*To Kill a Mockingbird*

*Chapters 1-2*

* Setting: Maycomb, Alabama (and surrounding area) during the 1930’s. Segregation was a way of life. The Finch family history is traced.
* Charles Baker Harris (“Dill”) is introduced. A Childhood friend of Scout and Jem, he visits the community each summer.
* Arthur “Boo” Radley: An obviously disturbed man from an unusual family, Arthur got into some trouble with the law as a teen-ager. The court sent his accomplices to reform school, but Arthur was released into the care of his family. The result was that he never left the house. For the local children, he became somewhat of a legend. They told stories about him that were obviously creations of imagination. *All of this symbolizes the impact cruelty can have on innocence.* Arthur’s crime was not that serious. His cohorts faced a court mandated punishment that was far less severe than Arthur endured, which seemed to include years of psychological abuse.
* Scout began school for the first time. It did not go well for her. The teacher was not impressed by Scout’s reading abilities, and eventually punished her when she pointed out the Walter Cunningham was poor. The teacher, Miss Cunningham, did not understand why Walter had no lunch, and tried to lend him money, which was refused. Scout was the one who finally said “you’re shaming him.”

*Chapters 3-5*

* Calpurnia: Cook, housekeeper and most importantly, *surrogate mother* to both Jem and Scout. She is a strong disciplinarian, not afraid to chastise the children (think Walter and the molasses). However, she cares deeply for the children (misses Scout while she was at school, makes her treats, kisses her).
* She is an integral part of the family: *“We couldn’t operate without Cal…think about how much Cal does for you and mind her, you hear?”*
* The Ewells: *“They were people, but they lived like animals.”* Harper Lee wants to emphasize that *race* is not a suitable indicator of behavior.
* The children begin to find objects left in the hole of a tree on the Radley property.
* A game is created by the children based on what they know of the Radley story. Atticus finds out and tells them to stop (49).
* Maudie Atkinson lives in the neighborhood. She is generous, humourous and kind. She believes that *some* people hold intolerant and narrow minded views based on their interpretations of religion. She uses the example of the Radleys to illustrate how dangerous that can be. She is also a source of authentic information on the Radleys (43-46).

*Chapters 6-8*

* The children’s attempt to peep in the Radley window almost gets them shot. Nathan Radley (Boo’s brother) thought they were prowlers. Jem lost his pants on the fence during the commotion.
* Jem goes back to get them. He wanted to avoid punishment. If Nathan Radley found them and showed Atticus, his father would know the truth. He probably feared reprisal, since he had been warned to stay away.
* Jem later told Scout that his pants were waiting for him, mended and carefully folded. There was also the issue of the gifts in the tree hole. It is clear that Boo is trying to communicate with them.
* Nathan Radley eventually filled the hole with cement. When Atticus confirmed that the tree was *not* dying, as Nathan had said, he became quite upset, though he tries to hide it. He knows that Boo Radley had been trying to communicate with them, but those attempts were thwarted by his brother.
* Old Mrs. Radley dies. She was quite reclusive. The children wonder if Boo killed her, but Atticus confirms it was “natural causes.”
* Maudie’s house catches fire in the middle of the night, which is of concern to everyone given the unusually cold temperatures, the equipment problems and the possibility that the fire could spread.
* Note the blanket on Scout’s shoulders (71-72).
* Changing views on Boo: First, something to be feared; Then, an object of curiosity; Finally, someone with the potential for kindness and generosity.
* The fire in chapter eight signifies a departure of sorts. Up to this point, the novel dealt primarily with the children, their experiences, and their fascination with Boo. Scout’s most important qualities – independence, intelligence, toughness – are all highlighted. Chapter 9 will introduce the main conflict that drives the story.

*Chapter 9*

* Scout doesn’t really understand the insults aimed at her father (Cecil Jacobs, cousin Francis…) but she recognizes them as attacks on his character, to which she reacts violently.
* *“He made it sound as if you were running a still” (75).*
* *“I ain’t very sure what it means, but the way Francis said it… (I won’t) sit there and let him say somethin’ about Atticus” (86).*
* This chapter introduces the centerpiece of the plot: the trial of Tom Robinson. There is a lot of *foreshadowing* in terms of both plot *and* theme.
* Atticus knows that the fight to come will be difficult and divisive (75-77), and the outcome has all but been determined: he will lose the case. Yet, he feels it is a battle that must be fought. *Winning or losing one battle does not determine ultimate victory. Fighting for goodness, justice and truth is worthwhile and necessary. When battling an unjust system, the ultimate victory is meaningful change. That doesn’t happen overnight.*
* “Maycomb’s usual disease” (88): *Racism. “Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don’t pretend to understand.”*
* Aunt Alexandria: opinionated; resists change; wants Scout to behave like a stereotypical girl of the times; does not agree with the parenting style of Atticus.

*Chapter 10*

* Scout does not think her father is capable of doing anything that the community would view as strong or important (ironic).
* Mockingbird: an important symbol / metaphor. Note the description of them on page 90.
* A rabid dog (“Tim Johnson”) is on the loose. Tension mounts as the entire neighborhood hides indoors. Even the sheriff does not want to deal with it, deferring instead to Atticus. Atticus shoots the dog and the children learn what all the adults already know: Atticus is the best shot in town. Maudie points out that Atticus has a special gift and he only uses it under special circumstance.
* *This entire episode is metaphorical!* Rabies is a dangerous disease that changes the demeanor of an animal. It creates a disconnect from reality, and brings out the worst (aggression, senselessness…). The author draws a clear parallel between rabies and “Maycomb’s usual disease” – *racism.*
* Rabies (and racism) cause similar reactions if people become infected. It also causes similar reactions to those *not* affected: they cower and hide. In both cases, the townspeople need Atticus to confront the issue. *See page 75 – Judge Taylor.*