

To Kill A Mockingbird Chapters 4-6 Review

Chapter 4:

We've time jumped! Scout reflects on her first school year without a lot of enthusiasm. She's mainly looking forward to summer, since that means Dill will come back from Mississippi. Near the end of the school year, while walking home from school, Scout finds a tinfoil packet in the knothole of an oak tree on the edge of the Radley property. Inside the packet are two pieces of gum, which she licks and waits to see if she dies before putting them in her mouth (remember where she found them, after all).

When Jem finds out where Scout found the gum, he makes her spit it out and gargle. However, he is with Scout when they find another thing in that knothole of the oak tree—two Indian head pennies, which are said to be good luck. Jem notices that the coins must belong to someone since they're scrubbed and polished. Scout and Jem decide to wait till next school year to see if they belong to anyone, just in case a kid was using that knothole as a hiding place and forgot to collect their coins.

When Dill comes back, they begin playing together. One of their first games involves sitting hunched up in a tire and being rolled down the street. After Scout makes fun of Jem for believing in "Hot Steams" (a kind of Southern ghost story), Jem gets his revenge by **shoving** Scout with all his might when it's her turn to sit in the tire. Scout rolls all the way down the street, which is a problem, since their street ends with the Radley place!

Scout crashes through the fence, barrels into the front steps of the Radley place, and sprawls out, dazed. She can barely hear Jem screaming at her to get up. She *does* hear something, though: low laughter coming from *inside the house* (I mean, who wouldn't laugh if they saw a child crash a tire?). Jem drags Scout away, then goes back for the tire.

Scout is disturbed by the laughter she heard since it means there IS someone inside the house (not Nathan Radley, since they see him walk to town every morning). Jem and Dill aren't interested. They decide to play a new game: they turn the rumors and events they know about Boo Radley's life into a story game for them to reenact. They include most of the ugly rumors, like the scissors, and the arrest, and the screaming/being chained up. Scout doesn't like this game, but she plays so she can be included. They make the events of Boo Radley's life into a horror show that they put on every day in the yard.

One day, Atticus catches them reenacting the scissor incident. He asks what they're doing, and Jem lies and says, "Nothing." Scout then knows that what they're doing is kind of wrong. Atticus tells Jem to put the scissors away, and then, when he asks Jem if this has anything to do with the Radleys and Jem lies and says, "no," Atticus replies with, "I hope not." This is parent-speak for "you better stop it right now."

Scout is relieved that they've sort of been told to stop playing the game, since she still remembers that laughter coming from the Radley house. Jem and Dill want to keep playing; Jem is certain that they can just change the names and then no one will know it's about Boo Radley. Scout starts to separate from Dill and Jem.

Chapter 5:

Scout starts to spend more time with Miss Maudie Atkinson, their neighbor. Since she doesn't want to play the Boo Radley game, and since Jem and Dill are accusing her of being "more like a girl every day," Scout decides not to participate. She starts to really like Miss Maudie for more than just her relative

peace with them in the neighborhood (they can play in her yard and eat fruit from her scuppernong trees [scuppernongs are a kind of grape] so long as they don't touch her azaleas). Miss Maudie bakes when she can save the sugar, and she shares with Jem, Dill, and Scout.

Miss Maudie is unique in Maycomb. She is very sarcastic, and she has never remarried after her husband died. She hates her house, which is large and elegant, but loves her yard and garden. Miss Maudie is a good friend to Scout, since she is willing to explain things (like Atticus does).

When Scout asks Miss Maudie about Boo Radley, Miss Maudie says that, "His name is Arthur." She reveals more about the history of that house—not the scary history that everybody gossips about, but the sad history of how Mr. Radley Sr. raised his household. Miss Maudie explains that the Radleys were "foot-washer Baptists," a kind of spin-off sect from mainstream Baptists that were more severe. Foot-washer Baptists believe that anything we can take pleasure in here on earth must be a sin. That's the kind of environment Boo Radley was raised in, and then, after his wild days as a teen, that's the kind of house he's been *kept* in.

This gives Scout a lot to think about, but Dill and Jem are still fascinated with the mystery of Boo Radley—the scary side more than the sad side. Scout catches Jem and Dill plotting something about the Radley house. Jem and Dill plan to give Boo Radley a note inviting him outside for ice cream. There's a loose shutter on one of the windows around the side of the Radley place. Jem is going to stick the note on the end of a bamboo fishing pole and *slap* it against the house, hoping it will stick. Dill is going to stand watch by the light pole. He's got Calpurnia's lunch bell with him, which he's supposed to ring if they see anyone coming. Scout is recruited to be another lookout in this venture.

The slapping of the note into the window with a fishing pole is *unsuccessful*, can you believe it? Jem tries and keeps trying, until he and Scout both hear Dill ringing the bell like crazy. When they come around from behind the Radley place, Dill is ringing the bell directly in Atticus's face.

"Stop ringing that bell." (Lee 49). Atticus asks them what they were doing, reads the badly crumpled note, and full-out tells them to STOP. "Stop tormenting that man" (Lee 50). Atticus tells them in no uncertain terms to leave Boo Radley alone and to stop performing the rumors about his life as though they were just a game.

This warning barely lasts for the rest of the summer.

Chapter 6:

On the last night of summer, on the night before Dill has to go back to Mississippi, he and Jem do something dumb, and Scout goes with them because she doesn't want to be accused of being a girl.

The kids wait until it's dark out before they ask if they can go sit with Dill by Miss Rachel's fishpond, way out in her backyard. They use this opportunity to sneak around through the schoolyard to enter the Radley property from the back so no one sees them doing it from the street. Jem and Dill are *desperate* to see Boo Radley, so they want to look in the windows. They give Scout all kinds of reasons for doing it tonight despite Atticus's warning:

1. It's Dill's last night in Maycomb
2. Atticus is up reading and won't notice
3. It's easier to sneak around at night

4. It's easier to see into a lighted window at night
5. If Boo Radley kills them, they'll only miss school instead of summer vacation

Fool proof.

They have to crawl under a wire fence to get onto the Radley property, and this will be important later. They creep slowly up to the window with the loose shutter. Scout and Jem hoist Dill up, but he can't see anything. Jem decides to creep around to a lighted window to see if they can see anything there. Scout and Dill don't go with him (since they're paralyzed by fear). The old steps creak under Jem's footsteps, and he freezes. All of them see a shadow of a man in a hat pass in front of the window.

The children decide to run, which was wise, since the next noise they hear is a shotgun being fired. Nathan Radley heard some creaks from his old steps and decided to fire off a shotgun.

The kids run, but they have to crawl back under the fence. Jem holds the fence up for Scout and Dill, but they keep running before they realized Jem isn't with them. He's stuck—his pants are caught in the fence. Before Scout and Dill run to free him, Jem just takes his pants off and gets clear of the fence.

They realize they'll have to go into the street to act all curious about the gun being fired. If all the grown-ups—who are now in the street—look around and realize the kids aren't there, they'll assume it was the kids' fault that Nathan Radley shot his gun. This is a problem, though, since *Jem has no pants on*.

They try it. They run around to Miss Rachel's fishpond so it'll look like they came from that direction, they steady their breathing, and then they enter the street acting like, "Oh my gosh, what happened?"

Miss Stephanie Crawford and Nathan Radley are being vile about who might have been sneaking on the Radley property. The kids get by for a few minutes before the adults realized Jem is half-naked.

When Atticus asks Jem where his pants are, Dill tells a whopper of a lie. Dill says they were playing strip-poker.

This causes all of the adults (except Atticus) to have palpitations. Who wants to hear their eight-year-old say they were playing strip poker? Atticus calms the neighbors down, then tells Jem to get his pants back.

This is a problem. Jem's pants are tangled in the fence of the Radley lot, and Nathan Radley proudly told the neighborhood that he's saving the second barrel of his shotgun for whatever makes the next noise on his property.

Nuts.

Scout begs Jem not to go get his pants, to just be in trouble and deal with it from there, but Jem is determined not to disappoint Atticus more than he already has. He goes back for his pants at 2 in the morning, in the pitch dark, knowing Nathan Radley is willing to shoot whatever comes near his house. Scout waits in agony for Jem to come back. She hears Atticus cough, but his light doesn't go on, so she thinks Atticus doesn't realize Jem's gone.

Jem does return, with his pants, but he is visibly shaken. He lies down on the bed and says nothing to Scout.