CHAPTER QUESTIONS FOR TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD PART II

CHAPTER 12

1. A major theme in To Kill a Mockingbird is the journey from youth and innocence to maturity and knowledge. How does Jem symbolize this theme in Chapter Twelve? What evidence indicates that he is growing up and changing?

2. Why is Dill not coming to Maycomb this summer? How does Scout feel about his absence?

3. Why must Atticus leave for two weeks? How is his absence related to the country’s economic troubles?

4. What is the name of Calpurnia’s church, and what is the significance of the name?

5. Briefly describe Calpurnia’s church. How does it differ from the church Jem and Scout usually attend? How is it similar?

6. When they arrive at the church, Scout and Jem experience first-hand what it feels like to be the object of racial

intolerance. Briefly describe the incident and how it is resolved.

7. What prompts Reverend Sykes to order the doors be closed and that no one be allowed to leave for a period of time?

8. Why is Helen Robinson finding it difficult to get work lately?

9. What more does the reader learn about Tom Robinson’s arrest? Of what has he been accused? Who has accused him?

10. What is “linin’,” and why is it done?

11. In this chapter, Scout and Jem seem to see Calpurnia in a new light. What do they learn about Calpurnia, and how does

it change their views about her?

CHAPTER 13

1. Why does Aunt Alexandra come to visit? How does Scout feel about her arrival?

2. What is Aunt Alexandra’s major theory concerning human behavior? How does Jem point out the irrationality of it?

3. Scout states that there is a “caste system” in Maycomb. How does she explain the system?

4. When Atticus comes into Jem’s room before bedtime to speak with the children, what information does he relay to them

from Aunt Alexandra? Do you think he believes what Aunt Alexandra has made him say?

5. What makes Scout cry while Atticus is talking with her and Jem?

6. How do the last few paragraphs indicate that Atticus was merely following Aunt Alexandra’s orders and that he feels

bad about doing so?

CHAPTER 14

1. How is the trial affecting the children’s weekly visits to town? What are people saying?

2. How does Atticus explain rape to Scout?

3. As Scout eavesdrops on Atticus and Aunt Alexandra, she says, “I felt the starched walls of a pink cotton penitentiary

closing in on me….” What does Scout mean by this comment? What literary term is demonstrated here?

4. What does Alexandra want Atticus to do to Calpurnia? What is his response?

5. What does Jem tell Scout she should do when dealing with Aunt Alexandra? How does Scout react to his suggestion?

6. Scout thinks there may be a snake under her bed. What is actually under her bed?

7. What does Jem do that shocks Dill and Scout? How does he explain this? How does it establish his maturity?

8. Why has Dill run away from home? What reasons does he give?

9. As the chapter ends, what is Scout thinking about? What question does she ask Dill, and how does he respond?

CHAPTER 15

1. The chapter begins on an ominous note as the reader receives hints that something bad is about to happen. Identify at least two instances of foreshadowing from the first several paragraphs.

2. What are the men talking about as the children listen from the window? What can the reader infer from the conversation? For example, what makes Heck Tate “uneasy”?

3. What does Atticus say that causes the men to close in on him? What makes the men scatter?

4. After the men leave, Jem reveals his fears to Atticus. What is Jem worried about?

5. According to Scout, Atticus does “something that interest[s]” her and Jem. What is it? What other surprising thing does he

do, and why does this suggest to Jem that something is wrong?

6. What do Jem and Scout do after Atticus leaves the house, and why?

7. Where do the children find Atticus, and what is he doing when they spot him? How does this explain why he left the

house with the extension cord and light bulb?

8. The reason for the men’s arrival at the jail is not directly stated. Taking into account what they say and their behavior, why have they come to the jail?

9. Briefly summarize what happens when Scout pushes her way through the group of men. How does she ultimately defuse

the situation?

10. The concept of protection plays a major role in this chapter, as several characters are involved in the act of defending or

safeguarding one another. Who protects whom, and how do they do it?

CHAPTER 16 (The Trial)

1. As Scout is drifting off to sleep, two images come into her mind. What are they and why do they cause her to cry?

2. What surprising fact does Atticus reveal about Mr. Underwood at the breakfast table? What previously mentioned theme is emphasized by this information?

3. What does Atticus say about mobs and men over the breakfast table? What does he mean by the statement, “[M]aybe

we need a police force of children…”?

4. What is the mood in the courthouse square on the first day of the trial? What do you find disturbing about it?

5. What is significant about Mr. Dolphus Raymond?

6. According to Jem, what are “mixed” children, and why are they sad?

7. Compare and contrast the behavior of the white spectators to that of the black spectators.

8. How are blacks and whites segregated inside the courthouse? Where do Scout, Jem, and Dill end up sitting?

9. How does Scout describe the Maycomb County courthouse? According to her, what do the Greek revival columns and the old clock tower suggest about the people of Maycomb?

10. Describe the members of the Idlers’ Club. What information does Scout get from them? What is it that confuses her?

CHAPTER 17 (The Trial)

1. Who is the first person to take the stand? Briefly summarize his testimony.

2. What does Atticus spend much of his time asking Mr. Tate?

3. To what animal does Scout compare Mr. Ewell? How is the comparison fitting?

4. Where do the Ewells live, and what does this say about their social position in Maycomb county?

5. How does Mr. Ewell act when he first takes the stand, and how does Judge Taylor react to him?

6. What is Mr. Ewell’s version of what happened?

7. Why does Atticus want Ewell to write his name?

8. Jem thinks that Atticus has clinched the case by establishing that Ewell is left-handed.

9. However, Scout is skeptical that the information proves anything. What are her doubts?

CHAPTER 18 (The Trial)

1. What is Mayella’s version of what happened? Which part of her testimony contradicts that of her father’s?

2. Why does Mayella think that Atticus is mocking her?

3. Why does Atticus begin by asking Mayella a lot of questions about herself and her family?

4. Describe the way Tom Robinson looks as he stands up. What is unusual about his arms? Why is this important?

5. On what dramatic note does Atticus end his questioning of Mayella? What is her response?

6. Considering the evidence and testimony up to this point, do you think Tom Robinson is guilty? Why?

CHAPTER 19 (The Trial)

1. When Tom Robinson takes the oath, what is made clear about his left hand? How does this help Atticus’s case?

2. Summarize Tom’s testimony. According to him, what happened on the day of the alleged crime?

3. Where were the other Ewell children on that day? What does this suggest about Mayella’s motives concerning Tom?

4. What does Tom’s running away from the Ewell house suggest? What else could he have done?

5. What does Link Deas say about Tom Robinson? How does this show that he is different from others in Maycomb?

6. How would you describe Mr. Gilmer’s cross-examination of Tom Robinson? What is his strategy? What is his tone?

7. When Tom admits that he felt sorry for Mayella Ewell? How do the majority of white people in the courtroom react?

8. Why does Dill begin to cry?

CHAPTER 20 (The Trial)

1. Why does Dolphus Raymond pretend to drink liquor? What does Scout think this and the reasons his gives for it?

2. How does Dolphus Raymond explain Dill’s crying?

3. Dolphus Raymond tells Scout, “You haven’t even seen this town, but all you gotta do is step back inside the courthouse.”

How will Scout see what her town is truly like simply by stepping back into the courthouse?

4. What does Jem think the verdict will be? Do you think he is right? Give reasons for your opinion.

5. During his closing argument, Atticus does something that astonishes Scout and Jem. What does he do? Why?

6. At one point during his closing remarks, Atticus says to the jury, “This case is as simple as black and white.” What does he

mean by this statement? How can it be interpreted on more than one level?

7. According to Atticus, what motivated Mayella Ewell to accuse Tom Robinson of raping her?

8. How is Atticus’ closing statement in defense of Tom Robinson also an attack upon racism?

9. In his closing statement, Atticus says, “All men are created equal.” What is the one institution in which this is true?

10. Atticus says “A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up.” What does he

mean by this assertion?

CHAPTER 21 (The Trial)

1. Calpurnia comes into the courtroom to hand a note to Atticus. What does the note say?

2. Why is Jem certain that Tom Robinson will be acquitted?

3. What does Reverend Sykes say about his experiences in court?

4. As everyone waits for the verdict, a certain impression creeps into Scout’s mind. What is she remembering? What is the

significance of the impression?

5. When the jury comes in, what does Scout notice about the jurors’ behavior? According to her, what does their behavior

signify?

6. The climax occurs when the jury gives its verdict. How does Jem react to the verdict? How does Atticus react?

7. What do you think Atticus whispers to Tom Robinson just before he leaves the courtroom?

8. What do the black spectators do as Atticus leaves the courtroom? What does their gesture signify?

CHAPTER 22

1. What does Atticus mean when he says, it “seems that only children weep”?

2. On the morning after the trial, the kitchen table in the Finch household is “loaded with enough food to bury the family.”

Who brought the food, and why? What is Atticus’s response?

3. Jem uses the metaphor of a caterpillar in a cocoon to describe his feelings. According to him, in what way is he like a

caterpillar in a cocoon? What feeling is he struggling with, and how does it relate to the trial and the town of Maycomb?

What does the caterpillar symbolize?

4. What does Miss Maudie mean when she says, “…we’re making a step—it’s just a babystep, but it’s a step”? What

evidence does she use to explain her optimism?

5. As the children watch the neighbors gossip, Dill makes a declaration about what he will be when he grows up. What does he say, and what are his reasons?

CHAPTER 23

1. We learn that Mr. Ewell had actually threatened to kill Atticus. How does Atticus take the threat?

2. Alexandra disagrees with Atticus about the threat. Why? Should Atticus take the threat more seriously?

3. According to Atticus, what is optimistic about Tom’s case?

4. If Tom is found guilty on appeal, what will his punishment be? Why?

5. Jem and Atticus converse about some of the obvious problems with the legal system. Briefly summarize their discussion.

What are Jem’s major points, and how does Atticus address them?

6. What does Atticus mean when he says, “…it’s all adding up and one of these days we’re going to pay the bill for it”?

7. According to Atticus, what are three reasons why many Maycomb citizens do not want to serve on a jury? Summarize

the example he uses to illustrate one of these reasons.

8. Atticus says that the fact that the jury took so long to reach a verdict may indicate “the shadow of a beginning.” What does he tell Jem and Scout about one of the jurors?

9. When Scout learns about the Cunningham juror, what does she saw she will do as soon as school starts? What is Aunt

Alexandra’s response?

10. What physical signs indicate that Jem is growing up? What does he show to Scout when he brings her into his room?

11. Scout explains to Jem what Aunt Alexandra said that caused her to cry. What was it that upset her most?

12. How does Jem describe the social hierarchy in Maycomb?

13. Jem talks about “background” to explain how the Finches are different from the Cunninghams. How does he define

“background”? What is Scout’s response to his theory?

14. At the end of the chapter, what conclusion does Jem draw about Boo Radley? What leads him to this conclusion?

CHAPTER 24

1. Aunt Alexandra is entertaining her missionary circle. Who are the Mrunas? Why do they interest the circle?

2. Mrs. Merriweather says, “If we just let them know we forgive’ em, that we’ve forgotten it, then this whole thing’ll blow

over.” Who and what is she talking about? What is ironic about her statement?

3. What is hypocritical about the concern the ladies of the missionary circle have for the Mrunas?

4. When Mrs. Merriweather claims, “there are some good but misguided people in this town,” what is she talking about?

5. What does Miss Maudie say that silences Mrs. Merriweather?

6. Why does Scout prefer the company of men as opposed to that of women?

7. What did Calpurnia say to Miss Rachel’s cook about Tom’s despair? What was the last thing Tom told Atticus?

8. When Atticus arrives home, what news does he bring about Tom Robinson? Summarize what happened to Tom.

9. Why do you think Tom ran for the fence? Why did he keep running even when the guards warned that him?

10. Alexandra asks Miss Maudie, “[W]hat else do they want from him, Maudie, what else?” What does she mean by this?

11. How does Miss Maudie reply to Alexandra’s question? What literary device is used in Miss Maudie’s response?

CHAPTER 25

1. As Scout is about to kill a roly-poly bug. What stops her from doing it? What theme does the incident underscore?

2. Dill was present when Atticus tells Helen Robinson the news of her husband’s death. Summarize what happened.

3. Scout recalls what people in Maycomb had said after Tom’s death. What was general attitude of the townspeople?

4. To what did Mr. Underwood’s editorial compare Tom’s death? What is the significance of his comparison?

5. What was Scout confused about when she read the editorial? What became clear to her upon later reflection?

6. What remark did Mr. Ewell make upon hearing of Tom’s death? What is the significance of the remark?

CHAPTER 26

1. Scout says that the Radley place had ceased to terrify her. Why?

2. How does Scout feel about the way she, Jem, and Dill treated Boo Radley? What are her thoughts about him now?

3. What do the children talk about in current events period? According to Miss Gates, what is the difference between

America and Germany?

4. Why is Scout surprised that her teacher hates Hitler? How is Miss Gates similar in this regard to the ladies in the

missionary circle from Chapter Twenty-Four?

5. Why does Jem react violently when Scout talks about what she overheard at the courthouse?

CHAPTER 27

1. Scout says three unusual things had happened in Maycomb by the middle of October. Briefly summarize these things.

2. What is different about Halloween this year? Why?

3. Identify at least two instances of foreshadowing in the final four paragraphs of the chapter.

CHAPTER 28

1. How does Scout describe the night of the pageant? What mood is suggested by Scout’s description of it?

2. How have Scout’s feelings about Boo Radley changed since the beginning of the novel? What other childhood fears have

Jem and Scout left behind? Identify the simile that she uses to explain the disappearance of these fears.

3. As Scout and Jem pass by the edge of the Radley property, what do they hear in the tree? Why is this significant?

4. Harper Lee creates a mood of suspense and foreboding as Jem and Scout begin their walk home. Briefly summarize

their journey from the school to the big oak tree, noting some elements that contribute to the suspenseful mood.

5. What happens when Scout and Jem arrive at the tree?

6. What does Scout see when she looks down the road after the attack?

7. Who do you suppose the assailant was? Who is the stranger that carries Jem home?

8. As Scout waits to hear about Jem she says, “After ten forevers Dr. Reynolds returned.” What literary term is this?

9. What are Jem’s injuries, according to Dr. Reynolds?

10. As Scout looks at the man who carried Jem home, what are her thoughts?

11. The chapter closes on a dramatic note. According to Sheriff Tate, what is lying under the big oak tree?

12. The narrative of To Kill a Mockingbird has a circular plot. Give an example from this chapter that demonstrates this.

CHAPTER 29

1. When do you suppose Boo Radley came out of his house?

2. According to Heck Tate, why did Bob Ewell go after Scout and Jem instead of Atticus?

3. How does Scout describe Boo Radley? How does she react when she finally realizes Boo saved her and Jem?

CHAPTER 30

1. How has Scout’s “small fantasy” about Boo Radley come true in this chapter?

2. Who does Atticus think killed Bob Ewell? Why does he not want it covered up?

3. Heck Tate tries to convince Atticus that Scout was wrong about who killed Bob Ewell. What is Tate’s theory?

4. Who killed Bob Ewell? Why does Tate decide to keep this information from the public?

5. To what does Scout compare Boo’s exposure? Explain her meaning.

CHAPTER 31

1. In what ways is Boo Radley like a child in this chapter? What is the significance of his behavior?

2. As Scout stands on the Radleys’ front porch, she flashes back to a number of scenes from the previous two years.

Summarize these flashbacks. What is the significance of Scout’s remembering these scenes?

3. What lesson comes to Scout’s mind as she reminisces on the Radley porch? What is the significance of this?

4. As Atticus leads Scout to bed, she dreamily talks about the plot of The Gray Ghost, one of the novels that she and Jem

had known very well. How is the ending of that book similar to Scout’s experiences with Boo Radley?

5. What is Atticus’s final statement about people? What theme does this statement highlight?