

To Kill A Mockingbird

Study Guide

Chapter 1

1. What narrative point of view does Harper Lee use to begin the story?
2. What can the reader expect to learn from this narrative point of view?
3. What is the setting of the story? How does Harper Lee use this setting to set the tone?
4. Why does Jem tell Scout (the narrator) not to ask Dill about his father? What can the reader infer about Jem and Scout's relationship from this exchange?
5. Briefly describe how the Radleys are different from the other people in Maycomb.
6. Why does Jem take three days to accept Dill's dare and go up to the Radleys' home? What theme is Lee introducing with Jem's response to Dill's dare?
7. What does Harper Lee mean by calling Miss Stephanie Crawford, "a neighborhood scold?" (p.11)
8. From the beginning of the story, the narrator reflects on events of the past. How is this evident to the reader, and how may it affect suspense and story development?
9. What is the first event that Lee uses to begin building suspense in the story?
10. Briefly describe Boo Radley. What purpose does Boo serve in this story?
11. What is the allusion that Lee makes in the following passage?

There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself. (pp.5-6)

Chapter 2

1. Why does Miss Caroline hit Scout with the ruler?
2. Is Scout's first day of school what she expected? Why or why not?
3. How does Harper Lee use the school setting to give the reader important exposition about Southern culture?
4. How does Harper Lee show that Miss Caroline is not familiar with Maycomb customs?

5. What could be Lee's motivation for having Miss Caroline come from another county rather than from Maycomb?
6. How does Lee create sympathy for Miss Caroline at the end of the chapter?
7. Describe Lee's use of humor as Jem tries to explain Miss Caroline's teaching theories to Scout.

Chapter 3

1. Why does Jem invite Walter to dinner? What social issue does Lee introduce with the character of Walter Cunningham?
2. What does Atticus mean when he says to Scout, "—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it?" (p.30)
3. Compare and contrast Walter Cunningham and Burris Ewell. What is Lee illustrating with the differences in these two characters?
4. Why does Atticus not want Scout to tell Miss Caroline about their compromise? What does this indicate about Atticus' character?
5. The reader learns that Scout and Jem's mother is dead, and they have an African-American housekeeper named Calpurnia. What significance does Calpurnia have for the plot?
6. Although Scout does not learn anything academic on the first day of school, she has several opportunities to learn about human nature, social customs, and relationships. Briefly describe some of the non-academic lessons Scout learns on the first day of school.

Chapter 4

1. Briefly describe the symbolism of Scout's nickname and how it is appropriate.
2. What does Jem's response to Scout's chewing gum tell the reader about his feelings for her?
3. What is Lee's intent by having Scout say:

"...As for me, I knew nothing except what I gathered from *Time* magazine and reading everything I could lay hands on at home, but as I inched sluggishly along the treadmill of the Maycomb County school system, I could not help receiving the impression that I was being cheated out of something. Out of what I knew not, yet I did not believe that twelve years of unrelieved boredom was exactly what the state had in mind for me." (pp.32-33)

4. What do Scout's reasons for wanting to stop the game foreshadow?
5. What literary device is Lee using in the following quotation?

"...some tinfoil was sticking in a knot hole just above my eye level, winking at me in the afternoon sun." (p.33)

6. What can the reader infer from the two Indian head pennies?
7. What character trait do Jem and Scout illustrate with their ambivalence about taking the pennies?

Chapter 5

1. What emotion is Scout really displaying in the following passage? What does Lee show about Scout's character through this passage?

...Dill was becoming something of a trail anyways, following Jem about. He had asked me earlier in the summer to marry him, then he promptly forgot about it. He staked me out, marked as his property, said I was the only girl he would ever love, then he neglected me. I beat him up twice but it did no good, he only grew closer to Jem. (p.41)

2. How does Scout's conversation with Miss Maudie develop the reader's sympathy for Arthur (Boo) Radley?
3. How does Lee use humor to discredit Miss Stephanie's stories about Boo?
4. Why is Atticus angry with Jem, Scout, and Dill?
5. Based on Atticus' conversations with the children, briefly describe his attitude toward the Radleys. What conclusions can the infer about Atticus' character?
6. What are specific examples that the children are not paying attention to Atticus' advice about their actions toward other people? What makes these actions more acceptable from children than if they had been done by adults?

Chapter 6

1. When Scout becomes suspicious of Dill's suggestion to go for a walk, how do the boys' respond?
2. What examples does Lee use to show that Scout does not act like a proper, Southern young lady?
3. How does Lee use light and darkness to create suspense in this chapter?
4. How does Lee illustrate racism in the following passage?

Mr. Radley shot at a Negro in his collard patch....Shot in the air. Scaredhim pale, though. Says if anybody sees a white nigger around, that's the one. Says he's got the other barrel waitin' for the next sound he hears in that patch, an' next time he wo not aim high, be it dog, nigger, or ... (p. 55)

5. Describe Scout's internal conflict when Jem decides to go get his pants.

6. What does Scout mean when she says, “It was then, I suppose, that Jem and I first began to part company?” (p. 56) What could Lee’s purpose be for having Scout say this?

Chapter 7

1. What does Scout mean when she says, “I tried to climb in Jem’s skin and walk around in it...” (p. 57), and what is significant about her saying this?
2. What makes second grade better than first grade for Scout?
3. What is ironic about Jem’s telling Scout about the pants on this specific day?
4. What does the reader learn about Jem’s character in this chapter when he decides to write a letter?
5. Why does Lee periodically have Jem and Scout find something in the tree?
6. What did Atticus mean when he told Scout to delete the adjective and she would have the facts? Why does Lee include this conversation in the book?
7. What does Lee accomplish by having Jem ask Nathan Radley about the cement in the knot hole?
8. What does Jem’s reticence to cry in front of Scout’s foreshadow?

Chapter 8

1. What is ironic about Mr. Avery’s allusion to the Rosetta Stone? How does Scout show that she does not know Mr. Avery’s purpose for using this allusion?
2. After seeing the snowman that the children built, Atticus praises Jem in an unusual way by saying that he’s “...perpetrated a near libel...” (p. 67) What does Atticus mean?
3. What could Lee be foreshadowing with the unusual weather?
4. Explain the irony of Calpurnia’s telling Atticus that she will be warmer in her own house than in their house on the night of the snowstorm. What could Lee mean by having Calpurnia say this?
5. Why does Atticus start to get angry at the children after the fire?
6. What can the reader infer from Jem’s reaction to Atticus’ request for him to get the wrapping paper out of the pantry?
7. What does the blanket symbolize?
8. How does Lee use Miss Maudie’s conversation with Jem and Scout the morning after the fire to illustrate the theme of racism?

Chapter 9

1. How does Lee use Scout's innocence as a vehicle to explain Atticus' attitude toward African-Americans?
2. How does Lee use humor when Atticus talks to Scout about saying "nigger?" (p. 74) What is the effect of this humor?
3. How does the allusion to the Missouri Compromise (p. 76) help explain Maycomb's attitude toward the Civil War?
4. How might the reader's impression of Aunt Alexandra be different if Lee had written the story in third person?
5. What does the reader learn about Dill in this chapter? Why does Lee mention this?
6. How does Lee create sympathy for Scout in this chapter?
7. What can the reader infer about Lee's purpose for introducing Uncle Jack in this chapter?
8. How can the reader see Scout change during this chapter?
9. What suspense does Lee create for the reader in this chapter?
10. At the end of the chapter, Atticus tells Jack that Judge Taylor assigned the Robinson case to Atticus. How might this impact the reader's impression of Atticus?
11. What upsets the children the most about Atticus taking on the Robinson case? What is Lee's purpose for having the children hear the community's attitude toward Atticus?

Chapter 10

1. Briefly describe Atticus' character.
2. In the following quotation, what is the meaning of "tooth and nail," and what type of literary expression is this?

"I would not fight publicly for Atticus, but the family was private ground. I would fight anyone from a third cousin upwards tooth and nail." (p. 90)
3. According to Scout' narrative, what is the children's impression of Atticus?
4. How does Lee occasionally offer the reader an adult perspective of Scout's narrative?
5. How does the children's picture of Tim Johnson compare with Calpurnia's description of the dog when she calls Mr. Finch and Miss Eula May? Why does Lee include this event in the story?

6. How does Lee use Calpurnia's actions in dealing with Tim Johnson to show the subtle discrimination prevalent in small Southern towns?
7. What did the children learn about Atticus as a result of their sighting of Tim Johnson?
8. What character trait does Lee reinforce by having Atticus shoot the dog, tell the children to stay away from the dog's body, and the return to the office? How did it affect their opinion of Atticus?
9. How does Lee introduce the significance of the book's title? What does it symbolize?
10. What does Jem mean about Atticus being a gentleman like him? What change does this illustrate about Jem?