To Kill a Mockingbird

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF HARPER LEE

Nelle Harper Lee was the youngest of four children born to Amasa Lee and Frances Finch Lee. She earned a law degree from the University of Alabama in 1949 and spent a year in Oxford, England, but moved to New York in 1950 to focus on writing. She published *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960, which became an immediate and immense success—it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961 and was voted "Best Novel of the Century" by a *Library Journal* poll in 1999. After 1960, Lee retreated from public life to her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama. Aside from a few essays, she published nothing else until 2015. At that point, her publisher released *Go Set a Watchman*, which Lee wrote initially as a first draft of *Mockingbird*. Its publication was controversial, as some believed Lee's publisher took advantage of her old age to release the book (though an investigation by the State of Alabama found no evidence of this). Lee died in her sleep in 2016 at age 89, having received numerous honorary degrees, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the National Medal of Arts.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1931, nine black teenage boys were accused of rape by two white girls. The trials of the boys lasted six years, with convictions, reversals, and numerous retrials. These trials were given the name The Scottsboro Trials, made national headlines, and drastically intensified the debate about race and racism in America. Ultimately, after six years of trials in which the boys were kept in jail, and despite the fact that one of the girls ultimately changed her testimony and claimed that no rape had actually occurred, five of the nine were convicted of rape. These cases are said to have inspired *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as Tom Robinson is also a target of a false and racially motivated rape accusation in the novel.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

To Kill a Mockingbird is set in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama. While it is the story of Scout's growing up, it is also a story of the racially charged atmosphere in the town in the years of the Great Depression. *Mockingbird* therefore falls into a particular subset of American literature called Southern literature, since it deals explicitly and implicitly with themes and issues that were uniquely Southern. Other notable works of Southern literature include Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, and Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. In 2015, Lee's publisher released *Go Set a Watchman*, which was billed as a sequel to *Mockingbird* but was actually her first draft of *Mockingbird*. It's set 20 years after the events of *Mockingbird*. *To Kill a Mockingbird* also shares many connections with *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Both novels have a troublemaking child as their protagonist and narrator, and both novels chart their protagonists' growth as their adventures force them to see the unfairness and brutality of their community and of society, particularly in regard to the racist treatment of black Americans.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** To Kill a Mockingbird
- **When Written:** 1950-1960
- **Where Written:** New York City and Monroeville, Alabama
- **When Published:** 1960
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Bildungsroman; Social Novel
- **Setting:** The fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama during the Great Depression
- **Climax:** The trial of Tom Robinson; or when Bob Ewell attacks Scout and Jem
- **Antagonist:** Bob Ewell; more broadly, racism and mob mentality
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

"Dill" Capote. The character of Dill is based on Harper Lee's real-life childhood friend, Truman Capote, who went on to become a national literary star in his own right. He wrote the bestselling true crime book *In Cold Blood*.

Atticus in Real Life. Harper Lee became close friends with Gregory Peck, the actor who played Atticus in the Academy Award-winning film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She remained close with his family after Peck died, and Peck's grandson is even named Harper after her.

PLOT SUMMARY

In the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, in the middle of the Great Depression, six-year-old Scout Finch lives with her older brother, Jem, and her widowed father, Atticus. Atticus is a lawyer and makes enough to keep the family comfortably out of poverty, but he works long days. He relies on the family's black cook, Calpurnia, to help raise the kids. Scout, however, finds

Calpurnia tyrannical and believes that Calpurnia favors Jem over her.

Scout and Jem spend much of their time creating and acting out fantasies. One year, a boy named Dill comes to spend the summer with his aunt, the Finches' neighbor Miss Rachel. The three children become friends, and, pushed by Dill's wild imagination, soon become obsessed with a nearby house called Radley Place. A man named Nathan Radley owns the house, but it is his reclusive brother, Arthur Radley (whom the children call Boo) who interests and terrifies them—he is supposedly locked up in the house and once stabbed his father, Mr. Radley, with scissors. Local children believe that he's impossibly tall, drools, and eats neighborhood cats and squirrels. On a dare, Jem runs up and touches the Radley house, and Scout is sure she sees someone watching them from inside behind a curtain.

Summer ends, and Dill returns to Mississippi. Scout starts school, which she hates despite looking forward to it. On the first day, her teacher, Miss Caroline, criticizes her for already knowing how to read and forbids her from writing in cursive. When she comes home from school upset, Atticus encourages her to think about how Miss Caroline must've felt—she had no idea how to deal with the eccentricities of Maycomb children, just as Scout had no idea how to deal with her odd teacher. He suggests that she put herself in others' shoes to understand how they see things. The highlights of the school year come when Scout and Jem occasionally find treasures stuffed into a knothole of a tree next to the Radleys' fence. When they find several sticks of gum, Scout and Jem ignore the rumor that everything on the Radley property is poison.

Summer arrives and Dill returns. He, Scout, and Jem grow more daring and sneak onto the Radley property one night to look in the window, but Nathan Radley sees them and thinks they're thieves. As they run away, and Jem's pants get caught in the Radley fence. He leaves them behind and, to cover their tracks, the children show up with the rest of the neighborhood at Nathan Radley's gate and explain that Jem is without pants because Dill won the pants in a game of strip poker, much to the horror and exasperation of the adults. When Jem goes back to Radleys' fence to retrieve the pants later that night, he finds them mended and folded. Meanwhile, Scout and Jem continue to find gifts in the knothole until Nathan Radley cements it shut, claiming that the tree is dying. Jem is very hurt, especially when Atticus notes that the tree doesn't look ill. A few months later, in the dead of winter, the Finch's neighbor Miss Maudie Atkinson's house catches fire, and as Scout and Finch watch it burn, someone Scout doesn't see puts a blanket around her shoulders. Jem realizes that Boo must have done it. Scout is horrified, but Atticus stifles his laughter.

That year, Atticus is appointed by the court to defend a black man, Tom Robinson, who is accused of raping Mayella Ewell, the daughter of a poor, notoriously vicious white man named Bob Ewell. Racial tensions in Maycomb flare. Scout and Jem become targets of abuse from schoolmates, neighbors, townspeople, and even some family members. Atticus pleads with Scout to not beat people up when they hurl insults at her about it, something that Scout struggles with greatly at Christmas. While at Finch's Landing with Francis, a boring family member who is a year older, Francis baits Scout to fight him, ensuring that she gets in trouble with her beloved Uncle Jack. Later at home, Scout tells Uncle Jack where he went wrong: he never asked for her side of the story and punished her based on Francis's incorrect assertion, and she begs him to keep this entire situation a secret from Atticus. On the bright side, Scout and Jem receive air rifles for Christmas, though Atticus refuses to teach them how to shoot. His only advice is that it's a sin to kill a **mockingbird**. Later in the winter, as Scout and Jem take out their new air rifles to hunt for rabbits, they discover a beloved Maycomb dog named Tim Johnson behaving strangely. Calpurnia recognizes that the dog has rabies, alerts the neighbors, and calls Atticus and the sheriff, Heck Tate. Rather than shoot the dog himself, Mr. Tate makes Atticus do it, surprising the children—they had no idea Atticus even knew how to shoot a gun, but Miss Maudie says he used to be the best shot in the county.

In the spring, Scout and Jem begin going further down the road to meet Atticus after work, which takes them past the house of Mrs. Dubose, a horrendous woman. Jem is able to ignore her abuse for a while, until one day when she hurls slurs and insults at him about Atticus defending Tom Robinson. Jem retaliates by cutting the tops off of her beloved **camellia** bushes. To make up for this, Mrs. Dubose asks Jem to read to her every day after school for a month, and Atticus insists he has to follow through. Mrs. Dubose is thoroughly nasty the entire time and frightens both Jem and Scout, as she has fits of some sort. Atticus forces Jem to read for an extra week and a month after he finishes, Mrs. Dubose dies. Atticus explains that Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict and used Jem's daily reading to break herself of her addiction before she died—she wanted to die free. Atticus admits that he made Jem read because he wanted Jem to see that courage isn't a man with a gun—it's doing something you know is right, even if you know you'll fail.

Calpurnia takes the children to attend her black church one Sunday when Atticus is gone and they are, for the most part, warmly received. Scout in particular is shocked to discover that Calpurnia lives a double life, as she speaks one way in the Finch home and another way among her black peers. When they return home, Aunt Alexandra, Atticus's sister, is there to stay with them for "a while"—which in Maycomb, could mean any length of time—to provide a "feminine influence" for Scout. Scout is skeptical and takes major offense to Aunt Alexandra, especially when she forbids Scout from visiting Calpurnia's home. Aunt Alexandra's social views are, in general, more conservative than Atticus's. She treats Calpurnia more like a servant than a family member and tries to impress upon the

children that the Finches are a "Fine Family" because they've been on the same land for generations. Jem notes that, per this logic, the Ewell family is also made up of "Fine Folks." On the day that Aunt Alexandra forbids Scout from visiting Calpurnia, Scout discovers Dill hiding under her bed after running away from his mother and her new husband. Jem breaks their code by telling Atticus, though Dill's mother and Miss Rachel allow Dill to stay in Maycomb. That night, Dill admits that he was lonely and suggests that Boo Radley must also be lonely—but Boo hasn't run away because, possibly, he has nowhere to go.

The weekend before Tom Robinson's trial, Scout, Jem, and Dill observe tensions in Maycomb rising. Groups of men congregate on the Finches' lawn, something that, in Scout's experience, only happens when someone dies or when people want to discuss politics. The day before the trial, a mob surrounds the jail where Tom is being held. Scout, Jem, and Dill sneak out of the house to figure out where Atticus went and join Atticus at the courthouse, who anticipated a mob attack on Tom. Scout doesn't realize what's going on and is scared and uncomfortable when she finds herself in the middle of a group of men she doesn't know, especially when she realizes that Atticus is scared. She recognizes a man named Mr. Cunningham in the crowd and asks him about his son, Walter, who is Scout's classmate. The man, shamed, disperses the mob. The next morning, this event transforms into a wild story of bravery that delights Dill and annoys Aunt Alexandra.

At the trial, Atticus presents a powerful defense of Tom and makes it clear that both Mayella and Mr. Ewell are lying, since Tom doesn't have the use of his left arm and couldn't have choked and beaten a woman, and Mayella's injuries indicate that whoever beat her was left-handed. Rather, Atticus suggests that Mr. Ewell, who is left-handed, beat Mayella himself when he caught Mayella touching Tom. Tom saw running as his only option, even if it made him look guilty. Scout, Jem, and Dill sneak into the trial and watch the proceedings from the balcony, where the black people are forced to sit. While the prosecuting lawyer, Mr. Gilmer, questions Tom, Dill has to leave. He's extremely upset by the racist way that Mr. Gilmer spoke to Tom. Outside, they meet Mr. Raymond, a white man who chooses to live with black people. He notes that Dill can only experience this kind of a reaction because he's a child, whereas adults learn to ignore their innate sense of right and wrong. Jem is sure Atticus will win the case, but the all-white jury convicts Tom as guilty of rape. Jem is particularly devastated by the verdict, and his faith in justice is even further shaken when Tom tries to escape from prison and is shot and killed.

Even though Robinson was convicted, Ewell is furious that Atticus made him look like a fool in court. He harasses Helen Robinson, Tom's window, and even tries to break into Judge Taylor's house. Atticus isn't concerned, however—he believes that Mr. Ewell got everything out of his system when he spit in Atticus's face the week after the trial. However, as Jem and Scout walk home alone from a Halloween pageant one night, Mr. Ewell attacks them. Scout can't see much of what happens, but hears Jem's arm break before someone rushes in to help. In the scuffle, Mr. Ewell is stabbed to death. The man who saved Jem and Scout carries Jem home, and once inside, Scout realizes that the man is Boo Radley. Mr. Tate decides to keep Boo's involvement in Mr. Ewell's death quiet, which Scout understands—she suggests to Atticus that punishing him would be like killing a mockingbird. Scout leads Boo to say goodnight to Jem, who's unconscious, and then walks Boo home. As Scout stands on the Radley porch, she sees the world as Boo must see it and looks back on the experiences of her last few summers. She begins to understand that Boo truly was their neighbor and cared about "his children," Scout, Jem, and Dill. When she gets home, Scout falls asleep as Atticus reads to her at Jem's bedside.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Jean Louise Finch (Scout) – The novel's protagonist. Over the course of the novel's three years, Scout grows from six to nine years old. She's bright, precocious, and a tomboy. Many neighbors and family members take offense to her love of overalls, though her father, Atticus, defends her right to wear what she wants and doesn't force her to act like a lady. Scout adores and admires both Atticus and Jem, her older brother, who in her mind know everything there is to know. She finds Atticus in particular far more knowledgeable than her teachers at school, as her teachers take offense to the fact that Scout already knows how to read and write in cursive on the first day of first grade and force her to engage in mindless exercises. She prefers summertime, when she can run around the neighborhood with Jem and their friend Dill, who proposes to Scout at the beginning of their second summer together. Though Scout is just as terrified as Jem and Dill are of their neighbor Boo Radley, she'd rather be cautious about approaching Radley Place and ideally would give it a wide berth, but she often gets roped into Dill and Jem's plans to somehow force Boo out of the house. When Atticus, a lawyer, agrees to take on the defense of a black man, Tom Robinson, in a rape case, Scout demonstrates her hotheadedness by defending Atticus's honor against their majority-white community's vitriol—though she tries her best to follow through with Atticus's request that she take the moral high ground and not fight back. Scout struggles with her own prejudiced feelings, as when she can't see the hypocrisy of hating dresses but thinking that boys shouldn't learn to cook, or when she suggests that Tom Robinson is just a black person, and that it's therefore normal and expected for people to treat him poorly. When Boo saves Scout and Jem from being attacked by Mr. Ewell (the

father of the plaintiff in Robinson's case) on Halloween night, Scout truly learns the power of putting herself in another's shoes, as it allows her to see that Boo isn't scary or evil—he's merely different, and deserves respect just like anyone else.

Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) – Scout's older brother. He's nine when the novel begins. In Scout's eyes, Jem is an expert on most things and is the ringleader of their group, especially once Dill arrives on the scene. He desperately wants to look brave and courageous, which leads him to do things like touch the Radley house when goaded and one summer. Jem is extremely intelligent and reads everything he can get his hands on. He's sensitive and, like his father, Atticus, has a strong sense of morality and justice. This causes him to stand up for Atticus in questionable ways, as when he cuts down all of Mrs. Dubose's **camellias** when she insults Atticus for defending Tom Robinson. As the novel progresses, Jem begins to grow up and mature in a way that's hurtful and strange for Scout. He becomes sensitive, somewhat reclusive, and during the summer, he excludes Scout in favor of spending more time alone with Dill. Especially as Tom Robinson's trial approaches, Jem becomes both moodier and more of an adult. He insists on outing Dill, who ran away and came to the Finches' home, to Atticus, and when he finds Atticus surrounded by a mob of angry men the night before the trial, he disobeys Atticus and refuses to leave. The trial itself is thrilling for Jem, as he wants to be a lawyer, idolizes Atticus, and believes that Robinson's innocence is obvious. It's heartbreaking for Jem, then, when the jury takes hours and still decides to convict Robinson as guilty. In the aftermath, Jem tries to come up with various ways of understanding how this could've happened, but these explanations primarily rest on him coming up with arbitrary divisions between people that seek to explain their animosity, rather than understanding that his world is fundamentally prejudiced in a variety of ways. He's rightfully terrified when Mr. Ewell, the father of the plaintiff in Robinson's case, begins terrorizing Atticus and others, which results in Jem breaking his arm on Halloween as he tries to fight off Mr. Ewell and protect Scout from harm.

Atticus Finch – Scout and Jem's father. Atticus is older than most fathers in Maycomb at almost 50 years old, and as a lawyer, Scout and Jem initially believe that Atticus doesn't do anything of import. Atticus is kind, compassionate, and treats his children like adults to the furthest extent that he can—he asks for both sides of arguments, for instance, and takes their concerns seriously, no matter how odd they may seem. He also insists that it's necessary to answer children's questions truthfully, no matter how embarrassing or unsavory the subject. While at home, he spends most of his time reading newspapers, and through this, taught Scout to read at an early age. Atticus has a firm sense of morality and believes in the dignity of all people. He teaches his children to be compassionate and understanding of everyone, from mean old Mrs. Dubose to Calpurnia, the Finches' black cook. All of this means that Atticus feels compelled to take on the case of Tom Robinson, a black man wrongfully accused of raping a white woman. Atticus knows that Robinson will be found guilty regardless, but believes that in order to look his children in the eye and in order to live with himself, he has to do his best to actually defend Robinson to the best of his abilities rather than allowing the trial to proceed unchecked in favor of the white Ewells. The months preceding the trial are trying for the entire Finch family, as Atticus is often harassed by locals for his role. In February, before the summer trial, Atticus reveals that he used to be the best shot in the county when he shoots a rabid dog, an experience that, in Scout's mind, cements Atticus's role as the person who does unsavory but necessary things for the community. He ultimately loses the trial, but believes that his closing arguments caused the jury to take a tiny step in the right direction by arguing about their decision for hours. He doesn't take Mr. Ewell's threats seriously in the months after, as he believes fully in the goodness and kindness of all people.

Charles Baker Harris (Dill) – Jem and Scout's friend and Miss Rachel's nephew. Dill comes to stay with Miss Rachel in Maycomb one summer and immediately shows that he's a prolific liar and storyteller. In his play dramas with Jem and Scout, Dill plays all manner of characters but truly excels at portraying villains. He prefers his own stories to reality, hence his fascination with the Radley Place and with making Boo Radley come out of the house—the thought that Boo feeds on cats and might be dead piques Dill's interest, which leads to all manner of shenanigans that, in retrospect, Scout realizes were extremely rude. Dill begins to show that he's sensitive and compassionate, however, when he decides that they need to give Boo a note asking him to come out and sit with them and offering to buy him an ice cream. In the year that follows, Dill begins to suspect that Boo is really very lonely and doesn't have any friends. Dill himself is very lonely: his mother is divorced and remarries sometime before the novel's third summer, and now Dill's parents don't want much to do with him. He runs away to the Finches because he feels more welcome there than he does at home. During Tom Robinson's trial, Dill's sensitivity comes to the forefront and causes him to have to leave the courthouse, as he can't stomach the rude and racist way that Mr. Gilmer speaks to Tom during his questioning. He's adamant that it's horrible to treat any person that way, no matter their skin color. In this sense, Dill truly remains an innocent child throughout the novel, as both Atticus and Mr. Raymond suggest that as children grow, they stop crying when they see injustice like this, and ultimately become either numb to it or go on to perpetuate it themselves.

Arthur Radley (Boo) – The youngest Radley. Arthur is a recluse, and his life is shrouded in mystery. At the beginning of the novel, his unwillingness to come out of the house leads to wild rumors that he eats cats and squirrels on his nightly walks to

look in people's windows. Scout, Jem, and Dill are both terrified of and fascinated by him, and they engage in all manner of shenanigans to try to get him to come out. According to Miss Maudie, Arthur's life was an unhappy one. His father, Mr. Radley, was so religious he couldn't take pleasure in living, and there was possibly abuse that went on behind closed doors in the Radley house. After a brief involvement in a gang of sorts as a teen, Arthur was kept inside the house and by the time the novel starts, it's been 25 years since he left it. Miss Maudie also notes that prior to this, Arthur was a polite, if quiet, young man. As Scout, Jem, and Dill grow, they come to suspect that Arthur is truly just lonely, and possibly that he wants to stay inside for good reasons, including the racism and prejudice of his neighbors. Arthur finally comes out on Halloween night to rescue Scout and Jem from being attacked by Bob Ewell, stabbing Mr. Ewell to death in the process. Seeing Arthur for the first time, Scout doesn't find him scary at all. As she stands on his porch after walking him home, she realizes how much he cares for her, Jem, and for the neighborhood, even if he never went out into it.

Bob Ewell – The racist patriarch of the Ewell family, which lives behind the Maycomb dump. His aggressive, drunken behavior causes people in Maycomb to give him a wide berth and allow him to break the rules, as they understand that it's useless to try to force his children to stay in school and it isn't worth it to punish him for hunting out of season. In terms of his hunting, Mr. Ewell gets away with this in part because, though his family relies on relief checks, he spends most of the money on alcohol. When Scout first sees Mr. Ewell in court, she thinks of him as being like a bright red, cocky rooster. He's vulgar, rude, racist, and is very obviously uneducated, which makes him look even less believable than he already does. During the trial, Atticus makes the case that Tom Robinson didn't rape Mayella; rather, Mr. Ewell beat Mayella and blamed Robinson when he caught Mayella touching Robinson. In fact, it's heavily implied that Mr. Ewell has sexually abused Mayella in the past, as she told Robinson that she'd never kissed a man because "what my papa do to me doesn't count." Even though Mr. Ewell and Mayella win their case, Mr. Ewell sets out to get revenge on everyone who made him look like a fool in court. In addition to harassing Helen Robinson and spitting in Atticus's face, this culminates in him attempting to murder Scout and Jem on Halloween night. Mr. Tate insists that Mr. Ewell fell on his knife (in truth, Arthur Radley killed him to save the children), telling Atticus to let the killing slide so that Mr. Ewell can pay for the pain, suffering, and ultimate death he brought on Tom Robinson.

Miss Maudie Atkinson – The Finches' neighbor across the street. Miss Maudie is in her 40s and a widow, and she loves to garden but hates her house. She's a mostly benign presence in Scout's life until Jem and Dill begin excluding her, at which point Scout begins spending more time with Miss Maudie and decides they're friends after Miss Maudie shows Scout her bridgework (fake teeth). Miss Maudie, like Atticus, has an innate sense of morality and believes that all people deserve to be treated with respect and compassion. She's adamant that Arthur Radley is just different, not evil, and she suggests that he's suffered abuse of some kind at home from his overly religious father. Miss Maudie is opinionated and willing to express her views, and as such, often calls out Miss Stephanie and others for gossiping and spreading rumors. Following the trial, Miss Maudie tries to impress upon Jem in particular that Atticus did a necessary and important thing by defending Tom Robinson, even though he knew he wasn't going to win. She encourages Jem to look for the other people who aren't all bad or who somehow tried to help Atticus and Robinson.

Calpurnia – The Finches' black cook. Atticus has employed her for years, and following the death of his wife, Calpurnia essentially raises Scout and Jem. Scout initially sees Calpurnia as tyrannical and horrible, but as she begins to grow, she comes to understand that Calpurnia truly does love and care for her. Calpurnia is unique in Maycomb, as she's one of the few black residents who's literate—she taught Scout to write in cursive and taught her son, Zeebo, to read. She's fanatical about policing Scout's manners, which irks Scout to no end since she believes that Calpurnia doesn't correct Jem nearly as much. When Scout and Jem attend the local black church with Calpurnia and hear her speaking differently to the black parishioners there, they realize that Calpurnia leads something of a double life—she speaks one way at home and speaks very differently when she's at the Finches' house. This increases Scout's respect for Calpurnia, and she becomes even more supportive of Calpurnia when Aunt Alexandra arrives and makes numerous bids for Atticus to fire Calpurnia. Atticus, however, insists that Calpurnia is like family and that he'll never fire her.

Aunt Alexandra – Atticus's sister. She's married, but Scout insists that her husband isn't worth mentioning. Aunt Alexandra is a formidable lady and is the only Finch sibling who stayed at Finch's Landing, the family's old plantation. Scout dislikes her, as Aunt Alexandra takes great offense to Scout's tomboyish nature and desperately wants Scout to wear dresses and act more feminine. In the months before Tom Robinson's trial, Aunt Alexandra inexplicably decides to move in with Atticus in order to give Scout a feminine role model, though Scout suspects that there's more to it than this. While in Atticus's home, Aunt Alexandra proves to be somewhat racist and very classist—she detests Calpurnia's presence and disapproves of Atticus's choice to defend Robinson. She makes it very clear to Scout that the Finches are a good family and that Scout shouldn't spend time with her poorer peers. For all these faults, Aunt Alexandra does rally around Atticus and try to comfort him when he loses the trial, and she remains concerned for Scout and Jem's safety once Mr. Ewell begins harassing Atticus, Helen Robinson, and Judge Taylor.

Tom Robinson – A 25-year-old black man whom Atticus defends in a court case against the Ewells. Bob Ewell claims that his daughter, Mayella, was raped by Tom. However, Tom is kind, a churchgoer, and a married father of three, as well as a beloved member of the black community in Maycomb and a good employee of Mr. Deas. Atticus makes the case that Tom, who got his left arm caught in a cotton gin as a child and can't use it as a result, couldn't have strangled and beaten a woman with only one arm. In his testimony, Tom speaks about the impossible situation Mayella put him in when she hugged and kissed him. Being a black man, he couldn't have pushed her away or forcibly removed himself—though running was his only choice, it made him look as though he was guilty of something more. Despite the overwhelming lack of evidence against Tom, the jury ultimately convicts him as guilty of rape. In prison, guards shoot and kill Tom when he tries to escape over a fence.

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose – Mrs. Dubose is a widow who lives two doors down from the Finches. She's ancient and unspeakably mean, shouting abuse from her porch at everyone, even children. Some, like Cecil, walk further every day to avoid her. She remains a force to be avoided until she insults Atticus for defending Tom Robinson in front of Jem, which spurs Jem to hack the buds off of her **camellias**. Following this, Mrs. Dubose and Atticus force Jem to read to her every afternoon for five weeks. Scout finds Mrs. Dubose's appearance and home repulsive—she drools, her house smells oppressive, and she seems to barely listen to Jem while continuing to insult Jem and Atticus. Following her death, Atticus explains that Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict who, while undeniably mean and racist, did a courageous thing by breaking herself of her addiction before her death.

Mr. Dolphus Raymond – A white man who, for much of the novel, Scout and most people in Maycomb believe is always drunk. He was supposed to marry years ago, but rumor has it that his fiancée committed suicide when she learned that Mr. Raymond had a black mistress. In the present, Mr. Raymond lives with his black girlfriend and has a number of children with her. He speaks to Scout and Dill when they step outside of Tom Robinson's trial because Dill was upset by how the solicitor treated Robinson. At this time, he admits that he's not a drinker—he drinks Coca-Cola out of a bag but pretends it's whiskey to give people a reason that makes sense to them as to why he'd want to live the way he does. He's firm in his belief that all people deserve respect and dignity, no matter the color of their skin.

Mayella Ewell – Bob Ewell's 19-year-old daughter. She's described as thick and used to hard labor and cultivates bright red **geraniums** in the family's yard. and Scout can tell that though Mayella tries to keep clean, she's regularly unsuccessful. The oldest child in her family, it falls to her to care for the younger children. She accuses Tom Robinson of beating and raping her, though Atticus, through his questioning of her and of Robinson, shows that Mayella was unloved, abused, starved for attention. It's clear that she was actually beaten by her father when he caught her forcibly touching Robinson, and was not raped at all—though it's heavily implied that Mr. Ewell has, in fact, sexually abused Mayella in the past. Though Mayella comes close to admitting that Mr. Ewell beats her when he drinks, she refuses to change her testimony and admit that she accused Robinson of rape, so that she can escape the fact that she broke an important social code as a white woman tempting a black man.

Uncle Jack – Atticus's brother who is 10 years younger and a doctor. He's unmarried but has a female cat, and he spends a week every Christmas with Atticus, Scout, and Jem. Scout adores him as he doesn't seem much like a doctor to her—rather than acting cold and clinical, he makes her laugh or explains in detail what he's doing while performing minor procedures. He punishes Scout at Christmas for beating up Francis but feels horrendous about it when Scout accuses him of being horrible with children and not asking for her side of the story. He later tells Atticus shamefully that Scout's rebuke makes him never want to have children.

Mr. Underwood – The sole owner, writer, and editor of the *Maycomb Tribune*. According to Atticus, Mr. Underwood is an intense and profane man. He seldom leaves his home above the *Tribune* to report on any goings-on; people bring him the news instead. Though he's racist and is one of the men who convenes at the Finches' home in the days before Tom Robinson's trial to speak to Atticus, he also stands up for what's right and is ready to protect Atticus from a mob that gathers at the jailhouse. Following the jury's guilty verdict and Robinson's death at the hands of prison guards, Mr. Underwood takes a stand and insists that it's unconscionable to kill a disabled person, invoking Atticus's own adage that killing a **mockingbird** is a sin.

Mr. Avery – An older and cantankerous neighbor who lives across the street from the Finches. He's a portly man who whittles, though only to make himself toothpicks. Scout, Jem, and Dill find Mr. Avery fascinating since in the summers, he puts on a nightly show of sitting on his porch and sneezing—and one night, they caught him urinating an impressive distance off of his porch. Scout doesn't like him much, but she takes him at his word that it's written on the Rosetta Stone that Maycomb experiences bad weather when children misbehave. Despite being cantankerous, he's one of the bravest men who fights the fire in Miss Maudie's house.

Heck Tate – The sheriff in Maycomb. He's a tall and slender man who wears cowboy boots. He carries a rifle, but he insists that he's not as good of a shot as Atticus, though this is never confirmed. While Scout never gets a good or nuanced understanding of how Mr. Tate feels about black people more generally, Mr. Tate does try to protect Tom Robinson and gives testimony in court that supports Atticus's argument that Mr. Ewell, not Robinson, beat Mayella. He later shows that he does

believe in justice when he declares that Mr. Ewell fell on his knife (when really Arthur Radley killed him in defense of Scout and Jem), thereby protecting Arthur from unwanted attention or legal trouble.

Judge Taylor – The elderly judge in Maycomb. He often looks like he's asleep and not paying attention, but in reality, he pays close attention to court proceedings and is a strict and fair judge. He has a peculiar habit of eating cigars during court proceedings, which fascinates and delights Scout. While Judge Taylor doesn't overtly voice his support for Tom Robinson or Atticus during the trial, Miss Maudie points out that he did assign the case to Atticus, not the newest lawyer in town, suggesting that he wanted Robinson to have the best chance possible.

Mr. Radley – Arthur and Nathan Radley's father. According to Jem, Mr. Radley didn't do anything, while Miss Maudie explains that Mr. Radley was religious to the point where he wasn't interested in anything to do with the outside world, hence his family's solitude and unwillingness to mingle in Maycomb. Due to possible abuse, he may be the reason for Arthur's unwillingness to leave the house as an adult. He dies when Jem is a child, but Jem, Scout, and Dill resurrect him as a character in one of their summer dramas.

Nathan Radley – The eldest Radley son. He left the Radley Place as a young adult but returns to care for Arthur when old Mr. Radley dies. Like the rest of his family members, Nathan is reclusive and spends most of his time inside. Though he doesn't act nefarious or mean, he does fill the hole in the oak tree—in which Arthur was leaving Scout and Jem treasures—with cement.

Reverend Sykes – The reverend of First Purchase, the black church in Maycomb. He's a kind and generous man, though Scout notes that like all preachers in her experience, he's preoccupied with sin and insisting that women are somehow compromised. He kindly allows Scout, Jem, and Dill to sit with him during Tom Robinson's trial, and he gives much of his church's collection money to Helen in the weeks before the trial.

Walter Cunningham – A poor boy in Scout's first-grade class. Scout notes that Walter's family is extremely poor, with no food or extra money to spare, hence why he comes to school on the first day without shoes or a lunch. Despite this, in contrast to the Ewells, Walter is clean and wears clean clothes. Scout blames him for souring her relationship with Miss Caroline.

Mr. Cunningham – Walter Cunningham's father. A year before the novel begins, Atticus helps Mr. Cunningham with some legal issues, and as a Cunningham, Mr. Cunningham is unable to pay Atticus with money. Instead, he pays with foodstuffs and firewood. Atticus thus insists that although Cunninghams may be poor, they're honorable. Later, he's part of the mob that tries to antagonize Atticus for taking on Tom Robinson's court case, but shamefully retreats after Scout asks him about Walter.

Miss Stephanie Crawford – The Maycomb gossip. She's a good Maycomb lady in that she's active in the church and is very social, but Scout knows to not believe anything she says. Miss Stephanie very interested in Miss Maudie's Lane cake recipe, but Scout shares with the reader that she doesn't believe Miss Stephanie would be capable of baking the cake even if she had the recipe.

Miss Rachel Haverford – Dill's aunt and the Finches' next-door neighbor, with whom Dill comes to stay during the summer. She isn't a major presence in Scout, Jem, and Dill's lives, but she cares deeply for Dill and takes issue with their moral development when the children insist that they've been playing strip poker. She's also a gossip and a friend of Miss Stephanie's.

Mr. Gilmer – The prosecutor in Tom Robinson's trial. He could be anywhere between 40 and 60 years old and Scout doesn't know him well, as he's from Abbottsville. Despite representing the Ewells, Mr. Gilmer seems just as put off by them as everyone else in the courtroom. He treats Tom Robinson rudely during his questioning, which disturbs Dill.

Mrs. Grace Merriweather – According to Scout, Miss Merriweather is the most devout lady in Maycomb. She's a Methodist and leads the mission group. She's shocked by the "sin and squalor" that African tribes live in, and she takes major offense to the fact that black people in Maycomb can't move on after Tom Robinson's trial.

Link Deas – A land and business owner in Maycomb. He's a generally kind man who employed Tom Robinson, and employs Tom's wife, Helen, after Tom is found guilty at his trial and imprisoned. When Bob Ewell tries to intimidate Helen following the trial, Mr. Deas threatens him, and he's thrown out of court for defending Tom's character unprompted.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Miss Caroline – Scout's first-grade teacher. She's a young teacher from Winston County, which makes children suspicious of her—people from Winston County are, in the eyes of those in Maycomb County, very peculiar. Miss Caroline takes offense to Scout's advanced literacy and introduces a new way of teaching in Maycomb.

Miss Gates – Scout's third-grade teacher. Though she expresses contempt for Hitler and insists that there's no prejudice in America like there is in Germany (thanks to the U.S. being a democracy), Scout hears her say after Tom Robinson's trial that the black residents of Maycomb got what they deserved.

Francis – Aunt Alexandra's grandson. He's a boring and spoiled child, and he's one of the first to test Scout's willingness to obey Atticus and not fight people when he bullies her for Atticus's defense of Tom Robinson.

Cecil Jacobs – One of Scout's classmates who lives down the street. Though he and Scout have a generally positive relationship, he is the first to bully Scout for Atticus's role in defending Tom Robinson.

Little Chuck Little – A classmate in Scout's first grade class. Despite being small, he frightens Burris Ewell. Though he is poor, he's clean and a born gentleman.

Zeebo – Calpurnia's adult son and the garbage collector in town. He also leads the black church in Maycomb in singing call-and-response hymns.

Burris Ewell – A hulking and filthy boy in Scout's first-grade class. He frightens Miss Caroline with his lice and his sudden anger, but he doesn't return after the first day.

Lula – A tall black woman who takes offense to Calpurnia bringing Scout and Jem to their church.

Simon Finch – Scout's ancestor. He founded Finch's Landing, a plantation 20 miles east of Maycomb.

Jessie – Mrs. Dubose's black servant.

Helen Robinson – Tom Robinson's wife.

Eula May – The telephone operator in Maycomb.

Dr. Reynolds – The doctor in Maycomb.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

GOOD, EVIL, AND HUMAN DIGNITY

To Kill a Mockingbird follows Scout, a precocious six-year-old, over the course of three years as she begins to grow, and in the process, bears witness to the trial of Tom Robinson, a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman. As a child, Scout has set ideas regarding what's good and what's evil, but throughout the novel, her father, Atticus, gradually begins to encourage her to see that the world isn't divided into good people and bad people. Rather, he suggests to her that all people are composed of a mix of good and bad qualities, but regardless, everyone is deserving of being treated with dignity and respect.

At first, Scout and her brother, Jem, hold very black and white views of what's good and what's evil. They believe that most of the people in Maycomb are good, as is the law. But in their eyes, the Radley family down the street (and specifically the youngest adult son, Arthur Radley) is evil—as is their elderly neighbor in the other direction, Mrs. Dubose. However, this ignores or contradicts over some of Scout's more nuanced observations, such as the fact that Miss Stephanie, a good Maycomb lady by many standards, is a horrible gossip and nobody should believe what she says. Yet, Scout lumps Miss Stephanie in with Maycomb at large as a good part of her life. Meanwhile, there's little real evidence that Arthur Radley, whom the children call Boo, is a bad person. In fact, there's little evidence that he exists at all—Scout and Jem believe that Boo is evil because of childish neighborhood rumors that Boo survives on cats and squirrels and spends his evenings peeping into people's windows. In other words, Scout's world is clearly more complex than strict terms of good and evil, even if she doesn't have the maturity to fully recognize this.

Through Tom Robinson's trial, Scout has a number of opportunities to begin to question her initial assumptions about whether people are good or bad, and Atticus's behavior impresses upon her that one of the best things a person can do is help another person maintain their dignity, which he does by defending Robinson. It's confusing for Scout when she hears peers, extended family, and even adults in town—many of whom previously fell into her "good" category—take issue with Atticus's defense of Robinson, defense that she understands that Robinson is entitled to under the law. Because of this, Scout has to grapple with the fact that people despise Atticus for doing his job, which begins to suggest that the people of Maycomb aren't as overwhelmingly good as Scout initially thought. Indeed, many of them are extremely racist, and while they may treat their white neighbors kindly and with compassion, it's unthinkable for many of them to extend that kind of generosity to their black neighbors or employees.

As Scout comes to understand that her town and neighborhood aren't as good as she initially thought, she also has several opportunities to discover that seemingly evil villains in her life are actually not as villainous as she once believed. Though Mrs. Dubose is a foul woman who hurls insults, slurs, and other abuse at every member of the Finch family, including Jem and Scout, she also grows beautiful **camellias** of which she is very proud, a small quirk that humanizes her to the reader, if not to the children. Further, Atticus shares after her death that Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict who, in attempt to die free and with dignity, broke herself of her addiction in the weeks before her death. While this doesn't substantially change how Jem and Scout view Mrs. Dubose, as they remain fixated on the awful way she treated them and Atticus, Atticus makes the point that every person, no matter how unsavory they may seem, has their own sense of dignity that his children—and for that matter, the reader—should make every effort to recognize and respect. Similarly, Arthur Radley makes a dramatic leap in Scout's mind from a nefarious presence to the reason she's alive when, a few months after Robinson's trial, he kills Mr. Ewell (the man who accused Robinson of raping his daughter Mayella) in defense of Scout and Jem, whom Mr. Ewell tries to murder on their way home from a Halloween pageant. While

the particulars of events that night raise a number of questions about morality, as Arthur does murder Mr. Ewell, both the adults and Scout choose to focus on the fact that what Arthur did was something that saved the lives of Jem and Scout. It's possible that he also saved the lives of Mr. Ewell's abused children and preserved some sense of safety in the town by removing its most dangerous resident. This situates Arthur as one of the novel's "**mockingbirds**," in that he helps and even puts himself in danger for others despite the wider world's cruelty toward him.

Possibly more importantly than the novel's exploration of the nuances of adult characters, however, is its portrayal of Scout herself as a morally complex individual. While not maliciously racist, Scout still parrots racist slurs and beliefs that she hears others espouse, even in the midst of Robinson's trial—at one point, she tries to comfort Dill, who's upset by the prosecution's racist treatment of Robinson, with the assertion that Robinson is "just a Negro," and therefore it's not worth getting too upset over his treatment, as it's just the way things are. However, she does begin to question this and other thoughts and behaviors of her past, most notably when she begins to feel guilty for the way that she, Jem, and Dill surely tormented Arthur Radley for years. In this way, the novel proposes that everyone, no matter how seemingly good or seemingly bad, is nuanced and contains both good and evil—and most importantly, that through exposure, time, and maturity, it's possible to become increasingly better.

PREJUDICE

Throughout *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout witnesses many different types of prejudice—and even promotes these attitudes herself—including classism, sexism, and racism. Regardless of the type of prejudicial worldview, each one treats people as stereotyped groups, demands conformity, and doesn't give any credit to individuals. Over and over again, *To Kill a Mockingbird* illustrates how prejudice can be closed-minded and dangerous, as well as seemingly benign—but in all cases, it's ridiculous and misguided.

Though racism is the type of prejudice that shines through the novel the most, *Mockingbird* is careful to show that this not the only kind of prejudice at work—and, at least for a white girl like Scout, it's not even the most pressing issue in her life. However, it's worth keeping in mind that racism isn't Scout's biggest issue exactly *because* she's white, and what bothers her more is the sexism she experiences, and the classism expressed most often by her Aunt Alexandra. Scout is a tomboy and states clearly that she has no interest in being a lady, so she finds attempts by her Uncle Jack, Aunt Alexandra, and occasionally Jem to force her into acting more like a lady to be especially offensive, especially when this concerns wearing dresses instead of her preferred overalls. While certainly not a direct equivalent to racism, the sexism that Scout experiences at times impresses upon her just how silly prejudice is in general. Despite this, she still holds and espouses her own sexist views—she laughs when her cousin Francis says that Aunt Alexandra is going to teach him to cook, as she believes that boys don't cook. To an outside observer, the juxtaposition of Scout's annoyance with others' clothing preferences with her own sexist ideas makes the point that anyone, even the victims of unfair treatment themselves, can hold questionable views.

Similarly, Scout gradually comes to the understanding that a person's financial situation or family history *shouldn't* have any bearing on whether or not they're thought of as good people—though in many cases, she sees clearly that it does. While Aunt Alexandra outright forbids Scout from playing with Walter Cunningham, a poor farm boy at school, Scout sees that the only thing that separates her and Walter is that Walter has to miss school to work on the farm and his family doesn't have any money—neither of which are things with which Scout (whose father, Atticus, is a lawyer) has to contend. Further, Scout feels especially warm toward the Cunningham family in general following Tom Robinson's trial, as someone in the family was on the jury and was the one who fought to acquit Robinson. For Scout, this is proof that Walter isn't all that different from her, and moreover, is a good person deserving of respect and kindness. To Aunt Alexandra, however, the possibility of Scout being friends with Walter represents an existential threat to the Finch family name, as she believes that being anything but polite and detached toward poor individuals sullies one's own reputation—again, something Scout sees as being ridiculous, misguided, and selfish.

While the existence of racism in Maycomb becomes clearest to Scout during and immediately after Tom Robinson's trial, the novel goes to great lengths to show that the racism hurled at Robinson doesn't exist in a vacuum—it's a part of the way Maycomb operates. Scout learns in the year or so before the trial that segregation and a general dislike of black people isn't something benign or normal: rather, it exists thanks to a strong undercurrent of hate on the part of white people in Maycomb. During and after the trial, Scout hears friends, family, and neighbors verbally attack Atticus for taking Tom Robinson's defense seriously—in their opinion, Robinson doesn't deserve a fair trial because of the color of his skin. She and Jem also suffer abuse for Atticus's choice to defend Robinson, suggesting that in Maycomb, treating a black person with anything other than distant contempt is an unspeakable offense. Similarly, Atticus makes the case in his closing argument that the case, which relies on he-said-she-said argumentation rather than medical evidence or eyewitness testimony, asks the jury to believe that all black men are dangerous rapists—even if there's no compelling evidence that Robinson raped Mayella Ewell, and even if there's a very good chance that Mr. Ewell, Mayella's father, was the one who beat her instead.

Through all of this, Scout gradually comes to the conclusion that prejudice of any kind is ridiculous and misguided—after all, she sees that the town becomes increasingly hostile toward Atticus, whom she believes is unwaveringly good, when he stands up against prejudice by defending Robinson. Further, she begins to interrogate her own prejudiced thoughts about Boo Radley, especially after he saves her and Jem's lives. Scout's gradual realization that it's not fruitful or worth her time to dislike or fear people for their differences, no matter what they are, makes the case that it's possible to move on from prejudice as people gain exposure to others who are different—especially when those seemingly different people turn out to be not so different from oneself.

GROWING UP

Over the course of the novel's three years, Scout, Dill, and Jem grow up both physically and mentally. They begin the novel with a firm and uncomplicated idea of what's good and what's bad, but by the end of the novel, they've all lost their innocence and have come to a more complex understanding of how people and the world work. In particular, having Scout, whom the reader meets at age six, narrate the story allows the novel to show clearly how children lose their innocence as they grow—while also using Scout's innocence to look freshly at Maycomb and her world to criticize its flaws.

Though Scout is a precocious child in a variety of ways, the novel also goes to great lengths to comically demonstrate how innocent and unaware Scout is of the world around her. For example, she believes Jem's unfounded claim that the teaching method Miss Caroline promotes is called the Dewey Decimal System—in reality, a system of organizing a library—and referring to her and Jem's snowman as an "Absolute Morphodite" in such a way that betrays that she has no idea what "morphodite" actually means (a hermaphrodite, a plant or animal with both male and female sex organs). The children also firmly believe, for the first year of the novel, that Boo Radley is a zombie-like figure who eats small mammals or, possibly, is dead and stuffed up the chimney of the Radley house. While undeniably humorous to the reader, who's likely aware that these notions are ridiculous and incorrect, the beliefs themselves function as a window into just how youthful and innocent Scout, Jem, and Dill truly are.

The children's innocence, as represented by these instances of misunderstandings or far-fetched superstitions, isn't always entirely humorous, however. Particularly once Scout begins attending school, the novel suggests that even though children may be prone to this kind of nonsense and far-fetched storytelling, they're still innately able to recognize the ridiculousness of the adult world around them, and in particular, the ineffectiveness of the school system. Scout's precocity and intelligence means that when she enters the first grade, she already knows how to read and write, both printing and cursive—something that her teacher, Miss Caroline, finds threatening and offensive for seemingly no real reason, and even punishes Scout for. In this sense, Scout begins to see that the adult world is just as nonsensical as the reader can see that Scout's childhood world is—though the adult world is one that forces growing children to conform and fall into line, rather than one that relies on imagination and individuality. With this, Scout is encouraged by Atticus to understand that while she may one day have to enter the world of adults and grow up, the path to get there is one on which she'll have to fight constantly for her individuality. As the novel wears on and Scout witnesses terrible cruelty and injustice, it also suggests that she'll also have to fight hard to maintain her sense of compassion, right, and wrong.

Mr. Gilmer's interrogation of Tom Robinson is a wakeup call for the children, and their reaction to Robinson's the trial suggests that although children can be naïve, they are often more perceptive and compassionate than the supposedly mature adults around them. Dill, in particular, is angered and overcome by the rude and racist way that Mr. Gilmer speaks to Robinson. Outside the courthouse, Mr. Raymond, a man whom Scout previously thought was an evil drunk, suggests that Dill only has the reaction he does *because* he's a child—as children grow, he suggests, they lose their capacity to cry over injustices like Robinson experiences, as they learn to conform to adult rules of polite society that forbid reactions like that (and for white people like Scout and Dill, also discourages that kind of compassion directed toward black people in the first place). Mr. Raymond is, notably, an outsider in Maycomb, as he's white and yet lives with his black girlfriend because he wants to, a choice that's unthinkable to even someone like Scout. It's because of his outsider status that he's able to make these observations and confirm for Dill that what's happening to Robinson is awful—though it's still possible, he suggests, that Dill will one day "fall into line" and conform to the hatred around him. Later, Atticus echoes Mr. Raymond when he tells an angry and tearful Jem that juries have been wrongfully convicting black men for years, will continue to do so, and that only children cry when it happens—another indicator that children, who are more unencumbered by social codes and pressure to fit in, are innately able to pick up on injustices like this. The hope, the novel suggests, is that they'll be able to maintain this ability to look at the world in this way once they enter the adult world and face pressures to conform and bury their sense of right and wrong.

Tom Robinson's trial represents the end of an era of blissful innocence for both Scout and Jem. Jem in particular struggles to understand how such a thing could've happened, a thought process that Atticus suggests simply reflects where Jem is in his development—at 13, Jem understands better than Scout how the case unfolded, which makes it more difficult in many

ways for him to deal with. While the novel doesn't resolve Jem's angst and inability to wrap his head around what happened, it does offer hope that both he and Scout will be able to maintain their moral compasses, as well as their compassion, into adulthood. Scout's major coming-of-age moment happens as she stands on the Radley porch and, as Atticus has instructed her to do at several points, "climb[s] into [Boo Radley's] skin." She's able to understand, through this, that Boo may be very different from her in a variety of ways, but he's still a compassionate, self-sacrificial neighbor who's worthy of respect and kindness. This leap in understanding suggests that as Scout continues to grow and develop past the novel's close, she will be able to maintain her belief in what's morally right, even as she loses her innocence and moves toward adulthood.

COURAGE

Many people in *To Kill a Mockingbird* confuse courage with strength and believe that courage is the ability or willingness to use strength to get one's way. However, the novel makes it abundantly clear that this understanding of courage is immature at best and is possibly wrong altogether. Instead, the novel proposes that courage isn't about winning. Instead, it's about thinking about something and choosing to do what's right, even if doing so is difficult or guaranteed to fail.

When the reader first meets Scout, she believes that she's very courageous: she's hotheaded and consistently gets in fights to defend what she believes is right. Though Jem is a little old for fights like this, he, too, thinks of fighting as a more or less appropriate way to demonstrate one's courage. This is supported as time goes on and Jem in particular, who loves football, is mortified that Atticus is the only father in town who doesn't play in the inter-church football game because of his age. In Jem and Scout's understanding, Atticus isn't as courageous or as admirable as the other Maycomb fathers, simply because he's a lawyer, which means that his contribution to the world isn't something entirely tangible, unlike other fathers who are farmers or shop owners. In this sense, Scout and Jem tie a person's worth to what they can do, but only if their capabilities are immediately visible to others.

This understanding of what courage means and what worth is begins to break down in February, before Tom Robinson's trial. When Scout and Jem discover what turns out to be a rabid dog heading for their neighborhood, Mr. Tate forces Atticus to shoot the dog—which shows Atticus's children that he *can* do things—he just chooses not to. At the same time, Atticus begins to encourage Scout in particular to not fight people who taunt her for Atticus's role in the trial. Though Scout characterizes not fighting as cowardice, Atticus insists that it's courageous to take the moral high ground and make the choice to not try to appear powerful with one's fists, something that he embodies as he embarks on Robinson's case.

Atticus knows full well that Robinson won't win his case. In Maycomb, a small, Southern town in 1935, the idea that a black man accused of rape wouldn't suffer consequences (no matter the truth) is far-fetched. Despite this, Atticus insists to Scout and Jem, and to other adults alike, that he has to take Robinson's case and do his best to clear Robinson's name. He feels he must do so even if he knows he'll be unsuccessful, something that even Scout suggests at one point is actually silly and misguided, not courageous. Atticus, however, makes the case to Scout that courage doesn't mean winning at all. Rather, courage, in Atticus's understanding, means taking a stand for what's right and seeing it through, even though he knows he won't be successful. On the day of Tom Robinson's death, Scout begins to embody this when she begins to understand that being a lady—something she previously found unappealing and boring—actually means doing exactly that. Scout begins to see that it takes courage and poise to navigate a roomful of opinionated, racist ladies, keep the conversation focused on inoffensive topics, and keep everyone's refreshments in order, all while experiencing major emotional turmoil and trying not betraying that to her guests. In this situation, there is no winning to be had—Scout's courage results only in a smooth meeting of the local missionary circle, which isn't disrupted and made ugly by news of Robinson's death. But it's nevertheless a turning point in Scout's understanding of what it means to be courageous, as it represents a form of courage she previously hadn't thought worth considering.

In this sense, *Mockingbird* suggests that courage is playing the long game rather than focusing on immediate wins, something it illustrates clearly when Mr. Ewell, the man who accused Robinson, attempts to murder Scout and Jem. His attempt to murder children (and for that matter, his harassment and attempted crimes against Helen Robinson and Judge Taylor) is undeniably cowardly and morally reprehensible, but it's possible that his attempt at violence was, in *his* mind, an attempt to salvage his family name by bringing down Atticus. The novel offers an example of true courage, meanwhile, when Boo Radley leaves his house for the first time in 25 years to save the children, something that clearly causes him distress, even if he knows it's the right thing to do. With this, the novel makes allowances for the fact that at times, courage *does* mean acting out with one's strength, as Boo does by killing Mr. Ewell in defense of the children. But in order to be genuine courage within the world of the novel, it must still happen only in times of great need, and must be in service of the greater good.

SMALL TOWN SOUTHERN LIFE

Maycomb is a small town with all the stereotypical characteristics of small-town life. Most notably everyone knows everyone else's business, which leads mostly to endless and generally harmless gossip—but more importantly, it makes the community extremely intimate

and close-knit. Throughout the first part of the novel, these qualities cause Scout and Jem to believe that Maycomb is nothing more than an insular, safe, intimate community. While they're not entirely wrong about the truth of this, as the novel progresses, it goes to great lengths to encourage both the reader and its young protagonists to understand that Maycomb is composed of a variety of individuals. Thus, the town should not be idealized as a picturesque small town, but considered more like the individuals who live in it: something that contains both good and bad.

In many ways, Scout isn't wrong about her perceptions of Maycomb. It is intimate, tight-knit, and for the most part, safe. In part, this is because of Maycomb's specific history. Because of some questionable dealings during attempts to establish the county seat, Maycomb became the county seat for no good reason—indeed, it was far away from any rivers, the only real mode of transportation at the time, and so it became an island of civilization in a sea of wilderness and agriculture. Being an isolated community, in addition to being the county seat, led to the development of a number of eccentricities and of an extremely insular community. In this sense, there's a degree of truth to the idea that each family in Maycomb has a "streak" of some sort, or some defining quality that separates it from other families (though Atticus also notes that most people in Maycomb are somehow related to each other, muddying this assessment). This also leads to the development of, an open-door community in the town, in which everyone spends time on their porch and visiting with their neighbors, thereby building community through this essentially required element of social engagement. For these reasons, Scout always knows what to expect when she encounters someone and feels safe playing in her neighborhood and around town. In her experience, everyone would look out for her if a threat of some sort were to arise.

Until the novel begins, Scout doesn't see anything wrong with the way that Maycomb is, and indeed, doesn't believe that there's anything negative about it. She, like many in the community, finds the Radley family odd because they don't socialize or attend church—a way of thinking ultimately exposes a variety of other ways in which Maycomb may be safe and close-knit, but also vehemently punishes those who violate social codes and Maycomb traditions. This can be as benign as local children taking advantage of a set of adult sisters' insistence on having a cellar, a peculiarity in Maycomb, by moving all their furniture into it one Halloween as a prank. More sinister is the way in which many in Maycomb, adults and children alike, take issue with Atticus's choice to take defending Tom Robinson seriously. Maycomb is a segregated town and, Scout discovers, cares little for its black residents, especially when someone like Atticus demands that white residents treat their black neighbors with the same kind of compassion and civility shown to white people in Maycomb. This is why, especially on the day of Robinson's trial and in the weeks after, Scout and Jem begin to think that Maycomb is uglier than they thought, as their friends, neighbors, and even their teachers show themselves to be shockingly racist and callous.

However, both Atticus and Miss Maudie encourage Scout and Jem to understand that Robinson's trial *does* represent the beginning of positive change, as the jury—made up of Maycomb's rural population—did take hours to reach their verdict, rather than just a few minutes. Atticus suggests that this indicates there's hope for Maycomb to improve in the future, and in doing so, extend its good qualities and sense of care to all of its residents, regardless of skin color. Meanwhile, Miss Maudie asks Scout and Jem to think of and acknowledge all the people in Maycomb who did everything in their power to give Tom Robinson a fair trial in spite of efforts on the contrary, including Judge Taylor, Mr. Tate, and Atticus himself. With this, Miss Maudie and Atticus truly encourage Jem, Scout, and the reader to understand that Maycomb has the potential to undergo the exact same kind of improvement that the novel suggests individuals can. Maycomb's residents can grow, develop, and put aside harmful ideas in favor of those that respect the humanity, dignity, and right to life of all people. It may not be there yet, but just as with Scout herself, who still has a long way to go in terms of coming of age and maturing, Maycomb is nevertheless on the right path and beginning to change for the better.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE MOCKINGBIRD

Mockingbirds symbolize innocence and beauty in the novel. Atticus and Miss Maudie tell Scout and Jem that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because these birds cause no harm to anyone or anything—they just sing. In doing so, they make the world a better place. Because of this, mockingbirds are pure creatures, and killing them would be, in contrast, an act of senseless cruelty. Several characters in the novel can be seen as mockingbirds, especially Tom Robinson and Boo Radley, as they are fragile, kind, and moral individuals who are misunderstood by their prejudiced society—and, in Tom's case, ultimately destroyed by it.

GERANIUMS AND CAMELLIAS

Geraniums and camellias symbolize the redemptive qualities that are present even in the most cruel and unsympathetic people. Mayella Ewell, Tom Robinson's accuser, is in a variety of ways a pitiful and unsavory

character—and yet, like Miss Maudie, she grows bright red geraniums in jars for her enjoyment and for the enjoyment of everyone who passes her family's home. Mrs. Dubose similarly is very proud of her camellias, despite also being an extremely unpleasant, rude, and racist individual. Because of this, the flowers that both women grow come to symbolize their respective humanity, which challenges Scout's notion that people are all good or all bad. This supports the novel's assertion that even individuals who seem, at first glance, to be horrible people who do and say unspeakable things aren't entirely evil.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Warner Books edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird* published in 1960.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it

[...]

There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5-6

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Scout describes the setting where the novel takes place, depicting the small-town life that defined her childhood. However, in some ways this description is deceptive. It suggests that nothing ever happened in Maycomb—that, in a certain way, it was located outside history, its inhabitants leading their lives in sleepy isolation without having to face the problems or changes taking place outside the town's borders.

The rest of the novel will show this not to be the case. However, this doesn't mean that this depiction is a lie: here, Scout focuses on the way she herself experienced the town when she was a child, before she recognized that Maycomb was indeed part of history. Already, the last sentence of this passage suggests a wider context: "nothing to fear but fear itself" recalls a famous line from Franklin D. Roosevelt's inaugural presidential address in 1933 (a reference that also helps to place the novel in the Great Depression era). Within a broader context of the Great Depression and of the rise of Nazi Germany, the book will focus on courage in the more local milieu of Maycomb, though as the novel will show, Roosevelt's suggestion will be just as relevant in Maycomb as in the rest of the world.

Chapter 3 Quotes

"There's some folks who don't eat like us," she whispered fiercely, "but you ain't called on to contradict 'em at the table when they don't. That boy's yo' comp'ny and if he wants to eat up the table cloth you let him, you hear?"

"He ain't company, Cal, he's just a Cunningham—"

"Hush your mouth! Don't matter who they are, anybody sets foot in this house's yo' comp'ny, and don't you let me catch you remarkin' on their ways like you was so high and mighty!"

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Calpurnia (speaker), Walter Cunningham

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

When Jem has invites Walter Cunningham to their house to eat lunch, Scout is shocked by the way Walter pours molasses all over his food—and she says so. Here, Calpurnia gives Scout a lesson about the way she should treat other people. Scout has a socialized sense of who counts as "company" and who doesn't—that is, who is worthy of politeness and respect (richer, more prominent members of the community) and who is not (poorer members of the community). It is this belief that Calpurnia rebukes Scout for, saying that "company" is anyone who is invited home, and that Scout should be ashamed of thinking otherwise.

Indeed, Scout is meant to learn through this event that judging Walter at all, much less expressing her prejudice, is something to be ashamed of, far more than Walter should be ashamed of his eating habits. Calpurnia and Atticus are clearly on the same page regarding the way they believe one must treat *all* other people: with common dignity and without prejudice.

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—"

"Sir?"

"—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Atticus Finch (speaker), Miss Caroline

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

Scout has returned home from school upset and indignant that her teacher, Miss Caroline, wants her to stop reading at home. She expects that her father will share her righteous anger, but instead, Atticus takes a different tack. He may believe strongly that reading to Scout is important and healthy—indeed, he doesn't stop doing it merely because Miss Caroline said so—but he is unwilling to conclude that Miss Caroline's notions about education make her evil. Instead, he suggests that neither he nor Scout should judge Miss Caroline's actions or behavior, since they don't know exactly what prompted her to say such a thing, nor where she's coming from in general.

Atticus suggests in this passage that it takes time and effort to understand another person's point of view. He doesn't simply suggest that this effort is necessary in order to be able to justify criticizing someone—he implies that the more one tries to understand another person, the less one will be moved to condemn the other person at all. Atticus, as we see for the first time here, doesn't think that human nature is constant and unchangeable. Rather, he thinks that the way people act often stems from their past, from their environment, and from their opportunities or lack thereof. Therefore, it makes little sense to put strict moral labels on others.

Chapter 5 Quotes

"There are just some kind of men who—who're so busy worrying about the next world they've never learned to live in this one, and you can look down the street and see the results."

Related Characters: Miss Maudie Atkinson (speaker), Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Mr. Radley, Nathan Radley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 50

Explanation and Analysis

Scout is curious about her family's reclusive neighbor, Boo Radley, and here she asks a friend of the family, Miss Maudie, why he never leaves home. As with Walter Cunningham, Scout reveals here how easy prejudice can be: even a young child can be naturally suspicious of people who act differently than she does. Luckily, Scout has a number of adults, from Atticus and Calpurnia to Miss Maudie, who are willing to be patient and teach her to take a step back and consider alternative possibilities to her prejudice.

Here, Miss Maudie humanizes Boo, telling Scout about his strict, very religious father, who was against all pleasure in life. Like Atticus, Miss Maudie doesn't think people are just born a certain way: instead, she believes that a combination of personality and opportunity work to influence how a person is and acts, and that one should seek to understand this process rather than judging from appearances.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"If you shouldn't be defendin' him, then why are you doin' it?"

"For a number of reasons," said Atticus. "The main one is, if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again."

[...]

"Atticus, are we going to win it?"

"No, honey."

"Then why—"

"Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win," Atticus said.

Related Characters: Atticus Finch, Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Tom Robinson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86-87

Explanation and Analysis

Once again, Atticus teaches Scout a difficult lesson about morality—one that counters to her own youthful impulses. Scout has heard other children at school criticize Atticus, and when she asks why, he tells her that he has decided to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of rape, in court—even though he knows there's no chance of winning

the case. Until now, Scout has considered that physically fighting and winning is what it means to be courageous. Now, her father attempts to explain to her that it can show even more courage to strive for something even when one knows that failure is inevitable.

Rather than acting because he will win, Atticus chooses to defend Tom Robinson because he knows that it is the right thing to do. Interestingly, even though many people in town are prejudiced and disagree with Atticus's choice, for Atticus it is the fact that everyone in town knows him and his own beliefs that serves as another motivation for him to act according to his principles. He believes that only by standing up for his ideas can he then, in turn, be seen as a legislative representative of the community (even if the community disagrees with some of those beliefs). In order to be morally consistent, Atticus believes, he must act on behalf of human dignity—and more specifically, Tom's dignity—regardless of the end result.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"After my bout with Cecil Jacobs when I committed myself to a policy of cowardice, word got around that Scout Finch wouldn't fight any more, her daddy wouldn't let her.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Cecil Jacobs, Atticus Finch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

After having a talk with Atticus about courage, Scout vows to a "policy of cowardice" in which she will not retaliate against others. Scout has long prided herself on what she has considered to be courage: refusing to back down when others insult her or her family and fighting as strongly as she can. But she has slowly come to accept Atticus's quite different view of courage. For him, courage does not only mean striving for something when ones know that failure is inevitable: it also means having the strength of character to accept what others may say about oneself without physically fighting back. Instead, he teaches Scout that keeping your head held high, confident of what the right decision really is, is the true mark of courage. Scout still uses the word "cowardice" to refer to her decision not to fight, but the word is mainly a relic of her instinctive attitude toward courage—she is slowly beginning to accept her father's alternative approach instead.

"Remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." That was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it.

"Your father's right," she said. "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

Related Characters: Miss Maudie Atkinson, Atticus Finch, Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

The air rifles that Atticus gives Scout and Jem for Christmas come with a warning: they are never to kill a mockingbird. Scout rightly notices how rare Atticus's strong language here is. Usually, when she tries to make a judgment or condemn someone or something, Atticus immediately tries to draw her back, to help her to understand where the person is coming from, and to gain a more nuanced view of the situation. Instead, he makes a declarative judgment about killing an innocent creature, invoking religious morality to emphasize the gravity of such an act.

Miss Maudie, who usually has just as subtle an understanding of human actions as Atticus, is nonetheless in agreement with him on this exception. The moral world of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is far from simple, but there are rare elements in it that *are*, in fact, purely simple. Miss Maudie is obviously describing real, physical mockingbirds in this passage, but her description also holds for human beings: people who are endlessly generous, who give rather than take, such that they deserve only appreciation and care. It will be Scout's task to apply the lesson from Miss Maudie and from Atticus to the people around her, as she develops a more advanced understanding of how good and evil interact in the world.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker),

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, Atticus Finch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 115-16

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, it is actually Atticus who is telling Scout and Jem about the courage of another person, Mrs. Dubose, who, with the help of Jem's reading lessons, was battling her morphine addiction before she died. Although Mrs. Dubose was cantankerous and cruel when she was alive, Atticus nonetheless encourages his children to see here as a complex individual whose decision to withdraw from morphine before her death makes her respectable and worthy of empathy. As Atticus explains what makes such an act courageous, Scout is able to connect this story with Atticus's own courage. In school she has learned a limited definition of courage, one that is restricted to war heroes and to those who face violence and physical danger. She is still having to adjust her expectations for what counts as courage as Atticus defines it: adhering to one's ethical principles, regardless of how unpopular those principles may be.

"Atticus, you must be wrong…"

"How's that?"

"Well, most folks seem to think they're right and you're wrong…"

Related Characters: Atticus Finch, Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Tom Robinson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

In the small, tight-knit town of Maycomb, what "most folks seem to think" can quickly come to mean what the community deems as irrefutable fact. Such "group think" and the pressure it puts on individuals to join in it help to preserve and expand all sorts of prejudice. Here the reader can see such logic at work, as Scout questions her father's choices based on what most people in the town think about those choices, despite knowing that her father is a wise and morally upright man.

Scout is still struggling to reconcile these two things: it's difficult for her to see how "most folks" can be wrong, since it makes sense that what the majority thinks about something must be right—especially in a town small enough that it can seem like everyone thinks the same way about something, such as the Tom Robinson case. But the ellipses (three dots after Scout's sentences) seem to suggest that Scout is hesitatant and not at all confident in going against her father: she can sense that there are elements at work that she may not yet understand.

"The one that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

Related Characters: Atticus Finch (speaker), Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose

Related Themes:

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

Atticus is attempting to explain to Scout and Jem what it is that made Mrs. Dubose's quiet, persistent fight against morphine addiction so courageous. His reference to "majority rule" reflects his own expertise as a lawyer, deeply schooled in the Constitution and in the laws and history of the country. In the United States, of course, majority rule is what's legal: a majority elects a president, a majority of politicians vote for laws to be enacted, and even in a jury, a majority can convince the minority enough to ensure a unanimous sentence. Usually, this process works well enough, and Atticus obviously isn't calling for a radical dissolution of majority rule.

Still, Atticus shows in his comments here both that there are profound weaknesses to the idea of majority rule, and that there are other, significant elements of human existence—a person's conscience, for instance—that don't abide by this standard. Majority rule, for instance, pays little attention to ideas that may be unpopular, so it can confirm existing prejudices. Atticus suggests, however, that a person's conscience always knows, deep down, what is good and evil, what is right and wrong. On an individual level, then, one must fight against what on a social level is accepted and widespread.

"It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do."

Related Characters: Atticus Finch (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

As in the rest of his lesson to Jem and Scout, here Atticus emphasizes what to him is the true definition of courage, a definition that, he is aware, could easily seem counterintuitive to them. He is focusing on the concrete example of Mrs. Dubose, a woman who may certainly be prejudiced, but in other ways is courageous (and so his willingness to recognize her courage is also part of Atticus's nuanced, complex understanding of the meaning of good and evil).

Here, Atticus expresses a bit more optimism than he does elsewhere. Courage means persisting, seeing something through even if—perhaps especially when—you know that you are most likely to fail. But Atticus also suggests that such a process is not absolutely condemned to failure. Indeed, holding out hope that you may win can be a powerful way to motivate oneself, enabling oneself to remain realistic and committed despite overwhelming odds.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ Lula stopped, but she said, "You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here—they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?"

[...]

When I looked down the pathway again, Lula was gone. In her place was a solid mass of colored people.

One of them stepped from the crowd. It was Zeebo, the garbage collector. "Mister Jem," he said, "we're mighty glad to have you all here. Don't pay no 'tention to Lula, she's contentious because Reverend Sykes threatened to church her. She's a troublemaker from way back, got fancy ideas an' haughty ways—we're mighty glad to have you all."

Related Characters: Zeebo, Lula (speaker), Reverend Sykes, Calpurnia, Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem), Jean Louise Finch (Scout)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

Calpurnia has invited Jem and Scout to her all-black church while Atticus is away at the state legislature. This passage pins one woman, Lula, who is suspicious of the white children's presence, against the rest of the congregation, which welcomes them. Lula is portrayed as being just as prejudiced as the white people in town, just as susceptible to judging people on the basis of their skin color rather than of their character. In this sense, the rest of the congregation is shown to surmount this small-mindedness and embrace the inherent human dignity in welcoming guests into their home or place of worship.

Nonetheless, another way to interpret this passage would involve making a distinction between the kind of "prejudice" Lula shows and the kind shown by the white members of the town. The black people in Maycomb are discriminated against and restricted in almost every facet of their lives, and their church is among the only places where they can feel secure and at home. It is understandable, therefore, for Lula to express suspicion at white children interrupting this small sanctuary in a town that seems to have little room or desire for people like her. As children, of course, Jem and Scout haven't played any kind of active role in creating this double standard, but Lula's reaction only underlines the deep and structural reality of the inequalities that persist in the town.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ Somewhere, I had received the impression that Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had, but Aunt Alexandra was of the opinion, obliquely expressed, that the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Aunt Alexandra

Related Themes:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

Aunt Alexandra has moved into the Finch home because she believes that Scout needs more of a "feminine" influence. In addition, she begins to try to inculcate Scout with some of her own social values, which stress class and family history over character and behavior. The Finches have, indeed, lived in Maycomb for a long time, and Alexandra believes that this means they are inherently superior to other people who have not been around for so long in the town. The way Scout describes this belief—"squatting on one patch of land"—makes clear through its tone just how skeptical she is

of Alexandra's ideas.

In other situations, Scout's childhood innocence is shown to revert back to easy prejudice, such that her father must teach her a better, more nuanced, and less judgmental way of thinking. Here, however, her innocence makes her see more clearly, making it obvious to the reader, as well, just how silly the idea of moral superiority based on land ownership or family history really is.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ Dill's eyes flickered at Jem, and Jem looked at the floor. Then he rose and broke the remaining code of our childhood. He went out of the room and down the hall. "Atticus," his voice was distant, "can you come here a minute, sir?"

Beneath its sweat-streaked dirt Dill's face went white. I felt sick.

[...]

Jem was standing in a corner of the room, looking like the traitor he was. "Dill, I had to tell him," he said. "You can't run three hundred miles off without your mother knowin'."

We left him without a word.

Related Characters: Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) (speaker), Charles Baker Harris (Dill), Atticus Finch, Jean Louise Finch (Scout)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 159-60

Explanation and Analysis

Dill has run away from his own house in a town that is 14 miles away, and has snuck into the Finch's home, where Jem has found him hiding under the bed. As Scout watches, Jem calls to their father in order to tell him that Dill is here. Immediately, a line is drawn between Jem, on the one hand, and Scout and Dill, on the other.

Scout takes it for granted that one must never tell on another child – that there are secrets which can't be shared with adults. Jem, however, no longer adheres to this assumption: instead, he acts based on the knowledge that Dill's parents will be worried about him, and that it's the right thing to do to tell Atticus that Dill is here. From Scout's perspective, Jem is a traitor, but this is because she is still a child, while he has begun to grow up. The book doesn't necessarily paint adulthood as inherently better and more advanced than childhood, but it does suggest that moving into adulthood and maturing is an important step, one that Scout isn't yet ready to take.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ "Well how do you know we ain't Negroes?"

"Uncle Jack Finch says we really don't know. He says as far as he can trace back the Finches we ain't, but for all he knows we mighta come straight out of Ethiopia durin' the Old Testament."

"Well if we came out durin' the Old Testament it's too long ago to matter."

"That's what I thought," said Jem, "but around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black."

Related Characters: Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem), Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Uncle Jack

Related Themes:

Page Number: 184

Explanation and Analysis

Amid the excitement around the trial that's about to start, Jem and Scout talk about their own family history. In Scout's childhood innocence, once again, it becomes clear just how silly it is to seek to draw hard-and-fast borders between races, and to proclaim moral differences based on something so fragile. After all, every human being ultimately, originated from Africa. Not only can one never, with any certitude, trace one's own family history back in order to prove racial "purity"—the very idea of racial purity, as this passage shows, is simply absurd.

Jem, slightly older than Scout, is aware both of how senseless the idea of racial purity is, as well as how entrenched of an idea it is in this small town anyway. The notion that even one small "drop" of blackness makes a person black—which equates to moral inferiority, according to the town's logic—gives the townspeople a black-and-white way to look at racial relations, and a pseudo-scientific definition to bolster their own prejudice.

Chapter 19 Quotes

"If you had a clear conscience, why were you scared?"

"Like I says before, it weren't safe for any nigger to be in a—fix like that."

"But you weren't in a fix—you testified that you were resisting Miss Ewell. Were you so scared that she'd hurt you, you ran, a big buck like you?"

"No suh, I's scared I'd be in court, just like I am now."

"Scared of arrest, scared you'd have to face up to what you did?"

"No suh, scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do."

Related Characters: Tom Robinson, Mr. Gilmer (speaker), Bob Ewell, Mayella Ewell

Related Themes:

Page Number: 225

Explanation and Analysis

As Mr. Gilmer cross-examines Tom, he is trying to make the jury give in to its racist prejudices and assume that Tom must be guilty, even in the absence of any proof. One way he does this is by suggesting that Tom wouldn't have run away from the Ewell house if he weren't guilty. Here, though, Tom reminds Mr. Gilmer and the rest of the audience that as a black person in the South, any suspicious situation would almost certainly be blamed on him, regardless of whether he was actually involved.

As he and Mr. Gilmer go back and forth, it becomes ever clearer that Gilmer is, purposely or not, misunderstanding Tom. Tom is attempting to refer to the societal assumption that all black men must be guilty—and, indeed, that that is why he finds himself in court now. Mr. Gilmer, for his part, stubbornly clings to this very assumption of guilt which is based on the very prejudice Tom is referencing, and so Gilmer takes everything Tom says as an indication that Tom is guilty.

"The way that man called him 'boy' all the time an' sneered at him, an' looked around at the jury every time he answered— ... It ain't right, somehow it ain't right to do 'em that way. Hasn't anybody got any business talkin' like that—it just makes me sick."

Related Characters: Charles Baker Harris (Dill) (speaker), Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Mr. Gilmer, Tom Robinson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 226

Explanation and Analysis

Dill has begun to cry in the courtroom during the trial of Tom Robinson, so Scout takes him outside. They had been listening to the prosecutor Mr. Gilmer's cross-examination of Tom Robinson. Gilmer—making little attempt to introduce hard evidence with which to convict the defendant—has been essentially trying to bait the jury into succumbing to racism in order to convict him. Dill cannot stand to hear the way Mr. Gilmer is talking to Tom Robinson: for him, the lawyer is essentially treating Tom as a different, inferior species.

An advantage of having a child narrate *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and in having other children populate the novel, is that readers can look with fresh, innocent eyes at appalling prejudices in American society. The characters in the novel, and indeed the reader, may be in danger of growing accustomed to these prejudices, of assuming that they are simply the way the world works. Part of Dill's distraught feelings stem from the dawning realization, as he and Scout grow up, that this is the way the world works. The way in which he rebels against this reminds the reader of the danger of complacency, and of forgetting just how shocking and unacceptable such prejudices really are.

Chapter 22 Quotes

"They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it—seems that only children weep."

Related Characters: Atticus Finch (speaker), Tom Robinson, Charles Baker Harris (Dill), Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

Jem tells Atticus that he can't understand how the jury could have convicted Tom Robinson based on the lack of evidence and the arguments from Atticus and from Mr. Gilmer. Here, Atticus implicitly returns to what he told his children at the very beginning and has repeated again and again: that good will won't necessarily conquer evil, and that sometimes prejudice will win out over both evidence and human dignity.

While Atticus has done his best to educate Jem and Scout

so that they lose some of the weaknesses and naïveté of childhood, here he shows himself to be convinced that childhood holds some major moral advantages over adulthood. Children are still innocent enough, as they have not been desensitized to the world, to notice and be devastated when something unjust happens. Unlike adults, they have not yet learned to grow bitter or passive to the way things are. This state of shock and anger, Atticus implies, is a powerful reminder for adults not to become complacent.

Chapter 24 Quotes

"Oh child, those poor Mrunas," she said, and was off. Few other questions would be necessary.

Mrs. Merriweather's large brown eyes always filled with tears when she considered the oppressed. "Living in that jungle with nobody but J. Grimes Everett," she said. "Not a white person'll go near 'em but that saintly J. Grimes Everett."

Related Characters: Mrs. Grace Merriweather (speaker), Jean Louise Finch (Scout)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 263

Explanation and Analysis

Aunt Alexandra has invited company to the house, and Scout is helping to serve the guests. Here, Mrs. Grace Merriweather is beginning to talk about the "oppressed" people of Africa, whom she has such pity and compassion for. However, this passage and the ones that follow make clear that Mrs. Merriweather's so-called compassion is nothing else but another form of prejudice.

On the one hand, Mrs. Merriweather speaks with tears in her eyes about the plight of African people, even while she snaps at the African American servants and cares little about the fate of Tom Robinson. On the other hand, even her attitude towards Africans is condescending and ultimately rests on her conviction in her own superiority, and on the superiority of white people in general. Scout is, little by little, equipped with the tools to understand this prejudice and to distance herself from it.

Chapter 25 Quotes

[Jem] was certainly never cruel to animals, but I had never known his charity to embrace the insect world.

"Why couldn't I mash him?" I asked.

"Because they don't bother you," Jem answered in the darkness. He had turned out his reading light.

Related Characters: Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem), Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 273

Explanation and Analysis

Scout has been poking at a roly-poly bug, preparing to smash it, but Jem stops her from doing so. Scout pays attention to him because he's her older brother, but she's also confused as to why he has forbidden her this game. However, by the end of the passage, Scout (as well as we readers) should recognize the parallel that Jem is making. He is essentially taking Atticus's lesson about never killing a mockingbird and expanding the definition of "mockingbird" to include any living creature which cannot defend itself and should be protected rather than destroyed. By only applying the lesson of the mockingbird to some things—people rather than animals, for instance—the significance and power of this attitude is lost.

Once again, as Jem and Scout both grow up over the course of the story, in some ways Jem leads Scout. Several years older than her, he must grapple with the lessons about good, evil, and how to treat other people on his own, even as his sister slowly comes to understand what he does as well.

Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Mr. Underwood, Tom Robinson, Atticus Finch

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 275-76

Explanation and Analysis

As Scout reads Mr. Underwood's editorial, which compares Tom Robinson to a mockingbird, she thinks about how prejudiced and wrong the blasé attitude of the rest of Maycomb is. Maycomb residents think Mr. Underwood is just trying to be "poetic," but here Scout summarizes what she really believes to be the lesson of the piece: Atticus's battle against prejudice had lost, not because he wasn't a good enough lawyer, and not because he didn't provide sufficient evidence to make the case for Tom's innocence, but because prejudice was so ingrained in the hearts of Maycomb people that they would never be able to be convinced that Tom wasn't guilty. In this context, any time black people are accused of anything, guilt will be the presumption—a danger that Scout is only beginning, soberly, to recognize. Mr. Underwood's metaphor, then, reaffirms what Atticus has instilled in Scout all along: that to kill a mockingbird, or to harm any innocent being, is morally wrong.

Chapter 31 Quotes

❝ A boy trudged down the sidewalk dragging a fishing-pole behind him. A man stood waiting with his hands on his hips. Summertime, and his children played in the front yard with their friend, enacting a strange little drama of their own invention.

It was fall, and his children fought on the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Dubose's [...] Fall, and his children trotted to and fro around the corner, the day's woes and triumphs on their faces. They stopped at an oak tree, delighted, puzzled, apprehensive.

Winter, and his children shivered at the front gate, silhouetted against a blazing house. Winter, and a man walked into the street, dropped his glasses, and shot a dog.

Summer, and he watched his children's heart break. Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him.

Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.

Related Characters: Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, Arthur Radley (Boo), Atticus Finch, Charles Baker Harris (Dill), Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 320-21

Explanation and Analysis

After Bob Ewell's attack on the Scout and Jem was thwarted by Boo Radley, Scout accompanies Boo Radley back to his house. She pauses on the Radley porch and looks out at the street. Briefly, the reader relives the entire trajectory of the novel, from the most significant highlights to the descriptions of everyday life in Maycomb, but through Boo Radley's eyes from within his house. Atticus's lesson, which Scout has remembered all along, was that you shouldn't judge someone based on first impressions: instead, you should try to see things from his or her perspective and try to really understand the person behind the appearance. Now she tries to do so, seeing herself and Jem as if they were someone else's children, viewed by a sympathetic stranger.

Of course, Scout has not really pierced Boo Radley's character—she hasn't really gotten to know him—merely by standing on his porch. But her revision of the events of the last year or so are a child's earnest attempt to try. She sees how Boo Radley could have developed a close emotional connection to her and her family even without ever speaking with them. The goodness and empathy that he shows is superficial, in the way he talks or looks, but in fact is far more profound.

❝ "When they finally saw him, why he hadn't done any of those things...Atticus, he was real nice..." His hands were under my chin, pulling up the cover, tucking it around me. "Most people are, Scout, when you finally see them." He turned out the light and went into Jem's room. He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning.

Related Characters: Atticus Finch, Jean Louise Finch (Scout) (speaker), Arthur Radley (Boo), Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 322-23

Explanation and Analysis

Back at the family home, Scout tries to explain to Atticus what she has realized about Boo Radley: that all the suspicious rumors and prejudice against him actually have no basis in fact. Atticus is not shocked by this revelation. Indeed, he has told the children not to judge people before they stand in their shoes—not so that they wait to judge until they understand better, but rather so that they learn that they have little right to judge at all. Atticus

believes deeply that most people are good at heart but are led astray by prejudice and temptation. He is not naïve—he does recognize the existence of evil in the world that must be fought against—but for him this evil is not located permanently in specific people but rather moves around, always able to insert itself in a given situation, but always able to be challenged as well.

Scout and Jem have, through the events of the novel, learned to take such a subtle approach to good and evil as well, and have lost much of their childhood innocence as a result. Still, having gained these difficult lessons, they are still in a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Atticus's great gift to them is to accompany them through this transition, watching over them as they make it.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Scout explains that when her brother, Jem, was 13, he broke his arm. Many years later, they argue about when everything that led to the accident truly began. Jem maintains that it began the year Dill arrived, while Scout insists that if they want to take a broad view, it began with Andrew Jackson. She gives a brief account of her family's history—Simon Finch established a modest plantation called Finch's Landing and the Finches remained on the land until Scout's father, Atticus, and his brother left to study law and medicine, respectively. Atticus set up shop in Maycomb, 20 miles away from Finch's Landing, and is related to nearly everyone in the county. When the story begins, Maycomb is a tired and poor old town, and Scout's family lives on the main residential street.

In particular, the fact that Atticus (and by extension, Jem and Scout) are related to most people in the county speaks to the nature of Maycomb: it's a close-knit and insular community. However, the note that Maycomb is poor speaks to the era in which the story takes place—the Great Depression—and suggests that in some ways, Maycomb isn't much different from most other towns that were also tired, poor, and struggling with the economic downturn.

Scout and Jem love Atticus, but their cook, Calpurnia, is a mystery. Since Scout's mother died when Scout was two, Calpurnia raises Scout and Jem and Scout finds her tyrannical. When Scout is six and Jem is 10, they spend their summer playing on their block and, one morning, they find a boy sitting in Miss Rachel's collard patch. He introduces himself as Charles Baker Harris, or Dill, and announces that he's almost seven and can read. Dill is from Mississippi and is spending the summer with his aunt, Miss Rachel. He explains that he saw the film *Dracula*, which endears him to Scout and Jem. After this, they spend the summer in their tree house and performing their various dramas based off of their favorite books. By August they're bored, so Dill turns his attention to the Radley Place.

Scout likely finds Calpurnia tyrannical and one-dimensional because she's so young and can't yet understand Calpurnia as a complex individual. Dill and his imagination begin to situate these kinds of fantasy games as a hallmark of childhood in Mockingbird, *while the fact that their games are based off of books indicates that all three children are literate. While this might not seem important to the children themselves, it does point to their financial situation and Atticus's professional job, as they have enough money to live in a home that encourages education.*

The Radley Place is a low house in disrepair two doors down. A phantom lives inside and commits petty crimes, and children believe everything on the property is poisoned. The Radleys keep to themselves, something unheard of in Maycomb. According to legend, the youngest son, Arthur "Boo" Radley, joined a gang in his teens, participated in tormenting a parish official, and rather than allow his son to attend the industrial school, Mr. Radley kept Boo at home from then on. Then—according to the neighborhood scold, Miss Stephanie Crawford—when Jem was little, Boo stabbed his father with scissors. Jem figures that these days, Boo lives chained to his bed. Mr. Radley died soon after and Calpurnia whispered that he was mean, which surprised Jem and Scout—she never speaks ill of white people. Nathan Radley returned to the house to imprison his brother. All of this fascinates Dill.

The beliefs that a phantom lives in the house and that everything is poisoned is clearly the work of young imaginations. But note where those rumors likely stem from: the Radley family is considered strange and even evil because they don't socialize like most people in Maycomb. The particulars of Boo being kept at home, coupled with Calpurnia's posthumous assessment of Mr. Radley's character, suggests that the reason for their seclusion may have been abuse, but this seems to be beyond the children's understanding.

Jem entertains Dill by describing what Boo looks like: tall and scarred with yellow teeth and fed on a diet of raw cats and squirrels. Dill decides he'd like to get a look, so he dares Jem to touch the house by goading and insulting him. Jem takes his time but races to the house, slaps the siding, and then races back to the safety of his own porch with Dill and Scout behind him. The children notice a small movement in the window.

Jem's very real anxiety about touching Radley Place makes the case that as people ostracize others for being different and as rumors circulate, this inevitably turns into not an understanding of difference, but a genuine fear of people who are different. That this shows up in a child rather than an adult, however, does offer hope that Jem will be able to question this later.

CHAPTER 2

Dill returns home to Mississippi in early September. Scout is miserable until she remembers that she starts school in a week. Jem agrees to take Scout to school and explains that she can't bother him at all because things are different at school. Scout learns that Jem is right almost immediately. Her teacher, Miss Caroline, is from Winston County, a peculiar place. After reading the class a silly story about talking cats, Miss Caroline prints the alphabet on the board. Nearly every student can read it since many failed first grade last year, but Miss Caroline asks Scout to read it aloud. Scout then reads most of her reading book and part of the newspaper. Miss Caroline is upset that Scout can read and tells her to tell Atticus to not teach her anymore. Scout isn't sure what she did wrong—she can't remember *not* knowing how to read.

Miss Caroline's teaching methods show immediately that, within the world of the novel, school is silly for most children and forces them to conform rather than building on what they already know. Note, too, that Scout makes it clear that Miss Caroline is from Winston County, and therefore is an outsider who shouldn't be taken seriously. This again illustrates how insular Maycomb is, while also making the case that Scout is missing out on opportunities to expand her horizons by writing off people from other places outright.

At recess, Jem finds Scout, and Scout explains her predicament. Jem assures her that Miss Caroline is introducing a new teaching method called the Dewey Decimal System, which Scout doesn't question. Back in class, Miss Caroline waves cards printed with "cat," "rat," and other words. Scout is bored, so she begins a letter to Dill. Miss Caroline scolds Scout for writing in cursive, which she isn't supposed to learn until the third grade. Scout explains that Calpurnia taught her cursive on rainy days to keep Scout out of her hair.

Jem's announcement that Miss Caroline is teaching the Dewey Decimal System points to the fact that even though he's older than Scout, he's still a child and doesn't know everything—the Dewey Decimal System is a system of organizing libraries, not of teaching. Scout's willingness to buy this, meanwhile, points to her trust in her brother, as well as her youth.

Miss Caroline prepares the class for lunch by taking stock of who will go home to eat and who brought lunch. She notices that Walter Cunningham isn't going home and doesn't have a lunch. Walter quietly agrees that he forgot his lunch but refuses Miss Caroline's offer of a quarter to eat downtown, to be paid back later. Scout notices that despite his poverty, Walter is clean and tidy. Someone hisses for Scout to explain the situation, so Scout raises her hand and announces that Walter is a Cunningham. She believes her meaning is clear—everyone knows that the Cunninghams have no money or extra food. At Miss Caroline's prodding, Scout explains the Cunninghams won't accept anything if they can't pay people back. She tells the reader that last year, Atticus helped Mr. Cunningham with his entailment. Then, throughout the winter, Atticus found firewood and foodstuffs on his porch.

Scout, importantly, isn't trying to embarrass Miss Caroline with her explanation of the Cunninghams' situation—she's trying to help her fit into Maycomb and understand some of the eccentricities. Scout's confusion when Miss Caroline doesn't immediately understand her intentions, however, reminds the reader that Scout doesn't have a lot of experience dealing with outsiders who aren't aware of how Maycomb works. She doesn't yet have the skills to think about what Miss Caroline might not know or understand and to explain herself accordingly.

Atticus explained to Scout then that Mr. Cunningham was hit hard by the stock market crash but doesn't want a WPA job since it'll mean nobody will be around to work his land. Not being able to explain this as well as Atticus, Scout tells Miss Caroline that she's shaming Walter since he can't pay her back. Miss Caroline hauls Scout to the front of the room and asks her to hold out her hand. Scout is confused when Miss Caroline lightly taps Scout's hand with a ruler. Children laugh when they realize Miss Caroline "whipped" Scout.

"Whipping" Scout like this makes the public school system look even more ridiculous, especially since Scout was only trying to help both her classmate and Miss Caroline fit in better. Scout's understanding of the reasons why the Cunninghams are so poor, meanwhile, speaks to her precocity and her ability to understand complex concepts, even if she can't figure out how to navigate school.

CHAPTER 3

Scout finds and beats Walter in the schoolyard until Jem pulls her off. She explains the situation to Jem, who realizes that Walter is Mr. Cunningham's son, invites Walter for lunch, and assures him that Scout won't jump him. Jem boasts about having touched the Radley house on the way home. At the table, Atticus and Walter discuss farming. Walter asks if there's any syrup and Calpurnia brings him the pitcher. He pours it over his plate until Scout asks what he's doing, at which point he puts it down and looks ashamed. Atticus shakes his head at Scout and Calpurnia calls Scout into the kitchen. Calpurnia scolds Scout for her rudeness, so Scout brings her plate into the kitchen. Scout scathingly tells Calpurnia that Calpurnia has already gotten her in trouble today for teaching her to write.

Again, Scout betrays how uncomfortable she is with difference of any sort when she calls Walter out for pouring syrup over his entire plate. This is something she'd never do but, presumably, is something normal in the Cunningham home. When Calpurnia is the primary one to scold Scout for this, it situates her in more of a parental role, not just the role of the Finches' cook. In this sense, Calpurnia is one of the most important people in Scout's life, as she's one in charge of helping Scout develop her moral compass and figuring out how to deal with difference when she encounters it.

After lunch, Scout tells Atticus that Calpurnia is horrible and asks him to fire her. Atticus stonily refuses, so Scout concentrates on hating Calpurnia the entire way back to school. In class, Miss Caroline shrieks and boys crowd around her, looking for a mouse. She shakily points to a hulking boy and says that "it" crawled out of the boy's hair. Little Chuck Little assures Miss Caroline that she shouldn't be afraid of cooties (lice), fetches her water, and steers her to her desk. Miss Caroline ascertains that the boy with the cooties is named Burris Ewell. He doesn't know how to spell his name and is filthy. Miss Caroline asks him to go home to treat his scalp and to bathe before returning.

Scout's narration draws out the differences between the Cunninghams and the Ewells: while Walter is clean for his first day of school, Burris is filthy. This introduces Scout to the idea that there are different levels of poverty in her small town, and a variety of different ways of dealing with that poverty among families. Miss Caroline's reaction, meanwhile, leaves much to be desired and shows again how poorly prepared the school system is to serve all the children in it.

Burris stands and laughs rudely. He says that he's already done his time, and another classmate explains to Miss Caroline that the Ewell children come every year for the first day of school but don't come back. He says that Mr. Ewell is contentious, and that they have no mother. Miss Caroline asks Burris to sit back down, but he looks suddenly enraged. Chuck tells Miss Caroline to let Burris go and she takes his side. Burris slouches to the door and once out of range, he hurls insults and slurs at Miss Caroline until she cries. The students cluster around Miss Caroline's desk and comfort her.

When the students have to comfort Miss Caroline and essentially deal with this problem child themselves, it makes it even clearer that the education system isn't designed to either give teachers the tools to deal with all of their students, or to effectively educate the willing students. That the Ewells' situation is common knowledge in Maycomb speaks again to the insular and close-knit nature of the town.

Scout races past the Radley Place that afternoon, feeling as gloomy as the house. She decides to run away and answers Atticus's questions about school with one-word answers. Calpurnia is oddly kind to Scout and insists she missed Scout and Jem, so Scout decides that Calpurnia has realized the error of her ways. After dinner, Atticus grabs the paper and invites Scout to read with him. Feeling overwhelmed, she heads for the porch. Atticus follows. Scout insists she doesn't feel well and can't go to school, but finally tells him her tale and begs to not go back.

When Scout walks away from Atticus rather than read with him anyway, it makes it clear how much pressure she feels to conform and follow Miss Caroline's directions. Her unhappiness about having to conform is an early indicator that the adult world is rooted in conformity, something that Scout, especially at this point, can't deal with. In other situations, however, Scout is able to conform and understand her surroundings properly, as shown by her ability to navigate and explain Maycomb's eccentricities.

Atticus tells her that she should try to climb into other people's skin and walk around so she can consider things from their point of view. He points out that Miss Caroline had no idea she couldn't give something to a Cunningham, so they can't blame her for the mistake. Scout points out that Burris Ewell doesn't have to go to school, so she shouldn't have to go either. Atticus explains that the Ewell children don't have to go because the Ewells have been the disgrace of Maycomb for generations. They live like animals and it's silly to force them to go to school. He says that similarly, Mr. Ewell can hunt out of season because he spends his relief checks on whiskey and people don't want the children to go hungry. Atticus agrees that they can keep reading but asks Scout to keep this from Miss Caroline.

Given Atticus's calm, kind, and general willingness to see the best in others, the way that he describes Mr. Ewell is telling. It indicates that these are, even in his opinion, people beyond help and beyond the law. In particular, the fact that Mr. Ewell seems to flat-out refuse to feed his children situates him as an evil and selfish person. In contrast, the fact that Maycomb looks the other way when he hunts out of season makes the case that not all of Maycomb is bad; it can, in cases like these, rally around its most vulnerable members to afford them some kind of protection.

CHAPTER 4

The rest of Scout's school year proceeds much like her first day. She can't help but think she's missing something, since Atticus was educated at home, not with the Dewey Decimal System, and he's been elected to the state legislature unopposed for years. Scout gets out of school 30 minutes before Jem, so she races past the Radley Place. One afternoon, something catches her eye and she returns to one of the big oak trees in the Radley yard. In a knothole, she finds two pieces of chewing gum in tinfoil, which, after checking to make sure they're not poisonous, she shoves in her mouth. Jem is aghast when he finds her and makes Scout gargle.

Again, the fact that Scout can identify that her formal education seems less useful in light of what Atticus has been able to accomplish through a home education speaks to both her precocious nature and the uselessness of the school system as she experiences it. Choosing to chew this gum despite the rumor that everything on the Radley property is poison suggests that a small kindness like leaving the gum can be enough to help a person like Scout overcome their prejudices and fears.

On the last day of school, Jem and Scout get out early. They discuss Dill's impending arrival and as they pass the Radley Place, Scout points to the knothole. There's more tinfoil in it, and this time, Jem pulls out a shiny package. At home, Jem finds a ring box containing two polished Indian head pennies. They deliberate over whether to keep them and wonder if Cecil Jacobs might be hiding things in the knothole, but they reason that Cecil goes an extra mile per day to avoid the Radley Place and mean Mrs. Dubose. They decide to keep them until school starts again in case they belong to a classmate. Scout points out that nobody would want to save chewing gum, but Jem insists that the pennies are important to someone since Indian head pennies are magic.

Jem and Scout's genuine attempts to ensure that they're not stealing from one of their classmates illustrates how kind they are and how important it is to them to do the right thing, even if they might lose out on something exciting like pennies or gum. Their aside about Cecil Jacobs's long walk to school, meanwhile, indicates that the fear of the Radleys extends throughout the community and suggests that the "evil" in Maycomb is easy to identify and avoid, if one is willing to literally go the extra mile.

Dill arrives two days later on the train. He announces that he rode the train, helped the engineer, and that he met his father over the school year. The children squabble over what to play and Dill sniffs, declaring he can smell death at the Radley Place. They argue over whether Hot Steams are real and Scout insults Jem's courage. Scout suggests they roll in the tire, which Jem and Dill agree to. Scout goes first and folds herself into the tire. She only realizes once Jem pushes her with all his might that Jem was offended by her insult. As the tire rolls, Scout feels like she's suffocating. She crashes and finds herself on her back in the Radley front yard. Jem screams at her to run.

"Hot Steams" are ghosts or spirits with unfinished business on Earth, which makes it clear that the children's superstitious beliefs don't just involve their reclusive neighbors: they're part of a much larger belief system. Because of this, however, note that the Radley Place becomes not just another house on the street, but something fundamentally different in the children's eyes—and because of this, it's terrifying.

Scout runs on wobbly legs back to Jem and Dill and then argues with Jem about who should get the tire. Jem is furious, but he dashes in to get the tire and insults Scout for acting too much like a girl. Calpurnia calls them in for lemonade and as they sit on the porch, Jem announces expansively that they can play Boo Radley. Scout knows this is supposed to make him look fearless and her look scared. He doles out parts (Scout is Mrs. Radley, Dill is old Mr. Radley, and Jem is Boo) and chastises Scout for being scared of Boo, whom he insists is dead. Their game evolves over the summer and though Jem and Dill love it, Scout plays anxiously.

Insulting Scout about being too girly shows that in addition to the class warfare at work in Maycomb, Scout also experiences sexism, even from those closest to her. This betrays Jem's prejudice, as he's clearly suggesting that feminine attributes—or in this case, fear, which everyone, regardless of gender, experiences—are less desirable than those he believes come along with masculinity. This is another attempt to get Scout to conform as well.

The play draws from neighborhood gossip. Dill plays villains, and for once Scout gets a good part when she plays the judge. Jem steals Calpurnia's scissors daily so he can mime stabbing Dill in the leg, and the children stand silent when Nathan Radley passes or when they catch neighbors watching. One day, they don't notice Atticus watching. Jem evasively insists that they're not playing anything. Atticus shrewdly takes the scissors and asks if their game has to do with the Radleys. Jem insists it doesn't, and Atticus tells them it shouldn't as he enters the house. Scout hisses that Atticus knows, but Jem accuses her of being a girl and imagining things. She doesn't tell him that she's anxious because on the day she rolled into the Radley yard, she heard someone laughing.

As far as Atticus is concerned, the children are being extremely rude to their neighbors by acting out this family drama on the lawn. This suggests that in Atticus's mind, the Radleys aren't scary or untouchable. Rather, they're neighbors who deserve respect and kindness, even if they're different and don't interact with the Finches the same way other people do. While it's likely that Scout interpreted the laughter she heard in the Radley house as sinister, a more generous reading suggests that whoever laughed simply found the children's antics funny and means them no harm.

CHAPTER 5

Scout nags Jem about their game and they stop playing it so much, though Jem does decide that if Atticus tells them to stop playing it, they can just change the characters' names and it'll be okay. Dill agrees with Jem and frustratingly for Scout, the boys spend most of their time plotting in the tree house without her. This is especially frustrating since Dill asked Scout to marry him early in the summer and then seemed to forget about her. Scout starts spending time with Miss Maudie, who up to this point has only been a benign presence in her life. Scout and Jem have always been allowed to play on Miss Maudie's property and eat her grapes, so they don't speak to her much to preserve their relationship.

When the boys shut Scout out, it impresses upon her that no matter how hard she tries to not live up to Jem's assessment that she's being too girly, it's impossible for her to succeed all the time. When Scout turns to Miss Maudie, however, it suggests that at least for Scout, being the victim of this kind of prejudice does give her the opportunity to expand her community and learn more about where she lives from Maycomb's other residents.

Miss Maudie is a widow who hates her house. She spends her day gardening and her evenings dressed beautifully. She tells Scout that nut-grass is the only weed she ever kills and allows Scout to inspect her bridgework (fake teeth), a gesture that makes them friends. Miss Maudie is kind to Jem and Dill, too, and she calls them to eat her exceptional cakes. Scout spends evenings on Miss Maudie's porch, and one day they discuss whether Boo Radley is alive. Miss Maudie tells Scout that his name is Arthur and he's not dead—they haven't carried his body out yet. Scout shares that Jem thinks Boo's body was stuffed up the chimney, which makes Miss Maudie declare that Jem is turning into Uncle Jack, a childhood friend.

Letting Miss Maudie in on Jem's questionable beliefs about the Radley family shows that Scout truly trusts her and is willing to let her in on how she and Jem see the world. Miss Maudie, like Atticus, shows that she believes that the Radleys deserve respect and kindness, in particular when she corrects Scout to use Arthur's name rather than the neighborhood nickname. The fact that she only knows Boo isn't dead because he hasn't been carried out, meanwhile, does betray that Miss Maudie finds the family mysterious and hard to understand.

Miss Maudie explains that Arthur just stays in the house. Scout wants to know why, so Miss Maudie explains that Mr. Radley was a "foot-washing Baptist." This confuses Scout. Miss Maudie says that foot-washers think anything pleasurable is a sin, including her flowers—they take the Bible literally. Scout parrots that according to Atticus, God means loving people like a person loves themself, but Miss Maudie gruffly says that the Bible in the hands of some men is worse than a whiskey bottle in Atticus's hands. Shocked, Scout insists that Atticus doesn't drink, and Miss Maudie says that men like Atticus are better at their worst than others are at their best.

Here, Miss Maudie makes the case that it's possible for different men to interpret something, like the Bible, in wildly different ways that in turn allow lesser men to excuse horrendous behavior. This, she suggests, also leads to prejudice and an inability to take pleasure in one's life. When Miss Maudie holds up Atticus as an exceptionally moral and good individual, it asks the reader to think of him the same way and to take his assessments of others as truth.

Scout tells Miss Maudie about the rumors surrounding Boo, but Miss Maudie insists they all came from black superstitions and Miss Stephanie Crawford. She says that as a boy, Arthur always spoke kindly to her, but she has no idea what goes on behind closed doors. This again offends Scout, as Atticus treats her well inside, but Miss Maudie agrees with her and sends her home with pound cake.

Scout betrays her youth and innocence here when she mistakes Miss Maudie's insinuation of abuse to be about Atticus, rather than about Mr. Radley. It suggests that she's not entirely aware that other men, presumably like Mr. Radley, aren't good or kind people like her father when they're in private, no matter how upstanding they may seem in public.

The next morning, Dill and Jem rope Scout into joining them to give Boo Radley a note by dropping it through a broken shutter with a fishing pole. Dill will keep watch and ring a bell if anyone comes along. Scout is terrified, especially when Dill explains that they wrote that they'd like to buy Boo an ice cream and sit with him on the porch. They discuss the lengthy beard that Boo must have and Scout catches Dill in a lie about his father, but Jem stops their squabbling and sends them to their places.

The contents of the note suggest that Dill, at least, is starting to come around and acknowledge that Boo might not be a terrifying monster—he might be (and indeed, probably is) just another person who might enjoy an ice cream. This situates Dill as one of the least prejudiced characters in the novel, especially since this shows that he can reevaluate his ideas and come to a kinder way of thinking.

The fishing pole is too short, so Jem struggles to get the note close to the window. Scout is looking down when the bell rings. She whips around expecting to see Boo, but instead she sees Dill ringing the bell at Atticus. Jem trudges out looking extremely guilty. Atticus tells the children to leave Arthur alone and let him live his life, even if it seems odd to them, and then tricks Jem into admitting that they've been performing the Radley family history all summer.

Atticus's scolding shows again that in his mind, the Radleys are people, not something to gawk at as though they're subhuman. Despite Dill's understanding that Boo might be a person, the choice to pass this note via a fishing pole indicates that at least on some level, Dill is still terrified—too terrified to just leave the note at the door.

CHAPTER 6

Atticus allows Jem and Scout to go sit by Miss Rachel's fish pool with Dill the night before he leaves. They look for Mr. Avery, who lives across the street from Mrs. Dubose and whom they once watched urinate an impressive distance. Dill casually suggests they go for a walk, something nobody does in Maycomb. Jem agrees and assures Scout that they're not disobeying Atticus. They stroll down the sidewalk and try to send Scout home. They explain that they're going to look into Boo Radley's window, since if he kills them now, they'll just miss school. Jem complains that Scout is acting more and more like a girl, so she feels compelled to join them.

The aside that if Boo kills them now, they'll miss school, is mean to be humorous for the reader, though it also drives home again how the children see Boo as fundamentally different from them and because of that, see him as dangerous and scary. This also begins to make the case that even though Dill can empathize with Boo at times, he's not entirely sold on Boo being a real, normal person.

They slip under the wire fence in the back of the Radley Place and creep to the back porch. Jem and Scout boost Dill up so he can look in the window, but he only sees curtains. Jem ignores Scout's insistence that they leave, creeps onto the porch, and peeks in another window. Scout sees the shadow of a man wearing a hat come toward them and then disappear. Jem and Dill freeze and then they all race back to the fence. They hear a shotgun go off as they reach the wire fence. Jem gets his pants stuck and ditches them in his escape.

This event makes it clear that there truly is some real danger in going onto the Radley property, even if it doesn't necessarily come from the monster the children imagine Boo to be. This begins to show the possible consequences of holding such prejudiced views: in this case, the morbid curiosity that comes along with fearing someone could actually culminate in major injury or even death.

The children race across the schoolyard and reach the Finches' back porch before strolling casually to where neighbors are gathered at the Radley front gate. Jem insists that they have to go, or it'll look suspicious. Miss Maudie tells the children that Nathan Radley shot at a black man in his collard patch and Miss Stephanie notices that Jem isn't wearing pants. Dill explains that he won Jem's pants in a game of strip poker, which the adults seem to buy. Scout has no idea what strip poker is. Miss Rachel shrieks about children gambling on her property and Atticus asks if the children were playing cards. Jem says they were playing with matches, which is still bad but better than cards. Exasperated, Atticus bans poker, sends them home, and tells Jem to get his pants back.

It's clear, given Scout's confusion and Jem's answer that they were playing with matches, that none of them have any idea what they're actually talking about—cards are necessary to play poker of any kind, but in the 1930s, cards weren't considered a benign game at all. Scout later discovers that Atticus knows exactly what happened, so it's possible that he's just trying to save the children some face or trouble by allowing this to slide and letting the humiliation of being in public without pants be its own punishment.

Dill is comforted, but Jem still has no pants. Before they say goodbye, Dill kisses Scout and bawls, asking them to write. On the sleeping porch later, Scout and Jem barely sleep, waiting for Boo Radley to jump them. Jem whispers that he's going for his pants when they see Atticus's light go out. Scout tries to talk him out of it, noting that Atticus will whip him but that this is better than getting shot by Nathan Radley. Jem mutters that he doesn't remember the last time Atticus whipped him and wants to keep it this way. This is beyond Scout's understanding, but she waits for Jem to return and hopes that Atticus stays asleep. Jem returns a while later with his pants and goes to bed.

Both Scout and Jem exhibit their own versions of maturity here. Scout recognizes the very real danger posed by returning to the Radley property, while Jem wants to look more adult in Atticus's eyes by avoiding what he believes would be a childish whipping. Jem's reasoning in particular speaks to how much he respects Atticus and wants to give his father a reason to respect him in return, even if he knows that Atticus is displeased with him.

CHAPTER 7

Jem says nothing for a week and Scout tries to take Atticus's advice and put herself in Jem's skin. She reasons that she'd be dead if she'd gone to the Radley Place, so she gives Jem space. School starts and second grade is awful, but Scout and Jem usually walk home together. One afternoon, Jem says there's something he didn't tell Scout about his foray to the Radley Place: when he got to the fence, someone had folded his pants and mended them where they were ripped. Pleadingly, Jem asks Scout to confirm that nobody can read his mind and Scout plays along. They reach the oak tree and find a ball of gray twine. Scout insists it's someone's hiding place, but when the twine is still there three days later, Jem takes it.

Again, Scout's ability to put herself in Jem's shoes shows that she's starting to grow up and think more critically about how people around her might see things. Finding his pants mended and waiting for him should impress upon Jem that someone—possibly Boo Radley—is looking out for him and doesn't want him to get caught or killed, but his unwillingness to accept this speaks to Jem's unwillingness to consider that someone he finds scary and different could be so caring.

Jem assures Scout that school gets better, especially in sixth grade. In October, they find white soap carvings in their knothole. Scout pulls them out, sees that they're a boy and a girl, and throws them, afraid that they're hoodoo figures. Jem picks them up and they realize that the carvings are of them. They try to figure out who carved them, but Jem won't explain what he's thinking. Later, they find a packet of chewing gum and a tarnished spelling contest medal. Then, they find a pocket watch that Atticus declares would be worth $10 new. Jem assures Atticus that he didn't swap for it at school—Atticus lets him carry his grandfather's watch once per week—but Jem says he'd rather fix and carry this broken one.

Scout's fear that the soap carvings are hoodoo figures again makes it clear that her fear of Boo Radley doesn't exist in a vacuum; it's part of a much broader belief in the supernatural, which Boo is a part of because of his differences. The fact that Jem and Scout now seem to trust that the items in the tree are for them offers hope that they will one day learn to see that Boo isn't a terrifying person—he is just different and, judging by the gifts, kind and generous.

Jem isn't able to fix the watch but asks Scout if they should write a letter to whomever's leaving them things. They argue about whether Miss Maudie left them the treasures but address their letter to a "sir" and sign it. The next morning, Jem runs ahead to put the letter in the knothole, but they discover that someone filled it with cement. Later, Jem catches Nathan Radley and asks about the hole. He explains that the tree is dying, so he filled the hole. That evening, Jem asks Atticus if the tree looks sick and relays what Nathan Radley said. Atticus says the tree looks fine, but that Nathan Radley is the expert on his trees. Jem stands outside for a long time and when he comes in, Scout can see that he's been crying.

It's never entirely clear whether Nathan Radley fills the hole to stop his brother leaving Scout and Jem treasures, which would support Miss Maudie's implication that there are control issues, if not abuse, taking place behind closed doors at Radley Place. It could be that Nathan is simply tired of children playing with his trees, or that he truly thinks the tree is sick. Regardless, it's important to note that Jem's tears indicate that he is beginning to come around to the possibility that Boo is a kind and generous individual—even a potential friend.

CHAPTER 8

Maycomb experiences its coldest weather since 1885. Mr. Avery insists that the Rosetta Stone indicates that when children disobey, smoke cigarettes, and fight, the seasons change, so Jem and Scout feel guilty for causing themselves and everyone else discomfort. Mrs. Radley dies over the winter with little fanfare. Jem and Scout suspect that Boo got her, but Atticus insists that she died of natural causes and gives Scout a scathing look when she asks if he saw Arthur. The next morning, Scout wakes up and screams in fear—it's snowing, and she's never seen snow before. Eula May calls to inform Atticus that school is canceled.

Once again, when Scout and Jem buy Mr. Avery's explanation without question, it drives home how young, naïve, and trusting they are—for one, the Rosetta Stone says no such thing. Regardless, this does have the effect of making Scout and Jem feel bad about their shenanigans over the summer, which suggests that next year, they may think twice before tormenting their neighbor just because he's different.

Jem wants to know how to make a snowman, but Atticus doesn't know and cautions his children that there might not be enough snow to do so. Calpurnia arrives and Jem and Scout race outside. Jem scolds Scout for eating the soggy snow and walking in it, which he insists is wasting it. They walk in Miss Maudie's yard, where Mr. Avery accuses them of bringing on this bad weather. Scout, knowing that Mr. Avery knows it's her fault because of the Rosetta Stone, doesn't question him. Miss Maudie wraps her azaleas in burlap to keep them from freezing and when Jem asks, suspiciously lets him borrow a basket to cart away her snow.

The fact that the snow is something entirely unheard of in Maycomb foreshadows what's to come—a summer in which other things previously unheard of will also come to pass. This then represents a major disruption to Maycomb life, even as Miss Maudie behaves normally by caring for her plants and Mr. Avery does the same by blaming the bad weather on the children.

Back in their yard, Jem fetches laundry hampers of dirt and leads Scout in sculpting a mud man. At first the figure looks like Miss Stephanie, but Jem mischievously makes it look like Mr. Avery. Once he's satisfied with the shape, he and Scout cover the mud with snow. They call Atticus and he expresses pride when he gets home. He laughs when he realizes it looks like Mr. Avery, insists the snowman is libelous, and tells Jem to alter the "caricature." Jem insists it's not a caricature since it looks just like Mr. Avery, but he fetches Miss Maudie's sunhat and clippers. Miss Maudie shouts for her hat and she and Atticus discuss the snowman. Miss Maudie calls the snowman "an absolute morphodite."

"Morphodite" is a slang term for hermaphrodite. Miss Maudie uses it to refer to the fact that Jem changed the snowman from female (Miss Stephanie) to male (Mr. Avery) and back to female (Miss Maudie). Jem shows here that he's still too young to entirely understand why it might not be a polite thing to make a snowman depicting one's neighbor with whom he doesn't have the best relationship, since he doesn't recognize that his "perfect" image of Mr. Avery might be more offensive than even a caricature.

By afternoon, the snow stops, and it freezes. Calpurnia declines Atticus's offer to stay the night and Scout goes to sleep cold. She wakes up confused when Atticus shakes her. She hears a horrifying sound and asks whose house is burning. It's Miss Maudie's. Atticus sends Scout and Jem to stand in front of the Radley Place for safety. They watch as the old fire truck, which can't start in the cold, arrives, and the hydrant bursts. Half-dressed men carry Miss Maudie's furniture out and Mr. Avery has to climb out a second-story window. When the flames reach the second floor, men hose down Atticus and Miss Rachel's houses next door. Scout frets while Atticus and Miss Maudie look unconcerned.

The fire creates an opportunity for Scout to see her community come together around a common goal and put out the fire. This speaks to one of the positive aspects of how close-knit and intimate Maycomb is, as there's no indication that anyone is sitting this one out—especially since even Scout and Jem are outside watching, even if they're not old enough to help.

Scout watches the Abbottsville fire truck arrive and spew water on her house and on Miss Rachel's. The "Absolute Morphodite" melts as men fight the fire in pajamas. Scout is frozen by the time another fire truck arrives and Miss Maudie's house collapses. Men leave around dawn and Jem and Scout approach Miss Maudie and Atticus. Atticus leads them home and sternly demands to know where Scout got her blanket. She realizes that there's a strange woolen blanket around her shoulders. Neither she nor Jem know where it came from. Atticus starts to grin and says that *all* of Maycomb was out. He suggests wrapping up the blanket to take it back, but Jem spills every secret about his dealings with Boo Radley. Scout is confused, but Atticus smiles and says that that Boo must've given her the blanket. She almost vomits.

Receiving a blanket from Boo shows the reader (even if Scout herself doesn't understand) that even if Boo is a recluse he still cares deeply for the wellbeing of his neighbors. Though he's not fighting the fire, he's still making sure that the most vulnerable individuals on the street are safe and warm. Though Scout doesn't understand it now, this will later begin to impress upon her that Boo is generous and human, just like she is. In this sense, Boo's simple gesture here is something that will, later on, spur some of Scout's most profound coming-of-age moments.

Scout and Jem sleep until noon, when Calpurnia wakes them and sends them to clean up the yard. They find Miss Maudie's hat and clippers and take them to her. They offer condolences for her house, but she reminds them that she hated her house and now, she'll have more room for azaleas. They discuss how the fire started and Miss Maudie asks Scout about her unexpected company last night. She says that she wishes she'd been with Scout and Jem. Scout looks perplexed, but Miss Maudie says that she was most worried about the danger the fire posed to everyone else, especially Mr. Avery. She notes that she'll make him a Lane cake when Miss Stephanie isn't looking, since Miss Stephanie wants her recipe.

Though Scout and Jem might not understand it, Miss Maudie is promoting a courageous view of what happened in that rather than wallowing in what she lost, she's doing her best to look on the bright side and focus on the good that will come of the fire. However, when she mentions Mr. Avery's bravery, the novel does make room for the fact that sometimes, courage and bravery does mean doing something physical rather than simply hoping for the best.

Jem notices Miss Maudie's dirty and bloody hands. He suggests she hire a black man to help and offers his and Scout's help for free. Miss Maudie reminds Jem that he has his own yard to attend to, but Scout assures Miss Maudie that they can rake up the morphodite quickly. Miss Maudie stares silently and then laughs. Jem and Scout don't understand why she's laughing.

In this instance, Scout and Jem's innocence and Scout's total lack of understanding provides a spot of humor for Miss Maudie. This begins to make the case that one of the most meaningful things the children can do at this point (albeit without their knowledge) is to help people laugh.

CHAPTER 9

Things began to get difficult for Scout. Atticus forbids Scout from fighting, but Cecil Jacobs makes her forget this when he announces to their class that Atticus defends black people. Scout denies it and later, asks Atticus if he "defends niggers." Atticus admits that he does but cautions Scout to not talk that way, as it's common. Scout points out that everyone at school talks that way, yet another bid to convince Atticus to not send her to school. He looks vaguely amused. Scout asks if all lawyers defend black people and points out that Cecil made it sound bad.

The casual tone with which Scout uses a racial slur suggests that she's not necessarily using it in a malicious way—rather, she's parroting language she's heard others use. Atticus's reproof of this language, however, suggests that he understands that speaking about black people in this way deprives them of dignity, while using a more appropriate term (Atticus uses "Negro" at various points in the novel, which suggests that this was proper at the time) shows respect.

With a sigh, Atticus says he's defending a black man named Tom Robinson, and some believe that he shouldn't defend Tom. Scout asks why he took the case then, and Atticus insists that he had to in order to hold his head up and maintain the moral high ground. He tells Scout that she might hear nasty things about it at school and encourages her to not fight. Scout asks if he'll win the case. Atticus says he won't, but that it's important to fight anyway. He pulls Scout onto his lap and says that they're "fighting friends." She remembers this when she tells Cecil to take his taunt back the next day. He refuses. Scout punches him and then walks away, feeling as though she has to obey Atticus since he rarely asks for anything like this.

By being truthful with Scout about what's going on and what's going to happen—in other words, by not sheltering her—Atticus gives her the opportunity to grapple with adult ideas, and in doing so, helps her both grow and come to a better understanding of how her world works. When Atticus insists that he has to defend Tom in order to maintain the high ground, it indicates that for Atticus, helping others preserve their dignity is doing the right thing—even if he knows he won't be successful.

Christmas is a mixed bag for Jem and Scout. On the plus side, Uncle Jack visits for a week. On the downside, they have to spend time with Aunt Alexandra and her grandson Francis (Aunt Alexandra's husband is, in Scout's opinion, not worth mentioning). Atticus insists they spend Christmas day at Finch's Landing every year, despite Aunt Alexandra being a formidable woman and a gossip and Francis being boring.

Scout's refusal to mention Aunt Alexandra's husband reminds the reader that this is truly a child's account, with all her opinions and thoughts added in. The reader should thus take what Scout says about things with a grain of salt, as it's impossible for her to look at the world with anything other than her young perspective.

Uncle Jack arrives on the train with two long packages, pecks Atticus on the cheek, and shows Scout and Jem pictures of his cat. He insists she's getting fat because she eats leftover body parts from the hospital, which Scout declares is "a damn story." Atticus explains that Scout has decided cussing is fun and to ignore her, and Scout tells the reader that she believes that if Atticus realizes she learned the words at school, he won't make her go. That night, she asks Uncle Jack to pass the damn ham. Later, he tells Scout that he doesn't like language like that and asks Scout if she wants to be a lady. Scout isn't interested in being a lady, but Uncle Jack insists that she actually is. The next morning Scout and Jem receive air rifles from Atticus, but he won't let them take them to Finch's Landing.

When even Scout's beloved Uncle Jack tries to talk her into being ladylike, it reminds the reader that Scout doesn't fit into people's conceptions of what a young girl should be like. In this sense, if she were to think about it, she's a lot like Boo—he, too, doesn't fit into what people believe Maycomb's residents should act like. Scout's inability to make this leap, however, speaks to her youth and innocence, as does her use of rude language.

At Finch's Landing, the children exchange gifts and Jem leaves Scout to entertain Francis. They discuss what they got for Christmas. Francis got clothes—just what he wanted—and doesn't believe that Jem got a real chemistry set. Scout finds Francis to be extremely boring and a tattletale. He relays everything to Aunt Alexandra, who passes everything onto Atticus. Atticus only ever got sharp with Aunt Alexandra once when she took offense to Scout's overalls, as she believed that Scout needed to be a lady and a ray of sunshine for Atticus. At dinner, Scout sits alone at the kids' table, fuming, but Aunt Alexandra's cooking almost makes up for it. After dinner, Scout goes outside with Francis, who announces that Alexandra is going to teach him to cook. Scout giggles that boys don't cook.

This passage is extremely important, as it shows clearly that even though Scout suffers from other people's prejudiced views surrounding gender roles, she holds questionable views of her own surrounding how boys and girls should act. The fact that Atticus stood up for Scout's right to wear overalls, meanwhile, indicates that he's far more concerned with preserving Scout's individuality and sense of self than forcing her to behave a certain way.

Scout admits that she and Dill are engaged, which makes Francis laugh—according to him, Dill's family passes him from relative to relative and declares that Scout's lack of knowledge speaks to her general ignorance. He calls Atticus a "nigger-lover" who's ruining the family. Scout chases him into the outside kitchen and waits for him to come out so she can jump him. When Aunt Alexandra appears, Francis whines that Scout cornered him. Francis kicks around the yard, gloating, and repeats his slur again. Scout punches him so hard she splits her knuckle to the bone. Aunt Alexandra and Uncle Jack separate them, and Francis bawls that Scout called him a "whore-lady." Scout doesn't deny it and Uncle Jack spanks her.

Note the difference here between Scout's use of the n-word at the beginning of the chapter and Francis's usage here. Whereas Scout was merely curious about hearing other people say the word, Francis clearly means it to land as an offensive slur. This suggests that he's more developed than Scout, has a better understanding of how careful one must be with language like this, and knows how to weaponize it against those like Atticus who are sympathetic to black people, and against black people themselves. Francis betrays his prejudice and racism by using it here.

At home, Scout locks herself in her room and tries to keep Uncle Jack from coming in to talk to her. Scout accuses him of not understanding children and of not being fair and asks to tell her side. She explains that Atticus always listens to her *and* to Jem when they fight, and that Jack told her she could use bad words when provoked. She shares what Francis said and knows that Francis is in trouble by the look on Uncle Jack's face. She begs him to let it go, since Atticus made her promise to not fight over this sort of thing. He agrees and then bandages her hand. Scout asks what a "whore-lady" is. Uncle Jack tells her a story about a silly Prime Minister, which Scout thinks makes no sense.

Scout's query of what a "whore-lady" is betrays that she has no idea what she's saying—she simply uses words because she hears them and picks up on the fact that they're offensive. Again, while this doesn't excuse her use of slurs, it does indicate that she's generally not using them in a calculating and purposefully racist way, she's only doing it for attention. Asking for Uncle Jack to be fair with her also shows that her sense of right and wrong is well-developed, even if she's not fully aware of how her world functions.

Later, when Scout gets up for water, she stops in the hallway and listens to Uncle Jack tell Atticus that he'll never have children after Scout's dressing down earlier. He doesn't betray his promise to Scout but tells Atticus about dodging Scout's question of what a "whore-lady" was. Atticus tells Uncle Jack to tell children the truth. He muses that Scout will go through a lot in the next few months and needs to learn to not beat people up. Jack asks about the case. Atticus says that it's a case of he-said, she-said, and the Ewells are involved—but John Taylor told him to take it, and he won't be able to face his children if he doesn't. He hopes that they come to him with questions and don't catch Maycomb's "usual disease." Atticus sends Scout back to bed. Years later, she realizes that he wanted her to eavesdrop.

Scout's reflection that Atticus wanted her to hear what he said shows that Atticus understands how difficult things are for Scout right now. He wants her to understand, however, that he must defend Tom Robinson in order abide by his own conscience and code of ethics. His mention of Maycomb's "usual disease" is likely a reference to racism, which Atticus is clearly aware exists in force, even if it's not really on Scout's radar yet. His advice to Uncle Jack to answer children's questions truthfully again shows that Atticus believes children are capable of hearing about adult concepts, even if they don't totally understand them.

CHAPTER 10

Scout and Jem are disappointed that Atticus, at 50, is older than their classmates' parents and doesn't do anything, like farm or drive a dump truck. He also wears glasses and never hunts, drinks, or smokes. Despite how innocuous he seems, everyone talks about him defending Tom Robinson. People tease Scout after she commits herself to "a policy of cowardice." He refuses to teach Scout and Jem to shoot their air rifles and tells them that it's a sin to kill a **mockingbird**. This isn't a normal thing for Atticus to say, so Scout asks Miss Maudie about it. She agrees with Atticus and says that mockingbirds just sing for people. Scout complains that Atticus is too old and can't do anything. Miss Maudie points out that Atticus can write fantastic wills, play checkers, and play the mouth harp. Scout is even more embarrassed.

When Scout refers to her choice to follow Atticus's request as a "policy of cowardice," it shows that she still thinks courage and bravery have to do with the way a person fights physically or verbally for what they believe in. In other words, it hasn't yet crossed her mind that it might be more courageous for her to walk away from others' taunts. Atticus's request that the children not kill innocent mockingbirds hearkens to his defense of Tom Robinson, who is being persecuted by the community. When Miss Maudie echoes what Atticus said, it helps the children see that within Atticus's sense of morality is based on universal concepts of right and wrong that everyone can apply.

Miss Maudie sends Scout home, so the construction crew doesn't crush her. Scout finds Jem's attempts to shoot tin cans boring, so when Atticus gets home, he finds Scout pointing her rifle at Miss Maudie's backside. He warns Miss Maudie, who good-naturedly insults Atticus, and tells Scout to not point her gun at people. Annoyed, Scout asks Calpurnia what Atticus can do. Calpurnia insists that Atticus can do lots of things but can't list any. Later, Scout feels even worse when Atticus is the only father not playing in the inter-church football game.

Scout and Jem's disappointment with the fact that Atticus apparently can't do anything again suggests that both of them think of courage and personal worth as coming from an individual's tangible capabilities. As a lawyer, there's not much to directly see of Atticus's work, which makes it harder for his children to understand that he performs important services for his community through his profession.

On Saturday, Scout and Jem take their air rifles out, but just past the Radley Place, Jem spots old Tim Johnson, a beloved local hound dog. He drags Scout home and asks Calpurnia to come look at Tim. Jem mimes how Tim is moving—like his right legs are shorter than his left, twitching and gulping—and Calpurnia comes outside to look. After a minute, she rushes Jem and Scout back inside, gets Eula May to warn everyone on the street that a mad dog is coming and ask Atticus to come home. She runs to the Radley Place to warn Nathan and Boo, but they don't open their door.

Keep in mind that to Jem and Scout, Calpurnia's willingness to run right up to the Radleys' front door may look either wildly misguided or very courageous, since they're still wary of Boo. Calpurnia's actions also make the case that she feels as though she's an essential part of Maycomb and, just like Scout's other neighbors, can and should do everything in her power to protect others from the rabid dog.

Atticus and Mr. Heck Tate, the sheriff, arrive in the car. Calpurnia explains that Tim is just twitching, not running, so they decide to wait for him to get closer. Scout is terrified—she thought that mad dogs foamed at the mouth and lunged at people's throats, and only do so in August. Tim's behavior in February, combined with the deserted and silent street, is eerie. Tim comes into sight, looking dazed, and Mr. Tate breathes that Tim is definitely ill. At the bend in the road in front of the Radley Place, Tim hesitates. As Jem and Scout watch from behind Calpurnia, Mr. Tate shoves his rifle at Atticus to shoot Tim.

Scout's aside that Tim's behavior is scarier because it's not what she expected from a rabid dog shows again that what Scout fears most of all is the unknown—even outright threats aren't as frightening as something that's entirely surprising. The fact that the street also looks eerie when it's empty and closed-up nods to the idea that even in February, Scout expects her neighborhood to be open and welcoming—seeing that it has the potential to not be is very off-putting.

Atticus tries to refuse, but he takes the rifle and steps into the street. He pushes his glasses up, but they fall back—he drops them, and they crack. As Tim catches sight of Atticus and goes rigid, Atticus swiftly lifts the gun and shoots. Tim crumples. Mr. Tate's inspection reveals that Atticus shot a bit too far to the right. Atticus isn't surprised. He grinds his broken lens into powder as the neighborhood comes back to life. Jem tries to talk to Atticus, but he can't formulate words. Atticus warns Jem and Scout to stay away from the body, and Miss Maudie calls Atticus "One-Shot Finch."

Atticus is very clearly comfortable handling a rifle, thereby throwing a wrench into Scout and Jem's belief that he can't do anything. This begins to suggest that Atticus may have any number of skills, but that he doesn't choose to use them unless it's wholly necessary to do so in order to protect his family and his community.

Atticus and Mr. Tate head back to town. Miss Maudie silences Miss Stephanie and tells Jem that Atticus used to be the best shot in Maycomb County. He stopped shooting when he realized he had an unfair advantage over other living things. She tells Scout that people in their right minds don't take pride in their talents as they watch Zeebo remove the dog's body. Later, Jem tells Scout to not mention what happened—he believes if Atticus wanted them to know he was a good shot, he would've told them. Jubilantly, Jem shouts that Atticus is a gentleman.

It's telling that Jem is so ecstatic to learn that Atticus is a good shot, as it falls into line with what Jem believes about courage and worth coming from easily demonstrable skills, like shooting. The idea that it's a choice to use skills like this, however, suggests that there's more to this than Jem realizes—such as the possibility that Atticus might feel as though showing off his shooting skills would be incompatible with his morally upright image.

CHAPTER 11

By the time Scout is in the second grade, tormenting Boo Radley is a thing of the past and Scout and Jem's games take them further up the street and past Mrs. Dubose's house. Mrs. Dubose lives alone with a black servant named Jessie and is rumored to carry a concealed pistol. Scout and Jem hate her, as she's mean and responds viciously to even polite greetings. As time goes on, Jem gets bolder and insists that he and Scout need to run all the way to the post office—past Mrs. Dubose's house—to meet Atticus in the evenings. But most nights, Atticus finds Jem enraged by something Mrs. Dubose said. He encourages Jem to understand that Mrs. Dubose is ill and greets her heartily every evening.

Atticus's choice to greet Mrs. Dubose politely, even when she insults his own children on a daily basis, adds more evidence to the idea that Atticus believes treating an individual with respect is always the right thing to do, regardless of that person's behavior. Ignoring Mrs. Dubose or heckling her back would likely make her feel even meaner and less accepted by the community than she already is, whereas treating her kindly could yield positive results even if doing so is difficult. Jem's willingness to write Mrs. Dubose off comes from his youth, as he's not mature enough to consider that there might be an underlying reason for her behavior.

Jem receives money for his 12th birthday, so he decides to buy a miniature train for himself and a twirling baton for Scout. Mrs. Dubose hurls insults at the children, terrifying Scout, but Jem keeps his composure until Mrs. Dubose accuses Atticus of defending a black man, insisting that Atticus is no better than the "trash" for whom he works. This is the first time that Scout has heard abuse of this sort coming from an adult. They make their purchases in town and Scout gleefully tosses her baton as they head home. When they reach Mrs. Dubose's house, she's not on the porch. Jem snaps. He grabs Scout's baton, uses it to cut the tops off of Mrs. Dubose's **camellia** bushes, and then snaps the baton. He beats up Scout and they head home.

The simple fact that Mrs. Dubose cultivates camellias, just like Miss Maudie, makes it clear that she's not an entirely evil person—like the delightful and kind Miss Maudie, Mrs. Dubose takes pleasure in the natural world and wants to make it beautiful. This, however, doesn't excuse her nasty and rude behavior, as the abuse she slings at Scout and Jem here is clearly racist. Keep in mind that it's likely Atticus knows Mrs. Dubose's views on black people already, which makes it seem even more courageous that he continues to greet her warmly.

Scout and Jem don't meet Atticus that evening. When Atticus arrives home with the broken baton and a **camellia**, Jem confesses, and Atticus icily sends him to apologize to Mrs. Dubose. Scout is terrified—she believes Mrs. Dubose will shoot Jem—but her anger at Atticus for sending Jem into danger evaporates. She crawls into Atticus's lap and he encourages her to keep her head, even if nobody at school does so. He says that things will get worse come summer. Scout points out that Atticus might be wrong about needing to defend Tom, since everyone else thinks he's wrong. Atticus says he needs to do this to live with himself.

As far as Scout is concerned, what everyone else in Maycomb thinks is probably right—thus far, she's had little reason to question the status quo and whatever the majority believes since, for the most part, she's been a part of that majority (due to the fact that she's white and Atticus is a respected figure in town). This experience starts to show her what it's like to be on the outs, which will help her develop empathy for other people who are different and disliked.

Jem returns home. He says that he said he was sorry, but he isn't, and that Mrs. Dubose wants him to read to her every day after school. Atticus says that Jem must do this for the whole month that Mrs. Dubose requested. On Monday, Scout accompanies Jem to Mrs. Dubose's house. Jessie lets them in. The house is dark and smells oppressive. Mrs. Dubose lies under many quilts and looks almost friendly, so Scout momentarily feels sorry for her. Mrs. Dubose insults Scout and Jem begins to read *Ivanhoe*. Scout inspects Mrs. Dubose's face and thinks of how disgusting she looks. Mrs. Dubose corrects Jem for 20 minutes, but then seems to go into a silent fit. When an alarm clock goes off, Jessie shoos Scout and Jem out so Mrs. Dubose can have her medicine.

It doesn't seem as though Scout and Jem have much experience spending time with elderly people, which likely explains some of their fear and apprehension about being here—to an active and imaginative child, an elderly person who's confined to her bed, spews profanity, and seems unwell could be understandably unsettling. That Scout momentarily feels sorry for Mrs. Dubose shows that she certainly has the capacity to feel empathy and compassion for people who are very different from her, even if they're also scary—an important lesson as she continues to consider Boo.

That afternoon, Jem tells Atticus that Mrs. Dubose is nasty, drools, and has fits. Atticus reminds him that sick people don't always look nice. As the week wears on, Scout, Jem, and Mrs. Dubose fall into a routine: Mrs. Dubose corrects Jem's reading for a while and insults them and Atticus, seems to go vacant, and when the alarm clock rings, Jessie dismisses Scout and Jem. One evening, Scout asks Atticus what a "nigger-lover" is. She explains that Mrs. Dubose calls Atticus that and that Francis hurled it at her, but she's not sure what it means—users' tones, however, tell her it's not nice. Atticus says it's an ugly term like "snot-nosed," and it reflects more on the ugliness of the person using it than the person receiving it.

Atticus suggests here that when a person uses slurs, it simply shows how cruel and misguided the person is—in Scout's position of receiving these slurs, it says nothing bad about her. Keep in mind the fact that Scout is hearing this abuse from adults as well as children, which begins to create cracks in the idea that Maycomb is an idyllic place. There's a clear undercurrent of hate and racism in town that Scout is just beginning to see, even if Atticus implies that it's been here the entire time—just not on Scout's radar.

A month later, Atticus enters as Jem reads to Mrs. Dubose. With a smile, Mrs. Dubose tells Atticus that it's 5:14, and the alarm is set for 5:30. Scout realizes that they've been staying a little longer at Mrs. Dubose's every day and that today, Mrs. Dubose shows no sign of having a fit. Mrs. Dubose asks if Jem will read to her for another week. On the way home, Atticus insists that Jem must continue reading. The next week, Mrs. Dubose, not the alarm clock, releases Jem. She doesn't have fits, picking on Jem and Scout instead. On the last day, she releases the children and they race away howling.

Extending the alarm clock every day makes it clear to Scout that there's more going on here than just reading, even if she's not yet sure what. This again speaks to her capacity to understand some aspects of the adult world, even if she can't fully interpret them yet. That Mrs. Dubose's racist abuse continues even as she improves indicates that this is not just an anomaly due to her illness, but rather a feature of her personality. Her open expression of these sentiments also suggests that this mindset is common among adults in town, and that there are others who are just as racist as Mrs. Dubose.

A month or so later, the phone rings and Atticus goes to Mrs. Dubose's house. He returns much later with a candy box and explains that Mrs. Dubose died. He says that Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict, and this is why she had fits. She called him just before Jem cut down her **camellias** to make her will and insisted that she'd die beholden to nothing—she wanted to overcome her addiction, and she did. Atticus assures Jem that Mrs. Dubose died free and told him all sorts of nasty things before she went. He hands Jem the box, which contains a white camellia. Jem throws it and screams. He buries his face in Atticus's shirt and Atticus says he would've made Jem read anyway. He wanted Jem to see that courage is not a man with a gun—it's doing something even if you know you won't succeed.

The camellia is a reminder to Jem to remember that for all her faults, Mrs. Dubose was a human being like anyone else—and like everyone else, she deserves kindness, respect, and to be remembered as being courageous and dignified in her own way. Atticus recognizes that this is one of the most important things he can teach his children, as learning this lesson will help them to be empathetic and caring in the future, especially when faced with people who are different.

CHAPTER 12

Seemingly overnight after Mrs. Dubose's death, Jem becomes moody and starts telling Scout what to do, including to act like a proper girl. Calpurnia assures Scout that Jem is just growing up and invites Scout to join her in the kitchen. Things look bright for a while, and Scout starts to suspect that there's skill involved with being a girl. However, she receives a letter from Dill early in the summer, which says that Dill has to stay in Mississippi with his new father. He promises to return and marry Scout, which is little comfort—for her, Dill *is* summer. To make matters worse, Atticus leaves for two weeks to attend an emergency legislative session. One morning, Scout and Jem find a cartoon in the paper that depicts Atticus chained to a desk. Jem tells Scout that it's about Atticus doing things that nobody else will do.

As Scout begins to think that there's more to being a girl than she thought, it shows that she's starting to grow up and come to a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be an adult in the world. While there's no indication of why Alabama called this emergency session or of what they're working on, there is some truth to the idea that Atticus does things that nobody else will do. Remember that he shot Tim Johnson when Mr. Tate wouldn't, and in the months to come, Atticus will defend Tom Robinson, something that nobody else will do or wants him to do.

Scout heads for the kitchen. Calpurnia asks what to do about church this week. Scout points out that Atticus left collection for them and they haven't misbehaved in church in years, but Calpurnia invites Scout and Jem to come to her church instead. That night she bathes Scout roughly and supervises Jem. In the morning, Scout puts on her heavily starched dress. Calpurnia leads them to First Purchase, the black church, named because freed slaves bought it with their first earnings. Most people part respectfully and let Calpurnia lead Scout and Jem to the steps, but one woman, Lula, asks why Calpurnia has white children. Jem and Scout want to leave, but the rest of the congregation shuts Lula out and assures the children that they're welcome.

Lula's reaction indicates that among the black population of Maycomb, there's prejudice, just like in white Maycomb. However, it's also important to keep in mind that Lula has good reason to want to keep what likely feels like a safe space for her free from the racism of white people. Especially going forward from this point, Scout will see just how discriminatory Maycomb is and just how terribly most white people think of and treat their black neighbors.

Reverend Sykes leads Calpurnia, Scout, and Jem to the front pew. Calpurnia gives dimes to Scout and Jem, telling them to keep theirs, and Scout asks where the hymnbooks are. Calpurnia shushes her. Reverend Sykes makes announcements and says that the collection this week will go to Helen, Tom Robinson's wife. Zeebo comes to the front of the church to lead the first hymn. Scout can't help herself and asks how they're going to sing without books, but Zeebo leads the congregation in a call-and-response of the hymn. The sermon is forthright and familiar to Scout, but she finds it odd that people go to the front to offer their collection. Reverend Sykes counts it and says they need to reach $10 before people can leave. Jem takes his and Scout's dimes up, and finally they reach $10.

In Scout's mind, church looks, feels, and proceeds a certain way. It's off-putting, then, to find herself without the usual amenities, like hymnbooks. This becomes an important moment in which Scout gets to see firsthand the way that other people in her town go about things, as it introduces her to the fact that not everyone in Maycomb lives like she does, or even the way that poor white families like the Cunninghams live. While they may all go through more or less the same rituals, there are distinct differences depending on a person's skin color or their degree of wealth.

Outside, Jem and Scout chat with Reverend Sykes. He mentions that Atticus is very kind and Scout asks why they're taking collection for Helen. He explains that Helen can't take her children to work, which seems odd to Scout. Reverend Sykes says that Helen can't find work as Calpurnia leads her away. Scout peppers Calpurnia with questions and learns that Tom is in jail because Bob Ewell accused him of raping his daughter. Scout remembers how Atticus called the Ewells trash and asks what rape is. Calpurnia won't say. Jem asks about the way they sing hymns and Calpurnia explains that most of the congregation is illiterate. She says that Miss Maudie's aunt taught her to read. Calpurnia taught Zeebo from a book that Atticus's father gave her—the Finches have employed her from the beginning.

Learning that Calpurnia and Zeebo are two of only a handful of literate black people in Maycomb drives home both how impoverished and how segregated Maycomb is—there's no mention, for instance, that there's even a school available for black children. Remembering what Atticus implied about the Ewells and how horrible they are, Scout believes right away that Tom Robinson probably isn't at fault, simply because she so fully trusts her father to make good assessments and lead her in the right direction.

Jem comments that this is why Calpurnia doesn't talk like the other black people, and Scout realizes that she's never thought of Calpurnia leading a double life and speaking two languages. She asks why Calpurnia speaks incorrectly to black people when she knows it's wrong. Calpurnia points out that she's black and notes that she needs to speak that way to make people feel comfortable. Scout asks if she can visit Calpurnia at her house sometime, and Calpurnia insists she'd be glad to have her. Jem points Scout's attention to the porch. She looks first at the Radley porch, but then sees Aunt Alexandra on their porch.

Calpurnia's willingness to host Scout makes it clear that there's more to her relationship with the Finch family than simply cooking for them: she truly is a member of the family. Scout's desire to visit, meanwhile, shows that she's beginning to understand how much she doesn't know about even her immediate world—and her desire to figure it out speaks to the fact that she's growing up and actively trying to be less prejudiced.

CHAPTER 13

Aunt Alexandra tells Calpurnia to take her suitcase upstairs. Jem takes it and Aunt Alexandra tells Scout that she and Atticus decided that it's time for her to stay "for a while." In Maycomb, this could mean any length of time. She says that Scout needs a feminine influence. Scout thinks that she has Calpurnia and knows there's more to it, but she doesn't press since Aunt Alexandra is irritable on Sundays. The day passes slowly and Jem and Scout race outside when they hear Atticus get home. Scout assures Atticus that she's thrilled to have Aunt Alexandra, which is a lie. Atticus says that Aunt Alexandra is doing him a favor and that it'll be a hot summer. Scout doesn't understand but suspects that this was Aunt Alexandra's idea.

Scout's recognition that she Calpurnia is a legitimate feminine influence is correct, and moreover, reveals that there's more to Aunt Alexandra's explanation than she lets on. As Scout and the reader will go on to learn, Aunt Alexandra is conservative and racist, suggesting that she probably doesn't view Calpurnia as an appropriate feminine influence for Scout, simply because of the color of her skin.

Maycomb welcomes Aunt Alexandra. She's soon a fixture in the social circle and she begins hosting the missionary society. It amuses Jem that Aunt Alexandra often points out the shortcomings of other families, since the Finches are related to almost everyone in Maycomb. She confuses Scout by insisting that fine folks are fine because they've been landowners for a long time. Scout thought that fine folks did the best with what they had, and Jem points out that per Aunt Alexandra's understanding, the Ewells are fine folks.

Jem and Scout's confusion (as well as their ability to poke holes in Aunt Alexandra's questionable logic) suggests that children have an innate ability to identify prejudice and hypocrisy like this. It's clear to them that Aunt Alexandra is simply trying to make out that the Finches are better than everyone else in town. Jem and Scout understand that there's more to being a good person than owning land, which speaks to their growing sense of morality and compassion.

Scout explains that, to a degree, Aunt Alexandra is right: Maycomb is an old town that became the county seat despite being an island of civilization in a sea of agriculture, so there are very real clans and there's truth to the idea that everyone in a certain family behaves a particular way. Aunt Alexandra never fits into Jem and Scout's world. She occasionally snags Scout to speak to Maycomb ladies, though she always looks like she regrets it immediately since Scout is usually dirty. One afternoon, she summons Scout and Jem to the living room to tell them about their esteemed Cousin Joshua. Jem asks if it's the same Cousin Joshua who, according to Atticus, went crazy and tried to shoot the president. Aunt Alexandra is shocked and offended.

While there's no real indication of whether Cousin Joshua was as unhinged as Atticus insists he is, it's telling that Aunt Alexandra is more than willing to simply ignore the more embarrassing parts of family history in favor of focusing on how esteemed they were. Given Aunt Alexandra's character, it's unlikely that she'd ever be this forgiving toward someone from any other family in town. For her, part of the draw of being in such a small town is feeling superior to everyone else.

Before bed, Atticus finds Scout and Jem. He awkwardly tells them that Aunt Alexandra wants them to know that they're from a good family and should behave accordingly. Scout and Jem are stunned. Scout begins to run a comb's teeth along the edge of her dresser, but Atticus sharply tells her to stop. She begins to cry and buries her head in Atticus's stomach. She feels that this isn't her real Atticus and asks if all of this "behavin' an' stuff" is going to make things different. Atticus assures her it's going to be fine and tells her to forget everything. As he leaves, he tells his bewildered children that he's becoming more like Cousin Joshua every day.

It's clear to the reader that Aunt Alexandra put Atticus up to this, but that Atticus's heart isn't in it. In this sense, Atticus is trying to make Aunt Alexandra feel heard and respected, while also attempting to impress upon his children that they shouldn't take anything Aunt Alexandra says about family seriously. This is an understandably hard thing for the children to understand, but Atticus's willingness to go there anyway speaks to his faith in their ability to eventually figure it out.

CHAPTER 14

In town, Scout and Jem hear lots of muttered comments about the Finch family. Scout hears one that mentions rape and remembers that she never asked Atticus what rape is. She asks him that night and when he tells her, she ends up telling him all about her trip to Calpurnia's church. Aunt Alexandra is shocked that Scout and Jem went to Calpurnia's church. Scout asks Atticus if she can visit Calpurnia on Sunday, but Aunt Alexandra forbids it. Scout spits that she didn't ask her. Atticus forces her to apologize, and Scout leaves. She listens from the hall as Aunt Alexandra scolds Atticus for keeping Calpurnia, but Atticus insists that Calpurnia is a member of the family and has done a great job with the children.

It is somewhat unclear exactly why Aunt Alexandra is so offended by Calpurnia's presence, as she is, according to Scout, a fine cook and clearly cares for Scout and Jem. It's likely that Aunt Alexandra is simply trying to not come out and say outright that she doesn't think a black woman should be raising her niece and nephew. Atticus's defense of Calpurnia shows that he believes it's his job to treat Calpurnia fairly and respectfully, which in his eyes, means defending her to Aunt Alexandra and keeping her employed in their household.

Upstairs, Jem gravely asks Scout to not annoy Aunt Alexandra. This angers Scout, but Jem insists that they need to think about how preoccupied Atticus is with the Tom Robinson case. His superiority angers Scout. When he threatens to spank her, she calls him a morphodite and they start a fistfight. Atticus separates them, asks who started it, and tells Scout that she only has to listen to Jem if he can make her do so. This enrages Aunt Alexandra.

Again, Scout clearly still has no idea what "morphodite" means—she's hurling the insult at Jem for no reason other than the suspicion that it's not an especially polite thing to say. Atticus's method of dealing with the fight acknowledges that his children are individuals who should learn on their own to deal with conflicts, while Aunt Alexandra's reaction implies that she thinks Atticus needs to be more of an authoritative parent.

As she gets into bed, Scout steps on something that she thinks feels like a snake. She asks Jem to come investigate. He pokes a broom under the bed and Dill emerges. Scout fetches him milk and cornbread when he asks and Dill tells a far-fetched narrative of how he got here, followed by the truth: he has run away from home, and took a 14-mile train ride from Mississippi to Maycomb. Jem is concerned that Dill's mother doesn't know where he is, and he calls for Atticus. Dill goes white. Atticus pleasantly tells Scout to get Dill better food and calms Dill when he hysterically threatens to run away again if they make him go back. Atticus assures him that he just wants to check with Miss Rachel if Dill can stay the night. Jem stands alone and says he had to tell.

When Jem chooses to alert Atticus to Dill's arrival, it makes it clear that he's beginning to shift from child to adult. He's able to understand that Dill's parents are surely very worried and need to know where he is, something that Scout and Dill, as young children, don't find especially compelling. This begins to situate Jem as significantly more mature and empathetic than his younger peers, and given Scout and Dill's idolization of him, provides hope that they, too, will grow up to emulate his thoughtfulness.

Dill eats and then survives Miss Rachel's scolding. She allows him to stay. Aunt Alexandra sends the children to bed and since things seem okay, Scout and Dill decide to be civil to Jem. Scout wakes up in the middle of the night when Dill crawls in with her. She asks why he ran away. Dill explains that his new father isn't interested in him, and his parents ignore him. Scout tells him that life would be awful if his parents were *too* interested, but she begins to wonder how things would be different if Atticus didn't want her around. Dill suggests that he and Scout buy a baby. Scout asks if Dill has any idea why Boo Radley never ran away. Dill wonders if Boo doesn't have anywhere to go.

Even if Dill might not be on par with Jem in terms of maturity, his assessment of why Boo hasn't run away shows that he's more than capable of thinking critically about the way Boo doesn't fits into society. Dill is continuing to evaluate his prior fear and prejudice against Boo and against others, while also potentially coming to recognize just how unwelcoming Maycomb is to those who are different.

CHAPTER 15

After some pleading, Dill's mother allows him to stay. After this, things go downhill quickly. One evening, Mr. Tate knocks and asks Atticus to come outside. Scout knows that men only talk outside for death or politics and wonders who died. She and Jem try to follow, but Atticus sends them back in. They turn out the lights and put their noses to the window screens to listen to Mr. Tate, Atticus, and Mr. Link Deas talk about the trial, getting a change of venue, and whether "they" will get drunk on a Sunday.

This passage shows again how young and inexperienced Scout, Dill, and Jem are. For one, it's inconceivable to them that there may be other reasons for Atticus to speak to people outside, not least to keep the conversation private from nosy children. The fact that they don't understand anything they're hearing reinforces this, though it rightly alerts them to the possibility that all is not well.

Mr. Deas tells Atticus that he has everything to lose and Atticus asks if he really thinks that. He says that Tom might go to the chair, but he has to tell the truth. The men move closer to Atticus and Jem screams that the phone is ringing. The men in the yard scatter and Scout sees that it's her neighbors. Atticus comes inside, turns the living room light on, and picks up his paper. Jem asks if the men wanted to get Atticus, but Atticus assures him that they were friends, not a gang or the Klan. Scout walks Dill home and returns to find evidence of a fight between Aunt Alexandra and Atticus. She consults Jem, who shares that Aunt Alexandra thinks Atticus is disgracing the family. Jem admits that he's afraid someone is going to hurt Atticus.

Jem's fear is very real, which starts to make the case that in potentially dangerous situations like this, children suffer when they're confused about what's going on. Atticus is surely trying to protect the children, but what they see doesn't give them a lot of faith that everything is going to be okay. The fact that the men who were speaking to Atticus are neighbors and friends, not faceless bad men, lets Scout know that it's people she knows and cares about who take issue with Atticus. This makes the situation even more unsettling, since Scout trusts her neighbors.

The next day, Sunday, Atticus spends time in the yard talking with more men, including Mr. Underwood, the owner of the *Maycomb Tribune* who never leaves his linotype. Atticus shares with Scout that they've moved Tom to the Maycomb jail. At suppertime, Atticus comes in carrying an extension cord with a light bulb. He announces that he's going out and tells them not to wait up. He takes the car, something he rarely does. Later, around 10:00 p.m., Jem tells Scout that he's going downtown. Scout insists that she's coming too, and they grab Dill on their way out.

Because Scout is close with her small-town neighbors, Mr. Underwood's choice to come out signals to her that something big and important is going on. Because Jem is afraid and not sure what's going on, there's no way for him to know that he's walking into a very dangerous situation by heading out after Atticus.

They expect to find Atticus in his office in the Maycomb Bank building, but he's not there. They wonder if he's visiting Mr. Underwood, who lives a few storefronts down on the other side of the jail. The jailhouse is an odd building; it has one cell but is built in the Gothic style. Its supporters think it makes Maycomb look respectable and like there are no black people around. Jem, Scout, and Dill notice a light outside the jail. They see Atticus sitting under it, reading. Jem stops Scout from running to Atticus as four dusty cars stop. The children hide and watch men get out of the cars. The men ask Atticus if "he" is in the jail, tell Atticus to move aside, and share that Mr. Tate is out in the woods on a phony call.

What Scout has to say about the jailhouse's supporters shows again that racism isn't something odd in Maycomb—it's an intrinsic part of what the town is, even if it's not hostile to Scout on account of her being white. The mob reinforces this, as it shows that Maycomb's residents are willing to band together to try to take matters into their own hands and possibly go so far as to attack and kill Tom Robinson before he can even get to his trial the following day.

Atticus asks very calmly if the men think that changes anything. Knowing that this means business, Scout races to Atticus, hoping to surprise him. She falters when she sees fear in his eyes and notices that she doesn't recognize the men, who smell of alcohol. Atticus calmly tells Jem to take Dill and Scout home, but Jem refuses. One man yanks Jem's collar, so Scout kicks the man in the groin. The men mutter. Scout looks for a friendly face and recognizes Mr. Cunningham. She asks about his entailment and about Walter, which makes him look uncomfortable. Remembering Atticus's advice to talk to people about what they're interested in, Scout mentions the entailment again and realizes that everyone, including Atticus, is staring at her openmouthed. She asks what's wrong. Mr. Cunningham squats, tells Scout he'll say hi to Walter, and leads the men away.

Remember that to Scout, Atticus is a solid, calm, and confident presence, so seeing that he's afraid tells her that she's walked into something very serious and dangerous. Recognizing Mr. Cunningham and trying to strike up a conversation with him shows that Scout is internalizing Atticus's advice, as she humanizes a member of the mob in order to steer them away from violence. The fact that she's effective speaks to the fact that these men aren't wholly evil—they're still affected by the innocent kindness of a child.

Scout turns to Atticus, whose face is pressed against the jail wall. Suddenly tired, she asks if they can go home. Atticus wipes his face and blows his nose as Tom asks if the men left. Atticus assures him that the men won't bother him now, and Mr. Underwood interjects that he was keeping watch from his upstairs window. He waves his shotgun. Atticus gathers his things. Scout watches Atticus brush Jem's hair aside.

This was likely one of Atticus's most terrifying experiences, though Scout, in her youth and her innocence, doesn't seem to fully comprehend the danger they were all in. Mr. Underwood's appearance suggests that Atticus has more allies than he may have thought, despite feeling like all of Maycomb is united against him.

CHAPTER 16

After quietly sneaking into the house and going to bed, Scout realizes what happened. She remembers Atticus preparing to shoot Tim Johnson and begins to sob. Jem comforts her. The next morning, Aunt Alexandra insists that children who sneak out are disgraces. Atticus notes that Mr. Underwood is a known racist; he's surprised that Mr. Underwood was protecting him. Calpurnia serves Aunt Alexandra coffee and agrees to give Scout a tablespoon of coffee in milk. When Calpurnia leaves, Aunt Alexandra scolds Atticus for talking about Mr. Underwood in front of Calpurnia, since all the black people in town talk. Atticus acidly says that they might be quiet if they didn't have so much to talk about.

The recognition that Mr. Underwood did what he knows is right, even if he's a racist and doesn't agree with what Atticus is doing in defending Tom Robinson, continues to offer hope that Maycomb isn't entirely racist and hysterical over this. There are some who believe that even a black person like Tom should get their chance at a fair trial, even if they likely believe that Tom has no business expecting to win. Atticus's response to Aunt Alexandra suggests that it's the fault of the racists in town that the black population talks amongst themselves—they have every reason to do so to stay safe.

Scout says that she thought Mr. Cunningham was their friend. Atticus says that he is. Mr. Cunningham, he insists, has blind spots, and he notes that mobs are made up of people. He says that it took a child to bring them to their senses and that this is proof that "a gang of wild animals can be stopped, simply because they're still human." Scout declares that she's going to beat Walter up on the first day of school, which Atticus forbids. He leaves for work and tells Atticus and Scout to stay home. Dill arrives and announces that a rumor is flying that they held off 100 people, but Aunt Alexandra gives him a withering stare. The children go outside to watch what seems like the entire county head for the courthouse. They hear the Baptists tell Miss Maudie she's going to hell for her flowers.

Atticus makes the case that it's possible to respect and see the good in someone, even if they have obvious and dangerous flaws. This also why he continually tells Scout that they're fighting their friends, as that's a concise way of telling Scout that everyone has differences, but that's no reason to stop being kind and welcoming to their friends and neighbors. The Baptists' treatment of Miss Maudie demonstrates the opposite of this, showing how ridiculous prejudice and self-righteousness can be.

Scout, Dill, and Jem go across the street to see if Miss Maudie is going to court to watch. She isn't. Miss Stephanie Crawford announces that she's headed downtown, and Miss Maudie jokes to the children that given Miss Stephanie's wealth of knowledge, Atticus might ask her to testify. After lunch, the children go downtown. The square is crowded with people eating lunch. They watch Mr. Dolphus Raymond sitting with the black people and watch him drink out of a paper bag—he has whiskey in a Coca-Cola bottle in it, and he sits with the black people because he's in a relationship with a black woman and has several "mixed children." Jem says that Mr. Raymond is from an old family and was supposed to marry a white woman, but she committed suicide.

Miss Maudie's jab at Miss Stephanie situates her once again as one of Maycomb's moral compasses, as she's well aware of how Miss Stephanie contributes to horrible rumors, and in all likelihood, to the heightened racist sentiment of the moment. The way that Scout describes Mr. Raymond reminds her again that Maycomb isn't made up of all upstanding citizens: there are men like Mr. Raymond who break all manner of social codes, which turns them into outcasts whom everyone else looks down on.

Scout asks what a mixed child is. Jem says they're half black, half white, and don't fit in anywhere. Mr. Raymond sent two up north. A happy black child skips by. Jem says that he's one of Mr. Raymond's. Scout can't tell and asks how they know that *they're* not black too. Jem says that according to Uncle Jack, they don't know, but they may have come from Ethiopia during the Old Testament times. Jem says that once a person has a drop of black blood, they're black. Suddenly, people begin to rise and enter the courthouse. The children wait until everyone else is inside before entering.

Jem alludes here to the science that shows that all humans, millions of years ago, came out of Africa. This, Uncle Jack seems to suggest, makes the case that humans from different parts of the world or with different skin colors aren't all that different from each other. Rather, categorizing people by race is arbitrary and only serves to alienate people, such as Mr. Raymond's biracial children.

Scout gets separated in the crowd and finds herself in the middle of the Idlers' Club, which is made up of idle old men who are regular court spectators. The men snigger that Atticus does nothing but read, and one notes that the court appointed Atticus to defend Tom. Another says disapprovingly that Atticus is taking it seriously. This is new, confusing information for Scout, since it seems they don't like Atticus for doing his job. By the time Jem finds Scout, there's no more room. Reverend Sykes invites the children to sit in the balcony with the black people. Scout surveys the room. Judge Taylor, as usual, looks to be asleep. Scout hopes she can watch him eat a cigar as Mr. Tate takes the stand.

As far as Scout is concerned, there's no reason why Atticus wouldn't do his job to the best of his ability, since this is what's proper and right. The Idlers' Club, however, proposes that it's not okay for a white lawyer like Atticus to make a genuine case for the innocence of a black person like Tom Robinson, thereby betraying their racism. That Scout can't quite figure out how they can come to this conclusion amplifies both her sense of trust in Atticus, as well as highlights her youth and naïveté.

CHAPTER 17

Scout tries to ask Jem about the Ewells, but he turns her attention to Mr. Tate's testimony. Scout doesn't know the solicitor, Mr. Gilmer, well, as he's from Abbottsville and she and Jem seldom come to court. Mr. Tate gives his account of what happened: Mr. Ewell called him out because Tom raped his daughter. Mr. Tate found Mayella beaten up on the floor and she identified Tom as her rapist, so he took Tom into custody. Atticus takes over questioning and asks why they didn't call a doctor. Jem is on the edge of his seat. Mr. Tate describes the injuries and notes that her right eye was blackened. Atticus, Mr. Tate, and Tom all look suddenly alert. Mr. Tate says there were also bruises around her neck like someone strangled her.

Atticus's query of why Mr. Tate and Mr. Ewell didn't call a doctor calls into question why it is that this case has gotten this far when there's no physical evidence—this fight is entirely based around whose subjective story is going to be believed. This reminds the reader that this case is truly about racism and whether the jury will succumb to it—it's not about actually giving Tom Robinson the chance to make his case and prove that he didn't do it.

Scout thinks all of this seems boring. Judge Taylor calls Bob Ewell to the stand as Scout notice Jem's grin. Bob Ewell is bright red and struts like a rooster. Scout tells the reader that the Ewells are always poor and on government assistance, whether it's a depression era or not. They live behind the garbage dump in a cabin once inhabited by black people. There are no windows and the yard is littered with refuse, but along one side of the fence, red **geraniums** bloom in slop jars. There are lots of children. Beyond the cabin is a neat black settlement. Scout thinks that the only thing that makes Mr. Ewell better than his neighbors is his skin color.

Again, notice the way that Scout describes the Ewell home versus the "neat" black settlement—it truly is the case that the only thing that makes Mr. Ewell "better" than the black people down the road is the fact that he's white, as it seems like his home is far from neat or orderly. The geraniums, however, function much like Mrs. Dubose's camellias did: they indicate that there's some sense of humanity and redemption here, even if the Ewells are mostly awful people.

Mr. Gilmer begins to question Mr. Ewell. Mr. Ewell is rude to Mr. Gilmer and makes a crude joke when Mr. Gilmer asks if he's Mayella's father. Judge Taylor tells Mr. Ewell to not speak like that in his courtroom, but Scout doesn't think Mr. Ewell gets it. When asked to tell his version of events, he says that he arrived home to hear Mayella screaming. He says he looked in the window to see Tom raping Mayella. He stands and points to Tom as he says this, and the court erupts. Reverend Sykes tries to get Jem, Scout, and Dill to leave, but they refuse, and he doesn't press the issue. Mr. Ewell looks smugly at the tense crowd. Judge Taylor warns the crowd and Mr. Ewell that if another outburst happens, everyone will be charged with contempt.

Mr. Ewell's smug look betrays that he knows exactly what he's doing. Even if what he's saying isn't at all true, the simple thought of a black man raping a white woman is enough to send the courtroom into hysterics—evidence again that many of the people watching are racist themselves. Judge Taylor's attempts to contain Mr. Ewell and the damage he's wrought show that he's taking this trial seriously, just like Atticus, which situates him as a sympathetic and less racist figure than his peers.

Fixing Mr. Ewell with a glare, Judge Taylor gets the questioning going again. Mr. Ewell says he saw the room in disarray and recognized Tom. He then asks that Judge Taylor clean out the black settlement that devalues his property, but Judge Taylor cuts him off. Mr. Gilmer ends his questioning. Judge Taylor allows the courtroom to laugh when Mr. Ewell runs into Atticus as he stands to question Mr. Ewell. In a genial tone, Atticus asks why he didn't call a doctor and asks if Mr. Ewell agrees with what Mr. Tate said about Mayella's injuries. He asks the court reporter to read them word for word, and then asks Mr. Ewell if he can read and write. Atticus offers Mr. Ewell a pen and paper to demonstrate. He declares that Mr. Ewell is left-handed and after this, Mr. Ewell refuses to say anything else.

When Judge Taylor cuts Mr. Ewell off in his diatribe about his black neighbors, it suggests he's well aware that Mr. Ewell is trying to garner sympathy from other people who are also racist. Again, given Scout's description of the Ewell property, its low value likely has little to do with the neighbors and everything to do with his personal failure to provide for his family. Mr. Ewell seems to expect that Maycomb is going to rally around him by sending the message that Maycomb is undeniably a white town.

Jem excitedly whispers that Mr. Ewell is going down. Scout doesn't agree. She understands that Atticus is making the case that Mr. Ewell could've beaten Mayella, but she thinks that Tom may also be left-handed.

It's unclear exactly what Jem knows that Scout doesn't, but his glee suggests that he still trusts the justice system to actually function fairly—something that speaks to his youth and innocence despite his relative maturity.

CHAPTER 18

Mayella takes the stand. Scout can tell that Mayella tries but fails to keep clean, and she thinks of the **geraniums** in the Ewell yard. Mr. Gilmer asks Mayella to share what happened. Mayella promptly bursts into tears and says that she's afraid of Atticus. Judge Taylor assures her that Atticus won't scare her. Mayella says that Mr. Ewell had asked her to chop up a "chiffarobe" (dresser) for firewood, but she asked Tom to do it for a nickel instead. She went inside to get the money and he choked her and raped her. She agrees that she screamed and fought and says that she doesn't remember much until Mr. Tate arrived.

Again, Mayella's geraniums help Scout to see that Mayella is a person, just like everyone else in the room—being a Ewell doesn't change that. Because of Mayella's lack of education and the fact that she doesn't fit into polite Maycomb society, Atticus's manner of speech toward her father and his insinuation that Mr. Ewell was the one who beat Mayella is probably terrifying and overwhelming for her.

Atticus takes over questioning. He calls Mayella "miss" and "ma'am," which offends her. Scout is flabbergasted and Judge Taylor assures Mayella that Atticus is just being polite. Atticus builds up a picture of the Ewells' home life: Mr. Ewell spends the relief checks on alcohol, nobody goes to school, and the children are constantly ill. Mayella is offended when Atticus asks if she has friends. Atticus asks if Mr. Ewell is good to Mayella. Mayella starts to say that he's not always good, and Atticus gently coaxes out that he's not good when he's drinking. Mayella defiantly says that Mr. Ewell has never beaten her. Atticus turns to the case and asks about Mayella's injuries. She says that Tom both did and didn't hit her.

The very fact that Mayella thinks that Atticus is out to get her speaks to how awful Mayella's life is: nobody is kind to her, and she has far more responsibility than any 19-year-old should have. When Atticus is very nearly able to get Mayella to admit that her father beats her, it indicates that showing someone kindness and treating them like a person can be very meaningful—even if, in this case, it would lead Mayella to admit that she's lying and ultimately come back to hurt her later.

Atticus asks Mayella to identify her rapist, so she points at Tom. Atticus asks Tom to stand, and Scout sees that Robinson's left arm is a foot shorter than his right, with a shriveled hand. Reverend Sykes whispers that it got caught in a cotton gin when he was a boy and it's now useless. Atticus asks how Tom could've choked, beaten, and raped Mayella with one hand. He presses the issue, asks if Mayella screamed, and asks where the other children were. He asks if Tom or Mr. Ewell beat her up. When Atticus turns away from Mayella, he looks ill. Mayella announces that Tom raped her and refuses to say anything more. Scout isn't sure what Atticus is doing.

Even if Mayella is doing a horrendous and evil thing by wrongfully accusing Tom of raping her, she probably believes that doing so is her only choice—Atticus has made it clear that if Mayella doesn't fall into line, Mr. Ewell will beat her. He has shown that Mr. Ewell cares little for his children's wellbeing in general. Atticus knows, in other words, that he may be putting Mayella in danger by suggesting she's lying, even if he knows that it's the right thing to do to free Tom, adding an additional layer of moral complexity to the case.

Judge Taylor calls for a 10-minute break. Mr. Underwood snorts when he sees Scout, Jem, and Dill in the balcony. Scout knows that there are finer points to the trial, but she's not sure what they are—everything seemed normal, aside from Mr. Gilmer's obvious distaste for his witnesses. Judge Taylor returns and Scout punches Dill when Taylor pulls out a cigar and bites into it. Judge Taylor, Mr. Gilmer, and Atticus decide to finish for the day, since it's already 4:00 p.m.

Scout isn't totally aware of the danger that Mayella faces or the danger that Tom faces, regardless of the trial's outcome. This points again to her youth and innocence, as it simply doesn't occur to her that a supposedly impartial court verdict could endanger people or otherwise ruin their lives.

CHAPTER 19

Atticus calls Tom to the stand. With Atticus's questioning, Tom says that he's 25, has three children, and served 30 days in jail for disorderly conduct a while ago. He explains that he works for Mr. Deas year-round and passes the Ewell house to get to and from work. He often greeted Mayella, and last spring she asked him to chop up a chiffarobe. He refused the nickel she offered, but after that, Mayella often asked him to do small tasks for her. Tom explains that the children were always around, but never helped Mayella, and Mr. Ewell didn't either.

Tom shows here that he's a kind and empathetic individual, and that he recognized Mayella's humanity and sought to respect it by helping her. This begins to show that in this sense, Tom is far more upstanding and respectable than Mr. Ewell is, something that Maycomb's racist white population would likely insist is impossible given many in town believe that any white person, no matter how unsavory, is better than a black person.

Scout realizes that Mayella must be the loneliest person in the world and is probably lonelier than Boo Radley. White people shun her because of her poverty, while black people want nothing to do with her because she's white. She's not like Mr. Raymond, who can spend time with black people because he's wealthy. Scout thinks that Tom was probably the only person to ever be kind to her. She listens to him say that he'd never enter the Ewells' yard without an invitation and believes him. Atticus asks what happened on the night of the alleged rape.

This is a major turning point for Scout, as she begins to understand the horrible and lonely situation that both Mayella and Tom are in. She also recognizes how someone like Mr. Raymond can get away with breaking social codes simply because he's white and wealthy, whereas Tom's very livelihood is in danger for allegedly doing the same as a black man. Additionally, accepting that Mayella is human is and important and brave thought process for Scout, as it requires her to be empathetic to her enemy.

Tom says that the Ewell place seemed quiet. He entered the yard at Mayella's invitation and when she asked him to look at the door, entered the house. The door was fine, but Mayella closed the door and explained that she saved money to send the children to town to buy ice cream. He praised her for this and then at her request, stood on a chair to get a box off of an armoire. While he was there, she grabbed him around the legs, scaring him. He jumped down and knocked the chair over. Tom looks terrified as he says that Mayella hugged him. The courtroom explodes momentarily, and Tom continues that Mayella kissed his cheek. Mayella told him that what Mr. Ewell does to her "doesn't count," and then Mr. Ewell appeared. Mr. Ewell threatened to kill Mayella, and Tom ran away.

Tom has good reason to be scared—due to the likely combination of sexist and racist beliefs in the community, the idea that a white woman would willingly touch a black man in an inappropriate manner is likely unthinkable to many in this courtroom. When Tom repeats Mayella's insistence that what Mr. Ewell does to her "doesn't count," it heavily implies that Mr. Ewell sexually abuses Mayella. If this is the case, Mayella perpetuated that abuse onto someone else by choosing to touch Tom without his consent. For her, Tom is vulnerable, just as she's vulnerable to her father.

Tom insists he didn't rape Mayella, and that he ran because he was scared—being black, he couldn't have fought back differently. Mr. Gilmer rises as Mr. Deas announces that he's never had any trouble from Tom. Judge Taylor throws Mr. Deas out. Mr. Gilmer asks about Tom's disorderly conduct charge and asks if he's strong enough to throw a woman to the floor. Tom admits that he probably is, but he never has. Mr. Gilmer leads Tom to admit that he felt sorry for Mayella. They go through Mayella's testimony and Tom insists that Mayella is mistaken. He insists that he ran because he was scared, and now he's ended up in court for something he didn't do.

Tom understands that as a black man, he'd be in even more trouble if he'd pushed Mayella or otherwise fought harder to get away. Doing so would play right into the racist belief that all black men are violent rapists and a threat to white women, the belief on which Mr. Ewell is basing his entire case. When Mr. Deas stands up for Tom, it shows Scout that there's another person in town who's not racist and who's willing to courageously stand up for what's right, even if he knows he'll get thrown out. This reaffirms Atticus's lesson that courage means doing what is right even in the face of opposition or failure.

Dill starts to cry uncontrollably, so Jem sends him out with Scout. Outside, they greet Mr. Deas and sit under an oak tree. Dill says that he couldn't stand the way that Mr. Gilmer spoke to Tom, calling him "boy" and sneering. Scout points out that Tom is "just a Negro," but Dill says it's not right to talk to anyone that way. Scout and Dill argue, but Mr. Raymond interrupts them in support of Dill.

Dill understands that it's awful to treat someone rudely and in a racist way, no matter who the person in question is. All people, he understands, deserve respect and kindness. Scout's attempts to talk Dill down, meanwhile, betray her own internalized racism.

CHAPTER 20

Mr. Raymond invites Dill to have a drink to settle his stomach. Scout knows he's evil and that Atticus and Aunt Alexandra will be unhappy, but she follows Dill. Dill delightedly says that it's just Coca-Cola in the bottle and Mr. Raymond swears the children to secrecy. Scout asks why he pretends to be drunk all the time. Mr. Raymond explains that some people don't like the way he lives, so it helps to give people a reason to dislike him. In truth he doesn't drink much, but people will never understand why he chooses to live like he does. Scout finds this fascinating and asks why he trusted them. Mr. Raymond says that children understand it, and that Dill is still young enough to cry when white people treat black people horribly.

Scout description of Mr. Raymond as evil again shows that she's prejudiced and has firm ideas of who's good and who's bad in Maycomb. Learning that he only pretends to be drunk shows Scout that Mr. Raymond recognizes he's different in a way that people simply can't wrap their heads around. Maycomb is so caught up in racism that they can't fathom why a person would willingly spend time or fall in love with a black person.

Scout notes that according to Atticus, cheating a black man is worse than cheating a white man. Mr. Raymond says that Scout will learn soon enough that Atticus isn't a normal man. He notes that she hasn't seen Maycomb, but she will if she steps back inside the courthouse. Scout pulls Dill back into the courthouse. Judge Taylor is almost finished with his cigar and Atticus is already halfway through his speech to the jury. Jem whispers that Atticus just finished going through the evidence.

Here, Mr. Raymond insists that racism is an intrinsic part of Maycomb, even if it hasn't been especially apparent to Scout before now. Atticus's advice rests on the idea that it's a horrendous thing to pick on someone who isn't able to defend themselves, just like Bob and Mayella Ewell are doing with this case.

Atticus asks permission to unbutton his vest and collar and remove his coat. He only ever loosens clothing at bedtime, and Scout and Jem are horrified. He addresses the jury like he might address friends and says that this case is easy. Tom isn't guilty, but someone is. He says that Mayella is guilty. She hasn't committed a crime, but she broke societal rules. She's the victim of poverty and ignorance, but because she's white, tempting a black man is something that she's trying to push far away from her. Atticus suggests that Mr. Ewell beat Mayella when he realized what happened. He says that Tom's only crime was feeling sorry for Mayella, and now the Ewells are asking the jury to believe that all black people are immoral, untrustworthy liars. He insists that people of *all* colors can be awful.

In his speech to the jury, Atticus picks apart the social rules that make it easy for someone like Mayella to get away with accusing Tom of rape, while at the same time denying someone like Tom any ways to defend themselves. He suggests that Mayella and the jury would do a horrible thing by playing into racial stereotypes, which deny black people any sense of dignity or indeed, humanity—in fact, racism functions in such a way as to make it seem to white people that black people are less than human.

Atticus begins to sweat—another unusual thing. He closes by saying that many people insist that all men are created equal, something that often gets used out of context. Atticus says this isn't true—unintelligent students move through school just like their more intelligent peers, some women make better cakes than others, and some men make more money or have more opportunity. Regardless, Atticus insists that all men *should* be equal in court. He insists that he believes in the court and he knows the jury will review the evidence and come to the right choice. He implores the jury to believe Tom. Dill points. Scout sees Calpurnia heading for Atticus.

Here, Atticus brings up the hypocrisy of insisting that all men are created equal when it's so easy for a man like Mr. Ewell to wrongfully accuse a man like Tom Robinson of rape and get away with it. In essence, he's asking these men to do the right thing and help to move Maycomb in the direction of being a more welcoming place for everyone, no matter the color of their skin.

CHAPTER 21

Calpurnia passes Atticus a note. Atticus asks Judge Taylor to go, since his children are missing, but Mr. Underwood interjects that Scout, Jem, and Dill are in the balcony. The children head downstairs and Jem excitedly announces that they're going to win. Atticus looks exhausted. He agrees that they can return after supper and stay if the jury is still out. Calpurnia is enraged and scolds Jem, which delights Scout. Aunt Alexandra looks faint when she learns where the children were and seems hurt that Atticus already gave them permission to go back.

When Atticus agrees to let the children return for the verdict, it again shows that he believes children are capable of grappling with difficult adult ideas. Doing so will help them become better people as they move toward adulthood, and since Atticus seems fairly convinced that Tom is going to lose, he understands that this will help the children recognize the underlying cruelty and unfairness in their idyllic small town.

Jem, Scout, and Dill return to find that the jury is still out, and few people moved. Reverend Sykes shares that Judge Taylor seemed like he may have been leaning toward Tom's side. Jem confidently announces that they'll win and then offers his own ideas of how the courts deal with rape in Alabama. Jem stops only when Scout assures Reverend Sykes that she knows exactly what Jem is talking about. Atticus, Mr. Gilmer, and Judge Taylor all behave normally, but the rest of the courtroom still seems fretful and anxious. They sit, and around 11:00 p.m. Scout falls asleep against Reverend Sykes. Dill sleeps against Jem.

Again, it's unlikely that Scout actually knows exactly what Jem is talking about—it's still unclear if Scout even knows what sex is or that it can be used to abusively exert power over a person. It's telling that the jury is out for so long, as it suggests that there's real conversation happening behind closed doors, hence the fretful and anxious courtroom. For everyone, this could mean that change is on the horizon, though whether it's considered good change or not likely depends on their skin color.

Scout starts to feel the same way she did in February, when the street closed up, the **mockingbirds** were silent, and Mr. Tate told Atticus to shoot Tim Johnson. Mr. Tate returns and calls the court to order. Tom returns, along with the jury, and Scout notices that the jury doesn't look at Tom—a sure sign they convicted him. She half expects to see Atticus raise an unloaded rifle. Judge Taylor reads the verdicts: they're all guilty. Atticus packs his things, whispers something to Tom, and then leaves. Reverend Sykes calls Scout to attention and makes her stand for Atticus's departure with the other black people.

When Scout continues to think back to the day when Atticus shot Tim Johnson, it shows that she recognizes that Atticus is sacrificing himself to doing what he feels is right and necessary. When Reverend Sykes asks the children, along with the others in the balcony to stand for Atticus out of respect, it shows how meaningful Atticus's honest attempt to save Tom was for the black community, even if he lost the case. Atticus's efforts send the message that in the eyes of this influential community member, they matter.

CHAPTER 22

Jem cries angrily as he, Dill, and Scout find Atticus outside. He says that it's not right and Atticus agrees. At home, Aunt Alexandra apologizes to Atticus and asks if Jem will be okay. Atticus insists he will be and says that the children may as well learn to deal with Maycomb County as it is. He excuses himself to bed, but Jem catches him and asks how the jury could've done this. Atticus says he's not sure, but they've done it before, they'll do it again, and only children cry about this. In the morning, Atticus assures Jem that there will be an appeal. Calpurnia shows Atticus the huge amount of food people left on the porch to thank him. Touched, Atticus excuses himself to go to work.

Atticus's insistence that the children can learn to deal with Maycomb County shows again that like Mr. Raymond, Atticus has no delusions about his community. He knows that it's overwhelmingly racist, classist, and willing to do unthinkably horrible things in order to maintain racial segregation and class order. When he suggests that only children cry in times like these, he implies that adults have been conditioned to passively accept these things as facts of life, while children see them for the injustices they are.

Dill arrives, eats Atticus's breakfast, and says that Miss Rachel said that Atticus can bang his head against a wall if he wants to, but he decided not to set her straight since she was so worried about him. Jem tells him to stop going off without telling Miss Rachel, but Dill insists he did tell her—she just drinks too much and forgets. Aunt Alexandra deems this observation cynical and unbecoming, so Jem leads Dill and Scout outside. They see Miss Stephanie talking to Mr. Avery and Miss Maudie. Miss Maudie yells for Jem. Miss Stephanie starts asking why the children were in the balcony at court, but Miss Maudie hushes her and shoos the children inside for cake.

Jem's choice to again reprimand Dill for making the adults worry speaks to how mature and adult Jem feels right now. Given the way that Atticus and Mr. Raymond suggested how children see the world, it's likely that Dill's assessment of Miss Rachel's drinking habit has some truth to it. Aunt Alexandra's scolding, however, shows how as children grow into adults and enter polite society, it's no longer acceptable to make such observations, even if they're true.

Miss Maudie baked two small cakes and one large one, which seems wrong until Miss Maudie cuts Jem a piece out of the big cake. She tells Jem that Atticus is a man who does unpleasant jobs for them all. Jem says that he thought Maycomb was good and safe. Miss Maudie says he's not wrong, but Maycomb isn't often called on to act Christian, so Atticus acts Christian for them. Jem asks if there's anyone else, and Miss Maudie points out that the black neighborhood, Mr. Tate, and Judge Taylor stepped up—Judge Taylor didn't give Tom's case to the newest lawyer, for instance. Miss Maudie insists that she knew Atticus wasn't going to win, but it's a step in the right direction that the jury took so long to decide.

Here, Miss Maudie encourages Jem to look for all the individuals in Maycomb who are fighting for good, even if Maycomb as a whole is racist and closed-minded. When she notes specifically that Judge Taylor did Tom a major favor by giving Atticus the case, it shows how some of these kind and courageous acts often go unnoticed by many. But in actual effect, these gestures are more meaningful than, for instance, Mr. Deas's unsolicited character assessment of Tom that just got him thrown out of court.

Outside, Miss Stephanie and Mr. Avery are still talking. Miss Rachel heads toward them as Dill says he's going to be a clown and laugh when he grows up. He suggests that everyone else should be riding broomsticks as Miss Rachel waves wildly at them. They approach and Miss Rachel sends the children into the yard. Before Miss Rachel can stop her, Miss Stephanie shares that earlier, Mr. Ewell stopped Atticus, spat in his face, and threatened him.

Dill's newfound cynicism reflects his growing understanding that the world he once thought was safe and delightful actually has a very real dark side. He, Jem, and Scout now know that men will go to prison for crimes they didn't commit, while horrible people like Mr. Ewell are able to go on with their lives.

CHAPTER 23

Later, Atticus says later that he wishes Mr. Ewell wouldn't chew tobacco, while Miss Stephanie takes it upon herself to dramatically tell the story of Mr. Ewell spitting in Atticus's face. Jem and Scout don't think it's entertaining—they're terrified. They try several tactics to try to get Atticus to carry a gun, but it takes a while for Atticus to realize how scared they are. One evening, Atticus encourages Jem to think of how Mr. Ewell feels. He says that he destroyed Mr. Ewell's credibility at the trial and if Mr. Ewell spitting in his face saved Mayella a beating, he's fine with it. Aunt Alexandra isn't so sure that they're in the clear, but Jem and Scout feel better.

Some of the reason that Scout and Jem are so afraid is because, to a degree, they still believe that courage and revenge happen physically. Spitting in Atticus's face is, in their understanding, not enough to make Mr. Ewell okay with what happened. Atticus isn't afraid because he understands that courage doesn't have to be physical—it can be simply standing up to someone and refusing to engage or retaliate.

A few weeks later, Atticus discuss Tom's case with Scout and Jem. He explains that Tom is at a prison farm 70 miles away, and he and Jem argue over whether rape should be a capital offense. Atticus insists he's fine with that, but he doesn't believe men should be sentenced to death on circumstantial evidence rather than eyewitness testimony. Jem stubbornly says that the jury is the problem, but Atticus argues that in his opinion, only judges should be able to set the penalty in capital cases. He says that the law won't change for years, if ever, and points out that the men on the jury are reasonable people, but they lose their heads when confronted with something like Tom's case—in this world, a white man will always win against a black man.

Atticus essentially proposes here that racism, not the courts or the law, is the problem. He suggests that when men have to make a decision like Tom's jury did, particularly when they are influenced by a group, they will fall back on their worst instincts and continue to behave in prejudiced and racist ways. His ability to see that the men on the jury are still reasonable people comes from his desire to see good in everybody, since he recognizes that most people contain elements that are both good and bad.


Jem maintains his position, but Atticus replies vehemently that he should always remember that a white man who cheats a black man is trash. He declares that one day, they're going to pay for this mistreatment. Jem asks why nobody like Miss Maudie ever sits on juries. Atticus points out that in Alabama, women can't serve, though he suggests that's not such a bad thing. Then, Atticus says that Maycomb's citizens are disinterested and afraid. Serving on a jury to decide a peer's fate could lose someone business—even if, in theory, a jury vote is secret. He says that men don't like to declare themselves and Jem mutters that Tom's jury decided quickly.

Atticus takes the long view here and suggests that it's wrong to believe things will never change—eventually, white people won't be able to get away with mistreating black people poorly, though those that try will still be immoral and wrong. When he points out that it might not be a bad thing that women can't serve on juries, it suggests that even Atticus may harbor some sexist sentiments—not even he is an entirely flawless person.


Atticus says quietly that that's not true—it took much longer than usual, and a Cunningham wanted to acquit Tom. Jem yelps, but Atticus says that the Cunninghams are loyal once you earn their loyalty. He says that if they'd had two Cunninghams, the jury would've been hung. Jem asks how Atticus could risk putting someone on the jury who wanted to kill him, but Atticus insists there's little risk—a man who's a little uncertain is a good bet. Scout wants to know this Cunningham's relationship to Mr. Cunningham. Atticus says they're double first cousins, which Scout can't make sense of.

Double cousins are, importantly, a real thing—they are the children of sisters who each marry a brother from another family. For the reader, the fact that these kinds of relationships exist in the Cunningham family point again to how close-knit the community is and how little new blood there is, which forms the basis for the tight and insular community that Scout recognizes.

Scout feels good about defending Walter at school and declares that she's going to invite Walter for dinner sometime. Aunt Alexandra puts her foot down. Scout is confused and says that the Cunninghams are good people, but Aunt Alexandra insists that they're not *their* kind of people—and Finch women aren't interested in them anyway. Scout presses further, but Aunt Alexandra maintains that Scout and Walter can't be friends because Walter is trash and Scout is already enough of a problem. Jem catches Scout before she can do anything and leads her to his bedroom. She cries and accepts his proffered Tootsie Roll.

Aunt Alexandra calling Walter trash is especially difficult for Scout, as she's only ever heard Atticus describe the Ewells that way. Especially now that Scout knows that a Cunningham wanted to acquit Tom, she understands that there's a world of difference between trash as Atticus defines it and just being from a poor farming family. Aunt Alexandra betrays here that she's extremely classist and thinks lowly of poor, uneducated people like the Cunninghams, no matter how kind they may be.

Scout studies Jem, who's getting taller and leaner. He shows her hair growing on his chest, which Scout can't see but compliments anyway. He tells Scout to not let Aunt Alexandra get on her nerves and asks if Scout would start sewing. Scout insists that she's upset that Aunt Alexandra called Walter trash, not about being a lady. Jem proposes that there are four kinds of people in Maycomb County: normal people like them and the neighbors, people like the Cunninghams, ones like the Ewells, and black people. Each group hates the person who comes next on the list. Scout asks why Tom's jury of Cunningham-like people didn't acquit Tom to spite the Ewells, but Jem waves this away.

Jem is coming from an understandable place in his attempt to organize Maycomb County's residents into categories, since this is how people in town likely make sense of themselves in relation to others. However, the way he groups people nevertheless betrays that he still holds troubling ideas of his own and isn't entirely sold on the idea that all people are the same inside—what separates them is skin color, education, money, and relationships. This becomes especially apparent when he dismisses Scout , since her question actually makes perfect sense given his divisions.

Jem says that he's seen Atticus enjoy fiddle music on the radio, but somehow, they're still different from the Cunninghams. Atticus once said that Aunt Alexandra is so concerned about the family because they have background but no money. Scout insists that the focus on being an old family is silly, but Jem insists that it has to do with how long a family has been literate. Scout points out that nobody is born knowing things and notes that Walter is smart, he just misses school to help on the farm. She thinks that people are just people. Looking angry, Jem says he used to think that, but he can't understand why people can't get along if they're the same. He understands now that Boo Radley might stay inside because he *wants* to.

Throughout the novel, liking fiddle music is code for being poor and provincial. As Jem tries to figure all of this out, Scout begins to take on the role that Dill did outside the courthouse when she suggests that people are just people. This shows that at this point, she's still a child, and after what she learned during the trial she understands that there's not much that innately divides groups of people. Rather, it's power and privilege that do that.

CHAPTER 24

One Sunday late in August, Jem and Dill swim naked at Barker's Eddy, leaving Scout with Calpurnia and Aunt Alexandra's missionary circle. She sits in the kitchen and listens to Mrs. Grace Merriweather report on the Mruna people, who apparently have earworms, no family, and get drunk on chewed-up tree bark. Aunt Alexandra asked that Scout join them for refreshments, but Scout decides to stay in the kitchen when she realizes that if she spills on her Sunday dress, Calpurnia will have to wash it again. Scout offers to help, so Calpurnia allows her to carry in the coffee pot. Aunt Alexandra again asks Scout to stay, and Scout feels apprehensive as she sits next to Miss Maudie.

Scout's realization that if she spills on her dress, Calpurnia will have to wash it represents another turning point in maturity for Scout, as it shows that she now cares about Calpurnia enough to do whatever she can to save her from having to perform extra work. In this sense, Scout is beginning to abandon some of her prejudice and treat Calpurnia with respect and care.

Miss Maudie asks Scout where her pants are and Scout says they're under her dress, not meaning to joke. Miss Maudie doesn't laugh like the other ladies, and Miss Stephanie teases Scout about wanting to grow up to be a lawyer. Miss Maudie touches Scout's hand gently and grips it tightly when Miss Stephanie says that Scout isn't girly enough. To be polite, Scout asks Mrs. Merriweather what they studied. Mrs. Merriweather goes on about the Mruna people and the missionary J. Grimes Everett, who is the only one who understands the poverty and the immorality of the Mrunas.

Miss Maudie is giving Scout a valuable lesson here in how to deal with rude people like Miss Stephanie—just as Atticus encouraged her to do when it came to defending her honor via fighting, it's better and more courageous in this case to simply ignore someone like Miss Stephanie and change the subject. Scout's willingness to sit and listen also shows that she's beginning to grow up, as does her ability to humor Mrs. Merriweather.

Mrs. Merriweather then goes on to say that she hates when black people sulk, as it ruins her day. She insists that Helen Robinson needs to get over it and the white residents of Maycomb need to forgive the black residents so the black residents will stop being so upset. Another woman insists that they can educate and evangelize to black people, but it's no use. Mrs. Merriweather agrees and says that some people think they were doing the right thing a while ago, but all they did was stir up the black people. Scout isn't paying attention, but Mrs. Merriweather's comment angers Miss Maudie. Aunt Alexandra changes the subject and gives Miss Maudie a look of thanks. Scout doesn't get it—she thinks that men aren't catty like women are.

Mrs. Merriweather betrays her racism here when she goes on about how she hates it when black people in her hometown sulk, while also expressing condescending pity toward tribes in Africa. In both cases, Mrs. Merriweather cannot accept black people as they are, or accept the fact that those in Maycomb have every right to be upset by what transpired in the courtroom. Her insult of Atticus also indicates that she doesn't think white people in Maycomb should ever offer their black neighbors genuine help or respect.

Mrs. Merriweather speaks poorly of desegregation efforts as Scout thinks that if she were the Governor of Alabama, she'd let Tom go. She remembers hearing Calpurnia talking the other day about how Tom gave up hope when he went to jail, but he doesn't understand that things could still change. Just then, Atticus gets home early. His face is white, and he asks to speak to Aunt Alexandra in the kitchen. Scout and Miss Maudie follow, and he explains that Tom is dead: he tried to climb over a fence in prison and the guards shot him. He wants Calpurnia to accompany him to tell Helen. Atticus says that Tom had a chance, but he must've decided to stop hoping for white men's chances.

Though Atticus can see that Tom had a chance, he understands that Tom has spent his life at the mercy of white men—and in the last year, found his life turned upside down and put in danger because a white man decided to punish him when he did nothing wrong. Except for Atticus's attempt to give Tom a fair trial, Tom had no reason to continue to trust that the white people in charge of his life were going to follow through and do the right thing.

Aunt Alexandra sits down, and Miss Maudie breathes heavily. Wearily, Aunt Alexandra says that she doesn't always approve of Atticus, but she wants to know what else "they" want from him. She says that Maycomb is letting him do what they're too afraid to do. Miss Maudie points out that the people who believe black people deserve a fair trial are trusting Atticus to do the right thing. Scout starts shaking. Miss Maudie tells her to stop and insists they need to return to the ladies. They gather themselves and return to the living room. Scout watches Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie serve. She picks up a plate of cookies, offers one to Mrs. Merriweather, and thinks that if Aunt Alexandra can be a lady right now, she can too.

Now, Scout begins to understand that being a lady as Miss Maudie and Aunt Alexandra define it has to do with putting on a smile and carrying on, rather than letting this tragedy rock the missionary circle and watching it descend into even more racist rhetoric. This continues to support Atticus's assertion that courage is standing up tall and carrying on, even if one knows they won't be successful. In this case, there's no real way for Scout to win, as there's nothing she can do to help Tom.

CHAPTER 25

One September evening, Jem makes Scout put a pill bug outside rather than squish it. He insists that the bug isn't bothering Scout, so there's no reason to kill it. Scout lies back on her cot, thinking of Dill, and remembers suddenly what Dill told her. He and Jem had been swimming and, as is customary, waved to a car for a ride home. It turned out to be Atticus and Calpurnia, and Atticus grudgingly allowed them to come to the Robinson cabin and told them what happened. A child fetched Helen as Atticus played with a toddler. Helen collapsed before Atticus said anything. Scout says that Maycomb was only interested in Tom's death for two days, and many believed that he showed his true colors when he tried to escape.

The assertion that Tom showed his true colors when he tried to escape speaks again to the racist stereotypes that propose that all black people are dishonest and untrustworthy. It's far more likely that Tom didn't see any other avenue to escape from his horrible, unfair circumstances and was broken mentally, something entirely understandable in his situation. That Maycomb is so disinterested in Tom's death shows again how little the town thinks of its black residents.

Following Tom's death, Mr. Underwood wrote a bitter article about how it's a sin to kill disabled people. He likened it to senselessly killing **songbirds**. Scout was confused, since Tom received due process, but then she realized that Tom was always going to be convicted. Meanwhile, Jem and Scout hear from Miss Stephanie that Mr. Ewell is thrilled with Tom's death and has said that there are "two more to go." Jem swears Scout to secrecy about this.

Mr. Underwood's article likens Tom to a songbird, which situates Tom as a kind of mockingbird in Atticus's moral adage to his children. Like an innocent mockingbird, Tom never did anything but help others and go through the world kindly and compassionately. Disability or not, Atticus would suggest that Tom didn't deserve to die, as he did nothing but good. In effectively sentencing Tom to his death, then, Maycomb has committed a terrible sin.

CHAPTER 26

School starts. Scout seldom sees Jem, since he's in 7th grade and stays out late carrying water for the football team. Scout often walks alone past Radley Place and feels horrible for tormenting Boo Radley. She remembers the gifts left in the oak tree and reasons that almost seeing him a couple times is good enough. She fantasizes about seeing him on the porch and greeting him politely, but Atticus warns her to not think about it and lets on that he knows about their midnight jaunt through the Radley yard. Boo is the least of Scout's worries, however, since classmates still taunt Scout and Jem about Atticus's role in Tom's case. Scout decides that people are strange, since they still reelect Atticus to the state legislature, so she mostly ignores them.

Feeling horrible for the way she treated Boo, and indeed recognizing that she, Jem, and Dill tormented him is another leap in Scout's maturity. Now, she's able to look back on her childish antics and see that she was actually prejudiced against someone who simply chooses to live differently, and that she made his life even more difficult because of that. When Maycomb still elects Atticus to the legislature, it creates the sense that not much is going to change in Maycomb, for better or worse.

One week during Scout's current events period, Cecil Jacobs brings in an article about how Hitler is persecuting Jewish and disabled people in Germany. Miss Gates gives the class a quick lesson on democracy and insists that Germany is a dictatorship, unlike the U.S. Because the U.S. is a democracy, nobody is persecuted because nobody is prejudiced. Scout has questions but doesn't feel comfortable asking Atticus. She seeks out Jem and notes that Miss Gates hates Hitler, but she also heard Miss Gates after the trial saying that the black folks in Maycomb are getting above themselves. She wants to know how Miss Gates can be so hypocritical. Furious, Jem tells Scout to not talk about the trial. Scout finds Atticus. He encourages her to be understanding of Jem, as he's trying to process something right now.

Scout recognizes that Miss Gates is extremely hypocritical and racist here. Miss Gates can see how awful it is that Hitler is persecuting Jewish people yet can't understand that in the U.S., black people also live in fear of the white people in charge—who are prejudiced, no matter what she says. Again, the fact that Scout can pick this out when Miss Gates cannot speaks to the novel's insistence that children have the ability to recognize these discrepancies, as they don't yet have to fit into polite society and assume the questionable views required to fit in.

CHAPTER 27

Just as Atticus promised, things settle down in October. Three things happen, however: first, Mr. Ewell gets a job with the WPA, but they fire him within days. Second, while Judge Taylor is home one Sunday night while his wife is at church, he hears an odd scratching noise. He sees a shadow disappearing and his screen door cut open. Third, Mr. Deas makes a job for Helen Robinson in his store. However, when Helen uses the main road to reach her job, Mr. Ewell taunts her. When Mr. Deas finds out, he threatens Mr. Ewell, but the next morning, Mr. Ewell tails Helen to work and whispers foully at her. One more stern conversation with Mr. Deas makes Mr. Ewell stop.

Mr. Ewell's behavior shows that Maycomb isn't the safe place Scout once thought it was, as Mr. Ewell is clearly out for revenge. His willingness to harass Helen Robinson in particular shows that Mr. Ewell is willing to pick on vulnerable individuals in order to make himself feel powerful and in charge. Mr. Deas's defense of Helen, meanwhile, reminds Scout again that there are still people in Maycomb willing to do the hard thing and stand up for what's right.

This makes Aunt Alexandra nervous, and she doesn't understand why Mr. Ewell is behaving this way when he won in court. Atticus points out that nobody really believed him or Mayella, and nobody thinks he's a hero like he wanted. He says that Judge Taylor made him look like a fool and treated him contemptuously.

Atticus's admission that nobody believed Mr. Ewell and Mayella reminds the reader that Tom was convicted simply because of racism and nothing else—and in Maycomb, acting as Judge Taylor did puts Taylor at risk, given the intensity of people's prejudice.

Things return to normal at school. Maycomb seems back to itself, though people remove pro-National Recovery Act stickers and, following last year's Halloween prank on two sisters in which local children hid all their furniture in their cellar (the only one in town), Maycomb decides to put on a carnival. Mrs. Merriweather composes a pageant about Maycomb County's agricultural products and casts Scout to play the part of a ham. The local seamstress makes Scout a costume out of chicken wire, which looks great but isn't something Scout can take on and off herself. She assumes that everyone will come, but Aunt Alexandra and Atticus refuse. Scout shows off her costume and Jem takes her to school.

While relatively benign in the grand scheme of the novel, notice that the children play this prank on the sisters simply because they don't fit the mold and have a cellar when nobody else does. In this sense, the children are still targeting those who are different and creating pressure for them to conform, even if in this case, it's more humorous and lighthearted. Regardless, at its core this is the same kind of thinking that led the jury to convict Tom Robinson.

CHAPTER 28

The weather is unusually warm, but there's no moon. Scout and Jem are no longer afraid of Boo Radley, but they laugh about the silly superstitions they used to believe in. They listen to a **mockingbird** as Scout trips on a root on their way into the schoolyard. Scout can't see anything, but Jem says he can tell they're under the oak tree because the ground is cool. They work their way across, and as they get close, Cecil Jacobs leaps out and scares them. At the auditorium, Scout and Cecil enjoy the booths until another student calls them to come backstage.

The Halloween carnival in particular paints a picture of idyllic small-town life, as the whole point of the event is to keep people safe and out of trouble. Cecil's prank on Scout and Jem, however, flags for the reader that the carnival cannot protect them everywhere—there are still places in their town where they can be unsafe, whether just from a classmate's prank or something more dangerous.

Backstage, Scout discovers that someone smashed her costume. Mrs. Merriweather fixes it and shoves Scout inside. Scout and Cecil sit and listen to Mrs. Merriweather narrate the history of the county, beginning with the first white settler and with lots of time given to Colonel Maycomb's exploits. It's boring, so Scout falls asleep. Scout doesn't wake up until she misses her cue and runs onstage to catch up with everyone else, which Judge Taylor finds hilarious. Mrs. Merriweather accuses Scout of ruining her pageant, but Jem makes Scout feel better. They start home, Scout still wearing her costume.

Mrs. Merriweather's confidence in putting on a pageant like this suggest that her racism and sense of superiority is widespread, and that her audience will be sympathetic to her views. Like much of the U.S, Maycomb's history likely includes violently pushing out Native Americans so that European settlers could colonize the land.

Jem grabs the hock end of the ham to help steady Scout in the dark. Scout realizes she forgot her shoes, but they see the auditorium lights go out before they can go back. Jem starts to say something but doesn't finish. He admits a minute later that he thinks he heard something. Scout teases him, but she understands that he's not joking. They stop and listen, but they don't hear anything. Jem insists it must be Cecil following them—the stripes on the ham costume are reflective and easy to see. Scout turns and shouts an insult at Cecil, but Cecil doesn't acknowledge it. This isn't like Cecil.

In this situation, Jem has to take Atticus's lessons on courage and implement them, as there's not much he can do in the pitch dark to protect himself or Scout except to continue walking. The fact that someone might be following them shows again that Maycomb isn't as safe and innocuous as Scout and Jem once thought, as they clearly didn't think that this was going to be a dangerous walk home.


Jem stops Scout and softly asks if she can take off her ham costume. She can't, so they decide to leave it on. Jem insists he's not afraid and they're almost to the road. They shuffle slowly and Scout can hear that whoever's following them sounds like they're wearing thick pants and heavy shoes. She feels the cold sand and knows they're near the oak. They stop, but their follower rushes them. Jem shouts for Scout to run, but Scout falls. Jem pulls her up and holds her steady as they run, but near the road, Jem falls back and Scout hears a crunch and Jem scream. Scout runs into their attacker's stomach and he begins to choke her. Suddenly, her attacker flies backwards. Scout realizes that there are four people under the tree.

Keep in mind that because Scout is inside her ham costume, she can't see and can't effectively interpret what's going on here. This makes her even more vulnerable, as there's no way for her to identify her attacker or a way out of this situation. Further, consider that whoever's attacking them is attacking individuals the novel might characterize as mockingbirds—children, within the world of the novel, are innocent and defenseless, and thus attacking them is something unspeakably evil.



Scout hears a man breathing heavily and pulling something to the road. She begins to look for Jem but only finds a man who smells like whiskey. Scout wanders toward the road and sees a man carrying Jem to her house. Atticus ushers him in, Aunt Alexandra receives Scout, and they call for Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Tate. Scout asks if Jem is dead, but Atticus assures her he's just unconscious. Aunt Alexandra extricates Scout from her costume. Dr. Reynolds arrives.

In the aftermath of the assault, Scout sees her immediate family and community rally around her and Jem, showing her that while Maycomb clearly has a dark side, there are still people who believe in its capacity for good and will do anything to protect the most vulnerable members of the population.

Mr. Tate arrives as Dr. Reynolds leaves, and he and Scout enter Jem's room. Atticus explains that Dr. Reynolds put Jem out to keep him comfortable. Scout sees the man who brought in Jem, but she doesn't recognize him. Mr. Tate asks everyone to sit down, except for the man who brought Jem in. Mr. Tate says that he found Scout's dress, pieces of her costume, and Mr. Ewell, dead with a kitchen knife in his ribs.

Finding Mr. Ewell's body suggests that, in a way, Mr. Ewell is paying for what he did to Tom. He now won't be able to ruin or take anyone else's life. Note, too, that Scout just accepts the man who saved her and doesn't ask questions, suggesting that she recognizes her community is bigger and better than she thought.

CHAPTER 29

Scout thinks that Atticus looks somehow old. Mr. Tate asks to look at Jem's injuries while Scout tells them what happened, and Aunt Alexandra excuses herself. Scout puts her head in Atticus's lap and describes their walk, thinking it was Cecil following them, yelling, and her visible costume. Mr. Tate inspects the costume and declares that it probably saved Scout's life. Atticus says that Mr. Ewell was out of his mind, but Mr. Tate insists that Mr. Ewell was just mean, drunk, and cowardly enough to kill children. Scout resumes her story, explains how she interpreted the scuffle, and points to the man in the corner who carried Jem away. Scout looks at the sickly man, who smiles timidly at her. Through tears, Scout greets Boo Radley.

Atticus still wants to believe that Mr. Ewell had some good in him, but Mr. Tate insists that Mr. Ewell is one of the few people or things in life that's purely evil. With this, the novel makes the case that just as there are creatures like mockingbirds who are pure good, there are also select elements that are just evil. When Scout greets Boo Radley in this way, it makes it clear that she's no longer afraid of him and of all the ways that he's different. She can now confront her own prejudiced thoughts and set them aside.

CHAPTER 30

Atticus corrects Scout and blandly introduces her to Arthur Radley. Embarrassed, Scout runs to Jem's bedside and notices Boo smile, but Atticus cautions Scout to not touch Jem. Dr. Reynolds returns and greets Boo, and Scout realizes that Boo must also get sick. Dr. Reynolds shoos everyone out and Atticus suggests they go to the porch. Scout leads Boo down to the hall to the porch and the rocking chair in shadow. She sits beside him and Atticus says that this will come to the county court, but Jem is only 13 and it was self-defense. Mr. Tate asks incredulously if Atticus really thinks that Jem killed Mr. Ewell, and he insists that Jem didn't do it.

Realizing that Boo must get sick, too, and that Dr. Reynolds must've treated him at some point opens Scout's eyes yet again to the fact that even people who seem wildly different from her aren't really so different—they get sick and they care for their neighbors, just like Scout does. Scout's choice to attach herself to Boo and make sure he's comfortable indicates that she's also learning how to be a polite adult and a mature caretaker.

Scout watches in fascination as Mr. Tate and Atticus argue. She's not quite sure what exactly they're fighting for or about. Mr. Tate says that Mr. Ewell fell on his knife, but Atticus insists that they can't hush this up—it'd be horrible for Jem, and Atticus doesn't want to have to act one way in public and one way at home. Mr. Tate pulls out a switchblade knife and suggests that Scout was too scared to know what happened. When Atticus pushes back, Mr. Tate says he's not thinking of Jem and points out that with a broken arm, Jem wouldn't have been able to tackle and kill an adult.

Mr. Tate's reasoning for why Jem couldn't have killed Mr. Ewell is almost exactly the same as Atticus's case for Tom Robinson's innocence. This flags for the reader that, at least in some sense, Mr. Tate has the right idea. Atticus wants to do the right thing here by making Jem deal with the aftermath of the attack, but Mr. Tate insists that Atticus isn't thinking about this properly if he thinks that Jem did anything wrong.

Atticus asks where Mr. Tate got the switchblade. Coolly, Mr. Tate says he confiscated it from a drunk man, and that Mr. Ewell probably found the kitchen knife in the dump. Mr. Tate says that it's his choice, not Atticus's, and that Jem didn't do anything. With his back to everyone on the porch, Mr. Tate says that there's a black boy dead for no reason and now, the man who's responsible is dead. He says they need to let the dead bury the dead, and he won't stand for people making a fuss over the person who saved Scout and Jem. He declares once more that Mr. Ewell fell on his knife and drives away. Atticus asks if Scout can understand that Mr. Ewell fell on his knife. Scout says she agrees—the alternative would be like killing a **mockingbird**. Atticus thanks Boo for saving his children.

Especially once the adults establish the truth of what happened—that Boo killed Mr. Ewell, probably with his own kitchen knife—it becomes clear that Mr. Tate probably picked up the switchblade off of Mr. Ewell's body before he sent Dr. Reynolds out to look. Mr. Tate also suggests they have the opportunity to create some semblance of justice for Tom Robinson by deciding on this story that's not entirely truthful, but that restores the safety of Maycomb.

CHAPTER 31

Boo stands and coughs. Scout leads him to Jem's room so he can say goodnight. Scout takes Boo's hand, leads him to Jem's bed, and encourages him to stroke Jem's hair. When he's ready to leave, Scout leads him to the porch. There, Boo whispers and asks Scout to lead him home. Scout knows she can't be seen leading him, so she asks him to bend his arm, so it looks like he's escorting her. She leads him right to his front door and never sees him again. Scout thinks that neighbors give, and Boo gave them gifts and their lives—but they never returned the favor, which makes Scout feels sad.

Scout's understanding that she can't just lead Boo home by the hand speaks to how much she's grown since the start of the novel. Now, she recognizes the power of at least creating the appearance that she's a lady and that her companion, whomever that might be, is a gentleman. She also understands that even if Boo is different, he's their neighbor through and through—and that she's been cruel by not being more neighborly in return.

Scout stands on the front porch and looks out. She stands in front of the window and in her mind, watches Miss Stephanie gossip with Miss Rachel while Miss Maudie gardens and children scamper around. She can see children playing in the yard and in the fall, she sees them find gifts in the tree. She sees the fire, a man shooting a dog, and the children's hearts break. Scout sees that tonight, Boo's children needed him. She thinks that Atticus was right—it's impossible to know a person until one stands in their shoes, but she thinks that standing on the Radley porch is enough.

Even though Scout isn't entirely capable of understanding Boo's life, what she sees when she stands on the Radley porch is a good start as she goes on to grow up and at some point in the future, understand that all people, no matter how different they may seem, are all the same on the inside. The fact that she was terrified the last time she was near the porch also adds perspective, as it shows how much she's grown since then.

Scout feels old on her walk home. She knows that Jem will be furious he missed seeing Boo Radley and thinks that there's nothing more for them to learn except algebra. She runs upstairs and finds Atticus in Jem's room. He tries to send her to bed but then allows her to stay. Sleepily, Scout asks what Atticus is reading, and Atticus shows her *The Gray Ghost*. He says it's one of the few things he hasn't read. When Scout asks Atticus to read it aloud, Atticus insists it's too scary and she's had enough fright for one night, but Scout insists that she and Jem weren't scared. She declares that nothing's scary, except in books. Atticus begins to read out loud.

The aside that there's nothing more to learn but algebra is a final instance of comic relief at the expense of Scout's innocence—there is, of course, much more for her to learn besides math. However, she now truly understands the power of interrogating her prejudice and recognizing the dignity of others, even if those other people might not always make perfect sense to her.

Scout falls asleep and wakes when Atticus nudges her with his toe. She mutters the gist of the story as Atticus leads her to bed, puts on her pajamas, and tucks her in. Scout says that the story is about kids who thought someone was messing up their clubhouse, but when they finally saw the culprit, he was innocent and very nice. Atticus says that most people are nice when you get to know them. He spends the rest of the night in Jem's room.

Atticus's final words of advice as he tucks Scout in remind her and the reader that it's important (as he's told Scout before) to put oneself in another's skin before jumping to conclusions. Seeing another person as they are, he suggests, is one of the most powerful ways to promote compassion and make the world a better and more welcoming place for everyone.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Florman, Ben. "*To Kill a Mockingbird*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 22 Jul 2013. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Florman, Ben. "*To Kill a Mockingbird*." LitCharts LLC, July 22, 2013. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird.

To cite any of the quotes from *To Kill a Mockingbird* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Lee, Harper. To Kill a Mockingbird. Warner Books. 1960.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Lee, Harper. To Kill a Mockingbird. New York: Warner Books. 1960.