

To Kill A Mockingbird Study Guide Questions

Chapter 1

- What do you learn in this chapter about Maycomb, Atticus Finch and his family? Maycomb is a hot like desert
- What do you learn about Dill's character?
- What, briefly, has happened to Arthur "Boo" Radley.
- Why does the Radley place fascinate Scout, Jem and Dill?
- What do you notice about the narrative voice and viewpoint in the novel?

Chapter 2

- Why is Scout so looking forward to starting school?
- What do you think of Miss Caroline Fisher as a teacher? Can you find qualities which would make her good or not so good at her job?

Chapter 3

- Who is Calpurnia? What is her place in the Finch household?
- What is Walter Cunningham like? What does his behaviour during lunch suggest about his home life?
- What do you think of the way Atticus treats Walter?
- Atticus says that you never really understand a person "until you climb into his skin and walk around in it". What does this mean? Is it an easy thing for Scout to learn? (In the last chapter of the novel, Scout repeats this, but she changes "skin" to "shoes" - this is probably not a mistake: Harper Lee suggests that Scout cannot clearly recall exactly what Atticus said and when, but the reader can check this!)
- What do you learn in this chapter about the Ewells?

Chapter 4

- Why do the children make Boo's story into a game? What do they do in this game? Do you think the game is an accurate version of what happens in the Radleys' home?
- What might be the cause of the laughter from inside the house?

Chapter 5

- Describe Miss Maudie Atkinson? How typical is she of Maycomb's women? What do the children think of her?
- What does Miss Maudie tell Scout about Boo? How does this compare with what Scout already believes?
- Scout claims that "Dill could tell the biggest ones" (lies) she ever heard. Why might Dill have told such lies?
- What reasons does Atticus give for the children not to play the Boo Radley game? Do you think he is right? Why?

Chapter 6

- What does Mr. Nathan Radley know about the intruders in his garden?
- Why does Miss Stephanie refer to a “negro” over whose head Mr. Nathan has fired?
- Why does Dill's explanation of Jem's state of dress almost land him in trouble?

Chapter 7

- Can you find any evidence that Jem is beginning to understand more than Scout about Boo Radley? What do you think this is?
- Does Jem still fear the gifts in the tree? Give reasons for your answer.

Chapter 8

- Why does Scout quiz Atticus about his visit to the Radley house? How much does Atticus tell her?
- When Atticus asks Scout about the blanket around her shoulders, what does Jem realize?

Chapter 9

- How well does Atticus feel he should defend Tom Robinson? Is it usual for (white) lawyers to do their best for black clients in Alabama at this time?
- Does Scout learn anything from overhearing Atticus's conversation with Uncle Jack? What might this be?
- Read the final sentence of this chapter. Explain in your own words what it means and why it might be important in the story.

Chapter 10

- Scout says that “Atticus was feeble”. Do you think that this is her view as she tells the story or her view when she was younger? Does she still think this after the events recorded in this chapter?
- In this chapter Atticus tells his children that “it's a sin to kill a mockingbird”. What reason does he give for saying this?
- Why does Heck Tate not want to shoot Tim Johnson?
- Near the end of this chapter Atticus cuts off Heck Tate as he is speaking to Jem. What might Heck have been about to say, and why would Atticus want to stop him from saying it?

Chapter 11

- How does Atticus advise Jem to react to Mrs. Dubose's taunts?
- What does Mrs. Dubose say about the children's mother? How does Jem feel about this?
- What request does Mrs. Dubose make of Jem? Is this a fair punishment for his "crime"?
- Explain in your own words what Atticus thinks of insults like "nigger-lover". How far do you agree with him?
- Why, in Atticus's view, was Mrs. Dubose "a great lady"?
- Atticus says that Mrs. Dubose is a model of real courage rather than "a man with a gun in his hand". What does he mean? Do you think he is right?
- Chapters ten and eleven are the last two chapters in the first part of the book. Explain why Harper Lee chooses to end the first part here.

Chapter 12

- Comment on Jem's and Scout's visit to First Purchase church.
- What new things does Scout learn here about how the black people live?
- What does Scout learn from Calpurnia's account of Zeebo's education?
- Explain why Calpurnia speaks differently in the Finch household, and among her neighbours at church.

Chapter 13

- Why does Aunt Alexandra come to stay with Atticus and his family? What is she like?
- Read the first two things Alexandra says when she comes to the Finch house. Are these typical of her or not?
- Alexandra thinks Scout is "dull" (not clever). Why does she think this, and is she right? Are all adults good at knowing how clever young people are?
- How does Aunt Alexandra involve herself in Maycomb's social life?
- Comment on Aunt Alexandra's ideas about breeding and family. Why does Atticus tell them to forget it? Who is right, do you think?

Chapter 14

- Comment on Atticus's explanation of rape. How suitable is this as an answer to Scout.
- Why does Alexandra think Atticus should dismiss Calpurnia? How does Atticus respond to the suggestion?
- Why is Scout pleased when Jem fights her back? Why is she less pleased when he tells Atticus about Dill?
- What do we learn from Dill's account of his running away?

Chapter 15

- What is the "nightmare" that now descends upon the children?
- What was (and is) the Ku Klux Klan? What do you think of Atticus's comment about it?
- How does Jem react when Atticus tells him to go home, and why?
- What persuades the lynching-party to give up their attempt on Tom's life?

- Comment on the way Scout affects events without realizing it at the time.

Chapter 16

- What “subtle change” does Scout notice in her father?
- What sort of person is Dolphus Raymond?
- How does Reverend Sykes help the children see and hear the trial? Is he right to do?
- Comment on Judge Taylor's attitude to his job. Does he take the trial seriously or not?

Chapter 17

- What are the main points in Heck Tate's evidence? What does Atticus show in his cross-examination of Sheriff Tate?
- What do we learn indirectly of the home life of the Ewell family in this chapter?
- What do you learn from Bob Ewell's evidence?
- Why does Atticus ask Bob Ewell to write out his name? What does the jury see when he does this?

Chapter 18

- Is Mayella like her father or different from him? In what ways?
- What might be the reason for Mayella's crying in the court?
- How does Mayella react to Atticus's politeness? Is she used to people being polite?
- How well does Mr. Gilmer prove Tom's guilt in the eyes of the reader (you) and in the eyes of the jury? Can you suggest why these might be different?

Chapter 19

- What made Tom visit the Ewell's house in the first place?
- Why does Scout think that Mayella Ewell was “the loneliest person in the world”?
- In your own words explain Mayella's relationship with her father.
- How does Dill react to this part of the trial? Why is this, in your opinion?

Chapter 20

- Scout says that “Mr. Dolphus Raymond was an evil man”. Is she right?
- In most states of the USA people who drink alcohol in public places are required to hide their bottle in a paper bag. Why does Dolphus Raymond hide Coca-Cola in a bag?
- What, according to Atticus, is the thing that Mayella has done wrong?
- Explain, in your own words, Atticus's views on people's being equal.

Chapter 21

- What does Jem expect the verdict to be? Does Atticus think the same?
- What is unusual about how long it takes the jury to reach a verdict? Is the verdict predictable or not?
- As Scout waits for the verdict, she thinks of earlier events. What are these and how do they remind us of the novel's central themes?

Chapter 22

- Although Atticus did not want his children in court, he defends Jem's right to know what has happened. Explain, in your own words, Atticus's reasons for this. (Look at the speech beginning, "This is their home, sister".
- Miss Maudie tells Jem that "things are never as bad as they seem". What reasons does she give for this view?
- Why does Dill say that he will be a clown when he grows up? Do you think he would keep this ambition for long?
- This story is set in the 1930s but was published in 1960. Have attitudes to racism remained the same (in the USA and the UK) or have there been any changes (for the better or worse) since then, in your view?
- Why does Bob Ewell feel so angry with Atticus? Do you think his threat is a real one, and how might he try to "get" Atticus?

Chapter 23

- What do you think of Atticus's reaction to Bob Ewell's challenge? Should he have ignored Bob, retaliated or done something else?
- What is "circumstantial evidence"? What has it got to do with Tom's conviction?
- What does Atticus tell Scout about why the jury took so long to convict Tom?
- Why does Aunt Alexandra accept that the Cunninghams may be good but are not "our kind of folks"? Do you think that people should mix only with others of the same social class? Are class-divisions good or bad for societies?
- At the end of this chapter, Jem forms a new theory about why Boo Radley has never left his house in years. What is this? How likely is it to be true, in your opinion?

Chapter 24

- Do you think the missionary ladies are sincere in worrying about the "Mrunas" (a tribe in Africa)? Give reasons for your answer.
- Compare the reactions of Miss Maudie and the other ladies when Scout says she is wearing her "britches" under her dress.
- What is your opinion of the Maycomb ladies, as depicted in this chapter?
- Explain briefly how Tom was killed. What is Atticus's explanation for Tom's attempted escape. Do you think agree with Atticus?
- How, in this chapter, do we see Aunt Alexandra in a new light? How does Miss Maudie support her?

Chapter 25

- How does Maycomb react to the news of Tom's death?
- Comment on the idea that Tom's death was "typical"?
- Explain the contrast Scout draws between the court where Tom was tried and "the secret courts of men's hearts". In what way are hearts like courts?
- Why did Jem not want Scout to tell Atticus about Bob Ewell's comment? Was this a wise thing to ask her to do?

Chapter 26

- In her lesson on Hitler, Miss Gates says that "we (American people) don't believe in persecuting anyone". What seems odd to the reader about this claim?
- Why is Scout puzzled by Miss Gates' disapproval of Hitler?

- Why does Scout's question upset Jem? Is there a simple answer, or any answer, to the question ("How can you hate Hitler an' then turn around an be ugly about folks right at home?")

Chapter 27

- What three things does Bob Ewell do that alarm Aunt Alexandra?
- Why, according to Atticus, does Bob Ewell bear a grudge? Which people does Ewell see as his enemies, and why?
- What was the purpose of the Halloween pageant? What practical joke had persuaded the grown ups to have an organized event?

Chapter 28

- Comment on the way this chapter reminds the reader of earlier events in the novel.
- Why does Jem say that Boo Radley must not be at home? What is ironic about this? (Is it true? Does he really mean it? Why might it be important for him and Scout that Boo should not be at home?)
- Scout decides to keep her costume on while walking home. How does this affect her understanding of what happens on the way?
- Why had Atticus not brought a chair for the man in the corner? Who might this stranger be?

Chapter 29

- What causes the "shiny clean line" on the otherwise "dull wire" of Scout's costume?
- What explanation does Atticus give for Bob Ewell's attack?
- What does Heck Tate give as the reason for the attack?
- Do you think the sheriff's explanation or Atticus's is the more likely to be true?

Chapter 30

- Who does Atticus think caused Bob Ewell's death?
- Why does Heck Tate insist that Bob Ewell's death was self-inflicted? In what way is this partly true?
- Is Heck Tate right to spare Boo then publicity of an inquest? Give reasons for your answer.
- How does the writer handle the appearance, at the end of the story, of Boo Radley?

Chapter 31

- How do the events of the final chapters explain the first sentence in the whole novel?
- Comment on the way the writer summarizes earlier events to show their significance.
- How does Scout make sense of an earlier remark of Atticus's as she stands on the Radley porch?
- How much of a surprise is it fo find what Boo Radley is really like? Has the story before this point prepared the reader for this discovery?
- At the end of the novel, Atticus reads to Scout. Comment on his choice of story. Does it have any connection with themes earlier in the novel and in its ending?

TKAMB Vocabulary 1st half

For each word write down the definition, part of speech, and create a sentence that incorporates the word within it. You will be quizzed on these words on chapters 1-10 quiz.

1. Chameleon
2. Compromise
3. Condescend
4. Eccentric
5. Evasion
6. Indigenous
7. Intimidation
8. Irked
9. Malignant
10. Malevolent
11. Preserve
12. Pronouncement
13. Quibbling
14. Teetered
15. Tormenting
16. Tyranny
17. Unanimous

TKAMB Vocabulary 2nd half

For each word write down the definition, part of speech, and create a sentence that incorporates the word within it. You will be quizzed on these words on chapters 11-21 quiz.

1. Acquainted
2. Acquired
3. Adjacent
4. Cantankerous
5. Compensation
6. Contemporaries
7. Contradict
8. Debating
9. Ecclesiastical
10. Emerge
11. Entrusted
12. Extract
13. Fanatical
14. Inaudible
15. Inconspicuous
16. Ingenuous
17. Isolate

18. Pensive

19. Peril

20. Perplexity