

## English 9 Honors: Summer Reading Assignment

**Directions:** During the summer break, you are to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Please note: you do not need to submit these questions; they are merely guiding you through each set of chapters. Upon our return to school, we will have several writing assignments pertaining to this novel, along with a test.

### Chapter One:

1. Explain how Lee introduces elements of humor and elements of tragedy into the story as the novel begins.
2. Who is Dill? Describe his physical appearance and personality. Why do Jem and Scout like him so much?

### Chapter Two:

1. Describe Scout's first morning in the first grade. How does she find herself in conflict with Miss Caroline? Which details suggest that Scout is both independent and intelligent?
2. Describe Miss Caroline's first morning as a teacher. What mistakes does she make? How do you explain her actions? Are the readers supposed to have any sympathy for Miss Caroline? Why or why not?

### Chapter Three:

1. Specifically, how do Burris Ewell and his father, Bob Ewell, contrast with Walter Cunningham and his father who are introduced in the previous chapter? What do the Ewells and the Cunninghams have in common? What is the great difference between them?
2. How does Atticus explain the nature of a compromise to Scout? What compromise do they reach? What do you think this conversation between them indicates about Atticus as a parent?

### Chapter Four:

1. The novel is written in the *retrospective point of view* as the narrator remembers and relates experiences from her childhood. Looking back, she makes this observation about being in the first grade

“ . . . as I inched sluggishly along the treadmill of the Maycomb County school system, I could not help receiving the impression that I was being cheated out of something. Out of what I knew not, yet I did not believe that twelve years of unrelieved boredom was exactly what the state had in mind for me.”

What do you think Scout was “being cheated out of”? Given what you know already about Scout, why was she so bored?

### **Chapter Five:**

1. What are Miss Maudie's most admirable character traits? How is Miss Maudie like Atticus in several ways?

### **Chapter Six:**

1. How does Lee create the atmosphere of a summer night in Jem and Scout's neighborhood? Which descriptive details help you see, hear, and feel the time and place?

2. Why is it so important to Jem to retrieve his pants from the Radley fence? How does it relate to his feelings about Atticus?

### **Chapter Seven:**

1. What advice had Atticus once given Scout to help her understand Jem and his behavior? Is this good advice to follow in trying to understand someone else? Why or why not?

2. At the conclusion of the chapter, Atticus and Scout go into the house, but Jem stays behind on the porch. When he goes inside, Scout is sure he has been crying. How do you explain Jem's tears? What various emotions do you suppose he is feeling at this point in the story?

### **Chapter Eight:**

1. Describe Miss Maudie as she appears to Jem and Scout the morning after her house has been destroyed by fire. What does her attitude and behavior suggest about her? Are readers supposed to admire Miss Maudie?

### **Chapter Nine:**

1. What evidence suggests that Atticus understands children, especially his own, much better than his brother Jack understands them? How is this shown through Jack's interactions with Scout? In what ways is Atticus both wise and fair in regard to Jem and Scout?

### **Chapter Ten:**

1. According to Miss Maudie, why is Atticus not proud of being a sharpshooter with a rifle? What suggests that Jem understands more than Scout what Maudie explains to them?

### **Chapter Eleven:**

1. Atticus says the following about being courageous: “It’s when you know you’re licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do.” Do you agree with Atticus? Why or why not?
2. After learning that Mrs. Dubose has died—and how she died—Jem opens a gift she had arranged to send him, a beautiful white camellia. Describe specifically what Jem does when he first sees the flower. What does he seem to be feeling? What evidence at the conclusion of the chapter implies that he now is thinking about Mrs. Dubose in a different way?

### **Chapter Twelve:**

1. Describe Jem and Scout’s visit to Calpurnia’s church. Why is it a good experience for them?
2. How is the theme of racism brought into the chapter through the characters of Helen Robinson and Lula? What evidence in the chapter suggests that Jem and Scout don’t base their opinions of others on race?

### **Chapter Thirteen:**

1. How does Atticus seem to relate to Alexandra? What differences do you see in them even though they are brother and sister?
2. Atticus speaks with Jem and Scout about their being members of the Finch family and then leaves:

“He went to the door and out of the room, shutting the door behind him. He nearly slammed it, but caught himself at the last minute and closed it softly.”

In the context of the scene, what does the passage imply about Atticus and what he might be thinking?

### **Chapter Fourteen:**

1. Contrast how Scout feels about her place in her family with how Dill feels about his place in his family. Discuss what the contrast emphasizes about Dill.
2. How does Dill’s running away relate to the Boo Radley plot? How does bringing these two storylines together further develop the character of Boo Radley?

## **Chapter Fifteen:**

1. Why does Jem defy his father and refuse to leave the jail? What does Jem understand that Scout doesn't realize? What do Jem's actions suggest about him?

2. On the way home after the mob disperses at the jail, Scout is afraid that Atticus will be angry with Jem for having refused to do what Atticus had told him to do, to take Scout and Dill and go home:

“Atticus and Jem were well ahead of us [Scout and Dill], and I assumed that Atticus was giving him hell for not going home, but I was wrong. As they passed under a streetlight, Atticus reached out and massaged Jem's hair, his one gesture of affection.”

What does Atticus's reaching out to stroke Jem's hair imply? What message do you think Atticus is giving his son?

3. Explain how this chapter illustrates Scout's innocence and Jem's growing maturity.

## **Chapter Sixteen:**

1. Do you think Atticus is right to tell Jem and Scout not to hate their neighbors, no matter what happens in regard to Tom Robinson's trial? Why or why not?

2. Why is Atticus being criticized in Maycomb for representing Tom Robinson even though the court assigned Tom's case to him? What does their thinking imply about the judicial system in Maycomb County? Why would Atticus be hated for challenging it?

## **Chapter Seventeen:**

1. Describe several ways Judge Taylor leaves no doubt that he is in control of his courtroom.

2. Describe Atticus's demeanor in the courtroom. How is it a reflection of his personality?

3. Bob Ewell has asked the county to “clear out” the black families who live near him in a small settlement because they devalue his property. Why is the idea that they “devalue” his property ironic?

4. Describe the house and yard where Mayella lives with her father, brothers, and sisters. Why might she have planted and taken such good care of the “brilliant red geraniums” that line the fence? What does the presence of the beautiful flowers suggest about Mayella and her life?

### **Chapter Eighteen:**

1. Of Mayella's sudden emotional outburst and angry sobbing, Scout says,

"Somehow, Atticus had hit her hard in a way that was not clear to me, but it gave him no pleasure to do so."

In what way do you think Mayella has been "hit hard" by Atticus and his questions? Why would he question her in this manner even though he does not enjoy causing her pain and anger?

### **Chapter Nineteen:**

1. Scout thinks that Mayella Ewell is as lonely as Boo Radley. In what ways might Scout be right?

2. Describe how Mr. Gilmer cross-examines Tom. Why does it make Dill cry? What does Dill's reaction to Mr. Gilmer suggest about Dill?

3. Remembering what Atticus and Miss Maudie told Jem and Scout about mockingbirds, do you see any similarity between a mockingbird and Tom Robinson? Explain your thinking.

### **Chapter Twenty:**

1. Dolphus Raymond understands why Dill cried in court as he watched Mr. Gilmer cross-examine Tom Robinson on the witness stand; Raymond believes that such hatred and cruelty won't make Dill cry anymore "when he gets a few years on him." Do you agree? Are children more sensitive to injustice and cruelty than adults? Is racial prejudice learned with age?

2. At the end of his summation, Atticus says to the jury, "In the name of God, do your duty." To himself he appears to say, "In the name of God, believe him." What is Atticus most likely thinking and feeling at this point in Tom's trial?

### **Chapter Twenty-One:**

1. Why is Jem so confident that the jury won't convict Tom Robinson? Why is Atticus noncommittal with Jem in regard to the verdict the jury will deliver? Why does Reverend Sykes tell Jem not to be so sure that Tom will be set free?

2. Describe Jem's behavior as he hears the jury being polled by Judge Taylor. Why would he have such an emotional reaction to the verdict?

3. Describe Reverend Sykes's interactions with Jem and Scout in this chapter. What do they reveal about his character?

4. Consider the conclusion of the chapter. In what ways is it dramatic and powerful? What do Reverend Sykes's words to Scout suggest?

## **Chapter Twenty-Two:**

1. Why does Aunt Alexandra accuse Dill of being “cynical”? What does Dill say to her in response? Is Dill right about telling the truth? Why or why not?

2. In speaking of Maycomb, Miss Maudie tells Jem the following:

We’re the safest folks in the world .... We’re so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we’ve got men like Atticus to go for us.”

How do you interpret Miss Maudie’s meaning? In what ways are the people of Maycomb the “safest folks” instead of the “best folks,” as Jem had once believed?

3. Explain Dill’s contention that when he grows up, he will be a “new kind of clown.” What does it indicate about Dill’s particular struggles and experiences? How does he relate to the adult world?

## **Chapter Twenty-Three:**

1. On what grounds does Atticus consider someone to be “trash”? How does his view differ from Alexandra’s? What do their views reveal about them and their values?

2. Jem has been very disillusioned by the jury’s convicting Tom Robinson, who is obviously innocent. Jem is now aware that people “go out of their way to despise each other.” Explain how Jem’s disillusionment relates to his developing understanding of Boo Radley.

## **Chapter Twenty-Four:**

1. Explain why it is ironic that some of the ladies of the missionary circle are so concerned about the poverty and terrible living conditions of the Mrunas. How does their concern with the Mrunas emphasize their hypocrisy?

## **Chapter Twenty-Five:**

1. Describe Maycomb County’s general response to Tom Robinson’s being shot to death. What does it suggest about this society?

2. Scout comes to the following realization after reading Mr. Underwood’s editorial:

“... Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men’s hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.”

In what way was Tom Robinson’s case tried in “the secret courts of men’s hearts”? Why was Tom a condemned man before his trial even began?

### **Chapter Twenty-Six:**

1. Describe what Jem and Scout’s life in Maycomb is like after Tom Robinson’s trial. How has the trial impacted their relationships with other people and with each other?
2. Even though Scout can’t understand it, she recognizes her teacher’s hypocrisy. Why is Miss Gates’s explanation of democracy and her defense of the Jews being persecuted by Hitler both so ironic? Is Miss Gates aware of the irony?
3. Why does Jem become furious when Scout mentions an event that occurred at the courthouse after Tom Robinson’s trial? What does Jem’s angry response imply? What is he dealing with emotionally that Scout doesn’t understand?

### **Chapter Twenty-Seven:**

1. The chapter ends with Jem agreeing to take Scout to the Halloween pageant. Scout says, “Thus began our longest journey together.” What other “journeys” have Jem and Scout made together in the past? What is the implication of this journey’s being their “longest”?

### **Chapter Twenty-Eight:**

1. Describe Jem’s and Scout’s injuries. What do Atticus, Aunt Alexandra, and Dr. Reynolds do to help and comfort Jem and Scout after they have been injured by an attacker?

### **Chapter Twenty-Nine:**

1. Contrast Atticus’s opinion of Bob Ewell with Heck Tate’s assessment of Ewell. Who do you think is right in his judgment of Ewell—Atticus or Heck? Why?
2. Describe how Lee brings together in this chapter three plots in the novel: Jem and Scout’s growing up, Tom Robinson’s tragedy, and the mystery of Boo Radley’s character.

### **Chapter Thirty:**

1. Why does Heck Tate insist that Bob Ewell died when he fell on his own knife? Whom is the sheriff trying to protect? What is he trying to prevent? Is Sheriff Tate right to alter the facts of how Ewell died? Why or why not?
2. Heck Tate and Atticus argue at length about how the sheriff will proceed in regard to Bob Ewell's death. Describe how Heck and Atticus are each standing on principle during their argument.
3. What evidence makes it clear that Scout understands why the sheriff will say that Ewell fell on his own knife even though it's not true? How does it relate to the novel's mockingbird motif?

### **Chapter Thirty-One:**

1. In what ways does Scout show sensitivity, understanding, and respect for Boo Radley? In what ways do you think she has grown up since the beginning of the novel?
2. As the novel ends, Atticus goes into Jem's bedroom to sit with him while Jem sleeps. Scout says of Atticus, "He would be there all night, and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning." Explain how this last line in the novel illustrates several essential traits in Atticus's character.