St. Catherine High School

English B

Grade 10

Prose: To Kill a Mockingbird

(March 20, 2020)

**To Kill a Mockingbird chapter summaries (6-10)**

### Summary: Chapter 6

Jem and Dill obey Atticus until Dill’s last day in Maycomb, when he and Jem plan to sneak over to the Radley Place and peek in through a loose shutter. Scout accompanies them, and they creep around the house, peering in through various windows. Suddenly, they see the shadow of a man with a hat on and flee, hearing a shotgun go off behind them. They escape under the fence by the schoolyard, but Jem’s pants get caught on the fence, and he has to kick them off in order to free himself.

The children return home, where they encounter a collection of neighborhood adults, including Atticus, Miss Maudie, and Miss Stephanie Crawford, the neighborhood gossip. Miss Maudie informs them that Mr. Nathan Radley shot at “a Negro” in his yard. Miss Stephanie adds that Mr. Radley is waiting outside with his gun so he can shoot at the next sound he hears. When Atticus asks Jem where his pants are, Dill interjects that he won Jem’s pants in a game of strip poker. Alarmed, Atticus asks them if they were playing cards. Jem responds that they were just playing with matches. Late that night, Jem sneaks out to the Radley Place, and retrieves his pants.

**Chapter 7:**

A few days later, after school has begun for the year, Jem tells Scout that he found the pants mysteriously mended and hung neatly over the fence. When they come home from school that day, they find another present hidden in the knothole: a ball of gray twine. They leave it there for a few days, but no one takes it, so they claim it for their own.

Unsurprisingly, Scout is as unhappy in second grade as she was in first, but Jem promises her that school gets better the farther along one goes. Late that fall, another present appears in the knothole—two figures carved in soap to resemble Scout and Jem. The figures are followed in turn by chewing gum, a spelling bee medal, and an old pocket watch. The next day, Jem and Scout find that the knothole has been filled with cement. When Jem asks Mr. Radley (Nathan Radley, Boo’s brother) about the knothole the following day, Mr. Radley replies that he plugged the knothole because the tree is dying.

**Chapter 8:**

For the first time in years, Maycomb endures a real winter. There is even light snowfall, an event rare enough for school to be closed. Jem and Scout haul as much snow as they could from Miss Maudie’s yard to their own. Since there is not enough snow to make a real snowman, they build a small figure out of dirt and cover it with snow. They make it look like Mr. Avery, an unpleasant man who lives down the street. The figure’s likeness to Mr. Avery is so strong that Atticus demands that they disguise it. Jem places Miss Maudie’s sunhat on its head and sticks her hedge clippers in its hands, much to her chagrin.

That night, Atticus wakes Scout and helps her put on her bathrobe and coat and goes outside with her and Jem. Miss Maudie’s house is on fire. The neighbors help her save her furniture, and the fire truck arrives in time to stop the fire from spreading to other houses, but Miss Maudie’s house burns to the ground. In the confusion, someone drapes a blanket over Scout. When Atticus later asks her about it, she has no idea who put it over her. Jem realizes that Boo Radley put it on her, and he reveals the whole story of the knothole, the presents, and the mended pants to Atticus. Atticus tells them to keep it to themselves, and Scout, realizing that Boo was just behind her, nearly throws up.

Despite having lost her house, Miss Maudie is cheerful the next day. She tells the children how much she hated her old home and that she is already planning to build a smaller house and plant a larger garden. She says that she wishes she had been there when Boo put the blanket on Scout to catch him in the act.

**Summary: Chapter 9**

At school, Scout nearly starts a fight with a classmate named Cecil Jacobs after Cecil declares that “Scout Finch’s daddy defends niggers.” Atticus has been asked to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman. It is a case he cannot hope to win, but he tells Scout that he must argue it to uphold his sense of justice and self-respect.

At Christmastime, Atticus’s brother, Jack, comes to stay with Atticus for a week during the holidays. Scout generally gets along well with Uncle Jack, but when he arrives in Maycomb, she begins cursing in front of him (a habit that she has recently picked up). After supper, Jack has Scout sit on his lap and he warns her not to curse in his presence. On Christmas Day, Atticus takes his children and Jack to Finch’s Landing, a rambling old house in the country where Atticus’s sister, Alexandra, and her husband live. There, Scout endures Francis, Alexandra’s grandson, who had been dropped off at Finch’s Landing for the holiday. Scout thinks Francis is the most “boring” child she has ever met. She also has to put up with the prim and proper Alexandra, who insists that Scout dress like a lady instead of wearing pants.

One night, Francis tells Scout that Dill is a runt and then calls Atticus a “nigger-lover.” Scout curses him and beats him up. Francis tells Alexandra and Uncle Jack that Scout hit him, and Uncle Jack spanks her without hearing her side of the story. After they return to Maycomb, Scout tells Jack what Francis said and Jack becomes furious. Scout makes him promise not to tell Atticus, however, because Atticus had asked her not to fight anyone over what is said about him. Jack promises and keeps his word. Later, Scout overhears Atticus telling Jack that Tom Robinson is innocent but doomed, since it’s inconceivable that an all-white jury would ever acquit him.

### Summary: Chapter 10

Atticus, Scout says, is somewhat older than most of the other fathers in Maycomb. His relatively advanced age often embarrasses his children—he wears glasses and reads, for instance, instead of hunting and fishing like the other men in town. One day, however, a mad dog appears, wandering down the main street toward the Finches’ house. Calpurnia calls Atticus, who returns home with Heck Tate, the sheriff of Maycomb. Heck brings a rifle and asks Atticus to shoot the animal. To Jem and Scout’s amazement, Atticus does so, hitting the dog with his first shot despite his considerable distance from the dog. Later, Miss Maudie tells Jem and Scout that, as a young man, Atticus was the best shot in the county—“One-shot Finch.” Scout is eager to brag about this, but Jem tells her to keep it a secret, because if Atticus wanted them to know, he would have told them.

Notes from Chapter 6:

* Remember that Jem is four years older than Scout. He feels more mature and the shame of possible punishment from Atticus is a stronger pressure than the terror of the Radley Place. Scout does not understand this because she is still too young to regard punishment as something which affects her pride.
* Note the focus on Boo Radley’s character. In chapter 5, Miss Maudie offers insight into the origins of Boo’s reclusiveness and a sympathetic perspective on his story. Miss Maudie has only contempt for the superstitious view of Boo: he is no demon, and she knows that he is alive, because she hasn’t seen him “carried out yet.” From her point of view, Boo was a nice boy who suffered at the hands of a tyrannically religious family. He is one of many victims populating a book whose title, To Kill a Mockingbird, suggests the destruction of an innocent being. In fact, as a sweet, young child apparently driven mad by an overbearing father obsessed with sin and retribution, Boo epitomizes the loss of innocence that the book, as a whole, dramatizes.

Notes from chapter 7:

* Jem is going through the painful process of discarding youthful assumptions and ideas which he has now discovered to be quite wrong. This is also something which Atticus, amongst others, is trying to persuade the people of Maycomb to do-to discard their prejudice.
* In comparison to Scout’s still very childish perspective, Jem’s more mature understanding of the world is evident here, along with his strong sense of justice.
* When Nathan Radley plugs up the hole in the tree, Scout is disappointed but hardly heartbroken, seeing it as merely the end of their presents. Jem, on the other hand, is brought to tears, because he grasps that Boo’s brother has done something cruel: he has deprived Boo of his connection to the wider world and has broken up his brother’s attempt at friendship.
* Jem’s anger at this injustice foreshadows his later fury concerning Tom Robinson’s trial. While Scout retains her innocence and optimism throughout the book, Jem undergoes severe disillusionment as part of his “growing up,”

Notes from chapter 8:

* Different kinds of humor arise from the snow episode. Scout’s reaction is funny because she over-reacts out of ignorance. There is also the narrator’s dry humor about the effects of sin.
* The smallness of the town is also emphasized in this chapter. Look at the lit of jobs entrusted to the town’s telephone operator.
* The unseasonable snow and the fire at Miss Maudie’s, as well as the later appearance of a mad dog, can be seen as contributing to a sense of supernatural foreboding leading up to the injustice that pervades Tom Robinson’s trial.
* Miss Maudie perseveres after her house is destroyed. Even when she sees her prize flowers ruined, the brave old woman does not despair; instead, she offers a cheerful comment about wanting a smaller house and a larger garden. This interweaving of dramatic, Gothic atmospherics and good-hearted small-town values epitomizes To Kill a Mockingbird and mirrors the novel’s main theme. In a world in which innocence is threatened by injustice, cruelty, prejudice, and hatred, goodness can prevail in the form of sympathy, understanding, and common sense, as evidenced by how the townspeople’s affectionate willingness to help one another enables them to overcome the intrusion of these Gothic elements into their simple small-town lives.

Notes from chapter 9:

* The case of To Robinson is a matter of honour for Atticus. He knows he cannot win, but he cannot refuse to take it on for fear of losing his self- respect, the respect of his children and the respect of those townfolk whose opinions he values.
* Atticus can be so certain they will be defeated because he knows exactly what the status of the Negro is in the South. In spite of the abolition of slavery at the end of the Civil War the Negro remained a second class citizen. He lived a separate life, in a separate part of town, received an inferior education, and had to take on poorly paid jobs. Even in the court he was not equal. In any case which involved a black man against a white man, the black man rarely won. This is why Atticus is so sure of failure.
* Atticus has a great sense of duty toward his family. He refuses to break the tradition of Christmas even if some members of the family are tiresome to be with. This is important,

because it demonstrates that even the tolerant Atticus has to work at keeping his feelings under control.

* Atticus’s tolerant attitude towards his children comes in for a lot of criticism from the family, especially Aunt Alexandria.
* Atticus sets himself apart from the people in Maycomb. He does not share their prejudice when it comes to Negroes, although he is very realistic about his chances of changing their attitudes.
* Miss Maudie’s description of a mockingbird somehow fits the characters of Boo and Tom Robinson.
* The occasion for the adult world to intrude on Scout’s life is the trial of Tom Robinson. Because Robinson is a black man accused of raping a white woman, the white residents of Maycomb are furious that Atticus, the town’s best lawyer, would choose to help his cause. The townspeople are unwilling to limit their displays of anger to Atticus himself; Scout and Jem become targets as well. The town of Maycomb, whose inhabitants have been presented thus far in a largely positive light, suddenly turns against the Finches, as the ugly, racist underbelly of Southern life exposes itself. Even members of Atticus’s own family—Alexandra and her obnoxious grandson—condemn his decision to defend Tom Robinson. Chapter 9 marks Alexandra’s first appearance in the story, and her portrayal is mostly negative; only later will she develop into a sympathetic character.

Chapter 10:

* The adversity faced by the family reveals Atticus’s parenting style, his focus on instilling moral values in Jem and Scout. Particularly important to Atticus are justice, restraint, and honesty. He tells his children to avoid getting in fights, even if they are verbally abused, and to practice quiet courage instead. When he gives Jem and Scout air rifles as presents, he advises them that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird. This idea is, of course, the source of the novel’s title, and it reflects the book’s preoccupation with injustices inflicted upon innocents. In different ways, Jem and Scout, Boo Radley, and Tom Robinson are all “mockingbirds.”
* The incident with the mad dog demonstrates Atticus’s courage and symbolizes the town’s dependence upon his protection from both the rabid animal and the worst evil within themselves.

Activities:

Theme:

1. Identify at least two emerging themes from the story and explain how they have been explored thus far.

Characters:

1. Describe Ms. Maudie. What type of relationship exists between her and Finch’s?
2. Comment on the changes being displayed in Jem. How do these changes affect his perception of others around him?
3. What typical behaviours within the Maycomb society does Aunt Alexandria represent?

b. How is she different from her brother, Atticus?

c. How does her behaviour affect the children? (her own grandchild and niece)

4. In what ways is Atticus presented as morally superior to the ordinary residents of Maycomb? How does this attribute impact the lessons he teaches his children?