

To Kill a Mockingbird Questions

Ch. 1-2

1. List all the ways Maycomb is a “slow” town
2. Scout is trying to tell her teacher something, but the teacher isn’t “hearing” her. Compare Scout’s teacher experience to any experience with an adult you’ve had that was similar.
3. Defend the Cunningham philosophy of, “If you don’t have it, you do without.”

Ch. 3

1. Atticus tells Scout, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view.” Think of someone you were upset with or argued with recently and try to write down the incident that upset you from the other person’s point of view.
2. What is your initial opinion of Atticus as a father?
3. Atticus explains to Scout that in regard to the Ewells, it is sometimes “better to bend the law a little in special cases.” Some people would agree, and some would disagree with this statement. Relate an incident in which you saw this done in a school situation.

Ch. 4

1. Scout feels that at school she is being cheated out of something. Apparently she feels that she should be learning more than she is or learning something different than what she is being taught. Have you ever felt cheated in this fashion? If so, what did you do or what might you have done about it?
2. At the end of this chapter, Scout says that she had heard someone inside the house laughing. Who do you think was laughing? Why was he/she laughing? What inferences might you draw from the laughing?

Ch. 5-6

1. Ms. Maudie says, “Sometimes the bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of [Someone else].” Try to explain her meaning to a classmate that doesn’t understand.
2. Imagine you are new in Maycomb and have recently met Scout, Jem, and Dill. In a letter to a friend in your old home town, describe the three of them.
3. Jem has to go back for his pants. Respond in the dialogue below and explain his actions to a friend who says:
Friend: It was stupid of Jem to go back for his pants. He could’ve been killed.
You: _____
4. Why does Scout think that Boo Radley will not be able to read their letter?
5. List the order of events in this chapter.

Ch. 7

1. Jem is crying at the end of this chapter. Explain the reason to a classmate who hasn't a clue about the reason.
2. Why do you suppose Mr. Nathan Radley fills the knothole with cement? Write down the conversation that might have taken place between Nathan Radley and Arthur Radley before the cementing of the knothole was done.

Ch. 8

1. The first 8 chapters are part of what we would call plot line #1. Summarize the action of this plotline and give it a name.
2. A number of things happen in this chapter, and some questions could be raised. For example, where does the blanket come from that is put around Scout's shoulders? What is snow like to someone who has never experienced it?

Ch. 9

1. Plotline #2 begins with this chapter. From the clues that have been given, what do you suppose this plotline will follow? What name could we give to plotline #2?
2. Atticus tells his sister that he's doing the best he can in raising two young children without a mother. How do you suppose that you'd do as a single parent raising two children? Is there anything you'd try to do or avoid doing in this situation?
3. Aunt Alexandra believes that Scout doesn't behave as a proper young woman should. Do you have any thoughts on how a proper young woman should behave?
4. Atticus says using bad language is a stage all young people go through and then outgrow. Would you agree with that? Today, you hear bad language so often that you get used to it, and you stop noticing it. What's your opinion about bad language?
5. Consider the social climate in Alabama and other Southern states at this point in history; to a classmate who doesn't understand, try to explain why Atticus defending Tom Robinson is as important as it is.

Ch. 10

1. Ms. Maudie says, "People in their right minds, never take pride in their talents." Why does she say that? Do you agree with her?
2. Jem says of his father, "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me." Given the context of the story, how do you suppose Jem means the word "Gentleman"? and how would you define the word "Gentleman"?
3. Jem has gone from feeling ashamed of his father because of his apparent lack of athletic ability to feeling very proud of him. Atticus is the embodiment of what a man should be –Atticus is the man Jem wishes to become. In your mind, what would the model embodiment of a man be?
4. Is Jem correct in his changed opinion of Atticus, simply because of the shooting of the mad dog? What ability do you have that no one knows about; if your friends knew of it, how differently would they treat you?

Ch. 11

1. The narrator of the story is Scout, or more appropriately, the woman Scout becomes when she grew up, Miss Jean Louise Finch. Imagine what Miss Finch looks like and is doing at the time she is looking back on her life telling this story. What advantage does an author have in creating a narrator who tells a story in present time?
2. When Jem complains furiously about Mrs. Dubose, Atticus says, "Easy does it son... She's an old lady and she's ill...Whatever she says to you, it's your job not to let her make you mad." Think about this: if we let someone else make us mad, we give them a power over us. Do you know someone who makes you mad? What can you do so that no matter what the person says, you will not let him or her have the power to make you angry?
3. How do you think most people you know would hold up against public opinion if everyone else thought they were wrong, but they thought they were right? How would you deal with that type of situation?
4. Atticus said that Mrs. Dubose had real courage. Courage, he says, is "...when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what." What is your opinion of his definition? What is your definition of courage?

Ch. 12

1. Do you act, talk, or think differently depending who is nearby or who you are with? Why? What do you do differently?
2. Does Calpurnia's explanation as to why she spoke one language at work and another language at church give rise to any thoughts in you about language? How do your surroundings affect the way you speak?
3. Comment on anything else in this chapter you found thought-provoking.

Chp. 13

1. The narrator tells us that the day Aunt Alexandra arrived, "The remainder of the afternoon went by in gentle gloom that descends when relations appear." What does she mean? Describe a relative's visit that you remember being gloomy.
2. Because of the way she was raised, Aunt Alexandra is self-assured, always in control, and without any doubts about herself or her place in the world. To what extent are you like that? To what extent would you like to be like that? Describe the negatives that Aunt Alexandra exhibits.
3. Aunt Alexandra believes, "...the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was." Have you ever seen anyone else, either in life or in the movies, who thought like that? What is your opinion of that kind of thinking? How important is the idea of owning land to you?
4. Atticus talks to the children about "gentle breeding." At one point Atticus tells Scout to "stop the noise," and Scout breaks out crying. Why? In a dialogue with a classmate who doesn't understand, explain it.

Classmate: "I don't get it. Why is she crying?"

You: _____

5. Atticus tells Scout, "It's not time to worry." Explain what foreshadowing is to someone who is not familiar with the term, and explain what this comment probably foreshadows.

Chapter 14

1. Dill and Scout are surprised that Jem called Atticus and informed him of Dill's presence. How do you feel about Jem's actions? Can you remember making a similar kind of decision in your own life? What were the results?
2. Scout says, in effect, that parents never do half the things they promise. Do you think that's true? As a parent, how would you handle making promises?
3. What is your opinion of Dill? What are the things you like or don't like about him? Remember when you were his age. Is there anything you can identify with in his personality?

Chapter 15

1. Tom Robinson, a black man, is in jail because he was accused of raping a white woman. To the crowd of friends in front of his house, Atticus says, "Link, that boy might go to the chair, but he's not going til the truth's told... And you know what the truth is." We readers, however, do not know what the truth is, but we speculate. What do you think "the truth" might be?
2. That evening a mob goes to the jail to lynch Tom Robinson, and it looks as if they will harm Atticus if they have to. Discuss how Scout, without even knowing it, able to get the mob to disperse and go home. What parts of her personality cause the mob to leave?
3. The whole scene in the square is observed by the newspaper editor, Mr. Underwood. Write the news story or editorial he might have printed the next day.

Chapter 16

1. Although more liberal than anyone else in town, both Jem and Dill express attitudes that, at best, could be called patronizing to black people or racist. The author is aware of this, but she is trying to present a true picture of the way things were back then. Do you feel Jem and Scout are prejudiced? Imagine a conversation between you and Jem.

Jem: Too many half-white-half-black kids don't belong anywhere.

You: _____

2. Jem and Scout cannot sit downstairs at the trial along with the rest of the whites of Maycomb, so the children go up to the balcony with Reverend Sykes and the black townspeople. How would you feel if you, like Scout and Jem, were the only members of your race in a group of people of a different race? Why?
3. This chapter gives a picture of the customs and social attitudes of a small Southern town in the late 1930's? What particularly caught your attention?

Chapter 17

1. What is your opinion of Bob Ewell? Compare him to any other character you've seen in a book or movie. Try, as Atticus suggests elsewhere, to walk in Bob Ewells' shoes.

2. At this point in the novel, what are your thoughts or feelings about this book?

Chapter 18

1. What is our opinion of Mayella Ewell? If you are inclined to dislike her, try to walk in her shoes for a day. Describe a day in her life.
2. Imagine a dialogue with a friend who calls Mayella “a lying slut.” What could you say about Mayella in her defense?
3. What is your opinion of Mr. Ewell?

Chapter 19

1. If you understand why Dill starts to cry as he watches the trial, respond to a friend who says,

Friend: To have Dill cry was stupid. No real boy would have cried in that situation.

You: _____

2. What was your reaction to Mr. Gilmer’s cross-examination of Tom Robinson?

Chapter 20

1. Lately, some people have questioned whether the courts do treat everyone the same. What was your reaction to what Atticus had to say about the courts?

Chapter 21

1. At this point, if you could have asked anyone in the courthouse (Atticus, Jem, the jury, Judge Taylor, the prosecutor, Mr. Gilmer, or Tom Robinson) a question, what question would you have asked? What possible answers might you have received?

Chapter 22

1. When all the food is left at the Finches’ Atticus is appreciative, but he says, “Tell them they must never do this again. Times are too hard...” Why does he say this? Relate it to what you know about the Depression in the United States.
2. Speaking of his Aunt Rachel, Dill says,
Dill: “Bet that woman drinks a pint for breakfast every morning—know she drinks two glasses full. Seen her.”
Aunt Alexandra: “Don’t talk like that Dill. . . It’s not becoming to a child. It’s—cynical.”
Dill: “I ain’t cynical, Miss Alexandra. Tellin’ the truth’s not cynical, is it?”
Alexandra: “The way you tell it, it is.”

What are your thoughts on what Dill says?

Chapter 23

1. What is your opinion of Atticus’s reaction when Bob Ewell curses him out and spits in his face? What would you have done in Atticus’s place?
2. Atticus says he’d rather Bob Ewell spit on him than beat his kids or take his anger out on someone else. Describe any situation where you have seen someone take out his or her anger on an innocent or weaker person or animals, rather than the real object of the anger.

3. Aunt Alexandra says, "They're not our kind of folks," about the Cunninghams. What does she mean by that? Do you know anyone who thinks like that? What may be right and what may be wrong with what she says?

Chapter 24

1. If the Tom Robinson trial were to take place today, it is very likely that shows like "Inside Edition," "60 Minutes," or "A Current Affair" would show up in town shortly after the verdict was in. If so, who would do the interview, whom would they interview, and what would be the interviewer's opening and closing comments?
2. How do you suppose it is possible for the Missionary Society ladies to have so much sympathy for the Mrunas, but so little sympathy for the black people in their own town?
3. Miss Maudie says that Atticus does the right thing, the thing that many other people would like to do but are afraid to do. In what ways would you like to be like Atticus? How would you feel about having that role in your community?

Chapter 25

1. We are told that Mr. Underwood wrote an editorial about the shooting of Tom, but we are not told much about the editorial. Write the editorial you think he might have written.

Chapter 26 and 27

1. The Tom Robinson subplot that began in Chp. 9 has concluded. Where do you think the story line will go in the last five chapters?

Chapters 28 and 29

1. 1. What is your opinion of the way these chapters are written? Is what happens suspenseful?
2. Before it is revealed who attacks Scout and Jem, who did you believe the person was?

Chapter 30

1. In this chapter, the comment that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird comes up for the third time. Identify the context in which this phrase, or a very similar one, is mentioned.
2. What is your reaction to Sheriff Tate's "findings" in the death of Bob Ewell? If you were the Sheriff, how would you have handled explaining the death of Bob Ewell?

Chapter 31

1. How did you feel about Chapter 31? Would you have ended the book any differently? Could the story have ended with Chapter 30?