

# TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee



## Chapter 1 Discussion Questions

1. Who was Robert E. Lee Ewell? Describe the type of character he portrays?
2. How old are Scout and Jem in Chapter 1?
3. When Scout says that Calpurnia's hand was "wide as a bed slat and twice as hard," what conclusions can you draw?
4. How does the first sentence describing Atticus's first case give a different impression than when you hear the rest of the story?
5. Describe Atticus's relationship to Maycomb.
6. How did the sheriff make his decision about what to do with Boo? What were the results?
7. How and why were the Radleys set apart from the rest of Maycomb?
8. What distinguishing features do Scout, Jem, and Dill have, as revealed in this chapter?
9. What do you think it means to make "people into ghosts"? What ways do you think Atticus might have had in mind?
10. Do you think the children were imagining the movement in the Radleys' house? If so, how do you account for their thinking something moved? If not, what do you think caused the movement?
11. Why do you think Dill is so fascinated by the Radley place and Boo?

## Chapter 2 Discussion Questions

1. What does Jem mean when he says, "school's different"? What difference does Scout actually find?
2. What does Jem think of Miss Caroline? On what is his opinion based?
3. In what ways does Miss Caroline misjudge the first grade?
4. Why does Miss Caroline want Scout's home tuition in reading and writing to stop?
5. What is the Dewey Decimal System? What do you think Jem may have meant when he used this term?
6. What kind of student does Miss Caroline wish to discover in her classroom?
7. What information does Scout use to make her assessment of Miss Caroline?
8. What information does Scout use to understand Walter's behavior?
9. Summarize the effects of the Stock Market Crash on Maycomb. (Be brief)
10. Why does Miss Caroline bury her head in her arms when the class leaves?
11. What do you predict will happen when the class returns after lunch?

## Chapter 3 Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jem invited Walter to dinner?
2. What does it mean when Scout says, "By the time we reached our front steps, Walter had forgotten he was a Cunningham"?

3. How do Scout's and Calpurnia's ideas of company differ?
4. What can you gather from Scout's approach to "fixing" Calpurnia by drowning herself?
5. Scout says Little Chuck Little was a gentleman. What does that term mean to you? What does that mean to Scout?
6. What do you think Scout learned in her first day of school? What does Miss Caroline learn? What did you learn about Scout's schooling?
7. How is Atticus's response to how Scout should approach Miss Caroline similar to Dill's response to Jem about the turtle in Chapter 1?
8. Do you agree with Atticus that "Sometimes it's better to bend the law a little in special cases"? Under what principle could this be justified? Explain your response.
9. Atticus says that Miss Caroline learned "not to hand something to a Cunningham." He also says, "It's silly to force people like the Ewells into a new environment." We can presume that if Atticus says it, it's true. How can we know when it is useful to codify observations like this, and when doing so might lead to injustice through prejudice?

#### **Chapter 4 Discussion Questions**

1. How does the narration change from the end of chapter 3 to the beginning of chapter 4?
2. Explain the children's interaction with the items found in the tree. What explanation did you think made sense?
3. Describe Jem's and Scout's "ethical culture" in your own words. Is it the same as or different from what you believe? Explain.
4. Scout reports that Calpurnia, their Black cook, calls the legend about Hot Steams "ni---- talk." Assuming that Scout reported Calpurnia's words accurately, what do you think Calpurnia meant? Do you consider this to show racial bias? Why or why not?
5. What factors lead to the invention of the new drama, "Boo Radley"?
6. Why doesn't Scout want to play "Boo Radley"? Why do the boys think she doesn't want to play?
7. "One Man's Family" was a Sunday evening radio serial that began in April of 1932. The longest running serial drama in the history of American radio, it unfolded the story of the family of Henry Barbour until 1959. How does this information add to your understanding of what the children were doing?
8. Do you think Atticus knows what the children are doing? Explain.

#### **Chapter 5 Discussion Questions**

1. Since early Christianity, there has been a discussion of the difference between the "letter" of the law and the "spirit" of the law (it's in the New Testament in 2Corinthians 3:6 "a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives life"). Following the letter of the law is following literally the exact wording of the law. Following the spirit of the law, is going beyond and behind the words, when applicable, to try to grasp the deeper reality that the words are based on, which may demand more than words are able to convey. Apply this distinction to Jem's and Scout's dialogue after Atticus's arrival in Chapter 4 and to the first paragraph of Chapter 5.

2. What do you think Scout means by calling Miss Maudie a “chameleon lady” (p.42)?
3. “Old Testament pestilence” refers to Chapters 7 through 11 of the Book of Exodus in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament of the Christian Bible. Look this up and also find out about the Second Battle of Marne and explain the rhetorical figure Lee is using in discussing Miss Maudie’s reaction to nut grass.
4. Why do you think seeing Miss Maudie’s bridgework was what “cemented” her friendship with Scout?
5. According to Scout’s understanding, Atticus thinks God is “loving folks like you love yourself” (p.45). How do you think this works in practical realities?
6. What do you think Miss Maudie means by “The Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of ...”? Explain in your own words.
7. Miss Maudie says of the legends about Boo Radley that Scout recounts to her, “That is three-fourths colored folks and one-fourth Stephanie Crawford.” What does she mean? Do you consider it to show racial bias? Explain.
8. Scout compares and contrasts Miss Maudie and Stephanie Crawford. What criteria does Scout use for evaluating people?
9. What insight do you think Scout gains from speaking to Miss Maudie about Mr. Arthur?
10. Why does Dill want Boo to come out? Give as many reasons as you think are applicable.
11. How do you think Scout would have ended the sentence, “Okay, okay, but I don’t want a watch. Jem, somebody was—“ if Jem hadn’t interrupted her (pg. 47)?
12. Why do you think Jem doesn’t take Scout’s suggestion to use the front door? (pg.48)
13. Why do you think Lee chose not to put Atticus’s lecture in direct address?
14. What was the lawyer’s trick the Jem fell into?
15. What sense do you make of Jem waiting until Atticus could no longer hear him and then yelling after him?