

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Short Answer Format Answer Key

Chapters 1-3

1. Identify Atticus Finch, Jean Louise (Scout) Finch, Jem Finch, Maycomb, Calpurnia, Charles Baker (Dill) Harris, The Radley Place, Stephanie Crawford, Arthur (Boo) Radley, Miss Caroline Fisher, Walter Cunningham, and Burris Ewell.

Atticus Finch is a lawyer and Scout and Jem's father. Scout is the narrator of the story. Jem is Scout's older brother. Maycomb is the name of the town (and also the county) where the story takes place. Calpurnia is the Finch family's cook, maid and nanny. Dill is Miss Rachael's nephew, a young boy who visits his aunt and plays with Scout and Jem in the summertime. The Radley Place is the home of the Radley family across the street from Scout's house; it is a curiosity to the children because the Radleys are so different from other folks they know. Stephanie Crawford is a gossip neighbor who knows everybody's business and everyone's family history. Boo Radley is a mystery to the children; he never leaves his house. Miss Caroline Fisher is Scout's first grade teacher. Walter Cunningham is a student in Scout's class, one of The Cunninghams. Burris Ewell is also a student in Scout's class; he is one of The Ewells.

2. What did Dill dare Jem to do?

Dill dared Jem to run up and touch the Radley house.

3. What was Scout's first "crime" at school?

Scout's first crime was that she could already read.

4. What was Calpurnia's fault?

Scout said it was Calpurnia's fault that she could write. This also caused trouble for her at school. Miss Caroline asked Scout to tell her father to stop teaching her.

5. Why did Scout rub Walter Cunningham's nose in the dirt?

Scout stood up for Walter in class and tried to explain the Cunningham ways to Miss Caroline. For her explanations, Scout got in more trouble with Miss Caroline, so she took out her revenge on Walter.

6. Scout said, "He ain't company, Cal, he's just a Cunningham." What did she mean by that and what was Cal's answer?

Scout meant that Finches were better than Cunninghams, and for that reason she didn't have to treat Walter as company. Calpurnia told Scout that she should treat anyone who came to visit her home as "company" and show him every courtesy.

7. What two mistakes did Miss Caroline make on the first day of school?

Miss Caroline's first mistake was to offer Walter Cunningham money; the Cunninghams don't take anything they can't pay back. Her second mistake was trying to tell Burris Ewell to go home and wash out his "cooties."

8. Why didn't the Ewells have to go to school?

If the truant officer enforced the laws for the Ewells, Mr. Ewell would probably be jailed. Without their father, wretched as he was, the children would be worse off than if they simply did not go to school. Because the Ewell children's home life was so unusual, the authorities bent the rules for them.

Chapters 4-7

1. What did Scout and Jem find in the Radleys' tree?

They found gum and two Indian head pennies.

2. Identify Mrs. Dubose.

Mrs. Dubose is an old lady who lives down the street. She berates the children as they walk past her house.

3. How did Jem get even with Scout for contradicting him about "Hot Steams?"

When it was her turn to ride in the tire, he gave her an extra-hard shove. She ended up in the Radleys' front yard.

4. What was the Boo Radley game?

Jem, Dill and Scout reenacted the few facts and many peculiar stories they had heard about the Radleys.

5. Identify Miss Maudie.

Miss Maudie is another neighbor, about the age of Atticus. She is open-minded and enjoys the children's company.

6. What does Miss Maudie think of the Radleys?

She thinks they have a right to do whatever they want to do as long as they are not bothering anyone else, and she believes they have a right to their privacy.

7. Why do Dill and Jem want to give Boo Radley a note? What does Atticus say when he finds out about their plan?

They want to invite him out to play with them; they think he might enjoy that. Atticus tells the boys to leave Arthur Radley alone, that if he wanted to be outside, he would. Atticus also tells them that the proper way to extend the invitation would be at the Radley front door instead of putting a note on a fishing pole and sticking that through the window.

8. How did Jem lose his pants? What did he find when he went back for them?

Jem, Scout and Dill went to look into the Radley house. When they were discovered, they ran. Jem got caught on the fence, and in an effort to free himself, he took off his pants and left them on the fence. When he went back for them, they were mended and folded, sitting on the fence.

9. What else did Jem and Scout find in the Radleys' tree?

They found a ball of twine, two figures (resembling themselves) carved from soap, and a broken watch.

10. Why would there be no more surprises in the tree?

Mr. Nathan Radley cemented the hole closed.

Chapters 8-9

1. What happened to Miss Maudie's house? What was her reaction?

Miss Maudie left fires going (for warmth) and her house burned down. As always, she put her most optimistic foot forward and seemed not to mind too much.

2. Identify Cecil Jacobs.

Cecil Jacobs was a boy at Scout's school who first made her aware that Atticus was defending a black man.

3. What "disaster" happened at Christmas between Scout and Francis?

Scout and Francis got into a fight because Francis was fussing with Scout about Atticus' defending a black man. Scout couldn't stand all the things Francis was calling Atticus, so she hit him square in the mouth. She didn't really understand what Francis said, but she knew it wasn't complimentary.

4. What did Scout's Uncle Jack learn from Scout and Atticus?

Uncle Jack broke up the fight between Scout and Francis. He automatically took Francis' side. Since Francis was injured, he looked like the wronged party. Scout just gave in to Uncle Jack and said she did what he said she did. Later, she points out to Jack that he didn't even give her a chance to explain, that Atticus always listens to both sides before he decides which person is guilty. Secondly, when Scout asks Uncle Jack a question, he gives her a non-answer. Atticus later explains to Jack that such answers only confuse kids. The truth is always best.

Chapters 10-11

1. What brave thing does Atticus do in Chapter 10? Why are Scout and Jem shocked?

Atticus shoots a mad dog. They are shocked because until this day, they think of Atticus as having no real talents or anything to be proud of. He never touched a gun, to their knowledge, and he did not believe in fighting. Thus, they are very surprised to find out about "One-Shot Finch."

2. What did Jem do when Mrs. Dubose said Atticus "lawed for niggers?"

He took Scout's birthday baton and, waving it madly, cut the tops off of all of Mrs. Dubose's camellia bushes.

3. What was Jem's punishment?

He had to repair the damage as well as he could, and he had to read to Mrs. Dubose each afternoon after school for a month.

4. What did Jem learn from his encounter with Mrs. Dubose and following her death?

He learned that people aren't always what they seem, that one can't understand someone else until one has all the facts, and, most importantly, that there is a different kind of courage than physical courage.

Chapters 12-14

1. How does Jem change?

Jem is growing up. He is trying to make sense of things he sees, trying to be like Atticus, and trying to put behind him childish games and youthful pranks. Consequently, he is moody sometimes and occasionally seems to lord his authority over Scout. She resents his new "airs."

2. Identify Lula, Zeebo and Reverend Sykes.

Lula was the woman at Calpurnia's church who made Scout and Jem feel unwelcome. Zeebo, Cal's son, makes them feel welcome, as does Reverend Sykes, the preacher at Calpurnia's church.

3. What does Scout learn about Calpurnia?

Scout learns that Cal leads a double life. She talks and acts like her black friends and neighbors when she is with them, and she talks and acts more like white people when she is with them. Scout thinks this is interesting and asks to visit Cal at her home one day.

4. Who was waiting for the children when they came home from the church service? Why had she come?

Aunt Alexandra was waiting for them. She had come to stay and "help out" while Atticus would be busy with the Robinson trial.

5. "Aunt Alexandra fitted into the world of Maycomb like a hand in a glove, but never into the world of Jem and me." Explain.

Alexandra knew all the proper social things to say and do, and she knew a great deal of the history of the local families. She joined some clubs and entertained at her home, and generally did fit right into the town's society. However, Alexandra didn't understand or agree with the values by which Atticus was raising his children. Therefore, she did not understand the children's behavior. Because their value systems were different, they were more often than not at odds.

6. Atticus and Alexandra disagree about how to deal with the children. How does Atticus handle the situation?

Atticus makes the children obey Alexandra, but he lets them know that their relationship with him will always be the same as it was. He tries to appease Alexandra when he can, but on the major issues, he puts his foot down.

7. Describe Jem and Scout's relationship through these chapters as Jem matures.

Jem and Scout seem to grow apart, but they don't really. They fuss more often than they had, mostly because Scout resents Jem's telling her what to do. Actually, though, they are still very close and join forces when their pride is at stake.

8. Why did Dill run away from home back to Maycomb?

Dill had everything a boy could want, except his parents didn't spend any time with him. He didn't feel like they needed him.

Chapters 15-17

1. What did Mr. Heck Tate's mob want?

They wanted to make sure Atticus and Tom Robinson would be all right.

2. What was the purpose of Walter Cunningham's mob?

Cunningham's mob wanted to get to Tom Robinson to inflict their own justice upon him. If that meant they had to beat up Atticus, they were willing to do that.

3. Why did Mr. Cunningham's mob leave?

Scout, Jem and Dill arrived on the scene. Scout came forward, and, while making her entrance and looking at the crowd, she noticed Mr. Cunningham. She identified him and began speaking to him on a personal basis, saying she was in his son's class and that he had come to lunch. She also reminded him that Atticus had done some legal work for him. All of these things were said in an innocent conversation to Mr. Cunningham. It made Cunningham (and others, I suspect), realize that they were individuals, neighbors, and that they really didn't want to hurt Atticus or anyone else.

4. Identify Mr. Dolphus Raymond.

Mr. Dolphus Raymond was a white man who married a black woman and lived with the black community. Jem has heard a story that Mr. Raymond is always drunk. (However, we learn later that this is just an act.)

5. Identify Tom Robinson, Mr. Gilmer, Bob Ewell, Mayella Ewell, and Judge Taylor.

Tom Robinson supposedly raped Mayella Ewell, Bob Ewell's daughter. Mr. Gilmer is the prosecuting attorney. Judge Taylor will be the judge during Tom's trial.

6. What was the importance of Mayella's bruises being primarily on the right-hand side of her face?

Bruises on her right side indicate that a left-handed person inflicted the wounds.

Chapters 18-21

1. What was Mayella's account of the incident with Tom Robinson?

Mayella said she asked Tom to come into the yard to break up a chiffarobe. When she went into the house to get him a nickel, he had followed her in and then he grabbed her around the neck and hit her. He "chunked [her] on the floor an' choked [her] 'n took advantage of [her]." Her father came in and was standing over her, and then she fainted.

2. What was Tom's side of the story?

Mayella asked Tom to come fix the hinges on the door in the house. Mayella had saved enough nickels to send all of the kids out for ice cream so she and Tom would be alone. She asked Tom to climb up on a chair to get a box, and as he stood there, she grabbed him around the legs. When he hopped down off the chair, she jumped on him. She kissed him on the side of the face. Tom wanted out and had to push Mayella away from the door. She was not hurt. He ran away before Mr. Ewell could catch him.

3. What was Tom's handicap? Why was it important to his case?

Tom's left arm had been rendered useless in an accident. He could not have bruised Mayella's right side and he more than probably would not have physically been able to force himself on a strong, violently resisting young woman.

4. What do Dill and Scout learn from Mr. Raymond?

Dill and Scout learn that people aren't always as they appear to be. They learn that Mr. Raymond lives as he does because that's simply what he wants to do. Since people could never accept that, he gives them a "reason to latch onto" so they can accept his behavior. (One might note that Boo Radley does as he pleases, but gives people no reason to latch onto, and people make up their own reasons, no matter how ridiculous.)

5. What were Atticus' closing remarks to the jury?

He said there was no medical evidence to suggest that Mayella had been raped, that the only evidence was the questionable testimony of two witnesses. He painted a picture of Mayella as a victim of poverty and ignorance, a lonely young woman who tempted and kissed a Negro and then had to get rid of him, the evidence, of her crime against society's unspoken laws. He tried to remind the jury of Thomas Jefferson's words that "all men are created equal," and that their job as a jury was to give a fair trial to the defendant.

6. What was the jury's verdict?

The jury found Tom Robinson guilty.

Chapters 22-25

1. Why did Jem cry?

Jem cried because he was shocked at the injustice of the jury, people from his own town, which he had always considered above such prejudice.

2. What was " 'round the back steps" when Calpurnia came in on Monday morning?

The black community had left all kinds of food for Atticus and his family as a gesture of their thanks for his defending Tom Robinson.

3. What was the significance of Maudie's two little cakes and one large one?

Maudie had two little cakes for Scout and Dill, but Jem got a slice from the big cake. This was Maudie's symbolic way of saying she accepted Jem as a young man instead of a boy.

4. Describe Bob Ewell's meeting with Atticus at the post office.

Bob Ewell wanted to fight with Atticus. Atticus just said he was too old to fight, and he walked away. Bob Ewell threatened to get even.

5. What is Atticus' reaction to Ewell's threats?

He rationally understands that Ewell is upset, and he allows Mr. Ewell the right to be upset. However, he does not believe that Bob Ewell would actually do any terrible physical harm to anyone.

6. Alexandra doesn't want Scout playing with Walter Cunningham. Why not?

Alexandra thinks the Cunninghams are trash because they don't have the "background" of the Finches.

7. Jem said, "I think I'm beginning to understand why Boo Radley's stayed shut up in the house all this time . . . it's because he wants to stay inside." Why does he say that?

The world is starting to look mighty complicated to Jem. The jury decision, all the talk about social class and the problem of what exactly "background" means, and Mr. Raymond's false drinking problem are all weighing on his mind, and he's trying to get things all sorted out with nice, neat definitions. He is learning that things in the real world just aren't easy to sort-out and understand.

8. Mrs. Merriweather of the missionary circle complains about her cooks and field hands. What does that tell us about her?

As a member of the missionary circle, she is very concerned about the personal welfare of many Africans, but in her own back yard, Mrs. Merriweather is as prejudiced as she can be.

9. What happened to Tom Robinson?

Tom was shot when he tried to escape from prison.

10. What more do we learn about Alexandra after Atticus and Calpurnia leave?

Alexandra is given a more rounded personality in this section. We see clearly for the first time that she loves and is concerned for her brother. We see her take the news of Tom's death with great difficulty, yet she gathers herself together and carries on with her guests. She seems a bit more human and a bit more noble than she has been painted prior to this.

11. What did Mr. Underwood's editorial say?

He likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children.

Chapters 26-31

1. What was Scout's fantasy regarding Arthur (Boo) Radley?

She daydreamed that Boo would be sitting in the swing and they would chat as if they had chatted every day for all their lives. She wanted him to be "normal" like everyone else on the street.

2. What did Scout hear Miss Gates say at the courthouse? In class, Miss Gates said, "That's the difference between America and Germany. We are a democracy and Germany is a dictatorship. . . . We don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced." What does this tell us about Miss Gates?

Scout heard Miss Gates at the courthouse saying that "it's time somebody taught 'em a lesson, they were gettin' way above themselves, an' the next thing they think they can do is marry us." Miss Gates is either a hypocrite or has not stopped to recognize that she is just as prejudiced as Hitler was, although for a different group of people.

3. What happened to Judge Taylor?

Someone (Bob Ewell, we assume) was breaking into the judge's house when the judge and his dog frightened him away.

4. What happened to Helen Robinson?

Helen Robinson walked the long way around to work to avoid the Ewell house because they "chunked at her" when she used the public road. Mr. Link Deas escorted Helen on the public road and threatened the Ewells. After that she had no trouble.

5. What was Scout's part in the pageant?

She was to be a ham. Her ham costume would later save her life.

6. Why did Scout and Jem not leave the school until almost everyone else had gone?

Scout was embarrassed because she fell asleep, came on stage late during the pageant and ruined Mrs. Merriweather's program.

7. What happened to Jem and Scout on the way home from the pageant?

Someone attacked them. Scout got tangled in her costume, someone knocked out Jem, there was a struggle and then Scout saw someone carrying Jem home.

8. Who saved Jem and Scout? Who killed Bob Ewell?

Arthur (Boo) Radley saved Jem and Scout and he killed Bob Ewell.

9. Why did Heck Tate insist that Bob Ewell fell on his own knife?

Heck figured out that Arthur had killed Bob Ewell, and he saw no sense in dragging the "hero" through a nasty, public ordeal. He thought it would be better to "let the dead bury the dead."

10. Scout arranged things so that "if Miss Stephanie Crawford was watching from her upstairs window, she would see Arthur Radley escorting [her] down the sidewalk, as any gentleman would do." Why did she do that?

Scout now understands that Arthur Radley is a real person, not a freak. She wants him, in his public appearance, to look "normal" so that Miss Stephanie and (through Miss Stephanie's gossip) the rest of the town will begin to think of him as a real person, too.

11. As Scout leaves the Radley porch, she looks out at the neighborhood and recounts the events of the last few years from the Radleys' perspective. Why is that important?

All through the book, she (and Jem and Dill) have been, at various times, taking Atticus' advice and putting themselves in someone else's shoes, looking at things from someone else's perspective. Each time they do this, they learn something new. It is appropriate that near the conclusion of the novel, Scout takes the most difficult stance of looking through the world from Arthur Radley's perspective.