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To Kill a Mockingbird

Chapters 17 – 27 Questions

Chapter 17

1. Who is first to testify in chapter 17?
 - Why does Scout say he no longer terrifies her?

2. Why did Mr. Tate say he did not call a doctor?

3. On which side of her face was Mayella Ewell “bunged up”?
 - What specific injuries did she have?

4. Why does Scout believe everything will be all right on page 169?
 - What nightmare is she referring to?

5. How does the description of the Ewell home contrast with the description of the Negro settlement?

6. Explain what is meant by, “All the little man on the witness stand had that made him any better than his nearest neighbors was, that if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin was white.” (p. 171)

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7. Why does Mr. Ewell begin answering questions so informally?
 - How does Judge Taylor react to this?

8. Why does Reverend Sykes tell Jem to take Scout home after Mr. Ewell begins to testify?

9. To what dictum is Scout referring when she tells Jem, "You gotta make me first!"?

10. What reasons did Mr. Ewell give for not calling a doctor?

11. What metaphor does Scout use to describe Mr. Ewell? (Also used on pg 169 – 170)
 - Explain why he is described this way.

12. What is comical about Mr. Ewell's answer to the question, "Are you ambidextrous?"

Chapter 18

13. What difference does Scout notice between Mayella and her father?
 - What does this difference remind her of?

14. Why does Mayella start crying on the witness stand?

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15. What simile is used to describe Mayella on page 181?

- Explain what the simile means.

16. Why does Mayella think Atticus is making fun of her by calling her Miss Mayella and ma'am?

- What is the root of her fears?

17. Why doesn't Mayella finish her answer to the question of how her father treats her?

18. What do the children notice when Tom Robinson stands up to be identified by Mayella?

19. What does Atticus mean when he asks, "What did your father see in the window, the crime of rape or the best defense to it?"

- Why does he think it may have been Bob Ewell who beat up Mayella?

20. Other than the explanation of the bathrooms not being open to the public, why doesn't the courthouse clear during recess?

Chapter 19

21. What made Tom visit the Ewell's house in the first place?

22. Why does Scout think that Mayella Ewell was, "The loneliest person in the world"?

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23. In your own words explain Mayella's relationship with her father.

24. How does Dill react to this part of the trial?

- In your opinion, why does he act this way?

25. Who is outside with Dill and Scout? (2 people)

Chapter 20

26. Scout says that, "Mr. Dolphus Raymond was an evil man." Is she right? Why or why not?

27. In most of the United States, people who drink alcohol in public places are required to hide their bottle in a paper bag. Why does Dolphus Raymond hide Coca-Cola in a bag?

28. What, according to Atticus, is the thing that Mayella has done wrong?

29. Explain, in your own words, Atticus's views on people's being equal.

Chapter 21

30. What does Jem expect the verdict to be?

- Does Atticus think the same? Why or why not?

31. What is unusual about how long it takes the jury to reach a verdict? Is the verdict predictable or not?

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32. As Scout waits for the verdict, she thinks of earlier events. What are these and how do they remind us of the novel's major themes?

Chapter 22

33. As the children leave the courthouse, the crowd is described as cheerful. Why are they cheerful?

34. Jem asks Atticus, "How could they do it, how could they?" Atticus responds, "I don't know, but they did it. They've done it before and they did it again tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it – seems that only children weep." In your own words explain Atticus's response.

35. Who are the "they" Calpurnia is referring to when she shows Atticus all the food that has been brought to the house? Why have they done this? (Go beyond Cal's explanation.)

36. Why did Miss Maudie ask the children inside for some cake? Why did she give Jem a slice of the big one instead of making him his own little one like she had in the past?

37. Why did Judge Taylor appoint Atticus to defend Tom?

- What does this say about what kind of man Judge Taylor is?

38. What metaphor is Dill using when he says, "Every one of 'em oughta be ridin' broomsticks."?

39. Why is Miss Stephanie so excited to share the news of what happened on the post office corner?

- What is the news?

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Chapter 23

40. What does Atticus's response to what Bob Ewell did say about his character?

41. Why, if Tom Robinson was found guilty, did Bob Ewell threaten Atticus and call him names?

42. What unfortunate fact of life is Atticus explaining to Jem on Page 220?

- Explain how this is a theme for the novel.

43. Summarize Atticus's explanation why people like them don't serve on juries.

44. Why is Aunt Alexandra against Scout inviting Walter Cunningham over?

- Why does this upset Scout?

45. What kind of folks does Jem say are in Maycomb county?

- How do different folks feel about each other?

46. What kind of folks does Scout say there are?

- What does she mean by this?

47. Why does Jem say Boo Radley stays inside?

- Explain why he now thinks this.

Chapter 24

48. Why would Scout be filled with, "Vague apprehension and a firm desire to be elsewhere" when among a group of ladies?

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49. Why does Miss Maudie clasp Scout's hand while she answers Miss Stephanie's questions?

50. Do you think the missionary ladies are sincere in worrying about the Mrunas (an African Tribe)? Give reasons for your answers.

51. What is your opinion of the Maycomb ladies, as depicted in this chapter?

52. Explain briefly how Tom was killed.

- What is Atticus's explanation for Tom's attempted escape?
- Do you agree with Atticus?
- Why or why not?

53. Why did Atticus want Calpurnia to go to Helen Robinson's house with him?

54. How, in this chapter, do we see Alexandra in a new light?

- How does Miss Maudie support her?

Chapter 25

55. At the beginning of the chapter when Jem tells Scout to not kill the roly-poly bug, what is his reason?

- What other creature have the children been told not to kill for similar reasons?

56. How does Maycomb react to the news of Tom's death?

57. Comment on the idea that Tom's death was "typical"?

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58. Explain the contrast Scout draws between the court where Tom was tried and, “the secret courts of men’s hearts”. In what way are hearts like courts?

59. Why did Jem not want Scout to tell Atticus about Bob Ewell’s comment?

- Was this a wise thing to ask her to do?

Chapter 26

60. In her lesson on Hitler, Miss Gates says that, “We (American People) don’t believe in persecuting anyone”. Explain what is hypocritical about this statement.

61. Why is Scout puzzled by Miss Gates’ disapproval of Hitler?

62. Why does Scout’s question upset Jem?

- Is there a simple answer, or any answer, to the question, “How can you hate Hitler an’ then turn around an’ be ugly about folks right at home?”

Chapter 27

63. What three things does Bob Ewell do that alarm Aunt Alexandra?

64. Why, according to Atticus, does Bob Ewell bear a grudge?

- Which people does Ewell see as his enemies, and why?

65. What was the purpose of the Halloween pageant? What practical joke had persuaded the grownups to have an organized event?