

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES & ANALYSIS

### PART 1

#### CHAPTER 1

##### Summary

In this chapter, a brief introduction of the Finch family is given by Scout. Simon Finch established a homestead, 'Finch's Landing', on the banks of the Alabama River. He died a rich and prosperous man. One of his sons, Atticus, studied law; the other had studied medicine. Although both sons left Finch's Landing, Alexandra, their sister, remained.

Atticus practiced law in Maycomb, where he lived with his two children, Jem and Scout, and the cook, Calpurnia. Atticus' wife died when the children were young, and Scout hardly remembers her.

The children's boundaries for roaming were Miss Henry Lafayette Dubose's house and the Radley house. The Radley house had always fascinated the children with its spooky exterior. The children used to imagine that a vicious phantom resided in the house. In fact, Mr. and Mrs. Radley were a couple who kept to themselves. Their son, Boo Radley is believed by children to have maniacal tendencies and so is kept at home. The children played games around the Radley house and dare one another to touch the wall of the house to prove how brave they are.

##### Notes

This chapter merely gives the reader a view of the Maycomb society and its inhabitants. The main characters, of course, are Atticus and his family. Scout, his daughter, narrates the entire story in first person. Since the entire novel is a narrative seen through Scout's eyes, the visualization is purely from a child's point of view. This includes the depiction of her morbid fear of the Radley house, about which she has heard a number of stories, drawn out of proportion by the local gossips. The description of Boo, therefore, is a larger than life one: "he was six-and-a-half feet tall, dined on row squirrels -- there was a long jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped and he drooled."

The father's relation with his children seems superficial in the beginning -- "he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment," yet the fact that the children call him by his name, and even later, as his outlook and conduct are revealed, they only point to the genuine love he has for his children.

Dill is introduced in the chapter. He is a child searching for love in a loveless family; he also has a tendency to fantasize and exaggerate. During the course of the novel, he will prove to be a good friend to both Jem and Scout.

#### CHAPTER 2

##### Summary

Scout is to begin school, and Jem is assigned to escort her on the first day. Jem makes it clear to Scout that she is to stay with the first graders and not try to follow him or ask him to play with her. Scout is excited about her first day at school but is disillusioned because she is rebuked for already knowing how to read and write. It turns out that Atticus and Calpurnia had introduced her to reading and writing at a very early age, but the teacher is unable to see the genuineness of this attempt and feels that it is only a hindrance to further learning.

When Scout tries to explain the reason why Walter Cunningham would not accept her money for buying lunch, she is punished by the teacher.

##### Notes

In this chapter, the reader is made aware of the narrow-minded and idealistic approach to learning which insists on a step-by-step approach. The fact that Scout already knows how to read and write is not appreciated, but is judged by the teacher an irritant to further learning.

The chapter also shows a section of the Maycomb society, where people, like the Cunninghams, are dirt-poor, but honest and hardworking. Scout's teacher, Miss Carolina, who comes from North Alabama, is unfamiliar with Maycomb society, and Scout's simple explanation about Walter Cunningham only serves to irritate the teacher all the more. Gradually, the intricacies of Maycomb society are being unraveled by the author.

#### CHAPTER 3

##### Summary

Jem manages to stop the fight between Scout and Walter Cunningham and on spontaneously invites him for dinner. Scout makes an involuntary remark about Walter's strange eating habits at the dining table, and is severely reprimanded by Calpurnia.

Back at school, Miss Carolina is disgusted to see a louse in Burris Ewell's hair and sends him home to get clean. The boy's rude behavior shocks the teacher and one student offers an explanation about the lifestyle of the Ewells, who breach all rules and live a life of sloth. Back home, Scout wonders aloud to her father, whether she too could skip school and stay at home like the Ewells. Atticus explains to her that sometimes rules are bent to maintain the harmony in society, but Scout would have to go to school.

##### Notes

Another section of the Maycomb County is unveiled here. The Ewells are what was called the 'white trash' who live in dire poverty, yet make no attempts to ascend out of it. The society has to accept their way of life and they are merely evaded as far as possible. The Cunninghams, though as poor, are not like the Ewells, in that they possess self-respect, honesty and perseverance.

Atticus, being a lawyer, has to deal with all kinds of people including such as the Cunninghams and the Ewells, and is therefore aware of their particular failings and strengths.

Calpurnia serves as a surrogate mother for the children, who takes them at hand, teaching them rudimentary reading and the courteous conduct.

## CHAPTER 4

### Summary

On this particular day, as Scout runs back home from school, she sees something glistening on the oak tree outside the Radley house. Taking courage, she retraces her steps to investigate and finds some chewing gum wrapped in tin foil and stuffed into a hole in the its trunk.

Jem, on discovering it, makes Scout spit it out. But the very next day, when they pass by the same place, they discover a box containing two shining pennies in it. Initially they decide to inquire if anybody has lost some pennies, and if there would be no claimants, they decide to pocket it themselves.

Dill arrives in a blaze of glory and a fanfare of fantasies. While they are playing together, Scout gets into an old tire which is pushed over by Jem. It starts rolling down the road and stops right outside the Radley house. In her fright, Scout runs back, leaving the tire behind. Jem, with much ado at bravery, ultimately retrieves it. Then they plan out a pantomime game, with Jem pretending to be Boo, continually howling and shrieking away. They even act out the scene where Boo had supposedly plunged a knife through his father's pants.

Unfortunately for them, Atticus catches them at it and the game is stopped. Scout remembers that on the day she had rolled into the Radley front yard, she had heard a low sound of laughter from inside the house.

### Notes

The apparent futility of the new method of teaching makes Scout sluggish in her schoolwork. It is also evident that her fear of the Radley house has not mitigated with time.

The discovery of the chewing gum, and later the pennies, gives an insight into the character

of Boo Radley, who is feared by all children but who loves them nonetheless, and therefore

shows his interest in them through such covert attempts. Even his laughter, that Scout overhears as she rolls onto his front yard, reveals his keenness in the children's actions and a fervor in living his life amidst people, as he did before he had been submitted to this severe punishment of confinement.

The game the children indulge in is typical of children who wish to enact things they hear about. And though Boo Radley scares the wits out of them, his life holds prominence too, which leads them to an enact (what they

believe is) Boo's life. Though apparently it is an unkind thing to do, the children are displaying the way they come to terms with the adult world.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary

Their neighbor Miss Maudie, is also a friend of the children. Scout questions her about Boo, and Maudie explains that there is nothing wrong with Boo, or rather Arthur( his real name). Mr. Radley had been a Protestant Baptist, with strong religious notions which Miss Maudie didn't believe in. She then assures Scout that all the stories built around the Radley house are imaginary ones.

Dill and Jem have, in the meantime, formulated a plan delivering a note to Boo, inviting him to come out and meet them. Scout is petrified, but agrees to carry out her part of guarding the area, for fear of being labeled a girl and a 'sissy'.

However, their plan does not succeed as Atticus arrives and dissuades them from tormenting Boo, instructing them to leave him alone.

### Notes

People in the county have a very high regard for Atticus. As Miss Maudie puts it - "If Atticus drank until he was drunk, he wouldn't be as hard as some men are at their best."

Dill and Jem's desire to bring Boo out of the house not only shows their sincere attempts at befriending him; it is also an innocent need to see him and find out if he is for real. It is an innate curiosity of knowing what has never been clearly revealed to them. All such hopes are, however, quashed by Atticus who doesn't believe in interfering in other people's private lives.

Dill's childish desire of marrying Scout and his subsequent neglect towards her also indicates the evolving behavior of children who at one point, want to do what grown ups do, and the next minute, get busy doing juvenile things. Scout's angry reaction of giving Dill a thrashing is also very typical of her temperament: she always likes to behave boyish and this is a chance to display her aggressive trait.

## CHAPTER 6

### Summary

Jem and Scout get permission to spend the last night with Dill before he goes back. Dill and Jem had already planned out a night walk across Boo's place. They reach the house, and Dill climbs on their shoulders to look in. He sees nothing, however, as it is too dark. Then they suddenly see a shadow of a man wearing a hat. Just when they think that he is going to lay his hands on them, the shadow walks away. All three run off in terror and they hear a shotgun go off behind them. On reaching home, they find Nathan Radley, Atticus, Miss Maudie, Miss Stephanie Crawford, Miss Rachel and Mr. Avery standing outside their house. It turns out that Mr. Radley had taken a shot at the Negro intruder. Atticus, meanwhile, notices that Jem's pants are pants

(which he had lost while climbing through the fence) and comments on it. They are left alone after some feeble attempts at giving explanations. In the middle of the night, Jem returns to the fence to retrieve his pants.

## Notes

The children, apparently, are undeterred by Atticus' instructions to leave the Radley family alone, and thus they dare to make second attempt to meet Boo in the night. But once again their plans backfire.

Jem is embarrassed at being caught without his pants in front of a gathering. So that their lie of having played strip poker, is not discovered, Jem has to attempt going into that area again to retrieve his pants. Scout's fear, as she awaits Jem's safe return, has been portrayed touchingly. Along with this, the added fear of Atticus waking up and catching Jem not at bed, is awesome. But all is well as Jem returns, holding up his pants speechlessly.

## CHAPTER 7

### Summary

School has reopened and now Jem and Scout return home at the same time unlike before. Jem reveals to Scout that the night he had returned to retrieve his pants, the parts which had been tattered had been sewn, though crookedly, and it had been neatly folded and kept across the fence. Both wonder at this new dilemma: who could have been behind this? Later, they even find a ball of gray twine in the knothole of the oak tree, and after waiting for three days to see whether somebody else takes it, they finally pocket it. Further, they decide that whatever they will find in the knothole would be their property.

As time passes, they continue to find things hidden in the knothole. They find two small images carved in soap, of a boy and a girl, that are exact replicas of themselves, a whole packet of chewing gum, a tarnished medal and the biggest prize of all -- a pocket watch on a chain with an aluminum knife. After that, they write a letter of appreciation for all the gifts they have received but when they reach the tree, they find that the knothole has been cemented. Nathan Radley has done this, putting forward the explanation that the tree had been dying. But Atticus informs that the tree is quite healthy. Jem is upset about this but is unable to do anything.

### Notes

The reader can guess that Boo Radley wishes to befriend the children, in a covert manner, though. In fact, it is Boo who has not only stitched and folded his pants, but he has also been gifting them fantastic objects. The children, of course, are yet unaware of the truth, but wish to show their gratitude to this unknown friend of theirs.

This attempt, however, is thwarted by Nathan Radley. His apparent lie probably implies that he is against any friendship between his son and anyone. His self-imposed punishment to his son includes a total abstinence from any kind of normal and healthy relationships, which includes friendships with such children. Therefore, he comes across as an excessively stern character. Atticus on his part is

probably aware of this attitude, which explains why he discourages the children from irritating Boo Radley.

Undoubtedly, Boo is portrayed as a pathetic personality, craving for friendship and attention, however little it may be. The various articles he leaves in the knothole is probably a cry for attention that any human being requires so desperately. The reader cannot help feeling sympathy towards him.

## CHAPTER 8

### Summary

Winter arrives in Maycomb County. Mrs. Radley expires, but this causes no ripples. Scout is frightened on seeing the snow. Since school is declared closed on account of the snow, Scout and Jem decide to visit Miss Maudie. They borrow the snow from her yard and build a snowman which resembles Mr. Avery.

In the night, Scout is woken up from her sleep, and is informed that Miss Maudie's house has caught fire. Atticus orders the children to stay near the Radley house while the fire is being put out. Later, they discover that a woolen blanket has been thrown over Scout's shoulders. How it has come there is a mystery to both Scout and Jem. Then, Atticus is told of all the mischief that they have done around the Radley house. On being told that it may well have been Boo who has put the blanket, Scout is terrified.

### Notes

The fire at Miss Maudie's place creates quite a stir, but Scout's close encounter with Boo, albeit without her realization of it, causes more topic for conversation. Boo's love for the children is noted when he places the blanket on Scout's shoulders. It is obvious that Boo has done it, since Nathan Radley had been near Maudie's house, helping to put out the fire.

Though her entire house is razed to the ground Miss Maudie is still not disturbed and has recovered her sharp sense of humor. Her plans of setting up a new house, large enough to room her azaleas, portrays her as a practical and a worldly woman.

## CHAPTER 9

### Summary

Scout is pushed into a fight with her classmate, who had jeered her father for defending the 'niggers'. On being questioned, Atticus does agree that he defends niggers, in particular the one named Tom Robinson. He explains that though the case is a tricky and a complex one, it is important for his own self-esteem. Moreover, his conscience compels him to suffer on behalf of the injustice carried out by his community. Another reason for taking up the case is that if he did not, he would not be able to represent their country in the legislature. Besides, the case is equally important for him to be able to stand up to his anti-racial stance.

Christmas arrives with mixed feelings for Jem and Scout since they have to spend it at Finch's Landing, with Aunt Alexandra, Atticus' sister. They receive air rifles as Christmas gifts from Atticus. Getting acquainted with the relatives once again seems a tiring job and Scout finds her cousin Francis a terrible bore. Aunt Alexandra is outraged that Scout is still in breeches and not in a dress. The children make a very amusing comparison of Aunt Alexandra with Mount Everest

Scout and Francis have a quarrel first over Dill and then over Atticus, whom Francis calls a 'nigger-lover'. Uncle Jack mediates between them. Uncle Jack is unable to comprehend Scout's way of thinking and admits to Atticus how he himself is better off for not having married at all.

## Notes

Scout cannot help picking a fight when her father's position at stake. Her behavior and her use of expletives is greatly abhorred by Uncle Jack, but he is not able to sort out the confusion.

Uncle Jack has a talk with Atticus about the children, and Atticus, knowing that Scout is listening says that he hopes the children would trust him and come to him for answers instead of depending on the local gossips. Scout is surprised that her father knows she has been listening --"and it was not until many years later that I realized he wanted me to hear every word he said."

Atticus again displays his rich character through his penetrating sense of child psychology. He realizes, as do few adults, that sometimes children abhor being told what is to be done. In a very adept manner, he maneuvers the conversation with Jack Finch in order to let Scout know (who he knows may be overhearing) that he hopes that his children would not be like the rest of the other citizens of Maycomb society, who refuse to associate with the blacks.

Scout, child that she is, is amazed at her father's perceptiveness. Harper Lee has very skillfully sketched the depth of this father - daughter relationship.

## CHAPTER 10

### Summary

Atticus refuses to teach the children how to shoot and Uncle Jack takes up the charge of giving them the lessons. Atticus only tells them that they may shoot at anything but a mockingbird. He explains that mockingbirds hurt no one; they only sing for people to enjoy, so killing a mockingbird is definitely a sin.

While going for a walk across the Radley house, they notice Tim, Mr. Harry Johnson's dog, behaving strangely. The children rush home to inform Calpurnia. It turns out the dog had turned mad, and Calpurnia rushes around, informing everyone about it. The sheriff, Mr. Heck Tate requests Atticus to shoot down the dog. Atticus kills the dog in one shot! The children who had never been aware of their father's shooting prowess are truly stunned. It turns out their father's nickname in his younger days was 'ol,'one-shot'. Miss Maudie then explains to the children that though

Atticus was such a fine shooter, he had decided long ago that he would shoot only when it would be absolutely necessary to do so. She also describes him as a very civilized being at heart.

## Notes

The mockingbird is mentioned for the first time. Atticus insists that a mockingbird, whose sole ambition in life is to bring pleasure to others, should never be killed, it being a virtual sin to do so. The reference to the mockingbird is important for Tom Robinson's trial, as well as in relation to Boo Radley.

Atticus' excellence in shooting greatly astonishes the children who have never seen their father shoot at anything. Maudie's explanations clear up the confusion. Atticus maintains an appreciable sense of propriety and civility in this chapter. The children's respect for their father is raised several notches now. Jem, especially, who is at the stage of emulating his father, is very proud of his him, which is demonstrated when he says jubilantly, "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me!"

## CHAPTER 11

### Summary

Jem and Scout have outgrown the practice of bothering Boo. They now encounter Mrs. Dubose, an old woman with a wrathful gaze and a vitriolic tongue, who never fails to shower abuses on Jem and Scout, as well as on Atticus and the entire Finch family. One day, in his anger, Jem cuts down the tops off every camellia bush owned by Mrs. Dubose. Atticus, of course, makes Jem go back and apologize to her. As a punishment, Jem is ordered to go to Mrs. Dubose's house and read out to her for a month. Everyday, he would read out till the alarm clock, set beside the bed, would ring, signaling the time for him to go home. A month later the reading stops. Some days later, Atticus informs them that Mrs. Dubose had died, leaving a box containing a waxy perfect camellia for Jem. Later on, Jem is told that the reading sessions had been conducted only as a distraction for her to overcome her morphine addiction. Mrs. Dubose had died a free woman.

## Notes

Jem and Scout have grown up, but they still cannot overcome their anger if anyone passes a comment on their father. Mrs. Dubose comes across to the children as an acidic and garrulous woman who can only say harsh things about others. Yet, Atticus is scrupulous enough to insist that the children respect her for her age.

The evenings in her house, reading to Mrs. Dubose, is a hard task for the children, but the essential reason for it is revealed only after her death. Her desire to get rid of her morphine addiction before her death, reveals her as a strong character, who would rather go through a grueling experience to break the habit of addiction than die as an addict. Her gift to Jem is also typical of her perceptive character. The gift of the camellia shows that she had understood Jem's anger when he had cut off her camellia bushes. Presenting him with the same flowers is her way of

letting him know that she understands his feelings and acknowledges the same.

Atticus emphasizes the fact that whatever Mrs. Dubose went through revealed indisputable courage -- "Its when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through, no matter what." The children learn a great deal about strength of character and grit through their experience with Mrs. Dubose.

## **PART 2**

### **CHAPTER 12**

#### **Summary**

Jem shows the typical signs of growing up, with inconsistent moods and a short temper. Scout is advised to let him alone.

When Atticus leaves for town for some official work, Calpurnia takes the children for a service to a black church. Their presence is acknowledged by all the members of the church, except for Lula, a troublemaker, but her stance is overlooked. Scout is amazed at the proceedings, especially at the lack of hymnbooks. She is later told that most of them are uneducated except for a few, including Calpurnia. Calpurnia's sudden switch to the colored folks' way of talking, also surprises them, and they realize the somewhat dual life that Calpurnia has to lead.

The preacher, Reverend Sykes virtually commands the people to donate money for Tom Robinson's wife and children. Jem and Scout donate from their own pockets.

On returning home, they are disappointed to see their Aunt Alexandra in their front porch.

#### **Notes**

The suffering that Jem undergoes through the process of maturing are not fully comprehended by Scout, who misses his company as well as Dill's. And her growing is evident too, when she finds kitchen work to have interesting prospects.

The day the children's time at the black church serves an eye-opener for them. They suddenly realize how inherently different they are from the blacks and how they may have to face mild opposition too. But the heartfelt welcome given by the rest of the members speaks a lot of the basic generous nature of the Blacks. Besides, the children also notice the general wish to help out Tom Robinson. The reason behind Tom's arrest is revealed, that he had apparently raped Bob Ewell's daughter.

The reader notices how well Calpurnia (essentially a black), has adjusted herself to the way of life of Atticus' family; having learnt to read, and even speak like the white folk. At the same time, she hasn't forgotten her origins, and attends the services with her Negro kin of their own Church, and smoothly switches over to their way of talking when she is with them.

Aunt Alexandra, it is realized (in the next chapter) has come to stay and being a strong influence on the children, a fact which is not quite agreeable to them.

### **CHAPTER 13**

#### **Summary**

Aunt Alexandra makes her presence felt from the first day itself.

Atticus returns home the same day. Aunt Alexandra settles down in the house. She becomes the secretary of the Maycomb Amanuensis Club and holds parties in the house. Whenever she does so, she summons Scout, to get her introduced to the guests. Aunt Alexandra's attempts at instilling her sense of etiquette into the children is of no avail and Atticus has to speak to them about it. Atticus seems stern and gruff to the children who cannot understand this sudden change in his behavior. But finally, even he relents and allows the children to not take everything that Aunt says, too seriously.

#### **Notes**

Aunt Alexandra's presence in the family is not immediately comforting since a lot of adjustments are required. The children, who have never been used to such a rigid upbringing, find themselves at a loss. Atticus has probably been pressurized by his sister to let her stay in his house, to rear the children better, but not being such a stickler to rules and codes of behavior himself, he too finds himself in a dilemma. Alexandra's basic reasoning of things is right, but having no children of her own, she is not able to comprehend their true nature, and so, many uncomfortable situations ensue. It is Atticus' practical and non-conforming nature that lets the children believe that things are not as bad as they seem.

### **CHAPTER 14**

#### **Summary**

Scout asks Atticus the meaning of rape and is given a perfunctory, yet technically correct answer. Further discussion discovers their trip to the blacks' church. Aunt Alexandra is outraged at this. Later Scout overhears her father and her aunt discuss her. Aunt Alexandra feels that Calpurnia shouldn't be allowed to work in the house anymore, but Atticus refuses to let her go. Jem advises Scout not to irritate their father as he has too many things in his mind. His advising her seems too high-handed for Scout, who ends up quarreling with him.

Scout discovers something warm and resilient on the floor, and together with Jem she discovers Dill under the bed. Atticus is immediately summoned, who insists on informing his Aunt Rachel about his escape. Dill stays there overnight, and Scout is pleased to have her friend back.

#### **Notes**

Aunt Alexandra reveals her narrow-minded puritan approach by her distress at the children attending Church with Calpurnia. Atticus, though, not in accordance with her,

in any case does not allow Scout to be ill mannered with her, and insists on an apology from her. He is sensitive enough to insist on not throwing out Calpurnia, knowing full well her worth and the children's proximity to her.

Jem, at a mature stage, seems to understand his father's tensions and wishes to ease them as far as possible. His reasoning, however, is unheeded by Scout: Jem advising her is something she still cannot digest.

Dill's return is a harbinger of better times for Scout. She hopes that the three of them can get together as they used to, and enjoy themselves.

Dill with all his fantastic stories, is a pathetic character; a child seeking love and attention, who builds up stories boost his self-esteem.

## CHAPTER 15

### Summary

Dill is given permission to stay at Scout's house for the summer. One evening, as the family is relaxing, Heck Tate arrives with a few men. A discussion is held over the forthcoming trial, and whether Tom Robinson is safe in their custody. To the children it sounds like a fracas, but Atticus pacifies them. The next day, being a Sunday, is spent in Church, but in the evening Atticus declares that he is going out. In the night Jem prepares to follow his father. Dill and Scout join him in this venture. They find their father going to the Maycomb jail. As they watch, a group of men join Atticus and get around to talk to him. Scout interrupts them at an inopportune moment and Atticus instructs them to leave. Scout attempts at a conversation with Mr. Cunningham but fails to elicit any response. Finally they leave. Atticus had been protecting Tom Robinson, in the jail, but it turns out that Mr. Underwood had also been covering him (Atticus), with a shotgun, from his window above the Maycomb Tribune office, in case anyone would attack him. Finally, they all return home.

### Notes

Tom Robinson's trial is a hot topic for discussion in the Maycomb County, and various stands have been taken over the trial. Atticus demurs from leaving the case, even after some warning. To safeguard Tom's life before the trial, Atticus even goes out to guard him in the Maycomb jail.

Jem has matured enough to understand his father's frame of mind. But Scout is still quite immature and her attempts of making conversation with Mr. Cunningham about his entailments, causes a little embarrassment. Scout had earlier overheard her father and Mr. Cunningham discuss about entailments in their house. Atticus had legally solved Cunningham's problems about his land and Cunningham had been voicing his gratitude. On asking what entailments means, she had been sidetracked by Jem. Hence although she does not know its meaning and the background behind it, she had just mentioned the word to Cunningham. She probably wishes to show that she too is adult enough to participate in a mature conversation. Cunningham, however, gets embarrassed and being reminded of Atticus' favor, is unable to continue threatening him. Thus, Scout's

innocent remarks, in a way, does prove beneficial to her father.

As the facts stand, Tom, a black man, has raped a white girl. The fact that a black has assaulted a white make the trial extremely precarious. Moreover, that Atticus has determined to take the case (and therefore defend Tom) is not approved by the people in general. Though the supposed victim in the case, Bob Ewell's daughter, is what they call 'white trash', she is a white, and so the chances of Tom being excused are extremely remote.

## CHAPTER 16

### Summary

Aunt Alexandra is disapproving of the children having had a rendezvous in a jail in the middle of the night. The children are worried for their father, especially for the fact that Mr. Cunningham would have tried to kill Atticus, if it had not been for Scout's timely intervention, with her small talk about entailments.

A group of Mennonites pass by in wagons. As they pass Miss Maudie's house, they comment upon her love for gardening, considering it a sin. But Miss Maudie is stubbornly unmoved.

It is the first day of the trial, and the place is crowded with people who have come to witness the trial of Tom Robinson. Mr. Dolphus Raymond is noticed sitting with the colored folk, sipping from a brown paper pack (which allegedly contains whisky).

Since the courthouse is fully packed, the children join Reverend Sykes at the balcony, along with the blacks.

The judge is none other than Judge Taylor. Though he gives the impression of dozing through the hearing is actually very sharp in his dealings. The Tom Robinson case begins with Mr. Heck Tate being the first witness.

### Notes

Aunt Alexandra's disapproval is an expected one but Atticus, is depicted as a person who doesn't necessarily take his sister's side always. He does show his slight irritation at her, once in a while.

The Mennonites were a strict Christian sect who accept no authority except for the Bible and are opposed to anything modern. Miss Maudie's spending more time in gardening and less time in reading the Bible is considered as sacrilegious behavior, but Miss Maudie is unmoved by their comments.

A brief description of the courthouse and the gathering is given. Whites and blacks have arrived in equal numbers to witness the trial. The scene outside the courthouse, before the initiation of the trial, resembles a picnic spot. However, once the trial begins, there is absolute silence in the courtroom.

The Finch children sitting in the colored balcony with the blacks, is probably symbolic of how their family values

endorse equality. However, they are also eager to watch their father handle the case, knowing full well that he would disapprove of their presence if he knew they were inside the courtroom.

## CHAPTER 17

### Summary

Mr. Tate relates his story -- on the night of November twenty first, Mr. Ewell had rushed into his office saying that his daughter has been raped by a 'nigger'. On reaching their house, he had found the girl on the floor, badly beaten up. She had declared that the 'nigger' had been none other than Tom Robinson. Then Atticus questions Mr. Tate as to whether a doctor had been called, but the reply is in the negative.

Then the magnitude of her bruises are discussed. Her right eye had been bruised and marks around her neck could also be noticed. Bob Ewell is called next on the witness stand. Ewell claims that on returning home, he had caught Tom in the act of raping his daughter. Atticus questions him next about the bruises, then makes him sign on an envelope, noticing aloud that he is left-handed.

### Notes

A description of the lifestyle of the Ewells is given, which gives one a fair idea of the utterly shabby and dilapidated life they lead. Ewell comes across as an audacious person, with no respect for others and a mean manner of speech. Jem realizes that the reason Atticus had paraded Ewell's left-handedness, is to verify that he could have beaten his daughter, as her bruises are mostly on the right side of her face.

When the talk of rape and sexual intercourse arises, the Reverend deems it better that the children leave, especially Scout, but Jem placates him; the children had no plans of leaving the courtroom however, they miss out on watching their father defend the case.

## CHAPTER 18

### Summary

Mayella, Bob's daughter is called to the witness stand. She gives her side of the story, claiming that Tom had forcefully entered the house, and had taken advantage of her, hitting her all the while. When Atticus rises to interrogate her, Mayella is extremely frightened. Through his penetrating questions, it is revealed that the family is very poor, the father spends most of the relief money on drinks, and that she is a very lonely girl, bereft of love and affection. On cross-examining her further, as to whether it had really been Tom or her father who had beaten her up, Mayella at first remains silent in terror and then bursts into tears. The court is adjourned for a recess. Mr. Underwood sees the children, and the children perceive that a mention of them would definitely be made in the next issue of the "Tribune".

### Notes

The courtroom is fraught with tension during the ensuing verbal battle first between Ewell and Atticus, and later between Mayella and Atticus. Atticus has his own style of throwing questions at the person quite casually to disarm one, and at the right moment, pelting questions to and rattle him.

The fact that Tom Robinson is crippled, with his left hand shriveled, proves that he could not have been the one to beat up Mayella, since the bruises were on the right side of her face. The case logically appears to bend in favor of Tom Robinson.

Judge Taylor, for all his disposition of being a lazy man, prone to dozing during the court-scene, is truly a good judge; very sharp at particular points, and not without a sense of humor.

## CHAPTER 19

### Summary

Thomas Robinson is Atticus' only witness, and he is called to the stand. It is mentioned that he had earlier been in trouble with the law for disorderly conduct. Apparently, Tom used to go across Mayella's house to Mr. Link Deas' place to work on his yard. Mayella used to regularly ask him to do some minor chores for her. The other children used to always be around. On that particular day, she had called him in to repair a hinge of the door, which Tom, however, had found to be all right. On inquiring about the children, Mayella says that she had saved up some money so that she could send them to town for ice cream. When Tom climbed a chair to remove a box from atop the 'chiffarobe', Mayella had grabbed his legs, hugged him and even tried to kiss him. While he had been fighting her off, her father had entered. Tom had fled away in fear for his life. He insisted that he had not even laid a finger on Mayella, and definitely not raped her. In the middle of all this, Mr. Link Deas rises and proclaims loudly that Tom (while he had worked for him) had been no trouble to him at all. The judge ousts him out of the courtroom.

Tom does admit that he had helped Mayella out of pity for her. This remark is not liked by anyone in the courtroom.

Dill suddenly begins to cry, and Scout is made to take him out. They sit with Mr. Link Deas outside the courtroom, and Mr. Dolphus Raymond joins them.

### Notes

Through Tom's relation of his version of the story, he comes across as an honest, hardworking Negro, well mannered and always willing to help anyone in distress. Moreover, Mayella's pathetic loneliness is poignantly portrayed. She is a girl seeking love and attention, and Tom is the only visible source of any affection that she could hope for.

Tom's fleeing from the house is by itself a sure sign of guilt otherwise, but here he insists that being a Negro and getting caught in such a situation would surely spell deep trouble, and so he had been forced to run away.

The case turns against Tom the moment he confesses that he had felt pity for Mayella. However poor she is, the basic fact is that she is still a white, and it was considered too forthright of Tom to feel pity for her.

## CHAPTER 20

### Summary

Mr. Dolphus Raymond offers a sip from his brown bag to Dill. Dill sips warily, and then grins, realizing that it contained, not whisky, but Coca-Cola. Mr. Raymond explains that it is sometimes better to make people believe that you are something which, in reality, you are not.

The children return to the courtroom. Atticus rises and begins to loosen his clothes slowly. The children are horrified. He then begins to speak. He insists that there is no proof that Tom has raped Mayella; no verdict of any doctor. He also insists that Mayella, too, has committed no crime. She is just a "victim of cruel poverty and ignorance". At the end of his speech, Dill suddenly spies Calpurnia entering the courtroom and heading towards Atticus.

### Notes

The children are wary of speaking to Mr. Raymond because he's supposed to be an alcoholic and a father of mixed children. But, after talking to him, they realize that he is an unusual person, in the sense that he prefers people to have a bad impression of him, so that he can live his life the way he wishes. He has very strong opinions against the way the whites treat the poor blacks.

Atticus' final speech is a powerful one, which penetrates the hearts of every black and white man present in the courtroom. He doesn't condemn anyone, not even Bob Ewell nor Mayella, since it is their circumstances that have led them to behave in such a manner. He presents the typical attitude of all whites -- "that all Negroes lie, all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women." He reiterates the fact that all men are created equal. At the end of the speech, Atticus even mutters "In the name of God, believe him", probably perceiving that nothing (not even proof) is going to change the orthodox view of the jury.

## CHAPTER 21

### Summary

Calpurnia has a note for Atticus, sent by his sister, saying that the children are missing. Mr. Underwood announces the presence of the children. Atticus relents in allowing the children to return to hear the verdict. The people have to wait for a considerably long time before the jury return with their verdict. The verdict is that Tom Robinson is guilty.

### Notes

Aunt Alexandra is outraged that the children had been in the courtroom all the while, and she is all the more upset on hearing that Atticus had allowed them to return to the courtroom.

Jem is certain that his father will win the case, since a jury is expected to be fair. However, these are just childish delusions, and Atticus has to admit that no jury had till date favored a colored man over a white man.

The final verdict declaring Tom guilty, certainly seems unfair, yet one must take into consideration the period. Though slavery had been legally abolished, one cannot expect views of the whites to be mitigated easily. Undoubtedly, the verdict comes as no surprise for Atticus.

## CHAPTER 22

### Summary

Jem begins to cry on hearing this unjust verdict. On reaching home, even Aunt Alexandra seems to have softened her stance slightly. Being after all the Atticus' sister and the only aunt of the children, she cannot help sympathizing with them. She expresses her concern for not only Atticus but also Jem, who is yet too small to be exposed to the hard facts of life.

The next morning, Atticus says that the case is not closed and that there would be a further appeal. Seeing chicken for a breakfast, a dazed Atticus is led into the kitchen which is loaded with all sorts of food items. These had been sent by the blacks in their appreciation for Atticus for having taken up the case of a black.

As the children walk outside, Stephanie Crawford is full of questions as to how they had possibly been allowed to go to the court, but Miss Maudie icily stops her and calls them in for cakes. She then tells them that their father is one among those who are born to take the charge of doing the unpleasant jobs for the sake of others. She makes them realize that there had been some people in Maycomb who had tried, in their ways, to support Tom. As they walk towards home, they meet a group of people, and they are informed that Bob Ewell had met Atticus and vowed to teach him a lesson.

### Notes

Gifted food is the blacks' way of showing their appreciation for Atticus. One must take note that though Atticus had failed to save their man, they are still grateful to him for simply defending him, which in itself, was a big deal for the poor blacks.

Stephanie Crawford's curiosity is that of an idle mind working overtime. Miss Maudie is mercifully able to put a stern stop to her impudent questions. Giving Jem a larger piece of cake also says a lot about Miss Maudie's acute perception of human nature; that she can realize Jem to have matured. Again Stephanie displays her wretched nature in taking pleasure to inform the children that their father had been jeered by Bob Ewell.

## CHAPTER 23

### Summary

Scout feels that her father should not have listened to Bob Ewell quietly; instead he should have shot him. But Jem makes her realize that Atticus never carried a gun, believing it to be a needless invitation for someone to shoot one. Atticus realizes that his children are sincerely concerned for his safety, and so appeals to them to try and understand Ewell's point of view. After all, his credibility had been destroyed. Atticus, finally makes them believe that Ewell would do no harm. Tom's case had reached the higher court and the chances of him being let off this time are pretty good.

Jem is still upset that the jury convicted Tom. Atticus makes him realize that though ideally, a jury should be fair, very often the members carry their prejudices into the courtroom and so their verdict is shadowed. He makes them realize that the jury actually took a few hours to reach their verdict showing that there is hope in this world.

Aunt Alexandra refuses to allow a Cunningham into the house and Scout almost has a fight with her. Jem takes her out, and on the pretext of showing the newly sprouted hair on his chest, implores her not to let auntie aggravate her. He then says that maybe, after all this, he can understand why Boo Radley does not come out of his house; probably because he wants to stay in and avoid contact with this dreadful world.

### Notes

Ewell is such a perverted character that it is very probable that he would try to harm Atticus for having defended a black and for having grilled him and his daughter at court. The children's fear, therefore, is justified especially when the reader finds Ewell take his revenge, later on in the story. But Atticus at this moment feels that what Ewell is only serving empty threats.

Jem has shown amazing maturity during these trying times. He even mediates between Scout and Aunt Alexandra hoping for peace in the house. On discussing the various types of people in this world, his comment on Boo choosing to stay inside his house, touches a chord. It seems better to stay at home and be labeled a madman, rather than face a world full of evil and injustice.

## CHAPTER 24

### Summary

Aunt Alexandra has her regular Missionary Circle Meet at the house. Scout has been asked to join them for refreshments. Stephanie Crawford, in her usual cattiness, teases Scout about being present in the courtroom. They all discuss Tom's trial and are general about their attitudes towards the blacks. When indirect comments about Atticus are passed Miss Maudie quells them icily, for which Aunt Alexandra is very grateful.

Later, Atticus enters, asking to borrow Calpurnia for a while. It turns out that Tom is dead: he had been shot as he had

been trying to break away from the jail. Atticus needs Calpurnia to break the news to Tom's wife and to tend to her. Even Aunt Alexandra is shaken on hearing this and is deeply sympathetic towards her brother.

### Notes

As expected, shrewd remarks about Atticus' defense are passed in Atticus' house itself. But Miss Maudie and Aunt Alexandra are able to handle the situation tactfully.

The news of Tom's death is shattering. Atticus is dejected since he had been quite sure that they would have won the case in the higher court. But it seems as if Tom had grown weary of the entire procedure, waiting for white men to do something for him, and so he himself took the chance to escape. Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie realize Atticus' merit and also perceive that he is being paid a high tribute by the few people in the society who acknowledge his worth.

## CHAPTER 25

### Summary

Things have eventually normalized at the Maycomb County. Jem and Scout spend their time lazing around. They hitch a ride from Atticus and travel with him and Calpurnia to Tom's house. Helen, his wife, collapses on realizing the reason for their arrival.

The news of Tom's death lasts for two days, with a few articles about it in the newspapers. Ewell's name still causes an uneasy feeling in Scout but Jem placates her, saying that "Mr. Ewell was more hot gas than anything."

### Notes

There is very little of action in this chapter; almost like a lull before the next storm. The interest and excitement over Tom's trial and his subsequent death has waned. Even the warning given by Ewell to Atticus has lost its force over the children.

Helen's silent reaction over her husband's death may seem unnatural, but it is as if she always knew about the inevitability of her husband's death. His death sentence had already been written the moment Mayella Ewell had opened her mouth to scream. Society had still not improved so much that a black would be given precedence over a white. Both Tom and Helen knew this all the while.

## CHAPTER 26

### Summary

Scout is now in the third grade and the Radley house has ceased to terrify her. She remembers ruefully how she and Jem used to torment Bob Radley and yet he would leave them gifts in the knothole.

At school, in the Current Events class, when each child is supposed to give the gist of a piece of news aloud in class, Adolph Hitler and his prejudices are discussed. When Scout discusses it with Jem and breaches the subject of the

blacks, Jem furiously tells her never to discuss that topic again.

## Notes

Scout has outgrown her fear over the Radley house, but her wish to see Arthur Radley once before she dies, is at once squelched by Atticus. He does not want her to pester that family anymore.

The idea behind discussing news items in class is to give the child better poise, more confidence and to make him word-conscious. Unfortunately, however, half the children did not even have access to newspapers. Nevertheless, the subject of Adolph Hitler sparks a chain of thoughts in Scout's mind. She has realized that though one should not hate anybody, at the same time, it was obvious that the people in her society are still very much against the blacks and could never accept them. Her young mind has figured out the fact that people don't usually practice what they preach.

## CHAPTER 27

### Summary

Three things happen in Maycomb society: firstly, Ewell acquires and loses a government job in a matter of days. Thereafter, he resumes his weekly appearance at the welfare office for his check. It is overheard that he has been blaming Atticus for having lost his the job.

The second thing is that Judge Taylor, one night had heard a scratching noise outside his door, and on investigation had seen a shadow sneaking away. Thereafter, he sits with shotgun across his lap.

The third thing is that Helen who had been employed by Mr. Link Deas finds herself having to take the longer route so as to avoid the Ewells who used to clunk things at her. Deas lambastes at them but Ewell persists in scaring Helen by following her and crooning fowl words at her. But this too is stopped by Deas, with a strong warning.

Scout has to become a pork, for a pageant for Halloween. The costume is made of chicken wire. Since the family cannot come to watch her, she gives a preview of her performance at home.

## Notes

Bob Ewell has not changed over the years. A brief spurt of industry and he is back to his old mischief. His pestering of Helen is one way to get cheap satisfaction out of an old case. Mr. Link Deas displays his goodness by retaining Helen as his employee and by protecting her from Bob Ewell's evil tormenting. Atticus is able to sum up Bob's predicament well : it is because Bob knows that the people in Maycomb had not believed his and Mayella's yarns that he behaves in such a manner.

Halloween has some unusual connotations this year. The Maycomb ladies have planned out a pageant with children in costumes, representing the country's various agricultural products. Scout is to be a ham and her costumes of bent

chicken wire covered with brown paper is to later cause quite a lot of tension at the Finch house.

## CHAPTER 28

### Summary

Jem escorts Scout, carrying her costume, to school. The program is in the evening. The pageant begins. Scout waiting for her cue soon falls asleep inside her costume. She, therefore, is unable to enter when her name is called out and makes her entrance only much later, when the play is over. Scout is severely embarrassed by the entire episode and prefers to go home hiding herself in the costume.

Jem and Scout begin walking home. It is very late in the night. Suddenly, they realize that somebody is following them stealthily. They realize it is not their friend, Cecil, playing a prank, but an adult. Jem shouts at Scout to run off. She is quite scared by now. She tries to take a giant step but falls instead, unable to keep her balance. She screams out for help. The chicken wire crushes on her and she flounders, trying to escape. Scout hears scuffling and kicking sounds as well as Jem screaming. Scout is unable to get out of the metal wires. She finds herself falling into a man's arms. She is tightly held by his arms, and the man tries to squeeze the breath out of her. Then he is pushed backwards. Scout hears a man breathing heavily. She treads on a body and gets the stink of whisky from him. Then she walks off towards her home. The doctor is called, and so is the sheriff. Scout is helped out of the costume and the doctor checks her. Apparently, Jem is hurt. Mr. Tate has investigated the grounds of the incident and reveals that Bob Ewell had been lying on the floor with a kitchen knife stuck into him and is dead.

## Notes

A very eventful chapter. Scout messes up her role and is extremely embarrassed as she has become a laughing stock for the audience.

Ewell's evil intentions are clearly exposed in this chapter. Here is a man who would stoop to anything to get even with Atticus; the cowardly act of attacking children can also be resorted to. Such a man's death is welcomed by the reader.

One wonders at this point, who it is that has saved the children and managed to get rid of the detestable Ewell. The reader is kept unaware of the identity of the savior only to be revealed in the next chapter.

It is unclear, though, whether Ewell aimed to kill them or merely terrify them. However, the irony is that he himself ends up losing his life in the process.

## CHAPTER 29

### Summary

Atticus is very upset by the recent turn of events. Bob, it seems had really meant what he had warned. And for Atticus, his children's lives are undoubtedly far more precious than his own.

Scout is made to relate the events again. They perceive that it had been the chicken wire loop that had saved Scout's life. Scout then points out that somebody else had also been at the scene of the incident. The same man is present in the room. From his thin frame and blank look, Scout realizes that the man had been none other than Boo Radley.

## Notes

Bob Ewell's vindictive nature is finally realized. He is too weak a character to be able to face Atticus in the daytime, and even to frighten his children, he has to take the recourse of a few drinks.

As Scout relates the events, Heck Tate and Atticus realize that Bob Ewell actually meant to hurt the children seriously. The person to save the situation had been the hitherto unseen and unknown Arthur Radley. Scout, who had the long cherished wish of wanting to see him at least once has actually had her life saved by this same man. Arthur's physical appearance and behavior reveals the fact that he has never ventured out of the house in the daytime. It is the children's greatest fortune that Boo had come at the right moment to save their lives.

## CHAPTER 30

### Summary

The men seat themselves in the front porch. Scout is thrilled that her lifetime ambition of seeing Boo on her front porch has ultimately been fulfilled.

Atticus perceives that Jem had probably killed Ewell in self-defense, but the sheriff insists that he had not killed him. Atticus feels that the sheriff is trying to save Jem: he does not want the burden of a lie on his and Jem's shoulder. But Heck Tate insists that a small boy like Jem couldn't possibly have handled such a big knife, and that Ewell had probably fallen on the knife and killed himself. Atticus is still unsure but Heck Tate has made the up his mind. The truth is that Arthur Radley had killed Ewell but Heck Tate realizes that once the people come to know of it, all the ladies would pester Boo with some kind of food (as is the custom for appreciating one who has rid the society of some evil). Thus, he would be pushed into the limelight which he definitely does not want. So the truth should be squelched and left that way.

Scout sums it up precisely, saying that it would be like shooting a mockingbird. Atticus thanks Arthur Radley for having saved his children.

## Notes

Atticus, at first certain that his son had killed Ewell in self-defense feels it is wrong to hide the truth. Atticus is a man who would never wish his son to live a life with the burden of a hidden truth. It is finally understood that Heck Tate is insisting that Ewell killed himself not to save Jem but only so that Boo would be spared from the publicity he so keenly avoids. It is anybody's guess that for having killed an inherently evil man, as Bob Ewell, he would have been

smothered by public attention, which he obviously never wanted.

Scout's comparison of Boo to a mockingbird is absolutely accurate. Since mockingbirds only give enjoyment and never create problem, it is a sin to shoot them. Similarly, Boo had always been a mild character, not interfering in anybody's business. To harm him, by bringing him into the limelight would therefore, be a sin.

## CHAPTER 31

### Summary

Boo is led to Jem's bed to wish him goodnight. Scout is very protective and careful with Boo. When the latter requests Scout to escort him home and Scout does so, but by making it seem as though it is he who is leading her. After he goes home, Scout never sees him again.

Scout sits with Aunt Alexandra near Jem's bed for a while. Atticus is reading out from a book, *The Grey Ghost* to Jem who has fallen asleep. Gradually, Scout too falls asleep. Atticus leads her to her own bed and returns to Jem's room to remain there till morning.

## Notes

The final chapter neatly rounds up all the incidents of the novel. Boo is never seen after that particular night. It is almost as if he had come out of his house that once, only to fulfill Boo's dream of seeing him once, and then had once again disappeared into his solitude. Scout's protective demeanor towards Boo is touching. Scout too has matured by the end of the novel and has lost her initial fright of Boo. In fact, she even understands his mental and physical state and therefore guides him home, holding him by the crook of his arm. After reaching him home, Scout looks back at the neighborhood and recollects the past events associated with it.

Atticus feels the need to be with Jem and so he sits with him while he sleeps peacefully. The ensuing conversation between Atticus and Scout again reveals his profound understanding of the children. Atticus does not wish to read out the horror story to her, as she has had her share of fright. But she insists that he go on. Even while Atticus completes the horror story, he tells her that ultimately most people in this world are nice. On this secure and positive note, the novel draws to a close.

## OVERALL ANALYSIS

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### *Atticus Finch*

Atticus Finch, the father of Scout and Jem, is a highly respected AND responsible citizen of Maycomb County. An attorney by profession, he has always tried to instill good values and a sense of moral propriety in his children.

Atticus' relation with his children is unique. He lets them call him by his name. Though outwardly detached and always busy with his work, he does manage to find the time and patience to explain the intricacies of human nature to his children. When Scout comes home from school, upset at being reprimanded for already knowing how to read, Atticus teaches her to compromise with the situation. By continuing to take lessons from the teacher, and at the same time, reading with her father at home, both could be kept happy. Thus, Atticus teaches his daughter, in her impressionable years itself, the mature demeanor of how to conduct oneself in public, and at the same time luxuriate in one's own decisions.

For Jem, Atticus is a role model, and Jem's maturity is largely due to Atticus' dealings in his work and his conduct at home. Jem follows the Tom Robinson trial very attentively and with much trepidation, and actually starts believing that his father will win the case. So, when the case is lost, Jem feels hopelessly disillusioned. Yet Atticus' acceptance of the situation and the explanation that a black man has yet to win over a white man, heartens him. Hence Atticus has a great influence over his children's perspective of things.

Atticus always tries to be truthful to his children and takes pains to explain the things they don't comprehend fully. The children know that he loves them absolutely. His reassuring presence is highlighted in the last few lines of the final chapter -- "He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning."

Atticus is a typical southern gentleman. He is always courteous towards ladies, even the sharp-tongued Mrs. Dubose. He never raises his voice, even at his children. His behavior with Calpurnia is meticulous, giving her a fair status in the household. He is brave as well -- he faces the lynch mob in Tom's prison, without displaying any fright or anxiety. Though his speech is cool and formal, one knows that his heart is warm and he extends his amiability to all, including the black community as well as the poor whites, like the Cunninghams.

Atticus is primarily concerned for the welfare of his community which for him includes the whites as well the blacks. Therefore, he works diligently towards this goal. He does not possess the usual faults of Maycomb citizens; of prejudice, arrogance and hypocrisy. Instead, he takes pains to take the side of the blacks whenever needed and never compromises on this stance of his.

Atticus believes in religious tolerance and he wishes his children would learn this too. He also teaches them to be tolerant of others' shortcomings and forgive them for the

same. He insists that they respect Aunt Alexandra and tolerate her even if they find her even if they find her tiresome and rigid. He also insists that they go regularly to Mrs. Dubose's house to read out for her, even though he knows that she showers abuses on them. Therefore, he wishes to instill the virtues of Christian tolerance in his children.

Thus Atticus is an ideal gentleman and a sure favorite of all the readers.

### *Jem*

Jem has chosen Atticus as his role model, and he emulates him throughout the novel. However, at the same time he gets the opportunity to forming his individuality. Jem is a true brother to Scout, helping her out of scrapes, escorting her to school and back, guiding her at times and comforting her in general. When he is given money to buy something for himself, he buys a gift for Scout too. When he finds out that Scout has eaten the gum found in the knothole of the oak tree, he insists that she gargle her throat. When she muddles up her role in the pageant and is mortified, Jem is the one to console her. Much genuine concern and consideration is displayed by him in dealing with his unruly sister.

At the same time, some typical 'elder brotherly' syndromes are exhibited by him when he does not let her join in all the games he plays with Dill (as she is a girl). While escorting her to school on the first day, he instructs her not to follow him around school and embarrass him. He is thus portrayed as a brother, in all the characteristic ways.

Jem has a sharp mind too. During the trial, he follows all the details perfectly. He even understands the reason why Atticus was pointing out the side of Mayella's face which had been injured. When he builds the Morphodite Snowman, Atticus says, "from now on I'll never worry about what'll become of you, son, you'll always have an idea."

Jem's character undergoes a consistent change as the novel proceeds. At the beginning, he displays immaturity -- he does not realize the distress he is causing to Arthur by his pranks. During the middle of the novel, Jem he does mature though not entirely. He has a high regard for manliness and courage and is initially ashamed of his father's apparent feebleness in front of the fathers of his school friends. But his outlook changes completely when he sees his father shoot the rabid dog, and also when he faces the mob in the prison. By the end of the novel he has gained considerable maturity and Scout and Dill too realize this when Miss Maudie gives a slice of the 'grown-up' cake to Jem.

Jem is compassionate too, quite like his father. He empathizes with Arthur Radley and the his predicament, and during the Robinson trial, he cannot help getting upset at the unfair discrimination against Tom Robinson. Jem takes on from his father's humane nature and he is portrayed as a strong character.

## **Scout**

Scout, because of her age, and being the youngest in the family, is impulsive by nature and extremely emotional too. She unthinkingly rushes into fights and scrapes, cries when her ego is hurt and is generally rash in her actions.

Scout is very warm and friendly. Even in the midst of the tension, when the mob gathers in Tom's prison, she attempts at a friendly conversation with Mr. Cunningham. During the ladies' meetings held in her drawing room, though unnerved by Stephanie Crawford's saucy comments, she tries her hard at conversing with the ladies.

As the novel proceeds, Scout too gains in maturity. She realizes how offensive they had been by tormenting Boo Radley. Though a natural tomboy, she begins to adjust to her feminine role and enjoys helping Calpurnia in the kitchen.

Finally, her behavior with Boo Radley when she meets him, displays her sensitivity. She makes him sit comfortably and converses with him. She even escorts him back to the safety of his home. Thus Scout is an adorable character, with a great potential for perception and appreciable values in her personality.

## **Aunt Alexandra**

Aunt Alexandra is Atticus' sister, who used to stay at the ancestral Finch landing before she arrives at Atticus' house to stay. She is very unlike Atticus in all respects, and the children do not take a liking to her in the beginning. For a start, her reason for coming is to bring some 'feminine' influence to the house, and that fact itself is negated by the children since (according to them), Calpurnia is a sufficient feminine influence. Aunt Alexandra is so unlike her brother Atticus that Scout cannot help wondering whether the real sister had been switched with some other child, at the time of her birth itself. This belief is nurtured by her because of some old folk-tales she has heard about changelings.

Aunt Alexandra, initially comes across as a cold, unfeeling and an unloving person. She embodies all the local prejudices of the Maycomb society, like the snobbishness over the black society and the hard heartedness for the poor whites. She, therefore, is very easily accepted into the Maycomb society. But she annoys Scout by her insistence on ladylike behavior and she even irks the otherwise patient Atticus by her racial prejudices and her insistence on ousting Calpurnia from the house.

But even Aunt Alexandra comes down from her presumptuous pedestal by the end of the novel. She shows her loyalty to her brother by standing him. When she hears of Tom's death, she is very upset, and immediately agrees to send Calpurnia to help Helen, Tom's wife. Her intense concern over her brother is noticed when she tells Miss Maudie, "I just want to know when this [trial] will end. It tears him to pieces." Her warm concern for the children when they have been rescued from Bob Ewell's clutches, also reveals the genuine love beneath Aunt Alexandra's tough and forbidding exterior: she possesses a very kind and loving heart.

## **Boo Radley**

Arthur Radley, called Boo by the children, is an enigma in himself. As a young boy, he had been a pleasant, good-natured boy, but had fallen into the company of the unruly Cunningham boys and had created some mischief. As punishment his father had sentenced him to a lifetime confinement to their house.

Though having gained the reputation of a lunatic, Boo is basically a harmless, well-meaning person; childlike in behavior sometimes, and as Jem and Scout realize, hankering for some love and affection. When Scout and Jem discover little gifts for them, the reader can easily understand that this is Boo's attempt to extend a hand of friendship to them. But these attempts too are thwarted by his father.

When Boo emerges from the house to rescue Jem and Scout, and is finally introduced to the children, it can be seen that due to his long confinement, his health has weakened and he is unable to even stand the harsh living room lights. Scout feels sorry for him and understands the sheriff's reason to save Boo from the menacing limelight, which would inevitably fall on him if the truth is exposed. Scout surmises correctly that it would be like killing a mockingbird, a sin which should be avoided as far as possible.

## **Bob Ewell**

Bob Ewell is the useless, brutal father of a brood of children who have to live in extreme filth and shabbiness; with hardly any food to eat, surrounded by poverty and disease thanks only to him. Bob drinks away all the money got from the relief checks; is ignorant, foul-mouthed and arrogant. He has no qualms about submitting a poor, innocent black to death, for the apparent concern over his daughter, for whom he anyway has no great love or concern.

Even after winning the case, he continues to torment Tom's widow Helen. He does not even leave Atticus in peace and brings a great deal of stress by trying to scare Atticus and later, attempting to harm the children. The reader feels no sympathy whatsoever for him, and in fact are glad at his subsequent death at the hands of Arthur Radley.

## **Mayella Ewell**

Mayella, though Bob's daughter, is different in some ways. She attempts at keeping the house clean and looking after her younger brothers and sisters. But she has never had any friends, nor any love or affection in her life, and the only person who has been decent to her is Tom Robinson. Under such circumstances, one can understand her desperation to make sexual advances at Tom. She is to be pitied rather than condemned for her act, because it was a step taken through utter desperation. At the same time she is willing to lie in court and condemn Tom, so as to save her own life virtually, from the torturous treatment that may be meted out to her by her father. But she is certainly a better and more humanly person than her father and her crime is even pardonable unlike her father's.

## **Tom Robinson**

Tom is a young, harmless, innocent, hardworking black. As Scout realizes, he would have been a fine specimen, but for his left hand, which had been injured in an accident. Tom was married, with three children and worked for Mr. Link Deas in his farm.

The only mistake he made was that he took pity on Mayella and often helped her by doing small household chores for her. He pitied Mayella for her deplorable condition and so helped her whenever possible. But the racial prejudices in Maycomb county are still too dominant for this concern to be outweighed, and so Tom lost.

Tom's courtesy and innate goodness is revealed during the court scene, when he refuses at first to repeat the foul language used by Bob Ewell. He never openly accuses Mayella of lying, he just feels that she must be "mistaken in her mind". All this endears him to the reader and his eventual death brings about a profound sense of sorrow and despair at the injustice prevalent in the society.

## **The Black Community**

By including the black community in her novel, Harper Lee has very effectively revealed the striking differences between the two communities: the white and the black. Her main reason in writing about this community is of course to portray the outright oppressive manner in which the blacks were treated during those times. Her book is a bid to the readers to acknowledge the respect and regard due to this section of society.

Atticus' interest in this society is seen in almost every aspect of his life. His housekeeper is a black and he has utmost faith in her to raise the children in the right way. Atticus never fails to support their cause whenever the need arises. Tom Robinson's case is the best example of Atticus' attitude towards the blacks. It is a case no lawyer would have touched. Atticus takes it up, knowing full well the futility of it. His main concern is showing sympathy towards them any not leaving any stone unturned in bettering their lot.

The blacks in this novel are portrayed as better individuals than the whites. They are honest folk, always maintaining cleanliness, who do any work to eke out a living. This is so unlike the Ewells who though white (are called 'white trash') and are dirty, lazy, good-for-nothing people who have never done a day's hard work.

Even the African tribe which Mrs. Merriweather speaks of reveals a sense of warmth and familial feeling amongst them, which is truly lacking in the whites.

The whites always draw away from the blacks and even speak badly about them, but when Scout and Jem visit the church with Calpurnia, they are treated with respect and are not jeered by the blacks. Calpurnia herself has always treated the children like her own, and has instilled worthy values in them.

Through the court scenes, the reader realizes that Tom had treated Mayella with respect, and had actually felt sorry for her plight. Yet he is wrongly convicted and has to pay for a

crime which he never committed. As Atticus points out in his final speech the white have always assumed that "All Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro women are not to be trusted around our men." The truth, he insists, is that there "is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman with desire."

Harper Lee has thus depicted a race which has always been looked down upon, because of their color, and she has tried to mitigate such feelings of racial hatred and prejudice in the reader.

## **PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS**

*To Kill A Mocking-bird* is divided into 2 parts. The first part extends from Chapter 1 to Chapter 11, and the second part from Chapter 12 to Chapter 31. Part 1 and Part 2, though connected with events and actions, have separate identities.

Part 2 is concerned mostly with Robinson's trial and is well unified. Part 1 contains several episodes which are relevant to the issue dealt with in Part 2.

Part 2, which is longer than part 1, focuses on the novel's main theme: racial prejudice still prevalent in the South, which denied equal status to the blacks and the whites. It entirely consists of the Tom Robinson trial. This begins from the middle of chapter 16 and ends in Chapter 21. However, reference to the case is made before and after these chapters too.

Part 1 mainly deals with the characters of Jem, Scout and Atticus, and the innocent reactions of the children to the racial prejudices prevailing in their town. Scout is surprised that Walter has learnt no table manners, yet, the fact that she has invited him for dinner exhibits her sense of equality. Jem's admiration for his father is also depicted in the first few chapters.

The unifying element of both the parts is the unseen presence of Arthur Radley. He occupies the main interest of the children, which shifts away once the trial begins. At the end of the novel, the attention is brought back to Boo Radley, when he rescues the children from the evil clutches of Bob Ewell.

Close examination of the text reveals that Tom Robinson and Boo Radley have much in common. Both are innocent, harmless human beings, yet both are persecuted by the society: Tom for being black, and Boo for being a freak. Harper Lee shows her readers how wrong the society was by scorning such individuals.

Apart from the Tom Robinson trial and the Boo Radley encounter, the incidents in Part 1 are Miss Maudie's house catching fire, the shooting of the rabid dog, and the children's encounter with Mrs. Dubose.

One can notice that certain incidents and events take place in the first part to prepare the children for what is going to take place in the second part of the novel. The Ewells are introduced in the first part, so that the reader can fully comprehend the kind of people they are. This enables them to see through the act of Mayella and Bob Ewell. The typical

characteristics of southern tradition and culture is also depicted in the first part, to enable the reader to understand why the Tom Robinson case was a futile one from the start. In this manner, both the parts are linked together with episodes, and one finds a structured pattern falling into place.

One can definitely remark that *To Kill A Mockingbird* is a well-structured, well-knit, unified novel, with both the parts skillfully interlinked through characters and events. Harper Lee has left no thread loose at the end of the novel, and each episode is written to contribute firmly to the unity of the book.

## THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

### Main Theme

In the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, various themes can be noticed, which project the intricacies in the novel. The primary theme is evidently the problem of racial prejudice. This is revealed throughout the novel at some point or the other, but is highlighted in the Tom Robinson trial.

Tom Robinson, a poor black laborer has been accused of raping a white girl, Mayella Ewells and is on trial. The jury consists only of whites, and though Tom's innocence is evident, he is convicted as guilty. Thus, the reader witnesses an irrefutable instance of racial prejudice which restricts a black to clinch victory over a white, even if he is innocent. Though black slavery had been abolished, this abolition had still not been totally accepted by the whites, who could not see any equality between the whites and the blacks.

This racial prejudice taints the minds of many citizens of the town. Stephanie Crawford shows her lack of civility by passing cheap remarks over Atticus, and even Walter Cunningham, who is not much better off than the blacks, tries to harm Atticus. The children, however, in their innocence, are free from this prejudice.

### Minor Themes

Along with the theme of racial prejudice, is linked the aspect of social snobbery prevalent in the society. This snobbery does not allow Mayella Ewell, to seek companionship with anyone and so she cannot lead a normal life. This same snobbery does not allow Scout to befriend Walter Cunningham because Aunt Alexandra is conscious of the difference in class. The blacks are ostracized from mingling with the whites and are not given any educational or financial opportunities.

Atticus is the one person who deviates from this norm. He favors the blacks openly, has a black housekeeper in his house, and does not even reprimand the children for attending Calpurnia's church. For his egalitarian outlook and his judicious actions, he faces a lot of disapproval from the community, but is undeterred in his actions.

Besides this, minor themes of morality, need for love, concern, and a sympathy for the misfits of society are also discussed. Atticus teaches his children to maintain respect for humanity and life in general. He himself never carries a

gun. He instructs Jem never to shoot at a mockingbird, because they are harmless birds, which only sing to please others. Jem too has imbibed values approved by his father and does not allow Scout to torment the earthworms that he had dug out.

Dill, Boo Radley and Mayella are characters who are sorely deprived of love and affection in life, and they seek it through their actions. Scout and Jem, who have lived a life of constant affection, are able to give love to others in various ways: Scout invites Walter home, Dill is often given shelter in their house, and they even make attempts to befriend Boo Radley.

The story of the mockingbird is thematically related both to Boo and Tom. Both are inherently harmless people, innocent in their actions and only desiring to comfort those in distress. Society has committed a grave sin by harming Tom and it would have to pay for it. Fortunately, the sin of causing harm to Boo has been avoided, so there is some hope.

Childhood, and the process of development, the growth from innocence to maturity, have all been intermingled into the themes in the novel, so as to project a thematically perfect and well-tended novel, in all respects.

## AUTHOR'S STYLE / USE OF LANGUAGE

Harper Lee in her novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* has utilized Scout, a six-year old girl to relate the facts. Yet, the language she uses is not restricted to her age, since that would have severely limited the expressions which Harper Lee needed to give. She makes it clear that the book is being written by the adult Scout recreating her childhood experience.

A varied use of language is noticed throughout the novel. First of all, there is a difference in the language spoken by the whites and the colloquial use of language by the blacks. A compromise is reached by Calpurnia, who uses white man's language at Atticus' house, but switches over the black jargon the moment she is amidst the blacks.

Language describes the character of a person too. Ewell uses foul words and obscenities whenever possible, which shows his poor class. Mayella, though not using foul words, betrays a lack of education in her speech.

Atticus is formal in his speech, and his words are often laced with irony and humor. Yet he cannot be considered pompous or having an inflated ego because of this. When speaking to the children, he usually uses simple words which can be easily comprehended.

Jem and Scout sometimes use slang words, typical of their age. While speaking to Uncle Jack, Scout says. "I don't mean to sass you", and Jem remarks "shoot no wonder, then."

Tom uses the characteristic colloquial English, saying 'suh' for 'sir' and 'chillun' for 'children'. Yet, he is decent enough not to repeat the foul words used by Bob Ewell, in the courtroom. This indicates that though he has had very little formal education, his good manners and etiquette are innate.

Various derogatory terms for the blacks have also been used, like 'nigger', 'darky', 'Negroes', 'colored folk' and so on; this reflects the attitude of the whites towards the blacks. Thus language has been very adeptly and adroitly used by Harper Lee to enable her novel to read natural.

## MORALITY IN THE NOVEL

Harper Lee, through her novel has attempted to present certain moral truths to the reader: the underlying morality of the Maycomb county has been well portrayed.

The primary moral truth that is evident in the book is the prominence given to life and the need to safeguard it. This does not only concern the trial scene where a black man's life is at stake, but various other instances too. Atticus values life fundamentally, even if it is that of a bird's. He refuses to touch a gun, unless it is absolutely essential. His son too, is careful enough to preserve all the earthworms while building his snowman, and even reprimands Scout when she tries to irritate them. Dill too shows the same love for living creatures, and he says that striking a match under a turtle can hurt it. Miss Maudie loves her plants and bestows a lot of love and care on them.

Another characteristic human value depicted is the need for love and affection. Arthur Radley has lived an entire life deprived of companionship. Dill, starved of love, weaves fantastic stories which reveals the tragic nature of his life. Mayella too, through her words, reveals a desire for love and affection which she had only received from Tom Robinson.

Tolerance and patience are the other morals taught in this novel. Atticus teaches his children to tolerate Mrs. Dubose's vitriolic tongue, because she had a need for them. He teaches them to be patient with Aunt Alexandra, who had never dealt with children before. And most importantly, he teaches them to be tolerant of other's beliefs and values as he says: "You can never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view -- until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

These values and morals have one unifying message -- man needs the society he lives in. All men are equal and it is pointless to make distinctions. Only by living together in deliberate tolerance and love can one make the best of life.

Though the tone throughout is somber and interspersed with serious thoughts, yet Harper Lee has injected humor in novel. She has made a subtle use of humor, so that the reader can comprehend the serious messages with the agreeable flavor of humor. Scout's childish viewing of the entire scenario touches the reader's heart and brings a smile to the face, while going through the entire gamut of experiences that childhood is all about. Thus she very effectively blends entertainment with serious morality.

The lesson of equality is also imparted very effectively. It is well brought out that man has needlessly differentiated between the color of complexion of people and so formed barriers of prejudice. Harper has taken pains to convey the message that one must learn to be tolerant towards others. Only then can a better understanding and a stronger bond of mankind be formed.

## SYMBOLISM / SYMBOLS in To Kill a Mockingbird

Harper Lee has used symbolism rather extensively throughout the novel and a great deal of it refers to the problems of racism in the South during the early twentieth century. Symbolism can be traced in almost every important episode or event which formulates the story line. Right from the beginning Scout's character and her outlook towards the behavior of the people in Maycomb county symbolizes a child's innate curiosity towards life. It also portrays the untainted intelligence which helps her see beyond what is apparent.

Scout's understanding of Walter Cunningham's poverty and his self-pride is a prime example of this. Even Scout and Jem's relationship with Calpurnia symbolizes the rare understanding of racism prevalent during those times.

Miss Maudie is a classic example of the enlightened woman living in an age of suppressed womanhood. Miss Maudie hates staying indoors and is always seen pottering around her garden, working on her flowerbeds. She understands Atticus' need to fight against the racial prejudices and believes in him absolutely. When her house gets burnt down, instead of moping about it, she is back on her feet the next day, restoring her house and her garden. She is thus a symbol of strength and integrity.

Mrs. Dubose symbolizes the grit and determination of a woman, who though aware of the fact that she is going to die soon, wants to do so with all her wits about her. Her addiction to morphine is a negative factor and she attempts to overcome it appreciably.

Finally, the deepest symbolism conveyed is through the use of the concept of the mockingbird. The mockingbird is a symbol of everything that is harmless. They only make music for others to enjoy and to kill such a being is a sin. Both Boo Radley and Tom Robinson are harmless individuals, who never intend to hurt a soul. Yet Tom's life is lost, and this is like shooting a mockingbird. As Scout wisely says: to hurt Boo Radley too would be like killing a mockingbird. Thus the mockingbird has been used to symbolize the good and the harmless things in this world which should not be abused. As Mary Clare points out, the mockingbird is a symbol for two of the characters in the novel: Tom Robinson and Boo Radley.

In the novel, the people of Maycomb only know Boo Radley and Tom Robinson by what others say about them. According to a critic "Both of these characters do not really have their own 'song' in a sense, and therefore, are characterized by other people's viewpoints."

## CONTRASTS WITHIN THE MAYCOMB SOCIETY

Maycomb county comprises of a conglomeration of various sections of people, who live together in studied harmony. Their differences are noticeable, and therein lies the foundation for all trouble which emerges later on in the novel.

Outwardly, the community is divided into two sections: the white community and the black community. The blacks are simple, honest, hardworking folk, eking out a living by simple labor on the fields. They are god fearing and attend church regularly. Being uneducated, they repeat the hymns sung in the church, by rote. Though poor they have a sense of self-respect and pride and would never take anything from another without paying back in kind. When Atticus takes up Tom Robinson's case, even though he loses the case, his kitchen is overflowing with food items; the blacks' way of showing gratitude. Though Jem and Scout are white, they are treated with deference and respect when they visit their black church.

The white community is divided into two sections. One includes most of the citizens of the county, who are simple, yet well bred. They work hard, keep their houses clean and attend church regularly. At the same time, they are prone to indulge in idle gossip, and slander, and have a nose for prying into others' affairs. Stephanie Crawford, with all her well-bred insolence, cannot help making snide comments at Atticus and his children.

There is an air of suppressed hypocrisy among many of these white citizens.

Another small segment of the white community comprises of what is called 'white trash'. The Ewells are a part of this segment. These people, though white are worse off than the blacks. They are poor not because of circumstances but because of sheer laziness and lack of ambition. The children are filthy, have no manners, and even refuse to attend school. They are mean and hard and have no qualms about using their fists. Even the law has to be altered a little to maintain order in the society, for instance. This community is worse off than the poor but inherently good blacks, yet consider themselves superior to them because of the color of their skin.

There is another smaller segment, consisting of the Cunninghams. The Cunninghams are known never to take anything they cannot pay back, they manage with whatever they have, which isn't much. When Scout's teacher offers Walter Cunningham a quarter to buy lunch for himself, he refuses, and Scout has to explain to her the ways of the Cunninghams. When Mr. Cunningham cannot pay Atticus money for his legal help he sends sacks of hickory nuts, turnips and holly to him.

Evaluating all these sections, one can notice a marked similarity between the blacks and the Cunninghams. Though different in race and color, their attitude towards life, and importance to honesty and self-esteem, depicts them to be good people who deserve better than what is meted out to them by the society.

The Ewells, on the other hand, are the worst kind of people, who show no concern towards bettering themselves, and in fact show insolence towards the others.

All these distinct sections of people have been portrayed to bring forth the problem of racial prejudice to the fullest.

## STUDY QUESTIONS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS / ESSAY TOPICS

- 1.) Show the growth and maturity of Jem from the beginning of the novel till its end.
- 2.) Describe the details of the Tom Robinson trial.
- 3.) Elucidate on Harper Lee's presentation of the black community in 'To Kill A Mockingbird'.
- 4.) Give a character sketch of Atticus.
- 5.) Is Atticus an ideal father? Elaborate.
- 6.) Do you sympathize with Mayella Ewells? Explain.
- 7.) How has Harper Lee presented social snobbery in her novel 'To Kill A Mockingbird'?
- 8.) Elaborate on the relevance of the title to the plot of the novel.
- 9.) Discuss the concept of a gentleman that is presented in Chapter 11, where Atticus shoots the mad dog. How does that definition of gentlemanly behavior contrast with the philosophy of self-expression? With the "macho" concept of masculine behavior?
- 10.) Who is responsible for Tom Robinson's death? What answers do various characters in the novel give to this question? What answer do you think best represents the author's point of view? What do you think?
- 11.) What does the author's physical description of the town of Maycomb tell you about the people who live there?
- 12.) Notice especially the description of the town in Chapter 1. Doesn't the insistence that Maycomb is a lazy town where nothing ever happens make you feel that something very ominous is going to occur before long? How can this be?
- 13.) Jem Finch is one of the most important and complex characters in the novel. How does his relationship with Scout change over the course of the story? Who do you think resembles Atticus the most-Jem or Scout?
- 14.) Both Miss Maudie and Aunt Alexandra represent types of the southern lady. How do the two characters differ? How are they alike? What does Scout learn from each of them?
- 15.) Describe the differences among the Finches, the Cunninghams, and the Ewells. What do you think of the novel's suggestion that individual members of the same family more often than not run true to type? In considering this question, pay attention to what the novel says about

why this is so, noticing especially what Atticus has to say about heredity versus environment.

16.) How important is it to the novel that the narrator, Scout Finch, is a child at the time the events of the story take place?

17.) Harper Lee has said that the South is "the refuge of genuine eccentrics." What do you learn from the various eccentric characters in the novel, for example, Boo Radley and Dolphus Raymond? Can you think of any reasons why a society that is very conscious of class and family tradition might also have more than its share of eccentrics?

18.) Do you think the character of Scout is a convincing portrait of childlike behavior? Why or why not?

19.) The voice you hear telling the story of the novel is actually that of the adult Jean Louise Finch telling you about events that happened when she was a child. At what points in the novel do you become aware of this? How does this adult narrator's reflections contribute to your understanding of the people of Maycomb? How does the adult Jean Louise create suspense by hinting at certain developments yet to come in the story?

20.) Some readers have objected that the black characters in the novel are two-dimensional and thus the story presents a superficial view of the problem of racial prejudice. Do you feel that this is a valid criticism? In thinking about this question you might want to read a novel by Richard Wright, or some other black author presenting a view of life under segregation. How do the two viewpoints compare?

21.) Why does Mr. Underwood come to the aid of Atticus in defending Tom Robinson from the mob? Contrast Mr. Underwood's behavior with the decision of Heck Tate to file a false police report about Bob Ewell's death. How do the two men's ideas about justice differ?

22.) What does the story have to say about the importance of tradition? In framing your discussion, notice that there are times when the narrator approves of tradition, for example, in defending old-fashioned ideas about education, and ridiculing Miss Caroline's modern ideas about how to teach reading. On the other hand, Atticus, the hero of the story, criticizes Aunt Alexandra for being too concerned with family traditions. And he himself violated these traditions when he became a lawyer instead of a farmer.

23.) Some readers think that Jem's broken arm symbolizes the wound that the system of segregation inflicted on white southerners. What do you think of this idea? What evidence can you find in the story that the author might have intended to make the broken arm a symbol?

24.) When *To Kill a Mockingbird* was first published in 1960 a number of reviewers compared the character of Scout with Frankie, the tomboy in Carson McCullers' play *The Member of the Wedding*. You might like to read *The Member of the Wedding* for yourself and discuss how the two characters are alike. Or, if you think they are very different, why you think the comparison is a bad one.

25.) Discuss how Scout's attitude toward superstition changes over the course of the novel. Don't forget to talk about the final chapter in the story, where Atticus reads to Scout from the novel *The Gray Ghost*. Why doesn't Scout find such stories scary anymore?

26.) Why do you think the scene in which Jem and Scout build a snowman was included in the novel? Explain.

27.) Contrast the characters of Miss Maudie and the newspaper editor Mr. Underwood. How can two individuals whose values are so different both be "good" characters?

28.) What is the significance of Scout's criticisms of progressive education? If innocent children are sometimes wiser than the adults around them, as the story seems to be saying, why doesn't the narrator trust a system of teaching that depends on children's ability to learn through instinct and their own initiative?

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