To Kill a Mockingbird

Study Questions

Chapter 1
1. Our narrator is Scout, a girl who will grow from age 6 to almost 9 during the story. What do you suppose we, as the readers, should be aware of as we listen to Scout tell her story? Is a child a reliable or unreliable narrator? Defend your answer.

2. Jem and Scout call their father by his first name, Atticus, instead of calling him “Dad” or “Daddy.” What does this tell you about their relationship?

3. We know that the setting of this story will be Maycomb, Alabama, a sleepy Southern town that’s a little rough around the edges. What is the time period of this story? Give evidence to support your conclusion about the time period of this novel.

4. Dill, the children’s neighbor during the summer, is described as “a pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies.” What does this mean?

5. Who are the Radleys? Describe their house and yard.

6. Who were the Cunningham boys and what happened to them? What’s the irony here?

7. According to Jem, how do you get a turtle to come out of its shell? In what way might this idea be an apt parallel to get people to do what they don’t want to do? Give an real-world example to support your answer.

8. Find a simile from this chapter and write down the sentence in which it appears. Yes, I want you to write down the full sentence.

Chapter 2
1. Why does Scout’s ability to read and write annoy her teacher, Miss Caroline?

2. Atticus says that country people, like the Cunninghams, were hit the hardest by “the crash.” To what is he referring? Why would country people be the ones to suffer the most?

3. Why are professional people also suffering?

4. Why does Jem not want Scout to acknowledge him at school? Is his behavior typical of an older brother?

5. An entailment is an unusual legality that prohibits a piece of land from being sold. It was designed to protect a family’s interest in a piece of land because it could only be passed down to a member of the same family, never sold for profit. Jem describes an entailment as “a condition of having your tail in a crack,” and Atticus later says that Jem’s description is surprisingly accurate. How is this an apt description for the Cunningham family?

6. What do you think of Miss Caroline Fisher as a teacher?
Chapter 3
1. Why does Walter Cunningham drench his lunch in molasses/syrup?

2. When Scout criticizes Walter Cunningham’s eating habits, Calpurnia scolds Scout, smacks her on the bottom as she sends the girl out of the room, and then lectures her on proper manners, saying, “Yo’ folks might be better’n the Cunninghams but it don’t count for nothin’ the way you’re disgracin’ ‘em.” What does Calpurnia mean here? Is she right?

3. In the tiff between Scout and Calpurnia, Atticus takes Calpurnia’s side. What does this show us?

4. Describe the way that Atticus treats Walter. What do you think of this?

5. Atticus tells Scout that you never really understand a person “until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” What does this mean? Give an example from your world to illustrate this idea.

6. What is the “compromise” which Atticus suggests at the end of the chapter?

7. Who are the Ewells? How are they the same as the Cunninghams? How are they different?

8. Why do Maycomb officials bend the rules for the Ewells? Is this the right thing to do?

Chapter 4
1. What does Scout think of her school’s new style of education? What does this failing show us about adults?

2. What’s the first thing Scout finds in the knothole of the tree on the edge of the Radley property? What’s the second thing she finds? How many of each item was there? Significance of this? Who, do you suppose, put the items in the tree hole?

3. Scout has two reasons for wanting to quit Jem and Dill’s Radley game. What are they?
Chapter 5
1. Describe Miss Maudie Atkinson. How typical is she of Maycomb’s women? What do the children think of her?

2. Miss Maudie says, “...sometimes the Bible in the hands of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of—oh, of your father.” Explain what she means.

3. What does Miss Maudie tell Scout about Boo? How does this compare with what Scout already believes?

4. Scout says that “Dill Harris could tell the biggest” lies she ever heard. Why might Dill have told such lies?

5. Paraphrase Atticus’ speech about the Radleys’ right to privacy. Do you agree with his point of view? Why or why not?

Chapter 6
1. List the four reasons Jem and Dill give for deciding to peek into the Radley window on this particular night.

2. Find and write down the line from early in the chapter that foreshadows the trouble Jem will have when he tries to flee the Radley’s backyard.

3. Jem wants to return to the Radley yard and fetch his pants so he can stay out of trouble with Atticus. Scout wants Jem to leave the pants where they are and face the consequences with Atticus. With which child do you agree? Why?
Chapter 7

1. According to Scout, what’s the only good thing about second grade?

2. What spooked Jem on the night of the Radley house incident? Who, do you suppose, did this?

3. After they find the soap dolls, what does Jem realize that Scout does not yet understand?

4. Look closely at this line: “Jem stared at me so long I asked what was the matter, but got Nothing, Scout for an answer.” What does the elimination of the quotation punctuation do for this passage?

5. At the end of the chapter, Jem quietly cries alone on the porch. Give two reasons to explain Jem’s tears.

Chapter 8

1. What does Mr. Avery say that bad children cause? What’s ironic about this, given Jem and Scout’s reaction to the snow?

2. Why does Atticus awaken Jem and Scout instead of just letting them sleep through the fire incident? Give a line of text to support your answer.

3. During the fire, Boo Radley has quietly placed a blanket across Scout’s shoulders. Why doesn’t Jem want his father to return the blanket to the Radley family?

4. After the fire is over, how does Miss Maudie feel about the destruction of her house? What does this tell you about her character, her values?

5. Write down the line of text from this chapter that shows Jem believes that he and Scout are no better than anyone else in their town.

6. Once you’ve finished the chapter, go back and look at the portion that describes Jem and Scout’s snowman, which is covered with white snow on the outside, but has a core of dark mud. Symbolically connect the snowman to either Mr. Avery (go beyond the “Morphodite’s” physical similarity to Mr. Avery) or Boo Radley. How could the snowman be seen as a symbol for one of these men?
Chapter 9

1. When Atticus speaks of defending Tom Robinson, he says, “Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win.” To what is Atticus referring? Why would it be worthwhile to fight a battle that you know you’re going to lose?

2. Think about Scout’s fight with Francis and Atticus’ message to Uncle Jack about children being able to “spot an evasion quicker than adults.” How do these two elements connect to the value of having Scout, a child, be the narrator of this story?

3. Atticus is worried about “ugly things” that the family will face in the next few months. Although we haven’t read this part of the story yet, what sorts of things do you suppose have Atticus worried?

4. Thinking back to earlier chapters, what do we know about the Ewells? From this chapter, what do we know about Tom Robinson? Given this, why would the townsfolk be more likely to accept Mr. Ewell’s testimony than Mr. Robinson’s?

5. According to Atticus, what is Maycomb’s “usual disease?” Why is he worried that his children will catch it?

6. Read the final sentence of this chapter. Explain in your own words what it means. In what way is his conversation with his brother also a message for his daughter?

Chapter 10

1. Record the line of text that includes the reference to the title. Explain its meaning in the scene and take a guess as to the idea’s larger meaning. I know you haven’t finished the book yet, but I still want you to guess about how this line connects to the message of the novel.

2. At the beginning of the chapter, Scout is critical of Atticus because he seems old and doesn’t do anything that she deems impressive. By the end of the chapter, her opinion has changed. Why?

3. Why isn’t Atticus proud of his shooting ability?

4. What is Miss Stephanie Crawford’s reaction to the death of Tim Johnson?
Chapter 11
1. When Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose pushes Jem too far, he loses his mind a bit, destroying her flowers and breaking Scout’s baton. What other rough thing does he do in that moment? What message can we take from this part of the incident?
2. What was Jem’s punishment? Did it fit his crime?
3. Atticus is not upset that Mrs. Dubose calls him foul names behind his back. To Scout, he explains, “…it’s never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn’t hurt you.” Explain his meaning. Do you agree or disagree with him? Why? Finally, give a real-world example from your life to illustrate your point.
4. Why does Mrs. Dubose keep the children a few minutes longer each day?
5. In what ways was Mrs. Dubose heroic?
6. Other than living on the same street, what do Boo Radley, Atticus, and Mrs. Dubose all have in common? What larger message is supported by examination of these three characters?
7. Look back over this chapter and record two similes. Yes, I want you to write down the full sentence in which each simile appears.
8. Look back over this chapter and record what you think is the best line. Be prepared to defend your answer in class tomorrow.

Chapter 12
1. Why do Jem and Scout go to church with Calpurnia? Where is Atticus?
2. Why is the church named First Purchase?
3. Does Lula speak for the majority opinion in the congregation? Why does the author include her in the church scene?
4. What is the crime that’s been charged against Tom Robinson?
5. Why can’t Helen Robinson work and support her three children?
6. During the church service, we find out that Calpurnia is one of the few African-American residents of Maycomb who can read. The children get to know Cal better during this Sunday and realize lots of things about her that they didn’t know, including that she’s older than they realized. Look closely at this passage:
   “But, Cal,” Jem protested, “you don’t look even near as old as Atticus.”
   “Colored folks don’t show their ages so fast,” she said.
   “Maybe because they can’t read…”
What’s humorous or interesting about this short passage?
7. What nasty surprise awaits the children at the very end of the chapter?
Chapter 13
1. Scout and Aunt Alexandra communicate very poorly with each other. Is the fault more with one than the other, or are they equally at fault? Explain your answer.
2. What’s the reason the children are given as to why Aunt Alexandra has come to stay with them? What do you think is the real reason?
3. Atticus says to Scout, “Your aunt’s doing me a favor as well as you all. I can’t stay here all day with you, and the summer’s going to be a hot one.” There’s a double-meaning to this line. Explain.
4. Aunt Alexandra is critical of many of Maycomb’s families. According to Jem, what’s ironic about this?
5. What did Cousin Joshua do and how does he become a wedge between Aunt Alexandra and Atticus?
6. Look at the last short paragraph of the chapter. What was Atticus trying to do? Why is this sort of thing, according to Scout, better left to a woman?

Chapter 14
1. How does Aunt Alexandra feel about Calpurnia? Explain why this is “in character” for Aunt Alexandra?
2. Comment on Atticus’ explanation of rape. Why does Atticus explain the crime in this way?
3. What does Jem do that, to Scout, symbolizes the end of his childhood?
4. Dill tries to explain to Scout why he did not want to stay with his mother and new stepfather. State his reasons briefly in your own words.
5. Twice now, Scout has considered running away. Dill did, in fact, run away from home. Why, according to Dill, hasn’t Boo Radley ever run away from his terrible home?
Chapter 15

1. What was the “sickening comic aspect” of Atticus’ exchange with the small mob of men? What does this show us about the men in the small mob? About Atticus?

2. Why does Jem openly defy Atticus and refuse to leave?


4. Why was Atticus so affectionate toward Jem, even after Jem disobeyed him?

Chapter 16

1. What does Scout learn about mob mentality?

2. Mr. Dolphus Raymond is evidently a complicated and interesting person. Describe his way of life and comment on its effect upon the town.

3. Why did Mr. Dolphus Raymond’s fiancée die? What does this show the reader about life in Maycomb?

4. Jem says that “mixed” children are sad because they don’t belong anywhere. What does he mean? Is having a sense of belonging important in life? Explain your thoughts.

5. Judge Taylor’s appearance and his ability are two different things. What comment might the author be making in building the judge in this way?

6. Symbolically, what does the physical structure of the courthouse show us about the people of Maycomb?

7. Why didn’t Atticus tell his children that he had to defend Tom Robinson, that he was appointed by the court and didn’t really have a choice about taking the case?

8. Why do the four men give up their seats for Jem, Scout, Dill, and Reverend Sykes? What does this show us?

9. As the examination begins, Atticus’ table is bare. What does this show us?
Chapter 17
1. Scout says that Atticus has an “infinite capacity for calming turbulent seas.” What does she mean by this? Is this true?
2. In history, who was Robert E. Lee? Feel free to look up this info. and write down what you discover. What’s interesting about this man being Mr. Ewell’s namesake?
3. Looking at the Ewell property, what item stands out as not belonging with all of the other broken junk? What might this symbolize?
4. Reverend Sykes has second thoughts about allowing the children to stay and listen to the graphic testimony, but ultimately relents to Jem and allows them to stay. Why doesn’t Rev. Sykes force them to leave?
5. Judge Taylor refuses to close the courtroom and says, “People generally see what they look for, and hear what they listen for, and they have the right to subject their children to it...” What does he mean?
6. Why didn’t Mr. Ewell have a doctor check out his daughter? What does this show us about the man?
7. What’s compelling about the fact that Mr. Ewell is left-handed?
8. Look at the last line of the chapter. What is the old saying that Scout refers to here? How is this an appropriate idiom for this point in the trial?

Chapter 18
1. What does Atticus do that makes Mayella Ewell think that he’s making fun of her? What does this show us about Mayella’s life?
2. What is so important about Tom Robinson’s physical appearance? What, according to the testimony, does this prove beyond a doubt?
3. Is Mayella like her father or different from him? In what ways?
4. What does Scout notice about Mayella as she leaves the witness stand and passes Atticus’ defense table?
Chapter 19

1. Why does Atticus mention Tom’s previous record of conviction?

2. Explain Tom’s version of the events on the evening of Nov. 21.

3. In that moment with Mayella, Tom is in a no-win situation. Explain the “subtlety of Tom’s predicament.”

4. How is Mr. Link Deas heroic?

5. Why was it a “mistake” for Tom to say that he felt sorry for Mayella?

6. Miss Maudie once said that Atticus Finch is “the same in the courtroom as he is on the public streets.” What makes this such an awesome compliment?

7. Dill becomes physically sensitive at the end of the chapter, so he and Scout leave to get some fresh air. Is Dill too sensitive? What’s the author’s message in having Dill become ill?

Chapter 20

1. At the beginning of the chapter, we find out that Mr. Raymond sips only Coca-Cola from a paper sack, deliberately pretending to be drunk. Why does he do this?

2. Why does Mr. Raymond tell Scout and Dill about his life?

3. Scout says that Mr. Dolphus Raymond was “an evil man.” Is she right? Explain your answer.

4. Why, according to Atticus, did Mayelle throw her false accusation at Tom?

5. According to Atticus, what is the only institution that can serve as an equalizer of men? Do you agree with this idea?
Chapter 21

1. Jem is confident that Atticus has won the case, but Atticus is not as certain. Write the line of text that shows Atticus knows he’ll lose, but that he’s not ready to take away Jem’s hope.

2. Why is a long-deliberating jury a good sign?

3. How does Scout “know” the verdict before she hears it?

4. Why do the people in the balcony gallery stand when Atticus leaves the courtroom?

Chapter 22

1. Aunt Alexandra tries to scold Atticus for allowing the children to attend the trial, but Atticus says, “This is their home, sister…We’ve made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it.” Explain Atticus’ message.

2. Atticus lost the case, yet the black community has reacted with generosity, filling his kitchen with food. Why did people drop off so much food?

3. What’s interesting about Miss Maudie’s cake?

4. How did Judge Taylor try to help Tom?

5. What “baby step” was made with this case?

6. What does Dill say he wants to be when he’s grown? Why?

7. At the end of the chapter, what do we discover happened to Atticus that morning?
Chapter 23

1. How does Atticus react to Bob Ewell’s threat against him?

2. What is “circumstantial evidence” and what does it have to do with Tom’s case?

3. In thinking about the injustices faced by Tom and other members of the African-American community, Atticus says, “Don’t fool yourselves – it’s all adding up and one of these days we’re going to pay the bill for it. I hope it’s not in you children’s time.” What is his concern/prediction about the future?

4. Aunt Alexandra accepts that the Cunninghams may be good people, but she still thinks “they’re not our kind of folks.” Later, she calls them “trash.” This book was first published in 1960 and set in the 1930s, yet these class distinctions are still with us today. Why do you think, as Scout says so clearly toward the end of the chapter, folks just don’t get along with each other? Why do we allow this separation of race and class to still exist?

5. At the end of this chapter, Jem forms a new theory about why Boo Radley rarely leaves his house. What is this? How likely is it to be true?

Chapter 24

1. Do you think the missionary ladies are sincere in worrying about the “Mrunas,” a tribe in Africa? Give reasons for your answer. Be sure to include any ironic elements you notice in this part of the chapter.

2. Scout feels she prefers men to women. Why? Do you agree with her reasons?

3. Compare the reactions of Miss Maudie and the other ladies when Scout says she is wearing her “britches” under her dress.

4. Explain briefly how Tom was killed. What is Atticus’ explanation for Tom’s attempted escape? Do you agree with Atticus?

5. Miss Maudie says, “We’re paying the highest tribute we can pay a man.” What does she mean?

6. Toward the end of this chapter, we see Aunt Alexandra in a new light. How so? Explain how Miss Maudie becomes a sudden supporter of Alexandra.
Chapter 25

1. Explain how Scout’s treatment of the roly-poly bug mirrors the way the town of Maycomb treated Tom Robinson.

2. Everyone in town talks about Tom’s death, most saying it’s “typical.” What do they mean?

3. Write the line from the end of the chapter in which Mr. Underwood’s editorial in the Maycomb Tribune echoes Atticus’ earlier advice to Jem and Scout when they were given their guns. Then, explain how this connects to the title of the novel. Who is the mockingbird?

4. At the end of the book, the children find out that Mr. Ewell was thrilled to hear about the death of Tom and reportedly “said it made one down and about two more to go.” Who, do you suppose, are the “two more” that Mr. Ewell is targeting? Do you believe his threat?

Chapter 26

1. Apparently, Atticus has known all along about the night Jem lost his pants on the Radleys’ fence, but he never felt the need to say anything about it. What physical evidence led Atticus to make his realization?

2. Despite the drama of the summer, Atticus wins an unopposed re-election to the state legislature in the fall. Give two possible meanings that could be taken from this.

3. In her lesson on Hitler, Miss Gates says that Americans “don’t believe in persecuting anybody.” What’s ironic about her statement?

4. Why does Scout’s question upset Jem?
Chapter 27

1. What were the three notable things that happened in Maycomb by the middle of October? How does the circumstance of each show the reader something about Bob Ewell’s character?

2. What part of the Mruna family structure do the Maycomb ladies find particularly offensive? What do you think of this system?

3. Why do Atticus and Aunt Alexandra not intend to go to the Halloween pageant?

4. The last line of the chapter gives a sense of foreboding to the reader because, clearly, something dark and nefarious is going to happen this evening. Look back over the chapter and write down another line of text or paraphrase a plot element that contributes to this foreshadowing of something bad to come.

Chapter 28

1. There are several unfortunate elements to the evening that leave Jem and Scout especially vulnerable to Mr. Ewell’s attack. Name four of these elements.

2. Scout’s view of the events in the field are obscured by her ham costume. Using her descriptions and information from the end of the chapter, retell the events of the attack as you understand them.

3. What’s significant about the clothing that Aunt Alexandra hands to Scout when she arrives home?

4. We don’t know yet who the stranger is that carried Jem home, but you might have a good idea. Take a guess.
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Chapter 29
1. What does Atticus think was wrong with Mr. Ewell? What does Heck Tate think was wrong with Mr. Ewell? With whom do you agree and why?
2. What causes the “shiny clean line” on the otherwise “dull wire” of Scout’s costume?
3. Briefly describe the meeting between Scout and Boo.

Chapter 30
1. When Atticus first thinks that Jem was the one who killed Bob Ewell, what is Atticus ready to do? What does this show the reader about Atticus?
2. Atticus and Heck Tate have a heated argument, as Atticus assumes Heck is ready to cover up Bob Ewell’s killing as a move to protect Jem. Who is Heck really trying to protect? Why does Heck fight so hard to protect this person?
3. Heck Tate has tampered with evidence to make it appear that Ewell was killed by falling on his own knife. What piece of evidence did Heck remove from the scene of the crime?
4. Did Heck Tate do the right thing? Explain your answer.
5. Scout, who was confused about the actual cause of Mr. Ewell’s death, agrees with Heck Tate’s decision and utters an elegant line in support of him. Write that line.

Chapter 31
1. After she takes Boo home, Scout understands many new things because she is able to see the street from his point of view. Explain some of the things she now understands about Boo’s perspective.
2. In what way is Scout’s neighborhood/street similar to the Mruna tribe in Africa?
3. Reread the first line from chapter 1. How do the events in the final chapters connect to this line? Do you find this storytelling technique effective? Why or why not?
4. At the end of the novel, Atticus reads to Scout as she drifts off to sleep. How does the topic of the story connect to one of this novel’s major themes?
Chapter 1

1. Our narrator is Scout, a girl who will grow from age 6 to almost 9 during the story. What do you suppose we, as the readers, should be aware of as we listen to Scout tell her story? Is a child a reliable or unreliable narrator? Defend your answer. Since Scout is a child, we should remember that she’ll have a limited view/understanding of the world around her. In some ways, children are more open and honest than adults. In other ways, though, they are not able to fully make sense of the troubling things they see and are more likely than adults to accept someone’s words without thinking critically about those words. A child’s view of the world is delightful and we will be charmed by Scout. We will, though, need to read between the lines in this book at times as Scout struggles to understand things that the more-mature reader will already understand. Scout is an unreliable narrator, so the reader will need to do some work to determine that is – and isn’t – true. Jem’s exaggeration of Boo Radley’s appearance is a good example of this. Scout believes her older brother; we, however, should be more skeptical.

2. Jem and Scout call their father by his first name, Atticus, instead of calling him “Dad” or “Daddy.” What does this tell you about their relationship? The children’s mom has died and Atticus is a single father. Students will probably guess that Atticus is a straight-forward or even stern man. They might guess that the relationship between the children and their father is more business-like and less warm/fuzzy.

3. We know that the setting of this story will be Maycomb, Alabama, a sleepy Southern town that’s a little rough around the edges. What is the time period of this story? Give evidence to support your conclusion about the time period of this novel. The novel is set in the early-to-mid 1930s, during the Great Depression. There’s several pieces of evidence that students might cite, including the reference to F.D.R.’s famous line, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” from his 1933 first inaugural address. Scout says, “Maycomb County has recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.” Later, we’ll know in ch. 21 that the trial of Tom Robinson takes place in 1935, when Scout is a little older than she is now.

4. Dill, the children’s neighbor during the summer, is described as “a pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies.” What does this mean? Dill is tiny for his age, hence the “pocket.” He’s so small you could tuck him in your pocket. He’s a “Merlin,” which is an allusion to the famous wizard/magician. Dill has a wonderful, inventive imagination. He loves stories and adventures. It’s because of Dill’s personality and ideas that Jem and Scout will be pulled into the Boo Radley mystery part of this story. If it hadn’t been for Dill, these events would not have unfolded in this way.

5. Who are the Radleys? Describe their house and yard. The Radleys are a family that live on the same block as Jem and Scout. The family is shrouded in mystery involving rumors about Arthur “Boo” Radley, the family’s son who is hardly ever seen. The family’s house was once white, but now is gray with age and neglect. The yard is unkempt. This is the creepy house on the block (seems like every neighborhood has one, no?) and the children fear it. (Later in the book, I use this passage on pg. 8 to show that appearances are deceiving. Boo, as we later learn, is none of the things that the children fear, but I don’t share this with my students yet.)

6. Who were the Cunningham boys and what happened to them? What’s the irony here? The Cunninghams were rowdy troublemaking teens who were arrested, along with Arthur “Boo” Radley. Boo was taken home and locked away from the world by his father. The Cunninghams, however, were sentenced to attend the state’s industrial school, sort of a juvenile hall of the 1930s. The irony is that the state school gave the boys an excellent education and one of them even went on to college to become an engineer. Boo, who wasn’t even one of the ringleaders of the teen crew, was denied access to everything and still rots in that sad, broken house.

7. According to Jem, how do you get a turtle to come out of its shell? In what way might this idea be an apt parallel to get people to do what they don’t want to do? Give an real-world example to support your answer. Jem says that if you light a match under a turtle, the creature will come out of its shell as it tries to move away from the flame. In life, people are sometimes fearful, but need a motivation to get moving. Examples from your students will vary. One example is of an obese man receiving an alarming medical report indicating that he’s cutting his life short with his poor diet/inactivity. That doctor’s visit (and the fear it creates) might be the flame that gets the man moving. In a similar way, the government will make laws and impose taxes to create a pain point to motivate citizens to move onto a better path. High cigarette taxes, for example, might motivate some smokers to give up the habit.
8. Find a simile from this chapter and write down the sentence in which it appears. Yes, I want you to write down the full sentence. This one is my favorite: “Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o’clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.”

Chapter 2
1. Why does Scout’s ability to read and write annoy her teacher, Miss Caroline? The teacher is young and expected that she would be the one to teach the children in the “proper” way to read and write. She finds Scout annoying because the girl’s literacy has made her plans/methods useless. This is a brand-new teacher who is overwhelmed and upset when the class doesn’t run the way she expected.

2. Atticus says that country people, like the Cunninghams, were hit the hardest by “the crash.” To what is he referring? Why would country people be the ones to suffer the most? He’s referring to the 1929 Stock Market Crash. The poorest families suffered the most at this time because they didn’t have much to begin with; middle class families would’ve had a small cushion of savings to help weather the lean times. People like the Cunninghams would not have any cushion.

3. Why are professional people also suffering? Professionals, like Atticus and Dr. Reynolds, earn their wages from the poor families they serve. If the majority of working class families in Maycomb don’t have any money, there’s no money available to pay for professional services. Things are tough all over.

4. Why does Jem not want Scout to acknowledge him at school? Is his behavior typical of an older brother? Jem is older and doesn’t want his baby sister tagging along with him at school, cramping his style. Yes, this is a very typical of older siblings and his comment here makes the reader feel the siblings’ relationship is authentic.

5. An entailment is an unusual legality that prohibits a piece of land from being sold. It was designed to protect a family’s interest in a piece of land because it could only be passed down to a member of the same family, never sold for profit. Jem describes an entailment as “a condition of having your tail in a crack,” and Atticus later says that Jem’s description is surprisingly accurate. How is this an apt description for the Cunningham family? This family has been on the same plot of land for generations, yet the land is unable to support the family any longer. The Cunninghams are stuck because they are so poor, yet their land cannot be sold to help the family survive. Cunninghams also don’t borrow anything or accept handouts, so times during the Great Depression are especially lean for this particular family. They are stuck and in pain.

6. What do you think of Miss Caroline Fisher as a teacher? Students’ answers will vary. Some will be just as irritated with her as Scout is, while other students will feel sympathy for this young teacher who is clearly in over her head.

Chapter 3
1. Why does Walter Cunningham drench his lunch in molasses/syrup? He’s dirt poor and probably rarely, if ever, actually gets to eat any sweet syrup. He’s so excited to be in a house that has syrup available that he covers all of his food with the treat.

2. When Scout criticizes Walter Cunningham’s eating habits, Calpurnia scolds Scout, smacks her on the bottom as she sends the girl out of the room, and then lectures her on proper manners, saying, “Yo’ folks might be better’n the Cunninghams but it don’t count for nothin’ the way you’re disgracin’ ‘em.” What does Calpurnia mean here? Is she right? Scout’s family has more money and belongs to the professional class, but those things don’t show real class. The way we treat each other determines the real quality of people. Students’ answers will vary a bit on the second question, but Calpurnia is right. The richest family could be the trashiest, depending on how the family members behave. Real Housewives of Anywhere, perhaps? One’s bank account doesn’t show who he/she is as a person.

3. In the tiff between Scout and Calpurnia, Atticus takes Calpurnia’s side. What does this show us? First, it shows us that Atticus does the right thing in supporting the right person. He’s a good dad and models the best way to treat people. Second, this shows us that Atticus, whose wife has died before the beginning of the novel, is dependent on Calpurnia’s domestic help. Without her, he wouldn’t be able to raise his children well.

4. Describe the way that Atticus treats Walter. What do you think of this? Atticus talks to Walter like he’s a young man, not a little kid. He directs the conversation toward things that Walter knows/cares about; this shows that Atticus is kind and thinks about the other person’s perspective. Walter might feel ill at ease coming to have a free lunch with Jem and Scout, but Atticus makes sure that he feels comfortable at the Finch table. We, of course, like this about Atticus. He models proper behavior for Scout, who still needs to learn the right way to treat a guest – even if, of especially if, that
person is from a different social class.

5. Atticus tells Scout that you never really understand a person “until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” What does this mean? Give an example from your world to illustrate this idea. He means that we must look at a problem/issue from the other person’s perspective to get a better idea of what’s really happening and to find a solution. This ability to see something through the other person’s eyes is a marker of maturity. Students’ answers to the second question will vary, but they usually talk about resolving conflicts with siblings, parents, or teachers once they view the problem from the other person’s perspective.

6. What is the “compromise” which Atticus suggests at the end of the chapter? He will keep reading with Scout in the evenings (it’ll be their secret) if she agrees to continue to go to school. It’s not really a negotiation, but Atticus makes Scout feel like she’s worked a good deal for herself.

7. Who are the Ewells? How are they the same as the Cunninghams? How are they different? The Ewells are a large, poor family and a disgrace to the town. One of the Ewell children, Burris, arrives for school covered in filth and hosting head lice. This family is broke and has no class; young Burris even calls the new teacher a slut before he storms out of the classroom. The Ewells are similar to the Cunninghams in that none of them has much money. The Ewells, however, are different than the Cunninghams because they don’t have any pride, either. The Ewell mother is dead and the father is a drunk. The children attend school only on the first day of the school year to appease the court officials, but then they essentially drop out of school for the rest of the year. In Maycomb’s social strata, the Ewells are far below the Cunninghams in terms of respectibility.

8. Why do Maycomb officials bend the rules for the Ewells? Is this the right thing to do? Atticus explains that some people cannot be changed, and Bob Ewell is one of those kinds of people. He’ll always be a drunk and a neglectful parent. It’s not worth the fight to keep the Ewell children in school, and Bob Ewell is allowed to illegally hunt because his children would starve otherwise. Atticus knows that sometimes the right thing is not the legal thing; he also understands the necessity of compromise. These issues, of course, will become larger themes as the story unfolds. Students’ answers will vary a bit on the second question, which usually leads to an interesting class discussion.

Chapter 4

1. What does Scout think of her school’s new style of education? What does this failing show us about adults? She, of course, greatly dislikes the new methods and doesn’t understand why they can’t just learn the way Atticus learned. The “Dewey Decimal System,” which Jem has incorrectly named, is not effective. This shows us that adults don’t always know what they’re doing. Sometimes, kids have a better grasp on how things should run. Later in the novel, Scout will view a similar brokeness in the adult justice system as we watch the unjust trial of Tom Robinson unfold.

2. What’s the first thing Scout finds in the knothole of the tree on the edge of the Radley property? What’s the second thing she finds? How many of each item was there? Significance of this? Who, do you suppose, put the items in the tree hole? First, she finds two sticks of Wrigley’s Double-Mint gum. Later, she and Jem find a small jewelry box with two shiny pennies inside. Since there are two of each item (interesting, Scout chewed both the pieces of gum herself), it seems logical to the reader that one of each item was intended for Scout, the other for Jem. They are the only children who walk by the Radley property each day. Students usually understand that one of the Radleys, perhaps Arthur/Boo, has left these gifts for the Finch children.

3. Scout has two reasons for wanting to quit Jem and Dill’s Radley game. What are they? First, she knows that her father won’t like them playing this game and they’ll get in trouble. Second, she heard laughter coming from the house on the day that she accidentally rolled onto the Radley property when she was stuck inside the tire. She knows that the Radleys are aware of the children.

Chapter 5

1. Describe Miss Maudie Atkinson. How typical is she of Maycomb’s women? What do the children think of her? Miss Maudie is one of Atticus’ neighbors and about 10 years younger than him (she’s about the same age as Jack). She loves gardening and allows the children to run around her yard and eat her grapes, as long as they don’t damage her flowers. When she bakes, she also makes three small cakes for Scout, Jem, and Dill. She is a Southern lady, but her ways are a bit contrary to the typical women of Maycomb. Miss Maudie would rather be outside in her garden than inside reading her Bible, and she is criticized by some for this. The children like Miss Maudie, but don’t really
spend much time with her. In this summer, though, Scout isn’t invited along with Jem and Dill all the time, so she starts spending part of her evening with Miss Maudie on her porch, watching the sun set. She says that Miss Maudie “is the best lady I know.”

2. Miss Maudie says, “…sometimes the Bible in the hands of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of—oh, of your father.” Explain what she means. She means that some toxic men, like Boo Radley’s father, can use the Bible, a good book, to justify doing terrible things, like locking up an errant son. She compares Mr. Radley to Atticus, a good man who couldn’t do much damage even on his worst day. Some men are good and will always do good, no matter what. Other men are damaged and will cause pain in the world, no matter what.

3. What does Miss Maudie tell Scout about Boo? How does this compare with what Scout already believes? She explains that Arthur (she uses his real name instead of “Boo”) is alive and just prefers to stay inside. When Scout asks if Boo is crazy, Miss Maudie says that he might be and the craziness might’ve been caused by staying inside for so long. Remember, she loves being outside and this line makes me think of cabin fever/being stir crazy.

4. Scout says that “Dill Harris could tell the biggest” lies she ever heard. Why might Dill have told such lies? Dill must have a troubled home life. He doesn’t really know who his father is and his mother has to send him to live with his aunt every summer. To avoid embarrassment, Dill has started to lie about his father’s identity. In part, he does this to appear more interesting to his friends. He also, though, is probably sad that he doesn’t have a strong male influence (someone like Atticus) to be his father. The lies help smooth things over for Dill.

5. Paraphrase Atticus’ speech about the Radleys’ right to privacy. Do you agree with his point of view? Why or why not? He says that a family has a right to keep to themselves and be left alone. He wants the children to stop their games with the Radleys and move on to something else. Students’ answers will vary about agreement/disagreement. Some will say it’s all just harmless childhood fun; others will say it’s not appropriate to mock, even if it’s unintentional, the trials that a family has endured.

Chapter 6

1. List the four reasons Jem and Dill give for deciding to peek into the Radley window on this particular night. 1. They figure nobody will see them at night. 2. Atticus will be distracted with his evening reading and won’t notice what they’re doing. 3. If Boo kills them, they’ll miss school instead of missing summer vacation. 4. It’s easier to see into a dark house when it’s dark outside than when it’s light outside.

2. Find and write down the line from early in the chapter that foreshadows the trouble Jem will have when he tries to flee the Radley’s backyard. The foreshadowing line is when the children are climbing under the fence wire. Scout explains to us that, “It was a tight squeeze for [Jem].”

3. Jem wants to return to the Radley yard and fetch his pants so he can stay out of trouble with Atticus. Scout wants Jem to leave the pants where they are and face the consequences with Atticus. With which child do you agree? Why?

Chapter 7

1. According to Scout, what’s the only good thing about second grade? She gets to walk home with Jem every day.

2. What spooked Jem on the night of the Radley house incident? Who, do you suppose, did this? When Jem went back to get his pants off the fence line, the rip in the fabric had been crudely sewn and the pants were left neatly folded for him at the fence. One of the Radleys, most likely Boo Radley himself, must have fixed the pants and left them for Jem.

3. After they find the soap dolls, what does Jem realize that Scout does not yet understand? Jem knows that Boo Radley is watching them. He’s also starting to realize that, perhaps, Boo isn’t as harmful as they had feared.

4. Look closely at this line: “Jem stared at me so long I asked what was the matter, but got Nothing, Scout for an answer.” What does the elimination of the quotation punctuation do for this passage? It makes us feel more like Scout, a child, is actually speaking to us. There’s no pause/stop caused by the punctuation, so the sentence has a nice flow. This technique makes the narrator’s voice more authentic.

5. At the end of the chapter, Jem quietly cries alone on the porch. Give two reasons to explain Jem’s tears. Nathan
Radley, Boo’s brother, has cemented over the knot hole in the tree, essentially cutting off the line of communication between Boo and Jem/Scout. Jem is crying because he’s sad to be blocked from his blossoming relationship with Boo, but he’s also crying for the way it must feel to be Boo, trapped in the house and alone in the world.

Chapter 8
1. What does Mr. Avery say that bad children cause? What’s ironic about this, given Jem and Scout’s reaction to the snow? Mr. Avery says that bad children make the weather change. The irony, of course, is that Jem and Scout love the unexpected snow. Scout figures if their bad behavior causes the awesomeness of snow, perhaps they should be naughty more often.
2. Why does Atticus awaken Jem and Scout instead of just letting them sleep through the fire incident? Give a line of text to support your answer. He’s worried that their own home might also catch fire. We know this when Atticus tells Jem, “See which way the wind’s blowing?” Jem then realizes that embers could easily blow onto their house, spreading the fire.
3. During the fire, Boo Radley has quietly placed a blanket across Scout’s shoulders. Why doesn’t Jem want his father to return the blanket to the Radley family? Jem notices that Nathan Radley, Boo’s brother, was outside fighting the fire with the other men. He’s worried that Boo will get in trouble with Nathan for leaving the house.
4. After the fire is over, how does Miss Maudie feel about the destruction of her house? What does this tell you about her character, her values? She’s not too upset because she says the house was too big, anyway. This fire will allow her to rebuild a smaller house and have more room on her property for gardening. Miss Maudie is resilient. Her positive attitude spills over onto everything in her life. She also doesn’t highly value material objects. The garden is more important to her.
5. Write down the line of text from this chapter that shows Jem believes that he and Scout are no better than anyone else in their town. When Jem is talking to Miss Maudie, he notices that she’s wrecked her hands trying to fix her yard. He says, “You’ve ruined ‘em...Why don’t you get a colored man?...Or Scout’n’me, we can help you.” In this time of segregation, Jem shows that he’s willing to do the same low, hard work that an African-American man might be hired to complete. There’s a tone of equality in this line, as well as a gentlemanliness toward Miss Maudie.
6. Once you’ve finished the chapter, go back and look at the portion that describes Jem and Scout’s snowman, which is covered with white snow on the outside, but has a core of dark mud. Symbolically connect the snowman to either Mr. Avery (go beyond the “Morphodite’s” physical similarity to Mr. Avery) or Boo Radley. How could the snowman be seen as a symbol for one of these men? Answers will vary, but both men are not what they seem, just as the snowman is something different on the inside than what it seems to be on the outside. Mr. Avery is viewed as a crank who is mean to the children. In this chapter, however, he risks his life to try to save Miss Maudie’s belongings, a move which could be described as heroic. Boo, your students are likely realizing by now, is nothing at all like the rumors. He was feared when we began this story, but now we have warm feelings about Boo, who seems to be looking out for the kids.

Chapter 9
1. When Atticus speaks of defending Tom Robinson, he says, “Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win.” To what is Atticus referring? Why would it be worthwhile to fight a battle that you know you’re going to lose? Since the book is set during the 1930s, Atticus is referring to the time in Maycomb before the Civil War, when slavery was a part of life in the South. Maycomb’s residents continue to hold onto their old ways/beliefs. Yes, slavery has been abolished, but there’s still a huge divide between the white and black families in the town and racism rules the town. Atticus decides he’s going to fight this losing battle because there’s honor in trying to do the right thing. He needs to be a role model for his children. In his own way, he plans to “jar” the town a bit and be an agent for social change.
2. Think about Scout’s fight with Francis and Atticus’ message to Uncle Jack about children being able to “spot an evasion quicker than adults.” How do these two elements connect to the value of having Scout, a child, be the narrator of this story? Through Scout’s eyes, the reader will more clearly see the truth. Children, Atticus says, instinctively know what is right/wrong and know when an adult is lying. These will make Scout a good narrator as the trial of Tom Robinson begins because her viewpoint will not be tainted by the racism that affects most of the adults in this town.
3. Atticus is worried about “ugly things” that the family will face in the next few months. Although we haven’t read this
part of the story yet, what sorts of things do you suppose have Atticus worried? Students’ answers will vary, but the harassment could easily slip from verbal (all of that n-word lover taunting from the children) to physical threats. Give credit for any reasonable answers.

4. Thinking back to earlier chapters, what do we know about the Ewells? From this chapter, what do we know about Tom Robinson? Given this, why would the townsfolk be more likely to accept Mr. Ewell’s testimony than Mr. Robinson’s? We learned during Scout’s first day of school that the Ewells are a low-class white family that is the shame of the county. The Ewells are rude, crude, and uneducated. From Atticus, we learned in this chapter that Tom Robinson is also poor (he lives just past the town’s dump), but he’s a “clean-living man.” Calpurnia, their housekeeper, knows Tom Robinson because they attend the same church and she says he’s a good man. In this town, people’s racism will cloud their good sense so much that they’ll take the word of a rotten white man over an honorable black man.

5. According to Atticus, what is Maycomb’s “usual disease?” Why is he worried that his children will catch it? The disease is racism and he wants to raise his children to be open-minded and love every neighbor. By defending Tom Robinson, he’s hoping to model for his children the way we should treat each other.

6. Read the final sentence of this chapter. Explain in your own words what it means. In what way is his conversation with his brother also a message for his daughter? The line reminds us that Scout is telling this story as a flashback and that Atticus wanted her to understand the storm that’s approaching the family. In the passage, he also wants her to hear that he’s proud of her, loves her, and knows she’s capable of doing the right thing, even when it’s hard. He’s also clearly stating to her furtive listening ears that judging a man by the color of his skin is just wrong, even if the majority of people in their town do this very thing. He’s already begun to teach her big lessons and the trial hasn’t even begun.

Chapter 10

1. Record the line of text that includes the reference to the title. Explain its meaning in the scene AND take a guess as to the idea’s larger meaning. I know you haven’t finished the book yet, but I still want you to guess about how this line connects to the message of the novel. After Jem receives his air-rifle, Atticus tells him, “Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit ‘em, but remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” From a later passage in the chapter, students should be able to conclude that it’s wrong to harm someone who is innocent. All the mockingbird does is create sweet music. A person who is like this (perhaps Boo Radley? Tom Robinson?) ought to be protected, not targeted. Students’ answers will vary a bit on this question.

2. At the beginning of the chapter, Scout is critical of Atticus because he seems old and doesn’t do anything that she deems impressive. By the end of the chapter, her opinion has changed. Why? She discovers her father is legendary for his marksmanship. He kills Tim Johnson, the rabid dog, with one rifle shot.

3. Why isn’t Atticus proud of his shooting ability? He says that a God-given talent is nothing to brag about because he didn’t have much of a part to play in being a good shot. Also, he views hunting as destructive, and he doesn’t want to use his shooting ability until the situation arises where he needs to use a gun.

4. What is Miss Stephanie Crawford’s reaction to the death of Tim Johnson? She’s a sour lady who criticizes Atticus, even though he saved the day. She speculates that the dog wasn’t even rabid and that the owner will be upset when he finds out Atticus killed his beloved dog. I like how Miss Maudie gently calls out her hypocrisy in that moment.

Chapter 11

1. When Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose pushes Jem too far, he loses his mind a bit, destroying her flowers and breaking Scout’s baton. What other rough thing does he do in that moment? What message can we take from this part of the incident? He also roughs up Scout, yanking her hair and kicking her. Students will conclude different things from this moment, but it’s clear to the reader that anger will spill over and affect the innocent. I encourage students to keep an eye on this idea as we continue to read.

2. What was Jem’s punishment? Did it fit his crime? Jem must read to Mrs. Dubose each day for two hours. Students’ opinions will vary about the fairness of this sentence and it usually makes for a good class discussion.

3. Atticus is not upset that Mrs. Dubose calls him foul names behind his back. To Scout, he explains, “...it’s never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn’t hurt you.” Explain his meaning. Do you agree or disagree with him? Why? Finally, give a real-world example from your life to illustrate your point. Atticus means that foul words and sour thoughts tell us more about the speaker than the intended
subject. Students’ answers to the second half of the question will vary. Expect a good conversation on this one.

4. Why does Mrs. Dubose keep the children a few minutes longer each day? She’s trying to break her addiction to morphine and she uses their visit as a distraction. She’s probably trying to stretch out the time between doses until she no longer needs anymore morphine.

5. In what ways was Mrs. Dubose heroic? She, like Atticus, decided to fight a battle she would probably lose to overcome her drug addiction, yet she conquered it. Also, she decides to die free. She could have taken the easier road and died as an addict, but she wanted to do the more difficult, but righteous thing. Some readers might read this as a hopeful bit of foreshadowing for Atticus’ upcoming court battle.

6. Other than living on the same street, what do Boo Radley, Atticus, and Mrs. Dubose all have in common? What larger message is supported by examination of these three characters? All three of these characters are different than what they appear to be to Scout. Boo isn’t scary; he’s nurturing. Atticus isn’t old and feeble; he’s a sharp shooter with a reputation. Mrs. Dubose isn’t just a cranky old lady; she’s also battling an addiction and shows compassion toward the end of the chapter by sending the flower to Jem. Many characters in this novel are much more than their outward appearance presents.

7. Look back over this chapter and record two similes. Yes, I want you to write down the full sentence in which each simile appears. There are many, especially in the descriptive passages about Mrs. Dubose. Here’s two in one sentence: “Her face was the color of a dirty pillowcase, and the corner of her mouth glistened with wet, which inched along like a glacier down the deep grooves enclosing her chin.”

8. Look back over this chapter and record what you think is the best line. Be prepared to defend your answer in class tomorrow. Students’ answers will vary, but I really like: “The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” For this question, I usually have students work in teams of three to debate their answers on the following day before we talk as a full class to pluck out/discuss favorite lines.

Chapter 12

1. Why do Jem and Scout go to church with Calpurnia? Where is Atticus? Atticus is at the state legislature’s emergency session at the state capital. Calpurnia doesn’t trust the kids will behave themselves at their church without Atticus (based on previous incidents), so she takes them with her to the African-American church. She also, the reader sees, is making a point about integration and equality. The children are, mostly, welcomed at the church and the congregation is grateful to the work of their father.

2. Why is the church named First Purchase? It was the first thing that the former slaves of Maycomb purchased with their earnings as free men. It holds a lot of symbolic importance for the community.

3. Does Lula speak for the majority opinion in the congregation? Why does the author include her in the church scene? No, Lula does not speak for the crowd and she is shushed/whisked away when other, kinder people come forward to greet the children. Lee is showing a couple of things here. First, it’s a truth that there are sour people in every community; in a way, Lula echoes the feelings of Aunt Alexandra and Stephanie Crawford. Each community has its own naysayers. Second, her negativity is conquered by a greater amount of positive energy from the rest of the congregation. When good people speak up, they can silence those who are trying to bully or threaten the minority.

4. What is the crime that’s been charged against Tom Robinson? He’s been accused of raping one of the Ewell daughters. A charge that a black man raped a white woman in this community is, of course, going to grab the public’s attention.

5. Why can’t Helen Robinson work and support her three children? She wants to work, but no one will hire her because of the charges against her husband. The white community doesn’t want to get involved with her family.

6. During the church service, we find out that Calpurnia is one of the few African-American residents of Maycomb who can read. The children get to know Cal better during this Sunday and realize lots of things about her that they didn’t know, including that she’s older than they realized. Look closely at this passage:

“But, Cal,” Jem protested, “you don’t look even near as old as Atticus.”

“Colored folks don’t show their ages so fast,” she said.

“Maybe because they can’t read...”

What’s humorous or interesting about this short passage? The reader should chuckle at this because Jem is suggesting that ignorance is bliss. When you can’t read, you can’t get upset about the terrible things you read about in the
newspaper or worry yourself about trying difficult legal cases. Atticus, perhaps, looks a little older than he is because he reads and worries so much.

7. What nasty surprise awaits the children at the very end of the chapter? Aunt Alexandra has come for a visit and is waiting for them on the porch.

Chapter 13

1. Scout and Aunt Alexandra communicate very poorly with each other. Is the fault more with one than the other, or are they equally at fault? Explain your answer. Students’ answers will vary, but Scout doesn’t try at all to encourage conversation and Aunt Alexandra is harsh and critical in most of what she says. They’re both at fault.

2. What’s the reason the children are given as to why Aunt Alexandra has come to stay with them? What do you think is the real reason? The children are told that they’re getting older and Aunt Alexandra will be able to help Scout become more of a lady. The real reason likely has to do with the upcoming trial. Atticus will be busy with the legal case and won’t be around as much to parent and protect his children. Aunt Alexandra will play more of the parent role this summer.

3. Atticus says to Scout, “Your aunt’s doing me a favor as well as you all. I can’t stay here all day with you, and the summer’s going to be a hot one.” There’s a double-meaning to this line. Explain. Scout thinks that Atticus is referring to the temperature. The reader, however, knows that tensions in the town toward his family are going to heat up as the trial gets underway. Having his sister at the house will give him a bit more peace of mind about the safety of his children.

4. Aunt Alexandra is critical of many of Maycomb’s families. According to Jem, what’s ironic about this? He says that the Finch family is pretty much related to everyone in town, so when she criticizes other families she’s just about criticizing their own family.

5. What did Cousin Joshua do and how does he become a wedge between Aunt Alexandra and Atticus? Their cousin Joshua was a good writer, but lost his mind while at college and threatened to assassinate the president. Joshua blew up his own hand with the gun he’d planned to use and it cost the Finch family $500 to get him out of jail. Aunt Alexandra wants to pretend the scandalous incident never happened, but Atticus has already told Jem about this particularly piece of juicy family lore. Aunt Alexandra wants to paint a pretty picture and preserve the family’s reputation. Atticus is more interested in facing the truth.

6. Look at the last short paragraph of the chapter. What was Atticus trying to do? Why is this sort of thing, according to Scout, better left to a woman? He was trying to reinforce his sister’s attitude about family heritage and breeding to his children, but it made him physically ill. Really, he’s asking his children to accept lies or half-truths. Interesting, Scout believes that woman are better at selling this sort of thing. Clearly, young Scout doesn’t have a high opinion of the fairer sex.

Chapter 14

1. How does Aunt Alexandra feel about Calpurnia? Explain why this is “in character” for Aunt Alexandra? She doesn’t like Calpurnia and wants Atticus to fire her, but Atticus refuses to do so. Alexandra is appalled that Calpurnia took the children to the African-American church and feels she is partly to blame for Scout’s poor behavior. Alexandra is always looking for a reason to be displeased. Atticus defends Calpurnia and refuses to let her go, but this is a growing tension in the household.

2. Comment on Atticus’ explanation of rape. Why does Atticus explain the crime in this way? He gives a flat legal definition and uses advanced vocabulary that Scout would not really be able to understand. He’s directly answering her question, as he told Uncle Jack one ought to do, but he does it in a way that the true meaning is not clear to Scout. She’s really too young to have to face such ugly realities.

3. What does Jem do that, to Scout, symbolizes the end of his childhood? When she and Jem discover Dill hiding under her bed, he immediately calls for his father. Essentially, he turns in Dill.

4. Dill tries to explain to Scout why he did not want to stay with his mother and new stepfather. State his reasons briefly in your own words. They aren’t mean to him, but they aren’t interested in spending time with him either. He feels like a third wheel and figures that they’ll get along better without him around.

5. Twice now, Scout has considered running away. Dill did, in fact, run away from home. Why, according to Dill, hasn’t
Boo Radley ever run away from his terrible home? Dill says that Boo probably doesn’t have anywhere to run to.

Chapter 15

1. What was the “sickening comic aspect” of Atticus’ exchange with the small mob of men? What does this show us about the men in the small mob? About Atticus? Upon later reflection, Scout realizes that the entire exchange was completed in near-whispers because Atticus told the men to be quiet and not awaken Tom Robinson. This is ironic, of course, because these men want to kill Tom, yet they follow Atticus’ instructions and keep their voices low. This shows that the men in the mob are basically good guys and respect Atticus. They are swayed by their emotions, but ultimately don’t hurt anyone. This scene also shows us that Atticus is a powerful force; people listen to him and follow his direction.

2. Why does Jem openly defy Atticus and refuse to leave? He knows that his father is in danger and refuses to abandon him. Jem’s defiance shows him growing into his manhood. He’s doing the right thing by staying.

3. What does Scout’s childish attempt at conversation accomplish? Explain. She successfully diffuses the tension by engaging Mr. Cunningham in conversation. She is largely responsible for ensuring that no violence occurs outside of the jail that night.

4. Why was Atticus so affectionate toward Jem, even after Jem disobeyed him? Jem did the right thing and followed his own conscience even when he was directed by an authority figure to do the opposite. This willingness to do the difficult but right thing is exactly what Atticus has been trying to teach his children all along, so he is pleased.

Chapter 16

1. What does Scout learn about mob mentality? Answers will vary, but she certainly learned that a mob is made up of individuals who can still be reasoned with. If you can convince one person, like Mr. Cunningham, to see things from a different perspective, you might be able to alter the intentions of the entire mob.

2. Mr. Dolphus Raymond is evidently a complicated and interesting person. Describe his way of life and comment on its effect upon the town. He is white and wealthy, but chooses to live in the “colored” part of town with an African-American woman who has bore him many “mixed” children. He drinks liquor out of a Coca-Cola bottle hidden in a paper bag, so as not to offend the proper ladies walking about. He’s an independent soul who does not care what the rest of Maycomb thinks about this unconventional ways. Interestingly, it reads as though Jem (via Atticus’ influence, no doubt) respects him.

3. Why did Mr. Dolphus Raymond’s fiancée die? What does this show the reader about life in Maycomb? When she found out that Dolphus was having an affair with an African-American woman on the side, she killed herself with a gunshot blast to the head. To this woman, there was no greater humiliation, showing that in this culture she felt she would’ve been forever tainted to have been involved in such a sordid love triangle. The fact that the other woman was black made this beyond anything she could handle.

4. Jem says that “mixed” children are sad because they don’t belong anywhere. What does he mean? Is having a sense of belonging important in life? Explain your thoughts. Because the children are half-white/half-black, they aren’t accepted by either group. Answers to the second question will vary, but it is true that people need to have a place where they feel connected to other people, whether in a friendship or family group. Even though some people prefer isolation, humans are pack animals and we like the comfort and security of a group.

5. Judge Taylor’s appearance and his ability are two different things. What comment might the author be making in building the judge in this way? Judge Taylor is yet another example of someone being very different than he/she appears to be from the outside. We’ve had this theme running through the book, as discussed in earlier chapters with Boo Radley, Mr. Avery, and Atticus.

6. Symbolically, what does the physical structure of the courthouse show us about the people of Maycomb? Scout explains that the mish-mash of styles shows that the people of Maycomb are determined to preserve the past, even if the result is ugly and doesn’t fit together smoothly with the new ways/styles. Obviously, she’s talking about a lot more than architecture here.

7. Why didn’t Atticus tell his children that he had to defend Tom Robinson, that he was appointed by the court and didn’t really have a choice about taking the case? It’s true that Atticus was assigned the case, but he also wants to be the one to defend Tom and he wants to do the best job he can. If he said that he was only representing Tom because
he was required to do so, that would be an excuse. By omitting this part of the situation in his conversations with his children, he is showing them that he’s choosing to do the right thing in a difficult situation, and that’s the lesson he wants to teach. To do otherwise would lessen the effectiveness of the message.

8. Why do the four men give up their seats for Jem, Scout, Dill, and Reverend Sykes? What does this show us? The men up in the balcony designed for African-Americans give up their plum seats because of the Reverend’s request to do so. This move shows the community’s respect for the religious leader. It also shows that the black community respects Atticus’ children and understand that this trial is something they should witness. Perhaps the children will be the next generation to take everyone another step closer to justice.

9. As the examination begins, Atticus’ table is bare. What does this show us? There are different ways to read this, but most students see this as a sign of Atticus’ intelligence, preparation, and/or confidence. He doesn’t need any reference materials because he knows the case inside-and-out; he knows exactly what he’s going to say and do.

Chapter 17

1. Scout says that Atticus has an “infinite capacity for calming turbulent seas.” What does she mean by this? Is this true? She’s speaking about the rape case, which he starts off making it seem dry and uninteresting. Looking deeper, we see that Atticus has a calming effect on everyone around him, whether it’s causing his excitable children to settle down or convincing a racist mob to go home without causing any harm. So, yes, it is true that Atticus can calm things down.

2. In history, who was Robert E. Lee? Feel free to look up this info. and write down what you discover. What’s interesting about this man being Mr. Ewell’s namesake? Robert E. Lee was the best-known leader of the Confederate Army in the U.S. Civil War. He was the main military leader trying to separate the South from the Union so as to preserve the practice of slavery. Mr. Ewell shares his name (Robert E. Lee Ewell) and his racism, but not his title or social class. Lee was respected by the Southern residents who wanted to leave the Union, whereas Mr. Ewell is not respected by anyone.

3. Looking at the Ewell property, what item stands out as not belonging with all of the other broken junk? What might this symbolize? The brilliant red geraniums are a stark contrast to the rest of the wreckage in the yard/Ewell residence. Answers about the symbolism will vary, but students usually say it’s a hopeful sign that beauty can come out of horrible situations. Sometimes students think it might mean that Mayella is better than the rest of the Ewells, but we know from her testimony/behavior in court that she is not.

4. Reverend Sykes has second thoughts about allowing the children to stay and listen to the graphic testimony, but ultimately relents to Jem and allows them to stay. Why doesn’t Rev. Sykes force them to leave? There’s two possible reasons. First, no black man can order a white person, even a white child, around in this time and town. Jem presents himself as nearly grown, so he is the authority in the conversation. Second, none of them wants to miss a minute of the testimony. If Sykes made a fuss, he’d miss out on hearing what’s happening in the courtroom.

5. Judge Taylor refuses to close the courtroom and says, “People generally see what they look for, and hear what they listen for, and they have the right to subject their children to it...” What does he mean? We are all biased and view the world through our own unique lens. We seek out information that confirms our biases, even if that information isn’t the full truth of what was said or of the situation. If you go into a situation expecting to be disappointed, you’ll be disappointed, no matter what actually happens.

6. Why didn’t Mr. Ewell have a doctor check out his daughter? What does this show us about the man? He says he never thought to do so because he’s never taken any of his children to the doctor. Also, it would cost $5, which he seems to view as a waste of money. This answer shows several things: he neglects his children, is distrustful of authority, and is cheap. It should also raise our suspicion that Mayella didn’t need a doctor because she hadn’t actually been raped.

7. What’s compelling about the fact that Mr. Ewell is left-handed? Since Mayella was beaten on the right side of her face, it would’ve had to have been a left-handed attacker who did the damage. Tom, we soon learn, was disfigured in an equipment accident as boy and has no use of his left arm. Mr. Ewell, however, has full power in his left arm.

8. Look at the last line of the chapter. What is the old saying that Scout refers to here? How is this an appropriate idiom for this point in the trial? The old saying is, “Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched.” Scout is worried that Atticus has only called Mr. Ewell into question, but he hasn’t removed the doubt about Tom yet. There’s still more to do before this case is won.
Chapter 18
1. What does Atticus do that makes Mayella Ewell think that he’s making fun of her? What does this show us about Mayella’s life? He refers to her as “ma’am” and “Miss Mayella,” which are both terms of respect. No one has ever addressed her with such respectful terms, so she thinks he must be mocking her. This is sad. We should pity Mayella here because she’s been treated roughly and disrespected her entire life.
2. What is so important about Tom Robinson’s physical appearance? What, according to the testimony, does this prove beyond a doubt? His left arm is about 12 inches shorter than his right and he has no use of his left hand, due to a childhood accident with some farm equipment. It would be physically impossible for him to hold Mayella down with hand/arm and beat her with his left hand. He could not have done what Mayella testified he did; she’s caught in an obvious lie.
3. Is Mayella like her father or different from him? In what ways? Answers will vary. She’s unlike him in that she has no power in their household and she tries to make things a little nicer with her pretty red flowers. She is, though, a product of her environment and she echoes her father’s racism, hatred, and suspicion of Maycomb at large. In accusing Tom, she’s perpetuating an evil act, knowingly hurting an innocent man.
4. What does Scout notice about Mayella as she leaves the witness stand and passes Atticus’ defense table? Scout has never seen anyone stare at another person with so much hatred as Mayella stares at Atticus. (Don’t tell the class yet, but this is a good passage to use later as an example of foreshadowing Mr. Ewell’s attack on Jem and Scout.)

Chapter 19
1. Why does Atticus mention Tom’s previous record of conviction? It shows the jury that he has nothing to hide. It’s also better for the defense to admit something like that right up front to the jury, rather than having the prosecutor be the one to introduce that type of potentially damaging information about the defendant’s background.
2. Explain Tom’s version of the events on the evening of Nov. 21. Mayella sent all of the children to town to get ice cream and then lured Tom into her house, where she threw herself on him. He resisted, but didn’t want to hurt her. Her father saw them tussling through the window and yelled at his daughter for being a whore, trying to fool around with a black man. Tom knew he was in a jam, so he ran home, scared.
3. In that moment with Mayella, Tom is in a no-win situation. Explain the “subtlety of Tom’s predicament.” If he hits Mayella to get her to let go of him, he’ll be killed for striking a white woman. If he runs, though, it’ll look like he’s guilty of something nefarious. In that moment, he runs because he is scared, but, of course, people view that as an action of a guilty man. Tom explains that any black man in that situation would run.
4. How is Mr. Link Deas heroic? He stands up and publicly declares that Tom is a good worker, a good man. Deas is taking a social risk in doing this, as most of the white people of Maycomb had already determined Tom was guilty before they’d even heard a word of testimony. Deas, though, follows his heart and speaks up for his employee/friend.
5. Why was it a “mistake” for Tom to say that he felt sorry for Mayella? The white community finds it offensive that a black man would feel sorry for a white woman because it implies that Tom thinks of himself in a position of being better than her. It sounds uppity to the white people in the room, even though he doesn’t mean it that way.
6. Miss Maudie once said that Atticus Finch is “the same in the courtroom as he is on the public streets.” What makes this such an awesome compliment? It means that he’s always true to himself; he never puts on a show or pretends to be anything other than what he is at his core. With Atticus, you know exactly who you’re dealing with at all times. This is a rare trait, as most people lie and pretend to get through the day.
7. Dill becomes physically sensitive at the end of the chapter, so he and Scout leave to get some fresh air. Is Dill too sensitive? What’s the author’s message in having Dill become ill? Dill is not too sensitive. Everyone should be sickened by the injustice being served to Tom in the courtroom. It’s outrageous that the baseless charges have even come to trial. The author has earlier told us that children are better able to view the world as it really is, since they aren’t colored by their biases yet. Dill has an unfiltered view of right and wrong; the treatment Tom is facing is just plain wrong.

Chapter 20
1. At the beginning of the chapter, we find out that Mr. Raymond sips only Coca-Cola from a paper sack, deliberately
pretending to be drunk. Why does he do this? He says it makes it easier for people to accept his unconventional lifestyle choices if they think he’s a drunkard. He says the drunkenness is a reason that people can point to as an explanation of things they do not understand.

2. Why does Mr. Raymond tell Scout and Dill about his life? He knows that Dill was made ill by the injustice he witnessed. He says that children see things as they really are, so he doesn’t mind if they know his secret.

3. Scout says that Mr. Dolphus Raymond was “an evil man.” Is she right? Explain your answer. No, he’s not evil, just misunderstood. Mr. Raymond is another character who forces Scout to challenge her thinking about appearance.

4. Why, according to Atticus, did Mayelle throw her false accusation at Tom? Like a child refusing to take responsibility for her actions, she throws blame back on the victim. She is embarrassed that she’s broken a social norm by trying to seduce (awkwardly) a black man and she doesn’t want to face the criticism of the community. She’s also trying to protect her father, the one who probably actually beat her.

5. According to Atticus, what is the only institution that can serve as an equalizer of men? Do you agree with this idea? The courts/justice system. Answers to the second question will vary widely. I give credit to any reasonable answers. This question tends to open up good class discussions.

Chapter 21
1. Jem is confident that Atticus has won the case, but Atticus is not as certain. Write the line of text that shows Atticus knows he’ll lose, but that he’s not ready to take away Jem’s hope. When Atticus tells the children to go home for supper and that they can return afterward, even though he suspects the verdict will be delivered by the jury before the children are able to return, Jem says, “You think they’ll acquit him that fast?” Then, “Atticus opened his mouth to answer, but shut it and left us.” Atticus suspects the jury will return quickly with a guilty verdict, but he can’t bring himself to dash Jem’s hopes.

2. Why is a long-deliberating jury a good sign? Clearly, there’s some dissention. At least some of the jurors think Tom is not guilty.

3. How does Scout “know” the verdict before she hears it? She notices that the jury members don’t look at Tom, a classic signal that they are about to convict the defendant.

4. Why do the people in the balcony gallery stand when Atticus leaves the courtroom? They stand to show respect. Yes, Atticus lost the case, but he fought valiantly. There’s honor in the fight and they recognize that he launched the best defense possible.

Chapter 22
1. Aunt Alexandra tries to scold Atticus for allowing the children to attend the trial, but Atticus says, “This is their home, sister...We’ve made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it.” Explain Atticus’ message. Part of Maycomb is unequal treatment and injustice. He figures his children will have to face this problem for the rest of their lives in their beloved little town, so it’s time they begin to understand the full picture of their community. There’s no need to protect them/shield them from the truth.

2. Atticus lost the case, yet the black community has reacted with generosity, filling his kitchen with food. Why did people drop off so much food? This is their way of thanking Atticus for doing the best job he could in defending Tom. These folks don’t have much, but they’ll give what they have to show their appreciation to Atticus. This part chokes me up everytime.

3. What’s interesting about Miss Maudie’s cake? First, she got up early to make it for the children, knowing they would need a little sweetness to counter the bitterness of the world. Next, she deliberately sliced Jem a piece from the larger cake, symbolizing this growth from a child to a young adult. Finally, the cake echoes the food donations to the family from the African-American community, which shows that Miss Maudie, and likely many other white community members, share the feeling that Tom was unjustly convicted.

4. How did Judge Taylor try to help Tom? He appointed Atticus as the defense attorney when the case would have normally gone to Maxwell Green, a less-experienced attorney. Judge Taylor, Heck Tate, and Link Deas were white men who all wanted Tom to be freed and all tried in their own ways to make the jury agree.

5. What “baby step” was made with this case? Miss Maudie is trying to explain to the children that this is the first time a white jury really considered siding with a black voice over a white one. With the lengthy deliberation, it shows that
this is the first time that many people on the jury – and many in the audience – are facing the truth that white is not always right. This is the first step toward equal rights.

6. What does Dill say he wants to be when he’s grown? Why? He says he’ll be a clown because he wants to laugh at the ridiculous hypocrisy of the adult world. He’ll be an unusual clown, though, because he’ll laugh at the audience instead of having the audience laugh at him. This passage makes us think that Dill will need to laugh to keep from crying at the injustice he sees in the world.

7. At the end of the chapter, what do we discovered happened to Atticus that morning? Bob Ewell found Atticus downtown, spit in his face, and threatened that “he’d get him if it took the rest of his life.” Atticus is now a target.

Chapter 23
1. How does Atticus react to Bob Ewell’s threat against him? He uses dry humor to try to diffuse the situation.
2. What is “circumstantial evidence” and what does it have to do with Tom’s case? Without physical evidence and eyewitness accounts, a court can only use circumstantial evidence, logical deductions about what must have happened, to convict someone. Atticus thinks that circumstantial evidence should not be enough to convict someone of a capital offense.
3. In thinking about the injustices faced by Tom and other members of the African-American community, Atticus says, “Don’t fool youselves – it’s all adding up and one of these days we’re going to pay the bill for it. I hope it’s not in you children’s time.” What is his concern/prediction about the future? Atticus knows that a group of people can be mistreated/put down for only so long. He hints here about an uprising, which may turn ugly and violent. If we don’t treat the minority community well, a major problem will eventually explode, he suggests.
4. Aunt Alexandra accepts that the Cunninghams may be good people, but she still thinks “they’re not our kind of folks.” Later, she calls them “trash.” This book was first published in 1960 and set in the 1930s, yet these class distinctions are still with us today. Why do you think, as Scout says so clearly toward the end of the chapter, folks just don’t get along with each other? Why do we allow this separation of race and class to still exist? Answers will vary widely and this question always leads to a compelling class discussion.
5. At the end of this chapter, Jem forms a new theory about why Boo Radley rarely leaves his house. What is this? How likely is it to be true? Jem figures that Boo might have chosen to stay inside because Maycomb is so toxic. This, of course, is probably not true. Jem’s heart is just really hurt right now and he shares Boo’s reluctance to want to be a part of Maycomb’s society.

Chapter 24
1. Do you think the missionary ladies are sincere in worrying about the “Mrunas,” a tribe in Africa? Give reasons for your answer. Be sure to include any ironic elements you notice in this part of the chapter. The ladies are not sincere in their concern, but they pretend as though they are so as to appear compassionate and Christian. There’s no real sacrifice happening here, no actual actions to improve the Mrunas’ living conditions. Also, the irony is thick as the women say they are concerned about how the Mrunas live and want to help, yet they are blind to the fact that many of the African-American families in their own town could use some help during this Great Depression.
2. Scout feels she prefers men to women. Why? Do you agree with her reasons? She thinks that men are straightforward, don’t try to trap you or embarrass you, and aren’t as hypocritical as women. Based on most of the females in her house right now, she’s right. In our lives, though, there are plenty of women who are more like Miss Maudie and Calpurnia. Women are given a rough characterization in this chapter.
3. Compare the reactions of Miss Maudie and the other ladies when Scout says she is wearing her “britches” under her dress. Miss Maudie knows that Scout wasn’t trying to make a joke, so she doesn’t laugh at the child or make her feel embarrassed. Miss Maudie comforts Scout instead of mocking her.
4. Explain briefly how Tom was killed. What is Atticus’ explanation for Tom’s attempted escape? Do you agree with Atticus? Tom ran and tried to jump the prison fence in a failed escape attempt. He did this right in front of several guards and was shot 17 times. Atticus says he had tried to give Tom hope for a successful appeal of the conviction, but that Tom had lost all hope. The escape attempt almost feels like a suicide attempt, as Tom would’ve known he’d be shot for trying to climb the fence. Students’ answers to the last question will vary.
5. Miss Maudie says, “We’re paying the highest tribute we can pay a man.” What does she mean? She means that
good white people in the town who quietly agree with equality for all are allowing Atticus to be their undeclared leader; they trust him completely and know that he’ll always do the right thing. He has the respect of all of the good-hearted people in the town because he’s willing to do what they cannot or will not do.

6. Toward the end of this chapter, we see Aunt Alexandra in a new light. How so? Explain how Miss Maudie becomes a sudden supporter of Alexandra. Aunt Alexandra may not agree with everything Atticus believes, but she loves her brother and grieves for the heaviness of his heart. She is also aware of the hypocrisy within the very people she is trying to impress. We see Aunt Alexandra in a new light because we acknowledge that Scout will have to grow up and become a lady who navigates this town. Her heart is in the right place. Miss Maudie is right there with her, able to help put on a smiling face and continue the ladies’ party when Calpurnia must go with Atticus. Miss Maudie is one of these society women, but she’s also an independent thinker. We see that she, like Atticus, does her part to do the right thing; in this case, it’s being there when Alexandra is weary.

Chapter 25
1. Explain how Scout’s treatment of the roly-poly bug mirrors the way the town of Maycomb treated Tom Robinson. Scout is tempted to squash the bug when she’s done playing with it, just as the townspeople flatten Tom with their injustice. Neither Tom nor the bug was causing any harm. Both were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

2. Everyone in town talks about Tom’s death, most saying it’s “typical.” What do they mean? They mean that Tom lost his head, just as they believe every African-American would. They counter the evidence that Tom was basically a good man with their racist belief that every black man is an animal at his core. This, of course, is a racist viewpoint which allows the citizens of Maycomb to shake their heads about Tom, but then move on to thinking about other matters.

3. Write the line from the end of the chapter in which Mr. Underwood’s editorial in the Maycomb Tribune echoes Atticus’ earlier advice to Jem and Scout when they were given their guns. Then, explain how this connects to the title of the novel. Who is the mockingbird? The line students should write is: “He likened Tom’s death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children...” This connects to the title because Tom is the mockingbird who did nothing but try to make Mayella’s life a little better and raise his own strong, upstanding family.

4. At the end of the book, the children find out that Mr. Ewell was thrilled to hear about the death of Tom and reportedly “said it made one down and about two more to go.” Who, do you suppose, are the “two more” that Mr. Ewell is targeting? Do you believe his threat? The “two more” are Atticus and Judge Taylor. Students’ answers will vary to the second question, but the reader should believe Mr. Ewell, even though Atticus and Jem try to downplay the threat so as not to worry Scout.

Chapter 26
1. Apparently, Atticus has known all along about the night Jem lost his pants on the Radleys’ fence, but he never felt the need to say anything about it. What physical evidence led Atticus to make his realization? The children’s footprints led to his realization.

2. Despite the drama of the summer, Atticus wins an unopposed re-election to the state legislature in the fall. Give two possible meanings that could be taken from this. First, it shows that the people have forgiven Atticus for his excellent defense of Tom, or they are at least ready to move on. It also could show that the majority of people actually agreed with Atticus’ actions; this makes us think of a silent majority speaking at the ballot box. Finally, it might be used to show that Atticus is willing to do the unpleasant, but necessary things that other people are unwilling to do themselves, such as serve in the government or defend a black man in Maycomb. Atticus always does the right thing, no matter the personal sacrifice.

3. In her lesson on Hitler, Miss Gates says that Americans “don’t believe in persecuting anybody.” What’s ironic about her statement? She’s a huge hypocrite and doesn’t even realize it. On the day of Tom’s conviction, Scout heard Miss Gates tell Miss Stephanie Crawford that she wanted Tom put in his place because the African-Americans were getting too uppity. She joked that they might even think they could start – gasp! – marrying white people.

4. Why does Scout’s question upset Jem? He doesn’t want to think about the trial anymore because it just upsets him. He has tried to make sense of the events of the past summer, but hasn’t been able to reconcile his feelings about the injustice. Atticus knows that Jem just needs time to process everything and sort it out. This will just take some time.
Chapter 27
1. What were the three notable things that happened in Maycomb by the middle of October? How does the circumstance of each show the reader something about Bob Ewell’s character? First, Mr. Ewell was fired from his government job for laziness. His children need food, yet he can’t work hard enough to even keep an easy government job. This shows he is worthless. Second, Judge Taylor has a late-night attempted break-in, but scares away the creeper. This shows that Ewell prefers to lurk in the shadows than face a man properly. Finally, Ewell harasses poor Helen Robinson, who must walk past the Ewell property on her way to work at Link Deas’ house. He follows several paces behind her, muttering dirty words and phrases, which scares the woman mightily. It’s only after Link threatens Ewell that he backs off and leaves her alone. This shows that Ewell will torment a defenseless woman, yet he cowers when confronted by a strong man. Ewell is a poor excuse for a man.

2. What part of the Mruna family structure do the Maycomb ladies find particularly offensive? What do you think of this system? The ladies are horrified that the whole tribe takes responsibility for raising all of the children, so a child might have dozens of men he looks at as a father figure and he might have dozens of “mothers.” Students’ answers will vary on the second question, but this system is compelling and reminds us of the old maxim, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This might be a very successful system, but the Maycomb ladies are not open-minded to its possibilities.

3. Why do Atticus and Aunt Alexandra not intend to go to the Halloween pageant? Both of them are too exhausted by the end of the day (Atticus was in Montgomery and Alexandra was setting up for the school’s Halloween party) to go to the school’s gym and watch Scout stand on stage in a ham costume.

4. The last line of the chapter gives a sense of foreboding to the reader because, clearly, something dark and nefarious is going to happen this evening. Look back over the chapter and write down another line of text or paraphrase a plot element that contributes to this foreshadowing of something bad to come. Students’ answers will vary, but the fact that Scout cannot get out of her bulky costume on her own should give the reader pause. Also, the fact that no adults will be with Jem and Scout this evening makes the reader wonder if they’ll find something they can’t handle on their own.

Chapter 28
1. There are several unfortunate elements to the evening that leave Jem and Scout especially vulnerable to Mr. Ewell’s attack. Name four of these elements. There are lots of contributing factors, including: Atticus and Aunt Alexandra chose not to attend so the children are alone; the kids take a dark, deserted shortcut; it’s a moonless night and hard to see; Jem and Scout are among the last to leave because Scout’s embarrassed about messing up the play; Scout doesn’t have any shoes on; Scout’s costume is cumbersome, making it hard to move quickly; Cecil Jacobs scared them earlier in the evening so they mistakenly think that the stranger approaching is Cecil pulling another prank and they slow their pace to allow “Cecil” to catch up.

2. Scout’s view of the events in the field are obscured by her ham costume. Using her descriptions and information from the end of the chapter, retell the events of the attack as you understand them. Students’ answers will vary slightly, but it’s clear that Mr. Ewell was following the children and attacked them. Scout was knocked to the ground and her chicken-wire costume crushed around her as Mr. Ewell tried to grab her. Jem was thrown about roughly, had his arm broken, and was knocked unconscious. The stranger (Boo) arrived and pulled Mr. Ewell off of Scout; he then stabbed Mr. Ewell in the chest, leaving him to die under one of the trees. Boo is a hero.

3. What’s significant about the clothing that Aunt Alexandra hands to Scout when she arrives home? Without thinking, Aunt Alexandra gives Scout the overalls that the woman has railed against all summer. In this moment, all that matters is the kids are safe; the battle over Scout’s development as a proper lady is not at play here. This move shows that Alexandra cares about her niece and has surrendered on some level.

4. We don’t know yet who the stranger is that carried Jem home, but you might have a good idea. Take a guess. Yes, of course, it’s Arthur “Boo” Radley who came to the rescue.

Chapter 29
1. What does Atticus think was wrong with Mr. Ewell? What does Heck Tate think was wrong with Mr. Ewell? With whom do you agree and why? Atticus thinks Mr. Ewell must have been insane to want to attack children. Heck disagrees and thinks Mr. Ewell was just a low-down, trashy soul, not “worth the bullet it takes to shoot ‘em.” Students’ answers will vary on the last question.
2. What causes the “shiny clean line” on the otherwise “dull wire” of Scout’s costume? Bob Ewell had tried to kill her by stabbing and slicing her costume with a sharp knife. The bulky costume likely saved her life.

3. Briefly describe the meeting between Scout and Boo. On her own, she realizes that the man in the corner is her neighbor and object of obsession, Arthur “Boo” Radley. He has just saved the children’s lives and does nothing more than stand quietly in the corner.

Chapter 30
1. When Atticus first thinks that Jem was the one who killed Bob Ewell, what is Atticus ready to do? What does this show the reader about Atticus? He’s mentally figuring everything that will need to be done for Jem to turn himself in and be defended in court. This shows that Atticus respects the law above all else and wouldn’t allow Jem to be treated differently than any other man.

2. Atticus and Heck Tate have a heated argument, as Atticus assumes Heck is ready to cover up Bob Ewell’s killing as a move to protect Jem. Who is Heck really trying to protect? Why does Heck fight so hard to protect this person? Heck knows that it was Boo, not Jem, that killed Mr. Ewell. He wants to spare Boo the agony of a self-defense plea/trial and the resulting positive attention that would be uncomfortable for such a shy soul to endure.

3. Heck Tate has tampered with evidence to make it appear that Ewell was killed by falling on his own knife. What piece of evidence did Heck remove from the scene of the crime? He took Ewell’s sharp switchblade and will let the world assume that he attacked the children with the old kitchen knife that’s lodged in his ribcage. The kitchen knife, of course, came from the Radley house.

4. Did Heck Tate do the right thing? Explain your answer. Students’ answers will vary, and this question often leads to compelling class discussions.

5. Scout, who was confused about the actual cause of Mr. Ewell’s death, agrees with Heck Tate’s decision and utters an elegant line in support of him. Write that line. She says to her father, “Well, it’d be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird, wouldn’t it?”

Chapter 31
1. After she takes Boo home, Scout understands many new things because she is able to see the street from his point of view. Explain some of the things she now understands about Boo’s perspective. She realizes that he has been a part of her childhood, watching the important events of the last few years unfold. He has a vantage point to view each and every drama in the neighborhood and to feel a kinship with his neighbors, even if he isn’t personally involved with them. He’s part of this community, too.

2. In what way is Scout’s neighborhood/street similar to the Mruna tribe in Africa? There are many adults on this street who look out for the children and serve as surrogate parents. Scout and Jem’s mom has died, yet they have Calpurnia, Aunt Alexandra, Miss Maudie, and even Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose there to teach them lessons and take care of them. Atticus is their dad, but they also have Boo Radley who steps in to protect them in their most vulnerable moment. It is a village raising/safeguarding these children.

3. Reread the first line from chapter 1. How do the events in the final chapters connect to this line? Do you find this storytelling technique effective? Why or why not? We now understand the story behind Jem’s broken arm. Lee has brought the story full circle, answering all of the questions that may have lingered in our minds from the launch of the story. Students generally like this technique and find it effective, as it lends an air of mystery as the story unfolds.

4. At the end of the novel, Atticus reads to Scout as she drifts off to sleep. How does the topic of the story connect to one of this novel’s major themes? In the story, a boy is misjudged; he’s suspected of vandalism, yet he’s an innocent, good soul. Of course, this idea is echoed through so many characters and incidents in the novel. I like to have students brainstorm a list of characters who are different at their core than they first appear to Scout. Certainly, the list will include Boo, Tom, Mrs. Dubose, Miss Maudie, Mr. Avery, the Judge, and Atticus himself. This question bridges nicely into a discussion of theme and often serves as a launch into the end-of-unit essay assignment.