

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

by Harper Lee



THE AUTHOR

Nelle Harper Lee (b.1926) was born in Monroeville, Alabama, a town very much like the fictional Maycomb in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Her father, like Atticus Finch, was a lawyer; in fact, Finch was her mother's maiden name. She started, but never completed, both college and law school, and in both cases did some writing for campus publications. After moving to New York, she began to write short stories and hired an agent. In 1957, she finished the first draft of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which was published in 1960. Despite the author's own low expectations for her work, it became a best-seller and won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction the next year. After completing the novel, she traveled with childhood friend Truman Capote (the model for Dill) to Holcomb, Kansas to help with research for what was to become Capote's novel *In Cold Blood*. Their experiences together became the subject of two movies, *Capote* (2005) and *Infamous* (2006). Lee was also the model for the character of Idabell Thompkins in Capote's first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (some have tried to argue that Capote was the real author of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, but both principals have denied it). Since the publication of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Lee has retired from public life. She has written only a few short pieces, made few public appearances, and refuses to give speeches. When asked why she did not write another novel, Lee responded, "When you're at the top, there's only one way to go." She continues to divide her time between New York and her birthplace in Monroeville.

To Kill A Mockingbird, her only novel, is in many ways autobiographical. Not only is Maycomb like her home town of Monroeville and Atticus a lawyer like her father, but Lee herself was a tomboy much like Scout. Neighbor Truman Capote served as a model for Dill, and the neighborhood did contain a recluse who left things in knotholes in a tree like Boo Radley. Lee's time spent at law school would have equipped her to understand the legal ins and outs of the case at the center of the novel; furthermore, a celebrated case in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931, when Lee was five, involved nine black men who were accused of raping two white women, and were convicted based on highly dubious testimony. The film version of *To Kill A Mockingbird* in 1962 won Academy Awards for best actor and best screenplay; in the course of production, Lee became friends with Gregory Peck, who played Atticus Finch - one of his grandsons was named "Harper" after her. In 1999, the Library Journal conducted a poll that named *To Kill A Mockingbird* "Best Novel of the Century."

PLOT SUMMARY

The story is narrated by Scout, a young girl who is not quite six years old when the tale begins. She lives in rural Maycomb, Alabama during the Depression. She has a brother, Jem, who is four years her senior; they are the children of Atticus Finch, a widowed lawyer. Scout is precocious, having learned how to read at her father's knee. After telling the readers a little bit about the history of her family and her town, she describes the first time their friend Dill came to visit; he stayed for the summer with his aunt, the Finches' next-door neighbor. Dill is short, curious, and seemingly afraid of nothing. He dares Jem to run up and touch the Radley house - the home of Boo Radley, who is widely believed to be some kind of monster. The family had always been stand-offish, and Boo is a recluse whom few have ever seen. Jem takes the dare, and runs up and touches the house, after which Scout sees a tiny movement behind one of the shutters.

The next fall Scout goes to school for the first time. She immediately gets herself into trouble with the new teacher, Miss Caroline Fisher, because she can already read and write cursive; Miss Caroline insists that she tell her father to stop teaching her to read because he is doing it all wrong, and she wants to start over and teach her the right way (Miss Caroline has her head full of the newest educational theories, focusing on group instruction and letting the children learn whatever they please). When Walter Cunningham, a child from a poor family, has no lunch, Miss Caroline tries to give him lunch money, but Scout tells her that Walter would never accept it because his family has no money to repay her; they even pay the local doctor with crops from their field or wood for the fireplace. Miss Caroline promptly sends Scout to the corner for being a smart-aleck. After recess, Jem invites Walter home with them for lunch, and he accepts, though Scout is rude to him. That afternoon, Miss Caroline screams when she sees a louse in the hair of one of her students, Burris Ewell. The students inform her that Burris comes from the meanest family in town, and that they only send him to school on the first day each year; after that, the truant officer leaves them alone. He is in first grade for the third time.

The year passes, and Scout finds school horribly boring - she learns little and is far ahead of the other students. One day while returning from school she sees a piece of tinfoil in the knothole of a big tree on the Radley property. She takes it out and finds two pieces of chewing gum inside. On the last day of school, she finds another package in the knothole, this time containing two Indian-head pennies. Once Dill arrives, the three begin to play and enjoy the summer. One day they take turns riding inside an old tire. When Scout takes her turn, the boys push the tire so hard that it runs right into the porch of the Radley house. The three children then make up a new game - "Boo Radley." Scout plays Mrs. Radley, Jem plays Boo, and Dill plays whatever other parts are needed. One day while they are playing, Atticus sees what they are doing and tells them gently not to mock their neighbor. Suddenly they hear laughing coming from inside the Radley house. As the summer passes, Jem and Dill spend more time together and often exclude Scout. She spends much of her time with Miss Maudie Atkinson, the widow lady who lives next door. She is kind but sharp-tongued, and often bakes cakes for the children. One day Jem and Dill decide to write a note to Boo Radley asking him to come outside and talk sometime. The plan is to put the note on the end of a long pole and push it through a broken shutter into the Radley house. Atticus catches them in the attempt, however, and tells them to leave the man alone, so the letter is never delivered. On Dill's final night in Maycomb that summer, however, the children decide to sneak over and take a peek in Boo Radley's window. Boo's brother Nathan sees something on his back porch and fires his shotgun in warning. In trying to escape, Jem loses

his pants on the barbed-wire fence. The firing of the shotgun draws a crowd, and when Atticus asks Jem what happened to his pants, Dill explains that he lost them playing strip poker. Dill's aunt is furious at the very thought of gambling, but Atticus calms her down. Later that night, Jem returns to the Radley house and retrieves his pants, only to find that the holes in them have been roughly mended and that they were left hanging neatly over the fence.

School soon starts again, and Scout finds it just as boring as it had been the year before. Jem assures her that she won't really learn anything until sixth grade, which he appears to be enjoying. They continue to find small things in the knothole of the Radleys' tree, including two small carved soap figures intended to represent them. Soon, however, Nathan Radley closes up the knothole with cement to keep the tree from dying. That winter, Mrs. Radley dies, and the weather is unusually harsh - in fact, it snows for the first time in almost fifty years. Jem and Scout immediately try to build a snowman, but wind up building a mud-man coated with whatever little bit of snow they can gather instead. That night, Miss Maudie's house burns down. While the children are shivering in front of the Radley home as they watch the men try to put out the fire, Scout suddenly realizes that she has a blanket around her shoulders. Atticus later tells her that, unseen by her, Boo had put it over her.

Shortly before Christmas, Scout nearly gets into a fight with a boy at school who calls Atticus a "nigger-lover" for defending a black man in court. Atticus tells Scout not to fight when people say unkind things, but simply to walk away, and Scout succeeds in doing so until they have their family get-together at Christmas. There, her cousin Francis starts the same line of calumny, and Scout finally cracks and punches him in the mouth. She is punished for her behavior, but her Uncle Jack and Atticus realize that she is going to have to learn to tolerate much worse given the nature of the case in which Atticus is involved. As the winter drags on, Scout gets more and more frustrated with being unable to fight back against those who torment her, and begins to think negative thoughts about Atticus, who is older than the other fathers and doesn't do anything but sit in his office all day and read all night. She gets quite a surprise, however, when a mad dog comes down the street one day, the sheriff hands Atticus his gun, and the lawyer fells the dog with one shot. Later, Miss Maudie tells the children that their father had once been the best shot in the county, but hadn't picked up a rifle for thirty years because he abhorred unnecessary violence. That spring, the children have increasingly unpleasant encounters with an elderly neighbor, Mrs. Dubose, who yells at them and insults their father at every opportunity. One day Jem and Scout go to town, and Jem uses his birthday money to buy himself a locomotive and Scout a baton. On the way home, Mrs. Dubose says terrible things about Atticus, and Jem takes the baton and cuts down all her camellias. As punishment, he has to read to her every day after school for over a month. Only after she dies does Atticus tell the children that she was addicted to medical morphine but was determined to break her addiction before she died, and was using the reading to distract her from the pain.

The summer after Scout's second grade year does not have a promising start. Jem is now twelve, and wants nothing to do with his little sister. Worse yet, Dill writes and says that his mother has remarried and he will not be coming that summer. When Atticus is called away for a special session of the state legislature, Calpurnia takes charge of the children. One Sunday she takes them to church with her, and they experience Negro worship for the first time. They find that in many ways their churches are the same, except the black worshipers have no hymn books because most of them can't read. During the service, they dedicate the offering to Helen Robinson, Tom's wife, who must stay home to watch her three children with Tom in jail (besides,

no one will hire her). Calpurnia tells Jem and Scout that Tom has been accused of raping a white woman - Bob Ewell's white-trash daughter Mayella. That day, Atticus' sister Alexandra comes to live with them. She is strict, stern, and disapproving, but generally leaves the children to their own devices; Atticus is mostly concerned that they have someone available while he is at work during the day. Calpurnia had invited the children to visit her home sometime, but when Scout asks permission to do so, Alexandra immediately refuses before Atticus can speak. Scout leaves the room while the two quarrel, and when she and Jem go upstairs they get into a fight because Jem tries to boss her around. When she goes to bed she steps on something soft in the dark and calls for Jem, who finds Dill hiding under her bed - he had run away from home. After extended negotiations, Dill is allowed to stay with his Aunt Rachel.

One night, a group of men appear at the Finch house and express concern that trouble might occur because Tom Robinson was being moved to the Maycomb jail. Atticus assured them that they had nothing to worry about, but the next night he left the house without explanation. The children decided to see what was going on and found him sitting in a chair outside the jail reading a newspaper by the light of a dangling electric fixture. Soon some strange men drive up and try to get Atticus to move - their obvious intent is to take Tom from the jail and lynch him. Atticus refuses to budge, and suddenly Scout runs to him, followed by the boys. She tries to make conversation with the only man in the crowd she knows, Walter Cunningham, the father of one of her classmates. Surprisingly, he responds to her attempts at kindness and tells the men to go home, which they do. Only then does Atticus discover that Mr. Underwood, the editor of the *Maycomb Tribune*, had him covered with his shotgun from the window of his office in case any trouble should break out.

The next morning the trial begins, and the children go down to the courthouse after lunch, but find that even the standing room is occupied. They finally find seats in the balcony with the Negroes. Heck Tate is the first to testify, and he describes the scene he saw when summoned to the Ewell shack - Mayella lying on the floor badly beaten. He was told that she had been beaten and raped by Tom Robinson. Atticus then established the fact that her bruises had been on the right side of her face, and that no doctor had been called to attend to her. When Bob Ewell testifies, he says that he heard his daughter screaming and ran inside to find Tom on top of her, raping her; he ran out the door before her father could get inside. In the course of cross-examination, Atticus establishes the fact that Bob Ewell is left-handed. Mayella then comes to the stand and repeats her father's version of the story, adding that she had asked Tom to break up a chiffarobe for her, and that he had subsequently attacked her. When Atticus asks Tom to stand up, the jury can see that his left hand is shriveled and useless. Tom then takes the stand and tells his side of the story - Mayella had asked him to break up the chiffarobe months earlier, then regularly asked him to come in and help her with small jobs. On the day in question, she had asked him to come inside and fix a door, but he found that the door was not broken. She then grabbed him and kissed him. As he tried to pull away, her father had seen them through the window and Tom had run away. As he fled, he heard Bob Ewell threaten Mayella and heard her scream. The obvious conclusion was that Bob had beaten his daughter. During the cross-examination by Mr. Gilmer, the prosecutor, Scout and Dill go outside because Dill is feeling sick. There they meet Dolphus Raymond, a man despised by the community because he married a black woman. He is also thought to be a drunk, but he reveals his secret to Scout and Dill - the bottle in his paper sack contains Coca-Cola, not whiskey. When they return to the courtroom, Atticus is giving his closing summation - a simple appeal to truth without prejudice. While the

jury is out the children go home for dinner, and they are shocked when they return to the court and find that the jury has found Tom guilty and sentenced him to death.

The next morning the Finches awake to find piles of food on their back porch, left by grateful members of the black community. Atticus tells Calpurnia to express their thanks, but to say that, given the hard times, nothing like that should ever be done again. Later that day, the children overhear a conversation among the neighbors and discover that Bob Ewell had spit tobacco juice in Atticus' face and threatened to kill him. The children try to convince Atticus to arm himself, but he refuses, noting that people like Ewell were always more talk than action, and that by taking a little tobacco juice in the face he might have saved Mayella from another beating. In conversation with Atticus about the case, the children discover that one of the Cunninghams - the same group that tried to break into the jail and kill Tom earlier - had kept the jury from making a quick decision by arguing for a not-guilty verdict, apparently because of the respect they had gained for Atticus and his stand outside the jail. Atticus is hopeful that the verdict can be overturned on appeal.

On the last day before Dill was to return home at the end of the summer, Aunt Alexandra hosts her missionary circle. Jem is off teaching Dill to swim, and Scout avoids the party as long as possible, but finally she is called to sit with the women, but is infuriated by the racist conversation she hears from these supposedly-Christian ladies. The party is interrupted by Atticus' unexpected arrival in the middle of the afternoon. He brings the news that Tom Robinson is dead - he made a break to escape from the prison farm and was shot in the back as he tried to climb the fence with his one good arm. Most people seem not to care in the least. When school starts, Scout is now in third grade and Jem is in seventh, so he is in the high school, a completely different building. Scout begins once more to think about Boo Radley. Meanwhile, talk around town is all about Hitler and the horrible things he is doing to the Jews, but Scout can't understand why people don't see that their treatment of Negroes is every bit as bad.

That fall, a few peculiar things occur - Bob Ewell gets a job with the WPA and is fired almost immediately for laziness, then goes back to collecting welfare; Judge Taylor's house is broken into at night, but the Judge scares the intruder off; and Helen Robinson, after being hired by Tom's former employer so she can support her children, is briefly stalked by Bob Ewell. That Halloween, the town holds a celebration for the children at the school. Scout is involved in a small pageant displaying the agricultural products of the county - she plays a ham. She can hardly move in her costume, so Jem walks her to the school in the dark. On the way, they are surprised by Cecil Jacobs, a friend of theirs, who jumps out and scares them. The pageant comes off reasonably well except that Scout makes a late entrance in her ham costume, but everyone has a good time. On the way home, the children hear someone following them. At first they think it is Cecil again, but whoever it is stops when they stop, then suddenly runs toward them and attacks them. Jem tries to fight him off, but the assailant, Bob Ewell, breaks Jem's arm and tries to kill the children with a switchblade. Suddenly he falls to the ground dead - Boo Radley has come out of his house and stabs him through the heart with a kitchen knife. He then carries the unconscious Jem back to Atticus' house, with Scout tagging along behind. When Sheriff Tate checks out the crime scene, he insists that Ewell fell on his own knife in the struggle. Atticus maintains that Jem had killed him, but Tate is insistent - both, in fact, want to protect Boo Radley, whom they realize did the deed. Scout shyly makes friends with Arthur (Boo's real name), but respects his privacy and soon walks him back to his house. She never sees him again.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Atticus Finch - A small-town lawyer, widowed father of Jem and Scout, he defends Tom Robinson, a black man, on a false charge of raping a white woman.
- Jean Louise Finch (Scout) - The narrator of the story, a young girl growing up in rural Maycomb, Alabama in the time of the Depression.
- Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) - Scout's brother, four years her senior.
- Charles Baker Harris (Dill) - Friend of Jem and Scout, he visits every summer when his parents send him to visit his aunt, their neighbor. The character is modeled on Lee's childhood friend Truman Capote.
- Calpurnia - The Finches' housekeeper, and black woman who cooks, takes care of the house, and to a large extent raises the children.
- Arthur Radley (Boo) - A reclusive neighbor of the Finches, he is in his thirties and is widely believed by most in the neighborhood to be a horrible monster. He saves the lives of Jem and Scout when they are attacked by Bob Ewell, killing Ewell in the process.
- Nathan Radley - Boo's brother, who cares for him.
- Caroline Fisher - Scout's first-grade teacher, she is new and is full of the latest theories, but has little real understanding of the children she is trying to teach.
- Maudie Atkinson - A neighbor of the Finches, a kindly but sharp-tongued widow who grew up with Atticus and his brother; she cannot tolerate injustice.
- Stephanie Crawford - An old gossip who is a neighbor of the Finches, she has no time for blacks.
- Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose - An elderly terminally-ill neighbor of the Finches, she is always yelling at and nagging the children. When she insults Atticus for defending a Negro, Jem cuts down her camellias.
- Walter Cunningham - The father of one of Scout's classmates, his family is poor; he leads a mob trying to lynch Tom Robinson, but after being appealed to by Scout, he disperses the mob.
- Reverend Sykes - The pastor of the black church attended by Calpurnia and the Robinsons.
- Braxton Underwood - The owner and editor of the *Maycomb Tribune*, and a supporter of Atticus despite the fact that he hates Negroes.

- Dolphus Raymond - A man with a black wife and mixed-race children who is generally despised in Maycomb, he is thought to be a drunk but really isn't.
- Link Deas - Tom Robinson's employer, he vouches for Tom's character during the trial and is ejected for his pains.
- Heck Tate - The sheriff of Maycomb County.
- Judge John Taylor - The town judge and presiding officer in the Robinson rape case.
- Mr. Gilmer - The prosecuting attorney in the Robinson rape case.
- Jack Finch - Atticus' brother, a doctor, the only one of their relatives the children can comfortably tolerate.
- Aunt Alexandra - Atticus' sister who comes to live with them when there appears to be trouble on the horizon, she loves and defends her brother and the children despite her stern exterior.
- Tom Robinson - A young black man falsely accused of raping a white woman, he is killed trying to escape from prison camp after being unjustly convicted.
- Helen Robinson - Tom's young wife, mother of his three children.
- Bob Ewell - A member of the white-trash Ewell clan and father of the alleged rape victim, he tries to kill Jem and Scout at the end of the story.
- Mayella Ewell - The girl supposedly raped by Tom Robinson, she was really beaten by her father for trying to kiss Tom.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow.” (Scout, ch.1, p.9)

“It began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.” (Scout, ch.1, p.9)

“Dill was becoming something of a trial anyway, following Jem about. He had asked me earlier in the summer to marry him, then he promptly forgot about it. He staked me out, marked as his property, said I was the only girl he would ever love, then he neglected me. I beat him up twice but it did no good, he only grew closer to Jem.” (Scout, ch.5, p.48)

“Thing is, foot-washers think women are a sin by definition. They take the Bible literally, you know.” (Miss Maudie, ch.5, p.52)

“Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win.” (Atticus, ch.9, p.84)

“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.” (Miss Maudie, ch.10, p.98)

“People in their right minds never take pride in their talents.” (Miss Maudie, ch.10, p.107)

“The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” (Atticus, ch.11, p.114)

“Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father’s passin’.” (Reverend Sykes, ch.21, p.224)

“We’re so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we’ve got men like Atticus to go for us.” (Miss Maudie, ch.22, p.228)

“As you grow older, you’ll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don’t you forget it - whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash.” (Atticus, ch.23, p.233)

“Naw, Jem, I think there’s just one kind of folks. Folks.” (Scout, ch.23, p.240)

“Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it: we had given him nothing, and it made me sad.” (Scout, ch.31, p.293)

“Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.” (Scout, ch.31, p.294)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. One of the notable characteristics of Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird* is the voice in which it is written - that of a young girl who ages from not quite six to not quite nine over the course of the story. Assess the credibility of Scout’s narrative voice. Can you believe that these are the thoughts and words of a little girl? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.

2. In Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Scout Finch describes her experiences, thoughts, and feelings as a young girl, but the narrator is obviously writing down these observations from the standpoint of someone much older. How is the adult Jean Louise different from Scout as a child? What characteristics distinguish the narrative voice of the young child from that of the adult woman? How do these differences help to shape the narrative?
3. By choosing to focus her novel on children, Harper Lee created an opportunity for obvious growth and change over the course of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Choose one of the three children who are central to the story - Scout, Jem, or Dill - and discuss how and why the character changes over the course of the novel, and why those changes are important in developing the novel's central themes.
4. Discuss the view of education presented in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Focus especially on the contrast between the education Scout and Jem receive at home and that they receive in the local public school. Be sure to use specific incidents and quotations to support your conclusions.
5. Discuss the role of forgiveness in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Pay attention in particular to the attitudes expressed by Atticus, both in his instructions to his children and in his own behavior. Assess this view of forgiveness in the light of Scripture.
6. Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* speaks out clearly and forcefully against racism, and became popular in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, which had just begun when the book was published in 1960. Yet the book has been banned in some places for its use of racist language. Discuss the legitimacy of such censorship. Do you believe the book should be kept from children because of the language it uses to describe black people? Why or why not? Be sure to support your arguments with quotations from the book (though you need not include the offensive words).
7. Discuss the view of human nature portrayed in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Does the author picture man as basically good, basically evil, or a combination of the two? Support your conclusion with details from the story, and assess the author's understanding of human nature from Scripture.
8. The South pictured in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* is one of rigid social-class stratification. Scout, in her innocence, can't understand why she is not permitted to play with certain other children or visit certain people's homes. To what extent does the novel criticize, and to what extent does it accept such social distinctions? Support your conclusions with specifics from the story.

9. What is the significance of the title of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*? In chapter ten, Miss Maudie says, "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." Later, Tom Robinson and Boo Radley are both compared to mockingbirds. What does the mockingbird signify? How does it fit the characters who are associated with it, and how does it help to convey the central ideas of the book?
10. In some ways Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* is a coming-of-age tale. Discuss the ways in which the narrator, Scout, comes of age during the three-year period described in the story. In what ways does the voice of the child grow closer to that of the adult whose reminiscences the story presumably contains? In what ways does Scout still remain a child at the ripe old age of almost nine, and in what ways has she become much more adult?
11. Discuss the ways in which the Finch children's perceptions of other people change over the course of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Choose three people from the story and explain how Scout and Jem come to understand them more fully by the end of the novel. Relate these changes in perception to the overall themes of the book.
12. In contrast to the hypocrisy of many of the characters in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch is a man who practices what he preaches. Describe three incidents in the story that show this to be true, and explain how they contribute to the overall themes of the narrative.
13. Part of growing up involves learning to see the world in shades of gray rather than in simple black and white. Discuss how Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* illustrates this aspect of maturation in the lives of the Finch children. Consider also the extent to which such a moral outlook is biblical. From a biblical standpoint, should everything be viewed as black and white, or ought one learn to see legitimate shades of gray? Support your answer with details from the novel.
14. In Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, to what extent does the author make use of stereotypes? Consider portrayals relating to race, class, and gender when answering the question, and support your answers with specifics from the novel.
15. Discuss the way in which the black community in Maycomb is portrayed in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The author clearly works very hard to see both good and evil in the various social groupings of the white community, from Atticus and his neighbors to the poor farmers like the Cunninghams and even the "white trash" represented by the Ewell family. Does she do the same for the black community, or does she present them as one-dimensional stereotypes, albeit positive ones? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.

16. Evaluate the character of Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. As an example to the community and a role model to his children, Atticus serves as the moral center of the story and the vehicle used to communicate the author's values. Is he too good to be true? Would he serve as a better example if he had faults and weaknesses to overcome, or do his idiosyncrasies serve as sufficiently humanizing devices to allow the reader to identify with him?
17. Discuss the relationship between Scout and Jem in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Does their behavior toward one another ring true? Pay particular attention to the variety of ways in which they interact with one another over the course of the novel. How do these different forms of interaction contribute to the formation of well-rounded characters in the mind of the reader?
18. Discuss the importance of setting in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. What different aspects of the South aside from the overt racism left over from the time of slavery help shape the story and its characters? Do these characteristics of Southern life make the story less relevant to people from other places? Why or why not?
19. Discuss the importance of setting in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. In what way does the town of Maycomb itself play a key role in the story? Consider the importance of the town's geography in the progress of the narrative and its contributions to the themes of the novel.
20. Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* was published in 1960 during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. In what ways does the novel graphically illustrate the need for that movement? Does the author exaggerate the plight of blacks in the South, or is her picture a realistic portrayal of the deep-seated prejudices that sparked the racial politics of the sixties?
21. Compare Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as catalysts for social change. To what extent did these works of fiction serve as apologies for the Civil Rights Movement and abolitionism, respectively? What characteristics of fiction enable it to serve as a powerful instrument of social change? Of the two, which do you think is the more powerful? Support your conclusion with details from both stories.
22. Compare Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in their portrayals of black society. Even though the two were separated by more than a hundred years, what do they have in common in their ways of presenting blacks? How are these portrayals central to the messages the two novels are seeking to communicate?

23. Compare Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in their treatments of Christianity. Both clearly seek to promote "Christian" values. Are those values the same? Why or why not? Discuss the aspects of Christianity that were of greatest concern to the authors of the two books, and evaluate the extent to which they present Christianity in a way that is faithful to Scripture.
24. Compare and contrast the characters of Tom Robinson and Boo Radley in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. What do their similarities and differences contribute to the overall themes of the novel? Be sure to support your answer with specific incidents and quotations from the book.
25. Discuss the use of foreshadowing in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Choose three specific incidents and explain how they play a necessary role in preparing the reader for important events later in the story. Be sure to indicate the importance of these events in the thematic development of the novel as well.
26. In Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, to what extent is Mayella Ewell a sympathetic character? Did the author intend the reader to feel sorry for her or to despise her? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
27. After the unjust conclusion of Tom Robinson's trial in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch argues that the verdict represents a small step in the right direction. Do you agree? Can any good come from such horrible injustice? Cite specifics from the story to support your conclusion.
28. Compare and contrast the death sentences handed out to major characters in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In both cases, consider the way the author intends the reader to react to the death sentence and discuss his or her purpose for doing so. In what ways are the two critiques of the justice systems portrayed in the novels similar, and in what ways are they different? Be sure to use evidence from both novels to support your conclusions.
29. When asked by an interviewer what her ambition as a writer was, Harper Lee responded by saying, "All I want to be is the Jane Austen of South Alabama." To what extent did she succeed? Compare and contrast Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, paying special attention to the treatment of middle-class small-town life in the stories.
30. In what ways is the character of Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* a living demonstration of Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself"? Discuss in detail the ways Atticus responds to those around him - his children, his relatives, his neighbors, his friends, his enemies, those of his own social class and those of different social standings - being sure to use specific examples and quotations to support your arguments.

31. Discuss the concept of courage as it appears in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. What constitutes courageous behavior for the author and what constitutes cowardice? Choose specific examples and quotations from the book to support your conclusions.
32. Analyze the closing summation given by Atticus Finch in the trial of Tom Robinson in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* from a rhetorical standpoint. Discuss his use of ethical and emotional appeals and reasoned arguments. Which of these dominates his speech? Why do you think he chose this particular approach?
33. Discuss the lessons about peer pressure taught in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Be sure to look not only at the children, but at the adults as well in answering the question. Is the novel's approach to the issue a biblical one? Why or why not?
34. At the end of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Sheriff Tate refuses to arrest Boo Radley for the murder of Bob Ewell. Was he justified in doing so? Was Atticus right to try to talk him into putting Jem on trial for the killing, knowing that he would get off because of self-defense? On what basis do you believe the actions of Tate and Atticus were right or wrong? Defend your conclusions from Scripture.
35. The story told in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* is tied very closely to a particular place and time - a small town in Alabama during the Depression. To what extent is the impact of the story limited by its setting, and to what extent is it universal in its applicability? What characteristics of the novel make it appeal to so many who do not share its historical context?
36. Near the end of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Scout quotes her father as saying, "You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them." How is this assessment of fundamental human relationships illustrated in the novel? Be sure to cite specific incidents and quotations to support your arguments.