To Kill a Mockingbird

Study Guide by Course Hero

What's Inside

Book Basics

AUTHOR
Harper Lee

YEAR PUBLISHED
1960

GENRE
Drama, Fiction

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR
To Kill a Mockingbird is narrated in first-person point of view from the perspective of Scout Finch. At the opening of the novel Scout is six years old and living in Great Depression–era Alabama. Scout gives the unique perspective of a child as she talks about the racial and social relations in her town of Maycomb. Her innocence adds texture and poignancy to the story. Although she doesn't fully understand what's going on around her, she gives readers enough information to interpret themselves.

TENSE
To Kill a Mockingbird is told primarily in the past tense.

ABOUT THE TITLE
To Kill a Mockingbird is a reference to one of the novel's primary symbols: the mockingbird, a symbol of innocence.

In Context

Published in 1960, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* was an immediate success, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. The novel was turned into a popular motion picture in 1962. At the Academy Awards actor Gregory Peck won an Oscar for his portrayal of Atticus Finch.

This tale of racism and social injustice is especially poignant because of its six-year-old narrator, Scout Finch, who shares the events through her innocent but observant eyes.

What has solidified the novel as one of the most influential in American literature is its treatment of race relations, as seen in Tom Robinson's rape case. The novel's other subplot focuses on prejudice against the town's reclusive resident Boo Radley. These two subplots converge to convey powerful themes of tolerance and justice.

The novel and movie were released during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement. The first sit-in protest against segregation occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1960. Three years after that lunch counter sit-in, Martin Luther King Jr. penned his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," a defense of nonviolent civil disobedience. A few months later he led the March on Washington and

delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. That a book and a film could resonate with the country amid such controversy suggested that the movement toward equality, as Atticus said, might be "the shadow of a beginning."

To Kill a Mockingbird remains a thought-provoking and timely tale of cultural struggle as the United States continues to work toward equality on all fronts.

Author Biography

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama, the same state in which *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set. She was the youngest of four children born to Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Cunningham Finch Lee.

Certain aspects of Lee's upbringing seem to have planted the seeds for the characters and story found in the novel. Much like Scout, Lee was a professed tomboy whose father—thought to be the inspiration of Atticus Finch—was also a lawyer and legislator who had once defended two black men accused of murdering a white man. As a child she often sat in on court proceedings in which her father practiced.

It's often speculated that Lee's childhood friend and next-door neighbor, Truman Streckfus Persons—who would grow up to be famed author Truman Capote—was the inspiration for Dill (Charles Baker Harris).

Lee finished high school and enrolled in Huntingdon College in 1944. There she occasionally wrote articles for the college newspaper. The following year she transferred to law school at the University of Alabama, inspired by her father's legal career. She also continued her interest in writing, contributing to the university's student magazine and eventually becoming its editor. The summer before her senior year, she studied as an exchange student at the University of Oxford in England. There she began to formulate a plan for the future: her career would be in writing, not the law.

In 1949 after a final semester at the University of Alabama, she moved to New York City to pursue a literary career. There she fell in again with her childhood friend, Truman Capote. To support herself while writing, she served as Capote's research assistant, traveling with him to Holcomb, Kansas, where they worked on Capote's nonfiction narrative *In Cold Blood*.

Lee earned her own literary achievement in 1960 with the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for which she won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. Despite the critical and commercial success, Lee didn't publish any more books until 2015. Her second novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, features many of the same characters as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, although it is set 20 years after that novel's events. Although *Go Set a Watchman* was initially publicized as a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book is actually a first draft of Lee's prize-winning novel. *When Go Set a Watchman* was rejected for publication in 1957, Lee's editor suggested she revise the story to focus on the character of Scout. Two years later *To Kill a Mockingbird* was accepted for publication.

Lee's death at age 89 on February 19, 2016, prompted a national outpouring of grief and admiration for the author and her monumental work.

Characters

Scout

Jean Louise Finch is the daughter of widowed lawyer Atticus Finch. Known affectionately by her nickname, Scout is nearly six years old as the story begins. A tomboy through and through, Scout is eager, inquisitive, and observant. Her father teaches her to read at an early age, so she has the ability to soak up information wherever she finds it. She is mature and wise far beyond her years, which doesn't always sit well with the adult citizens of Maycomb. Even at six Scout shows herself to be open-minded and openhearted. She sees people as individuals and does not prejudge them according to the color of their skin. Scout goes into situations expecting as much goodwill as she brings, and has difficulty coping with deceit. By the book's end when she is nine, she learns to deal with the fact that the world is not as kind or honorable as she grew up believing.

Jem

Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) is Scout's older brother, 10 years old at the novel's beginning. He is as wildly imaginative and curious as Scout, especially when it comes to the reclusive

Boo Radley, but he also has the capacity to be thoughtful and considerate. Jem is more introspective than other boys his age, perhaps because he misses his mother (who died three to four years before the events of the book). Jem's thoughtfulness is characterized by a deliberate and deep ability to think. At times we see the youthful Jem at war with the Jem who is growing up; this dichotomy, or split personality, makes his character all the more real.

Atticus

Atticus Finch is a lawyer in Maycomb, Alabama, and the widowed father of Jem and Scout. Atticus is well-respected personally and professionally. He is an honest man with an open heart, a quick and fair mind, and a gentle disposition. At the same time Atticus is strong and focused in everything he does. His levelheadedness and legal training give him a solid backbone and strength of conviction, particularly during Tom's racially fueled rape case. Neighbor Miss Maudie tells Jem and Scout that Maycomb citizens are paying a great compliment to their father by placing faith in him to do the right thing. Throughout the novel Atticus shows himself capable of living up to that trust.

Calpurnia

Calpurnia has been the Finch family cook since Jem was born. When Atticus's wife died, she became a mother figure of sorts for the kids and a strict disciplinarian. Atticus considers her an integral member of the family. Her presence gives Jem and Scout insight into the African American community and a greater understanding of the racial tension in Maycomb. Calpurnia is a strong character, a bit like a female version of Atticus. While she may not have extensive formal schooling, she has gained much wisdom from life's experiences. She, like Atticus, isn't quick to judge, a rare quality in the racially divided town of Maycomb. Calpurnia serves as a bridge between the black and white communities. She knows Tom Robinson, which makes the case all the more personal for Atticus.

Boo Radley

Arthur Radley, or Boo, is the reclusive neighborhood legend who becomes the object of Jem, Scout, and Dill's obsession over the summer. He lives three doors down from the Finches in a foreboding house, where he hasn't been seen for years. According to local lore Boo's father kept him imprisoned in the house after Boo got into legal troubles as a teenager. The children's fear and prejudice against Boo runs parallel with the town's prejudice against Tom Robinson, the black man accused of raping a white woman. But the real Boo is quite a different person than the town believes. By the end of the novel the children have a more nuanced and sympathetic opinion of the former object of their curiosity and fear.

Dill

Charles Baker Harris, or Dill, is the six-year-old nephew of Rachel Haverford, the Finches' next-door neighbor. Jem and Scout meet him at the beginning of the novel when he comes to stay for the summer. Dill becomes a good friend to both Jem and Scout, and Atticus and Calpurnia regard him as one of their own. Dill, who is being shuttled among relatives after his mother remarries, protects himself with a vivid imagination. When he hears the story of Boo Radley, he entices Jem and Scout to help him lure the reclusive Boo from his house.

Bob Ewell

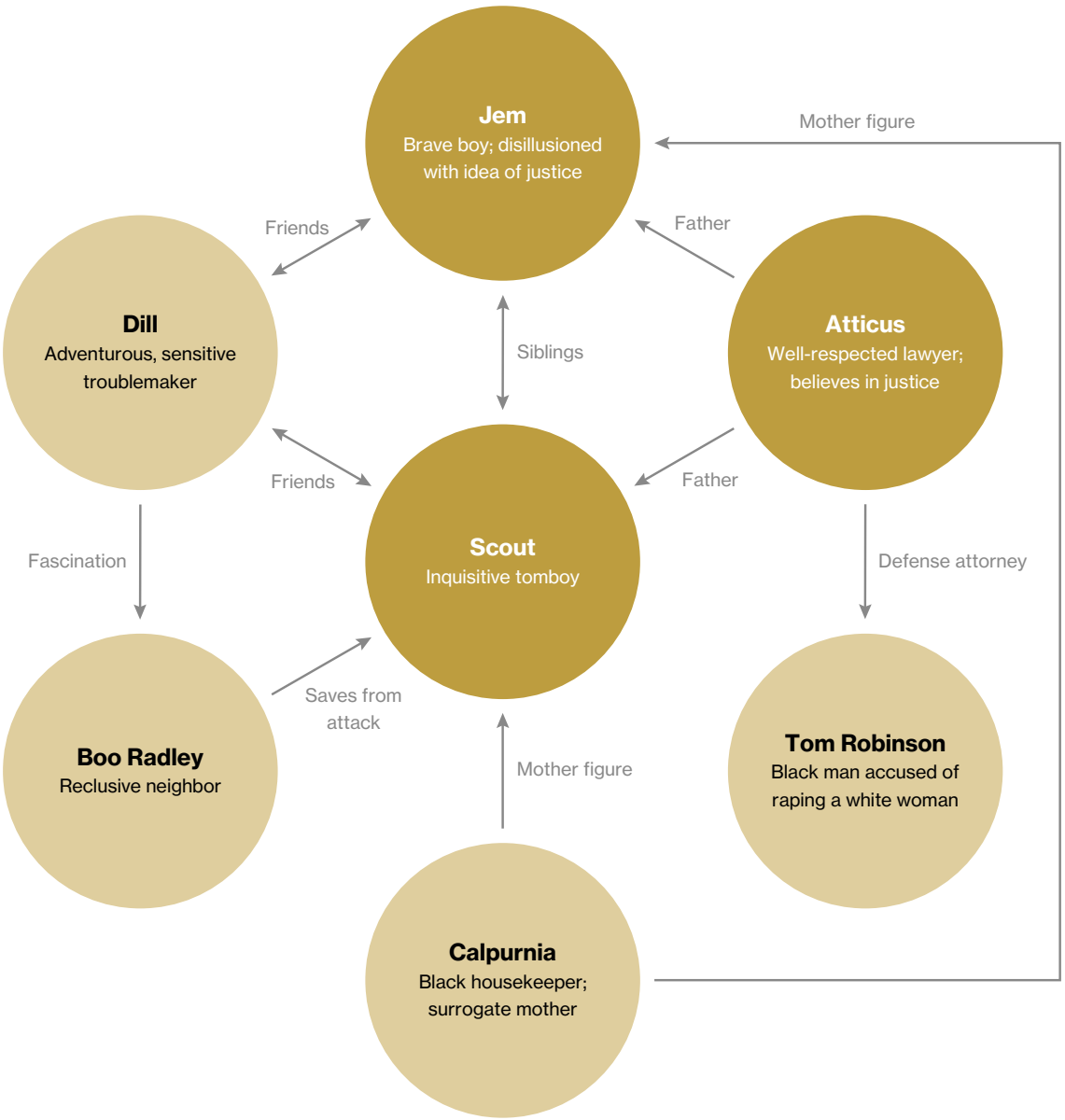
Bob Ewell is the father of Mayella Ewell and Tom Robinson's accuser. He is jobless, racist, and tends to drink away the relief checks that are meant to feed his many children. As the trial unfolds he becomes even more belligerent and vicious toward Atticus Finch for defending Tom Robinson. He is a racist because it gives him someone to look down on; he has no softness, no kindness, and no goodwill. He is unable to see the value of pulling himself up, even when the opportunity presents itself. In particular he has great feelings of inferiority, which, in this case, are aroused by Tom Robinson, who says at one point in the trial that he feels sorry for Mayella Ewell because she has no one to help her. Out of ignorance, Bob Ewell finds Tom Robinson's compassion for his daughter an insult to him and his family.

Tom Robinson

Tom Robinson is the black man accused of raping Mayella Ewell. A good-hearted man of about 25, Tom is married, has

children, and is known to be honest and hard-working. It is Tom's misfortune to be living in proximity to the Ewells. When Mayella Ewell asks for his help with small tasks, he obliges because he knows her father never helps her. Unfortunately it's Tom's thoughtfulness that puts him in Bob Ewell's sights where, like the mockingbird killed for sport, he is eventually destroyed.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Scout	Scout Finch is the child narrator of the novel and an intelligent tomboy.
Jem	Jem Finch is Scout's older brother who becomes disillusioned with the idea of justice.
Atticus	Atticus Finch is an honorable and well-respected lawyer who believes in doing the right thing.
Calpurnia	Calpurnia is the cook and housekeeper for the Finch family. She helps care for the children and also provides insight into the black community.
Boo Radley	Boo Radley is a reclusive neighbor and the object of the children's fascination.
Dill	Dill is a young friend of the Finch children; he protects his vulnerable emotions with a vivid imagination.
Bob Ewell	Bob Ewell is one of many racists in Maycomb and is Tom Robinson's accuser.
Tom Robinson	Tom Robinson is the black man Atticus defends against charges of raping a white woman.
Aunt Alexandra	Aunt Alexandra (Hancock) is Atticus's sister who moves in and helps raise the children during Tom's trial.
Dick Avery	Dick Avery is the boarding neighbor down the street who has sneezing attacks.
Miss Caroline	Miss Caroline (Fisher) is Scout's first-grade teacher who interacts with Burris Ewell and Walter Cunningham.
Stephanie Crawford	Stephanie Crawford is the gossipy neighbor on the block.
Walter Cunningham Jr.	Walter Cunningham Jr. is Scout's poverty-stricken classmate who is embarrassed by Miss Caroline.
Walter Cunningham Sr.	Walter Cunningham Sr. is the father of Scout's classmate and a member of the lynch mob.
Link Deas	Link Deas is Tom Robinson's employer who speaks up for him during the trial.
Mrs. Dubose	Mrs. Dubose is the intimidating widow and morphine addict Jem is forced to read to.
Burris Ewell	Burris Ewell is Bob Ewell's son and Mayella Ewell's brother. He is also Scout's bullying classmate who has little self-awareness.
Mayella Ewell	Mayella Ewell is the daughter of Bob Ewell who makes a false rape accusation against Tom Robinson.
Cousin Francis	Cousin Francis (Hancock) is Aunt Alexandra's grandson. He and the Finch children do not get along, and Scout fights with him after he badgers her about Atticus's defense of Tom Robinson.
Miss Gates	Miss Gates is Scout's third-grade teacher who deplores Hitler for his persecution of the Jews. Yet when Tom is convicted she states, "It's time somebody taught 'em a lesson."
Mr. Gilmer	Mr. Gilmer is the prosecuting attorney in Tom Robinson's trial.
Rachel Haverford	Rachel Haverford is the Finches' next-door neighbor and Dill's aunt.
Uncle Jack	Uncle Jack (Finch) is Atticus's childless younger brother, who he supported through medical school.

Cecil Jacobs	Cecil Jacobs is Scout's classmate who lives at the end of the street. He and Scout get into a fight when Cecil makes fun of Atticus for defending Tom Robinson.
Uncle Jimmy	Uncle Jimmy (Hancock) is Aunt Alexandra's husband.
Chuck Little	Chuck Little is Scout's classmate who calms Miss Caroline when the teacher is frightened by Burris Ewell's head lice.
Miss Maudie	Miss Maudie (Atkinson) is the widowed neighbor across the street whose house burns down.
Grace Merriweather	A member of Aunt Alexandra's Missionary Society, she is concerned with the plight of the Mruna tribe in Africa but oblivious to the African American community in Maycomb.
Nathan Radley	Nathan Radley is Boo's older brother who shoots at the Finch children when they trespass on his property.
Dolphus Raymond	Dolphus Raymond is a property owner who lives on the outskirts of town with his mixed-race family. He pretends to be an alcoholic to discourage prying comments about his family.
Dr. Reynolds	Dr. Reynolds is a local doctor and progressive thinker.
Helen Robinson	Helen Robinson is the wife of Tom Robinson; she is harassed by Bob Ewell.
Reverend Sykes	Reverend Sykes is the head of the church Calpurnia attends.
Heck Tate	Heck Tate is the sheriff of Maycomb County.
Judge Taylor	Judge Taylor presides over the trial of Tom Robinson; Bob Ewell later attempts to break into the judge's house.
Braxton Underwood	Braxton Underwood is the publisher of the local paper.

Plot Summary

To Kill a Mockingbird takes place between 1933 and 1935 in Maycomb, a fictitious small town in Alabama. Jean Louise Finch, better known as Scout, is the inquisitive and imaginative tomboy daughter of lawyer Atticus Finch. Although narrator Scout is grown, she tells her story through the eyes of her six-year-old self.

Scout's narration begins with an intimate view of her family. She introduces her father, Atticus, a widower who is raising his children with the help of Calpurnia, the family cook. Although an employee, Calpurnia is treated as a member of the family and a sort of surrogate mother to the kids.

As the story progresses Scout introduces the residents of Maycomb. She and Jem soon meet Dill, the small, white-haired, six-year-old nephew of Miss Rachel Haverford, the Finch's next-door neighbor.

While Scout is initially apprehensive of Dill, Jem accepts him into their group after discovering he's seen the movie *Dracula.* Dill soon grows bored of putting on plays with Jem and Scout and becomes fascinated with the sensational stories about Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbor who, according to Jem, "dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch." Dill's fascination soon grows into obsession as he plots to lure Boo outside with help from Jem and Scout.

Summer ends and Dill is sent back home to Mississippi. Scout is looking forward to her first day of school. At this point Scout's classmates are introduced—a unique group of characters who set the tone for the social division seen throughout the rest of the book.

One day while Scout is walking home from school, she sees something shiny in the knothole of an oak tree in front of the Radley house. This turns out to be two sticks of gum in tinfoil wrappers. Who left them is a mystery, but when she and Jem subsequently find more treasures left in the tree it becomes apparent that the gifts are meant for them, and they suspect that Boo Radley is the gift giver.

Jem and Scout's lives become more complicated when Atticus

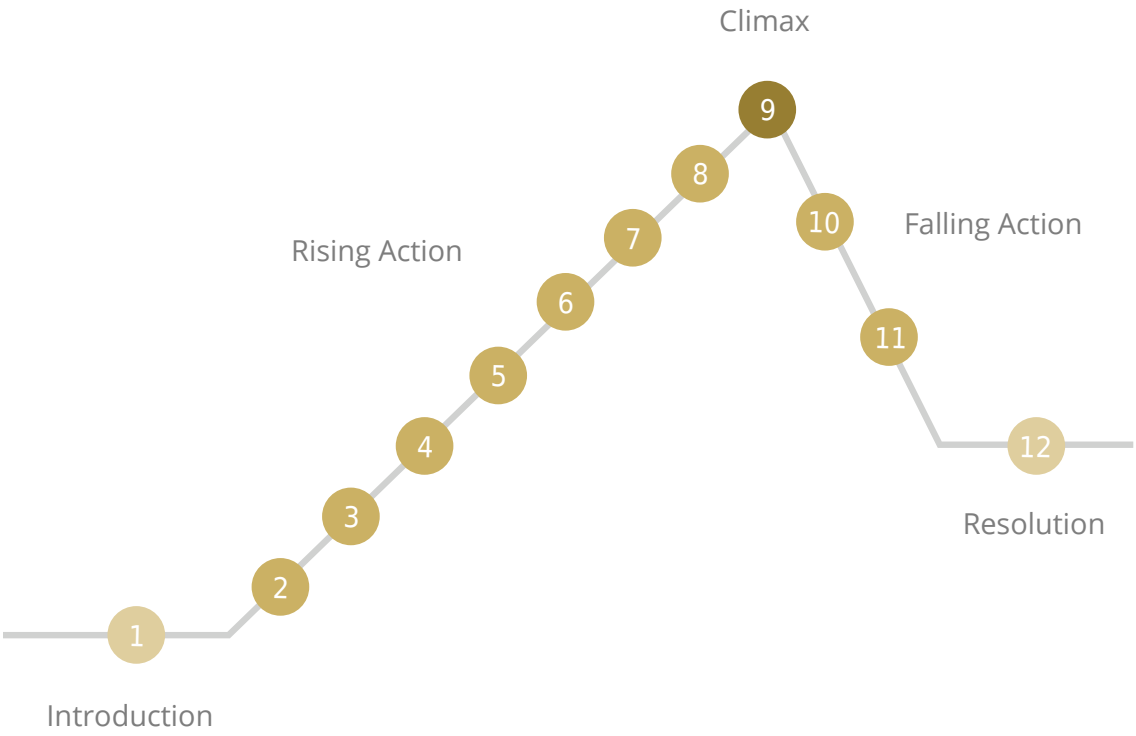
agrees to defend Tom Robinson, a black man who has been accused of raping Mayella Ewell, the 19-year-old daughter of Bob Ewell. Although many of Maycomb's more enlightened residents are certain of Tom Robinson's innocence, the community's pervasive racism means that Tom has little chance of a fair trial. Despite knowing he cannot win the trial—a matter his children don't understand—Atticus knows he must nonetheless defend Tom.

During the trial it becomes apparent that Mayella's father is the true criminal, having physically and sexually abused her. Ewell is enraged that Atticus has directed the community's attention toward him, and even though Tom is convicted Ewell publicly threatens Atticus. When Tom Robinson is killed trying to escape from prison Ewell says, "one down and about two more to go," referring to his plan to kill Scout and Jem.

The two plots converge when Ewell finally makes his move. Drunk and angry, he stalks Jem and Scout one evening as they make their way home after a school play. Still in costume as a ham, Scout is defenseless when she and Jem are attacked by an assailant in the dark cover of the trees just outside the Radley house. After the scuffle escalates she hears Jem cry out in pain. That's when she sees a silhouette of a second man—not the attacker—carrying Jem toward the Finch home.

Sheriff Tate discovers Bob Ewell dead from a stab wound where the attack occurred. Although it is clear that Boo Radley is the mysterious figure who saved Jem and Scout, Atticus and Sheriff Tate cover for Radley by saying Ewell fell on his own knife. Boo stays with the Finches that evening until he knows Jem is safe from harm. He then asks Scout to walk him home, and she does, her hand resting gently on his arm like a lady escorted by a gentlemen. When Boo enters the Radley house and closes the door, that is the last she sees of him, but the lessons that he, Tom Robinson, and Atticus have taught her will resound across her lifetime.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Dill arrives; characters, relationships are introduced.

Rising Action

2. Gifts begin appearing in the knot-hole.

3. Nathan Radley shoots at the Finch kids.

4. Miss Maudie's house burns down.

5. Atticus shoots Tim Johnson.

6. Aunt Alexandra moves in.

7. The lynch mob confronts Atticus outside the prison.

8. At Tom's trial, characters give their testimonies.

Climax

9. Tom Robinson is found guilty.

Falling Action

10. Tom is shot trying to escape prison.

11. Bob Ewell attacks the Finch children.

Resolution

12. Scout finally meets Boo Radley.

Timeline of Events

September 1933

Scout begins school.

October 1934

Knot-hole is cemented.

December 1934

Miss Maudie's house burns down.

Spring 1935

Mrs. Dubose dies.

Summer 1935

The Finches stop the lynch mob.

August 1935

Tom Robinson is found guilty.

Summer 1933

Dill arrives and befriends Scout and Jem.

Spring 1934

The children begin finding gifts in the knot-hole.

November 1934

Tom Robinson is arrested.

February 1935

Atticus shoots the rabid dog.

Summer 1935

Dill runs away from home and comes to Maycomb.

July/August 1935

Tom Robinson's trial begins.

August/September 1935

October 1935

Boo saves Scout and Jem from Bob Ewell's Halloween attack.

Tom Robinson is shot trying to escape.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

Summary

To Kill a Mockingbird opens with Scout recalling the events leading up to when her brother, Jem, broke his arm when he was almost 13.

Scout provides readers with the backstory of her family, a long line of southerners that dates back to a fur trader named Simon Finch from Cornwall, England. After crossing the Atlantic Finch eventually made his way up the Alabama River and homesteaded Finch's Landing some 40 miles above Saint Stephens, Alabama. This is where her father, Atticus, and his two siblings grew up.

Scout brings us into present-day Maycomb, Alabama, the small town she lives in with her widowed father, 10-year-old brother Jem, and Calpurnia, the family cook. It's summertime in Maycomb, and since there isn't much to do six-year-old Scout and Jem put on plays and run around near their house. Calpurnia, a strict disciplinarian, has set boundaries for how far they can roam from the house. This introduces the geography of their neighborhood—specifically the Radley Place.

The Radleys are a reclusive family who live three doors down from the Finch home. Many years ago the younger boy, Arthur (Boo), fell in with the wrong crowd while in his teens. On one particularly wild evening he and the other boys got in enough trouble to be sentenced to a state school. Mr. Radley asked the judge if Boo could be released into his custody, promising the boy would cause no further trouble. When Mr. Radley left the courthouse with Boo in tow, it was the last anyone saw of Boo for 15 years.

What happened next became the story out of which neighborhood legends grew. While under house arrest, Boo, who had been working on a scrapbook, attacked his father, stabbing him in the leg with scissors. Mrs. Radley ran from the house screaming that Boo was trying to kill them. The police were called, and Arthur, who was found in the living room still working on his scrapbook, was locked in the courthouse basement. Eventually Arthur was transitioned back home, where he'd been imprisoned ever since.

When old Mr. Radley died the older son, Nathan, returned from Florida and picked up where his father left off, keeping Boo locked in the house. Over the years stories surrounding Boo and the Radley family grew more ridiculous, but Maycomb residents were scared of the Radleys nonetheless. People wouldn't walk past the home at night when Boo was said to roam; stealthy crimes around town were attributed to him; plants that died in a cold snap were said to have been breathed on by Boo; pecans that fell from the Radley trees were thought to be poisonous.

The focus on Boo Radley becomes suddenly more intense when Jem and Scout meet Charles Baker Harris, or "Dill," when he comes to stay next door with his aunt, Rachel Haverford. Dill, who strikes up an instant friendship with Jem and Scout, is fascinated by the stories, and he makes plans to lure Boo out of the house.

Analysis

Chapter 1 begins building the framework of the story by introducing not only several characters and settings but also the themes of class, race, and equality versus inequality. As readers will learn later, class distinctions mean a great deal to Aunt Alexandra but are of little importance to Atticus, Scout, and Jem Finch. The Finch family's position in society, based on ancestor Simon Finch's establishment of Finch's Landing, has its roots in slavery. Simon Finch has ignored his religious teaching and purchased slaves—whose labor built his homestead.

So far Scout is untouched by concerns of race, class, and other more adult concepts. She, Jem, and Dill spend the summer playing and, if they think of any moral concepts, they tend to think in terms of good and evil. According to local gossip Boo Radley is evil, and their curiosity is fired up to see what evil looks like. This view of Boo Radley—someone the town sees as different—is an introduction to the theme of equality versus inequality. Because the people of Maycomb perceive Boo as different from themselves, they make an automatic judgment about him.

Chapter 2

Summary

September comes and Dill leaves for home in Meridian, Mississippi, just before school starts for Jem and Scout. Scout is entering first grade, and she's looking forward to it after many days of watching the other schoolchildren from her treehouse. However, her first day starts off rough.

Her teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, becomes frustrated when she discovers Scout is already an avid reader and writer. She tells Scout that her father should stop teaching her because he doesn't know how to teach. New to Maycomb, Miss Fisher knows little about the town's social structure, resulting in an awkward confrontation with Walter Cunningham, a student who comes from an extremely poor family. Miss Caroline offers to buy him lunch since he didn't bring any, but he has no means of paying her back. Scout explains to Miss Fisher that the Cunninghams don't take anything they can't pay for. Although Scout's explanation is well intended, Miss Caroline sends her to stand in the corner, confusing Scout about what she thought was a helpful interruption.

Analysis

Chapter 2 captures what an observant and intelligent six-year-old Scout is. Scout can read and write, something her new teacher Miss Caroline doesn't appreciate. As the story is told from Scout's perspective, we learn that reading came about as naturally as breathing for her.

Another interesting aspect of this chapter is Scout's young and inexperienced teacher, Miss Caroline. A parallel can be drawn here between Miss Caroline's unwillingness to understand the people of Maycomb and the town's unwillingness to understand each other.

Chapter 3

Summary

In the playground Scout takes her frustrations out on Walter Cunningham for the morning's mishaps. Jem stops her, realizing that Walter is the son of a man that Atticus defended in court. He invites the boy home with him and Scout for lunch. Walter is so hesitant at first that Jem and Scout leave, but he soon catches up to join them. At home the day doesn't get much better for Scout. When she questions Walter as to why he's pouring syrup on his food, Calpurnia calls her to the kitchen and scolds her for embarrassing their guest. When Scout tries defending herself by saying he's "just a Cunningham" and not company, Calpurnia banishes her to the kitchen to eat alone.

As the boys head back to school Scout stays behind to seek comfort from Atticus. She tells him that Calpurnia likes Jem better and asks Atticus to fire her. Atticus tells Scout that Jem gives Calpurnia less to worry about and makes it clear that he has no intention of firing Calpurnia, explaining that the family wouldn't survive a single day without her.

Back at school Miss Caroline goes into a panic when she spots lice on a student's head. She asks the student, Burris Ewell, to go home and treat his condition so that the rest of the class doesn't get infected. Burris laughs at her suggestion, informing her that he won't be coming back. One of the older students explains that Burris is like all the other Ewell kids: they attend school the first day to keep the truant officer happy but do not come again. Miss Caroline asks Burris to sit down, but he begins shouting vile insults at her and eventually drives the young teacher to tears.

When the school day is over Scout is pleasantly surprised by Calpurnia's kindness when she gets home. After supper Atticus asks her to read with him, but Scout explains that her teacher told her to stop doing that. Scout asks if she can be like Burris Ewell and just go to school the first day and not go back.

Atticus explains that the Ewells are a special case because people have become blind to the way they live. Everyone feels so badly for the children that they allow the father, Bob Ewell, to hunt for food outside of hunting season. But everyone else, including the Finches, have to live inside the law, and that's why Scout must continue going to school.

In the end Atticus strikes a deal with Scout: she continues

going to school, and they'll continue reading together at night just as they always have.

Analysis

It may have been Scout's first day of school, but her most valuable lessons occur outside the classroom. For instance, when she refers to Walter Cunningham as "just a Cunningham" and not a guest, Calpurnia is quick to point out that everyone deserves respect, no matter their social status. Scout's first day in the classroom begins her exposure to just how socially divided the small town of Maycomb really is.

Maycomb's social division becomes even more apparent in the incident with Burris Ewell, the student with lice. His behavior toward Miss Caroline foreshadows the kind of interactions one can expect from the Ewells. Later in the book, particularly during the trial, it becomes clear just how backward the Ewells are in society.

In Chapter 3 Atticus's appreciation of Calpurnia also is made clear. It is already evident that Atticus is a loving father; this chapter provides insight into his attitude toward race.

Chapter 4

Summary

The author whisks Scout through much of the school year, which she sums up as no better than Scout's first day. By this time Scout has gained enough confidence to pass the Radley house on her own, even if she feels compelled to run. On one particular day she spies something shiny in the knothole of one of the two oak trees at the edge of the Radley lot. A closer inspection reveals that it's two pieces of gum in foil wrappers.

Scout starts chewing the gum, and Jem questions where she got it. When he threatens to tell Calpurnia that she found it by the Radley lot, Scout is forced to spit it out. The gum is the first of many small gifts they'll find in the knothole. On the last day of school they find a small box containing two Indian head pennies. At this point they're still not sure whose hiding spot they've stumbled upon, so they agree to keep the pennies until school starts.

When Dill returns for the summer, Jem and Scout are so excited they seem to forget about the mysterious knothole. The three of them launch into play, rolling Scout down the street in an old tire. When Jem gives the tire an extra hard push, it shoots down the road and slams into the Radley's porch. Scout abandons the tire, leaving Jem to retrieve it.

Jem comes up with a new idea for a play they can perform called "Boo Radley." It consists of reenacting many of the stories they've heard about the Radley family, including the one where Boo stabs his father with scissors. They perfect their play over many days, but they are embarrassed when Atticus discovers them during their performance and gives them a stern lecture.

Scout is ready to quit the play even though Jem tells her she's acting like a girl, a taunt that often gets Scout to do exactly what Jem wants. Scout explains that it's not just Atticus's disapproval that makes her want to quit but also what happened the day the tire hit the porch: she had heard someone laughing inside the house.

Analysis

It becomes obvious that Scout's intellect and curiosity aren't mixing well with the rigid Maycomb school system. Like Maycomb's residents, the school wants conformity. A free thinker, Scout feels oppressed by the school, although the author suggests that with her support system of Atticus, Calpurnia, and Jem, she'll be fine.

A mystery enters the lives of Scout and Jem with the arrival of gifts in the oak tree. They puzzle over who the mysterious gift giver might be, but spend no time questioning the gift giver's motives.

Lee uses most of the chapter to celebrate Dill's return to Maycomb. With Dill present it is certain there will be more focus on his obsession: luring Boo outside.

Chapter 5

Summary

As Jem and Dill's friendship grows, Scout finds herself excluded more frequently from their activities. She starts spending more time with their widowed neighbor, Maudie Atkinson. Scout finds a kindred spirit in the older woman.

From their conversations Scout learns that Miss Maudie grew up with the Finch siblings at Finch's Landing. Much like Atticus she is patient, kind, and open-minded. Miss Maudie also tells Scout more about the Radley family. For the first time Scout begins to think of Boo Radley not as a monster but as a sad and lonely person.

With that in mind, Scout is less than enthusiastic when she discovers Jem and Dill's plan to deliver a note to Boo via a fishing pole through a loose shutter. She reluctantly goes along with the plan, serving as a lookout for Jem as he delivers the note. Too late they realize that Atticus is on to them, and he sternly tells them to leave Boo Radley alone.

Analysis

The three children are growing up a little. The boys prefer playing together without Scout tagging along everywhere. This causes something of an identity crisis for Scout, who feels at a crossroads. Throughout the book she's been told by her aunt and other women of Maycomb to act more like a lady. Meanwhile, her brother, whom she idolizes, criticizes her for acting "like a girl." Fortunately through her conversations with Atticus, Maudie Atkinson, and even Calpurnia, Scout is accepting herself.

Another important aspect of Scout and Miss Maudie's discussions about Boo Radley is that Scout begins to feel sympathy for Boo instead of fear. Scout will nurture this feeling throughout the book, and it will have great significance by the story's conclusion.

Miss Maudie also becomes important to Jem and Scout as a source of advice besides Atticus and Calpurnia.

Chapter 6

Summary

On the night before Dill returns home at the end of summer, he and Jem plan to peek into the windows of the Radley house. Scout tries to stop them, but when Jem tells her she is acting more like a girl every day she ends up going with them. As they try unsuccessfully to peer into the windows, they see the shadow of a man approaching. They start running as a shotgun is fired, narrowly escaping through the fence at the back of the property. Unfortunately Jem gets caught in the wire and is forced to leave his pants behind.

When they get home the whole neighborhood is abuzz with excitement, so the children slip quietly into the crowd. The adults believe Nathan Radley scared off a black man who had come to steal collard greens from his garden.

Standing in the crowd, Stephanie Crawford points out that Jem isn't wearing any pants. Dill quickly comes up with a story that he had won Jem's pants playing strip poker by the fishpond.

Later that night and against his better judgment, Jem decides that he must go back to recover his pants before morning to protect their secret. Scout tries to persuade him otherwise, but he is determined and quickly returns with his pants.

Analysis

The action in Chapter 6 keeps the Boo Radley subplot alive even as the author builds the foundation for what will become the central plot: Atticus's participation in the Tom Robinson case. It is also revealed that Dill and Jem's attempts to lure Boo Radley outside have become more daring.

The theme of race—and racism—is central to this chapter. Nathan Radley makes a hasty assumption that the intruder is black. He doesn't even consider the possibility that the intruder might be white—or just kids having a little fun.

Another significant aspect of the chapter is Jem's determination to retrieve his pants rather than have Atticus know he lied. Jem takes pride in the fact that Atticus and Calpurnia trust him with caring for Scout. He is already a thoughtful boy developing his moral code.

Chapter 7

Summary

School starts again and Scout is worried about Jem's quiet demeanor ever since their misadventure at the Radley house the week before. He finally admits that he has been withholding some troubling information. When he went back to get his torn pants, he found them crudely stitched and neatly folded across the fence as if someone was expecting him to return.

As Scout and Jem walk past the old tree at the edge of the Radley property, they notice a ball of twine tucked into the knothole. They discuss who might be hiding things there, but Jem is convinced someone is leaving things specifically for them. From then on, believing the gifts are intended for them, they take whatever they find. Hoping to leave a thank-you note for the gifts, the children are disappointed to find the knothole mysteriously cemented.

Jem waits to catch Nathan Radley coming home so he can ask him if he put the cement in the tree. Nathan Radley tells Jem that he did put cement in the tree because the tree is dying, but Jem knows this isn't true.

Analysis

In Chapter 7 Jem's journey into puberty is evident. Scout often mentions his moodiness, how he eats more, and how he prefers playing with boys his age. He even shows Scout his newly sprouted chest hairs.

With his physical growth, Jem seems to also gain emotional growth. He realizes, although he doesn't share the information, that Boo Radley is probably the person who mended his pants and comes to believe it is Boo who is leaving the gifts in the oak tree. It upsets him when Nathan Radley cements the knothole closed because he understands that this has destroyed Boo's method of communicating with the outside world.

Chapter 8

Summary

The weather turns unseasonably cold in Maycomb, and Jem and Scout get their first glimpse of snow. School is canceled, so they spend their day making a snowman with mud and slush. The snow stops in the afternoon but the temperature continues to drop, prompting people to keep their fireplaces going for warmth.

Late that night Scout is awakened by Atticus and ordered to dress and leave the house. Maudie Atkinson's house is on fire. Atticus tells Scout and Jem to wait in front of the Radley house while he goes to help the other men salvage Miss Maudie's belongings and prevent the fire from spreading to more homes.

The fire is finally brought under control, although Miss Maudie's home is lost. When it is safe to go home, Atticus suggests they go inside for hot chocolate. Atticus notices a foreign blanket around Scout's shoulders and wonders where it came from. Neither Scout nor Jem can remember how she came to be wearing it. It suddenly dawns on them that the elusive Boo Radley must have put the blanket on her. When Atticus suggests wrapping up the blanket to return it, Jem refuses. Then, as if the burden of keeping their secrets had become too much for him, Jem blurts out what he'd been holding back: about the gifts in the tree, the evening in the Radley garden, and finding his stitched pants. Calming Jem, Atticus agrees that the blanket had best be kept a story between them.

In the morning Jem and Scout find Miss Maudie in her backyard, amid the ruin. They are surprised to find she isn't grieving the loss of her belongings. She admits she always disliked the house and is already planning the house she'll build in its place. When Scout looks confused as to why she isn't more distraught, Miss Maudie explains that she was more worried about her neighbors.

Analysis

By Chapter 8 both Jem and Scout are beginning to look at Boo Radley in a different way. No longer is he the monster of neighborhood lore; he is human. The fact that he is so lonely now seems more sad than scary. Miss Maudie is the reason

Jem and Scout start opening their hearts to someone who is very different from them.

While they still have some unease about Boo Radley, they begin to see him as someone who should be protected rather than feared. Their changing attitude toward Boo Radley signifies an openness that, were it practiced more widely in their community, would provide greater objectivity, or fairness, in Tom Robinson's case.

Miss Maudie's relaxed attitude toward her lost possessions surprises Scout, but Miss Maudie explains she was more worried about the fire hurting her neighbors than she was about the fate of her possessions. Miss Maudie's kindness and selflessness foreshadow a source of strength the Finch family will need later in the book.

Chapter 9

Summary

Christmas is near, and Scout and Jem learn that Atticus has taken the case of Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman. Scout learns this when a classmate announces the news at school to embarrass her. Atticus explains that Tom Robinson is a member of Calpurnia's church. He tells Scout that defending Tom is the right thing to do, even if other people don't agree.

The case won't go to trial until the following summer. Atticus tells Scout to keep her wits about her if anyone teases her about his role. When she learns he won't win the case, she asks him why he is taking it. Atticus explains that you should always try, even if you know you can't win.

On Christmas Eve the Finches pick up Atticus's brother, Jack, who has come for the holidays. On Christmas they make their annual holiday visit to Finch's Landing, the family homestead. When Francis, Aunt Alexandra's annoying grandson, calls Atticus a "nigger-lover" to Scout's face, she loses her temper and starts fighting him.

To her disappointment Uncle Jack sides with Francis without hearing her side of the story. Once home Scout angrily tells Uncle Jack what Francis said. He becomes upset and wants to go back to Aunt Alexandra's to tell her what really happened, but Scout swears him to secrecy. She would rather have Atticus think they were fighting about something else than know she had let him down.

Later Scout overhears a private conversation between Atticus and Jack about raising children, Scout's temper, and what Atticus fears his children will face in light of the Robinson trial. Scout is relieved to find that Uncle Jack has respected her request for secrecy. As they talk Atticus explains why he felt taking the case was important and how he hopes the fallout will not change Jem and Scout. Atticus suddenly calls out to Scout to go to bed, and it occurs to her later that maybe she was meant to hear every word that was said.

Analysis

While Christmas at Finch's Landing should have been a fun time for Atticus and his children, it turns out to be anything but when Scout and Francis start fighting. Francis's criticism of Atticus for defending Tom Robinson is representative of what many Maycomb residents think. In an instance of situational irony, Atticus is concerned about protecting his children from angry outsiders when some of the greatest criticism actually comes from his own family.

Another item to keep in mind is Uncle Jack's treatment of Scout right after the fight. Had he taken the time to actually listen to her side of the story he would have known that Francis incited the fight with hateful comments. Uncle Jack's unfair treatment of Scout, including his unwillingness to hear the whole story, foreshadows the inequity that comes later during the Tom Robinson trial.

Chapter 10

Summary

Jem and Scout can't make sense of why people are so critical of Atticus just because of the Tom Robinson case when Atticus has been nothing but nice to everyone he meets. He doesn't hunt, smoke, fish, or play poker, as do all the other dads of Maycomb. Even so the Robinson trial has made Atticus a focus of the town's gossip.

Scout starts thinking about the air rifles they got for Christmas.

She recalls that Uncle Jack taught her and Jem to shoot, but Atticus reminded them to never a kill a mockingbird because it was a sin. Miss Maudie explains that mockingbirds do nothing but make music for people to enjoy, which is why it is a sin to kill them. From there the conversation turns back to Atticus. Miss Maudie, who grew up with Atticus, starts listing things he's good at: playing checkers, playing the Jew's harp, and having an airtight will. Scout is unimpressed.

Shortly afterward Jem and Scout spot a neighborhood dog named Tim Johnson stumbling down the street with a strange look on its face. Scout and Jem go home to tell Calpurnia. She calls Atticus about the dog, and it is revealed that the dog is rabid. Atticus arrives with Sheriff Tate, who aims his gun at the dog. Tate says that if he misses, the shot will go straight into the Radley house. Instead he gives the gun to Atticus, who takes aim and kills the dog with a single bullet.

As Atticus and Sheriff Tate leave, Scout and Jem hear Miss Maudie call him "One-Shot Finch." She later tells Jem and Scout that, among Atticus's other attributes, he was the most accurate shot in Maycomb County.

Analysis

Scout and Jem, startled to find people critical of Atticus, find their perspective of their father altered; he is not only their father, he is also a human being, with different roles to play outside of their family circle. Perhaps it is the anger generated against Atticus by his defense of Tom Robinson that causes Scout to wish he had some of the same hobbies as the town's other dads.

After Scout and Jem learn more about Atticus's past from Miss Maudie, they realize their father is human, just like all the other dads in Maycomb. But to Scout, her father's hobbies of reading and playing checkers are boring compared to other parents who smoke, fish, and hunt.

Scout and Jem's perspective changes when Atticus kills a rabid dog with one shot. They wonder why they never knew this side of their dad before. Atticus explains that shooting a gun well is not a talent to be proud of and should be used only when necessary. The fact that Sheriff Tate trusted Atticus with his gun symbolizes the high esteem the townspeople have for him. Jem and Scout learn a valuable lesson in the importance of humility.

Chapter 11

Summary

Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose is a nasty woman who harasses Jem and Scout every time they walk past her house. Her behavior eventually pushes Jem to his breaking point. When Mrs. Dubose rudely criticizes Atticus for defending Tom Robinson, Jem returns and destroys her camellia bushes with Scout's baton.

That evening Atticus sends Jem to apologize to Mrs. Dubose for his actions. He promises to come every Saturday to tend the bushes, but Mrs. Dubose insists he come every day for the next month to read to her.

For the next month, accompanied by Scout, Jem treks to Mrs. Dubose's house. Even though Mrs. Dubose continues making snide remarks about Atticus, Jem reads to her until she falls asleep. Shortly after Jem finishes his month-long sentence of reading to her, Mrs. Dubose dies. Atticus reveals that she had been addicted to morphine but had made a commitment to beat her addiction. Her vile behavior and mood swings were a side effect of withdrawal. Atticus wanted Jem and Scout to see the courage of her fight, even if it meant a painful death.

Analysis

This chapter illustrates the parallel between Mrs. Dubose's fight to beat her addiction, however painful it is, and Atticus's fight for a less racist world. Both Mrs. Dubose and Atticus know they are going to lose their fights yet take them on anyway. Scout and Jem are completely baffled as to why Atticus would take on a case he knows he's going to lose, but Atticus explains that losing is not a good enough reason not to try.

Chapter 12

Summary

Summer is back and Jem will be turning 12 in a few weeks. It's apparent that Jem's adolescent angst is starting to show. He's

continually telling Scout to stop bothering him, and, worst of all, he tells her to start acting more like a lady—after years of telling her to stop acting "like a girl."

Any hope for a fun summer feels lost when Dill writes to say he can't come. He reports having a new stepfather and says they're going to build a fishing boat together. He then assures Scout of his love and promises to come get her when he saves enough money. On top of that Atticus is called to an emergency session of the state legislature.

In Atticus's absence Calpurnia takes the Finch children to her black church. Church leader Reverend Sykes greets them warmly and finds them a seat, but the congregation meets them with a mixture of kindness and prejudice. The discrimination Jem and Scout feel is an eye-opening experience. After the service Jem, Scout, and Calpurnia have a wild discussion about religion, education, and life experience—all revolving around the differences between blacks and whites. When Scout and Jem return home, they are surprised to find Aunt Alexandra waiting for them.

Analysis

Because the story takes place over three years, Lee is able to illustrate the children's physical and mental changes. As the novel progresses the children and the reader are reminded that even in the face of mounting differences, common ground can be found, whether it's between a brother and a sister, men and women, or people of different races.

Scout comments about Jem's upcoming 12th birthday. As Jem reaches adolescence, his moodiness provides insight into the siblings' personality differences. Even though they occasionally get on each other's nerves, the underlying bond between them is always apparent.

The conversation between Calpurnia, Jem, and Scout as they walk home from church is pivotal in the way it reveals Jem and Scout's development. Though the children have known Calpurnia for a long time, they come to realize how very different their life experiences are. The chapter also shows how Calpurnia is a divided character—a bridge between African Americans and whites in Maycomb.

Chapter 13

Summary

Aunt Alexandra assumes a leading role in the Finch household and Maycomb society. She tells Atticus he needs to instill proper behavior in Jem and Scout so they can live up to the Finch family name. To appease Alexandra, Atticus tells the children that because they come from a good family they should act accordingly. Jem and Scout are so confused by Atticus's demands that Scout begins to cry. At the sight of his daughter's tears Atticus tells them to forget everything he said.

Analysis

Scout states that Aunt Alexandra fits into Maycomb society like "a hand into a glove" but that she will never fit well into Finch family life. Alexandra, although she means well, is far too traditional in her ways to understand the Finches' outlook. Her concern with keeping up with appearances and society's expectations stands in sharp contrast with Atticus's values and goals.

Chapter 14

Summary

Scout mentions to Aunt Alexandra and Atticus that she and Jem went to Calpurnia's church with her. While Atticus is amused, Alexandra is mortified. When Alexandra overhears that Calpurnia has invited Scout to her house, she tries to convince Atticus they no longer need her services. Atticus stands up to Alexandra, telling her sternly that Calpurnia is part of the family and that he wouldn't have survived without her.

Jem—attempting to demonstrate his "adult" authority—tells Scout she should stop making Aunt Alexandra angry. Scout takes offense, and the two fight. Atticus breaks up the confrontation and sends them both to bed. That night Scout steps on something that moves, and she tells Jem she thinks there's a snake in her room. When they investigate they discover Dill hiding under her bed. Dill has run away from home,

paying his train fare with money stolen from his mother's purse.

Atticus tells Miss Rachel where Dill is so she can inform his parents. Dill stays with the Finches that night. As Scout falls asleep Dill creeps into her room and crawls in bed beside her. He tells Scout that even though his new stepfather was supposed to be like a dad, he doesn't really want Dill around. As they're about to fall asleep, Scout asks Dill why he thinks Boo Radley never ran away. Dill says maybe he never had anywhere to run to. This makes Scout appreciate the strength of the family bond she and Jem have with Atticus.

Analysis

Aunt Alexandra has certain standards she wants the family to live up to, so she pushes her agenda on the Finches whenever she can. Alexandra's reaction to Scout and Jem going to Calpurnia's church is in stark contrast to Atticus's reaction. The confrontation reveals a major difference between the philosophies of Atticus and Alexandra: his is about fostering bonds between people, while hers has more to do with putting people in boxes.

While Atticus and Alexandra argue Jem and Scout slip away and discover that Dill has returned. Jem insists they tell Atticus so that Dill's Aunt Rachel and his parents can be informed. Dill stays with the Finches that night, and he and Scout talk until they fall asleep. Dill talks of his home life, and Scout senses the disconnect between Dill and his family; her own family ties with Atticus, Jem, and Calpurnia stand in sharp contrast.

Chapter 15

Summary

In the week following Dill's appearance, things seem to be looking up for Scout: Dill gets to stay for the summer; she's getting along with her aunt; and Jem, although he's outgrown the treehouse, helps Scout and Dill fix it up. And of course, Dill has come up with yet another plan to lure Boo Radley from his house.

One day, Sheriff Tate and a small group of men, including Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Avery, come to tell Atticus that Tom Robinson is being moved to the county jail in Maycomb. They're worried there may be trouble if he stays in the town jail the night before the trial. Their presence brings the trial's reality into the Finch home, and Jem begins to worry for Atticus.

The next evening Atticus goes into town after supper. Late that night Scout finds Jem sneaking out after him and insists on going too. The two of them, with Dill in tow, head downtown. They find Atticus camped out in an office chair in front of the Maycomb jail, reading by the light of a single bulb. As the children watch from a distance, cars approach the jail, and men empty out. They've come for Tom Robinson, but Atticus isn't budging.

Without thinking Scout runs for Atticus, and Jem and Dill are forced to follow. Although Atticus orders them home, Jem, in particular, refuses. Someone reaches out for Jem, Scout defends him, and Atticus struggles to keep the situation under control. Scout sees Walter Cunningham Sr., the father of the boy they invited for lunch earlier in the story. She asks him to say hello to Walter Jr. for her. The honest innocence of her request disarms the situation, and the men drive away.

Analysis

The Tom Robinson trial is becoming increasingly real in Jem and Scout's lives. To this point Atticus's involvement in the case has resulted in little more than a few sarcastic comments from classmates or neighbors. But with the trial imminent, the situation has become more serious.

Atticus's genuine concern upon hearing that Tom Robinson is being moved to the Maycomb County jail causes Jem and Scout to once again see their father in a different light. They are beginning to appreciate Atticus for the kind and humble person he is, not just for being their father.

The scene at the jail the following evening captures the strength of the Finch family bond. Jem, Scout, and Atticus stand up for each other, relying on their own strengths and personality. This is in stark contrast to the angry mob they're facing, whose members feel indistinguishable from one another. But when Scout recognizes Walter Cunningham Sr. and asks after his son, it breaks the mob mentality because one of the group has been seen as an individual. The men, who initially felt strong as a group, now feel vulnerable and ashamed as flawed individuals.

Chapter 16

Summary

After a run-in the night before at the county jail between Atticus and a mob looking to kill Tom Robinson, the Finch home is filled with tension. Aunt Alexandra is particularly upset that Jem and Scout snuck out. Atticus, on the other hand, is grateful they showed up when they did.

Jury selection for the Tom Robinson case is starting, so Atticus asks Jem and Scout to stay away from the courthouse that day. But their curiosity is running wild, especially as so many people are passing their house on their way to the courthouse. Atticus comes home at noon, and they talk of the morning's events. When he goes back for the afternoon session, the children can no longer resist going, too. They stop by to pick up Dill and then head to town to join the festival-like atmosphere in the square. Inside the courthouse Jem, Scout, and Dill eventually find seats in "the Colored balcony" just as the trial begins.

Analysis

The Finch family bond, always strong, has found even greater depth in Chapter 16: Atticus protects his children, but it is also evident that they protect Atticus. Dill, an honorary family member, feels this strongly as well. His comment about holding off "a hundred folks with our bare hands" illustrates his excitement and loyalty to the Finches; it also shows that he has not yet reached Jem's level of introspection.

As the book's characters come together for the trial, Maycomb is revealed as a complex web of prejudices and a symbol of the world at large.

Chapter 17

Summary

The trial begins with testimony from Sheriff Tate. Tate says that Bob Ewell came to his office, saying his daughter had been raped and beaten by a black man. Together they drove back to the Ewells' place where they found a beaten Mayella on the floor. She identified her attacker as Tom Robinson. On cross-examination Atticus establishes that no doctor was called and that it was the right side of the girl's face that had taken much of the beating. This indicates that her attacker is left-handed.

When Bob Ewell, Mayella's father, takes the stand, Scout gives some backstory on the Ewells, saying every town has a family like the Ewells: steeped in poverty and angry as hell about it. Bob Ewell's time on the stand shows him to be a bitter, nasty man. Although his story supports what Sheriff Tate had laid out, Atticus is able to poke holes in it, beginning with the fact that, despite Mayella's condition, no one called a doctor. Before Ewell leaves the witness stand Atticus shows him to be left-handed—a fact that suggested he could have been Mayella's attacker.

After the first set of witnesses has testified, Jem is excited about the direction the trial is going, but Scout doesn't share Jem's confidence.

Analysis

Lee details the trial scene in real time to build tension for the reader, right along with Jem and Scout. The holes in Bob Ewell's story are gaping. But no matter how clever Atticus is in casting doubt on the crime, it all boils down to race: black versus white—the word of Tom Robinson against that of the Ewells.

Though evil, Bob Ewell is a fascinating character in that he appears totally incapable of relating to anyone in a positive way. What makes Bob Ewell so easy to dislike is that he seems to be the total opposite of what Atticus, Jem, and Scout represent.

The saddest part about a man like Bob Ewell is that he infects everyone around him with bitterness, particularly his children. Burris Ewell, as presented in Chapter 3, is the next generation's Bob Ewell.

Chapter 18

Summary

The trial picks up with 19-year-old Mayella taking the stand. Like her father and brother, introduced earlier, Mayella is angry and defiant. But with Mr. Gilmer's guidance she relates the details of the day in question, her testimony aligning with her father's. She identifies Tom Robinson, seated in the courtroom, as her attacker. As she recounts the attack for Mr. Gilmer and, later, Atticus, she acts tearful and frightened.

When she becomes defiant toward Atticus, he remains courteous while he continues finding more holes in her testimony. When the details of the attack are laid out, he has Tom Robinson stand. The court sees that Tom's left hand is deformed—the result of a childhood injury—and that his left arm is shorter than the right. It is apparent that Tom could not have physically committed the crime that Mayella and her father claim he committed.

By the end of Mayella's testimony Atticus has cast doubt on her portrayal of the events. He presses her with more questions: Why did no one hear her screams? Where were the other children? Was her father the actual attacker? Instead of answering the questions, Mayella spits out the rehearsed speech again, accusing Tom Robinson of raping her. At the same time she gets angry at the court and the jury, accusing them of being cowards if they do nothing about the crime.

Atticus then calls his one witness: Tom Robinson.

Analysis

Lee's skilled handling of Atticus's cross-examination of Mayella sets up a plausible conclusion: there is no way Tom Robinson could be guilty of the crime. Despite Atticus's trademark gentle manner, Mayella reacts fearfully and defiantly. When he presses her with questions toward the end of his examination, she simply stops answering. While the evidence is clear, it does not mean Tom is off the hook.

The trial is shown from the perspectives of Atticus, Jem, and Scout. While Atticus knows that winning the case is unlikely, the children express a childlike sense of hope that—based on the evidence—Tom Robinson cannot be convicted. There is a pervading feeling in the chapter, however, that Tom Robinson is going to be found guilty.

Chapter 19

Summary

Atticus calls Tom Robinson to the stand. Through his questioning Atticus reveals what most everyone knows to be true: Tom is a gentle and caring man who occasionally helped the Ewells because he lived near them. Tom tells the court Mayella had invited him inside the fence of her yard several times to do small tasks for her. On the day in question he reports that he was assisting her when she kissed him and made sexual advances toward him. When Bob Ewell saw them, Tom fled.

Tom's testimony remains solid—even Mr. Gilmer's cross-examination can't shake it. When Mr. Gilmer asks Tom why he would do so much for the Ewells without getting paid, Tom responds honestly by telling the court that he feels sorry for Mayella. For people like the Ewells there's nothing more insulting than being pitied by a black man.

Scout doesn't hear all the cross-examination because Dill suddenly begins crying and can't stop. Jem tells her to take Dill out, and the two go into the square. Although Scout suggests it was the heat that got to Dill, Dill tells her it was the way Mr. Gilmer was grilling Tom Robinson that upset him.

Analysis

If the mockingbird symbolizes innocence and vulnerability, then it becomes apparent in Chapter 19 that Tom Robinson is the story's mockingbird. Before this not much has been known about him. Calpurnia and the people at her church think he is a decent, hard-working man who comes from good people. During his testimony it becomes clear what a kind and selfless person Tom really is.

The clarity and sincerity of Tom Robinson's statement makes the Ewells' statements look all the more suspect and weak. In terms of the narration of the story, Lee has chosen appropriate dialogue for her characters so that their personalities and honesty, or lack thereof, are self-evident. By the very simplicity of Lee's details and presentation, she makes the trial excruciating; there is a sense that the truth, despite its clarity, will not win out in the end.

Chapter 20

Summary

In the square Scout and Dill talk with Dolphus Raymond. Raymond has a black girlfriend and several mixed-race children, a situation that many people in Maycomb look down upon. Raymond offers Dill a drink from his ever-present brown bag to help settle his stomach. Scout is aghast, assuming it's alcohol, but Dill accepts, takes a sip, and tells Scout "it's nothing but Coca-Cola." Scout is taken aback and, in a display of growing command of her interactions with others, asks Raymond why he lets people think he's a drunk.

Raymond explains that he pretends to be a drunk to deflect the community's ire. The citizens of Maycomb accept the plausible explanation that he is a drunk and leave him and his family alone.

The children return to the courtroom as Atticus makes his closing remarks. Dill gets Jem and Scout's attention, pointing below as Calpurnia makes her way up the aisle toward Atticus.

Analysis

The interaction between Scout, Dill, and Dolphus Raymond offers a little break from the tension in the courtroom and provides yet another view of Maycomb's complex society. Raymond lives with his black girlfriend and their children outside of town as a way of avoiding the community's intolerance.

In a way Raymond, like Atticus, is standing up for what he believes. He is making a statement just by the life he leads. But he compromises his statement by hiding behind the image of a drunkard because it makes his life easier. Atticus is quiet about his beliefs until they are challenged; then he simply states what he believes and stands behind it. When it is suggested that Atticus shouldn't have taken the case in the first place because he has so much to lose, Atticus makes clear his belief in equality. Atticus says Tom "might go to the chair, but he's not going till the truth's told." Atticus, unlike Dolphus Raymond, leaves no doubt where he stands.

Chapter 21

Summary

Calpurnia passes Atticus a note, which Atticus quickly reads. Atticus reports to the judge that the note is from his sister, Alexandra, who writes that his children are missing and haven't been seen since noon. Braxton Underwood, the publisher of the newspaper, interrupts to say that Jem, Scout, and Dill are sitting above in the "Colored balcony."

The children meet Atticus and Calpurnia downstairs just before the jury is sent out, and Atticus orders the trio home. When they beg to return for the verdict Atticus relents, sending them home to eat and telling them that if the jury is still out when they return, they can wait with everyone else to hear the verdict.

At home Alexandra is shocked to know where they've been and disapproves of Atticus's consent for them to return. The children eat and head back, finding that Reverend Sykes had saved their seats. The jury has been out for a half hour.

By the time the jury files back in it's well past 11 p.m. Scout and Dill have been dozing on and off, and they wake to find the courtroom still packed. As the guilty verdict is read Scout recalls that everything took on a dreamlike state. She reports the details—Atticus packing his briefcase, saying something to Mr. Gilmer and the court reporter, speaking softly to Tom Robinson—and as Atticus turns toward the aisle to leave, Scout becomes aware of someone poking her. It is Reverend Sykes. Pointing out that her father is passing, Scout realizes that everyone in the Colored balcony has stood to honor Atticus as he leaves.

Analysis

The fact that Calpurnia interrupts the trial to pass a note to Atticus is a reminder that Maycomb is a small community. It's a town where everyone knows each other's name and business. These qualities can be an asset, but they can also be a detriment when overlaid with prejudice and racism. The trial of Tom Robinson is proof of that.

Although Atticus sends the children home to eat (and didn't want them at the courthouse in the first place), he allows them

to return, signaling that his relationship with his children has matured. He is beginning to see them more clearly just as they are beginning to see him more clearly.

The tension leading up to Chapter 21 makes the reading of the verdict a perfect climax. Some in the courtroom may be disappointed and shocked (as Jem is) to hear the guilty verdict, but, as Atticus recognizes, it couldn't have turned out any other way. A significant moment occurs when the entire black community honors Atticus as he passes, reminding the citizens of Maycomb that true class has more to do with morality than someone's family name, how much money they have, or the color of their skin.

Chapter 22

Summary

Feeling defeated, Atticus, Jem, Scout, and Dill trudge home. Jem in particular is crushed by the verdict because he can't make sense of why Tom was treated so unfairly. At home they find Aunt Alexandra has stayed up to greet them.

Before they go to bed Jem asks Atticus how the jury could have come to this verdict. Atticus admits he also doesn't understand it.

In the morning life picks up where it left off, except for the bounty of food that covers the kitchen table. Calpurnia tells Atticus that she found it all on the back steps that morning: gifts from Tom Robinson's many supporters to show their appreciation for Atticus. The people's gratitude brings tears to Atticus's eyes.

Outside, Miss Stephanie drills the children with questions, wanting to know the latest gossip about the trial. She doesn't let up until Miss Maudie calls her off and invites the children in for cakes. She tries to help the children understand the previous day's events by explaining how Atticus helped the community advance toward something better, even if by only a little bit.

Jem, Scout, and Dill listen but seem unconvinced as they leave Miss Maudie's house. Miss Rachel catches up to them and tells them danger is coming as she herds them back home. Word has spread that Bob Ewell confronted Atticus at the post office, spitting on him and threatening him.

Analysis

Chapter 22 focuses on what the characters take away from the trial and how it might change them. That Aunt Alexandra is waiting up for Atticus and the children to come home shows how much she loves and stands by her family. Unfortunately, her tenderness is far too often buried by her prejudices. A little like Scout's former classmate Burris Ewell, Alexandra is a product of her surroundings. These brief glimpses of a caring Alexandra are rare, but they suggest that somewhere down the line Alexandra might be able to change.

The bulk of Chapter 22 details Jem's reaction to the verdict. Growing up, he's always been exposed to Atticus's steadfast moral code and ability to make rational decisions based on facts—so he feels betrayed by Maycomb when the jury reaches such an illogical verdict. The last thing he says to Atticus the night of the verdict is: "How could they do it, how could they?" This is a subtle but powerful indictment of the town and an important moment for Jem, who is halfway between childhood and adulthood. While he has begun to form his own moral code, he has not yet entirely given up the simplicity and innocence of a child's perspective.

Atticus's reactions to the verdict are informative. While Aunt Alexandra is angry with him for allowing the children to witness the trial, he stands firm that it is important for the children to understand the makeup of their town: "We've made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it." Perhaps Atticus believes that if his children know the cold, hard truth about their community they will be inspired to be catalysts for positive change.

Chapter 23

Summary

Jem, Scout, Dill, and Aunt Alexandra are worried about Atticus when Bob Ewell threatens him the day after the trial. Atticus, however, with his ever-present composure and ability to look at a situation from another person's viewpoint, assures the family that Bob Ewell's threat was just his way of venting. Atticus suggests that Bob Ewell's threat to him might prevent Ewell

from taking out his anger on the Ewell children. To Atticus, the tradeoff seems fair.

Atticus's assurance seems to calm everyone, and summer continues to pass. They all look forward to Tom Robinson's appeal, which Atticus thinks they'll have a good chance of winning. Atticus and the children have a long talk about juries and evidence. Jem seems to have a better appreciation for the law, even if he holds steadfastly to his idealism of justice and equity.

When the discussion comes to Atticus's jury choices for the Robinson trial, he reveals that he allowed a relative of Walter Cunningham's to serve. Scout, gaining respect for the family, suddenly thinks about young Walter Cunningham and announces that once school starts again, she would like to invite him over for dinner. Aunt Alexandra is doubtful, and the conversation switches gears as Scout and Jem explore their aunt's thinking about class in Maycomb. Unable to make her point and under Scout's persistent questions, Aunt Alexandra brings a crushing blow to the conversation by saying that she won't allow Scout and Walter to play together because the Cunninghams are "trash." She further upsets Scout by saying that being friends with the Cunninghams would encourage bad habits and make her even more of a problem for Atticus than she already is.

Under Jem's protective wing they retreat to his bedroom where he tries to comfort his sister. Scout tells Jem that she is less upset about what Aunt Alexandra said about her than what she said about the Cunninghams. Although nothing seems to get resolved, Jem has the final word when he says he's starting to understand why Boo prefers to stay inside.

Analysis

In addition to focusing on Bob Ewell's threat, the chapter also launches a discussion between Atticus, Jem, Scout, and Alexandra to examine how the events of the trial have affected each of them. Atticus and Jem's discussion of a potential appeal for Tom Robinson provides insight into Jem's continued interest in the legal system and how racism can influence it. As Scout joins the conversation it becomes clear that she is beginning to think more deeply about issues of prejudice, even if she doesn't yet have the words for it. Her thought to invite Walter Cunningham home to dinner when school resumes—the boy she once said wasn't company but "just a Cunningham"—is a powerful signal of how much the summer's events have influenced her.

Chapter 24

Summary

With summer nearly over, school will soon be back in session. Before Dill has to leave he and Jem go to Barker's Eddy where Jem teaches Dill to swim. Since they are going to be swimming naked, Scout stays behind.

Aunt Alexandra is entertaining a circle of old missionary friends and invites Scout to join them. Fearing she'll drop something on her dress, Scout stays out of the meeting for the most part but offers to help Calpurnia with the refreshments. Aunt Alexandra seems pleased, and the ladies are delighted to talk with Scout, although they pepper her with questions. Miss Maudie, ever a dependable friend, helps Scout stay steady.

Halfway through the meeting Atticus comes home unexpectedly. He greets the ladies, excuses himself, and asks to see Aunt Alexandra in the kitchen. He reveals that while trying to escape prison, Tom Robinson has been shot. He takes Calpurnia with him to go see Tom's wife so they can break the news to her.

After Atticus and Calpurnia leave, Aunt Alexandra breaks down, overwhelmed by the weight she sees Atticus carrying. She wonders aloud to Miss Maudie how much more the town can take from him. In response Miss Maudie reminds Aunt Alexandra that whether they know it or not, the people of Maycomb's complete trust in Atticus is a tribute to him. With that Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie rise to the occasion and return to the ladies in the living room. Scout follows them, figuring if they are able to be ladies at the moment, she can do it, too.

Analysis

Chapter 24 brings the devastating news that Tom Robinson is dead—shot 17 times while attempting to escape from prison. Atticus has come home to ask Calpurnia to accompany him to tell Tom's widow. The episode provides another chance to see the Finch household rally to support each other. The moment

at the very end of this chapter, when Miss Maudie, Aunt Alexandra, and Scout pull together to carry on in front of the missionary circle ladies, again suggests that there may yet be hope for Alexandra. As for Scout, it is apparent that she is becoming more and more like Atticus and Jem. Scout's wearing overalls under her dress can be compared to Dolphus Raymond's technique for getting society off his back. Scout is able to appease her aunt with the dress while still maintaining her identity with the overalls.

After Atticus and Calpurnia leave, Alexandra and Miss Maudie have a discussion that provides an opportunity to look at Atticus from outside the family circle. When Alexandra worries about what Atticus's position demands of him, Maudie turns her thinking, saying that the community is actually honoring Atticus by giving him the responsibility: "We trust him to do right. It's that simple."

Chapter 25

Summary

On the way to Helen Robinson's to inform her of Tom's death, Atticus and Calpurnia come upon Jem and Dill, who are just returning from swimming, and the boys accompany them. Later the boys relay the details to Scout, telling her that upon hearing the news about her husband, Helen Robinson crumpled in a heap.

The news of Tom's death spreads like wildfire through Maycomb. Some people say Tom's poorly planned escape is typical of a black man's behavior. Others criticize him posthumously for the inability to wait to see the outcome of Atticus's appeal. In an editorial Braxton Underwood, the publisher of *The Maycomb Tribune*, says it's a sin to kill cripples, likening Tom's death to the "senseless slaughter of songbirds." In contrast, when Bob Ewell learns of Tom's death, he says, "one down and about two more to go."

Analysis

Bob Ewell's threatening comment following news of Tom Robinson's death foreshadows trouble. The townspeople's various reactions to Tom's death reinforce just how prejudiced the town is, but when Braxton Underwood's editorial compares Tom to a songbird, there seems to be hope for change.

Chapter 26

Summary

Once school starts the children find themselves passing the Radley house again. Scout, now in third grade, reflects on their past summers' obsession with Boo Radley, and she says she feels some shame for her part in their efforts, which she now thinks must have tormented him.

In school Scout's class has a Current Events period one day a week. This particular week Cecil Jacobs, one of Scout's classmates, brings in an article about Hitler's persecution of the Jews, talking specifically about forcing them into camps. When Cecil finishes, someone asks how Hitler can get away with that, wondering why the government isn't stopping him. A discussion of democracy follows in which the teacher, Miss Gates, points out that democracy is the difference between the United States and Germany and that in the United States, she says, persecution is not allowed.

Scout carries the conversation home with her, querying Atticus and then Jem. Examining the idea of hate and persecution, she finally gets around to her question. She recalls seeing her teacher on the steps of the courthouse the night of Tom Robinson's trial, where she overheard her saying how it was time someone taught "them" a lesson. Miss Gates also said something about how black people were getting too above themselves.

She asks Jem how Miss Gates can hate Hitler so much for what he does to the Jews, people half a world away, yet treat people she knows here at home so poorly. Jem, still angry about the court's decision, refuses to talk about it.

Analysis

Now in third grade, Scout has evolved noticeably. She understands the concept of persecution and is confused by the contrast between Miss Gates's statement following Tom Robinson's trial and her statement about Hitler's persecution of the Jews. She puzzles over how it can be considered wrong to persecute one group of people yet okay to persecute another

group. Recognizing that Jem may have some more grownup thoughts on this, she turns to him for his insight—and is further confused when her question enrages him.

Lee weaves Boo Radley back into the story, describing how Scout now refers to him by his real name, Arthur. Scout says she feels ashamed about her role in plotting to get Boo Radley to come outside, suggesting that she continues to follow Atticus's advice about walking in another person's shoes.

Chapter 27

Summary

By October life begins to settle down for Jem, Scout, and Atticus. Even so, Bob Ewell continues to weigh on their minds. They hear about his landing a job and then losing it almost immediately. It was a job for the Works Progress Administration (a government program set up during the Great Depression), and Scout wonders how anyone could be fired from a WPA job for laziness. Somehow Ewell blames Atticus for the loss of his job.

In a second incident an intruder attempted mischief at the home of Judge Taylor. Thinking no one home, the intruder entered the house through a back door. The judge never saw more than a shadow, but everyone was convinced it had been Bob Ewell.

A third incident is Bob Ewell's harassment of Helen Robinson. Tom Robinson's former employer, Link Deas, has given Helen a job. To get to Deas's house, Helen is forced to walk past the Ewells', where Bob harasses her. It takes Deas going out to the Ewell home and threatening Bob before the harassment finally stops.

As the chapter closes Scout talks about Maycomb's plans for Halloween. This year, the ladies of Maycomb decide to host a Halloween pageant at the high school with activities for adults as well as children—an event that is to include a performance titled *Maycomb County: Ad Astra Per Aspera* (a Latin phrase meaning "to the stars through difficulties"). The children are to portray some of the county's agricultural products, and Scout has taken the role of a ham.

Analysis

References to Bob Ewell continue to haunt Scout's narration, even as she reports that life is settling down. But as Scout relates the various run-ins that people have had with Bob Ewell, a certain tension is beginning to build—and it is evident that further misdeeds by Bob Ewell are on the way.

Chapter 27 also provides more information about Bob Ewell. By the end of the chapter he begins to appear as a representation of human existence at its worst—an embodiment of evil.

Chapter 28

Summary

When Scout learns that Atticus and Aunt Alexandra can't come to the pageant, she performs her small part for them in the kitchen wearing her bulky costume.

Jem and Scout leave together for the school. The path, though short, is particularly dark that night. Jem and Scout are spooked at one point when Cecil Jacobs jumps out at them. Once at school Jem joins friends his own age as Cecil and Scout run off together to enjoy some of the games before both have to take part in the *Maycomb County* presentation. Somehow Scout is late for her cue, causing the emcee—Grace Merriweather—to have to call for "Pork" twice. The little mishap delights the audience, but Scout is embarrassed. She leaves her costume on for the short walk home, hoping to hide her "mortification."

On the dark path Jem and Scout become aware someone is following them. They break into a run, but almost immediately Scout is knocked flat and something—someone—crushes her costume's chicken wire frame on top of her. Jem is with her, grabbing her up and attempting to run. With Scout still stuck in her costume, they don't get far. She notes they are near the road when she feels Jem's hand leave her. He screams, and she turns and runs in the direction of his scream. Suddenly Scout's attacker is yanked backward and flung to the ground. A third person—and a second stranger—has entered the scuffle.

And then, just as suddenly as the fight began, it is over. Scout

calls for Jem but there is no answer. She sees a lone man standing near the tree, coughing. The man fumbles around for something and then begins staggering toward the street. He is carrying something heavy.

Scout reorients herself and makes her way to the street. In the streetlight she sees the man carrying Jem toward their home. By the time she reaches the house the man and Atticus have already carried Jem inside. Aunt Alexandra runs to meet Scout and gets her in the house.

The doctor and sheriff arrive. While the sheriff goes to where the attack took place, everyone else is with Jem, including the man Scout had seen carrying Jem home. When the sheriff returns he reports finding Scout's dress, some bits of her costume—and Bob Ewell's dead body, right where he had attacked Jem and Scout. There is a knife stuck up under his ribs.

Analysis

Chapter 28 is heavy on action and mystery, and with Jem's arm shattered, we know we've nearly come full circle to Scout's first-page reference to his broken arm.

Scout and Jem's bond is central to the chapter. Despite their age and gender differences—and Jem's coming teen years—the two have stuck together. The description of Jem guiding Scout along the path, one hand resting on the top of her costume, makes that clear. For Scout's part, even though she's virtually helpless in her costume, she never leaves Jem's side.

It seems that the man who saves Jem and Scout must be Boo Radley. The action of the scene and the revelation that Bob Ewell is dead serve as tense lead-ins to Scout's face-to-face meeting with Boo Radley.

Mentioned on the first page of the book, Jem's broken arm—much like Tom Robinson's mangled arm and Boo Radley's reclusive nature—puts him in a class of people symbolized by the mockingbird, an innocent, vulnerable creature. As each of them proved in one way or another, they could be wounded but not completely broken.

Chapter 29

Summary

Sheriff Tate has Scout relate everything she can remember about the attack. Between her details and the sheriff's examination of the scene, Tate and Atticus piece the attack together. When Scout gets to the part where someone jumps in to help them, the sheriff asks whom it was. Scout points to a stranger. Under the stare of everyone in the room, the man squirms and looks uncomfortable. Scout looks at his hands, then at his clothes, and then at his face; as their eyes meet, his tension eases and a slight smile comes to his face. Through her tears Scout suddenly knows she is looking at Boo Radley.

Analysis

At last Scout meets Boo Radley. Like the trial scene it is simple in terms of plot and dialogue but loaded in sensory detail. The interaction is touching but not sentimental, consistent with Scout's entire narration.

Chapter 30

Summary

The doctor ushers everyone out of the room. Though nervous, Scout guides Boo through the house to the porch. There the discussion continues, with Atticus making a defense for Jem, saying he killed Ewell in self-defense. Tate says several times that Ewell must have fallen on his own knife. Determined to follow the legal system, Atticus insists that he won't be able to face Jem if he covers up for him. The men go round and round this way a few times before Atticus realizes that the sheriff is trying to tell him that Jem really didn't kill Bob Ewell: Boo Radley did.

Now understanding each other, Tate makes it quite clear that he stands by his interpretation of the story. As sheriff of Maycomb County, he informs Atticus, his word is final.

Analysis

Sheriff Tate realizes before Atticus does that Boo Radley killed Bob Ewell. The fact that the sheriff has Ewell's switchblade in his pocket suggests he has already decided how this incident must play out. But Atticus, focused on his children's immediate well-being, takes longer to realize that Boo Radley saved his children's lives in more ways than one: he not only took his children out of harm's way, but in killing Bob Ewell, he made sure that Ewell's hatred would never be a danger to them again.

Some of Atticus's strongest qualities are his open mind, his unfailing sense of justice, and his moral code that shapes all his actions. All of the best of Atticus intersects here when, as Sheriff Tate advises, he follows the spirit of the law and stands behind the sheriff's account that Ewell's wound was self-inflicted. Atticus realizes Scout's maturity when she agrees with the sherrif, adding that turning Boo in would "be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird."

Chapter 31

Summary

With the legal details settled, Boo makes Scout understand that he wants to see Jem one more time before leaving. Together they return to the room where Aunt Alexandra sits by Jem's side. Scout invites Boo to touch Jem. Hesitantly Boo reaches out and touches Jem's hair.

With that Boo asks Scout to take him home, and the two of them make their way back downstairs. At the front door Scout stops. She instructs Boo to bend his arm, and she slips her hand into the crook of it. Together they walk—like a lady and gentleman—all the way to the Radley door.

As Boo goes inside Scout remarks that was the last time she ever saw Boo Radley. But as she turns and faces in the direction of her home, she sees her neighborhood in a way she's never viewed it before. The new vantage makes her realize that for years Boo has had a ringside seat from which to see everything. She realizes, too, that from this vantage point, Boo Radley had watched her and Jem growing up—as if they were his children—stepping in to save them at the moment they needed saving.

Scout thinks once more about Atticus's advice about standing in another man's shoes to understand him.

At home Atticus is reading at Jem's bedside. Scout curls up beside him and falls asleep.

Analysis

In this scene, as Scout walks home with Boo, she displays maturity beyond her years. Showing Boo how to position his arm to properly escort a woman, she gives him dignity even while protecting him from the prying eyes of any neighbors who might be watching. But from his porch she grows even more, coming to understand (as she looks back at the neighborhood) how everything looked from Boo's viewpoint, how he had come to regard her and Jem, not just as neighborhood kids but as his own kids.

In this last chapter Lee comes around one last time to the idea of walking in another person's shoes. Of all the topics presented in the novel—class, prejudice, equality, racism, morality—it is this strong message that carries throughout the narration and links all of the themes.

“ Quotes

"Never ... understand a person ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

— Atticus, Chapter 3

Atticus is teaching Scout the importance of understanding others and their point of view. Atticus models this belief in his own life by defending Tom Robinson and protecting Boo Radley. The quote sets up the major change and growth in Scout's character that will occur over the course of the novel, as she too will learn how to do this.

"Atticus told me to delete the

adjectives and I'd have the facts."

— Scout, Chapter 7

This statement is Atticus's way of telling Scout that behind Jem's exaggeration there is a kernel of truth: school will become more interesting as she gets older.

"When a child asks you something, answer him ... But don't make a production of it."

— Atticus, Chapter 9

This statement, spoken to Uncle Jack, reinforces the idea that children understand much more than adults give them credit for. This underscores the importance of having a child narrator in a novel full of adult themes.

"Remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

— Atticus, Chapter 10

The mockingbird is used throughout the novel as a metaphor and symbol for good and innocent creatures. Mockingbirds represent harmless people who deserve society's protection. Boo Radley is later likened to a mockingbird.

"Before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself."

— Atticus, Chapter 11

This statement provides insight into Atticus's character. He loves his community but cannot abide injustice. Even if his actions make enemies Atticus has to do what's right.

"A gang of wild animals can be stopped, simply because they're still human."

— Atticus, Chapter 16

Scout realizes that even though people do bad things, they're still human. If you can connect with a person human to human, you often can effect change.

"One place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom."

— Atticus, Chapter 23

This statement gets to the core of the novel's themes. Racism has prevented Tom Robinson from getting a fair trial even though the charges against him were obviously false. This statement continues to resonate with modern readers who see that despite America's great democracy, injustice is still commonplace.

"I think there's just one kind of folks. Folks."

— Scout, Chapter 23

Scout's childlike statement expresses the moral worldview of the novel that all people are deserving of equal treatment.

"Well, it'd be sort of like shootin' a mockingbird, wouldn't it?"

— Scout, Chapter 30

With this question Scout shows her understanding of Heck

Tate's decision not to prosecute Boo Radley for killing Mr. Ewell since Boo acted to protect the children.

> *"Atticus was right. ... Just standing on the Radley porch was enough."*

— Scout, Chapter 31

Scout shows her maturity in her newfound understanding of Boo Radley's perspective on life. As she stood on the Radley porch she was able to imagine how Boo had watched Jem and her over the years, and realized that he had come to think of them as his children.

Symbols

The Mockingbird

The mockingbird is a symbol of innocence or vulnerability. Several characters lose their innocence in the novel—most notably Tom Robinson. When he is killed the newspaper editorial compares his death to the "senseless slaughter of songbirds," a direct reference to Atticus's earlier warning to his children that it's a sin to shoot a mockingbird because a mockingbird does nothing but bring joy to people. Similarly the sheriff refuses to arrest Boo Radley because doing so would be "sort of like shootin' a mockingbird," meaning that Boo is such a vulnerable character that it doesn't make sense to bring him extra hardship. In the same vein Scout's last name Finch, another songbird, suggests that her innocence (or loss of) will be integral to the story's plot.

Physical Challenges

Many characters in the novel face a physical (or mental) challenge: Tom Robinson has a mangled left arm; Jem breaks an arm badly enough that his arm, too, is forever altered; Boo Radley has a damaged spirit; Atticus has poor eyesight. These disabilities—or differences—are outward signs that everyone has weaknesses and carries with them the damages inflicted by life.

The Knothole

Boo has been living as a recluse for many years but obviously wants to connect with the outside world. Boo leaves gifts for Jem and Scout in the knothole of the tree as a way of connecting with them without making himself vulnerable. When Nathan Radley learns what Boo had been doing, he fills the knothole with cement, breaking Boo's ties with the outside world in an attempt to keep him secluded.

The Rabid Dog

Tim Johnson, a dog well known in Maycomb, becomes rabid—and a danger to the community. The dog's disease is symbolic of racism in the town. Just as Sheriff Tate refuses to serve justice in the Tom Robinson case, so does he refuse to shoot the rabid dog—he urges Atticus to fight it, just as Atticus fights for justice in the courtroom. Miss Maudie aptly tells Scout she believes that Atticus "decided he wouldn't shoot till he had to, and he had to today."

Themes

Race

Issues of race and prejudice pervade *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tom Robinson's trial reveals racial tensions that are deeply ingrained in the day-to-day life of the community and its people, even among those who are not immediately involved in the legal proceedings. Jem and Scout accompany Calpurnia to

church, where all members of the congregation are African American. There they experience incidents of racism from some of the church-goers. The town's newspaper publisher shows signs of racism even as he exposes it in the community. Aunt Alexandra also shows racist tendencies, as when she advises Atticus: "Don't talk like that in front of them [African Americans]. ... It encourages them."

During the trial the children—and particularly the deep-thinking Jem—are shaken by this sudden exposure to the town's prejudice. Their reactions in particular make the racist behavior of the adults around them look petty, illogical, and unethical.

Class

Harper Lee's exploration of class often has to do with money and power. In the novel Aunt Alexandra is loyal to Maycomb's existing class distinctions. People know their place, and to keep one's place is a tedious but necessary job. She makes it clear that Scout cannot invite impoverished classmate Walter Cunningham to their home because "he—is—trash. ... I'll not have you ... picking up his habits." Aunt Alexandra would also consider the Ewell family to be in a lower social class than the Finches.

Throughout the novel, especially after Aunt Alexandra moves in, Jem and Scout wrangle with the idea of class. They often talk about it as "background" or "family," but what they are trying to figure out is how to navigate the tricky waters of Maycomb's various social classes while remaining true to their beliefs.

Equality versus Inequality

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Lee examines issues of equality and inequality. For example, the solicitor, Mr. Gilmer, seems a decent enough person in his general interactions, but the way he addresses Bob Ewell, a white man, is very different from the way he addresses Tom Robinson, a black man, and reveals how deep racial inequality is ingrained in Maycomb.

Inequality can be viewed through many lenses in the story. In addition to a general inequality between whites and blacks in Maycomb, the theme also reveals divisions between the wealthy and the poor. Inequality shows up in discussions about families whose community roots run deep, as opposed to those people who are newcomers.

There is also a sense of inequality between the sexes. Women are not permitted to serve on the jury. Jem occasionally jibes Scout about her gender: "You're gettin' more like a girl every day!"

Morality

Morality occupies a central place in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and can be linked to racial issues and inequality. How moral or ethical individuals are directly relates to how racist they are. Much of the tension in the novel comes about when the moral compass and ethical standards of Jem and Scout—instilled in them by their father's teaching and example—come into direct conflict with the world of Maycomb. Atticus seems to have faith in an innate goodness in people—one that would allow them to choose the best path, treat people with dignity, and show respect for others, no matter what station in life they occupy. But for Jem and Scout life exposes a cruel and vicious world. Their concept of morality as being innate is shattered during the trial when Tom is convicted, despite the flimsy evidence presented against him.

Suggested Reading

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