Part One)

**Chapter 1**

The chapter opens with the introduction of the narrator, Scout (Jean Louise) Finch, her older brother Jem (Jeremy), and their friend and neighbor, Dill (Charles Baker Harris). Next, Lee provides an overview of Finch family history. Their ancestor, a Methodist named Simon Finch, fled British persecution and eventually settled in Alabama, where he trapped animals for fur and practiced medicine. Having bought several slaves, he established a largely self-sufficient homestead and farm, Finch's Landing, near Saint Stephens. The family lost its wealth in the Civil War.

Scout's father, [Atticus Finch](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#atticus-finch), studied law in Montgomery while supporting his brother, John "Jack" Hale Finch, who was in medical school in Boston. Their sister Alexandra remained at Finch's Landing. Atticus began his law practice in Maycomb, the county seat of Maycomb County, where his "office in the courthouse contained little more than a hat rack, a spittoon, a checkerboard, and an unsullied Code of Alabama." His first case entailed defending two men who refused to plead guilty for second-degree murder. They instead pled not guilty for first-degree murder, and were hanged, marking "probably the beginning of my father's profound distaste for criminal law."

Scout then describes Depression-era Maycomb, "an old tired town when I first knew it", summer heat and slow pace of life. She notes, "There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County". Scout describes as her father as entirely "satisfactory," and her family's black cook, [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia), as strict and "tyrannical." Scout and Jem's mother died of a heart attack when Scout was two and she has no memories of her. However, Jem can remember his mother and Scout notices that he is occasionally nostalgic about her. The novel takes begins during the summer. Scout is almost six, and Jem is almost ten.

Once this background picture is complete, the real narrative begins with the first meeting of Scout, Jem, and "Dill", a feisty, imaginative boy who is nearly seven but very small for his age Dill defends his height saying, "I'm little but I'm old". From Meridian, Mississippi, Dill will be spending the summer at the nearby house of Miss Rachel Haverford, his aunt. He impresses the Finch children with his dramatic recounting of the movie Dracula, which wins him their respect and friendship. The three engage in summertime play activities of improving the Finch tree and acting out the plots of several of their favorite books. Scout notes that Dill proves to be, "a pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies."

By late summer, having exhausted these pursuits, the children turn their thoughts to the mysterious Radley place, down the block from the Finch house. The Radley house is said to contain a "malevolent phantom" by the name of [Boo Radley](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#boo-radley). Though the children have never seen him, rumors abound that he is over six feet tall, has rotten yellow teeth, popping eyes and a drool, and eats raw animals. Whenever strange things happen in the neighborhood, Boo is often blamed. Boo's story is an extension of the strange Radley family, who have always disregarded local custom by "keeping to themselves." Prior to his death, Mr. Radley, Boo's father, had only been seen on his daily trip to collect groceries from 11:30am-12pm, and the family worshipped together in their own home on Sundays. Their youngest son, Arthur, who the children call Boo, apparently mixed with "the wrong crowd," a gang of boys who were finally arrested and brought to court after driving an old car through the town square and locking Maycomb's beadle in an outhouse. Though the other boys were sent to industrial school for punishment, and ironically received excellent educations, Arthur Radley's family preferred to keep him hidden inside the home. After fifteen years living at home, the thirty-three-year-old Boo is rumored to have stabbed his father in the leg with a pair of scissors and then quietly continued about his business of cutting out newspaper articles. Refusing to permit his son to be deemed insane or charged with criminal behavior, Mr. Radley allowed Boo to be locked up in the courthouse basement: "the sheriff hadn't the heart to put him in jail alongside Negroes". Boo was eventually brought back to the Radley home. After Mr. Radley's death, his older brother Nathan arrived to continue to watch over Boo and keep him inside and out of sight.

Dill develops an insatiable curiosity about Boo, and wants to lay eyes on this strange "phantom," who is said to walk about at night looking in windows. Dill dares Jem to go inside the boundary of the Radleys' front gate. After three days of hedging, Jem's fear of Boo succumbs to his sense of honor when Dill revises his terms, daring Jem to only touch the house. Jem finally agrees to do this. He runs, touches the house, and the three scramble back to the Finches' porch, where looking down the street to the Radley house "we thought we saw an inside of a shutter move. Flick - and the house was still."

**Chapter 2**

The summer is over, and September has arrived. Dill has returned to his family in Meridian, and Scout eagerly awaits her first day of school. She is excited about the prospect of finally starting school, but her first day of first grade leaves her extremely disappointed. Her teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, is 21 years old and new to the Maycomb County schools. Miss Caroline is from the richer and more cultured North Alabama, and does not understand the country ways of Maycomb.

To begin the day, Miss Caroline reads a saccharine children's story about cats, which leaves the children feeling restless. Scout explains, "Miss Caroline seemed unaware that the ragged, denim-shirted and flour-sack-skirted first graders were immune to imaginative literature." Half of these children had failed first grade the year before. Therefore, when Miss Caroline writes the alphabet on the board and Scout reads it through easily, then reads from her reader and from the local paper, Miss Caroline forbids Scout to let Atticus teach her to read anymore. Rather than congratulating Scout on her knowledge, Miss Caroline believes Scout is being taught incorrectly and tells her not to read at home anymore. Scout explains she doesn't remember learning how to read, but it seems she always knew how. When Miss Caroline forbids her to continue reading, she realizes how important it is to her: "Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing."

At recess, Jem listens to Scout's complaints and tries to reassure her, explaining that Miss Caroline is introducing a new teaching technique which he calls the Dewey Decimal System. Back in class, Scout gets bored and starts writing a letter to Dill, but is criticized again by her teacher for knowing how to write in script when she's only supposed to print in first grade. Scout blames Calpurnia for teaching her how to write in script on rainy days.

At lunchtime, Miss Caroline asks everyone who isn't going home for lunch to show her their lunch pails. One boy, [Walter Cunningham](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#walter-cunningham), has no pail and refuses to accept Miss Caroline's loan of a quarter to buy something with. Miss Caroline doesn't understand his refusal, and a classmate asks Scout to help explain. Scout tells Miss Caroline that Walter is a Cunningham, and thinks that explanation should be enough. After realizing Miss Caroline doesn't know what that means, Scout explains that the Cunninghams don't accept other people's help, and just try to get by with what little they have. Scout mentally recollects how Mr. Cunningham, when entailed, repaid Atticus for his legal services by giving the Finch family hickory nuts, stove wood, and other farm produce. The Cunninghams are farmers who don't have actual money now that the Depression is on. Many professionals in the town charge their country clients in farm produce rather than monetary currency. When Scout explains that Walter can't pay back the lunch money Miss Caroline offered, the teacher taps Scout's hand with a ruler and makes her stand in the corner of the room. Scout and the children are puzzled by this very unthreatening form of "whipping," and the entire class laughs until a locally-born sixth grade teacher arrives and announces that she'll "burn up everybody" in the room if they aren't quiet.

The first half of the day ends, and on her way out of the classroom, Scout sees Miss Caroline bury her head in her arms as the children leave the room. However, Scout doesn't feel sorry for her considering her unfriendly treatment that morning.

**Chapter 3**

Jem invites Walter Cunningham over for lunch when he finds out that the boy doesn't have any food. Walter hesitates but then takes Jem up on the friendly offer. At the Finch house, Atticus and Walter discuss farming, and Scout is overwhelmed by their adult speech. Walter asks for some molasses and proceeds to pour it all over his meat and vegetables. Scout rudely asks him what he's doing and Calpurnia gives her a lecture in the kitchen about how to treat guests - even if they're from a family like the Cunninghams.

Back at school, there's a big scene when Miss Caroline screams upon seeing a louse ("cootie") crawl off of the head of one of the boys in the class. This boy, Burris Ewell, comes from a family so poor that Atticus says they "live like animals." Their children come to school on the first day of the year and then are never seen again. The children inform their teacher of this, explaining that "He's one of the Ewells." Miss Caroline wants Burris to go home and take a bath, but before he leaves the room for the rest of the year, he yells crude insults at her and makes her cry. The children comfort her and she reads them a story.

Scout feels discouraged returning home from school. After dinner she tells Atticus she doesn't want to go back. Atticus asks her to understand the situation from Miss Caroline's point of view - Miss Caroline can't be expected to know what to do with her students when she doesn't know anything about them yet. Scout wants to be like Burris Ewell and not have to go to school at all. As Atticus explains, the town authorities bend the law for the Ewells because they'll never change their ways - for instance, Mr. Ewell can hunt out of season because everyone knows he spends his relief checks on whiskey and his children won't eat if he doesn't hunt. Atticus teaches Scout about compromise: if she goes to school, Atticus will let her keep reading with him at home. Scout agrees and Atticus reads to her and Jem from the papers.

**Chapter 4**

School continues; the year goes by. Scout doubts that the new educational system is really doing her any good - she finds school boring and wishes the teacher would allow her to read and write, rather than ask the children to do silly activities geared toward "Group Dynamics" and "Good Citizenship." One afternoon, as she runs past the Radley house, she notices something in the knot-hole of one of the oak trees in the front yard. She investigates further and finds two pieces of chewing gum. Scout is careful, but eventually decides to chew them. Upon learning she is chewing found gum, Jem makes her spit it out. Later, toward the end of the school year, Jem and Scout find two polished Indian-head pennies, good luck tokens, inside the same knothole. The children don't know if the knothole is someone's hiding place or if the pennies are a gift, but decide to take them and keep them safely at the bottom of Jem's trunk.

Dill comes to Maycomb for the summer again, full of stories about train rides and his father, whom he claims to have finally seen. The three try to start a few games, but quickly get bored. Jem rolls Scout inside an old tire, but he pushes so hard that it ends up in the Radley's yard. Terrified, Scout runs back home, but leaves the tire behind. Jem has to run into the yard and retrieve the tire. Dill thinks Boo Radley died and Jem says they stuffed his body up the chimney. Scout thinks maybe he's still alive. They invent a new game about Boo Radley. Jem plays Boo, Dill plays Mr. Radley, and Scout plays Mrs. Radley. They polish it up over the summer into a little dramatic reenactment of all the gossip they've heard about Boo and his family, including a scene using Calpurnia's scissors as a prop. One day Atticus catches them playing the game and asks them if it has anything to do with the Radley family. They deny it, and Atticus replies, "I hope it doesn't." Atticus's sternness forces them to stop playing, and Scout is relieved because she's worried for another reason: she thought she heard the sound of someone laughing inside the Radley house when her tire rolled into their yard.

**Chapter 5**

Jem and Dill have become closer friends, and Scout, being a girl, finds herself often excluded from their play. Dill, in childish fashion, has decided to get engaged to Scout, but now he and Jem play together often and Scout finds herself unwelcome. Instead of playing with the boys, Scout often sits with their neighbor, the avid gardener Miss [Maudie Atkinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#maudie-atkinson), watches the sun set on her front steps, or partakes of Miss Maudie's fine homemade cake. Miss Maudie is honest in her speech and her ways, with a witty tongue, and Scout considers her a trusted friend. Scout asks her one day about Boo Radley, and Miss Maudie says that he's still alive, he just doesn't like to come outside. She also says that most of the rumors about him aren't true. Miss Maudie explains that the Radleys are foot-washing Baptists - they believe all pleasure is a sin against God, and stay inside most of the time reading the Bible. She says that Arthur was a nice boy when she used to know him.

The next day, Jem and Dill hatch a plan to leave a note for Boo in the Radley's window, using a fishing line. The note will ask him to come out sometimes and tell them what he's doing inside, and that they won't hurt him and will buy him ice cream. Dill says he wants Boo to come out and sit with them for a while, as it might make the man feel better. Dill and Scout keep watch in case anyone comes along, and Jem tries to deliver the note with the fishing pole, but finds that it's harder to maneuver than he expected. As he struggles, Atticus arrives and catches them all. He tells them to stop tormenting Boo, and lectures them about how Boo has a right to his privacy, and that they shouldn't go near the house unless they're invited. He accuses them of putting Boo's life history on display for the edification of the neighborhood. Jem says that he didn't say they were doing that, and thus inadvertently admits that they were doing just that. Atticus caught him with "the oldest lawyer's trick on record."

**Chapter 6**

It is Dill's last summer night in Maycomb. Jem and Scout get permission to go sit with him that evening. Dill wants to go for "a walk," but it turns into something more: Jem and Dill want to sneak over to the Radley place and peek into one of their windows. Scout doesn't want them to do it, but Jem accuses her of being girlish, an insult she can't bear, and she goes along with it. They sneak under a wire fence and go through a gate. At the window, Scout and Jem hoist Dill up to peek in the window. Dill sees nothing, only curtains and a small faraway light. The boys want to try a back window instead, despite Scout's pleas to leave. As Jem is raising his head to look in, the shadow of a man appears and crosses over him. As soon as it's gone, the three children run as fast as they can back home, but Jem loses his pants in the gate. As they run, they hear a shotgun sound somewhere behind them.

When they return, Mr. Radley is standing inside his gate, and Atticus is there with various neighbors. They hear that Mr. Radley was shooting at a "white Negro" in his backyard, and has another barrel waiting if he returns. Dill makes up a story about playing strip poker to explain Jem's missing pants, and Jem says they were playing with matches rather than cards, which would be considered unforgivable. Dill says goodbye to them, and Jem and Scout go to bed. Jem decides to go back and get his pants late that night. Scout tries to persuade him that it would be better to get whipped by Atticus than to be shot and killed by Mr. Radley, but Jem insists on going. Jem explains that he's never been whipped by Atticus and doesn't want to be. Jem is gone for a little while, but returns with the pants, trembling.

**Chapter 7**

Jem is "moody and silent" after the pants incident. The new school year starts, and Scout finds second grade just as boring as first. One day, she and Jem are walking home together when Jem reveals that when he found his pants that night, they were all folded up, and the tears had been crudely sewn up, as if someone knew that he would be coming back for them. He finds this highly eerie. Then, they find a ball of twine in the Radley oak tree knothole. Again, they aren't sure if it is a gift for them or not, so they leave it for a few days. When it remains in the hole for a few days, they take it, and decide that anything left there is okay to take.

Jem is excited about sixth grade, because he is going to learn about ancient Egypt. Jem tells Scout that school will get better for her. One day in October they find two little figures in their secret knothole, a boy and a girl, carved artfully out of soap. Upon closer examination, they realize that the figures are images of themselves. They wonder who could have done it - maybe Mr. Avery, a neighbor who whittles wood. In a couple of weeks, they find a package of chewing gum, an old spelling bee medal, a broken pocket watch on a chain, and an aluminum knife. Jem can't get it the watch to work, but he and Scout decide to write a letter thanking the mystery person who is leaving them these gifts. They write a note of thanks and leave it in the oak tree. The next day, they are horrified to discover that someone has filled their hole up with cement. They ask Mr. Radley about it, and he claims the tree is dying and filling the knothole with cement will keep it alive. Jem is suspicious, and when he asks Atticus about it, Atticus says the tree looks very healthy, but that Mr. Radley must have a good reason for plugging up the hole. Jem thinks on Atticus's statement and about who might be leaving the gifts. He stands out on the porch by himself for a long time. When he comes inside, Scout thinks it looks like he has been crying.

**Chapter 8**

Winter arrives in Maycomb and it is unexpectedly harsh. Mr. Avery blames the children for causing the bad weather, saying that disobedient children make the seasons change. Mrs. Radley dies, and Atticus goes to the Radley house to pay his respects. Upon Scout's questioning, he sternly states that he did not see Boo there.

A snowstorm arrives, and it is the first snow Scout and Jem have ever seen. School is canceled and Jem and Scout decide to make a snowman. However, there is only a little snow, and Jem and Scout aren't even sure how a snowman is made. Determined, they decide to make a snowman using soil and snow collected from their yard and from Miss Maudie's. The snowman looks quite like Mr. Avery. Atticus admires their work, but suggests they disguise the identity of their creation to avoid offending their neighbor. Jem gives the snowman Miss Maudie's hat and pruning shears, and Miss Maudie laughs at the impersonation.

The night following the snowfall is bitterly cold. Scout wakes up in the middle of the night with Atticus over her telling her she must get up and go outside. Miss Maudie's house is on fire. Three fire trucks are trying to put out the flames, but they are hampered by the cold, and one of the hoses bursts. Atticus makes the two children wait by the Radley house so they are well out of the way. In front of the Radley yard, they shiver and hope that the flames won't come too near their own house. Miss Maudie's house collapses and her tin roof helps put out the flames. Scout understands that Miss Maudie will have to live at Miss Stephanie's house for a while.

Back at home, Atticus notices that Scout has a blanket wrapped around her shoulders and scolds her for straying from the one spot he told her to stay in. Scout explains that neither she nor Jem left the Radley yard and that they don't know where the blanket came from. They realize that [Boo Radley](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#boo-radley) must have slipped the blanket over Scout while she and Jem were engrossed by the fire. Mr. Radley, his brother, had been busy helping everyone else at Miss Maudie's house, so Boo is the only person that could have given Scout the blanket. Scout is amazed that she was so close to Boo and didn't even know it.

Miss Maudie is unexpectedly cheery about her house being burnt down and says she wanted a smaller house anyway, because she always wanted a bigger garden. She also notes that the fire probably started because she kept a fire going that night to keep her potted plants warm.

**Chapter 9**

A boy at school, Cecil Jacobs, teases Scout, saying that her father "defends niggers". Scout will not accept insults about her father and fights Cecil. Later, she asks Atticus what the phrase means, and he explains that he has decided to defend a black man named [Tom Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#tom-robinson), who lives in a settlement behind the town dump. Atticus says many of the town people think he ought not defend Tom because he is black. Scout asks why he's still doing it if people don't want him to, and Atticus responds that if he didn't take the case, he wouldn't be able to "hold up my head in town," represent his county in the legislature, or even tell his children what to do. Atticus explains that every lawyer gets at least one case in a lifetime that affects them personally, and that this one is his. He tells Scout to keep her cool no matter what anyone says, and fight with her head, not her hands. Scout asks if he's going to win the case and Atticus says no, but "simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win." He tells her that no matter what happens, the people of Maycomb are still their friends, and this is still their town.

Back at school, Scout works hard not to fight. [Uncle Jack](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#uncle-jack) comes to stay with them in Maycomb for a week, which Scout enjoys, because he has a good sense of humor, even though he's a doctor. Scout has been trying out swear words on the theory that Atticus won't make her go to school if he finds out she learned them there, but after dinner Uncle Jack tells her not to use them in his presence unless she's in an extremely provoking situation. For Christmas, Jem and Scout both get air rifles and are extremely pleased.

Atticus and the children go Finch's Landing, a large house with a special staircase leading to the rooms of Simon Finch's four daughters that once allowed Finch to keep track of their comings and goings. Scout hates going here, because her [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#aunt-alexandra) always tells her that she should be more ladylike - she should wear dresses and not pants, and that she should play with girls' toys like tea sets and jewelry. Aunt Alexandra hurts Scout's feeling and makes her sit at the little table in the dining room at dinner instead of the grown-up table, where Jem and [Francis](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#francis) are sitting. Francis is Aunt Alexandra's grandson, and Scout calls him "the most boring child I ever met." Talking to Francis gives Scout the feeling of, "settling slowly to the bottom of the ocean." The only good thing about being at the Landing is Aunt Alexandra's excellent cooking.

After dinner, Francis and Scout are outside in the backyard. Francis says that Atticus is a "nigger-lover," and that now Atticus will be the ruination of the family, who won't even be able to walk the streets of Maycomb. Scout patiently awaits her chance, and then punches him squarely in the mouth. Francis screams and everyone comes outside. Francis says Scout called him a "whore-lady" and jumped on him, which Scout does not deny. Uncle Jack tells her not to use that language and pins her when she tries to run away. Scout says that she hates him. Atticus says it's high time they went home.

Back at home, Scout runs to her room to be alone. Uncle Jack comes upstairs to have a talk with her about her language. Scout points out that he doesn't understand children very well, since he never heard her side of the story. Uncle Jack asks her for her side and Scout tells him what Francis said about Atticus. Uncle Jack is very concerned and wants to go talk with Alexandra right away, but Scout pleads with him not to tell Atticus, since she doesn't want him to know that she broke her agreement not to fight anyone over the issue of Tom Robinson's case.

Scout overhears Uncle Jack and Atticus talking. Uncle Jack explains that he doesn't want to have children because he doesn't understand them well enough. Atticus muses that Scout needs to learn to keep her temper under control because in the next few months, there is going to be a lot in store for the family. Jack asks how bad it will be, and Atticus says that it couldn't be worse - the case comes down to a black man's word against the word of the white Ewell family, and the jury couldn't possibly take Tom's word over the word of white people. Atticus just hopes that he can get his children through the ordeal without having them catch "Maycomb's usual disease," when "people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up." Atticus hopes that Jem and Scout will look to him for their answers rather than to the townspeople. Then he calls out Scout's name and tells her to go to bed. She runs back to her room. Years later, the narrator, an aged Scout, explains she eventually came to understand that Atticus wanted her to hear everything he said.

**Chapter 10**

Scout doesn't think her father can "do" anything besides be a lawyer - he doesn't do hands-on physical work and he doesn't play football. He's much older than the parents of her peers, which makes it difficult for him to take part in such activities. In addition, Atticus wears glasses because he's nearly blind in one eye. Instead of hunting, he sits and reads inside. Scout is slightly ashamed of her father, because it seems like he can't do anything noteworthy. Atticus tells Scout and Jem they can shoot their air guns at tins cans and bluebirds, but that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird. Miss Maudie affirms this, saying to Scout, "Your father's right. Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

One day a dog named Tim Johnson appears in the neighborhood, down the street from the Finch house. He looks strange appearance and walks slowly, with a twitch. The children tell [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia), who takes one look at the dog and immediately calls Atticus to tell him that there's a rabid dog in the neighborhood. Next Calpurnia gets the town operator to call everyone in the neighborhood to warn them. She even runs over to the Radley house and yells a warning to them. Atticus and the sheriff, [Heck Tate](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#heck-tate), drive up, and the sheriff gives Atticus the gun. The dog is so close to the Radley house that a stray bullet might go into the building. Atticus reluctantly takes aim and shoots the dog. The dog crumples into a heap. Jem is dumbstruck with the accuracy of his father's shot. Miss Maudie tells the children that their father used to be known as "One-Shot Finch," the best dead-shot in the county. She says he doesn't shoot unless he has to, because he feels that when he holds a gun, God has given him an unfair advantage over living beings. Scout wants to tell everyone in school about the incident, but Jem tells her not to. Jem explains that he wouldn't care if Atticus "couldn't do a blessed thing," because Atticus is a gentleman.

**Chapter 11**

On their way to meet Atticus after work, Scout and Jem have to pass by [Mrs. Dubose](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#mrs-dubose)'s house. Mrs. Dubose is a very mean, sick old lady who sits on her front porch and yells insults at Jem and Scout as they pass by. The day after Jem's twelfth birthday, he and Scout go to town to spend some of his birthday money. On the way, Mrs. Dubose yells to Jem that he broke Miss Maudie's grape arbor that morning, which is untrue, and yells at Scout for wearing overalls. Then she starts yelling at them about how Atticus is defending "niggers," and says that Atticus is no better than "the trash he works for." Jem tries to follow Atticus's advice regarding Mrs. Dubose: just hold your head high and be a gentleman. In town, Jem buys himself a model steam engine and buys Scout a sparkly twirling baton she has had her eye on for some time.

On the way home, in a sudden fit of anger, Jem suddenly grabs Scout's baton, cuts off all the tops of Mrs. Dubose's camellia bushes, and then snaps her baton in half. Scout watches, amazed, and begins to scream. They return home and gloomily await Atticus's return, knowing that they will be in trouble. Atticus comes home carrying green camellia buds and Scout's broken baton. He makes Jem go to Mrs. Dubose's house and apologize to her in person. Scout and Atticus discuss the necessity of keeping one's head even when times get hard. Atticus explains that he has to follow his conscience, no matter what anyone else in the town says. Jem returns from Mrs. Dubose's house. Atticus tells him one can't hold a sick old lady responsible for what she says. Jem explains that Mrs. Dubose wants him to read out loud to her every afternoon for a full month.

Scout and Jem go to Mrs. Dubose's house, which is dark, frightening, and full of medical equipment. Mrs. Dubose is lying in bed, and she looks friendly but her face is old and hideous. Jem begins to read Ivanhoe and Mrs. Dubose snaps at him when he pronounces any word incorrectly. As time passes, the old woman stops speaking and her mouth opens and closes while her head sways from side to side. Jem asks her if she is all right, but she doesn't reply. In a few minutes, an alarm clock sounds, and Mrs. Dubose's assistant shoes them out of the room and tells them to go home because it is time for Mrs. Dubose's medicine. This same sequence of events happens every time Scout and Jem go to Mrs. Dubose's house.

Scout asks Atticus what a nigger-lover is, and he says that it's just a meaningless term that "ignorant, trashy people use when they think somebody's favoring Negroes above themselves." He tells her that these words hurt the people who say them more than they hurt him.

The end of the month arrives and Mrs. Dubose asks Scout and Jem to read to her for one more week. Each day, it seems that they stay there a little longer before the alarm sounds. When Mrs. Dubose makes remarks about Atticus's case, Jem responds with detachment and keeps his anger hidden. Weeks after the last day of reading, Atticus receives a phone call and goes to Mrs. Dubose's house for a long time. He comes back to announce that she is dead, and tells the children that she was a morphine addict. Jem and Scout's visits helped break her from her morphine addiction, which the doctors had prescribed for her as a painkiller for her illness. Atticus explained to his children that Mrs. Dubose is an example of true courage. Even though she knew she was going to die, Mrs. Dubose wanted to be free of her addiction. Atticus tells Jem that courage is about more than men with guns. Instead, it is about knowing you're going to lose but sticking to your views and fighting anyway. Mrs. Dubose won, because she died beholden to nothing. Atticus calls her "the bravest woman I ever knew."

(Part Two)

**Chapter 12**

Jem is growing up and becoming moody and temperamental. Scout tries to give him his space, and looks forward to Dill coming in the summer. Unfortunately Dill doesn't arrive that summer - he writes to explain that he has a new father and has to stay in Meridian. To make matters worse, Atticus has to leave for two weeks for an emergency session with the state legislature. Instead of letting the children go to church unattended that Sunday, Calpurnia takes them to the First Purchase African M.E. church, an all-black congregation. Calpurnia takes special pains to make sure they are cleanly-scrubbed and as perfectly dressed as possible on Sunday.

At the church, a black woman named Lula tries to tell Calpurnia that white children don't belong at the church. However, Calpurnia points out that it's the same God, and the rest of the congregation welcomes the newcomers. Scout is surprised to hear Calpurnia speak in the same black dialect as the others, because at home, Calpurnia always speaks proper English. Inside the church, everything is much simpler than in the church she is used to, and there are no hymnbooks. [Reverend Sykes](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#reverend-sykes) announces that the collection taken up today will go to Helen, the wife of Tom Robinson. Calpurnia's son Zeebo, the town's trash collector, leads the congregation in hymns, singing each line and having the group repeat it back to him. Reverend Sykes gives a sermon, which seems similar to the sermons Scout is used to, except that he makes examples of particular people in the congregation to illustrate his points. After collection time, the Reverend counts the money collected and announces that they must raise ten dollars to give to [Helen Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#helen-robinson). He orders for the doors to be closed until everyone gives more.

After the service, Scout asks Reverend Sykes why Helen needs the collection money when she can still go to work and take her children with her. Reverend Sykes explains that she may have trouble getting any work in the fields now. Scout asks Calpurnia about this, and Calpurnia explains that it's because Tom has been accused of raping [Bob Ewell](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#bob-ewell)'s daughter. Mr. Ewell had Tom arrested and put in jail. Scout remembers that the Ewells are the ones who only come to school once a year, and are what Atticus calls "absolute trash." Calpurnia won't tell her what rape is. Scout then asks her why they don't have hymnbooks at her church, and Calpurnia explains that only a few people at the church can read. Scout also learns that Calpurnia used to work at the Landing for Miss Maudie's aunt, Miss Buford, who taught her to read. Jem asks Calpurnia why she doesn't speak with proper grammar around black people, and Calpurnia explains that it would be out of place, and that she would look pretentious. The others don't want to learn to speak the "right" way, she says, so she speaks their language. Scout asks if she can come over to Calpurnia's house sometimes to see how she lives at her own home, and Calpurnia says yes. When they arrive home, they discover Aunt Alexandra sitting on their porch.

**Chapter 13**

[Aunt Alexandra](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#aunt-alexandra) has decided (and convinced Atticus) it would be best for the family if she stays with them for "a while," which worries Scout even though she knows there's nothing to be done. Aunt Alexandra establishes herself in the neighborhood and continues to pester the children about what they should and should not do. She is old-fashioned and proper, and often refers to the people of Maycomb in light of their family history. She seems to believe that behaviors and character traits are hereditary, passed on from one generation to the next - one family might have a Gambling Streak, or a Mean Streak, or a Funny Streak. She also judges families on the basis of how long they have been settled in the same place. Those who have stayed on the same land for many generations are deemed "Fine Folks," whereas Scout always thought that "Fine Folks" were those who "did the best they could with the sense they had." Scout reasons that in Aunt Alexandra's eyes, the Ewells, who are very poor, are "Fine Folks," because they have stayed on the same land by the town dump for three generations, which clearly is not the case.

Scout remembers how Maycomb was founded around an old tavern run by a man named Sinkfield. Its location was very far inland and away from the only form of transportation in that day - riverboats. Thus, the original town families tended to intermarry a great deal, until most people looked fairly similar in the town. Newcomers arrived rarely, and when a new person married a Maycomb family, the new genes were noticeable. Most old people still know each other so well that every behavior is somewhat predictable and repetitive.

Aunt Alexandra wants the children to know all about the Finch family and uphold its genteel heritage, but Atticus has not introduced them to the entirety of their family history, and instead has told them amusing stories, such as how their cousin Josh went insane at university. Aunt Alexandra tries to pressure Atticus into telling the children why they should behave and "live up to your name." Atticus makes an attempt, but when Scout begins to get upset with this strange side of her father she has never seen before, he returns to his original principles and finds himself incapable of passing on what Aunt Alexandra deems important. Scout is relieved when her father returns to the same old Atticus, and says she knew what he was trying to do, but that "it takes a woman to do that kind of work."

**Chapter 14**

Scout asks her father what rape is. He tells her it is "carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent." Later on, Aunt Alexandra finds out that Scout and Jem went to the black church with [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia) and tries to forbid Scout from visiting Calpurnia's home. Moreover, Aunt Alexandra tries to make Atticus fire Calpurnia, but he refuses on the grounds that she's done an excellent job of running the house and raising the children, and the children love her. Jem takes Scout aside and tries to tell her not to antagonize their aunt. He and Scout get into a fist fight, which Atticus breaks up, saying that Scout doesn't have to obey Jem unless he can make her do so.

That night Scout feels something under her bed and thinks a snake his hiding there. She gets Jem to investigate, and they discover Dill hiding under Scout's bed. Dill tells a long story about being locked and chained in a basement and escaping with a traveling animal show. Then, he tells the real story of how he stole money from his mother's purse, and walked and hitched his way from the train station to the Finch house. Dill is very hungry and Scout gets him some cold cornbread to eat while mentally noting that Dill is now "home." Jem says that Dill should let his mother know where he is and goes to report the situation to Atticus. Scout remarks that by taking this action, Jem "broke the remaining code of our childhood". However, Atticus is lenient, and calls Miss Rachel to inform her of the situation and ask if Dill can stay the night. Miss Rachel appears on the scene and reprimands Dill but allows him to stay. Dill and Jem sleep in Jem's room, which adjoins Scout's room.

Late at night, Dill wakes Scout up and asks if he can sleep with her. He explains that his new father and mother don't seem interested in him, and that is why he left. They were kind to him, but did not seem to need him around. To Dill, it seemed they would rather spend time alone together that with him. Scout realizes how lucky she is to have a family that needs her. Then Dill suggests that they have a baby together, and even though he knows how babies are made, he makes up a long dreamy story about a magic island where babies are collected like flowers. Scout wonders why [Boo Radley](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#boo-radley) doesn't run away, and Dill replies saying maybe Boo doesn't have anywhere to run to.

**Chapter 15**

Dill is allowed to stay for the summer. Just a week later, events surrounding the trial begin to come to a head. First, a group of men pay a call to Atticus at his home. Jem and Scout watch from inside. The men make allusions to Tom being moved to the Maycomb jail the next day (Sunday), because the trial will occur on Monday. They are concerned that the "Sarum bunch" will cause some trouble, but Atticus thinks they won't do anything (such as a lynching) on a Sunday night. Mr. Link Deas warns Atticus that he has everything to lose from the trial, but Atticus says that he wants the truth to come out. Jem is concerned that the men outside mean Atticus harm, but Atticus assures him later that those men are his friends and are not part of a gang or the Ku Klux Klan, whom Atticus claims is gone and will never come back. Jem overhears Aunt Alexandra warning Atticus that he is bringing disgrace to the family name. Jem is still concerned for Atticus's safety.

On Sunday there are more people at church than ever in Scout's memory - even Mr. Underwood from the town newspaper is there, and he almost never attends church. Later that afternoon, Atticus leaves the house in his car, carrying an electrical extension cord with a light bulb at the end. He refuses to allow Jem and Scout to come. Around 10:00pm, Jem starts changing his clothes and tells Scout that he's going downtown. Scout insists on coming, and they pick up Dill on the way. They look for Atticus in his office, but finally spy him sitting outside the county jail, with the light bulb providing light for him to read his book. The children stay a safe distance away so Atticus won't notice them. Jem feels reassured knowing where his father is, but as they are about to head home, four old cars come into town. A shadowy group of men emerges. Atticus informs them that the sheriff is nearby, but they counter that they called him into the woods on false pretenses. Atticus still seems unperturbed. Suddenly Scout runs out into the circle, but is taken aback when she realizes that these men are strangers to her. Atticus orders the children to go home, but Jem refuses. One man picks up Jem by the collar, and Scout kicks the man in the groin. Jem still refuses to leave.

Scout becomes interested in the men, who smell of "whiskey and pigpen" and are dressed in heavy dark clothes despite the summer night. Looking for a friendly face in the group, she recognizes Mr. Cunningham, the father of Walter from her class at school. Trying to be cordial, she innocently begins to talk to Mr. Cunningham about how Walter is a good boy, and recounts how they invited him home for dinner one day, and asks Mr. Cunningham to say hello to his son for her. Then she tries to engage him on the topic of his entailment, which she heard her father mention once, but notices that everyone is staring at her. Mr. Cunningham bends down to Scout's height and says, "I'll tell him you say hey, little lady." The men decide to disperse, and go home in their cars. Mr. Underwood reveals himself in a nearby window with a gun, pointing out that he had them covered the whole time. The Finch family and Dill head home.

**Chapter 16**

Scout cries that night and Jem consoles her. Atticus says that Mr. Underwood despises black people, but was still willing to defend Atticus. Aunt Alexandra urges Atticus not to speak like that in front of Calpurnia, but Atticus protests as usual, claiming fairness and honesty are important. Scout wonders out loud why Mr. Cunningham wanted to hurt Atticus when he usually is Atticus's friend. Atticus explains that some people can forget that they are human beings when they become part of a mob. Clearly moved by the situation, Atticus explains to her that it took an eight-year-old girl to bring them to their senses.

[Tom Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#tom-robinson)'s trial begins, and despite warnings from Atticus to stay at home, Scout, Jem, and Dill go to the courthouse where the locals are all out picnicking in the park. They notice Mr. Dolphus Raymond drinking liquor from a paper bag and sitting with the black people. Jem explains that he married a black woman and that he has "mixed" children. Jem says that these children are "sad" because they don't feel accepted by black people or by white people - though they can be accepted in the North. They see one of the mixed children and Scout thinks he looks black. She asks Jem how to determine whether someone is "mixed" or not and Jem says that you can't tell by looking, you have to know their history. The Finch family is all white, but Jem considers that during Biblical times, it is possible some of their ancestors came from Africa. However, Jem notes that probably doesn't count because it was so long ago. In Maycomb county, if anyone has a drop of black blood, society considers them all black.

In the packed courthouse, the children have trouble getting seats until [Reverend Sykes](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#reverend-sykes) helps them find seats upstairs in the balcony where the black people sit. Scout observes [Judge Taylor](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#judge-taylor), whom she considers to be a rather good, sensible judge.

**Chapter 17**

The trial begins with the testimony of the sheriff, [Heck Tate](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#heck-tate). The prosecution's attorney, [Mr. Gilmer](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#mr-gilmer), asks him about the events surrounding Tom Robinson and Mr. Ewell's daughter, Mayella. Mr. Tate states that on November 21, Mr. Ewell came to get him because "some nigger'd raped his girl." He says that he found Mayella on the floor, very beaten up, and that Mayella claimed Tom Robinson had taken advantage of her and beaten her. Atticus questions Tate next, asking whether anyone called a doctor. Mr. Tate says no. Atticus asks where Mayella had been beaten, and Mr. Tate says, with some hesitation, that her right eye and entire right side of her face were bruised, and she had scratches all around her neck.

Mr. Ewell is the next witness. Scout recollects mentally the way that the Ewells live, in a tiny hut made of planks and corrugated iron and flattened tin cans, surrounded by junk salvaged from the nearby dump. In the corner of the yard there are some geraniums planted in slop jars by Mayella, which appear to be the most cared for living things on the property. Scout concludes that the only thing separating Mr. Ewell from the black people around him, in terms of social standing, is that his skin is white.

Mr. Ewell is surly and crass in the witness chair, but the judge, who clearly does not respect the man, manages to keep everything orderly. Mr. Gilmer asks Mr. Ewell for his version of the events. Mr. Ewell claims that he heard Mayella screaming when he was coming in from the woods with kindling, and that he ran to the house to find Tom Robinson having sexual intercourse with her. He uses the highly offensive term "ruttin," which causes an uproar in the court. After the judge calms everyone down, Mr. Ewell says that he ran to get the sheriff. He implores the judge to "clean up" the "nigger-nest" that are his neighbors, claiming that his neighborhood is getting dangerous.

Atticus questions Mr. Ewell, asking whether a doctor was called, and Mr. Ewell again says that no doctor was called, saying that he has never called a doctor in his life and never thought of doing so. Atticus asks if Mr. Ewell remembers Mayella's injuries as being the same as described by the sheriff. Mr. Ewell says that he does. Atticus asks if Mr. Ewell can write, and he says he can, so Atticus asks him to write his name on an envelope. In so doing, it is revealed that Mr. Ewell is left-handed.

**Chapter 18**

It is now Mayella's turn to be a witness. She is very distraught and cries in the witness stand, saying that she is afraid of Atticus. She finally tells Mr. Gilmer that her father asked her to chop up an old chiffarobe (chest of drawers) for kindling, but she didn't feel strong enough. When Tom Robinson walked by, she asked him to do it for a nickel. She claims that she went inside for the money, and Tom followed her, pushed her to the floor, and took advantage of her while she screamed and tried to fight back. Then, her father arrived and Tom ran away. After Mr. Gilmer has allowed Mayella to tell her story, it is Atticus's turn.

Atticus questions Mayella, but first asks her some background questions to show the jury what kind of family she comes from. At first, Mayella takes exception to Atticus calling her "Miss Mayella," and the judge has to explain that Atticus is imply being polite. He treats everyone on the stand with the same respect, no matter who they are or where they come from. In her cross-examination, we learn Mayella is nineteen and her family receives relief checks, but there isn't enough food to go around; her father seems to be a drunkard. Mayella went to school for a few years but none of her eight siblings go, and their mother is dead. Mayella doesn't seem to have any friends. Atticus asks if Mr. Ewell is a loving father, and with hesitation, Mayella says that he is "tolerable" except when he has been drinking. However, she insists that he never lays a hand on her or beats her. Atticus asks if this was the first time Tom Robinson has been invited into her house, and she jumps a little before she says that it was the first time. He asks Mayella if she remembers being beaten in the face, and Mayella first says no, but then yes. Atticus asks her to identify the man who raped her, and Mayella points to Tom, who Atticus asks to stand. Everyone in the courtroom notices that Tom's left arm is twelve inches shorter than his right, due to an accident in his youth when the arm got stuck a cotton gin. Atticus asks for more details about the struggle, then he asks many questions which Mayella doesn't answer: Why didn't the other children hear her screaming? Where were they? Why didn't they come running? Did she start screaming when she saw her father in the window? Did she get beaten up by her father, not Tom Robinson?

Mayella just says that she was taken advantage of, and if the upper class gentlemen won't prosecute Tom, they are cowards. Atticus appears to have found his exchange with the young woman distasteful. The court rests for ten minutes, but no one leaves the courthouse

**Chapter 19**

[Tom Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#tom-robinson) is called to the witness stand. He tries to put his left hand upon the Bible, but it is a futile effort, as his left arm is entirely non-functional. The arm simply slips off the Bible again and again. Finally, the judge tells him his effort is sufficient and he can take the stand. Atticus questions Tom, first asking whether he has ever been convicted of a crime. Tom explains that he was once convicted for fighting because he could not pay the fine that would have released him. In an aside, the narrator explains that Atticus is showing how honest Tom is and that he has nothing to hide from the jury. Next, Tom gives his account of the Ewell incident.

In Tom's version, he says he passed by the Ewell house every day on his way to work at Mr. Link Deas's farm, where Tom picks cotton and does other farm work. Tom confirms that one day last spring, Mayella asked him to chop up an old chiffarobe with a hatchet, but that was long before the November day in question. After Tom performed that favor for her, Mayella often asked him to help her with odd jobs around the house as he passed by. She offered him a nickel the first time, but he refused payment, knowing that the family had no money. He said he helped her out because she didn't seem to have anyone else to help her, and that he never went onto the Ewell property without being invited. Scout thinks about how lonely Mayella is - she's so poor that white people won't befriend her, but black people will avoid her because she's white.

Atticus asks about the events on November 21 of that year. Tom says that he passed the Ewell house as usual, and everything seemed very quiet. Mayella asked him to come inside and fix a broken door, but when he got inside the house, the door didn't look broken. Then, Mayella shut the door behind him and said she had sent the children to town to get ice cream, having saved for a very long time to be able to give each child a nickel. Tom starts to leave, but she asks him to take a box down from on top of another chiffarobe. As Tom reached for the box, Mayella grabbed him around his legs. He was so startled that he overturned a chair. Next, she hugged him round the waist and kissed his cheek, and as Tom explains, said that, "she never kissed a grown man before an' she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her pap do to her don't count." Mayella asks him to kiss her back, and Tom asks her to let him out of the house. However, her back is to the door, and he doesn't want to force her to move. He knows that as a black man, if he lays a hand on her he could later be killed. Then Mr. Ewell arrives, happens upon the scene, calls his daughter a "goddamn whore," and tells her he will kill Tom. Tom runs away in fear.

[Mr. Gilmer](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#mr-gilmer) questions Tom next, and he does so fairly aggressively, addressing him only as "boy". Mr. Gilmer tries to get at Tom's motivations for helping Mayella, insinuating that he must have had ulterior motives for helping her. Tom finally says he just tried to help because he felt sorry for her, which stirs up the audience considerably, as it is unacceptable for a black man to feel sorry for a white woman. Mr. Gilmer asks whether Tom thinks Mayella was lying about asking him to chop up the chiffarobe in November. Tom avoids a potential trap by saying he thinks Mayella must be, "mistaken in her mind" about this and everything else. Mr. Gilmer asks why Tom ran if he had a clear conscience, and Tom said he was afraid of being tried in court, not for what he did, but for what he didn't do.

At this point, Dill starts to cry, and Scout takes him outside the courthouse. He says he can't bear to watch Mr. Gilmer behaving so disrespectfully toward Tom. Scout says that all lawyers do that and Mr. Gilmer didn't even seem to be trying as usual today. Dill points out that Atticus isn't like that. A sympathetic voice behind them agrees that it makes him sick too - they turn to see Mr. Dolphus Raymond.

**Chapter 20**

Mr. Dolphus Raymond is known as the town drunk, because he always carries his drink in a brown paper bag, and tends to sway a bit in his walk. Mr. Raymond is also married to a black woman and has mixed children. When running from the courthouse, Dill and Scout run into Mr. Raymond and he offers Dill a sip of his drink. Scout is wary, but Mr. Raymond promises Dill it will make him feel better. Dill takes a sip and discovers Mr. Raymond is hiding a bottle of Coca-Cola in his infamous paper bag. Scout asks why he does such a thing, and Mr. Raymond explains he feels he has to give the population some reason for his odd behavior (being friendly toward black people). Mr. Raymond believes it's easier for people to handle strangeness when they have a reason to explain it. Thus, he pretends to be a drunkard. He says he thinks that children like Dill, who is so upset over the trial, haven't lost the instinct that tells them that it's wrong for white people to "give hell" to black people without consideration for their basic humanity.

Scout and Dill return to the courtroom, where Atticus is beginning his speech to the jury. Atticus explains that the case is very simple, because there is no medical evidence and very questionable testimony to prove Tom's guilt. Atticus explains that Mayella has, "broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society" by attempting to seduce a black man. He acknowledges her poverty and ignorance, but says, "I cannot pity her: she is white." He explains that Mayella followed her desires even though she was aware of the social taboos against her actions. Having broken one of society's strictest codes, she chose to, "put the evidence of her offense," namely Tom Robinson, away from her by testifying against him. Atticus accuses Mayella of trying to rid herself of the source of her own guilt.

Atticus suggests that Mr. Ewell beat his own daughter, as shown by Mayella's bruising on her right side. Mr. Ewell leads predominately with his left, while Tom can't punch with his left hand at all. Atticus points out that the case comes down to the word of a black man against the word of the white people, and that the Ewells' case depends upon the jury's assumption that "all black men lie." Uncharacteristically, Atticus loosens his tie and removes his jacket, which Scout and Jem are astounded to see, because he never walks about so casually. In his final remarks, Atticus speaks directly to the jury, earnestly reminding them that there are honest and dishonest black people just as there are honest and dishonest white people. He tells the jury that in a court of law, "all men are created equal." A court is, however, no better than the members of its jury, and he urges the jury to do their duty. As his speech comes to a close, Scout and Jem see [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia) moving toward the front of the court.

**Chapter 21**

Calpurnia arrives with a note for Atticus from [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#aunt-alexandra), who is concerned that the children have been gone all day. The court witnesses this exchange, and then the children are pointed out to Atticus. He sends the children home, but allows them to return to hear the jury's verdict after they eat their dinner. The children return home, where Aunt Alexandra is saddened to hear that the three of them, particularly Scout, were at the courthouse. Everyone eats, and then walks back to court. The jury is still deliberating, but the courthouse is still packed. Usually, people leave to go eat or walk around the square, but due to the weightiness of this case, everyone has stayed inside the courthouse, eagerly awaiting the decision. Everyone is silent and still, and Scout feels the sensation of chilliness in the room. Finally, the jury returns. Scout notices that not a single member of the jury looks at Tom, and she takes this as a bad sign. Meanwhile, she and Jem can't believe that anyone could convict Tom because he is so clearly innocent. [Judge Taylor](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#judge-taylor) polls the jury, and every man declares Tom guilty. Atticus whispers something to Tom, then exits the courtroom. All the black people in the balcony rise to their feet to honor Atticus as he passes them.

**Chapter 22**

Jem is crying and angry - he thought that the case was clearly in Tom's favor. Atticus is exhausted and when Jem asks him how the jury could have done it he responds, "I don't know, but they did it. They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it - seems like only children weep." However, the next morning, he explains that there's a good possibility for the case to be appealed in a higher court. Calpurnia reveals that the black community has left Atticus all sorts of appreciative gifts including chickens, bread and produce that have filled the house. Upon seeing this generosity, Atticus's eyes fill with tears. He says he's very grateful but tells Calpurnia that they shouldn't give him such things when times are so hard.

Dill comes by for breakfast and tells everyone that Miss Rachel thinks that, "if a man like [Atticus Finch](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#atticus-finch) wants to butt his head against a stone wall it's his head." The children go outside and Miss Maudie saves them from Miss Stephanie's nosy gossip by inviting them over for cake. Miss Maudie says that Atticus is someone who does other people's unpleasant jobs for them. Jem is discouraged and disappointed with the people of Maycomb, who he formerly thought were "the best people in the world." He thinks that no one but Atticus worked on Tom's behalf, but Miss Maudie points out that many people helped, including Mr. Tate the sheriff, the black community, and especially Mr. Taylor the judge, who offered Atticus the case in the first place. Mr. Tate assigned Atticus to the case because he knew Atticus would truly dedicate himself to the cause. Miss Maudie says that even though she knew Atticus couldn't win, he did manage to keep the jury out in discussion for longer than anyone else could, which is an achievement in and of itself. She says, "we're making a step - it's just a baby step, but it's a step."

As they leave, Dill says he wants to be a clown when he grows up, because, "there's ain't one thing in this world I can do about folks except laugh, so I'm gonna join the circus and laugh my head off." The children see Mr. Avery, Miss Stephanie, and Miss Rachel discussing something with animation in the street. Apparently Mr. Ewell saw Atticus by the post office, spat in his face, and told him that, "he'd get him if it took the rest of his life."

**Chapter 23**

Atticus is unconcerned about Mr. Ewell's threat, and tells his worried children that Mr. Ewell, who has been publicly discredited by the trial, just needs to feel like he is retaliating against someone, and better it be Atticus than the Ewell children.

Tom is being held on a prison farm, and his wife and children are not permitted to visit him. Atticus thinks there's a good chance he'll be spared execution by having his sentence commuted by the governor. Atticus comments that too many people are sent to death based upon purely circumstantial evidence. Jem thinks that juries should be done away with, because they can't make reasonable decisions. Atticus responds that men don't behave rationally in some situations, and will always take a white man's word over a black man's. Atticus tells Jem that any white man who cheats a black man is trash.

Jem and Atticus talk about what keeps people off of juries. Women can't serve on juries in Alabama (which Scout takes exception to), and many people don't want to get involved in court cases because their livelihood depends in some way upon maintaining good favor with both parties involved in a case. Jem thinks that the jury decided quickly, but Atticus reminds him that it took a few hours, which is much longer than usual. Typically, a case like Tom's would be settled in a matter of minutes. Atticus sees this as a sign of the beginnings of change for the better. Also, Atticus reveals that he learned that the one jury member who kept everyone out so long was a Cunningham who defended Tom's innocence. Atticus thinks that all Cunninghams will stand solidly behind anyone who wins their respect, without fail - and the incident at the jailhouse won the Finch family great respect.

Upon learning that his father believed Tom to be innocent, Scout wants to invite [Walter Cunningham](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#walter-cunningham) over for lunch more often, but Aunt Alexandra puts her foot down, saying that the Cunninghams aren't the right sort of people for Scout to spend time with. Scout can be gracious to Walter and polite, but can't invite him over because "he is trash."

Scout is upset about this and goes to Jem to talk about it. Jem tries to cheer her up and proudly shows her the beginnings of chest hair, which Scout pretends to see and congratulates him on. Jem explains he wants to go out for football next year. Next, Jem tries to comfort Scout by explaining that Aunt Alexandra is just trying to make her into "a lady." He says that there are four different kinds of people in Maycomb county: "ordinary" people like themselves, people like the Cunninghams in the woods, people like the Ewells by the dump, and black people. Each class looks down upon and despises the class below it. The two try to resolve exactly what separates and distinguishes the categories of white people. Background doesn't seem to matter, because all the families are equally old. Jem thinks these class definitions have to do with how long the family has been literate. Scout disagrees and thinks, "there's just one kind of folks. Folks." Jem says he used to think so as well, but he doesn't understand why they despise one another if that's the case. Jem seems very frustrated with society, and adds that maybe [Boo Radley](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#boo-radley) stays inside because he wants to.

**Chapter 24**

Jem and Dill have gone swimming, and wouldn't let Scout come along because they were planning to skinny dip. Aunt Alexandra has ladies over for a meeting of the Missionary Society of Maycomb, and keeps Scout in attendance in order for her to learn to be a lady. The women discuss the plight of the Mruna people, a non-Christian group in Africa who are said to live in squalor and are being converted thanks to the efforts of a missionary named J. Grimes Everett. Scout doesn't enjoy being around women but does her best to take part. The discussion moves toward the topic of Tom's wife, Helen. Apparently the black cooks and field hands in town were discontented during the week after the trial. One of the ladies comments on how much she dislikes a, "sulky darky," and says that when her black female servant was slow to perform her duties following the trial, she reminded her that Jesus never complained. Another lady says that no amount of education will ever make "Christians" out of black people, and that, "there's no lady safe in her bed these nights." Miss Maudie tersely shows her differing opinion on this topic. Aunt Alexandra magically smoothes everything over. Another lady says that Northerners are hypocrites who claim to give blacks equal standing but actually don't mix socially with them, whereas in the South people are very up-front about their lack of desire to share the same lifestyle.

Scout remembers that Calpurnia told Atticus that the day Tom went to prison, he lost hope. Atticus couldn't promise Tom an acquittal so he didn't try to reassure Tom by giving him potentially false hope. Suddenly Atticus enters the house and requests Aunt Alexandra and Calpurnia's presence in the kitchen. He reveals that Tom tried to escape from prison and was shot to death by the prison guards. Apparently the guards tried to tell him to stop and fired warning shots, but Tom kept running. Atticus needs Calpurnia to go with him to Tom's wife to give her the news. The two of them go, leaving Aunt Alexandra to tell Miss Maudie in the kitchen that she's concerned about Atticus. The trial has taken a lot out of him and it seems to be unending. Miss Maudie thinks that the town has paid Atticus a high tribute by trusting him to do right and uphold justice. These people are the small handful who know that blacks should be given justice, and who have "background." The two women are quite shaken, but then join the other women effortlessly. Scout feels proud of her Aunt and of Miss Maudie, and for the first time feels inclined to be ladylike, thinking that, "if Aunty could be a lady at a time like this, so could I."

**Chapter 25**

It is now September, and Jem and Scout are about to go to sleep on their cots on the back porch. Scout sees a roly-poly bug and goes to kill it. Jem stops her, saying the bug never did anything to harm her. Scout heeds his request and carefully takes the bug outside, noting internally that if anything, Jem is becoming more like a lady than she is. As she returns to her cot, she thinks of Dill and remembers his story of the day [Tom Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#tom-robinson) died in late August.

Atticus and [Calpurnia](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#calpurnia) were driving out to see Tom's wife when they spotted Jem and Dill on their way back from swimming. Jem and Dill ask for a ride, and although hesitant at first, Atticus finally agrees to let them come along. Apparently, when Tom's wife saw Atticus and Calpurnia, she seemed to faint, falling to the ground in a heap. Tom's death was only news in Maycomb for two days, and was regarded as "typical," since prevailing opinion was that black men tend to run away without any plan.

Scout reflects that "in the secret courts of men's hearts," nothing Atticus could have said could have freed Tom. Upon hearing the news, Mr. Ewell is rumored to have said, "one down and about two more to go," and Scout is afraid for Atticus. Jem confidently tells Scout that Mr. Ewell won't really take any action on his threats.

**Chapter 26**

School is in session again, and Scout has lost her fear of the Radley place. Every now and then she daydreams about seeing Boo sitting on the porch, and greeting him as if they spoke to each other every day. School is hard for the Finch children: their peers are generally somewhat cold toward them due to Atticus defending Tom Robinson, as if their parents had instructed them to be civil but not outwardly friendly.

One day during Current Events, Scout's class gets into a discussion about Hitler and the persecution of the Jews. Her teacher, Miss Gates, speaks at length about how the German dictatorship allows for the Jews to be persecuted by a prejudiced leader, but she claims that in America, "we don't believe in persecuting anybody." Scout finds Miss Gates hypocritical because she remembers that on the day of Tom's trial, she overheard Miss Gates say that she thought it was, "time somebody taught them a lesson, they thought they was getting' way above themselves, an' the next thing they think they can do is marry us." "Them" meant black people. In Scout's mind, this doesn't make sense and she goes to talk to Jem about it. Jem responds very angrily, and tells her he never wants to talk about anything having to do with that trial again. Scout is taken aback and goes to Atticus, who assures her that Jem just needs some time to think about things, and then he'll be himself again.

**Chapter 27**

Scout relates a few events that have recently occurred in Maycomb. Mr. Ewell holds down a job for a few days, but then is fired from the WPA (Work Projects Administration) for laziness. One night, alone in his study, [Judge Taylor](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#judge-taylor) finds the strange shadow of a prowler in his house and proceeds with his reading, but with a gun across his lap. [Helen Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#helen-robinson) has been working on the property of Mr. Link Deas, but walks nearly a mile out of her way in order to avoid walking past the Ewell's house, because they "chunk" at her when she passes by. When Mr. Link Deas finds out, he approaches the Ewell house and yells to them, warning them not to bother Helen, or else he'll have them put in jail. The next day, Mr. Ewell follows Helen to work, "crooning foul words" the entire way, but Mr. Link Deas again threatens him with jail and he stops this behavior. [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#aunt-alexandra) thinks that these events bode poorly for Atticus, as she is convinced that Ewell's threat after the trial carries more weight than Atticus is willing to believe.

It is nearly Halloween, and Mrs. Grace Merriweather writes a pageant for Maycomb people to perform about the history of the county. She wants children to play the parts of Maycomb's agricultural products, and Scout is assigned to play the part of the pork. She will wear a large costume made of chicken wire and wrapped around with brown cloth, which comes to just above her knees. She can't put it on or take it off without someone else's help because it pins her arms down, and she can't see well through the eyeholes. Jem escorts her to the pageant, because Atticus is too tired to go, and Aunt Alexandra opts to stay home with him.

**Chapter 28**

Jem and Scout walk past the Radley house on the way to the school, where the pageant and country fair will be held. It's very dark, and they can barely see a few feet ahead of themselves. Cecil Jacobs, a classmate of Scout's runs out to scare them, and definitely succeeds. Cecil and Scout entertain themselves at the fair until the pageant begins, visiting different booths and taking part in the fair. When the pageant begins, Scout goes backstage to prepare for her entrance. The section before her entrance, a history of Maycomb, is very long, and she decides to squat down inside her costume to rest. Lulled by Miss Merriweather's speech, Scout falls asleep. During the last song, she wakes up and realizes she has missed her cue. She rushes out to the stage, and makes a very amusing entrance that pleases the entire crowd. Scout is embarrassed about her performance and stays backstage with Jem until everyone leaves. She decides to keep her costume on for the walk home, and Jem escorts her.

The walk back is even darker than before, and near the school, Scout remembers that she left her shoes backstage. She is thinking of returning to get them, when Jem stops her because he hears a strange noise. Scout hears it too, but thinks maybe it's just Cecil again. They call out taunts to Cecil in order to get a response, but there is only silence. Jem thinks maybe Scout should take off her costume, but she doesn't have any clothes underneath, and can't get her dress on in the dark. They are almost home, near the dark shadow of the tree by the Radleys' house, and are trying to walk faster. It sounds like the person behind them is wearing thick cotton pants. The next time they stop walking, the footsteps behind them suddenly quicken into a run. Jem yells to Scout to run, but her costume throws her off balance. Something is crushed against her and she hears metal ripping. Jem's hand tries to pull her, but she is tangled up in her costume. There is a crunching sound and Jem screams. The man whom they are struggling with grabs Scout and begins to strangle her, when suddenly he is jerked backwards and thrown to the ground. Scout thinks Jem must have saved her, but she still can't see anything. She hears the sound of someone breathing heavily and, walking toward the tree to lean on, reaches out with her toes to find a person on the ground with stubble and the smell of stale whiskey. She makes her way in the direction of the road, and in the streetlight she sees a man carrying Jem, whose arm is hanging down at an odd angle.

Scout arrives home. Aunt Alexandra calls Dr. Reynolds and Atticus calls [Heck Tate](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#heck-tate), the sheriff. Alexandra removes Scout's costume and hands her Scout's infamous, un-ladylike overalls to put on. Scout says she will never forget that gesture. Jem is unconscious and has a broken arm. Scout checks on him, noting the man who carried him sitting quietly in the corner. She assumes he is a countryman she doesn't recognize who happened to hear the fight and come running. The sheriff investigates outside and comes back to report that Mr. Ewell is lying outside dead with a kitchen knife in his ribs.

**Chapter 29**

Scout tells the story of what happened outside to Atticus, the sheriff, and everyone else assembled. Mr. Tate notes the mark that Mr. Ewell's knife made in Scout's costume, and points out that Mr. Ewell meant to seriously harm or kill the children. When Scout points out the man who carried Jem, she finally takes a good look at him. He is very, very pale, with thin cheeks and feathery hair, and seems somewhat tense and nervous. She suddenly recognizes him as [Boo Radley](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#boo-radley) and, moved to tears, says "Hey, Boo."

**Chapter 30**

The doctor returns and everyone moves to the back porch. Trying to be as friendly as possible, Scout leads Boo to the porch and assists him into a rocking chair placed in a darker corner, where she thinks he will feel most comfortable. As she helps Boo along, she feels the odd sensation of her fantasy about finding him sitting on the porch one day coming true. Meanwhile, the others are discussing who killed Mr. Ewell. Atticus thinks that Jem must have done it since Scout named Jem as her protector in her story. However, the sheriff insists continually that Mr. Ewell fell onto his knife and killed himself, which irritates Atticus, who wants Jem to be treated as fairly as anyone else and not have exceptions made. After much arguing, finally the sheriff yells out that he's not trying to protect Jem (he is trying to protect Boo). The sheriff urges Atticus, this once, to accept the situation even if it's not perfect according to law: Mr. Ewell was responsible for Tom's death, and the sheriff urges Atticus to "let the dead bury the dead." He says that it would be a sin to drag shy Boo Radley out into the limelight, and declares officially that Mr. Ewell fell on his own knife. Atticus, deeply moved by this revelation, asks Scout if she understands. Scout assures him that she does, explaining that having it another way would be like shooting a mockingbird. Atticus looks at Scout with a sense of wonder, and thanks Boo for the lives of his children.

**Chapter 31**

Scout asks Boo if he'd like to say good night to Jem. Boo doesn't say a word; he just nods. Scout sees that Boo would like to reach out and touch Jem, and tells him he can. She shows him how to gently stroke Jem's hair. After Boo does this, she perceives that he wants to leave, and she leads him to the porch, where he asks her in a near-whisper, "Will you take me home?" She accepts, and allows him to escort her down the block, just like a lady should. She leads him home and he goes inside his house and shuts the door. The narrator, speaking as an older Scout, says she never saw him again.

Standing on Boo's porch, Scout look out over the neighborhood imagining how Boo must have seen it, and how, for all these years, he watched over "his" children. Back home, Scout sits with Atticus, who begins to read her one of the scary children's stories he has picked up, which ironically mirrors the story of Boo Radley. Scout says she wasn't scared by the night's events, saying just as Jem had on their fateful walk home, that "nothing's really scary 'cept in books." She falls asleep while Atticus reads to her, and wakes up while he carries her to bed. She tells him she was listening all the time, and that the book is about a character who was chased and caught and then found to be innocent and "real nice." Atticus tells her, "most people are, when you finally see them." Atticus then spends the rest of the night by Jem's side.