

To Kill a Mockingbird Analysis Questions

1. Why does the adult Scout begin her narrative with Jem's broken arm and a brief family history?
2. Do you think that the adult Jean Louise telling the story through Scout's eyes may have added any embellishments to the story? (Reliable versus unreliable narrator)
3. Why does Atticus choose not to directly reveal to his children that Judge Taylor appointed him to Tom's case? How does his decision affect Scout's perception of her father?
4. Compare and contrast the relationship between Jem and Scout with the relationship between Atticus and Aunt Alexandra.
5. How does the town of Maycomb function as a character with its own personality, rather than merely as a backdrop for the novel's events?
6. How does Boo Radley's past history of violence foreshadow his method of protecting Jem and Scout? Does this aggression make him more, or less of a sympathetic character?
7. Scout has strong feelings about her teachers Ms. Caroline and Ms. Gates. What causes those feelings, and what do they show the reader about Scout's view on education and society?
8. The novel takes place during the Great Depression. How do class divisions and family quarrels highlight racial tensions in Maycomb?
9. Atticus believes that to understand life from someone else's perspective, we must "walk in his or her shoes." From what other perspectives does Scout see her fellow townspeople?
10. What does Jem learn when Atticus forces him to read to Mrs. Dubose as a punishment? Why does the lawyer regard this woman as the "bravest person" he ever knew?
11. Since their mother is dead, several women - Calpurnia, Miss Maudie, and Aunt Alexandra - function as mother figures to Scout and Jem. Discuss the ways these three women influence Scout's growing understanding of what it means to be a Southern "lady."
12. Why does Atticus Finch risk his reputation, his friendships, and his career to take Tom Robinson's case? Do you think he risks too much by putting his children in harm's way?
13. Are there any characters whose beliefs or actions are impressive or shocking? Give details.
14. Adult readers may focus so much on the novel's politics that they may neglect the coming-of-age story. What does Scout learn, and how does she change in the course of the narrative?
15. Tom Robinson was killed for trying to escape from jail. What is another possibility? Explain.
16. Suppose that Mayella had admitted that she was lying when she testified against Tom. Would the outcome have been different?
17. Calpurnia and Dolphus Raymond both live dual lives. Explain what this tells the reader about the culture of the time.
18. Why are Jem and Scout attacked? What does it tell the reader about the attacker?
19. Who is (are) the mockingbird(s) of the story? Is there only one? Explain.
20. *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been challenged repeatedly by the political left and right, who have sought to remove it from libraries for its portrayal of conflict between children and

adults; ungrammatical speech; references to sex, the supernatural, and witchcraft; and unfavorable presentation of blacks. Is this a book that should be banned from schools and libraries for any of those, or other reasons? Explain.

21. One of the chief criticisms of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is that the two central storylines – Scout, Jem, and Dill’s fascination with Boo Radley and the trial between Mayella Ewell and Tom Robinson – are not sufficiently connected in the novel. Do you think that Lee is successful in incorporating these different stories?
22. In the end, Heck Tate decides not to disclose what happened after the pageant. Was that surprising? Explain.
23. Missing
24. What is the evidence that suggests Bob Ewell is actually the person who abused Mayella?
25. Atticus says the jury will be back in a minute. However, the jury takes quite a long amount of time to make a decision. What does that tell the audience about what possibly happened in the jury room? Explain.
26. How important is Part 1 in the telling of this story? Is it necessary to the development of the plot, or does it make the story less interesting?
27. Why does the entire black community in the balconies stand up for Atticus as he leaves the courthouse?
28. What is the importance (to his children, and the readers) of giving background information on Atticus being one-shot-Finch?
29. How does Tom Robinson's trial affect Jem? How does it affect Scout?
30. What might have been Tom and Mayella's relationship prior to the case? Why would Mayella accuse Tom of rape?
31. Why does Bob Ewell hold a grudge against Atticus even though he won the case?
32. At the end of chapter 23, what is Jem's theory about why Boo Radley has never left his home? Do you agree? Explain.