

## Chapters 24, 25, and 26 Summaries

### Chapter 24

- It's the end of August, and Aunt Alexandra is hosting a missionary tea at the Finch house. What is a missionary tea? \_\_\_\_\_
- Unusually, she's letting Calpurnia serve, rather than controlling every detail like she usually does. Doubly unusually, Scout is indoors—Jem is occupied in teaching Dill to swim, and they're skinny-dipping so they won't let her come along. Scout offers to help Calpurnia serve, and gets to carry in the silver coffee pitcher. Aunt Alexandra, pleased Scout is (1) wearing a pink dress, and (2) managing to carry something without spilling it, asks her to join them.
- Miss Stephanie Crawford asks Scout if she wants to be a lawyer when she grows up, since she's already taken to attending trials. Scout tries to be polite, but Miss Stephanie keeps needling her. So finally, Scout replies that she doesn't want to be a lawyer, just a lady. Ooh, burn.
- Scout takes up conversation with Mrs. Grace Merriweather, who had reported to the group on the Mruna tribe, whom J. Grimes Everett is trying to convert to Christianity. J. Grimes Everett's saintly behavior is apparently Mrs. Merriweather's favorite topic, and she goes on about him at great length. Eventually Mrs. Merriweather is distracted by a conversation going on next to her. She makes a comment about the need to "forgive and forget," and to help an unknown woman "lead a Christian life for those children from here on out". Scout asks if she's talking about Mayella Ewell, but Mrs. Merriweather says no, she's talking about Helen Robinson (though she doesn't actually know the woman's name). Mrs. Merriweather talks about how distressing it is when the colored help is cranky about something, and how it's important to remind them that Jesus was never cranky about anything so they should strive to do the same.
- Mrs. Farrow replies that there's nothing white people can do to change the inherent immoral nature of the black man. Unless they're trying to convert them in Africa, apparently. Mrs. Merriweather continues that she won't name names, but there are some "good but misguided" people in Maycomb who think they're helping but are really just making trouble. Miss Maudie breaks in to say, "His food doesn't stick going down, does it?", and a daydreaming Scout can tell she's very angry, though she doesn't understand why.
- Aunt Alexandra smooths things over with more cake, and turns the conversation in less dangerous directions, while also shooting Miss Maudie a thank-you look which Scout notices but again does not understand. (Translation: Mrs. Merriweather was smack-talking Atticus, and Miss Maudie put her in her place.) Scout wonders if she'll ever be able to function in this world of ladies whose rules make so little sense to her, especially compared to the male world.
- Finally, Atticus comes home. He's not looking too good. In the kitchen, he tells Scout, Aunt Alexandra, and Miss Maudie that Tom Robinson is dead. He tried to climb over the prison fence right in front of the guards and was shot, no fewer than seventeen times. After Atticus leaves with Calpurnia to tell Helen, a stunned Aunt Alexandra and Miss Maudie sit in the kitchen with Scout. Aunt Alexandra is mad at the town that puts the responsibility of doing the right thing on Atticus's because they're too scared to do it themselves. Miss Maudie says that "the handful of people in this town with backbone" share the principles he's working to uphold, and are grateful to Atticus for fighting on the side of the angels. Aunt Alexandra composes herself and they go back in to face the tea party, acting as if nothing is wrong. Scout joins them in their effort to keep up a ladylike attitude.

### Chapter 25

- September has arrived, but autumn coolness hasn't, so Scout and Jem are still sleeping out on the back porch. There Scout finds a roly-poly bug, and amuses herself by poking it so it rolls up, waiting for it to unroll and start walking, then poking it again. She's about to squish it when Jem stops her, and she makes fun of him for being so sympathetic towards bugs. Scout thinks that Jem is the one who's getting more like a girl, not her.
- Dill has gone back to Meridian for the school year, and thinking about Dill sends Scout onto thinking about what Dill told her before he left town. Cue memory flashback: On the day of the missionary tea, Jem and Dill had been walking back from the swimming hole trying to hitch a ride when they saw Atticus driving somewhere with Calpurnia. Atticus wanted them to try to get another ride since he wasn't going to go home for a while, but the boys convinced him to let them come with him. Tough ride: they went with Atticus to see Helen Robinson and watched her crumble at the news that her husband had died. On their way back, they passed the Ewell place, they

heard voices shouting at them, but Dill couldn't tell what they were saying. And that's the end of Dill's story of that day.

- Tom's death is the hot topic in Maycomb gossip for a few days, mostly as a way to reinforce pre-existing stereotypes as to the foolishness of black people. The story seems well on its way to dying a quick death until Mr. Underwood comes out with an editorial on the topic in *The Maycomb Tribune*. Since it's the only paper in town, he can say whatever he wants and not lose subscribers or advertising. Mr. Underwood's editorial is about how, basically, it's a sin to kill a mockingbird (in this case, a crippled man), and that the justice system didn't stand a chance: "Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed." Miss Stephanie, ever the joyful bearer of bad news, tells Aunt Alexandra and Jem that when Mr. Ewell heard of Tom's death, he said one down, two to go.

## Chapter 26

- School starts (third grade for Scout and seventh for Jem, who's got a place on the football team) so once again they're passing the Radley Place every day. Boo Radley seems positively tame after the events of the last year, which still haven't quite died down. Jem and Scout are practicing their gentleman and lady skills in the schoolyard, where most of their classmates share their parents' prejudices. Scout wonders why everyone re-elected Atticus to represent them in the state government if they all think he's wrong, and concludes that people are just plain weird. (We hear you.)
- Every week, Scout's class has a Current Events assignment, and one day the current event is Hitler. The teacher Miss Gates seizes the moment for a little lecture about the difference between democracy and dictatorship, and about the persecution of Jews. Later, Scout asks Atticus why the people Hitler's persecuting don't just persecute him instead, since there's lots of them and only one Hitler, and Atticus answers that he doesn't know. Scout asks Atticus if hating Hitler is okay. Apparently not, even if it's Hitler.
- Scout still can't quite formulate the question that's bugging her, so she goes to Jem, who's eaten his way through several bunches of bananas in an attempt to bulk up so he can get a better position on the football team. Scout tries to explain what's bothering her: it's bad to persecute people, and Miss Gates seems really upset at the way Hitler's persecuting the Jews, but she remembers Miss Gates coming down the courthouse steps after the trial saying "it's time somebody taught them a lesson".
- Here's the question: "how can you hate Hitler so bad an' then turn around and be ugly about folks right at home?". But Jem doesn't ever want to talk about the courthouse again. Scout goes back to Atticus and tries to climb in his lap, though she doesn't really fit there anymore.

List three big things that you are taking away from these three chapters:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.