

## Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Summary

### Chapter 13

- Scout asks Aunt Alexandra if she's come for a visit, and aunty says that she and Atticus have decided that it's best if she stays with them for a while, as Scout needs some "feminine influence" Scout does not agree with this, but keeps quiet about it. In fact, Scout has trouble making any kind of conversation with her aunt. That evening Atticus comes home and confirms Aunt Alexandra's reason for her coming to stay, though Scout thinks it's mostly her aunt's doing, part of her long campaign to do "What Is Best For The Family"
- Aunt Alexandra is popular in Maycomb and takes a leading role in the feminine social circles, even though she makes obvious her belief that Finches are superior to everyone else (even though, as Jem says, most people in town are related to the Finches anyhow).
- Aunt Alexandra is a firm believer in Streaks—each family has one (a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, etc.), though Scout doesn't really understand her aunt's obsession with heredity. It makes a kind of sense. The town is far enough away from the river that forms the area's main transportation route means that hardly anyone ever moves to Maycomb or away from it. Families have known each other for generations, establishing the reputation for having "streaks." Scout mostly ignores her aunt, unless she gets called in to make an appearance at a luncheon or tea.
- Alexandra also attempts to instill family pride, by, for example, showing them a book their cousin Joshua wrote. Unfortunately, the kids already know his story from Atticus: he went crazy at college and tried to assassinate the president of the school. After this Aunt Alexandra sends Atticus to talk to the kids about being proud of their superior heritage, but he just scares them because he doesn't usually talk to them in that way. Scout ends up crying on his lap, and Atticus tells them both to forget it.

### Chapter 14

- That incident is enough to make Aunt Alexandra shut up about the Finch Family Pride, just in time for Scout to get some hints that the townspeople are obsessed with the Finch Family Shame. After overhearing a passerby's cryptic comment, Scout asks Atticus what rape is. Atticus defines it for her as "carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent" Thanks for clearing that up, dad.
- Scout doesn't really get what that means, and asks Atticus why Calpurnia wouldn't explain it to her, leading to the story of how Calpurnia took Scout and Jem to her church. Aunt Alexandra is none too pleased to find this out, and inserts a resounding "no" into the conversation when Scout asks Atticus if she can visit Calpurnia.
- Scout talks back to her aunt and then hides in the bathroom, later returning to overhear her aunt and father quarrelling about an unnamed "her." Scout is worried that she's the "her," and feels "the starched walls of a pink cotton penitentiary closing in on" her.
- In other words, she's afraid they're going to make her wear frilly dresses for the rest of her life. Figuratively *and* literally.
- Eventually she figures out with relief that it's Calpurnia they're talking about: Alexandra wants to fire her, but Atticus won't hear of it. Jem tries to intervene by telling Scout not to get on her aunt's nerves, but little sis doesn't want her bro telling her what to do. This ends in a fistfight, naturally, until they make up when they overhear Aunt Alexandra launching yet another attack on their way of life.
- On the way to bed, Scout steps on something. Snake? Nope. It's Dill. And he's hungry. Dill tells a story (actually two, mutually contradictory stories) about how he escaped from his cruel father and journeyed to Maycomb. Scout brings him some food, and Jem breaks the no-tattling rule of childhood to tell Atticus. Hm, maybe Jem is growing up?
- After Scout has been asleep for a while, she wakes up to find Dill joining her in bed. Don't worry: nothing happens to heat up the G rating. They just talk about families. See, Dill felt like his mom and her new boyfriend weren't paying him any attention and didn't want him around.

- Scout's problem is that her family pays her too much attention, but realizes that she would hate it if she didn't feel like they needed her. Dill says that he and Scout should get themselves a baby, and tells her a story about where babies come from (no sex is involved in his account, fortunately), and they slowly doze off. Just before they fall asleep, Scout asks Dill why Boo Radley has never run off. Maybe, Dill answers, because he doesn't have a place he can run to.

## Chapter 15

- It's arranged that Dill can stay in Maycomb for the summer. After an uneventful week, one evening Mr. Heck Tate knocks on the front door of the Finch house. Some men want Atticus to step outside. The bits of the conversation Scout can hear are about Tom Robinson: Tate doesn't want to keep him in the town jail the night before the trial starts. There are some back-and-forth threats, and then Atticus says that he's going to make sure that the truth gets told. Tension rises, until Jem shouts that the telephone's ringing. Atticus tells him to answer it, causing the men—whom Scout now recognizes as people she sees every day—to go off laughing.
- Was that a gang? Nope, Atticus says. Those were their friends. Yeah, some friends. What about the Ku Klux Klan? They're gone and will never come back. (Sadly, not true. They came back [in the 1950s](#), when the [Civil Rights Movement](#) took off.)
- Sunday comes, and Scout sees some men at church who don't usually attend, including Mr. Heck Tate and Mr. Underwood, the editor of *The Maycomb Tribune*. Tom Robinson has arrived at the Maycomb jail. The evening, something weird happens: Atticus comes into the living room with a light bulb and an extension cord. He says that he's going out for a while and won't be back till after the kids are in bed.
- Strange event #2: Atticus takes the car, instead of walking like he usually does. Obviously, the kids sneak out to follow him. Finally they see him in front of the jail, reading by the light of the light bulb he went off with. Four cars drive up. Atticus puts down his newspaper, and Scout thinks that he seems to be expecting these visitors.
- The kids hide in a nearby doorway and overhear a man telling Atticus to move away from the door and let them through. Atticus tells them to go home and that Heck Tate's nearby. Another man says that they decoyed Tate out into the woods. He's not coming back any time soon. There's some threatening talk, and Scout can't take it: she runs out to Atticus. For a moment Atticus looks afraid when he sees Scout, and Scout's upset, too: these aren't the same men as last night.
- Atticus tells Jem to take Scout and Dill home, but Jem doesn't want to. Father and son face off. One of the men grabs Jem, and Scout kicks him right where it counts, making him back off. Finally, Scout sees a familiar face: Mr. Cunningham. And she starts talking. She asks him about his entailment, tells him to say hi to Walter for her, and keeps prattling away until his lack of answers really starts to get to her. Just then, Mr. Cunningham squats down and tells Scout that he's going to give Walter her message. He tells the other men that they're going to leave, and they do. Whew!
- A voice comes from above: Tom Robinson is asking if the men have gone. From across the square, another voice: Mr. Underwood has been playing sniper backup from *The Maycomb Tribune* office. Atticus and Mr. Underwood talk for a while, and then Atticus and the kids take Atticus's stuff to his car to go home. Scout thinks Jem is going to get royally chewed out for following Atticus into town, but her dad actually just rubs his head affectionately. Adults. They are *so* weird.

Why did these men come to the jail? \_\_\_\_\_