, according to Jem?
4. What does Atticus say is the result of naming people after Confederate generals?
5. What does Atticus say had brought the mob to its senses?
6. What is the Idlers' Club?
7. With whom do the children sit in court?
8. What two things keep Mr. Raymond from being trash?
9. What do the foot-washers say to Miss Maudie?
10. Why does Aunt Alexandra criticize Atticus?

### Answers

1. Judge Taylor presides over Tom Robinson's trial.
2. Elucidate means to explain or to clarify.
3. Mennonites don't use buttons, they live deep in the woods, trade across the river, rarely come to Maycomb, and have blue eyes. The men do not shave after they marry.
4. Atticus says the naming made them steady drinkers.
5. Atticus says an eight-year-old brought the mob to its senses.

6. The Idlers' Club is a group of retired men who frequent the court and the courthouse.
7. The children sit with Reverend Sykes.
8. Mr. Raymond is from an old family and owns land.
9. The foot-washers yell "He that cometh in vanity departeth in darkness."
10. Aunt Alexandra criticizes Atticus for talking about Mr. Underwood's racist feelings in front of Calpurnia.

## Chapter 17 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is the name of the solicitor?
2. What does the word ambidextrous mean?
3. Why does Reverend Sykes ask Jem to take Dill and Scout home from the trial?
4. Where do the Ewells live?
5. Why does Scout get to stay during the explicit testimonies?
6. Where do Scout and Jem sit during the trial?
7. What does Scout mean when she says that Jem is counting his chickens?
8. Why is it important that Mr. Ewell signs his name with his left hand?
9. What excuse does Jem use for not taking Scout home?
10. What does it mean when Scout says the Ewells live as guests of the county?

### Answers

1. The solicitor is Mr. Gilmer.
2. Ambidextrous means able to use both hands.
3. Reverend Sykes asks Jem to take Scout home because of the explicit details of the rape given during the trial.
4. They live "behind the town garbage dump in what had been a Negro cabin."
5. Scout stays because Jem tells Reverend Sykes that she does not understand.
6. The children sit in the balcony during the trial.
7. It means Jem was counting on Atticus's winning too soon.

8. It is significant that Mr. Ewell uses his left hand to write his name because it shows that he is left-handed. His daughter had bruises on the right side of her face which meant a left-handed person had hit her.
9. Jem says that Scout did not understand what was being said.
10. Scout means that the Ewells are on public welfare.

## Chapter 18 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is Mayella's full name?
2. What are lavations?
3. How can Jem tell which characters do not wash regularly?
4. Why does Judge Taylor not hold Mayella in contempt of court?
5. Why is Tom's left arm crippled?
6. Whom does Mayella say she is afraid of?
7. What is a chiffarobe?
8. What question does Atticus ask Mayella that makes her furious?
9. What does the word tollable mean?
10. How many witnesses does Atticus say he still has to call when Mayella had finished?

### Answers

1. Mayella's full name is Mayella Violet Ewell.
2. Lavations are washings.
3. Jem says that those who do not wash regularly have a scalded look as if their bodies have been deprived of a protective layer of dirt.
4. She is poor and ignorant.
5. He has caught his left arm in a cotton gin and has torn the muscles loose from the bones.
6. Mayella says she is afraid of Atticus.
7. A chiffarobe is an old dresser full of drawers on one side.
8. Atticus asks Mayella if her father had attacked her.
9. The word should read tolerable, which means passable.

10. Atticus says he has one witness to call.

## Chapter 19 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Why is Dill crying?
2. How old is Tom?
3. What is Link Deas' opinion of Tom?
4. What does Judge Taylor say to Deas when he speaks in favor of Tom?
5. What does Tom say that Mr. Ewell saw through the window?
6. Why does Scout take Dill from the courtroom?
7. What does Scout say is a sure sign of guilt?
8. What does Scout mean when she says Maycomb gives the Ewells "the back of its hand"?
9. Why was Tom afraid to push Mayella out of the way?
10. When Tom was approached by Mayella, he did something which Scout says was a sure sign of guilt. What was it?

### Answers

1. Dill is crying because of the way that Gilmer treated Tom.
2. Tom is 25.
3. Link says that Tom had worked for him for eight years and he had not had "a speck o' trouble outa him."
4. The judge throws Deas out of the courtroom.
5. He sees Mayella grab Tom and kiss him. Tom was trying to get away.
6. Scout took Dill from the courtroom because he began to cry.
7. Scout says that running is a sure sign of guilt.
8. Scout means that Maycomb gave the Ewells a slap. They gave the Ewells gifts but not in love.
9. Tom "would not have dared strike a white woman under any circumstances and expect to live long. . . ."
10. Tom ran, which Scout considers a sign of guilt.



# Chapter 20 Questions and Answers

## Study Questions

1. What does Dolphus Raymond give Dill to settle his stomach?
2. What is unusual about Atticus's clothing during his final summation?
3. What does Atticus argue are some of the reasons that Tom should not be convicted?
4. How does Atticus end his summation?
5. What does Atticus do in court that the children never saw him do even at home?
6. What feeling do both Tom and Atticus have for Mayella?
7. What does Atticus say is a great leveler?
8. Why does Mr. Raymond share this secret with the children?
9. Why does Mr. Raymond pretend to drink?
10. Does Atticus say that kissing Tom was a crime?

## Answers

1. Mr. Raymond gives Dill Coca-Cola to settle his stomach.
2. Atticus's clothing is unusual during final summation because he removes his coat, unbuttons his vest and collar, and loosens his tie. Scout had never seen him do this before in private or in public.
3. Atticus says the state has not produced any medical evidence that the crime that Tom was charged with ever took place.
4. Atticus ends his summation with the words, "In the name of God, believe him."
5. Atticus removes his coat, unbuttons his vest and collar, and loosens his tie.
6. Atticus pities her; Tom feels sorry for her. These emotions are the same.
7. Atticus says the courts were a great leveler.
8. Raymond says he could share his secret with the children because they would understand.
9. Since people could "never understand that I live like I do because that's the way I want to live," Raymond pretends to drink to give them a reason for his life-style.
10. Atticus describes Mayella's kissing Tom as a violation of a social code but not as a crime.

# Chapter 21 Questions and Answers

## Study Questions

1. Who walks down the middle aisle carrying a note to Atticus?
2. Why does Reverend Sykes ask Scout to stand when her father passes?
3. How does Reverend Sykes address Scout?
4. What things are strange about the courtroom during the wait for a jury decision?
5. Scout compares the atmosphere in the courthouse before the jury returns to another time and place. What is the time and place?
6. Why is Reverend Sykes not sure that the jury would decide in favor of Tom Robinson?
7. Why does Reverend Sykes's voice seem distant after the decision even though he is standing next to Scout?
8. What does Calpurnia's note say?
9. Why does Atticus walk down the middle aisle?
10. How can you tell when a jury has convicted a defendant?

## Answers

1. Calpurnia walks down the aisle carrying a note to Atticus.
2. The whole balcony stands as a sign of respect to Atticus.
3. The Reverend Sykes addresses Scout as "Miss Jean Louise."
4. The courtroom is very quiet. Occasionally a baby will cry out or a child might leave, but the adults sit or stand as still as if they were in church.
5. Scout likens the waiting to the time the rabid dog was near.
6. He is not confident because he has never seen "a jury decide in favor of a colored man over a white man."
7. His voice seems distant or detached because he wants to separate himself from what had happened. He is thinking of other things now.
8. Calpurnia's note says that the children have been missing since noon.
9. Atticus probably walks down the middle aisle to show he is not ashamed of his actions. This walk is an indication of his bravery.
10. When a jury has convicted a defendant, they will not look at the defendant when they return to the courtroom.

# Chapter 22 Questions and Answers

## Study Questions

1. What does Aunt Alexandra call Atticus?
2. What does Jem mean when he says “It ain’t right”?
3. What does Dill plan to do with his life?
4. Miss Maudie normally gives the children a small cake each. What does she do this time?
5. What special thing do the people do to show their appreciation to Atticus the next morning?
6. What does Mr. Ewell say and do to Atticus?
7. Does Miss Maudie think that it is an accident that Atticus was appointed by the judge to defend Tom Robinson?
8. What kind of person does Miss Maudie say that Atticus is?
9. Why does it say that Dill makes rabbit-bites?
10. What is Aunt Alexandra’s response to the children’s going to court?

## Answers

1. Aunt Alexandra calls Atticus “Brother.”
2. Jem means that it is not right that Tom was convicted.
3. Dill says that he plans to be a clown who laughs at people. He does not think he can change the way things are and, he prefers to laugh, not cry.
4. She gives Jem a slice from the big cake.
5. They bring him all kinds of food.
6. Mr. Ewell spits in Atticus’s face and says he will get even.
7. Miss Maudie says that the judge purposely chose Atticus to defend Tom. Usually the judge would have selected a new, beginning lawyer for this type of case.
8. Miss Maudie says that Atticus is a person who does the unpleasant work for others.
9. It means that Dill eats with his front teeth.
10. Aunt Alexandra says that the children should not have been there wallowing in the trial.

## Chapter 23 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is Atticus's response when the children ask him to borrow a gun?
2. What is a hung jury?
3. The jury contained white males from outside Maycomb. What are some missing groups?
4. What humorous remark does Atticus make when Ewell spits in his face?
5. Scout believes that Aunt Alexandra wants to help her choose something. What is this?
6. Do you think Tom could get a fair trial with a jury of white males from outside Maycomb? Why?
7. What is Atticus' response when he was asked if he is afraid to fight?
8. Atticus says that one type of person is trash. Who was this?
9. Why could Miss Maudie not serve on a jury?
10. What does Aunt Alexandra call Walter Cunningham that angers Scout?

### Answers

1. He responds "Nonsense."
2. A hung jury is one that cannot reach an agreement.
3. The Maycomb jury includes no woman, no "black man," and no Maycomb resident.
4. He says that he wished Bob Ewell did not chew tobacco
5. Aunt Alexandra seems to want to choose Scout's friends.
6. No, because they are not his peers.
7. Atticus says he is not afraid but too old to fight.
8. Trash is a white person who cheats a "black man."
9. Miss Maudie cannot serve because she is a woman.
10. Aunt Alexandra calls Walter trash.

## Chapter 24 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Where does the women's missionary circle hold its meeting?
2. Where are Dill and Jem?

3. During what month does the chapter take place?
4. Why is Scout not allowed to go with Dill and Jem?
5. What special group are the women studying?
6. Who is conducting the study?
7. Mrs. Merriweather tries to make Scout look bad in front of the others. She says Scout might want to be a lawyer since she has “already commenced going to court.” What does Scout say she wants to be when she grows up?
8. What bad news does Atticus bring home?
9. Mrs. Merriweather keeps saying there is someone the ladies needed to forgive. Who is it?
10. Who does Atticus take with him to Mrs. Robinson’s?

### **Answers**

1. The women’s missionary group meets in the Finch home.
2. Dill and Jem are swimming at Barker’s Eddy.
3. The chapter takes place in late August.
4. Scout cannot go with the boys since they are swimming naked.
5. The women are studying the Mrunas.
6. Mrs. Merriweather is conducting the study.
7. Scout says she wants to grow up to be a lady.
8. The bad news is that Tom had attempted escape and had been killed by guards.
9. She thought the women should forgive Mrs. Robinson.
10. Atticus takes Calpurnia with him.

## **Chapter 25 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What does Jem order Scout not to kill?
2. Why do Jem and Dill go with Atticus to the Robinson Place?
3. What condition does Atticus make for the two boys to go?
4. What game are the children playing at the Robinson Place?

5. What tender gesture does Atticus make while waiting for Helen?
6. What is Helen's reaction to seeing Atticus's face?
7. What does Mr. Underwood do to confront society?
8. To what does Mr. Underwood compare Tom Robinson?
9. What does Mr. Ewell say when he hears of Tom's death?
10. Why does Scout not tell Atticus what Mr. Ewell said?

### **Answers**

1. Jem orders Scout not to kill a roly-poly bug.
2. Dill and Jem are on their way back from swimming when they meet Atticus and flag him down to get a ride. He picks them up, but tells them that he is not going straight home.
3. He tells the boys that they must stay in the car.
4. The children at the Robinson Place are playing marbles.
5. Atticus helps one of Tom's little girls down the steps.
6. Helen Robinson faints after seeing Atticus's face.
7. Mr. Underwood writes an editorial to confront society.
8. Mr. Underwood compares Tom to a songbird.
9. Mr. Ewell says, "One down and two to go" when he hears of Tom's death.
10. Jem says he would never speak to Scout again if she told. He says Mr. Ewell was hot air.

## **Chapter 26 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What grade is Jem in in this chapter?
2. What grade is Scout in in this chapter?
3. How does Scout feel about the Radley Place now?
4. What newspaper does Miss Gates dislike?
5. What term does Miss Gates say means equal rights for everyone?
6. When does Scout see Atticus scowl?
7. Why is Jem trying to gain weight? How?

8. How does Scout define democracy?
9. What had Scout heard Miss Gates say on the courthouse steps?
10. Why does Atticus say that Jem would not talk about the courthouse?

### **Answers**

1. Jem is in the seventh grade in this chapter.
2. Scout is in the third grade in this chapter.
3. Scout still thinks the Radley Place is gloomy, but she is not terrified of it.
4. Miss Gates dislikes The Grit Paper.
5. Miss Gates says democracy means equal rights for everyone.
6. Scout sees Atticus scowl when Hitler is mentioned on the radio.
7. Jem is trying to gain weight by eating bananas and milk. He needs to gain 25 pounds in two years to play football.
8. Democracy is defined as “Equal rights for all, special privileges for none.”
9. Scout had heard Miss Gates say derogatory things about black people on the courthouse steps. She said things about teaching “em a lesson, and how they were getting way above themselves, and the next thing they will think they can marry us.”
10. Atticus says that Jem is trying to forget, but that actually he is storing the information until he can sort things out.

## **Chapter 27 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What does Mrs. Jones say Mr. Ewell said when he lost his job?
2. When does Judge Taylor hear a strange noise?
3. Why does Helen walk a mile out of her way to get to work?
4. Who defends Helen against Mr. Ewell?
5. What noise did Judge Taylor hear?
6. During what month does this chapter take place?
7. What is Scout’s costume for the pageant?
8. What are the nicknames for the Barber sisters?

9. What trick is played on the Barber sisters?

10. Who escorts Scout to the pageant?

### **Answers**

1. Mr. Ewell says that Atticus got his job.

2. Judge Taylor hears a strange sound on Sunday night.

3. Helen walks a mile out of her way to avoid the Ewell Place.

4. Mr. Link Deas tells Mr. Ewell to leave Helen alone.

5. Someone cut Judge Taylor's screen causing the noise.

6. This chapter takes place in October.

7. Scout is a ham for the pageant.

8. The children call the Barbers Tutti and Frutti.

9. The furniture from downstairs was put in the cellar while they slept.

10. Jem escorts Scout to the pageant.

## **Chapter 28 Questions and Answers**

### **Study Questions**

1. What is the weather like on Halloween night?

2. Who frightens the children on the way to the auditorium?

3. What is Cecil Jacob's costume for the pageant?

4. How much money does Scout have and how many things can she do with it?

5. Why does Scout miss her cue in the pageant?

6. Why are the children among the last ones to leave the auditorium?

7. Why does Scout wear her costume home?

8. Why can Jem see Scout in the dark?

9. How many people scuffle under the tree?

10. Who does Sheriff Tate find has been killed in the scuffle?

### **Answers**

1. The weather is warm and the sky cloudy and dark.



2. Cecil Jacobs frightens the children on the way to the pageant.
3. Cecil Jacobs is a cow in the pageant.
4. Scout has 30¢ so she can do six things at the Halloween celebration.
5. Scout misses her cue because she is asleep.
6. Scout does not want to leave until most people are gone because she is embarrassed by her performance and does not want to talk about it.
7. Scout wants to wear her costume because she can hide her mortification under it.
8. Jem can see Scout because the fat streaks in the costume are painted with shiny paint.
9. Four people scuffle under the tree.
10. The sheriff finds Mr. Ewell has been killed in the struggle.

## Chapter 29 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is Atticus's one sign of inner turmoil?
2. Why does Mr. Tate say it is all right that Alexandra had not heeded her feeling?
3. Why does Atticus want Scout to raise her head when she talks?
4. Why don't the children go back for Scout's shoes?
5. What does Scout call out to Cecil Jacobs?
6. Why do Atticus and Alexandra not hear the sounds outside?
7. Why does Mr. Tate say Mr. Ewell acted the way that he did?
8. How does Scout know that she is under the tree?
9. Who brings Jem into the house?
10. What does Scout say to the man who rescued Jem and her?

### Answers

1. The strong line of his jaw melts a little.
2. He says if we heeded all our feelings, we would be like cats chasing our tails.
3. He wants Scout to raise her head so Mr. Tate can hear.
4. The children don't go back because they see the lights go off.

5. She calls out that Cecil is a big, fat hen.
6. They were listening to their radios.
7. Mr. Tate says that Mr. Ewell acted the way he did because he was mean.
8. Scout knows she is under the tree because the sand feels cool.
9. Boo Radley brings Jem to the house.
10. Scout says, "Hey, Boo."

## Chapter 30 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. What is in the doctor's package?
2. Why do they take Boo on the front porch?
3. In what order do they go out on the front porch?
4. What does the sheriff say had happened to Mr. Ewell?
5. What does Atticus say had happened to Mr. Ewell?
6. What comparison does Scout make with Boo?
7. For what does Atticus thank Boo?
8. How does Scout try to cheer Atticus up after Mr. Tate leaves?
9. What kind of knife was used to kill Mr. Ewell?
10. Where does the sheriff say he had gotten the switchblade?

### Answers

1. The doctor carries medical supplies.
2. They take Boo to the front porch because they think he will be more comfortable in the dark.
3. Mr. Tate, then Atticus, then Scout and Boo together.
4. The sheriff says Mr. Ewell had fallen on his knife.
5. Atticus thinks Jem killed him in self-defense.
6. Scout compares Boo to a mockingbird.
7. Atticus thanks Boo for his children.

8. Scout tries to cheer Atticus with hugs and kisses.
9. A kitchen knife was used to kill Mr. Ewell.
10. The sheriff says he had gotten the switchblade from a drunk.

## Chapter 31 Questions and Answers

### Study Questions

1. Why does Boo go inside the Finch house again?
2. What book is Atticus reading?
3. Why does Scout walk with Arthur to his home?
4. Why does she ask Boo to take her arm?
5. Why does Scout go to sleep before the story is over?
6. Why does the doctor put a tent over Jem?
7. Why is Atticus reading the book?
8. What does Atticus say most people are like when you finally see them?
9. What makes you think Atticus does not believe Scout when she says she is not afraid?
10. What makes Scout sad in thinking back on all the gifts Boo had given them?

### Answers

1. Boo Radley goes inside the Finch house again to see Jem.
2. Atticus reads *The Gray Ghost*.
3. Scout walks with Arthur to his home because he asked her to do so.
4. She asks Boo to take her arm so if Miss Stephanie looks from her window, she will see a gentleman escorting a lady.
5. The room is warm, the rain is soft, Atticus's knee is snug, and the voice is deep so Scout goes to sleep.
6. The tent is to protect Jem's arm from the cover.
7. Atticus reads the book because he has never read it.
8. Atticus says most people are nice when you finally see them.
9. When Atticus raises his eyebrows, the reader knows he does not believe Scout.
10. Scout is sad because she remembers that they had given Boo nothing.

# Characters

## **Aunt Alexandra**

See Alexandra Finch Hancock.

## **Miss Maudie Atkinson**

Maudie Atkinson is a strong, supportive woman who lives across the street from the Finches. A forthright speaker, she never condescends to Jem and Scout, but speaks to them as equals. It is Miss Maudie who affirms that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird, since "they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us." A respected community member who often teasingly reproaches the children, Miss Maudie nevertheless has a impish streak: she likes to quote scripture back to conservative religious folk who frown on her brightly colored garden. Miss Maudie provides another example of bravery to the children when her home burns down. Instead of lamenting her fate, she tells Jem she looks forward to rebuilding a smaller house which will have more room for her flowers.

## **Mr. Avery**

A good-natured if somewhat coarse neighbor of the Finches who helps fight the fire at Miss Maudie's house at risk to his own Life.

## **Calpurnia**

One of several strong female figures in the lives of the Finch children, Calpurnia is the family's black housekeeper. She has helped to raise Jem and Scout since their mother's death four years ago. Like Atticus, Calpurnia is a strict but loving teacher, particularly in regard to Scout, whose enthusiasm sometimes makes her thoughtless. On Scout's first day of school, for example, Calpurnia scolds Scout for criticizing the table manners of Walter Cunningham Jr., whom the children have brought home as a lunch guest. That day after school, however, Calpurnia prepares Scout's favorite food, crackling bread, as a special treat. Calpurnia also gives Scout her first awareness of the contrast between the worlds of black and white. During a visit to Calpurnia's church, her use of black dialect with her friends makes Scout realize that Calpurnia has a wider life outside the Finch household. Calpurnia also helps Scout understand how people can serve as a bridge between these differing worlds. Although the majority of parishioners welcome them during their church visit, one woman challenges the white children. Calpurnia responds by calling them her guests and saying "it's the same God, ain't it?"

## **Stephanie Crawford**

The "neighborhood scold" who is always ready to gossip about anything or anyone.

## **Walter Cunningham Jr.**

A poor but proud classmate of Scout's.

## **Walter Cunningham Sr.**

Walter Cunningham Sr., is a member of a poor family who "never took anything they couldn't pay back." A former client of Atticus's, he paid for legal service with goods such as firewood and hickory nuts. After Scout recognizes him in the potential lynch mob and speaks to him of his son, he leads the crowd away from violence.

## **Link Deas**

A local farmer who hires a lot of Mack help and once employed Tom Robinson.

## **Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose**

According to Scout, Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose is "the meanest old woman who ever lived." She regularly

insults and harasses the children as they walk by. When Jem wrecks her garden in retaliation for a nasty remark about his father, Atticus punishes him by forcing him to spend many hours reading to her. She dies later that year, and Jem learns that his reading helped her to courageously defeat an addiction to morphine.

### **Bob Ewell**

The head of family who's been "the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations," Bob Ewell is despised by Maycomb society as a shiftless drunkard. He is unable to keep a job, spends all his relief money on alcohol, and traps animals outside of hunting season. He provides little support to his large, motherless family, and is reputed to beat his children (and perhaps sexually abuse them too, as Mayella's testimony hints). Angered and shamed by his exposure on the witness stand, Ewell makes threats to Atticus and others involved in the trial, but never risks direct confrontation. This cowardice reaches its peak in his violent attack on Scout and Jem, during which he is killed by Boo Radley.

### **Mayella Ewell**

The eldest daughter of Bob Ewell, Mayella Ewell lives a lonely life keeping house for her father and seven siblings without assistance. Although she can only afford small gestures such as a potted plant, Mayella tries to brighten her situation and the lives of her siblings. During the trial it is revealed that Tom Robinson's occasional stops to help her with heavy chores were her only contact with a sympathetic soul. When Bob Ewell discovers Mayella's attempt to seduce the unwilling Tom, his violent outburst leads her to accuse Tom of rape. Despite her situation, she loses the reader's sympathy when she repays Tom's kindness with open contempt and a lie that costs him his life. The fact that the jury accepts her word over his, even when it is demonstrated to be false, further illustrates the malicious power of racist thinking.

### **Mrs. Gertrude Farrow**

One of the hypocritical members of Aunt Alexandra's missionary circle.

### **Atticus Finch**

Atticus Finch, Scout's widowed father, is a member of one of Maycomb County's oldest and most prominent families. Nevertheless, he refuses to use his background as an excuse to hold himself above others and instead is a model of tolerance and understanding. Atticus is a lawyer and also a member of the state legislature, elected by townspeople who respect his honesty even if they don't always approve of his actions. For example, when Atticus is appointed the defense attorney for Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman, the town disapproves because he aims to do the best job he can. As a father Atticus is affectionate with Jem and Scout, ready with a hug when they need comfort and available to spend time reading to them. Although he allows his children freedom to play and explore, he is also a firm disciplinarian, always teaching his children to think of how their actions affect others and devising punishments to teach his children valuable lessons. When Jem damages the camellia bushes of Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, a neighbor who scolds and insults the children, Atticus sentences him to read to her each day. As Jem reads, he and Scout witness the dying woman's battle against her morphine addiction and learn the true meaning of courage: "it's when you know you're licked before you begin but you see it through no matter what," Atticus tells them. Atticus's own actions in arguing the Robinson case demonstrate this kind of courage, and his behavior throughout embodies values of dignity, integrity, determination, and tolerance. Although Atticus's character is somewhat idealized, critic William T. Goyen calls Lee's creation "the most memorable portrait in recent fiction of the just and equitable Southern liberal."

### **Jack Finch**

See John Hale Finch.

### **Jean Louise Finch**

The narrator of the novel, Jean Louise "Scout" Finch is almost six years old at the time her story begins. A tomboy most frequently clad in overalls, Scout spends much of her time with her older brother Jem and is

constantly trying to prove herself his equal. Throughout the book Scout maintains an innocence and an innate sense of right and wrong that makes her the ideal observer of events, even if she doesn't always fully understand them. She naturally questions the injustices she sees instead of accepting them as "the way things are." For instance, she doesn't understand why her aunt makes social distinctions based on "background" when Scout thinks "there's just one kind of folks: Folks." Her independence and outspokenness often get Scout into trouble, however; she is quick to respond to insults with her fists and frequently opens her mouth at inappropriate moments, as when she rudely remarks on the table manners of a guest. By the end of the novel, however, eight-year-old Scout has learned a measure of restraint, primarily through the influence and example of her father Atticus.

### **Jem Finch**

See Jeremy Finch.

### **Jeremy Finch**

Four years older than his sister Scout, Jeremy "Jem" Finch seems to have a deeper understanding of the events during the three years of the novel, for his emotional reactions to them are stronger. As the story begins, Jem is a quick-witted but fun-loving ten year old who spends a lot of time in creative play with Scout and Dill Harris, a summer visitor to the neighborhood. Jem is frequently exasperated by his sister, and requires her to keep her distance during school hours. Nevertheless, for the most part Jem is an understanding and encouraging older brother, allowing Scout to join in his games and even dignifying her with an occasional fistfight. He is anxious to please his father, and hates to disappoint him. When Jem loses his pants in the "raid" on the Radley house, he insists on returning for them during the middle of the night—not so much to avoid the pain of punishment, but because "Atticus ain't ever whipped me since I can remember. I wanta keep it that way." As he approaches adolescence, however, Jem becomes quieter and more easily agitated: he reacts angrily when Mrs. Dubose leaves him a small peace offering after her death. Although more socially aware than Scout, he is genuinely surprised at Tom Robinson's guilty verdict. The trial leaves Jem a little more withdrawn and less self-confident, and he spends much of the following fall concerned for his father's safety. He demonstrates his own courage, however, when he protects his sister from the attack of Bob Ewell without regard for his own safety.

### **John Hale Finch**

Atticus's younger brother, a doctor who left Maycomb to study in Boston.

### **Scout Finch**

See Jean Louise Finch.

### **Miss Caroline Fisher**

Scout's first-grade teacher who is a newcomer to Maycomb. She misunderstands the social order of Maycomb and punishes Scout for trying to explain it. She also comes into conflict with Scout because of the girl's reading ability.

### **Miss Gates**

Scout's hypocritical third-grade teacher who condemns Hitler's persecution of the Jews even as she discriminates against her own students and complains about blacks "getting above themselves."

### **Mr. Gilmer**

The circuit prosecutor from Abbottsville who leads the case against Tom Robinson.

### **Alexandra Finch Hancock**

Atticus's sister, Alexandra Finch Hancock, is a conservative woman concerned with social and class distinctions and bound to the traditions of the South. She tries to counteract her brother's liberal influence on

his children by reminding them of their family's eminence and by trying to make Scout behave in a more ladylike manner. When she moves in with Atticus's family, her efforts to reform Scout include requiring her attendance at regular meetings of a "missionary circle," whose discussions focus on improving the lives of "heathens" in distant Africa rather than on the needy in their own town. Aunt Alexandra is not completely unsympathetic, however; she also shows—in private—some anger towards the hypocrites in her missionary circle. Although she disapproves of Atticus's role in the Robinson case, she becomes upset upon hearing news of Robinson's death during one of her parties. Her ability to continue on leads Scout to state that "if Auntie could be a lady at a time like this, so could I."

### **Francis Hancock**

Scout and Jem's cousin and Alexandra's grandson.

### **Charles Baker Harris**

Small and devilish, Charles Baker "Dill" Harris is Scout and Jem's summer friend. He instigates much of the children's mischief by daring Jem to perform acts such as approaching the Radley house. He seems to have a limitless imagination, and his appeal is only enhanced by his firsthand knowledge of movies such as *Dracula*. Seemingly ignored (but not neglected) by his parents, Dill enjoys his yearly visits to his aunt, Rachel Haverford, who lives next door to the Finches—he even runs away from home one summer to come to Maycomb. A year older than Scout, Dill has declared he will one day marry her, a statement she seems to accept matter-of-factly.

### **Dill Harris**

See Charles Baker Harris.

### **Rachel Haverford**

Dill Harris's sympathetic aunt, who lives next door to the Finches.

### **Grace Merriweather**

A member of Alexandra's missionary circle who has a reputation as the "most devout lady in Maycomb" even though she is a hypocritical bigot.

### **Arthur Radley**

Arthur "Boo" Radley has a strong presence in the novel even though he isn't seen until its last pages. A local legend for several years, Boo is rumored to wander the neighborhood at night and dine on raw squirrels and cats. He has spent the last fifteen years secluded in his own house. An adolescent prank led his late father to place him under house arrest. His sinister reputation stems from a later incident, when it was rumored that he stabbed his father in the leg with a pair of scissors. Boo becomes a central figure in the imaginations of Scout, Jem, and their neighbor Dill Harris, for their summers are occupied with dramatic re-creations of his life and plans to lure "the monster" out of his house. Despite his history of being abused by his father, Boo is revealed to be a gentle soul through his unseen acts: the gifts he leaves in the tree; his mending of Jem's torn pants; the blanket he puts around Scout the night of the fire; and finally, his rescue of the children from Bob Ewell's murderous attack. The children's fear of Boo Radley, based on ignorance rather than knowledge, subtly reflects the prejudice of the town against Tom Robinson—a connection mirrored in the use of mockingbird imagery for both men.

### **Boo Radley**

See Arthur Radley.

### **Nathan Radley**

Boo's hardhearted older brother who spoils Boo's secret game with the children by filling the empty treehole with cement.

**Dolphus Raymond**

A local man from a good white family with property who has a black mistress and children. He fosters a reputation as a drunk to give townspeople a reason to excuse his flaunting of social taboos.

**Tom Robinson**

Tom Robinson is a mild-mannered, conscientious black man whose kind acts earn him only trouble when Mayella Ewell accuses him of rape. Because he saw she was left alone to maintain the household without any help from her family, he often performed small chores for her. During his testimony, he relates that he felt sorry for the girl. This remark affronts the white men in the jury, who see it as evidence that he is overreaching his social station. Although he is clearly proven innocent, the all-white jury convicts him of rape, a crime punishable by death. Unconvinced that he can find justice on appeal, Robinson attempts to escape from his prison camp and is shot dead.

**Reverend Sykes**

The minister of Maycomb's black church.

**Heck Tate**

The sheriff of Maycomb who is sympathetic towards Atticus and who insists on keeping Boo Radley's role in the death of Bob Ewell a secret.

**Judge John Taylor**

The deceptively sleepy but fair judge whose sympathy for Tom Robinson can be seen in the fact that he appointed Atticus, whom he knew would do his best, as Robinson's public defender.

**Uncle Jack**

See John Hale Finch.

**B. B. Underwood**

See Braxton Bragg Underwood.

**Braxton Bragg Underwood**

The owner and editor of the local newspaper who was ready to defend Atticus and Tom Robinson from the lynch mob with a shotgun even though he is known to "despise" black people.



# Themes

## **Prejudice and Tolerance**

Comprising the main portion of the book's examination of racism and its effects are the underlying themes of prejudice vs. tolerance: how people feel about and respond to differences in others. At one end of the spectrum are people who fear and hate, such as the members of the jury who convict an innocent man of rape because of his race. Atticus and Calpurnia, on the other hand, show understanding and sympathy towards those who might be different or less fortunate. When Scout brings a poor classmate home for dinner and then belittles his table manners, for instance, Calpurnia scolds her for remarking upon them and tells her she is bound to treat all guests with respect no matter what their social station. Atticus similarly bases his opinions of people on their behavior and not their background. Unlike Alexandra, who calls poor people like the Cunninghams "trash" because of their social station, Atticus tells his children that any white man who takes advantage of a black man's ignorance is "trash."

Other black people are shown similar attitudes. Whilst Atticus and his children regard Calpurnia as a part of their family, Aunt Alexandra epitomises the feelings of the majority of Maycomb society, regarding Calpurnia as little more than a slave and a bad influence on Scout.

Throughout the story blacks are referred to as 'niggers', and those who support them or show them any kindness, 'nigger lovers'. Strangely, the churchwomen form a missionary circle to support the wonderful work being done with the heathen savages in Africa, but condemn those who do anything for the black residents in their own town.

The black population are, however, not the only victims of prejudice. Anyone who is different is also targeted. Boo Radley is labelled as a monster and outcast because he is not seen outside his home. It is not enough to just leave him alone – he is an object of gossip and games. The children re-enact stories they have heard about him and dare each other to spy on him. Although Atticus dissuades his own children from doing this, even at the end of the book it is obvious Boo will continue to be labelled and misunderstood by the majority of the townspeople.

Women and children are both targets of prejudice in the male-dominated population of Maycomb. Any woman who is not respectably married with children and occupied with baking, sewing or gardening is considered strange and an outsider. Miss Maudie and Mrs. Dubose are two such women who exist on the fringe of respectable society.

Despite the absence of a mother, Jem and Scout have been raised to regard women as equals. They are surprised to learn that women cannot serve on juries, yet accept Atticus reasoning that women need to be protected and that women would find it hard to reach a decision. Earlier in the novel, Jem criticises Scout for acting like a girl.

The Ewell family should not be overlooked as being the victims of prejudice. The Ewells, although white, are almost as despised as the Negroes. They live in poverty, removed from respectable society. They are targets of scorn and derision. Mayella, a girl ruled by an alcoholic and violent father, is offered help by a man who should be her inferior. Tom Robinson is possibly the only man who has ever shown her any respect and, misreading this, she makes inappropriate overtures. When this is discovered her father forces her to turn the situation to their advantage by accusing Tom of rape.

## **Guilt and Innocence**

Closely linked to these themes of prejudice are issues of guilt and innocence, for the same ignorance that creates racist beliefs underlies assumptions of guilt. The most obvious instance is the case of Tom Robinson:

the jury's willingness to believe what Atticus calls "the evil assumption . . . that all Negroes are basically immoral beings" leads them to convict an innocent man. Boo Radley, unknown by a community who has not seen or heard from him in fifteen years, is similarly presumed to be a monster by the court of public opinion. Scout underscores this point when she tells her Uncle Jack he has been unfair in assigning all the blame to her after her fight with Cousin Francis. If he had stopped to learn both sides of the situation he might have judged her differently—which he eventually does. The novel's conclusion also reinforces the theme of guilt and innocence, as Atticus reads Scout a book about a boy falsely accused of vandalism. As Scout summarizes: "When they finally saw him, why he hadn't done any of those things. Atticus, he was real nice." To which Atticus responds, "Most people are, once you see them."

### **Knowledge and Ignorance**

Because a lack of understanding leads to prejudice and false assumptions of guilt, themes of ignorance and knowledge also play a large role in the novel. Lee seems to suggest that children have a natural instinct for tolerance and understanding; only as they grow older do they learn to react to differences with fear and disdain. For example, Scout is confused when one of Dolphus Raymond's mixed-race children is pointed out to her. The child looks "all Negro" to Scout, who wonders why it matters that "you just hafta know who [the mixed-race children] are." That same day Dill is made sick during the trial by the way in which Mr. Gilmer, the prosecuting attorney, sneeringly cross-examines Tom Robinson. As Dolphus Raymond tells Scout, "Things haven't caught up with that one's instinct yet. Let him get a little older and he won't get sick and cry." Lee seems to imply that children learn important lessons about life through the examples of others, not through school. In an ironic commentary on the nature of knowledge, formal education—as Scout experiences it—fails to teach or even contradicts these important lessons. Scout's first-grade teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, is more concerned with making her students follow a system than in teaching them as individuals. This is why she forbids Scout to continue reading with her father, whose "unqualified" instruction would "interfere" with her education. Whatever the method, however, the most important factor in gaining knowledge is an individual's motivation. As Calpurnia tells Scout, people "got to want to learn themselves, and when they don't want to learn there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or learn their language."

### **Courage and Cowardice**

Several forms of courage are explored in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, showing that it is both a physical and mental state which can manifest itself in multiple actions. All of the major players in the novel are called on to display their courage. Even Mayella Ewell, who hides behind a lie to protect herself, shows a curious kind of courage in having the strength to face the public and the court and uphold her story.

Atticus Finch, the lawyer at the centre of the story, is a man of great courage. His courage does not waver throughout the book. Atticus is a widower with two young children, as well as a respected lawyer, yet has the courage to provide the children with a stable home life in a time where men are seen as providers and women as nurturers. Although he makes use of the help of Calpurnia, he does not shirk his responsibility, as the children's only surviving parent, to ensure that they are raised well.

Atticus has a highly developed morality, with very strong convictions about wrong and right. He is prepared to stand up for what is right, regardless of the consequences. When he takes on Tom Robinson's case, he is determined to do all he can to defend him, even though he knows Tom's case is all but hopeless – he is a black man on trial in a system which has already judged him. Atticus refuses to drop the case or to provide a token defence, because he is convinced both of Tom's innocence and of his right to a fair trial.

Atticus shows courage in numerous other events in the book. He has the strength of character to recognise that there is both good and evil in every person, and the ability to admire that good. He admires Mrs. Dubose for her strength in fighting her morphine addiction even while disagreeing with her intolerant views. He is able to appreciate Aunt Alexandra's willingness to help him and his family, but will not agree to her request to dismiss Calpurnia.

The two victims of the book's key events – Tom Robinson and Boo Radley – both show courage. Prior to his arrest, Tom is willing to help Mayella with tasks such as chopping wood, because he sees that she is a woman in need. He is an intelligent man and aware that his help is taken for granted and could even be misconstrued. He has the courage to help her anyway, and this has disastrous consequences for him.

After his arrest, Tom continues to show courage. In court he is polite to all who address him and calm and measured in his responses, despite the enormous stress he is under. Even in his escape he shows courage – surely knowing that his escape attempt is unlikely to be successful, but thereby putting an end to the ongoing trauma to all involved.

Boo Radley, too, shows great courage. Regarded as a freak by the whole town, judged for his unwillingness or inability to join in with public life, Boo nonetheless has the courage to keep on living and to reach out to the children. He leaves gifts for them and, when he sees Scout is cold on the night of the fire, provides a blanket. In the final pages of the book he shows especial courage in rescuing Jem and Scout from the violent Bob Ewell and allowing Atticus and Heck Tate to decide the consequences.

In the same event Jem shows physical courage in protecting Scout, only stopping when his arm is broken. This is the culmination of Jem's various shows of courage throughout the book which have marked his progress from childhood towards adulthood. Earlier in the book, the children have seen as courageous childish actions such as touching the Radley's house. As the novel has progressed they have had to find a deeper level of courage to face their fears and to overcome the prejudice levelled at them by the residents of Maycomb.

### **Loss of Innocence**

The novel's narrator, Scout, tells the story as an adult looking back on her childhood. The events she describes, obviously memorable for their impact, also mark for her the end of her innocent childhood and the beginning of her growth towards adulthood. This change is even more marked for her older brother Jem, who is at her side throughout the novel and appears more profoundly affected by the events he witnesses, being older than Scout.

Both Jem and Scout come to realise that life is not always fair, that good does not always triumph over evil. As witnesses to the events surrounding Tom Robinson's trial they see a miscarriage of justice, with an innocent man condemned before he even enters the courtroom. They see men who their father has helped unconditionally confront him in their determination to lynch his client.

In the beginning of the novel the children play childhood games, innocently unaware that the games they play are potentially hurtful to others. They act out stories about Boo Radley, oblivious to the fact he could be watching. By the end of the novel much of this innocent naiveté has gone and the children are aware both of Boo's feelings and of those of others around them. They are fortunate that during this traumatic time they have the guiding wisdom of their father Atticus, who strives to make this loss of innocence as painless as possible.

Boo Radley also faces a loss of innocence. A victim of childhood abuse, he has become a recluse. In the confines of his house he is safe from the eyes and voices of the town. As he watches the world from behind his windows he witnesses Jem and Scout and feels a certain responsibility, caring for them by providing gifts and, when Scout is cold, warmth. Yet he is always able to do so without having to expose himself to the world.

When he sees Jem and Scout under attack from Bob Ewell he has to sacrifice his innocence and privacy in order to defend them. By killing Ewell he saves the children, but he also risks his own peace of mind and even his freedom. He has acted in self-defence once before, when he attacked his father, and so knows what the consequences might be.

In the events of *To Kill a Mockingbird* the whole town of Maycomb loses any prior semblance of innocence. In the opening pages of the book Scout describes the town as “an old town.” Steeped in tradition and cocooned in the apparent safety of a network of social rules (written and unwritten), life seems predictable and unchanging. The alleged rape of Mayella Ewell begins a series of events which challenge the very fabric of the town. Old notions of right and wrong are challenged. The town is exposed to the reader as being far from innocent, but rather a town riddled with bigotry, hatred and injustice.

Amongst all this loss of innocence is the presence of those who stand up for right - especially Atticus - who show Scout, Jem and others, including the reader, that there is good in every person and that the quest of justice is not a wasted effort.

# Style

## Point of View

The most outstanding aspect of *To Kill a Mockingbird's* construction lies in its distinctive narrative point of view. Scout Finch, who narrates in the first person ("I"), is nearly six years old when the novel opens. The story, however, is recalled by the adult Scout; this allows her first-person narrative to contain adult language and adult insights yet still maintain the innocent outlook of a child. The adult perspective also adds a measure of hindsight to the tale, allowing for a deeper examination of events. The narrative proceeds in a straightforward and linear fashion, only jumping in time when relating past events as background to some present occurrence. Scout's account is broken into two parts: the two years before the trial, and the summer of the trial and the autumn that follows. Some critics have proposed that Part II itself should have been broken into two parts, the trial and the Halloween pageant; William T. Going suggests that this arrangement would keep the latter section from "seeming altogether an anticlimax to the trial of Tom."

## Setting

The setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is another big factor in the story, for the action never leaves the town of Maycomb, Alabama. Maycomb is described variously as "an old town," "an ancient town," and "a tired old town," suggesting a conservative place that is steeped in tradition and convention. Scout's description of the local courthouse reinforces this impression. The building combines large Greek-style pillars—the only remnants from the original building that burned years ago—with the early Victorian design of its replacement. The result is an architectural oddity that indicates "a people determined to preserve every physical scrap of the past." The time of the novel is also significant, for the years 1933 to 1935 were in the midst of the Great Depression. These economic hard times affected the entire town, for if farmers and other laborers made barely enough money to survive, they had no extra money with which they could pay professionals like doctors and lawyers. When Atticus renders a legal service for Walter Cunningham Sr., a farmer whose property rights are in question because of an entailment, he is repaid with goods such as firewood and nuts instead of cash. This history between the two men influences events during the novel; when a lynch mob appears at the local jail, Scout recognizes Cunningham as her father's former client. The conversation she strikes up with him recalls him to his senses, and he sheepishly leads the mob away.

## Symbolism

As the title of the novel implies, the mockingbird serves as an important symbol throughout the narrative. When the children receive guns for Christmas, Atticus tells them it's all right to shoot at blue jays, but "it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." As Miss Maudie Atkinson explains, it would be thoughtlessly cruel to kill innocent creatures that "don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy." The mockingbirds are silent as Atticus takes to the street to shoot the rabid dog, and Scout describes a similar silence in the courtroom just prior to the jury pronouncing Tom Robinson guilty. The innocent but suffering mockingbird is recalled in an editorial B. B. Underwood writes about Robinson's death, and again when Scout tells her father that revealing Boo Radley's role in Bob Ewell's death would be "like shootin' a mockingbird." Another powerful symbol is contained in the snowman Scout and Jem build after Maycomb's rare snowfall. Because there is very little snow, Jem makes the base of the figure from mud; they then change their "morphodite" from black to white with a coating of snow. When Miss Maudie's house catches fire that night, the snow melts and the figure becomes black once again. Its transformation suggests that skin color is a limited distinction that reveals little about an individual's true worth.

## Humor

One element of the novel's construction that should not be overlooked is Lee's use of humor. The serious issues the novel grapples with are lightened by episodes that use irony and slapstick humor, among other techniques. Just prior to Bob Ewell's attack on the children, for instance, is a scene where Scout misses her cue during the Halloween pageant, only to make her entrance as a ham during Mrs. Merriweather's sober

grand finale. Scout's matter-of-fact, childish recollections also provide entertainment; she recalls that when Dill ignored her, his "fiancee," in favor of Jem, "I beat him up twice but it did no good." Other characters are full of wit as well. Miss Maudie Atkinson in particular. When exasperated by Stephanie Crawford's tales of Boo Radley peeking in her windows at night, she replies, "What did you do, Stephanie, move over in the bed and make room for him?" Including such humorous portrayals of human faults enlivens a serious plot, adds depth to the characterizations, and creates a sense of familiarity and universality, all factors that have contributed to the success and popularity of the work.

# Historical Context

## Civil Rights in the 1950s

Despite the end of slavery almost a century before *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published in 1960 (President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863), African Americans were still denied many of their basic rights. Although Lee sets her novel in the South of the 1930s, conditions were little improved by the early 1960s in America. The Civil Rights movement was just taking shape in the 1950s, and its principles were beginning to find a voice in American courtrooms and the law. The famous 1954 U.S. Supreme Court trial of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* declared the long-held practice of segregation in public schools unconstitutional and quickly led to desegregation of other public institutions. However, there was still considerable resistance to these changes, and many states, especially those in the South, took years before they fully integrated their schools.



Sharecropper's house, Memphis, Tennessee, 1937.

Other ways blacks were demeaned by society included the segregation of public rest rooms and drinking fountains, as well as the practice of forcing blacks to ride in the back of buses. This injustice was challenged by a mild-mannered department store seamstress named Rosa Parks. After she was arrested for failing to yield her seat to a white passenger, civil rights leaders began a successful boycott of the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 5, 1955. The principal leader of the boycott was the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Along with other black pastors, such as Charles K. Steele and Fred Shuttlesworth, King organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in January, 1957, one of the leading organizations that helped end legal segregation by the mid-1960s. The same year that Lee won a contract for the unfinished manuscript of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which provided penalties for the violation of voting rights and created the Civil Rights Commission. African Americans would not see protection and enforcement of all of their rights, however, until well into the next decade, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Bill of 1968 were passed. These laws banned racial discrimination from public places, workplaces, polling places, and housing.

The justice system was similarly discriminatory in the 1950s, as blacks were excluded from juries and could be arrested, tried, and even convicted with little cause. One notable case occurred in 1955, when two white men were charged with the murder of Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African American youth who had allegedly harassed a white woman. Like the jury in Tom Robinson's trial, the jury for the Till case was all white and all male; the trial was also held in a segregated courtroom. Although the defense's case rested on the unlikely claims that the corpse could not be specifically identified as Till and that the defendants had been

framed, the jury took only one hour to acquit the men of all charges. The men later admitted their crimes to a journalist in great detail, but were never punished for the murder.

### **The Great Depression and Race Relations**

The events surrounding race relations in the 1950s and 1960s have a strong correspondence with those in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which is set nearly thirty years earlier. The South, which was still steeped in its agricultural traditions, was hit hard by the Great Depression. Small farmers like Lee's Walter Cunningham Sr. often could not earn enough cash from their crops to cover their mortgages, let alone living expenses. Lee's novel captures the romanticism many white people associated with the Southern way of life, which many felt was being threatened by industrialization. Part of this tradition, however, protected such practices as sharecropping, in which tenant farmers would find themselves virtually enslaved to landowners who provided them with acreage, food, and farming supplies. The desperation sharecroppers felt was brilliantly depicted in Erskine Caldwell's 1932 novel, *Tobacco Road*. The racism of the South—many blacks were sharecroppers—is also portrayed in Richard Wright's novel *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938).

There was little opportunity for African Americans to advance themselves in the South. Schools were segregated between whites and blacks, who were not allowed to attend white high schools. Blacks were therefore effectively denied an education, since, in the early 1930s, there was not a single high school built for black students in the South. The result was that nearly half of all blacks in the South did not have an education past the fifth grade; in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Calpurnia tells the children she is only one of four members of her church who can read. Ironically, the Depression helped to change that when northern school boards began integrating schools to save the costs of running separate facilities. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal also led to the creation of the National Youth Administration (founded in 1935) and its Division of Negro Affairs, which helped teach black students to read and write. The Depression was particularly painful to blacks, who, in the 1920s, were already grossly underemployed. With worsening economic times, however, they found that even the menial jobs they once had like picking cotton—had been taken by whites. The New Deal helped here, too, with the creation of the Federal Housing Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and other agencies that assisted poor blacks in obtaining jobs and housing.

Yet the oppressive society in the South often prevented blacks from taking advantage of this government assistance. Racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Shirts terrorized blacks out of their jobs. The vigilante practice of lynching was still common in the South in the early 1930s. Only North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Alabama had laws specifically outlawing lynching as an illegal activity. (Surprisingly, only two northern states had similar laws.) By 1935, however, public outrage had reached a point where lynchings were no longer generally tolerated, even by whites. In Lee's novel, for instance, the local sheriff tries to warn Atticus Finch of a possible lynch mob while a concerned citizen, B. B. Underwood, is prepared to turn them away from the jail with his shotgun.



# Critical Overview

Although *To Kill a Mockingbird* was a resounding popular success when it first appeared in 1960, initial critical response to Lee's novel was mixed. Some reviewers faulted the novel's climax as melodramatic, while others found the narrative point of view unbelievable. For instance, *Atlantic Monthly* contributor Phoebe Adams found Scout's narration "frankly and completely impossible, being told in the first person by a six-year-old girl with the prose style of a well-educated adult." Granville Hicks likewise observed in *Saturday Review* that "Miss Lee's problem has been to tell the story she wants to tell and yet stay within the consciousness of a child, and she hasn't consistently solved it." In contrast, Nick Aaron Ford asserted in *PHYLON* that Scout's narration "gives the most vivid, realistic, and delightful experiences of child's world ever presented by an American novelist, with the possible exception of Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*."

Other early reviews of the novel focused on Lee's treatment of racial themes. Several observers remarked that while the plot of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was not particularly original, it was well executed; *New Statesman* contributor Keith Waterhouse, for instance, noted that Lee "gives freshness to a stock situation." In contrast, Harding LeMay asserted in the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* that the author's "valiant attempt" to combine Scout's amusing recollections of her eccentric neighborhood with the serious events surrounding Tom Robinson's trial "fails to produce a novel of stature, or even of original insight," although "it does provide an exercise in easy, graceful writing." Richard Sullivan, on the other hand, claimed in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune* that *To Kill a Mockingbird* "is a novel of strong contemporary national significance. And it deserves serious consideration. But first of all it is a story so admirably done that it must be called both honorable and engrossing." The Pulitzer Prize committee agreed with this last opinion, awarding the novel its 1961 prize for fiction.

Later appraisals of the novel have also supported these favorable assessments, emphasizing the technical excellence of Lee's narration and characterizations. In a 1975 article, William T. Going called Scout's point of view "the structural *forte*" of the novel, adding that it was "misunderstood or misinterpreted" by most early critics. "Maycomb and the South, then," the critic explained, "are all seen through the eyes of Jean Louise, who speaks from the mature and witty vantage of an older woman recalling her father as well as her brother and their childhood days." Critic Fred Erisman interpreted the novel as presenting a vision for a "New South" that can retain its regional outlook and yet treat all its citizens fairly. He praised Atticus Finch as a Southern representation of the ideal man envisioned by nineteenth-century American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson: "the individual who vibrates to his own iron string, the one man in the town that the community trusts 'to do right,' even as they deplore his peculiarities." R. A. Dave similarly found the novel a success in its exploration of Southern history and justice. He claimed that in *To Kill a Mockingbird* "there is a complete cohesion of art and morality. And therein lies the novelist's success. She is a remarkable storyteller. The reader just glides through the novel abounding in humor and pathos, hopes and fears, love and hatred, humanity and brutality—all affording him a memorable human experience of journeying through sunshine and rain at once. . . . The tale of heroic struggle lingers in our memory as an unforgettable experience."

# Character Analysis

*To Kill a Mockingbird* merges a skillful plot, depicting thought-provoking themes and events, with an equally skillful rendering of character. Lee creates the novel's cast using a range of techniques – from the use of stereotypical types to the in-depth layering of many-faceted characters. One of the book's particular strengths is the presence of such a number of finely-drawn characters. The reader is able to witness the motivations and growth of more than just the central protagonist.

## Scout

The most visible character in the book is Scout (Jean-Louise) Finch, the first-person narrator. Although only six years old at the time of the events being recounted, readers come to know two Scouts – the young Scout who witnesses and is involved in the events and the adult Scout who is actually looking back at these events.

Scout is an interesting choice for the narrator. She is the youngest character in the book and could be regarded as an unreliable narrator if not for her adult interjections. Scout manages to speak to the readers both of her experiences and attitudes at the time of the events and of her adult insights into the same events. Readers are fortunate enough to become acquainted with the woman who was shaped by the events and people depicted in the book.

The young Scout is a bright and curious child. She has taught herself to read, an indication of her intelligence, and is curious about many subjects. She does not hesitate to question others in her search for meaning and information. This is a characteristic encouraged by her father, Atticus, who answers Scout honestly, even when she asks difficult questions, and allows her to be exposed to situations which many other children would be sheltered from.

Scout is a non-conformist. She is a tomboy who refuses to wear dresses or act as a young lady. She likes to climb trees and play games usually reserved for boys and gets into fist fights. At the same time, Scout has an innate sense of right and wrong. She is not a model child but rather has a sense of moral justice, which she will defend stubbornly. It is this sense of justice and her belief in the universal good of mankind (which is sorely tested in the course of the novel) which sees Scout turn a lynch mob away from the prison.

The events of *To Kill a Mockingbird* see Scout's optimistic nature challenged. She becomes aware that not everyone acts with good intentions and becomes exposed to racism, bigotry and violence. She becomes gradually aware that the seemingly innocent games she has played with her brother Jem and their friend Dill are reflective of the nasty and unnecessary 'games' played by many of the adults around them.

## Atticus

Atticus Finch, Scout's father, is a lawyer and is also the sole parent of Scout and her brother Jem, whose mother died when they were young. He is the voice of reason in the novel, almost of God-like status in the eyes of Scout, who turns to her father for guidance and comfort.

Atticus represents the moral backbone of the town of Maycomb, deep in the south. Racist and intolerant attitudes, always strong in the town, have been strengthened by the depression - which has affected everyone – and fanned by a white girl's accusation of rape against a black man.

Atticus, already known for his forthright character and commitment to honesty and to right, refuses to change his attitudes. He takes on Tom Robinson's case, determined to give the man a chance at a fair trial. In doing so, he brings his family under the public scrutiny, a scrutiny which directs disapproval on him and on his children. Despite this, Atticus is unwavering in his determination to stand up for his beliefs. He is able not just to oppose injustice, but to see good in the very people who despise him.

As a father, Atticus is caring and compassionate, but also firm. He expects his children to be polite and considerate, but builds these qualities through guidance and example. He does not expect either less or more from his children than he expects of himself.

### **Jem**

Jem (Jeremy) Finch, Scout's older brother, is a character who shows a lot of growth in the novel. At the beginning of the novel he is a child, playing alongside Scout and Dill in the innocent months of summer. By the end of the novel he has reached adolescence and has weathered turbulent times.

Many of the games the children play are initiated by Jem, the oldest of the three. He tries to demonstrate courage and manliness in ways including being brave enough to touch the Radley house and by fighting. He is embarrassed that his father seems different from other fathers, being older and seemingly less manly.

The events of the novel, especially those surrounding the arrest and trial of Tom Robinson, are particularly difficult. He has been raised by his father to be strong in his beliefs and to stand up for what is right. During the trial he sees unfairness, bigotry and hatred. He realizes that right does not always triumph. This is traumatic for a child on the brink of becoming an adult. Jem is, though, fortunate to have the gentle guidance of his father to see past the hypocrisy that seems to surround him. His respect for his father develops in the light of the same events which trouble him.

By the end of the novel Jem is able to see examples of good which will help him to overcome his troubled feelings. When he goes to Scout's aid and is himself hurt, it is Boo Radley who comes to his own aid. There is an irony in this that Jem and Scout appear to recognize – that the person about whom they have held unfounded preconceptions is the very one who comes to their aid.

The two main victims of the prejudices of the people of Maycomb are Tom Robinson and Boo (Arthur) Radley. These two are like the mockingbirds referred to in the title and in the book itself. The children are told that it is a sin *To Kill a Mockingbird* because it fills the world with song and happiness and does no harm. Both Tom and Boo are portrayed by Lee as being similarly harmless and good.

### **Tom**

Tom Robinson's major 'sin' is being black. To the white population of Maycomb, deep in the South, black people are evil and have no rights. When Mayella Ewell claims to have been raped by Tom, her assertion is enough in the eyes of most white people to make Tom guilty. They do not believe that a black person is entitled to a fair trial and would happily lynch him if not stopped.

Tom's goodness is recognized by very few of the characters in the book. His willingness to help Mayella with the many tasks she has to perform around the house is seen by the white community as inappropriate. They can not understand why a black man would feel pity or compassion towards a white woman. They themselves would not feel the urge to help an Ewell, the most despised of the white population and so, to them, the only reason for Tom to offer such help would be for a sinister purpose.

### **Boo Radley**

Boo Radley is similarly misunderstood by the rest of the town. As a recluse he chooses not to participate in their society and therefore is marked as different. Rumors circulate about his violent ways, and even the adult townspeople do nothing to quell these rumors. The children playact the stories they have heard, without stopping to verify them and even play a part in persecuting Boo by trying to spy on him and refusing to respect his privacy.

Boo, like Tom, chooses to do good without seeking recognition or reward. He performs small acts of kindness such as wrapping a shivering Scout in a blanket and leaving gifts for the children. But it his courageous rescue

of Jem at the end of the book which threatens to see him brought into the public eye and possibly have to account for his actions, which is most selfless.

As well as his obvious kindness, Boo unwittingly plays an important part in both Jem and Scout's personal growth. In the wake of the trial and their confusion over its injustice, they are shown a parallel in their own unwarranted treatment of Boo Radley, who turns out to be their protector.

### **Others**

Part of the richness of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is its tapestry of characters. As well as the major characters already mentioned, there are a vast array of minor characters.

Calpurnia, the Finch's black housekeeper, provides a link between the black world and the white world in which the children move. She is a constant in their lives and fills a mothering role in the absence of their own mother. As a wise and loving black woman, Calpurnia provides the children with an experience which guards them against being drawn into the racist attitudes of the majority of their society.

The Ewell family – particularly Mayella Ewell and her father Bob – represent some of the darker side of human nature. Bob Ewell is an alcoholic and violent man, who manufactures the rape charge against Tom Robinson in order to protect any reputation his daughter may have. Although Mayella is herself a victim of her father, she lacks the strength of character to tell the truth. Only she has the power to save Tom Robinson by telling the truth.

Other characters, including the Finch's neighbor, Miss Maudie Atkinson, Heck Tate, the Sheriff, and Mister Underwood, the editor of the town's newspaper, provide Scout and Jem with varying examples of goodness and courage, showing them that it is not only their father who can exhibit these qualities.

Each of Harper Lee's characters, whether major or minor, provides a view of human nature and plays an integral part in the development of the plot and the pervading themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

# Essays and Criticism

## Symbols of Race in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In this comprehensive essay, J. Kersh examines the various symbols of race and racism employed throughout the novel.

Harper Lee's Maycomb county bears out many of the stereotypes commonly attributed to the south and southerners regarding race relations. In the midst of portraying negative attitudes and prejudices, however, a truer face of the south shines through in the actions of the Finch family. Lee skillfully balances Atticus and his children with symbols of life in a "typical" southern town to draw a sharp distinction between those who would live the life they are told to live and those whose consideration of the world around them make their lives richer and more meaningful.

One of the most profound pure symbols of race relations in the novel revolves around Jem and Scout's snowman. For instance, the building of a snowman by Jem and Scout one winter is very symbolic. Since Alabama winters don't produce enough snow to allow them to build a snowman entirely out of snow, Jem makes a foundation out of mud, covering it with the snow the children could scrape together. Clearly, one implication of this act is a "covering up" of the black man by making him whiter, more "pure." Jem is far too innocent for such an interpretation, but the world around him could provide a subtle influence.

More likely, this act is symbolic of a blending of the "clean" snow and the "dirty" mud, both of which are natural substances, showing how similar humans are. The substance created by the mixing is different than, although not necessarily better or worse than, either mud or snow. Atticus approves of his son's ingenuity as he says, "I didn't know how you were going to do it, but from now on I'll never worry about what'll become of you, son, you'll always have an idea." It is the idea, after all, the act of thinking, that separates intelligence from prejudice.

The snowman changes yet again as Miss Maudie Atkinson's house burns to the ground, melting the snow and leaving nothing but a clump of mud. Is Lee reflecting the townspeople's view that blacks and whites are indeed not the same, or is she evoking the old adage, "United we stand, divided we fall?" At least the snowman had a short life as a mixed "creature," enjoying the best of both worlds. In a sense, the snowman is like a mixed-race child who inherits the good qualities of his white and black parent, but who is scorned by a society that blames him for his parents' choices.

Jem's reaction to Mrs. Dubose is another case in point. Her insults, which include, "Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!" presume to show us her own views and those of the rest of Maycomb County's residents. Later on the day of the outburst, Jem takes Scout's baton and "runs flailing wildly up the steps into Mrs. Dubose's front yard. . . . He did not begin to calm down until he had cut the tops off every camellia bush Mrs. Dubose owned."

Jem's destruction of the white flowers symbolizes an internal backlash against the prejudice he has so recently witnessed. His subsequent care of the damaged plants (which Atticus demands, along with regular reading to Mrs. Dubose) demonstrates his learning the lesson of tolerance and of standing up to the negativity of his world. The children's visits to Mrs. Dubose begin their unconscious but very real project of attempting to change attitudes in Maycomb county.

But attitudes are not so easily changed if they are heavily ingrained. Maycomb County is a depiction of the "Old South" where blacks are still barely citizens, and where fear and suspicion reign over understanding and

respect. When Tom Robinson is arrested for raping a white woman, the townspeople immediately assumed that he is guilty. Lynching parties are formed, and “ordinary” men (i.e. not wearing Ku Klux Klan robes) let anger and fear empower them.

The same anger and fear are turned toward Atticus and even his children for the simple act of defending an unfairly accused man. Tom goes from being a respectable handy man to a monster simply because a white woman accuses him of a crime with no evidence except her word. Atticus is openly addressed as a “nigger lover” because he wants to find justice, even if that justice finds Tom guilty.

The Finches do indeed treat the black characters in their lives as equals, and important. Atticus and his children regard Calpurnia as a part of their family, where Aunt Alexandra claims that she is little more than a slave and a bad influence on Scout. The fact that Calpurnia is a substitute mother, and performs all the duties a mother would normally perform while Aunt Alexandra offers no such support seems to be irrelevant in the dominant view.

This view also (as narrow worldviews tend to do) contains a good helping of hypocrisy. The churchwomen form a missionary group to support the work of missionaries bringing Christianity to the “heathen savages” of the African Mruna tribe, but they are quick to condemn anyone who helps the black (and Christian) residents of their own town, whose conditions are hardly better than the Mruna’s. The men talk a good game, but they never make good on their angry promises regarding Tom; that their words scare him satisfies them, and keeps them safely distant from the revenge they claim they seek.

Perhaps the best example of prejudice in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is exemplified by the Ewells. The red geraniums that Mayella Ewell keeps in her yard are representative of “Southern white womanhood”; it and the white fence surrounding the Ewells’ property seem to reflect the desire to protect the delicate Southern white woman from being “tainted” by any outside influence. Inside influence – Bob Ewell’s regular violent drunken binges – doesn’t count since it is purely “family business.”

The Ewells are poor, and as such live very near the “black quarters” in town; the rank and file of Maycomb county “society” have no interest in them until Mayella claims to have been raped by Tom. As “white trash,” the Ewells only become “purely white” when they offer an opportunity for the rest of the townspeople. Mayella, lonely, abused, and virtually separated from any kind of real kindness, understands Tom’s separation from society, and his kindness prompts her to offer herself in return. Her father can’t accept this situation, making him vulnerable to the mob mentality and more than willing to see Tom die simply for being kind to Mayella.

At the trial, Bob Ewell stands up and exclaims, “I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin’ on my Mayella!” This choice of language, particularly the use of “ruttin,” resonates with prosecutor Gilmer’s description of Tom as a “big buck.” The prejudice in the trial scene rises to the point where blacks are no more than beasts, and Tom Robinson has slipped his yoke. Until Atticus coaxes a confession out of Mayella Ewell, her indiscretion is just a part of the way things are, not a crime in itself.

Atticus doesn’t kill racism in Maycomb county; he can’t. But by showing his children racism in action and fighting the prejudice of the “mockingbirds” of this stereotypical Southern town, Atticus plants the seeds of a future in which blacks and whites can live in peace.

## **The Class System in Maycomb County**

Class is a major element in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the following essay, J. Kersh explores this important theme, and gives specific examples of characters and their class.

*To Kill a Mockingbird*'s Maycomb County could be considered a microcosm (a small representation) of American class as a whole. A true "upper crust" isn't present, probably due to Harper Lee's desire to make the novel a more realistic depiction of a small southern town during the Great Depression of the 1930s – even the most well-off citizens are doing well to get by. The wealthiest citizens of Maycomb County are what people in most communities today might consider "comfortable." By drawing clear lines between the classes in Maycomb County, Harper Lee shows us the power of class division.

The Finches are near the top of the county's social strata; Atticus' position as an attorney sets him apart from the less-educated members of his society. His children, however, lack any pretensions of privilege; they wear blue jeans and overalls like any other country kids, and they show no real prejudice toward any of their peers. Jem and Scout's new friend Dill, who appears in Chapter 1, seems to lie in the same "comfortable" category as his playmates, with his good clothes that must be changed.

Farm families like the Cunninghams could be considered the "Middle Class" of the area – they are the most prevalent, and they contribute the most to be backbone of the county's well-being through farming. The Cunningham family is large, and they pay Atticus in turnips or nuts for his legal help and advice. While struggling, the Cunninghams do scrape by on what they can get through hard work and bartering. Many families in the Depression found themselves in the Cunninghams' position, and made the best with what little they had. Still, within the context of the story, they are seen as inferior due to their lack of material possessions and simple things like Walter's inability to buy lunch at school. Jem invites Walter home for lunch, where he promptly pours molasses – a luxury at his house – all over his meat and potatoes. As Scout reacts in horror, the Finches' housekeeper Calpurnia pulls her aside and teaches her her first lesson in class.

The Ewells, even lower on the social ladder than the Cunninghams, might be considered the "Lower Class" of Maycomb County. They are stereotypical "white trash" – their first appearance comes in the person of Burris Ewell, who comes to school once a year to avoid the county's truancy officer. A bug crawls out of Burris' hair, terrifying the children's teacher Miss Caroline, who seems to be unaware of any social class other than the one she comes from (she would be roughly equivalent to the Finches, having enough education to teach school).

The Ewells live on the outskirts of town, surviving in ways we don't see in the novel. The entire Ewell family has a sinister air, though, as if Bob Ewell and his clan are up to no good. Certainly, Bob's willingness to frame Tom Robinson for "attacking" his daughter when the opposite was true shows a lack of moral fiber, or perhaps even an understanding of moral and ethical behavior. Mayella herself, abused by her father, seems to have no self-esteem or self-respect, latching onto the only person in town who treats her like a person.

Tom Robinson and the other black members of Maycomb County society constitute the absolutely lowest class in the county. If the Ewells are examples of the "Lower Class," the county's black residents have no class at all by comparison. This is shown by the way Tom is treated during the obviously sham trial, in which the jury is quick to convict him on the basis of stereotypes and myths about black men.

The most visible black characters in the novel, however, are portrayed as kind and gentle, perhaps because their lack of power in society offers them no alternative. Tom is helpful and kind; Calpurnia is hard-working and keeps the children in line, often teaching them lessons about life; most of the members of First Purchase Church, such as Reverend Sykes and Zeebo, welcome the children into their world rather than criticizing or ignoring them. The black community's faith seems to hold it together far more closely than any other group despite their complete lack of social standing.

Scout's first real encounter with the class system in her community comes when she tries to explain Walter Cunningham's situation with Miss Caroline. Walter is unable to repay the quarter the new teacher offers for lunch, and Scout sees no problem with explaining that fact. When Miss Caroline's final response is to slap

her hand with a ruler, she begins to understand that even talking about issues of class causes problems. When those issues become public, they are even more difficult to deal with.

Through the trial, we see Maycomb county's classes come out in particularly nasty ways. Bob Ewell hates those "above" and "beneath" him, Tom is trapped within the lowest possible social station, and indirectly dies from it; and Atticus can do nothing from his high social perch to change the minds of a community whose ideas of class are so fixed. There is hope for the future in Scout and Jem, who have the advantage of seeing all the classes displayed and moving between them, but for the majority of Maycomb County, the divisions they place between themselves are a permanent reality.

## Why Scout? Gender in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Gender is an important issue in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In this essay, J. Kersh uses specific examples from the text to explore Harper Lee's examination of gender issues and roles, especially in the main character, Scout.

It's no coincidence that young Jean Louise Finch is nicknamed "Scout"; in addition to the obvious symbolism of the term, "Scout" is almost gender-neutral. Harper Lee's examination of racial and class-based issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* extend to gender roles as well. Scout symbolically moves from boy to girl and back, giving us a glimpse of the woman she will become, much like Harper Lee herself, who questions southern gender stereotypes as a part of the problem of growing up southern.

Early on in the novel Jem places his sister right on the balance of male and female: "'Scout, I'm tellin' you for the last time, shut your trap or go home - I declare to the Lord you're gettin' more like a girl every day'" (52). "More like a girl" in the sense that she tends to talk through a situation rather than immediately acting upon it, as women are taught, Scout nevertheless shows both feminine and masculine tendencies, giving her an insight no character except possibly her father (the best possible example of masculinity in the book) can hope to achieve.

Having lost her mother at an early age, Scout's female role models are fleeting at best, and negative at worst. Her aunt Alexandra, brought into town to help Atticus by providing a "motherly" influence, is simply incapable of understanding her niece having any interest in "doing things that required pants" (81). In one particular case, Mrs. Dubose, a grumpy old lady, stops Jem and Scout as they walk into town, asking Scout, "'what are you doing in those overalls? You should be in a dress and camisole, young lady!'" Mrs. Dubose is crabby and unpleasant, and the idea of being like her repulses Scout. Jem's reaction? "'Come on, Scout, [. . .] be a gentleman'" (101). Much of Scout's gender identity originates with those closest to her, her father and brother, so rolling around in the dirt and fighting with boys (and beating them) comes naturally. Aunt Alexandra and Mrs. Dubose represent opposite extremes of womanhood – the prissy socialite and the rotten old dowager – in effect showing Scout what she does not want to be.

By the time Mayella Ewell enters the book presenting an entirely different type of female, Scout has already realized what stereotypes are: "Ladies in bunches always filled me with vague apprehension and a firm desire to be elsewhere, but this feeling was what Aunt Alexandra called being 'spoiled'" (229). Mayella is a "rebel" in a sense, but also an outcast. She is also a victim of abuse, and Lee expertly contrasts the stubborn little girl who's not afraid of a fight with the pathetic wisp of a young woman who, at the very least, responds overly gratefully to the slightest kindness.

The term "sexual predator" was coined long after *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published; however, Mayella Ewell could be defined as one when she sends the children out for ice cream then invites Tom into her house to fix a door that isn't broken. She ends up grabbing his legs as he reaches up to retrieve a box, hugging him and begging him to kiss her - these actions are more sad than malicious. Lee doesn't seem to think Mayella is



a predator, merely a woman so weak she can only rely on her sexuality to alleviate some of the boredom and danger of her home life. But the fact remains that Mayella is weak enough to allow her father, who already has an abusive hold over her, to twist the truth in court to uphold his own "reputation."

Scout isn't interested in becoming a socialite, a matron or a victim; presumably the only option she has left involves a sort of gender-blending that allows her to take on both female and male characteristics. She wears jeans and overalls, even under her fancy dress; she fights and plays rugged boys' games. She begins to lose sight of her feminine side when Jem, who seems to be displaying his own "feminine side," prevents her from squashing a roly-poly. Jem is starting to grow a few chest hairs, and is considering trying out for football; ironically, this is when he really starts paying attention to the value of a more "feminine" perspective, that is, one that is more concerned with his surroundings and the emotions involved. In short, Jem is becoming a more complete person.

Scout is similarly returned to a more "feminine" role at the end of the novel. She enters Jem's room, where Atticus awaits to read her one of her brother's books. After being exposed to life as seen by wild little boys, social climbers, bitter old ladies and perpetual victims, she is ready to be, if for just one evening, her Daddy's little girl again. This is significant because this very girlishness is something Scout has rejected throughout the novel, as she has moved through various phases of engagements with the issue of gender. In the end, she wants to try life as Jean Louise Finch instead; it is a life we can assume will carry her well into a well-adjusted adulthood. Like Jem, Scout has "chosen" her gender role by seeing the world from both perspectives. The result brings them both closer to their father, whose fairness and evenness represents the best of both worlds.

## **Growing Pains: Levels of Maturity in To Kill a Mockingbird**

In this essay, J. Kersh tracks the growth and maturity of major characters in the novel, including Boo Radley and Scout.

*As To Kill a Mockingbird* opens, we get a glimpse of Scout and Jem's world – dark, overgrown, one might even say a bit decaying. It's hardly the bright world of *Alice in Wonderland* or *The Wind in the Willows*. Neither, though, is it the harsh existence of *The Lord of the Flies*; the key word to describe Maycomb county would have to be "realism."

Harper Lee seems to be showing the children as realistic characters in the midst of a heightened "Southern Gothic" background. A great deal of this heightened world comes from the children's (particularly Scout, the narrator's) observations and active imaginations: "In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square."<sup>(9)</sup> The children's strength lies in the fact that they know their games could have violent (or at least negative) ends, but they play to ensure that all the players are able to return home. On the other hand, adult games hurt those who refuse to play by ever-changing "rules," and not everyone gets to come home.

These games parallel the children's development from a total, imaginative innocence to a level of experience by realizing how genuine life's games really are. For instance, after playing games inspired by children's books and the pulp literature of the time, Scout, Jem and Dill turn to the world around them for ideas. Boo Radley becomes the perfect "monster," and they build a legend around him from stories told them by Miss Stephanie Crawford, Atticus, and Miss Maudie. They progress from daring each other to cross into the Radleys' yard to acting out different versions of Boo stabbing his father in the leg to, even after being scolded by Atticus, attempting to look into one of the Radleys' windows. Mr. Radley catches them, scaring them into realizing how real their game could be. Artifacts of this incident – the shotgun, Jem's pants left at the scene – remain as reminders, and the children grow a bit.

Childhood name-calling in *To Kill a Mockingbird* gives way to genuine voices of hatred. The children hear their father called a “Nigger-lover” and other names by people who don’t mean it playfully; their understanding of such things expands as the trial begins and such understanding is essential. So, too, does the incident at the jail. Scout innocently saves her father from a beating at best by simply recognizing Mr. Cunningham and calling out to his humanity. In doing so, she separates him from the safety of the mindless group of which he is a part, preventing violence – a very grown-up act, indeed, although she doesn’t yet realize how much she is changing.

The trial is a game in itself, with Mayella and Bob Ewell and their supporters pitted against Tom Robinson and Atticus, with the children sitting in the “Negro section” of the courtroom, symbolizing where their support lies. The children support their father not just because he is their father; they are coming to realize the stakes in this game, and that these stakes involve right and wrong. Scout and Jem also develop a higher respect for Atticus, because his version of the game involves respect and regard for the individuals involved, innocent or guilty. It is the only truly “adult” behavior in the novel. Atticus’s fairness in the trial makes it even harder for the children to accept the verdict. Atticus explains as well as he can, emphasizing both sides’ reasons for their words and actions. They still have a hard time understanding, as the “rules” of the community supercede the rules of fairness and the rule of law.

Outside its own playing field, the trial makes little sense to the children. It also leads to real-life violence, with no rules and no guarantee that anyone (Tom Robinson, in attempting escape, and Bob Ewell later) will return home. Boo Radley, the “monster” from earlier in the book, returns at the end to rescue the children from a crazed Bob Ewell. Believing he and his daughter have been wronged despite the fact that Mayella came on to Tom in the first place, Ewell just wants revenge on anyone, even children. Scout experiences an unusual negative response to missing her entrance in the school’s agricultural pageant (denoting a change in her attitude) then is attacked by Ewell on the way home. Jem attempts to defend his sister, but only when Boo comes out of nowhere does Scout survive. Boo Radley accidentally kills Ewell in the struggle; after carrying the wounded Jem home and sitting with Scout for a while, Boo disappears once more into the Radley house.

Walking home, Scout realizes that their games of imagining what Boo’s life was like no longer matter. He is a human being, no more or less flawed than anyone else in a final analysis. The “monster,” like Tom Robinson and Bob Ewell, isn’t inherently evil, but caught up in situations beyond their control. By deciding to embrace her father’s advice to practice sympathy and understanding, Scout emerges ready to deal with an adult world, where the games are real, and the rules change as you go.

## **Narrative structure of *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Protesting Prejudice and Racism**

In the following essay, Darren Felty explores how the narrative structure of *To Kill a Mockingbird* supports a reading of the novel as a protest against prejudice and racism.

Most critics characterize Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a novel of initiation and an indictment of racism. The novel’s point of view, in particular, lends credence to these readings. As an older woman, Jean Louise “Scout” Finch, the narrator, reflects on three crucial summers in her childhood. During this time, she, her brother Jem, and their friend Dill encounter two figures who change their views of themselves and their community. The first of these people, Boo Radley, the Finches’ reclusive neighbor, develops from a “malevolent phantom” who dominates the children’s imaginations to a misunderstood man who saves Scout’s and Jem’s lives. Tom Robinson, the second and more tragic figure, loses his life because of racial prejudice, teaching the children about the more malicious characteristics of their society and fellow citizens. Guided by the ethical example of their father, Atticus, the children attempt to understand the lives of these two men. Gradually, through their exposure to Boo Radley’s life and Tom Robinson’s death, they learn about the grave

ramifications of the social and racial prejudice that permeate their environment. Their honest and often confused reactions reflect their development as people and also help the reader to gauge the moral consequences of the novel's events.

Boo Radley is a compelling enigma and source of adventure for the children, but he also represents Scout's most personal lesson in judging others based upon surface appearance. In their attempts to see and communicate with Boo, the children enact in miniature their overall objective in the novel: to try to comprehend a world that defies easy, rational explanation. At first, Boo represents the mysterious, the unfathomable, which to the children is necessarily malevolent. They cannot understand why he would remain shut away, so he must be terrifying and evil. They ascribe nightmarish qualities to him that both scare them and stimulate their imaginations. In Jem's "reasonable" description of him, Boo is "six-and-a-half feet tall," dines on raw squirrels and cats, bears a "long jagged scar" on his face, has "yellow and rotten" teeth and "popped" eyes, and drools. He is, in essence, a monster who has lost all traces of his former humanity. And by never appearing to them, Boo always plays the part the children assign him: the silent, lurking antagonist.

Yet even their imaginations cannot keep the children from recognizing incongruities between their conceptions of Boo and evidence about his real character. The items they discover in the tree knothole, for instance, tell them a different story about Boo than the ones they hear around town. The gifts of the gum, Indian head pennies, spelling contest medal, soap-carving dolls, and broken watch and knife all reveal Boo's hesitant, awkward attempts to communicate with them, to tell them about himself. The reader recognizes Boo's commitment to the children in these items, as do Jem and Scout after a time. The children, we see, are as fascinating to him as he is to them, only for opposite reasons. They cannot see him and must construct a fantasy in order to bring him into their world; he watches them constantly and offers them small pieces of himself so he can become a part of their lives. The fact that Nathan Radley, Boo's brother, ends this communication by filling the hole with cement underscores the hopeless imprisonment that Boo endures, engendering sympathy both in the reader and the children.

After Boo saves the children's lives, Scout can direct her sympathy toward a real person, not a spectral presence. Because of this last encounter with Boo, she learns firsthand about sacrifice and mercy, as well as the more general lesson that Atticus has been trying to teach her: "You never understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Boo left the safe environment of his home to risk his life for hers, and she knows that his essential goodness and vulnerability need protecting. Hence, he is like a mockingbird, and to assail him with public notice would be comparable to destroying a defenseless songbird who gives only pleasure to others. As she stands on his porch, she reflects on her former behavior and feels shame "Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it; we had given him nothing, and it made me sad." Scout feels remorse over the children's isolation of Boo because of their fear and the prejudices they had accepted at face value. As a result of her experiences with Boo, she can never be comfortable with such behavior again.

While Scout's encounter with Boo Radley makes Atticus's lessons about tolerance tangible and personal, Tom Robinson's trial teaches her about intolerance on a social level. But Lee does not treat this trial solely as a means to develop Scout's character. Instead, the Tom Robinson story becomes the vehicle for Lee's overt social criticism in the novel. We see the town of Maycomb in its worst light, willing to execute an innocent man for a crime he did not commit rather than question their belief in black inferiority and their social taboos about interracial relationships. Lee wants to make explicit the consequences of racism and to guide the reader's judgment of this episode in the novel. She accomplishes these goals, in part, by employing Tom Robinson's trial to allude to the famous "Scottsboro Boys" trials of the 1930s. These trials featured nine black defendants accused of rape by two white women. Despite a lack of evidence and the questionable credibility of the witnesses, the men were sentenced to death by an all-white jury. Unlike Tom Robinson, however, all of these men escaped death after a long series of new trials, in some of which the defendants were still convicted

in spite of the evidence. These trials, like Tom Robinson's, revealed the deep-seated racial divisions of the South and the tenacious efforts to maintain these divisions. With the "Scottsboro Boys" trials as historical echoes, Lee points to fundamental American ideals of equality and equal protection under the law (as expressed by and portrayed in Atticus) to criticize the people's failure to meet those ideals. Through Lee's treatment, the white citizens of Maycomb become hypocrites, blind to the contradictions in their own beliefs. Hence, these people are judged, however benignly, by their own standards, standards which the reader shares.

Many of the lessons Tom Robinson's story dramatizes escape Scout's comprehension, but the reader still recognizes them, as does the older Jean Louise. The town of Maycomb is a sustaining force in Scout's life, and she views it uncritically as a child and even shares its prejudices. During the trial, for instance, she answers Dill's distress over the prosecuting attorney's sneering treatment of Robinson with "Well, Dill, after all he's just a Negro." She does not experience Dill's visceral repulsion at the trial's racist manipulations, but instead accepts the premise that blacks are treated as inferiors, even to the point of their utter humiliation. But this attitude stems mostly from her immaturity and inability to comprehend the ramifications of racism. Ultimately, Tom Robinson's trial and death initiate Scout's early questioning of racist precepts and behavior. She sees the effects of racism on her teachers and neighbors, and even feels the sting of it herself. Because of Atticus's involvement with Tom Robinson, for the first time the children must face the social rejection caused by racial bias. They become victims of exclusion and insult, which they would never have expected.

Lee poses a limitation on her social critique in the novel, however, by directing it almost completely through the Finch family rather than through Tom Robinson and his family. This focus makes sense given the point of view of the novel, but it still keeps the Robinson family at a distance from the reader. Calpurnia acts as a partial bridge to the black community, as does the children's sitting with the black townspeople at the trial, but we still must discern the tragedy of Robinson's unjust conviction and murder predominantly through the reactions of white, not black, characters, a fact many might consider a flaw in the novel. Like the children, the reader must rely on Atticus's responses and moral rectitude to steer through the moral complications of Robinson's story. His is a tolerant approach, warning the reader against overharsh judgment. He teaches the children that their white neighbors, no matter their attitudes, are still their friends and that Maycomb is their home. Yet he also asserts that the family must maintain its resolve because "The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience." We see the results of Atticus's words and behavior in the older Jean Louise, who becomes a compassionate yet not uncritical member of her community, both local and national. Finally, through the Finch family's resolve and sympathy, Lee lyrically communicates the need to cherish and protect those who, like mockingbirds, do no harm but are especially vulnerable to the violent injustices of our society.

Source: Darren Felty, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 1997. Felty is a visiting instructor at the College of Charleston.

## The Mockingbird's Song

In the following excerpt, Claudia Durst Johnson explores the role of stories, art, and other forms of communication in Lee's novel.

The subject of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is also song, that is, expression reading and literacy; both overt and covert attempts at articulation; and communicative art forms, including the novel itself. The particulars of setting in the novel are children's books, grade school texts, many different local newspapers and national news magazines, law books, a hymnal, and the reading aloud of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Much of the novel's action is actually reading, for as the locals and the children believe, that is Atticus Finch's only activity. These expressions are not only attempts to have the self broadcast and realized; more significantly, they are attempts to establish connections beyond or through boundaries.

Contrary to the notion that language and art are cold (for example, the Dracula theme frequently expresses the cold tendency of artists to sacrifice everything, even their own humanity, for their art), in *TKM*, language and art are usually borne of love and linked to expressions of charity and affection. The Gothic degeneracy of *TKM* derives from love's opposite—imprisonment and insularity, producing, in the extreme, incest and insanity, a gazing in or a gazing back. Its opposite is the social self, which is civilized in its high and positive sense, and reaches out in the love that overcomes ego in language and art.

Language and other modes of communication are usually not only civilizing in a very positive way, but are avenues of benevolence, and even charity and love. In the novel, we remember Scout reading in Atticus's lap, Atticus reading as he keeps vigil beside Jem's bed, Atticus armed only with a book as he plans to protect Tom Robinson from a lynch mob. The society that imprisons Tom Robinson is the same one that imprisons Scout in the "Dewey Decimal System," Jem's garbled version of the pedagogical theories of the University of Chicago's father of progressive education, John Dewey, which are being faddishly inflicted on the children of Maycomb. The practical result of Dewey's system on Scout is to diminish or hinder her reading and writing, and along with it, her individuality. Each child is herded into a general category that determines whether he or she is "ready" to read or print or write. ("We don't write in the first grade, we print.") The life of the mind and reading in particular is replaced in this progressive educational world with Group Dynamics, Good Citizenship, Units, Projects, and all manner of clichés. As Scout says, "I could not help receiving the impression that I was being cheated out of something. Out of what I knew not, yet I did not believe that twelve years of unrelieved boredom was exactly what the state had in mind for me."

As it is in a black man's account of slavery (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*), reading and writing are major themes in *TKM*. Reading is first introduced with Dill's announcement that he can read, and Jem's counterboast that his sister, Scout, has been reading for years:

"I'm Charles Baker Hams," he said. "I can read."

"So what?" I said.

"I just thought you'd like to know I can read. You got anything needs readin' I can do it. . . ."

The theme continues with Scout's difficulty with her first grade teacher, who resents that Scout is already able to read when she enters school. The heartfelt importance of reading to the child is considered as she contemplates its being denied to her. One notes in the following passage that reading is inextricably connected with her father and with the civilizing, everyday business of this world, that it is somehow as natural as breathing, and that she has learned that it is a crime in the view of her teacher, possibly because reading and writing (the latter taught to her by Calpurnia) are means of empowerment that place her beyond the control of her teacher:

I mumbled that I was sorry and retired meditating upon my crime. I never deliberately learned to read, but somehow I had been wallowing illicitly in the daily papers. In the long hours of church—was it then I learned? I could not remember not being able to read hymns. Now that I was compelled to think about it, reading was something that just came to me, as learning to fasten the seat of my union suit without looking around, or achieving two bows from a snarl of shoelaces. I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day, Bills To Be Enacted into Laws, the diaries of Lorenzo Dow—anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night. Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.

Atticus's civilizing power comes from his reading, a power he has taken on in place of the power of the gun. It is his sole pastime. The narrator reports, "He did not do the things our schoolmates' fathers did: he never went hunting, he did not play poker or fish or drink or smoke. He sat in the living room and read." Atticus is reading under the light outside the jail, with only a book and without a gun for protection, when the mob from Old Sarum arrives to harm his client, Tom Robinson. The novel closes with Atticus reading a book in Jem's room as he watches over his son. Members of The Idler's Club, the old men whose chief activity is attending court sessions together, know him as a lawyer whose skill arises from his being "a deep reader, a mighty deep reader." They disparage his reluctance to depart from the civilizing force of the law by saying, "He reads all right, that's all he does." The love of reading is also true of Jem, for "no tutorial system devised by man could have stopped him from getting at books."

The theme of reading and writing as emblems for civilization are shown further in Jem's and Scout's discussion of what determines a "good" or "quality" or "old" family, and Scout's recognition of the importance of literacy: "I think its how long your family's been readin' and writin'. Scout, I've studied this real hard and that's the only reason I can think of. Somewhere along when the Finches were in Egypt one of 'em must have learned a hieroglyphic or two and he taught his boy." To this Scout replies "Well, I'm glad he could, or who'da taught Atticus and them, and if Atticus couldn't read, you and me'd be in a fix."

By contrast, the more powerless Old Sarum residents and black citizens of Maycomb County are rarely literate; they are generally able only to sign their names. Calpurnia is one of the few black people in the area who can read. She shocks the children with the information that only four members of her church can read, and one, whom she has taught to read, "lines" the hymns from the hymnbook for all the others to follow. And finally, in contemplating the meaning of "Old Families," Scout realizes that literacy has little to do with intelligence. What she doesn't realize is that it has a great deal to do with power of an intellectual sort.

While reading threads the narrative as surely as the subject of the law does, its meaning is less consistent and more elusive. Despite Scout's reservation about Jem's speculation that reading is connected to "Old Families," it is apparent that, in that it is connected to Atticus, reading denotes a pinnacle of civilized progress. The most civilized, the most humane, the wisest character is the one who reads obsessively.

The continuing powerlessness of the black and poor white people of Maycomb County is incidental to their inability to read, and their children, in contrast to Scout, are taken out of school, and thus denied their only access to power. A related idea is the control that Mrs. Dubose has over narcotics through forcing Jem to read to her. On the other hand, Zeebo, who leads the singing in the black church, is an example of one who imbues his reading with spirit and offers it as a gift to his people. Like Calpurnia, he has learned to read from Blackstone's *Commentaries*, but he uses the language he has been given from the cold letter of the law and imbues it with the warmth and life of the spirit, as he alone is able to lead his church congregation in singing hymns like "On Jordan's Stormy Banks." For the three children, reading, as we have seen, is a way of sharpening the imagination and gaining knowledge of the Other.

The children obsessively make attempts to communicate verbally with Arthur Radley, first by leaving a message for him in the tree, and then, in a blundering fashion, by sticking a note to his window.

Like other dispossessed people in the novel, Boo is doomed to communicate without language, though we suspect him to be literate, for he gives the children a spelling bee medal and is rumored to have stabbed his father in the leg while clipping articles from the newspaper. This begs the question of whether his assault on his father is provoked while he is reading the newspaper because it reminds him of his forced prohibition from establishing an intercourse with the world. So Boo attempts to reach out to the world through other means, and he is thwarted again. A real tragedy of Jem's boyhood, and most likely of Boo's life, is the severing of their channel of communication, the hole in the oak tree, which Boo's older brother cements up. The presents that he leaves in the tree appear to be Boo's last attempt to reach outside his prison. And each present, which is

a means of communication, has significance. The chewing gum seems to be a way of proving that he isn't poisonous. The penny, an ancient medium of exchange, is something from the past. The spelling medal is also connected with literacy and communication. The carvings are works of art, communication, and love. The aborted mail profoundly affects Jem, who has played the part of Boo in the childhood dramas with conviction. Right after Jem's discovery of the cemented hole in the tree, Scout observes that "when we went in the house I saw he had been crying." For in shutting off Boo's avenue of expression, Mr. Radley, his brother, has thwarted Jem's as well, and has, more importantly, committed what would be a mortal sin in this novel—he has attempted to silence love.

Art forms other than literary ones occur in the novel, sometimes inadvertently communicating messages that the children don't intend. There is the Radley drama, performed for their own edification, which the neighbors and Atticus finally see. And there is the snow sculpture of Mr. Avery, which the neighbors also recognize. Perhaps because these are self-serving art works, created without a sense of audience, as if art's communicative essence could be ignored, the effects of the play and the snow sculpture are not entirely charitable. On the other hand, Boo's art—the soap sculptures—are lovingly executed as a means of extending himself to the children.

Then there is the story the narrator tells, which, again, unites art with love, somehow making up for the novel's missed and indecipherable messages, like those so frequently found in the Gothic. The novel is a love story about, a love song to, Jem and Atticus, and to Dill, the unloved child, and Boo Radley, whose love was silenced.

The reader of the Gothic, according to William Patrick Day [in *In the Circles of Fear and Desire*] is "essentially voyeuristic." He further states, "Just as when we daydream and construct idle fantasies for ourselves, the encounter with the Gothic [as readers] is a moment in which the self defines its internal existence through the act of observing its fantasies." Not only are characters in the Gothic enthralled, but the reader of the Gothic is as well. In the case of *TKM*, readers learn of the enthrallments of Jem, Dill, and Scout. But the reader of their story is also enthralled, not by the horror of racial mixing or the Dracularian Boo, but by the reminders of a lost innocence, of a time past, as unreal, in its way, as Transylvania. We, as readers, encounter the ghosts of ourselves, the children we once were, the simplicity of our lives in an earlier world. While the children's voyeurism is Gothic, our own as readers is romantic. In either case, the encounter is with the unreal. The children's encounter is in that underworld beneath reality, and ours is in a transcendent world above reality, which nostalgia and memory have altered. It is a world where children play in tree houses and swings and sip lemonade on hot summer days, and in the evenings, sit in their fathers' laps to read. Reality and illusion about the past is blurred. Within the novel's Gothicism and Romanticism, we as readers are enthralled with the past, and, like the responses elicited by the Gothic, we react with pain and pleasure to an involvement with our past world and our past selves.

Source: Claudia Durst Johnson, "The Mockingbird's Song," in *To Kill a Mockingbird: Threatening Boundaries*, Twayne Publishers, 1994, pp. 107-14.

## **In Defense of To Kill a Mockingbird.**

In this excerpt, Jill May looks at the history of censorship attempts on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which came in two onslaughts—the first from conservatives, the second from liberals.

The critical career of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a late-twentieth-century case study of censorship. When Harper Lee's novel about a small southern town and its prejudices was published in 1960, the book received favorable reviews in professional journals and the popular press. Typical of that opinion, *Booklist's* reviewer called the book "melodramatic" and noted "traces of sermonizing," but the book was recommended for library purchase,

commending its "rare blend of wit and compassion." Reviewers did not suggest that the book was young adult literature, or that it belonged in adolescent collections; perhaps that is why no one mentioned the book's language or violence. In any event, reviewers seemed inclined to agree that *To Kill a Mockingbird* was a worthwhile interpretation of the South's existing social structures during the 1930s.

In 1961 the book won the Pulitzer Prize Award, the Alabama Library Association Book Award, and the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It seemed that Harper Lee's blend of family history, local custom, and restrained sermonizing was important reading, and with a young girl between the ages of six and nine as the main character, *To Kill a Mockingbird* moved rapidly into junior and senior high school libraries and curriculum. The book was not destined to be studied by college students. Southern literature's critics rarely mentioned it; few university professors found it noteworthy enough to "teach" as an exemplary southern novel.

By the mid-sixties *To Kill a Mockingbird* had a solid place in junior and senior high American literature studies. Once discovered by southern parents, the book's solid place became shaky indeed. Sporadic lawsuits arose. In most cases the complaint against the book was by conservatives who disliked the portrayal of whites. Typically, the Hanover County School Board in Virginia first ruled the book "immoral," then withdrew their criticism and declared that the ruckus "was all a mistake" (*Newsletter [on Intellectual Freedom]* 1966). By 1968 the National Education Association listed the book among those which drew the most criticism from private groups. Ironically it was rated directly behind *Little Black Sambo* (*Newsletter* 1968). And then the seventies arrived.

Things had changed in the South during the sixties. Two national leaders who had supported integration and had espoused the ideals of racial equality were assassinated in southern regions. When John F. Kennedy was killed in Texas on November 22, 1963, many southerners were shocked. Populist attitudes of racism were declining, and in the aftermath of the tragedy southern politics began to change. Lyndon Johnson gained the presidency; blacks began to seek and win political offices. Black leader Martin Luther King had stressed the importance of racial equality, always using Mahatma Gandhi's strategy of nonviolent action and civil disobedience. A brilliant orator, King grew up in the South; the leader of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference], he lived in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1968, while working on a garbage strike in Memphis, King was killed. The death of this 1965 Nobel Peace Prize winner was further embarrassment for white southerners. Whites began to look at public values anew, and gradually southern blacks found experiences in the South more tolerable. In 1971 one Atlanta businessman observed [in *Ebony*], "The liberation thinking is here. Blacks are more together. With the doors opening wider, this area is the mecca. . . ." Southern arguments against *To Kill a Mockingbird* subsided. *The Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* contained no record of southern court cases during the seventies or eighties. The book had sustained itself during the first period of sharp criticism; it had survived regional protests from the area it depicted.

The second onslaught of attack came from new groups of censors, and it came during the late seventies and early eighties. Private sectors in the Midwest and suburban East began to demand the book's removal from school libraries. Groups, such as the Eden Valley School Committee in Minnesota, claimed that the book was too laden with profanity (*Newsletter* 1978). In Vernon, New York, Reverend Carl Hadley threatened to establish a private Christian school because public school libraries contained such "filthy, trashy sex novels" as *A Separate Peace* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (*Newsletter* 1980). And finally, blacks began to censor the book. In Warren, Indiana, three black parents resigned from the township Human Relations Advisory Council when the Warren County school administration refused to remove the book from Warren junior high school classes. They contended that the book "does psychological damage to the positive integration process and represents institutionalized racism" (*Newsletter* 1982). Thus, censorship of *To Kill a Mockingbird* swung from the conservative right to the liberal left. Factions representing racists, religious sects, concerned parents, and minority groups vocally demanded the book's removal from public schools. With this kind of offense, what makes *To Kill a Mockingbird* worth defending and keeping?



When Harper Lee first introduces Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she is almost six years old. By the end of the book Scout is in the third grade. Throughout the book events are described by the adult Scout who looks back upon life in the constricted society of a small southern town. Since it is the grown-up Scout's story, the young Scout Finch becomes a memory more than a reality. The book is not a vivid recollection of youth gone by so much as a recounting of days gone by. Yet, Scout Finch's presence as the events' main observer establishes two codes of honor, that of the child and of the adult. The code of adult behavior shows the frailty of adult sympathy for humanity and emphasizes its subsequent effect upon overt societal attitudes. Throughout the book Scout sees adults accepting society's rules rather than confronting them. When Scout finds school troublesome, Atticus tells Scout that they will continue reading together at night, then adds, "you'd better not say anything at school about our agreement." He explains away the Maycomb Ku Klux Klan, saying, "it was apolitical organization more than anything. Besides, they couldn't find anybody to scare." And when he discusses the case of a black man's word against a white man's with his brother, Atticus says, "The jury couldn't possibly be expected to take Tom Robinson's word against the Ewells' . . . Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand." The author tells us that Atticus knew Scout was listening in on this conversation and purposely explained that he had been court appointed, adding, "I'd hoped to get through life without a case of this kind. . . ." And when the jury does see fit to try and condemn Tom Robinson, Scout's older brother Jem and good friend Dill see the white southern world for what it is: a world of hypocrisy, a world burdened with old racist attitudes which have nothing to do with humanity. Jem says, "I always thought Maycomb folks were the best folks in the world, least that's what they seemed like." Dill decides he will be a new kind of clown. "I'm gonna stand in the middle of the ring and laugh at the folks. . . . Every one of 'em oughta be ridin' broomsticks."

The majority of white adults in Maycomb are content to keep blacks, women and children in their place. Atticus's only sister comes to live with the family and constantly tells Scout she must learn how to act, that she has a place in society: womanhood with its stifling position of prim behavior and wagging tongues is the essence of southern decorum. Even Atticus, the liberal minded hero, says that perhaps it's best to keep women off the juries of Alabama because, "I doubt if we'd ever get a complete case tried—the ladies'd be interrupting to ask questions." By the end of the book Scout has accepted the rules of southern society. The once hated aunt who insisted upon Scout's transformation into a proper young lady becomes an idol for her ability to maintain proper deportment during a crisis. Scout follows suit, reasoning "if Auntie could be a lady at a time like this, so could I."

The courtroom trial is a real example of Southern justice and Southern local color storytelling. Merrill Skaggs has analyzed the local color folklore of southern trials in his book *The Folk of Southern Fiction*. Skaggs comments that there is a formula for court hearings, and he suggests that local color stories show that justice in the courtroom is, in fact, less fair than justice in the streets. He discusses justice in terms of the black defendant, saying, "Implicit in these stories . . . is an admission that Negroes are not usually granted equal treatment before the law, that a Negro is acquitted only when he has a white champion." During the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird* Tom Robinson says he ran because he feared southern justice. He ran, he says, because he was "scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do." Dill is one of Lee's young protagonists. He is angered by the southern court system. The neglected son of an itinerant mother, Dill is a stereotype of southern misfits. Lee doesn't concentrate upon Dill's background; she concentrates upon his humanity. The courtroom scene is more than local humor to him. It is appalling. When he flees the trial, Scout follows. She cannot understand why Dill is upset, but the notorious rich "drunk" with "mixed children" can. He sees Dill and says, "it just makes you sick, doesn't it?" No one, save Jem and his youthful converts, expects Atticus to win. The black minister who has befriended the children warns, "I ain't ever seen any jury decide in favor of a colored man over a white man." In the end Atticus says, "They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it—seems that only children weep." And Miss Maudie tells the children, "as I waited I thought, Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that." Then she adds, "we're making a step—it's just a baby-step, but it's a step."

In his book, Skaggs points out that obtaining justice through the law is not as important as the courtroom play in southern trials and that because the courtroom drama seldom brings real justice, people condone "violence within the community." Atticus realizes that "justice" is often resolved outside of the court, and so he is not surprised when the sheriff and the town leaders arrive at his house one night. The men warn Atticus that something might happen to Tom Robinson if he is left in the local jail; the sheriff suggests that he can't be responsible for any violence which might occur. One of the men says, "—don't see why you touched it [the case] in the first place. . . . You've got everything to lose from this, Atticus. I mean everything." Because Atticus wants courtroom justice to resolve this conflict, he tries to protect his client. On the night before the trial Atticus moves to the front of the jail, armed only with his newspaper. While there, the local lynching society arrives, ready to take justice into its own hands. Scout, Jem, and Dill have been watching in their own dark corner, but the crowd bothers Scout and so she bursts from her hiding spot. As she runs by, Scout smells "stale whiskey and pigpen," and she realizes that these are not the same men who came to the house earlier. It is Scout's innocence, her misinterpretation of the seriousness of the scene, her ability to recognize one of the farmers and to talk with guileless ease to that man about his own son which saves Tom Robinson from being lynched. The next morning Jem suggests that the men would have killed Atticus if Scout hadn't come along. Atticus who is more familiar with adult southern violence, says "might have hurt me a little, but son, you'll understand folks a little better when you're older. A mob's always made up of people, no matter what. . . . Every little mob in every little southern town is always made up of people you know—doesn't say much for them does it?" Lynching is a part of regional lore in the South. In his study of discrimination, Wallace Mendelson pointed out that the frequency of lynchings as settlement for black/white problems is less potent than the terrorizing aspect of hearing about them. In this case, the terrorizing aspect of mob rule had been viewed by the children. Its impact would remain.

After the trial Bob Ewell is subjected to a new kind of Southern justice, a polite justice. Atticus explains, "He thought he'd be a hero, but all he got for his pain was . . . was, okay, we'll convict this Negro but get back to your dump." Ewell spits on Atticus, cuts a hole in the judge's screen, and harasses Tom's wife. Atticus ignores his insults and figures, "He'll settle down when the weather changes." Scout and Jem never doubt that Ewell is serious, and they are afraid. Their early childhood experiences with the violence and hypocrisy in southern white society have taught them not to trust Atticus's reasoning but they resolve to hide their fear from the adults around them. When Ewell does strike for revenge, he strikes at children. The sheriff understands this kind of violence. It is similar to lynching violence. It strikes at a minority who cannot strike back, and it creates a terror in law-abiding citizens more potent than courtroom justice. It shows that southern honor has been consistently dealt with outside of the courtroom.

Harper Lee's book concerns the behavior of Southerners in their claim for "honor," and Boo Radley's presence in the story reinforces that claim. When Boo was young and got into trouble, his father claimed the right to protect his family name. He took his son home and kept him at the house. When Boo attacked him, Mr. Radley again asked for family privilege; Boo was returned to his home, this time never to surface on the porch or in the yard during the daylight hours. The children are fascinated with the Boo Radley legend. They act it out, and they work hard to make Boo come out. And always, they wonder what keeps him inside. After the trial, however, Jem says, "I think I'm beginning to understand something. I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo Radley's stayed shut up in the house . . . it's because he *wants* to stay inside."

Throughout the book Boo is talked about and wondered over, but he does not appear in Scout's existence until the end when he is needed by the children. When no one is near to protect them from death, Boo comes out of hiding. In an act of violence he kills Bob Ewell, and with that act he becomes a part of southern honor. He might have been a hero. Had a jury heard the case, his trial would have entertained the entire region. The community was unsettled from the rape trial, and this avenged death in the name of southern justice would have set well in Maycomb, Alabama. Boo Radley has been outside of southern honor, however, and he is a shy man. Lee has the sheriff explain the pitfalls of southern justice when he says, "Know what'd happen then? All the ladies in Maycomb includin' my wife'd be knocking on his door bringing angel foodcakes. To my way

of thinkin'. . . that's a sin. . . . If it was any other man it'd be different." The reader discovers that southern justice through the courts is not a blessing. It is a carnival.

When Harper Lee was five years old the Scottsboro trial began. In one of the most celebrated southern trials, nine blacks were accused of raping two white girls. The first trial took place in Jackson County, Alabama. All nine were convicted. Monroeville, Lee's hometown, knew about the case. Retrials continued for six years, and with each new trial it became more obvious that southern justice for blacks was different from southern justice for whites. Harper Lee's father was a lawyer during that time. Her mother's maiden name was Finch. Harper Lee attended law school, a career possibility suggested to Scout by well-meaning adults in the novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in 1935, midpoint for the Scottsboro case.

Scout Finch faces the realities of southern society within the same age span that Harper Lee faced Scottsboro. The timeline is also the same. Although Lee's father was not the Scottsboro lawyer who handled that trial, he was a southern man of honor related to the famous gentleman soldier, Robert E. Lee. It is likely that Harper Lee's father was the author's model for Atticus Finch and that the things Atticus told Scout were the kinds of things Aunty Lee told his daughter. The attitudes depicted are ones Harper Lee grew up with, both in terms of family pride and small town prejudices.

The censors' reactions to *To Kill a Mockingbird* were reactions to issues of race and justice. Their moves to ban the book derive from their own perspectives of the book's theme. Their "reader's response" criticism, usually based on one reading of the book, was personal and political. They needed to ban the book because it told them something about American society that they did not want to hear. That is precisely the problem facing any author of realistic fiction. Once the story becomes real, it can become grim. An author will use first-person flashback in story in order to let the reader live in another time, another place. Usually the storyteller is returning for a second view of the scene. The teller has experienced the events before and the story is being retold because the scene has left the storyteller uneasy. As the storyteller recalls the past both the listener and the teller see events in a new light. Both are working through troubled times in search of meaning. In the case of *To Kill a Mockingbird* the first-person retelling is not pleasant, but the underlying significance is with the narrative. The youthful personalities who are recalled are hopeful. Scout tells us of a time past when white people would lynch or convict a man because of the color of his skin. She also shows us three children who refuse to believe that the system is right, and she leaves us with the thought that most people will be nice if seen for what they are: humans with frailties. When discussing literary criticism, Theo D'Haen suggested [in *Text to Reader*] that the good literary work should have a life within the world and be "part of the ongoing activities of that world." *To Kill a Mockingbird* continues to have life within the world; its ongoing activities in the realm of censorship show that it is a book which deals with regional moralism. The children in the story seem very human; they worry about their own identification, they defy parental rules, and they cry over injustices. They mature in Harper Lee's novel, and they lose their innocence. So does the reader. If the readers are young, they may believe Scout when she says, "nothin's real scary except in books." If the readers are older they will have learned that life is as scary, and they will be prepared to meet some of its realities.

Source: Jill May, "In Defense of *To Kill a Mockingbird*," in *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints*, edited by Nicholas J. Karolides, Lee Burrell, John M. Kean, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993, pp. 476-84.

# Suggested Essay Topics

## Chapter 1

1. Describe Boo Radley, through the eyes of Jem and Scout Finch. Discuss his habits, his appearance, and his actions.
2. After defining the words “Caste” and “Class,” describe the caste and class system in Maycomb. Do you think such a system would still exist in the town today? Why, or why not?

## Chapter 2

1. Contrast the teaching styles of Atticus Finch and Miss Caroline Fisher.
2. Describe the outward appearance and the actions of Miss Caroline. Are there any contradictions between the two?

## Chapter 3

1. Contrast Atticus Finch’s idea of the law and Mr. Radley’s idea of the law.
2. Compare and contrast Walter Cunningham and Burris Ewell.

## Chapter 4

1. What evidence does one have that Boo Radley is trying to make friends with the children?
2. How is Scout growing and maturing as the story progresses?

## Chapter 5

1. Explain why Miss Maudie Atkinson would be a good friend for a young, motherless girl to have.
2. What lessons did Atticus Finch try to teach the children when he found them using a fishing line to give a message to Arthur Radley?

## Chapter 6

1. Why did Jem return for his pants?
2. Why were the children going to spy on Arthur Radley on the last night of summer?

## Chapter 7

1. What were the six gifts placed in the tree? Why do you think those gifts were chosen?
2. What are the children beginning to think of Boo as a person?

## Chapter 8

1. Describe Miss Maudie’s reactions to her home burning. Tell why she was able to behave in this way.
2. Describe the colors of the snowman/woman. Tell how the colors relate to Maycomb. Describe the outward appearance of the snow person and how it changes. Describe the interior of the snow person. Is there symbolism relating to gender bias here? Why, or why not?

## Chapter 9

1. Compare and contrast Atticus and Jack. Consider their methods of disciplining Scout. How are they the

same? How are they different? Which person do you think is more effective in getting the desired result? Why do you believe this is true?

2. Describe the outward pressures on Scout to “become a lady.” Do you think Atticus applies the same pressures? Why, or why not? Why do you think Atticus behaves in this way?

### **Chapter 10**

1. Atticus had many accomplishments. What were some of these? Jem and Scout did not recognize their father’s accomplishments, they wanted him to distinguish himself in other ways. When Atticus killed the dog, Jem decided to keep this silent. Why do you think this happened?

2. Contrast marksmanship with playing the piano, according to Miss Maudie. Explain why Atticus refused to hunt.

### **Chapter 11**

1. Describe Mrs. Dubose. Describe her home. Does the setting in which Mrs. Dubose lives seem suited to her personality? Explain.

2. According to Atticus, what is real courage? Give examples of real courage you have seen in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

### **Chapter 12**

1. Describe the double life that Calpurnia leads. Why does she lead this double life?

2. Compare and contrast the church service in Calpurnia’s church with a church service in Jem and Scout’s church. Why do the differences occur? Do you think the church services in the two churches will become more alike or more different as time goes by? Why?

### **Chapter 13**

1. Compare and contrast Scout’s and Alexandra’s definitions of “a fine person.”

2. Both Jem and Atticus tell Scout that it is not time to worry. What does this tell you about the speakers?

### **Chapter 14**

1. Compare Dill’s fictional and factual accounts of running away.

2. What evidence do you see that Jem is growing up? What evidence do you see that Jem is not yet an adult?

### **Chapter 15**

1. Compare and contrast the events of the Saturday night and the events of Sunday evening.

2. Discuss the bravery of the children, especially in contrast to the cowardly mob.

### **Chapter 16**

1. Describe Judge Taylor. What do you think was unusual about him? What kind of courtroom did he run?

2. Describe the day of the trial in Maycomb. Is there another event in a small town to which the event could be likened? Why do you think so many people attended?

### **Chapter 17**

1. Describe the Ewell home. Compare it and contrast it to the home in which Scout and Jem had grown up in

Maycomb.

2. Why did Jem think Tom would be found innocent? Why was Scout more hesitant to believe that way?

### **Chapter 18**

1. Is Mayella telling the truth or is she lying? What does she say and do in court that makes you feel this way?

2. Describe Atticus' behavior in court toward Mayella. How do you think he feels about her and what she says?

### **Chapter 19**

1. Contrast and compare the style of Atticus' and Gilmer's cross-examinations.

2. Compare and contrast Mayella's and Tom's style of answering questions and compare their testimonies. How are they alike? How are they different?

### **Chapter 20**

1. Give a of Atticus's final speech to the jury. Why do you think that he loosened his clothing and removed his coat before he began?

2. Describe Atticus's view of lies and immorality. Do you think his view is typical of most of Maycomb society? Why, or why not?

3. What was the unwritten social code that Mayella broke? Are there unwritten social codes that Atticus himself has in his life?

### **Chapter 21**

1. Describe Atticus' actions after the trial. What was the significance of each action?

2. What impressions did Scout have as she waited for the decision?

### **Chapter 22**

1. How did many people show their appreciation to Atticus? What does Atticus say and do when he sees their response to him?

2. What did Miss Maudie do for the children to make them feel better the morning after the trial? What did she say to them that made them feel better? Do you think she believed what she told them? Why do you believe this way?

### **Chapter 23**

1. What were the four kinds of people in the world according to Jem? According to Jem's grouping system, where would Little Chuck Little who helped calm Miss Caroline when she saw the cootie be placed? Do you agree with Jem that the Finch family in Maycomb was in a different group than the Ewell family? Why?

2. Mr. Ewell spat in Atticus's face. What were some reasons Atticus did not fight back? Which man had greater courage?

### **Chapter 24**

1. Aunt Alexandra is trying to teach Scout to be a lady. From what went on at the meeting, what is a lady, according to Miss Maudie's example? according to Aunt Alexandra's example? according to Scout's thoughts?

2. What is a missionary circle? Describe the women's missionary meeting. Is there any irony evident at the meeting? Explain.

### **Chapter 25**

1. Tell about Mr. Underwood's editorial. To what does he compare Tom? Is this a good analogy? Why?
2. Compare and contrast the Robinson Place with the Radley Place. Do ghosts exist at both places? Explain.

### **Chapter 26**

1. Why did Miss Gates use current events in her class? Knowing what Miss Gates said on the courthouse steps, are there any inconsistencies in what she says in the classroom and what she does and says outside the class? How is this similar or different from Atticus?
2. Compare a democracy and a dictatorship. How are they different?

### **Chapter 27**

1. Why was Robert Ewell bitter, according to Atticus? How did he show his bitterness?
2. Compare and contrast the break-in on the Barber sisters' house and the attempted break-in on Judge Taylor's house.
3. Describe in detail Scout's costume for the pageant.

### **Chapter 28**

1. Describe the Maycomb Halloween celebration.
2. What events contributed most to the confrontation that occurs after the celebration?

### **Chapter 29**

1. Describe what happened after the children arrive home. Why did Boo decide to stay at the Finch home instead of sneaking back home? What feelings do you think Boo was experiencing?
2. Describe Boo Radley. Compare and contrast his true description with the description that the children held of him in Part One.
3. In Part One Scout called Arthur Radley, "Boo." Miss Maudie tells her to call him, "Arthur." She thinks of him as Mr. Arthur on her way home from third grade. When she sees him for the first time, she calls him, "Boo." What is the significance of each of these names?

### **Chapter 30**

1. Tell Atticus's story of the murder and what he thought should be done.
2. What did Sheriff Tate want to do about the murder and why?

### **Chapter 31**

1. What could be seen from Arthur's porch?
2. Are there indications in the chapter that Boo is sick and will die?

# Sample Essay Outlines

The following paper topics are designed to test your understanding of the novel as a whole and to analyze important themes and literary devices. Following each question is a sample outline to help get you started.

## Topic #1

The theme of the mockingbird is an important one in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Write a paper on the mockingbird theme in Harper Lee's only book. Be sure to tell what a mockingbird is and tell exactly why both Boo and Tom are mockingbirds. Are fears and superstitions associated with the mockingbird theme, with Boo, and/or with Tom? Explain your answer.

## Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Harper Lee uses the mockingbird theme with both Boo and Tom as examples and with fears and superstitions attached to the mockingbird and both characters.*

II. Definition of a mockingbird

- A. Songbird
- B. Gives its music
- C. Expects nothing in return
- D. Does no harm
- E. Sin to kill mockingbird

III. Boo

- A. Like the songbird
- B. Gives gifts in tree and in end protects children
- C. Expects no gifts or favors in return
- D. Does no harm
- E. Sin to harm or kill Boo

IV. Tom

- A. Like the songbird
- B. Gives gifts of labor
- C. Expects no gifts or favors in return
- D. Does no harm
- E. Sin to harm or kill Tom

V. Superstitions attached to each

- A. Mockingbird
  - 1. Sin to kill
  - 2. Spends life giving
- B. Boo
  - 1. Rumors spread about him
  - 2. Fear attached to him and the Radley Place
- C. Tom
  - 1. Rumors spread about him
  - 2. Fears associated with him and his race
    - a. "No lady safe in her bed" (Mrs. Farrow)
    - b. "Sin to kill a cripple" (Underwood)



## Topic #2

Both Atticus and Bob Ewell are important characters in the novel. Compare and contrast these important characters.

### Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *In the novel To Kill a Mockingbird there are similarities and differences between Atticus and Bob Ewell, but the differences outweigh the similarities.*

#### II. Similarities

- A. Fathers
- B. Single parents
- C. Set examples for their children

#### III. Differences

- A. Atticus Finch
  - 1. Same in public as private
  - 2. Set example of honesty and concern for others to children
  - 3. Did not use corporal punishment
  - 4. Works as lawyer
- B. Bob Ewell
  - 1. Does evil works in secrecy
    - a. Scares Helen Robinson when she is alone
    - b. Cuts judge's screen
    - c. Attacks children at night when they are alone
  - 2. Sets contentious example for children
  - 3. Beats children
  - 4. Does not hold job

## Topic #3

Atticus teaches many lessons to his children. What are some of the lessons that Atticus taught? How does he teach his lessons? Cite examples from the novel.

### Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Atticus teaches many lessons to his children through his examples and through his patient lessons.*

#### II. Lessons

- A. Answer children when they ask you something
- B. Do not hurt the defenseless
- C. Be the same in public as in private
- D. Use compromise when possible
- E. Try to crawl into someone else's skin

#### III. Means of instruction

- A. Tells brother to do so and does himself
- B. Example
- C. Example
- D. Shows Scout how to do so by doing with her
- E. Mentions many, many times to children

#### **Topic #4**

Lee chooses Scout as narrator for the novel. In what way does it accomplish Lee's purpose to have a young, innocent narrator? Can she make a profound statement about the hypocrisy of society? Explain your answer.

#### **Outline**

I. Thesis Statement: *Through Scout's innocent point-of-view, the reader sees Maycomb society with its barriers of class, race, and sex.*

#### II. "Different kinds of folks"

##### A. Jem

1. Ordinary folks like the Finches and neighbors
2. The Ewells
3. The Cunninghams
4. The Negroes

##### B. Aunt Alexandra

1. Heredity
2. Shortcomings in other tribal groups

##### C. Scout

1. Says that "Folks is folks"
2. Less prejudiced than most other characters

#### III. Sees evidence of racial differentiation

##### A. Said Calpurnia was "supposed to use back door"

##### B. Jury was white men from outside town

C. Is told by Reverend Sykes that he "ain't ever seen any jury decide in favor of a colored man over a white man. . . ."

#### IV. Sex lines in Maycomb

##### A. Women not on a jury

##### B. Expect girls to act and dress in a certain way

##### C. Southern womanhood

# Compare and Contrast

- **1930s:** During the Great Depression unemployment rose as high as 25%; the New Deal program of government-sponsored relief leads to a deficit in the federal budget.

**1960:** After a decade of record-high American production and exports, unemployment dips to less than 5 percent, while the federal government runs a small surplus.

**Today:** Unemployment runs between 5 and 6 percent, while the federal government works to reduce a multi-billion dollar deficit amidst an increasingly competitive global economy.

- **1930s:** Schools are racially segregated; emphasis in the classroom was on rote learning of the basics.

**1960:** Although backed up by force at times, school integration laws were being enforced; the 1959 launch of the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* leads to math and science gaining increased importance.

**Today:** School populations are as racially diverse as their communities; classes include a focus on combining subjects and problem-solving skills.

- **1930s:** Only property owners who were white and male could serve on juries.

**1960:** Women and minorities could now serve on juries; while the Supreme Court ruled that eliminating jurors from duty on the basis of race is unconstitutional, many trials still exclude blacks and Hispanics.

**Today:** All registered voters are eligible to serve on juries, although in many cases prosecution and defense teams aim to create a jury with a racial balance favorable to their side.

- **1930s:** A big trial serves as a entertainment event for the whole town and a child who has been to the movies is unusual.

**1960:** Television was becoming the dominant form of popular entertainment, while families might see films together at drive-in movie theaters.

**Today:** Although television and film are still large presences, computers and computer games swiftly gain a share in the entertainment market. Trials still provide public entertainment and are featured on their own cable channel.

## Topics for Further Study

- Research the 1930s trials of the Scottsboro Boys and compare how the justice system worked in this case to the trial of Tom Robinson.
- Explore the government programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" and explain how some of the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* could have been helped by them.
- Investigate the various groups involved in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and compare their programs to the community supports found in Lee's imaginary town of Maycomb.

## Media Adaptations

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* was adapted as a film by Horton Foote, starring Gregory Peck and Mary Badham, Universal, 1962; available from MCA/ Universal Home Video.
- It was also adapted as a full-length stage play by Christopher Sergel, and was published as *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird: A Full-length Play*, Dramatic Publishing Co., 1970.



From the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, starring Gregory Peck, Mary Badham, Phillip Alford, and John Megna, 1962.

# What Do I Read Next?

- In *A Gathering of Old Men*, Ernest Gaines's 1983 novel, a white Cajun work boss is found shot in a black man's yard. Nineteen elderly black men and a young white woman all claim responsibility for the murder in order to thwart the expected lynch mob.
- Nobel Prize-winner Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) is the story of Milkman Dead's quest for identity and how he discovers his own courage, endurance, and capacity for love and joy when he discovers his connection with his ancestors.
- Mark Twain's 1884 popular and sometimes controversial classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* follows the satirical adventures and moral development of Huck Finn, a young white boy, as he accompanies Jim, an escaped slave, down the Mississippi River in a quest for freedom.
- *Uncle Tom's Children*, a 1938 collection of stories by Richard Wright relates how African Americans struggle for survival in a racist world and explores themes of fear, violence, flight, courage, and freedom.
- Taylor Branch's social history *Parting the Waters: American in the King Years, 1954-63*, which won the 1988 National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction, looks at the state of the American civil rights movement between World War II and the 1960s. While focusing on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., the work also includes profiles of other important leaders and traces key historical events.

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## For Further Reading

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