*To Kill a Mockingbird*

Reading Questions

**Chapters 1-3**

1. What does it mean to “act responsibly”? Explain what a person needs to do in order to “act responsibly” in the 1930s in Maycomb, Alabama?
2. What are some essential family values and family history that have shaped the people in this community?
3. What behaviors are acceptable in the Maycomb community? What behaviors are not acceptable in the community?
4. Which characters inform Scout about proper behavior? How do these characters tell her to act?
5. What is Walter Cunningham like? What does his behavior during lunch suggest about his home life?
6. Describe Miss Caroline’s interactions with Burris Ewell. What does this suggest about Miss Caroline? What does this suggest about the Ewells?
7. What do you think of the way Atticus treats Walter?
8. Does Scout learn anything from Walter’s visit? What do you think this is?
9. Atticus says that you never really understand a person “until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” What does this mean? What does this lesson suggest about Atticus? Is it an easy thing for Scout to learn?

**Chapter 4**

1. What does Scout think of the educational system she is being brought up in? What do her opinions reveal about her character?
2. What risky behavior do Scout and Jem engage in?
3. Why do the children make Boo Radley’s story into a game?
4. How does Atticus react to the game? What does his reaction tell us about his character?
5. Identify at least 2 slang words/phrases appropriate to the 1930s in Maycomb, Alabama. Translate these words/phrases into today’s language.

**Chapter 5**

1. Describe the relationship between Dill and Scout. Include how he treats her and how she reacts to his treatment. How is this treatment typical and atypical (not normal) of this setting?
2. What kind of person is Miss Maudie Atkinson? How typical is she of Maycomb’s women? What do the children think of her?
3. What reasons does Atticus give for the children not to play the Boo Radley game? Do you think he is right? Why?

**Chapter 6**

1. What kind of risky activity do Scout, Jem, and Dill engage in? Explain their cover-up (how they avoid being caught).
2. Who is blamed for trespassing on the Radley place? What does this blame reveal about the setting (time and place) of the novel?
3. What causes fear in the hearts of Scout and Jem?

**Chapter 7**

1. Does Jem still fear the gifts in the tree? Give reasons for your answer.
2. When the children plan to send a letter to the person who leaves the gifts, they are prevented. How does this happen? Who does it, and why might he do so?
3. Can you find any evidence that Jem is more mature and wise (intelligence and awareness that comes with age/experience) than Scout? Provide at least one example that supports your answer.

**Chapter 8**

1. Why is Jem’s snowman creation so unacceptable to both Atticus and Miss Maudie?
2. What does the fire at Miss Maudie’s house reveal about the people living in Alabama in the 1930s?
3. Besides Atticus, identify a new character who supports Jem and Scout. Provide evidence to support this character’s benevolent spirit.

**Chapter 9**

1. Why does Atticus feel he should defend Tom Robinson? Is it usual for (white) lawyers to do their best for black clients in Alabama during this time period?
2. Scout and Jem have “mixed feelings” about Christmas. What are these feelings and why do they feel this way?
3. Uncle Jack Finch tells Scout that she is growing out of her pants. What does this mean and why might he say it?
4. Describe Aunt Alexandra and explain her negative feelings about Scout. How does Aunt Alexandra perpetuate (promote and continue) stereotypes?
5. What do you think Atticus is trying to teach his children? Why?

**Chapter 10**

1. In this chapter, Atticus tells his children that “it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee 119). What reason does he give for saying this?
2. What does the shooting of Tim Johnson reveal about Heck Tate and Atticus? How does Atticus feel about how well he can shoot?

**Chapter 11**

1. How does Atticus advise Jem to react to Mrs. Dubose’s taunts?
2. What kind of person is Mrs. Dubose, and how do you know?
3. What request does Mrs. Dubose make of Jem? What does Mrs. Dubose gain from this “punishment” to Jem? What does Jem gain?
4. What does Atticus teach Jem and Scout about understanding antagonizing and belittling language and people like Mrs. Dubose?

**Chapter 12**

1. Briefly explain Jem’s and Scout’s visit to Calpurnia’s church. What do people think/feel about them? How do Jem and Scout feel about this experience?
2. What new things do Scout and Jem learn at this church about how the black people live?
3. Describe Calpurnia’s education and her son’s education—refer to their literacy (ability to read and write).
4. Explain why Calpurnia speaks differently in the Finch household, and among her neighbors at church. How is language different in a workplace and in a social setting and/or around family?

**Chapter 13**

1. Why does Aunt Alexandra come to stay with Atticus and his family? What is she like?
2. Alexandra thinks Scout is “dull” (not clever). Why does she think this, and is she right?
3. How does Aunt Alexandra involve herself in Maycomb’s social life?
4. What are Aunt Alexandra’s ideas about breeding and family? Why does Atticus tell Jem and Scout to forget this? Who do you think is right?

**Chapter 14**

1. Who does Scout find hiding under her bed? Why is this person hiding in the Finch home?
2. Why is Jem considered a “traitor”? How can he also be seen as a maturing, more responsible young man?

**Chapter 15**

1. Describe Jem’s behavior when he confronts Atticus at the jailhouse and also when he meets a mob of hostile men.
2. Describe Scout’s behavior during the same scene.

**Chapter 16**

1. Describe how the Maycomb people act at the courthouse square when they arrive to view the trial of Tom Robinson.
2. Where do Jem, Scout, and Dill sit in the courthouse? Why is this significant?

**Chapter 17**

1. Describe Tom Robinson’s alleged crime, as told by Bob Ewell and Heck Tate.
2. What evidence does Atticus reveal about Bob Ewell that may find him guilty of Tom Robinson’s alleged crime?
3. What kind of person is Bob Ewell, and how do you know?

**Chapter 18**

1. Describe how Mayella acts on the witness stand. What is your opinion of her? Explain.
2. Compare and contrast Mayella and her father.
3. How does Mayella make her father look bad on the witness stand? Why does this help Tom Robinson’s case?

**Chapter 19**

1. How does Tom Robinson’s testimony help his case? How does it hurt his case?

**Chapter 20**

1. How does Atticus’s closing statement help his defendant, Tom Robinson? How does his closing statement also hurt Tom?
2. How do you think the jury will react to Atticus’s closing statement? Explain your reasoning.

**Chapter 21**

1. Who believes that Tom Robinson has a chance of being set free? Why do they believe this?
2. Why do Reverent Sykes and the rest of the African American spectators stand for Atticus, even after his defendant Tom was found guilty?

**Chapter 22**

1. Explain how Atticus’s character has influenced Jem. Identify evidence that supports Jem’s reaction to the verdict of the trial.
2. How do the children (Jem, Scout, Dill) deal with the outcome of the trial? What do their coping mechanisms reveal about each of them?
3. How do the adults deal with the outcome of the trial? What do their reactions and comments reveal about who they each are as people?

**Chapter 23**

1. How did Bob Ewell confront Atticus? How did Atticus react? What does this tell you about the kind of person that Atticus is?
2. What does “circumstantial evidence” mean in terms of Tom’s trial?
3. Why don’t Maycomb citizens sit on juries in their town?
4. Why does Scout want to befriend Walter Cunningham now, after learning more about the inner workings of the trial?
5. Why does Aunt Alexandra accept that the Cunninghams may be good but are not “our kind of folks”? Do you think that people should mix only with others of the same social class and/or race?

**Chapter 24**

1. How does Scout feel about the women and their discussions in this chapter? How do they treat Scout?
2. What can you learn from the women of Maycomb about proper and improper behavior?
3. Why did Tom try to escape from prison?
4. Explain briefly how Tom was killed.

**Chapter 25**

1. How is the meaning of the title revealed in this chapter?
2. Why is Tom’s death considered “typical” in Maycomb?
3. How does Mr. Underwood feel about Tom’s death? Why did the author choose to include Mr. Underwood’s opinions about Tom’s death?
4. Why is the court of public opinion sometimes more influential than the court of law? Refer to the novel and an example in real life.

**Chapter 26**

1. Why is it hypocritical of Miss Gates to teach a lesson on Hitler’s persecution of the Jews?
2. What is Harper Lee’s purpose in writing this chapter? Think about the messages she wants to send her readers.

**Chapter 27**

1. Identify three threats that Bob Ewell allegedly makes against some Maycomb townspeople.
2. Why do you believe the author, Harper Lee, included the Halloween story in her novel? Describe any significance you believe it has.

**Chapter 28**

1. Identify at least two signs that foreshadow trouble ahead.
2. Describe the significant event in this chapter that forever changes Jem and Scout.

**Chapter 29**

1. Who is the stranger standing in the corner of Jem’s room? Why might he be there?
2. Why is Scout’s ham costume significant to the story?
3. Who is responsible for this most recent crime? How do you know?

**Chapter 30**

1. Why does Heck Tate insist that Bob Ewell’s death was self-inflicted? In what way is this partly true?

**Chapter 31**

1. Comment on the way Scout summarizes earlier events and characters to show their significance. Refer to events and characters that include Boo Radley, Jem, Atticus, and the neighborhood as a whole. Why do you think the author chose to end her novel this way?