To Kill A Mockingbird

By Harper Lee

Reading Questions

You must answer all questions in the section to receive credit. You may do as many or as few sections as you choose. Worth 10 points per section. **USE COMPLETE SENTENCES.**

**Chapter 1-3**

1. What do you learn in this chapter about Maycomb, Atticus Finch, the Finch family, and Dill?
2. What briefly has happened to Arthur “Boo” Radley? Why does the radley place fascinate Scout, Jem and Dill?
3. Narrative Voice -- Who is the narrator of the story? How old is he or she in the narration? How do you know?
4. Why is Scout looking forward to the start of school?
5. Why does Jem not want anything to with Scout at school? Is this behavior typical of an older child?
6. What do you think of Miss Caroline Fisher as a teacher? What qualities does she exhibit that make her good or not so good at her job?
7. Who is Calpurnia? What is her place in the Finch household?
8. What is Walter Cunningham like? What does his behavior during lunch suggest about his home life? What do you think of the way Atticus treats Walter?
9. Atticus says that you never really understand a person “until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” What does this mean? Is it an easy lesson for Scout to learn?
10. What do you learn in this chapter about the Ewells?

**Chapter 4-6**

1. What does Scout think of current fashions in education?
2. What superstitions do the children have in connection with the Radley house?
3. Why do the children make Boo’s story into a game? What do they do in this game? Do you think the game is an accurate version of what happens in the Radley’s home?
4. Who might the laughter inside the house belong to?
5. Describe Miss Maudie Atkinson? How typical is she of Maycomb’s women? What do the children think of her?
6. What does Miss Maudie tell Scout about Boo? How does this compare with what Scout already believes?
7. Why does Scout disapprove of Jem’s and Dill’s plan to look in the Radley’s windows?
8. What does Mr. Nathan Radley know about the intruders in his garden?
9. Why does Miss Stephanie assume it was a “negro” in the garden?
10. Why does Dill’s explanation of Jem’s state of dress almost land him in trouble?

**Chapter 7-9**

1. What was strange about Jem’s trousers when he went to retrieve them?
2. What prevents Jem and Scout from leaving a letter for the person who gives them gift? Who caused it and why might he have done so?
3. Why does Scout quiz Atticus about his visit to the Radley house? How much does Atticus tell her?
4. Why does Atticus save Miss Maudie’s oak rocking chair?
5. What does Jem realize after Atticus asks Scout about the blanket around her shoulders?
6. Explain what Atticus means by telling Jem not to let his discover “inspire” him to “further glory”? Is there any reason why Jem might now do as his father says?
7. How well does Atticus feel he should defend Tom Robinson? Is it usual for white lawyers to do their best for black clients in Alabama at this time?
8. Scout and Jem have mixed feelings about Christmas? What are these feelings and why do they have them?
9. What unpleasant feature of Aunt Alexandra’s does Francis reveal to Scout?
10. Read the final sentence of Ch. 9. Explain in your own words what it means and why it might be important to the story.

**Chapter 10-12**

1. Scout says “Atticus was feeble.” What does feeble mean? Do you think that this is her view as she tells the story or when she was younger? Does she still think this after the events of Chapter 10?
2. What reason does Atticus give for it being a sin to kill a mockingbird?
3. Why does Heck Tate not want to shoot Tim Johnson?
4. What does Mrs. Dubose say about the children’s mother? How does Jem feel about this? How did Atticus advise Jem to react Mrs. Dubose’s taunts?
5. What crime does Jem commit against Mrs. Dubose? What is his punishment? Is this a fair punishment?
6. Explain in your own words what Atticus thinks of insults like “nigger-lover”. Do you agree with him?
7. Atticus says the Mrs. Dubose is a model of real courage rather than “a man with a gun in his hand”. What does he mean? Do you think he is right?
8. During Jem and Scout’s visit to 1st Purchase church, what new things does Scout learn about how blacks live?
9. What does Scout learn from Calpurnia’s account of Zeebo’s education?
10. Explain why Calpurnia speaks differently in the Finch household than to her neighbors at church.

**Chapter 13-15**

1. Why does Aunt Alexandra come to stay with the Finches? What is she like?
2. Read the first two things Alexandra says when she comes to the Finch house. Are these statements typical of her or not?
3. How does Aunt Alexandra involve herself in Maycomb’s social life?
4. Comment on Aunt Alexandra’s ideas about breeding and family? Why does Atticus tell the kids to forget it? Who is right?
5. Comment on Atticus’s explanation of rape. Is this answer suitable to Scout?
6. What do we learn from Dill’s account of running away?
7. What was (and is) the Ku Klux Klan? What do you think of Atticus’s comment about it?
8. What is the nightmare that now descends upon the children?
9. What persuades the lynching party to give up their attempt on Tom’s life?
10. Comment on the way Scout affects events without realizing it at the time.

**Chapter 16-18**

1. What “subtle change” does Scout notice in her father?
2. What sort of person is Dolphus Raymond?
3. How does Reverent Sykes help the children see and hear the trial? Is he right to do so?
4. What are the main points in Heck Tate’s evidence? What does Atticus show in his cross-examination of Sheriff Tate?
5. What do we learn indirectly of the home life of the Ewell family in this chapter?
6. What do you learn from Bob Ewell’s evidence?
7. Why does Atticus ask Bob Ewell to write out his name? What does the jury see when he does this? Why is it important?
8. Is Mayella like her father or different from him? In what ways?
9. What might be the reason for Mayella’s crying in court?
10. How does Mayella react to Atticus’s politeness? Is she used to people being polite to her?

**Chapter 19-21**

1. How well does Mr. Gilmer prove Tom’s guilt in the eyes of the reader (you) and in the eyes of the jury? Why might these answers be different?
2. What made Tom visit the Ewell house in the first place?
3. Why does Scout think that Mayella is “the loneliest person in the world?”
4. In your own words, explain Mayella’s relationship with her father.
5. How does Dill react to this part of the trial? Why?
6. Scout says “Mr. Dolphus Raymond was an evil man.” Is she right?
7. Explain, in your own words, Atticus’s view on people being equal.
8. What does Jem expect the verdict to be? Does Atticus think the same?
9. What is unusual about how long it takes the jury to reach a verdict? Is the verdict predictable or not?
10. Why does Scout think of the mockingbirds being silent and that February morning while she waits for Tom’s verdict? How does this relate to the novel’s central theme?

**Chapter 22-24**

1. Miss Maudie tells Jem that “things are never as bad as they seem.” What reasons does she give for this view?
2. Why does Dill say that he will be a clown when he grows up? Do you think he will keep this ambition for long?
3. This story is set in the 1930s but was publishing in 1960. Have attitudes on racism remain the same or have there been any changes (for the better or the worse) since then, in your view?
4. Why does Bob Ewell feel so angry with Atticus? Do you think his threat is a real one? How might he try to “get” Atticus?
5. What do you think of Atticus’s reaction to Bob Ewell’s challenge? Should he have ignored Bob, retaliated, or done something else in response?
6. What is circumstantial evidence? What has it got to do with Tom’s conviction?
7. Why does Aunt Alexandra mean when she says the Cunninghams aren’t “our kind of folks”? Do you think people should interact only with others of the same social standing? Are class divisions good or bad for society?
8. What is your opinion of the Maycomb ladies as depicted in Chapter 24?
9. Explain briefly how Tom was killed. What is Atticus’s explanation for Tom’s attempted escape? Do you agree with Atticus? What other gun related incident in this novel is this similar to?
10. How do we see Aunt Alexandra in a new light in Chapter 24? How does Miss Maudie support her?

**Chapter 25-27**

1. How does Maycomb react to the news of Tom’s death?
2. Comment on the idea that Tom’s death was “typical.”
3. Why did Jem not want Scout to tell Atticus about Bob Ewell’s comment? Was this a wise thing to ask her to do?
4. In her lesson on Hitler, Miss Gates says “we don’t believe in persecuting anyone.” What seems odd to the reader about this claim?
5. Why is Scout puzzled by Miss Gates’ disapproval of Hitler?
6. Why does Scout’s question upset Jem? Is there a simple answer, or any answer, to her question (“How can you hate Hitler an’ then turn around an be ugly about folks right at home?”)
7. What three things does Bob Ewell do that alarm Aunt Alexandra?
8. Why, according to Atticus, does Bob Ewell bear a grudge? Which people does Ewell see as his enemies, and why?
9. What was the purpose of the Halloween pageant? What practical joke persuaded the grown-ups to have an organized event?
10. What was Scout dressed up as for the pageant?

**Chapter 28- 31**

1. Who jumps out at Scout and Jem as they walk toward school?
2. How did Scout inadvertently become the star of the pageant? Who was less amused by Scout’s performance?
3. What did Scout leave behind at the school?
4. Describe, in your own words and in detail, what happened to Scout and Jem as they walked home from school.
5. The narration at this point in the novel becomes jumbled and difficult to follow. For what purpose might the author have chosen to write this section in this way?
6. What was Jem’s injury?
7. Who died in Chapter 28? How did they die?
8. Who does Atticus think killed Bob? Who does Heck say killed him? Who actually killed him?
9. Why does Heck say “let the dead bury the dead?” What does this mean?
10. Why does Scout say “it’d be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird, wouldn’t it?” What does this mean? How does this relate to the themes of the book?