

Go Set a Watchman Study Guide

Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee

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Plot Summary

Jean Louise Finch is a young woman living in New York. As the story opens, she is traveling to Maycomb, Alabama, where she plans to spend her 2-week vacation with her family. She expects to find her father, Atticus, waiting at the station but instead, Henry Clinton meets her. He is a long-time friend and an attorney in Atticus's law office. Henry believes that Jean Louise will eventually marry him and he makes it clear that he is now in a position to take care of them. Jean Louise wavers on the subject, but believes she will likely marry him at some point.

Jean Louise, nicknamed Scout, is Atticus's only surviving child. Her mother died of a heart condition when Jean Louise was a toddler. Jean Louise had a brother, Jeremy, who died very young of the same heart condition. Henry was left on his own from a young age and Atticus took an active role in his childhood. Henry joined the military and then attended college to become a lawyer. Because of Jeremy's death, Henry became the most obvious person to take over the majority of the work in Atticus's law firm. Atticus, in his early 70s, still works most days but arthritis is limiting his activities.

Atticus's sister, Alexandra, lives with Atticus and takes care of his house and his needs. His brother, Jack, is a retired doctor who lives nearby. The town is small and many things remain the same, though change is inevitable. For example, Uncle Jack confronts the song leader when he sings a traditional song a different way.

After church on her first Sunday at home, Jean Louise finds a pamphlet advocating white supremacy and calling for continued segregation of the races. Jean Louise is horrified and even more so when she finds that her Aunt Alexandra is in favor of the ideas presented. She learns that Atticus and Henry are attending a meeting about race issues and goes directly to the courthouse to find out. She sits in the balcony and watches as leaders from the region listen to a man spewing hatred against blacks. Jean Louise is very upset and avoids Atticus and Henry for the rest of the day.

Jean Louise goes to visit Calpurnia, a black woman who took care of Jean Louise and her brother for most of their childhood. Calpurnia barely acknowledges Jean Louise, leaving her to question the bond they'd shared when Jean Louise was a child. At home, Aunt Alexandra says that no white person in the county would visit a black home because of the way the blacks are treating the whites. It's the first time Jean Louise sees the true state of the relationship between the races in Maycomb County.

She plans to spend the rest of her vacation avoiding Atticus and Henry as much as possible but finds it impossible to avoid a confrontation after all. She confronts Henry who tries to justify his participation in the group by saying that he has to do whatever it takes to fit in with the community. She then confronts Atticus. He tells her that she doesn't understand the situation. He says the people of Maycomb County, and the South as a whole, have the right to decide how to handle race issues without outside interference, including from groups such as the NAACP.



That confrontation is especially painful for Jean Louise. She has spent her entire life looking up to Atticus and has always been in agreement with his ideals and opinions. When she tells him how angry she is, he says only that she has a right to feel that. That makes her even more angry and she storms away from his office. At home, she packs and plans to leave immediately but her Uncle Jack stops her. He slaps her, which forces her to slow down and consider the situation.

Once she's past the immediate anger, Jack points out that she's become prejudiced herself. He says she believes her stand is correct and that she's unwilling to consider that anyone else has a valid reason for taking any other position. Jean Louise realizes that he's right and she's horrified that she spoke so harshly to her father. Atticus tells her that he's proud of her for standing up for what she believes is right.



Part 1, Chapters 1-3

Summary

As the story opens in Part 1, Chapter 1, Jean Louise Finch is in a train headed for her hometown of Maycomb, Alabama. She usually goes home by plane but that means her father has to rise very early and drive a long way to the nearest airport. By taking the train, she will arrive at Maycomb Junction, very near her hometown, saving her father the drive. She is pleased with the experience and has enjoyed the train ride. She watches the countryside and is amazed at the beauty. She realizes that she has never really thought of this as beautiful country and wonders why.

Jean Louise isn't surprised when the train fails to stop directly at the station. This is typical and she fully expects that her father, Atticus Finch, will be waiting for her a quarter mile from the station. He isn't there but she sees Henry Clinton, a childhood friend known as Hank, waiting for her at the station. They are involved in a relationship and Henry kisses her. Jean Louise is pleased but tells him that they shouldn't. Henry says that Atticus is suffering from a bad flareup of arthritis. Jean realizes he can't drive when he's having so much pain but she hates that her father is suffering. On the drive to town, Jean Louise puts her head on Henry's shoulder. They talk and he asks if she'll marry him. She says she plans to "play until I'm 30."

From the age of 12, Henry lived in a boarding house across the street from the Finches' home. His mother died when he was 14 and Atticus looked after Henry, helping him financially when necessary. When Jean Louise's brother, Jeremy, died young, Henry became the logical choice for Atticus to take into his law practice. Henry doesn't look at Jean Louise as a sister and he talks seriously about his success as an attorney and his ability to provide for them. Jean Louise considers her feelings for Henry. She believes she's "almost in love with him" but feels that really isn't possible. Their conversation becomes tense before Jean Louise teases Henry back into a good mood.

In Chapter 2, Atticus Finch is talking with his sister, Alexandra Finch Hancock, when Henry and Jean Louise arrive. Jean Louise asks for the latest news. She learns that her Cousin Edgar's son died after a football practice and that the Merriweathers have gotten a divorce after 42 years of marriage. Alexandra mentions Jean Louise's clothing. She says she wishes Jean Louise would dress better while she's visiting because people think she's "slumming." Jean Louise counters, saying they would say she was putting on airs if she dressed up.

Alexandra goes to make coffee. Jean Louise asks her father about his golf game. He says he has an appointment on Sunday afternoon but agrees to play a round with her on Monday. After coffee, Henry says he's going to the office. Atticus says he feels up to going in as well.



Before leaving the house, Henry asks Jean Louise how much of the “Supreme Court's bid for immortality” makes the papers in New York. She says the “Post” reports that “we lynch 'em for breakfast” but that other papers are largely ignoring the case. Jean Louise says the state's failure to get a conviction “as our worst blunder since Pickett's Charge.” Atticus asks about the NAACP's take on the situation. Jean Louise says she knows nothing about that group. As Henry and Atticus prepare to leave, Henry says he'll pick Jean Louise up in the evening.

In Chapter 3, Alexandra is an imposing woman. Jean Louise respects and even admires her Aunt Alexandra when they are not together. She is soon on edge when she is actually spending time with her aunt. Alexandra was married for 33 years and had one son, Francis. Her husband decided to live apart from her and Alexandra didn't object once she had ascertained that there wasn't another woman involved. Francis is devoted to Alexandra to a stifling degree, making her glad he lives in Birmingham. She is the epitome of a Southern woman, with high morals, good manners, and a tendency to gossip.

After Jem's funeral a couple of years earlier, Alexandra told Jean Louise it was time for her to return to Maycomb to take care of her father. Jean Louise refused, saying that she and Atticus would both be miserable if they changed their lives because of Jem's death. Alexandra argued that it was Jean Louise's responsibility but, in the end, Jean Louise returned to New York and Alexandra moved in with Atticus.

Alexandra announces plans for a coffee she's hosting in honor of Jean Louise's visit. Jean Louise is horrified but feels that she owes her Aunt for taking care of Atticus. Jean Louise confides that she's considering marrying Henry. Aunt Alexandra says that Henry is “trash” and makes it clear that she doesn't approve of a marriage between them. Jean Louise tries to be calm but winds up telling Alexandra to “go pee in your hat.” Henry picks Jean Louise up that evening as planned.

Analysis

The relationship between Jean Louise and Henry is complicated. They grew up as neighbors though Henry was emancipated from the time he was 12. He lived in a boarding house and was more responsible for himself than any other youngsters of his age. He lived across the street from Jean Louise and her brother, Jem, and spent a great deal of time with Jean Louise when they were young. He seems to expect that they are going to marry and he mentions it often. Jean Louise thinks about her feelings for him on the ride home from the train station. She says she is “almost in love with him,” though she admits that it's not really possible to be almost in love. She seems to believe that she will probably marry him someday but she fears what her life will be like if she does. She is mature enough to realize that she won't ever be truly happy living as a typical housewife in Maycomb, Alabama, and she believes it's possible that she and Henry will become the typical couple who are unhappy with each other. She knows that this is the life that Henry wants and believes that it's possible that he can find someone



who will make him happy in ways she can't. This relationship is one of the themes of the book and it's an important part of Jean Louise's and Henry's characters.

As soon as Jean Louise arrives at her father's house, she asks for the local news. When Aunt Alexandra mentions Cousin Edgar, Jean Louise asks if he's still "courting" Alexandra. Alexandra answers that Jean Louise is perfectly aware that she and Edgar are first cousins. Atticus sees "his daughter's daemon rise and dominate her." He is indicating that there's something in control of Jean Louise's actions other than herself, and he knows from experience that there's no way to guess what she's about to say. She responds that the kinship makes no difference "at this stage of the game," indicating that Alexandra and Edgar wouldn't be having children together so their kinship wouldn't matter. It's a rude thing to say to someone as proper as Alexandra and there's no reason for Jean Louise to say it. This is an early look at Jean Louise's character. She's careless in her remarks and pushes the conversation just for her own entertainment. The reader should remember the time frame of this book. Most young women would be more delicate than this in their speech, especially in front of their father and Henry, but Jean Louise simply doesn't care. It can be seen as fun-loving but it can also be seen as rude and uncaring.

There is a reference to a court case in the second chapter that is never defined. Atticus asks Jean Louise what the northern newspapers are making of "the Supreme Court's bid for immortality." Jean Louise says the state's failure in the case is a big "blunder" for the South. It's left to the reader to decide which court case is being referenced.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship between Jean Louise and Henry based on the information available at this point. Do you predict they'll wind up marrying? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Alexandra and what kind of character is she?

Discussion Question 3

Make a list of everything you know about Jean Louise at this point. Keep the list and add to it as more details become available.

Vocabulary

inevitable, novelty, boisterousness, innate, overweening, predilections, gerrymander, dictum, fractious, abjured, perspicacious, daemon, scatology



Part 2, Chapters 4 and 5

Summary

Part 2 opens with Chapter 4. Jean Louise grew up in Maycomb, Alabama, a typical rural town of the South. Many people live in the county outside the town but go to town for business services such as doctors and shopping. The first paved road was in front of the school and the attitudes changed dramatically when the young men returned from World War II.

Jean Louise and Henry go out on their date. They have a meal and Henry says he sometimes feels he has a good grip on their relationship then feels that Jean Louise is slipping away from him. She says she fears marrying the wrong man because she doesn't want to turn into a shrew.

In Chapter 5, Jean Louise and Henry recall a time when they were headed to a local swimming place. Atticus was driving and he hit a big bump. Jem was thrown from the car and Jean Louise refused to let Henry tell Atticus. They arrived at their destination and Jem came running behind them. He jumped right into the water and Jean Louise teased him about “falling” out of the car for a long time. Jean and Henry plan to drive to the river. Jean Louise dozes during the drive. Henry rouses her to ask about a childhood friend, Dill. Jean says he's in Italy. Henry says he was jealous of Dill who spent summers playing with Jem and Jean Louise while Henry was in the country with his mother.

His name is Charles Baker Harris and he spent summers at the home of his great-aunt, Miss Rachel, next door to the Finch home. Jean Louise remembers that she and Jem often played games of make-believe with Dill. One day, they played until Calpurnia called the children in at mid-morning for cold lemonade. Calpurnia was a servant in the Finch household and took care of Jean Louise and Jem while Atticus was working. On this particular day, the children tried to think of a new game to play after the lemonade break. Several churches in the area were holding revivals and they come up with the idea to pretend to have a revival. They hold their “service” next to the goldfish pond in Miss Rachel's yard. After some debate, Jem becomes the preacher. Dill and Jean Louise sang a song, then Dill took up the offering. When Jem called for an invitation, Jean Louise demanded to be baptized. After some argument, they agreed that Jem would baptize her in the goldfish pond. Jean Louise takes off her overalls, leaving her naked for the baptism. Dill rushes inside and returns, covered with a sheet and pretending to be the Holy Ghost.

Miss Rachel breaks up the play, switching Dill for ruining her sheet. Then Atticus arrived with Reverend James Edward Moorehead and a woman Jean Louise didn't know. He covered Jean Louise with his jacket and sent the children inside. Calpurnia was furious, scrubbing Jean Louise in the bathtub and drying her before dressing her in a pink dress for dinner with the preacher. At one point during the meal, Atticus had to leave the



table. Jean Louise was mortified that she embarrassed her father and she whispered to ask Calpurnia if Atticus was very angry. Calpurnia announced that Atticus was on the back porch, laughing.

Jean Louise rouses as Henry turns onto the dirt road leading to Finch's Landing. There's access to the river there with steps leading down a bluff to a boat dock. Jean Louise's family once owned the property but it has been sold. Jean Louise and Henry race to the bottom and Henry wins. They talk and Jean Louise says she believes she would "go stark raving" crazy if she lived in Maycomb. Henry says he isn't pressing her for an answer, but assures her that she really wouldn't. He says again that he is ready and able to support them, and announces that he might run for political office.

They continue to talk and Henry asks if Jean Louise has a boyfriend in New York. He also says that he feels as if she's laughing at him. She realizes that she has probably hurt his feelings in the past but assures him that she has never been making fun of him. She laughs off the question of a boyfriend and threatens to push him into the river. She gives him time to empty his pockets and they both wind up in the river, fully clothed, where they swim for a few minutes. Then Jean Louise says she will act like Mrs. Merriweather "when we're married." She says Mr. Merriweather didn't know how to drive and Mrs. Merriweather would simply get out of the car and walk away whenever they argued.

On the way home, a car passes them and "careens around" an upcoming curve. Henry says some blacks have acquired used cars. Drivers often drive too fast without benefit of a license or insurance. When they reach home, Henry kisses Jean Louise good-night. She goes to her room where she sleeps in the bed she was born in.

Analysis

Henry confides in Jean Louise that he feels uncertain about their relationship because he is not certain where he stands with her. This seems like a cue for her to take a stand, either assuring him that she will marry him or ending the relationship so that he can find someone else. Instead, she says that she has a fear of marrying the wrong man so that she turns into a shrew. There seems to be little doubt that Jean Louise is trying to be honest but her words seem cruel. This is yet another example of Jean Louise's true character. She seems to rush through life without giving a lot of thought to the feelings of those close to her when she probably wouldn't dream of being so careless with the feelings of strangers. This may have something to do with her upbringing – the fact that she didn't have a mother's influence. It may also have something to do with her life in New York. She talks at one point about being pushed when riding public transportation and that New Yorkers fully expect to be pushed back.

There's an interesting look at Jean Louise's relationship with Hank in Chapter 4. He asks why she always drinks only half of her second cup of coffee at dinner. It's apparently a habit that she hasn't really thought about and she's shy the moment he



points it out. It's a statement of their familiarity and points to the fact that Henry pays a lot of attention to Jean Louise and her habits.

The scene in which Jean Louise, Jem, and Dill were caught pretending to hold a revival should have been embarrassing for Atticus. The reader gets an important look at his character by his reaction. The majority of people in that time and place would have declared that Jean Louise was running wild and that she needed to be punished for her actions. Atticus sees nothing more than childish fun in the situation and apparently doesn't punish her at all.

Jean Louise makes an interesting comment when she and Henry are at the river. She begins a sentence with, "When we are married." This seems to indicate that she has every intention of marrying Henry though she continues to act as if she isn't certain. Henry doesn't comment on it and it may have been merely a slip of the tongue on Jean Louise's part.

Few black families prior to this time had cars. With the ability to make money, more are buying cars but Henry says many of the drivers are reckless. This is another example of the attitude toward blacks. Henry has a valid point in that the drivers often don't have a license or proper training to handling a vehicle safely, and they don't often have insurance. His attitude, on this topic, is justified but the reader will later see that he exhibits a level of prejudice that catches Jean Louise unaware.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Atticus's reaction when he catches Jean Louise naked in the goldfish pond, and what does this say about his character?

Discussion Question 2

How does Henry see his relationship with Jean Louise? How does that differ from how Jean Louise sees her relationship with Henry?

Discussion Question 3

Compare Mayfield to New York. Where does Jean Louise seem more likely to fit in? Why?

Vocabulary

stratum, tribal, shrew, astute, pester, trove, ethereal, evinced, eternal, viciously, confirmed, stark, acrimonious, dissension



Part 3, Chapters 6-10

Summary

Part 3 opens with Chapter 6. Aunt Alexandra wakes Jean Louise the next morning to confront her about her actions the previous evening. The rumor is that Jean Louise and Henry were naked when they were swimming in the river. Atticus becomes involved and he's obviously amused rather than angry. Jean Louise explains that it started as a dare and Alexandra calls it a childish action.

Jean Louise, Atticus, and Alexandra go to the Methodist Church together. Atticus's brother, Dr. John Hale Finch, is waiting for them. Jean Louise calls him Uncle Jack and she notices that he and Alexandra look more like siblings than he and Atticus. Uncle Jack had gone to medical school at a time when the country was struggling economically. Atticus, just starting his law practice, had borrowed to help send his brother through medical school and Uncle Jack repaid the debt once he was established. He had made sound economic investments and retired at 45. He was an avid student of literature and many people failed to understand or appreciate his obscure literary references. Jean Louise sometimes struggles to keep up with him but she is very fond of him.

In Chapter 7, Jean Louise and Aunt Alexandra sit on one side of the church near the middle. Atticus and Uncle Jack sit near the front on the other. This is how they've sat in this church for years. Jean Louise has time to observe her father and uncle, and she's amazed that they don't look more alike but notices some small similarities. Henry helps collect the offering and Aunt Alexandra is angry when he solemnly winks at Jean Louise. Everyone is amazed when the song leader and organist play a traditional song differently. Jean Louise first thinks that the music director, Herbert Jemson, "had lost his mind." She then considers that Mr. Stone, the preacher, might be behind the change but she remembers the Mr. Stone is tone deaf and apparently didn't even notice the difference. Mr. Stone takes the pulpit and begins to preach from Isaiah. The verse reads, "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth." Jean Louise tries to listen but finds herself focusing on Herbert Jemson. She can tell by looking that Uncle Jack is also "in a snit" over the song. Mr. Stone calls for the benediction and the service ends.

Jean Louise heads to the front to talk to Herbert but Uncle Jack is already there. Herbert says he learned the new version of the song during a Methodist music camp over the summer as a way to "pep up" the service. He says there is a list of songs the camp's music instructor told them to eliminate. Uncle Jack correctly guesses some of them. Herbert says he was just trying out the idea to see what the congregation thought and assures Uncle Jack that he won't be making any more changes to the church's music. Outside, Uncle Jack prepares to walk home, as is his weekly custom, while Jean Louise, Atticus, and Alexandra head home for dinner.



In Chapter 8, Jean Louise, Atticus, and Alexandra have dinner. After the meal, Henry arrives and asks if Atticus is ready to go to their meeting at the courthouse. Jean Louise and Henry agree to meet that evening for another date and Jean Louise promises Alexandra that they'll go to the movies, avoiding the river altogether. Jean Louise picks up the newspaper Atticus was reading before he left and tidies a pile of books on an end table. She sees a pamphlet titled "The Black Plague." There's a drawing of an "anthropophagous Negro" on the cover. Jean Louise reads it.

When she's finished, she starts to throw the pamphlet in the trash but Alexandra stops her, saying the leaflets are difficult to find "these days." Jean Louise is horrified that Alexandra says she's read it, and that there are "a lot of truths" in it. Alexandra says Atticus got the pamphlet at a meeting of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. She says Atticus is a member of the council's board of directors and Henry is an avid member. Alexandra says she doesn't believe Jean Louise knows "what's been going on" in Maycomb County recently.

Jean Louise leaves the house without listening to more. She heads for the courthouse, trying to justify that Atticus and Henry are involved in this group. She imagines that they must be involved just to keep a close watch on what's going on with the council. She arrives at the courthouse in a daze and goes inside, climbing the steps to the balcony that is where the blacks of the community are allowed to watch court proceedings. She's amazed to find a gathering of men in the courtroom below, including Henry and Atticus. William Willoughby is among the men. Jean Louise notes that he is the kind of man Atticus hates because he feeds off the poorest of the area and holds more power than anyone like him should have. Most of the time, men like Willoughby hold political offices but Willoughby just holds the reins of men he put into various office.

Atticus introduces the day's speaker as Mr. Grady O'Hanlon, saying he "needs no introduction." Mr. O'Hanlon says he is devoted to the "preservation of segregation." He makes it clear that he thinks blacks are inferior and that whites have to stand up for themselves to stop integration. Jean Louise thinks about another time she sat in this balcony, when her father was defending a black man accused of raping a white woman. Atticus had worked as hard as he could on that case and never considered what it cost him. Mr. O'Hanlon continues to talk and Jean Louise begins to feel sick. She leaves the courthouse and walks aimlessly. She stops at an ice cream shop located on the lot where her childhood home sat, but finds she can't even eat the ice cream. She thinks about her father, the one man she'd felt was a true gentleman, and knows that he has failed her.

In Chapter 9, the reader gets a look at Jean Louise's family. Her father met and married his wife, Jean Graham Finch, while he was serving in the legislature. They were happy until she dropped dead of a heart condition when Jean Louise was a toddler, the same condition that caused Jem's death at a young age. Atticus, with the help of a black servant woman named Calpurnia, took care of his children. When Jean Louise graduated high school, Atticus sent her to a women's college in Georgia. When she completed her studies, he suggested that she should go somewhere, like New York. He wanted her to be able to take care of herself. She knew she was alone, but that she was



never truly alone because Atticus was behind her. She felt safe in her world because of him.

In Chapter 10, Jean Louise arrives at home and tells Aunt Alexandra that she saw the meeting. She says she wants to be alone and instructs Alexandra to tell Henry she can't go out with him after all. She goes to her room and falls asleep. The author writes that Jean Louise might have been able to figure out some things if she'd been able to think clearly, including the fact that she lived in the South where a proud society was bound to repeat history and that she had been born "color blind."

Analysis

There is another look at Atticus's character as a father when Aunt Alexandra confronts Jean Louise about swimming in the river. Atticus is glib on the matter, teasing Jean Louise by saying that he hoped she wasn't doing the backstroke while naked, and pretends to be stern at Alexandra's command. It's obvious he's a devoted father but it's also obvious that he trusts Jean Louise implicitly. This trust seems to go both ways but Jean Louise will have her trust tested when she discovers that her father exhibits a level of prejudice she doesn't understand.

Tradition is an important part of life in Maycomb and an important theme in the book. Jean Louise falls back into specific traditions without effort when she's home for a visit. Church is one of those traditions. She goes to her Sunday School classroom and "slept with her eyes open" through the lesson. The traditional aspect of service continues with the sermon, which Jean Louise listens to only partly. The hymns are another important part of the tradition, as seen by the reaction to a change in one of the songs.

The reader who hasn't read the prequel to this book, "To Kill a Mockingbird," may not really understand Jean Louise's reaction to the fact that Atticus and Henry are involved in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. She's devastated because she has no clue, prior to this, that Atticus has any prejudice in him at all. In fact, she believes the opposite is true. Jean Louise learned her behavior from Atticus and she believes that people are to be judged on their actions rather than on their race. The reader who remembers the previous book will try to justify Atticus's actions because he seemed like the kind of character who would never be involved in a group of this kind. However, it soon becomes clear that Atticus likes things the way they are and that he does have a level of prejudice that Jean Louise has never seen before.

Alexandra's attitudes about blacks is fairly typical for women of the day. She says that the pamphlet contains true information and she seems to believe it, despite the fact that it's obvious propaganda and lies meant to spread fear. But the reader has to remember that women of the day were largely kept in the dark about facts. They were usually only spouting the information fed to them by the men in their lives and most were raised to take that information at face value without questioning it. An important aspect of Alexandra's attitude is that she has probably been fed this misinformation by Atticus,



who is the most important male figure in her life at this point. She likely grew up with this prejudice programmed into her, but more recent attitudes are probably fed by Atticus.

When Jean Louise arrives home from the courthouse, she instructs Alexandra to tell Henry that she's "indisposed." It's a dated term used to explain any ailment that caused a woman to be unable or unwilling to participate in an activity. The term was usually aimed at keeping men from questioning the source of the ailment and it was usually successful. It's interesting that Jean Louise chooses to use that term when she absolutely wants to be left alone. She ignores much of the socially acceptable actions of the day, but latches onto this when it suits her. She follows up by telling Alexandra that she's going to do what indisposed women always do – she's "taking to her bed."

Discussion Question 1

What does Jean Louise find that sends her to the Maycomb County Citizens' Council and what is her reaction to it?

Discussion Question 2

What does Jean Louise find when she gets to the Courthouse where the Maycomb County Citizens' Council is meeting?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Jean Louise's reaction to the Maycomb County Citizens' Council.

Vocabulary

symposium, emerge, nether, eccentric, penchant, obscurities, predilection, salacious, preposterous



Part 4, Chapters 11 and 12

Summary

Part 4 opens with Chapter 11. Jean Louise remembers sixth grade when she'd been traumatized by the beginning of her period. One day, a boy named Albert told her he'd made a C-minus in geography and thanked Jean Louise for her help. Before Jean Louise could react, he kissed her and she felt his tongue on her lips. The other girls in her grade fed her misinformation, including that a girl they knew had gotten pregnant after her daddy kissed her, sticking his tongue in her mouth. Jean Louise began to fish for more information and became convinced she was pregnant. She knew her family would be forever ashamed and decided to kill herself before she had the baby. She climbed up the water tower and thought about her funeral. She debated how she would jump so that the fall would hurt as little as possible. Someone saw her and told Henry, who climbed the tower and forced her down.

That evening, she confessed everything to Calpurnia, who held her and told her the truths about sex. Jem went to her room to check on her when he got home. She felt certain Calpurnia had told him what happened by the way he talked to her. As he was leaving, he told her that she could always talk to him if she was in trouble.

In Chapter 12, Jean Louise wakes early the next morning. She goes outside and begins to think about the events from the previous day. She wishes she had caught Atticus and Henry with "two sleazy women" instead of participating in the Council's activities. She breaks off that thought to realize the yard needs to be mowed. She manages to start the mower but Aunt Alexandra stops her, saying it's too early and that she'll wake the neighborhood.

Jean Louise goes inside. She watches as Atticus eats his breakfast with modified utensils. There are large wooden handles so that he can hold them with his swollen hands. The phone rings and Alexandra says the sheriff wants to talk to Atticus. Atticus asks Alexandra to tell him to call Henry instead. Henry arrives later and says that a black man has run over a white man, killing him. The white man is Mr. Healy, a local alcoholic. The black man is Calpurnia's grandson, Frank. He is the son of Calpurnia's son, Zeebo. Jean Louise has no doubt that Atticus will defend him.

Henry says he told the sheriff they wouldn't take the case. Atticus says they'll take it. He says there will likely be no option except to instruct Frank to plead guilty. He then says cases like this are catching the attention of outsiders, and that the NAACP will likely be willing to hire a lawyer to defend the man. Atticus says it will be better for a local lawyer to handle the case than to allow an outsider to arrive, taking over the case.

Jean Louise leaves the room. She's sick at what she's hearing. She doesn't know how this level of prejudice has become common for people who never exhibited any



prejudice before now. She goes to the Jitney Jungle, a local grocery store, to pick up some things for Aunt Alexandra, then returns home to take her father to his office.

After dropping Atticus in town, Jean Louise heads for Calpurnia's house. Zeebo is with several other people outside the house. He greets her as Miss Jean Louise, and says Calpurnia is inside. He escorts Jean Louise into the room where Calpurnia is seated. Calpurnia invites Jean Louise to have a seat. She does. Calpurnia begins to talk and Jean Louise can tell by her speech that she's treating Jean Louise as an outsider. Jean Louise pleads with her, saying that she was once "your baby" and asking if Calpurnia has forgotten. Calpurnia makes it clear she has nothing kind to say. Jean Louise rises, saying she'd never believed their relationship could come to this. She asks if Calpurnia hated them but the woman doesn't answer, merely shaking her head. As she leaves, she tells Zeebo to call on her if she can do anything to help.

Analysis

Jean Louise and Henry saw a vehicle driven by blacks on their way home from the river the first night of Jean Louise's visit. Henry said there was bound to be an accident at some point, which was a foreshadowing of the event in which Frank runs over a white man. The white man, Mr. Healy, was elderly. Frank was drunk. While it seems likely that the case is destined to end in Frank's conviction, Atticus's attitude seems to indicate that he isn't going to really try to get Frank a lighter sentence, which would be the job of a good defense attorney.

Atticus's motivation for taking the case, as he put it, is to keep outsiders from arriving in Maycomb to take over the case. This is a historical attitude associated with the South, and was one of the main forces behind the Civil War. The Southern states wanted to have things their way, without outside interference. Atticus expresses that same idea, decades after the Civil War. While there are many people who agree that states should have the right to govern themselves, Atticus is really trying to keep a new line of thinking at bay. He doesn't really care about his state's right to govern itself as much as he is hoping to keep the new ideas about integration and civil rights away.

When Jean Louise was a child, she had a very close relationship with Calpurnia. When Jean Louise started her period, it was Calpurnia who explained it to her. When Jean Louise had questions about pregnancy, Calpurnia put her fears to rest. Calpurnia acted as caregiver and disciplinarian, and Jean Louise clung to her. When Jean Louise and Jem were grown, Calpurnia apparently continued to work for the family. Jem gives her a battery-powered coat that keeps her warm, and she's enamored with the gift. She's heartbroken when Jem dies. That makes it more difficult for Jean Louise to understand that their relationship has changed.

Jean Louise is shocked by Calpurnia's reception. When Jean Louise was a child, Calpurnia had good command of English and didn't speak in the traditional Southern black slang unless she was acting the role of servant for company. When Jean Louise visits after Frank's arrest, Calpurnia lapses into that slang. Jean Louise recognizes it for



what it is – Calpurnia's way of snubbing Jean Louise. There's no explanation for Calpurnia's actions, but it seems that she might simply have reached the end of her tolerance for the prejudice she lives with on a daily basis. Jean Louise is heartbroken over the situation but doesn't know what to do to make it any better.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship between Calpurnia and Jean Louise when Jean Louise is a child.

Discussion Question 2

Describe Calpurnia's reaction when Jean Louise visits after Frank's arrest.

Discussion Question 3

Who is Frank and what happens to bring him to Jean Louise's attention?

Vocabulary

malapropism, grotesque, accuracy, deceiving, shrieked, intermittently, addled, myopia, luxuriously, intricacy, multifarious



Part 5, Chapters 13 and 14

Summary

Part 5 opens with Chapter 13. Jean Louise tries to sneak into her room but Aunt Alexandra calls to her. Alexandra is getting the refreshments ready for the Coffee. Alexandra asks where Jean Louise has been. When Jean Louise says she's been to visit Calpurnia, Alexandra clearly disapproves. She says no one visits a black home anymore. She says the blacks are "shiftless," insolent, and undependable. She then asks Jean Louise to begin getting the living room ready for their guests. Jean Louise goes to the living room and sits down. She wonders how people can hold such prejudiced attitudes with a clear conscience. She considers that she might be the one who's changed.

The guests arrive on time. They gather in groups, based on their most important interests, including children, families, and work. Jean Louise catches pieces of conversations, including some very prejudiced attitudes toward blacks in the community. The talk turns to Mr. Healy's death. One of the women says there hasn't been "a good trial around here in 10 years." She uses a racial slur in her comment and several women make it obvious they are interested in seeing Frank punished for running over Mr. Healy. One woman turns the conversation to Communism, saying blacks in the north are trying to turn America into a Communist country. Jean Louise wonders at the attitudes. She says she went to the same school as these women and can't imagine where their attitudes became so different.

Jean Louise touts the basic ideas she holds dear, including that she had never heard a racial slur from her close family members until now and that she wasn't supposed to hate blacks. She admits that some of them are lazy, some are poor, and some are diseased, but that whites still weren't supposed to despise them. Jean Louise's thoughts turn to her father. She realizes that she had considered him infallible, which is why she's so hurt to see the level of prejudice he's displayed by being involved in the Council.

One of the women, Claudine, says she and her husband visited New York and hated it. Jean Louise says she loves it. Claudine says people were rude and pushy. Jean Louise says that's true, but that they also expect to be pushed back. Claudine says she was horrified when a black woman sat next to her in a diner. Jean Louise says the black woman had the right to do that and that she no longer notices the blacks who work and live in the city. Claudine says Jean Louise must be blind and Jean Louise admits to herself that she must be. Jean Louise thinks about the watchman in the Sunday sermon. She says she needs a watchman to help her see the truth about the world.

In Chapter 14, Jean Louise goes to visit Uncle Jack after the Coffee has been cleared away. They begin their visit with pleasantries and a salad for lunch. Jean Louise begins talking about her father at the Council meeting. She's upset and begins to rage about



the situation. She asks Uncle Jack why Atticus has become so prejudiced against blacks. Uncle Jack insists that she calm down. He says that men like Atticus are “dalying action to preserve a certain kind of philosophy.” Jean Louise says that philosophy should be eliminated, if the hatred from the Council meeting is an example of it. Uncle Jack says Atticus is not trying to keep blacks “in their places.”

Uncle Jack and Jean Louise have a lengthy, convoluted conversation about the history of the South and the world at large. He leads Jean Louise to realize that there have always been wealthy landowners and poor peasants, with the latter doing the majority of the work and living in deplorable conditions. He then points out that most of the Southerners who fought in the Civil War didn't hold slaves and that they fought because they felt a desire to defend the South, thereby “preserving their identity.” He says the only permanent change after the Civil War was an end to slavery. When blacks were freed, the poor whites found themselves in direct competition with the poor blacks. Uncle Jack says the only advantage the whites had was the color of their skin and that they've spent decades “nursing his hangover of hatred.”

Uncle Jack says the rest of the country has already moved through a second phase of Reconstruction in which the blacks are gaining rights and changing their lives, but the South is just headed into that phase. He says the South is “birthing” a new way of life and that it's a painful process for many. Jean Louise feels that he hasn't given her a straight answer at all, but Uncle Jack says he doesn't have the ability to answer any more clearly. Uncle Jack makes Jean Louise promise that she'll come to him when “you can't stand it any longer,” then ushers her out. Once she's out of the house, he goes to the telephone.

Analysis

There's a great deal of conversation and information about racial prejudice and about Jean Louise's attitudes toward race in Chapter 13. For the most part, Jean Louise seems to have no sense of prejudice at all. She is proud of her lack of prejudice and believes that her family is also lacking in prejudice. During the Coffee, Jean Louise thinks about things that she doesn't say aloud. One of those thoughts is that she knows there are blacks in the community who are diseased, lazy, and poor, but that she doesn't despise any of them. The thought seems to be prejudiced, at least to a degree, because she refers to the blacks as a group and uses words like “shiftless.” It's left to the reader to decide whether Jean Louise is prejudiced without realizing it.

Another important part of that thought series is that Jean Louise believes she shouldn't ever be rude or mean to a black person. She is probably equating her manners to those she is supposed to exhibit toward anyone. Those manners were taught to her by Calpurnia and Atticus, and Jean Louise notes that it was a white man and a black woman who taught her how to behave. She says she wouldn't expect to be mean to a black person “and get away with it.” As a child, she grew up in a time and place where someone would have told Atticus or Calpurnia if Jean Louise had acted inappropriately. While Atticus was a liberal parent, it seems likely that he would have drawn the line at



her acting rudely to an adult. But Jean Louise is an adult when she's thinking about the fact that she is expected to treat everyone kindly, regardless of their race. The fact that she says she wouldn't expect to "get away with" anything less indicates that she still feels her actions are being monitored.

The tendency of most readers will be to find the positive attitudes and lessons in this story. It's difficult to equate the prejudicial attitudes with the characters who are supposed to be good people, but that's what the discerning reader will likely find. Jean Louise learns that she has to accept that other people have opinions that differ from her own.

Uncle Jack seems to be pointing out that Jean Louise that the white men and women of the South are trying to defend a way of life that's all they know. Even if they aren't justified in their actions, he tries to make her see that she should be able to understand their feelings. He points out the history of the South, including years of white's feeling superior to blacks. The racial issue isn't all that's important, though. The South has a tradition of living on its own terms and preserving its own way of life. Uncle Jack uses the word "identity" to describe that. He says that most of the people in the South resent outside influence, even if it's ultimately a good thing. The enforcing of rights for blacks is seen as an outside influence and many Southerners fight against that because they don't want to be told what to do. Uncle Jack says the one thing he fears most is that there will be a big government that tramples the individual's rights. This fear is seen in modern times as well, with issues such as gun control. Some states react loudly when federal control is discussed. Some readers will understand Uncle Jack's point and will even agree with him while others won't be able to see a point at all. It's left to each reader to evaluate Uncle Jack's opinions and to decide if there's merit to his arguments.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Jean Louise's attitude about race. Do you think she's as open minded as she believes herself to be?

Discussion Question 2

What is Uncle Jack's argument regarding the reason Atticus is participating in the Council?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the Coffee.

Vocabulary

culinary, avail, veneer, incessantly, jargon, inquisitor, raucous, vacillations, esthete, lugubrious, heretic, acrimonious, effusion, edification, paradoxical, quixotic, paternalism



Part 6, Chapters 15-17

Summary

Part 6 opens with Chapter 15. Jean Louise thinks about her Uncle Jack as she's leaving his house and believes he is "mad as a hatter," but reassures herself that at least he knows he's crazy. She returns to the ice cream shop located on the lot where he childhood home was.

Jean Louise remembers the night of the Commencement Dance. Members of the graduating class invited their younger siblings to the dance. It was to be Jean Louise's first dance because Jem was a senior. He as captain of the football team. Henry was captain of the debate team but didn't have time for any other activities because of his work. Jean Louise was 14. She was heavysset and interested in Victorian poetry and detective novels.

Jean Louise didn't really want to go to the dance at first but Atticus persuaded her by saying it would "look funny" if Jem were the only senior without his younger sister in attendance. Atticus provided a shopping trip and Jean Louise found an incredible dress. She loved the dress but felt that it doesn't fit right because she was plump and hadn't yet developed breasts. Just before the dance, Jean Louise bought herself a set of false breasts to wear under the dress. Calpurnia was reluctant but Jean Louise was insistent that she wear them. She panicked when she realized she didn't know how to dance but Atticus directed her to Uncle Jack, who showed her some basics before the dance.

Henry escorted her to the dance. Jean Louise suspected that Jem pushed Henry into it, but she didn't mind. She danced with several boys and had a good time. She danced with several members of the football team and knew that Henry probably told them to make sure Jean Louise had plenty of dances. Again, she was grateful that he was looking out for her.

She was dancing with Henry when he suddenly insisted that they get some fresh air. He literally danced her to the door and pointed out that her falsies were now terribly out of place. Jean Louise was horrified but Henry insisted that it must have just happened. He encouraged her to take them out of her dress, and she did. He threw them as far as he could and they returned to the dance. Jean Louise was relieved that no one seemed to notice that she changed her appearance once they return to the dance.

The next day, the students were summoned to assembly. Maycomb County High School's principal was Mr. Tuffet. He ranted about the lack of respect and eventually revealed that he'd found the set of falsies outside the school. Jean Louise knew she'd have to confess that they were hers. She didn't want either Henry or Jem to be in trouble in their final weeks of school and knew she could withstand being expelled better than either of them. Henry asked her to wait for awhile before telling Mr. Tuffet. That afternoon, Henry told Jean Louise to write a specific sentence, saying the falsies



were hers, and to take it to Mr. Tuffet. She did as he instructed and found that Mr. Tuffet was angry with her confession. It turned out that Henry had gotten just about every girl in the school to write a similar confession and turn it in. He said he consulted Atticus about the situation and got the idea from Atticus's advice. Jean Louise then dreaded what Atticus might say about the situation. Henry said that he'd consulted Atticus as an attorney, and that the conversation was, therefore, confidential.

Jean Louise returns to the present. She says that she is destined to keep remembering the past without being able to live in the future. She calls herself a guest in her life.

In Chapter 16, Jean Louise goes to the law office. Henry is there and she asks where Atticus is. Henry says Atticus has gone to the post office and invites Jean Louise for a cup of coffee. On the way, Jean Louise finds herself looking at Henry, trying to figure out when and how he changed so much from the person she thought he was. Jean Louise tells him about the woman who talked about Communism. Henry says she believes it because her husband believes it. Jean Louise says that marriage means losing some level of your own identity, and that she'll never marry for that reason. Henry reminds her that they are going to get married someday. Jean Louise says, very seriously, that she's not going to marry him. Henry is confused but Jean Louise thinks that she's breaking his heart the way he broke hers.

Jean Louise tells him that she's upset that he's part of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. Henry says he has to live and work in Maycomb County, and that he does whatever it takes to get along. He says the Council's agenda is to make certain that the blacks of the community don't rush the changes that are coming and a warning to the courts not to try to dictate what goes on in the South. Henry then reveals that Atticus is a member of the Klan but says he joined to find out who else was involved, so he'd know who he'd be fighting if it ever came to that.

Jean Louise calls Henry a hypocrite and says they are nothing alike. She discovers that Atticus is standing behind her. He says that "hypocrites have just as much right to live in this world as anybody." Jean Louise is shocked to find that he's smiling at her.

In Chapter 17, Atticus asks Henry leave them alone. Jean Louise is suddenly aware that they are standing just outside Atticus's office, in the exact spot where Jem died. Atticus notices and suggests they go inside. Atticus reveals that he's already talked to Uncle Jack. Jean Louise says outright that Atticus's involvement in the Council is "disgusting." Atticus says the men who gathered each had their own reasons for being there. He says his is because of the government and the NAACP. Atticus asks Jean Louise her opinion on a recent court decision. She says she was angry because the government was telling the people of the South what to do "again." Atticus says she is one of many who believes in state's rights and that she's even more insistent on the subject than he.

Atticus then points out that blacks have the right to do whatever they want, but that they simply aren't capable of doing some things. He points out that the majority of blacks are "backwards." Jean Louise concedes that point. He asks whether people who don't have the ability to participate fully in the government, such as holding office, should have all



the privileges of citizenship. Atticus points out a neighboring county where blacks are in the majority. He says if that county voted in an all-black slate of officials, the county would be in trouble because the blacks don't know how to run those offices. Atticus says he believes, as Jefferson did, that a man has to be responsible for being able to vote before he has the right to vote. Atticus says he's stating "plain truths" but Jean Louise says that isn't what he taught her from a young age.

Jean Louise continues to argue, saying that she never knew Atticus felt this way. She says she had a misconception about the reason Atticus took that rape case so many years earlier. She thought it was because he wanted a black man to get a fair trial but now realizes that it was because he believes in justice and order.

Jean Louise returns the conversation to the Council meeting. She asks why Atticus allowed Mr. O'Hanlon to talk. Atticus says he allowed it because Mr. O'Hanlon asked to be heard. Jean Louise rants about the fact that Atticus has acted in a way that she never expected and that she can't condone. He says he "killed her" and that he "had to." She says she despises him but he says he loves her. She then says she never wants to see him or any other member of her family again. Atticus shocks her by saying, "As you please." Jean Louise curses at him then but Atticus stops her with, "That's do, Jean Louise," which was what he said when he was serious with Jean Louise and Jem.

Analysis

There's no doubt that Henry is fully aware that his past colors the way people see him. The people of Maycomb County know about his childhood and Henry believes that most people judge him because of it. Jean Louise says that he's scared to stand up for himself because of that judgment and that he feels compelled to do whatever Atticus and other important men of the community ask of him. Henry doesn't really say that she's wrong though he tries to justify his actions. This is an important part of Henry's character. He knows that he and Jean Louise are different and he says that she can do things her own way because she's Atticus's daughter, while he would be judged for making the same decisions. Henry is trying to justify the fact that he's taking a prejudiced stand. Jean Louise would likely respect him for taking a stand against the Council but it's clear that Henry wouldn't be accepted in town if he took that stand. His actions aren't right but most readers will find themselves able to understand why he takes this road. He admits that he's afraid and it seem that he has a reason to be. If he stood against the Council, he probably wouldn't get any business from the town's people and would likely have to leave Maycomb.

Henry drops yet another bombshell when he announces that Atticus is a member of the Klan. He says that it's because Atticus wants to know who he's dealing with if the time comes when he has to fight them. It's not clear whether this is really the case and it's left to the reader to decide if there is any merit to Atticus's actions.

Atticus's arguments have a level of truth in that most blacks were not equipped during this time to handle major government offices and businesses. They had not been



educated to expect those roles were possible and few would have been capable of dealing with the demands. However, he is also unwilling to help blacks get ready for those roles. He argues that the schools will be dragged down by integration. Jean Louise says the schools are already deplorable and can't possibly come down any farther. Additional prejudiced comments from Atticus appear. He asks if Jean Louise wants to share all aspects of modern life with the blacks, including theaters. The modern-day reader will find these questions and comments deplorable but the people of this time and place often found merit in continued segregation. This is yet another example of the differences in the attitudes of the time.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the dance Jean Louise attends with Henry. What happens there and what does this say about Henry's early devotion to Jean Louise?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Jean Louise's meeting with Henry and Henry's justification of his recent actions. Do you find any merit to his words?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Jean Louise's confrontation with Atticus. What are Atticus's arguments as he tries to justify his actions? Considering the time, do you see any merit in them?

Vocabulary

rectitude, alacrity, muss, monotonous, regularity, miasmal, impetuosity, thrived, metamorphosis, furtively, aplomb, prominence, impedimenta, compulsion, brevity, invective, impartial



Part 7, Chapters 18 and 19

Summary

Part 7 opens with Chapter 18. Jean Louise drives home though she's very upset. Aunt Alexandra asks what's wrong and Jean Louise snaps at her. Aunt Alexandra calls Jean Louise down for her words, then correctly guesses that Jean Louise and Atticus have had a fight. Jean Louise plans to leave the house but Aunt Alexandra says that Finches don't run from their problems. Jean Louise goes on a rant, saying that her father is "something unspeakable" while Uncle Jack is crazy. She then says that Aunt Alexandra is "pompous" and "narrow minded." Aunt Alexandra begins to cry and Jean Louise realizes she's gone too far. She apologizes and says she has been so hurt today that she is striking out to hurt back. Aunt Alexandra says Jean Louise is a lady but has some strange ideas. Jean Louise finishes packing and says Aunt Alexandra will find out Jean Louise isn't at all ladylike, once Atticus comes home.

Jean Louise goes to the car, planning to drive herself to the station to wait for the train. Just then, Uncle Jack arrives. Jean Louise remembers that he'd said she was to come to him but she's in no mood to listen to his rambling conversations. Uncle Jack asks her to listen to him but Jean Louise curses and says he should leave her alone. He strikes her with the back of his hand. Jean Louise stops and Uncle Jack says he's trying to make her listen. Jean Louise realizes she's exhausted. Uncle Jack says she is probably over her emotional outburst and Jean Louise agrees that she can't fight anymore. Uncle Jack tends her face then jokingly says he's never struck a woman before and might now go hit Aunt Alexandra. Jean Louise laughs when she hears Uncle Jack and Aunt Alexandra fussing in the kitchen.

Uncle Jack returns with some liquor, saying he's tapped into the stock Aunt Alexandra keeps for fruit cakes. Uncle Jack says he knows what happened between Jean Louise and Henry, then between Jean Louise and Atticus, and she realizes he must have followed her. She says she's ready to talk about it with Uncle Jack but begs him to talk more plainly than their earlier conversation. After the liquor, Jean Louise admits that she's able to look back on the events of the past two days and that it's somehow more bearable than it had been before Uncle Jack's intervention.

Uncle Jack says that Jean Louise has become a different person over the course of the day. He says that she has always had a conscience of her own but that she has never let her opinions be different from those of her father until now. He says that she's elevated her father to a godlike position and that's why it hurt her so much to discover that Atticus had done something of which she didn't approve. Uncle Jack says he and Atticus had discussed the situation and knew what was eventually going to happen. Uncle Jack also says that Jean Louise would never have listened to Atticus explain this to her. Jean Louise realizes this is why Atticus didn't argue with her when she called him a hypocrite and said she hated him.



Uncle Jack then says that Jean Louise is a bigot while her father is not. Jean Louise asks for an explanation. Uncle Jack says most people don't agree with the actions and rhetoric of the Klan but accept that they have the right to make fools of themselves. Uncle Jack says Jean Louise has never been willing to let anyone have an opinion that's different from her own. Jean Louise remembers Atticus saying he let Mr. O'Hanlon speak at the Council meeting because Mr. O'Hanlon wanted to speak. Uncle Jack says that Atticus is the kind of person who'll step in if someone is beating up someone else, but that he'll also try his best to keep the Federal Government from doing the same. Uncle Jack says the one thing Atticus will always do is stay within the law.

Uncle Jack says that Jean Louise has always looked at people as being equal and that she's struggling with race issues because racial equality is the burning issue of the day. Jean Louise realizes that Uncle Jack is right, and that she's been unfair to Atticus. She dreads confronting him but Uncle Jack assures her that Atticus is going to be fair to Jean Louise as well, and that they will be as close as ever.

Uncle Jack asks if Jean Louise would consider moving back to Maycomb. He says the South needs more people like her. He says it's important for people like Jean Louise to try to change those who have the wrong attitudes about race.

As she's about to let Uncle Jack out of the car, Jean Louise asks what she should do about Henry. Uncle Jack says she would be wrong to marry him and that she should go ahead and break up with him, as she would eventually. He says they aren't compatible because they aren't alike.

Uncle Jack then reveals that he was in love with Jean Louise's mother. He says Atticus knew and that his love for their mother gave Jack a special connection to Jean Louise and Jem.

In Chapter 19, Jean Louise arrives at the law office. She tells Henry she'd like to see him and they make arrangements to meet that evening. She then goes to talk to Atticus. Atticus says he's proud that she is willing to stand up for what she believes in, even when it means standing up to Atticus. She tells him she loves him and he says it's time to go home. Jean Louise allows Atticus to go out in front of her and watches as he struggles to get into the car before she carefully gets in as well.

Analysis

The South is a distinctive region and most southern people of this time and place were very proud of that heritage. Outsiders were not always welcome, especially if they brought change. When Jean Louise returns from her argument with Atticus, Aunt Alexandra asks what's wrong. Jean Louise says that Aunt Alexandra should leave her alone, "for Christ's sake." To Aunt Alexandra, this is the same as cursing and she won't tolerate it. She says that Jean Louise can't use "that Yankee expression." This is an example of the distinctive attitude of a typical southern woman.



The situation in which Uncle Jack strikes Jean Louise seems incredibly out of character for him and an extreme reaction. Uncle Jack talks to Jean Louise and Aunt Alexandra about it, explaining that he'd done what he had to do in order to get Jean Louise past her emotional outburst. Jean Louise accepts that Uncle Jack had pushed her through the emotions of the day to help her get to a place where she could react rationally. In modern times, this action would not be tolerated, even with Uncle Jack's explanation and Jean Louise's acceptance. This is another example of the different opinions of the time of this book. While civil rights for blacks became an issue during this time, rights for women would become an issue in the coming years.

There's a very dated reference at the end of the book that some modern-day readers may not fully understand. Jean Louise has a small tremble and she says "somebody walked over my grave." It's a superstition from the era. Jean Louise would have grown up believing that if a ghost walked over the place where her grave would someday be, she would shiver. That was used to explain away an unexplained tremble. Jean Louise says that it might have been Jem, "on some idiotic errand." This seems to indicate that she's come to terms with Jem's death and his absence, which is an important part of her emerging maturity.

Throughout the book, Jean Louise has bumped her head when she's getting in cars. She says the cars are changing, becoming more compact, and that she will never get used to them. However, as she gets into the car after picking up Atticus in the final chapter, she is careful not to bump her head. The point seems to be that Jean Louise is being more careful in her life now and that she's going to take more time to be certain that she doesn't crash into situations. She might be ready to pay more attention to her words when she's dealing with others as well.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Uncle Jack strike Jean Louise and what's the outcome of that?

Discussion Question 2

What does Jean Louise plan to do when she arrives home after her fight with Atticus? Describe her interaction with Aunt Alexandra at that point.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Uncle Jack call Jean Louise a bigot, and what does she realize after he calls her that?



Vocabulary

throttle, bridled, probate, clasped, pompous, instinct, parables, reverberations, subsided, fractious, judicious, gracious, antithesis, ructions, obliterate, icons, lam, mesmerized, omnipotent, capers, beaming



Characters

Jean Louise Finch

Jean Louise was known as “Scout” as a child and she has now grown into a self-reliant young woman. She grew up in Alabama but moved to New York after completing college. She lives happily there and returns to visit her family in Alabama during her summer vacation. She knows she has grown and changed, but that fact is made clearer when her Aunt Alexandra hosts a coffee in Jean Louise's honor. During that event, Jean Louise listens to the thoughts of other young women, most around her own age, and realizes that she would never be happy as part of this community.

Jean Louise's mother died when she was a toddler. She was raised by her father, Atticus, and a black servant named Calpurnia. From Atticus, she learned specific ideals, including that people are to be treated with respect regardless of their circumstances, appearance, or beliefs. When she learns that her father is part of a community group that seems to promote racism, she is furious at him. It's not until her Uncle Jack forces her to consider the situation rationally that she realizes she has placed her father on a pedestal as someone who could never fail or let her down. It's also at this point that she realizes she has ideas and principles of her own, and that she's allowed to stand up for them, even against her own father.

Jean Louise is strong willed and believes in herself. She has had a long-term relationship with Henry, but she also realizes that she's never going to be happy as a wife to him. She is willing to do almost anything for someone else, but she's also willing to go after a life that she believes will make her happy. As the story comes to a close, she prepares to end her relationship with Henry and comes to terms with the new status of her relationship with her father.

Dr. John Hale Finch

John is Atticus's brother and is known to Jean Louise as Uncle Jack. For the purpose of clarity in this guide, he is referred to as Uncle Jack except in direct quotes. Uncle Jack is a doctor and an avid student of literature. He is devoted to his family but often has convoluted ideas that are difficult for friends and family to follow. He made money on investments and some friends are willing to deal with his eccentric rants in order to get his financial advice. He lives alone and confesses to Jean Louise that he was in love with her mother. It was an unrequited love and he says that he felt a special kinship to Jean Louise and her brother, Jem, because of it.

Uncle Jack is an upstanding member of the community and takes pride in tradition. He confronts the music director about a change in a traditional hymn and pushes the man to abandon plans to make other musical changes in the weekly church services. He lives alone and hates the telephone.



Uncle Jack is in tune with the emotional upheaval Jean Louise experiences during her visit home this specific summer. When she has an argument with her father, Jean Louise packs and prepares to leave town without any additional communication. It's Uncle Jack who forces her to consider the situation rationally and to see it from her father's point of view. He says he and Atticus had wondered what would happen when Jean Louise finally disagreed with her father's view on something, and he doesn't seem particularly surprised that the situation became explosive. It's Uncle Jack who pushes Jean Louise to pick her father up from work after their argument, forcing her to face him so that they can put aside their differences.

Henry "Hank" Clinton

Henry had a difficult childhood. Unlike Jean Louise and Jem, he was forced to work from an early age to support himself. He spent the school year in a house across from the Finches' home but spent summers with his mother. He joined the military and then attended law school. By the time of this story, he has established himself as an attorney in Atticus's practice and tells Jean Louise that he can now afford to support them.

Henry seems to be in love with Jean Louise but it may be that he's simply set his sights on her as his wife. He asks her to remain in Alabama to marry him but she seems to know that they would not make a suitable match. When Jean Louise confronts him about his participation in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. Henry says that he has to do what's expected of him in order to keep building his law practice in town. This answer angers Jean Louise but Henry continues to try to reason with her, using the same arguments in different terms.

Atticus Finch

Atticus is Jean Louise's father. He is an attorney and is 72 at the time of this story. Jean Louise sees him as an incredible person with high morals, manners, and standards. She is devastated when she finds out that he is part of a group that seems to be fighting against black rights. He understands her point and had prepared himself for the day when their ideals didn't match. He accepts her right to stand up for what she believes and isn't surprised that she does so vehemently. He also accepts her apology and assures her that he isn't angry for her reaction.

Atticus is deeply loyal to his family and friends, and he wants to do what he believes to be right, even when being right is not popular. In a previous book, he took on the case of a young black man wrongly accused of rape. In this book, he stands up for the rights of individuals to determine their own course. Though most readers will disagree with his stand, he's taking action to do what he believes is right.



Alexandra Finch Hancock

Alexandra is Atticus's sister. She is the epitome of a proper, Southern lady. She wears a corset every day, and her Sunday corset is even tighter and more proper than her everyday one. She is married and has a son, Francis, though she and her husband have lived apart for years. She lives with Atticus and takes care of many of his routine needs, including buttoning his shirt and tying his shoes when his arthritis makes those tasks impossible for him. She hates that Jean Louise doesn't adhere to actions that Alexandra deems proper. She doesn't approve of Henry, citing the fact that his family is "trashy". Atticus calls her Zandra, but for the purpose of clarity in this guide, she is referred to as Alexandra except in the case of a direct quote.

Calpurnia

Calpurnia, or Cal as she's known to members of the Finch household, is a servant who takes care of most of the household needs of the Finch family for many years. She is an important fixture and takes on the role of caregiver to Jean Louise and Jem for most of their childhood. She is a black woman who hands out love and correction to the two Finch children. She is the one who explains the facts of life to Jean Louise when she begins having her period and who explains how babies are conceived.

Jean Louise goes to visit Calpurnia after Calpurnia's grandson is charged in the death of a white man. Calpurnia has aged by this time and her eyesight is poor. She has no kind word for Jean Louise and leaves the young woman wondering if Calpurnia had always hated the Finches and seen them only as a duty to be performed.

Jeremy Finch

Jeremy is Jean Louise's brother and was known as Jem. He does not appear in this story except in Jean Louise's memories. He was four years older than Jean Louise and was usually the typical older brother of this time period. He played games with her during their long summers out of school and he made sure his friends danced with her during a school function in the hope that Jean Louise would have a good time. He died on the sidewalk outside her father's law practice, the result of a heart condition inherited from their mother.

Charles Baker Harris

This character's nickname was "Dill" and he spent summers visiting relatives who lived next door to Jem and Jean Louise. He was a fun-loving youngster who participated in the games Jem and Jean Louise dreamed up. As an adult, he travels the world and is no longer a part of Jean Louise's life, though she keeps a general idea of what he's doing and where he's living.



William Willoughby

Mr. Willoughby is a typical community leader of the time and place. He is dedicated to the South and the southern way of life. He believes outsiders should leave them alone to handle things as they please. Jean Louise notes that some men like Willoughby choose to hold local political offices, but that Mr. Willoughby doesn't hold an office in Maycomb County, but he does influence many aspects of everyday life, including who is picked to hold offices. Jean Louise has no respect for him or his kind, and she's doubly upset to find that Atticus and Henry are involved in a group that includes Mr. Willoughby.

Mr. O'Hanlon

Mr. O'Hanlon is a typical racist of the time in the South. He speaks to the members of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council and it's obvious that his only agenda is to promote prejudice and white supremacy. Jean Louise hates what he stands for and she's furious that Atticus allows him to speak until she realizes that Atticus was willing to allow anyone the right to be heard, even if he disagreed with Mr. O'Hanlon's message.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Watchman

Essentially, the Watchman is a person's conscience. It's first mentioned in this book during a sermon at the Methodist Church where Jean Louise attends with her family. Later, Uncle Jack uses the term to make Jean Louise understand that every man is part of a community and that every man's own Watchman is his own conscience. He goes on to say that Jean has, for too long, rested her own conscience on that of her father, following blindly into any ideal that he followed without applying her own Watchman to find out if she agreed.

Coffee

A Coffee, with a capital "C", is an event in Maycomb during the time frame of the book. Aunt Alexandra hosts a Coffee for Jean Louise during her visit home from New York. Young women of the community are invited for coffee and refreshments, and they spend the time talking to Jean Louise and each other about their lives. Jean Louise hates the event but thanks Aunt Alexandra for hosting it in her honor.

The Black Plague

This is a pamphlet Jean Louise finds among her father's reading material. It's propaganda supporting continued segregation and extolling the problems with allowing blacks equal rights.

The Maycomb County Citizens' Council

This is a group of men who are considered community leaders who are gathered to work on the racial issues of the community. When Jean Louise secretly attends one of the meetings, she hears a man rant about the dangers of allowing blacks equal rights. She's horrified by the content of the meeting and hates that Atticus and Henry are involved.

The Methodist Church

This is the church Jean Louise attends with her family when she's back in Maycomb. There is a young preacher leading the congregation and he is the one who first proposes the idea of a Watchman in this book.



Arthritis

This is the disease that has a crippling effect on Atticus. He has had to make some changes in his lifestyle, including using modified cutlery for eating when the flare-ups are particularly bad. Despite this, he continues to work and to enjoy a fairly active lifestyle.

The Commencement Dance

This is an event attended by the seniors of Maycomb County High School in which they invite their younger siblings. Jean Louise attends, her first dance, escorted by Henry. She believes Jem must have instructed Henry to take her but it seems obvious that Henry is infatuated with Jean Louise even at this early age.

The Water Tower

This is literally a water town that supplies the town of Maycomb. Jean Louise climbs up on the tower, planning to throw herself to her death because she fears she's pregnant. Henry keeps her from jumping.

Finch Landing

This is a place on the river that was once owned by Jean Louise's family. It's where Jean Louise and Henry go swimming on Jean Louise's first night in town, prompting Aunt Alexandra's disapproval and a lot of rumors in town.

Calpurnia's House

Jean Louise goes to visit Calpurnia after Frank's arrest. She is welcomed with reservation and Aunt Alexandra is upset when she learns about the visit, saying that no whites visit black homes anymore because of the way the blacks act now.



Settings

Maycomb, Alabama

Maycomb is the small rural town in Maycomb County where Jean Louise was born and raised. She left Maycomb when she went to college and then moved to New York. The town has a great deal of agriculture around it. There are changes to the town itself though it is still very different from New York. The courthouse is a major spot in town and there are typical small-town stores, including the Jitney Jungle, a local grocery store.

New York

This is where Jean Louis lives as an adult. The town is a stark contrast to Maycomb, which is very rural. A young woman tells Jean Louise that she and her husband visited New York and hated it, but Jean Louise says she loves it. She explains that people push while they're on public transportation and that they expect to be pushed back. She says she knew she belonged once she pushed back.

Maycomb County Courthouse

This is where county business is conducted, including trials. This is also where the Maycomb County Citizens' Council meeting is held. There is not much detail about the building other than the courtroom where the Council meets. That room includes a balcony where the blacks are seated during public trials. Jean Louise sits in that balcony to watch the meeting.

The Finch Home

This is where Atticus Finch lives with his sister, Alexandra. This is not the same house where Jean Louise and Jem grew up. The house is typical of the time and place. It seems to be comfortable and large enough to accommodate Atticus, Alexandra, and guests.

The South

This is the region of the United States where the Finches live. The region is filled with people who believe in states' rights and who are sometimes more prejudiced against blacks. At the time of this book, there are still many women who believe they should exhibit the good manners taught to them by their mothers. Alexandra is one of those. She also believes a woman should dress a certain way and is appalled at Jean Louise's choice of clothing.



Themes and Motifs

Bigotry and Prejudice

The story is set in the years after World War II when civil rights issues were just beginning to be heard. Most readers will see the main example of this theme in the actions and attitudes of whites against blacks. Prejudice is common and many whites of this time and place believe that blacks are out of line with their demands for equality. The story is a work of fiction but the overall social setting is real. There were people across the South with attitudes similar to those expressed by characters in the book. There was a commitment by some to keep the social standards related to blacks unchanged. Similarly, there were people determined to force change. Both sides used reasonable arguments for their causes but there were also scare tactics aimed at creating emotional sympathy for each side. One of the arguments used by the whites against integration was that close relationships would form between black and white children, and that those friendships would lead to interracial marriages. The idea was foreign to the parents of this generation and many of the adults feared that this would come to pass. It was one argument used to promote segregation.

Another example of this theme is seen in the attitudes of the blacks when Jean Louise goes to visit Calpurnia. Calpurnia is black and she was a large factor in Jean Louise's childhood. However, times have changed dramatically and Cal is cold toward Jean Louise. The attitude is never completely explained but it seems likely that Calpurnia has come to see the whites as oppressors and she doesn't want anything to do with Jean Louise because of that attitude. Her neighbors and relatives who are standing around the porch as Jean Louise arrives are also examples of this theme. They don't know what to say to Jean Louise or how to act. When Zeebo shows her into the house, he doesn't know whether to walk behind her or take the lead. That level of discomfort is directly tied to the fact that blacks are as prejudiced against whites as whites are against blacks. They aren't willing to see Jean Louise's visit for what it really is – a white woman who feels the need to reach out to a black woman in her time of need.

Arguably the most important example of this theme is seen in Jean Louise's reaction to her father's participation in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. When she learns that he's involved and witnesses a meeting of the group, she's horrified. Jean Louise immediately labels her father as a bigot and hates him for letting her down in this manner. What she doesn't consider until her Uncle Jack forces her to slow down and think, is that Jean Louise isn't willing to consider that her father might have honorable motives for his actions. It's only when Uncle Jack pushes her to think that she realizes that she has been completely intolerant. She believes that everyone should speak out against racial inequality. When her father sits by, listening to a speaker talk about white supremacy, she is furious and doesn't even consider that he might have a reason. It's only when Uncle Jack confronts her that Jean Louise realizes she has exhibited intolerance by refusing to consider her father's side of the issue. She has, in fact, been



a bigot because she doesn't believe anyone can be right unless they believe as she believes, and take a stand similar to her own.

Coming of Age

Atticus is Jean Louise's father but their relationship is more important than a typical father-daughter relationship. Jean Louise's mother died when she was a toddler. That meant that Atticus and a black servant named Calpurnia were the two people who took responsibility for Jean Louise's upbringing. Jean Louise is fully aware of this and she credits them with molding her opinions and ideas into the adult she has become. This makes it very difficult for Jean Louise to accept that her relationships with these two people undergo dramatic changes.

Jean Louise is in her 20s when she arrives home at the beginning of the book. She has been living in New York on her own for awhile and she is a modern, self-confident woman. She believes she has no prejudices and that she is open-minded. While she's right to a degree, it takes an argument with her father and a speech from her Uncle Jack to make her see that she's really been spouting ideals and opinions in keeping with those touted by Atticus. When she disagrees with him, she's heartbroken out of all proportion to a typical disagreement between a father and child. Uncle Jack makes Jean Louise realize that she is showing a level of intolerance that she claims to hate.

With Uncle Jack leading her, Jean Louise comes to understand that she has never really had ideals and opinions of her own. She has, instead, based her thoughts on those she expects of Atticus. She has also refused to consider that any train of thought other than her own has merit. Uncle Jack says that he and Atticus have watched Jean Louise piggyback her ideas on those of her father since her childhood, and that they have both worried about the impact when she finally matured to the point of having her own. What shocks Jean Louise most is not that Uncle Jack and Atticus saw this coming, but that her opinion was so strong that she couldn't consider that her father might have a valid opinion that differed.

With this new understanding, Jean Louise reaches a new level of maturity. Her first fear is that she's damaged her relationship with her father beyond repair. She quickly discovers that's not the case. Her next piece of understanding is that she has to end her relationship with Henry. Uncle Jack verifies that she's making the right decision, another step in Jean Louise's "birth" into true adulthood.

The Relationship between Jean Louise and Henry

Jean Louise Finch and Henry Clinton lived in the same neighborhood from the time Henry was 12. Henry is older by several years and was good friends with Jean Louise's brother, Jem. Henry and Jean Louise seem to have become interested in each other from the time they were teenagers. In some ways, they seem to have drifted together by circumstance rather than by any real attraction. Henry believes that he and Jean Louise will eventually marry. It's apparently a subject that's been discussed prior to Jean



Louise's arrival at the opening of the book. When Henry mentions marriage, Jean Louise isn't surprised but she says she plans to remain single until she's 30. While she doesn't say so, it seems that she isn't certain that she should marry Henry, and that's the reason she's putting off a formal engagement.

An important part of their relationship is in their backgrounds and upbringing. Jean Louise is less aware of the difference than Henry and it seems to mean less to her than it does to some. When Jean Louise mentions to Aunt Alexandra that she might marry Henry, Alexandra says it's not a good idea. She says that Henry is “trash” and that he can't overcome his background. She points out several bad habits that she says points to poor upbringing – including picking his nose – but Jean Louise says it seems more likely that those are just habits of a man. Jean Louise ignores her aunt but she gets a similar speech later from her Uncle Jack. He doesn't call Henry trash but does say that Henry and Jean Louise are different.

Henry is very aware of their differences. He tells Jean Louise that their childhoods were very different. He points out that he had to work to support himself throughout his teenage years, meaning he wasn't as financially comfortable as Jean Louise and Jem were. He also says that he didn't have the same opportunities for play and enjoyment that Jean Louise and Jem took for granted. Henry's job meant that he also had less time to devote to studies, which put him at yet another disadvantage. That has spilled over into adulthood. Henry believes he is still being judged for his past and uses that to justify his decision to follow the crowd with regard to his prejudice. He says he would never be accepted if he didn't.

Jean Louise comes to admit that she and Henry are different and that they aren't likely to make a good couple for a long-term relationship because of those differences. This understanding can be compared to the fear that some whites seem to have about interracial relationships. Some people feed this, saying that there will be many interracial relationships once blacks and whites attend school together. They use this as an argument to support segregation. Uncle Jack argues that this is an irrational fear. He points out that people tend to enter into relationships and marriages with people who are similar to themselves. Jean Louise accepts his statement as fact and applies it to her relationship with Henry.

Attitudes of the South

Uncle Jack has one of the most compelling discussions on this theme, though there are other examples. Uncle Jack leads Jean Louise through a conversation about the history and attitudes of the South. He prompts her to realize that there have always been classes of people, even outside the South, and that the southern people are just another example of this class system. As a rule, there are wealthy people and poor people in any society, and the upper class holds to their advantages. He also leads Jean Louise through a discussion of the situation that led to the Civil War. Uncle Jack pointed out that most people who fought in the Civil War didn't hold slaves and were



fighting because they wanted to defend their “identities” and way of life against outside influences.

Atticus talks along those same lines and prompts Jean Louise to realize that she's a proponent of state's rights as well. She admits to being angry when a court decision called for intervention in the South and Atticus makes her realize that reaction is typical of people of Alabama and other southern states. It takes some time for Jean Louise to accept that others are reacting more to that interference than to the right of blacks to their civil liberties.

Atticus has a more educated thought on the topic of civil rights for the blacks than many. He argues that they deserve equal rights but that they can't rush into utilizing those privileges. Atticus points out that blacks tend to vote as a community, or block. In the case of a neighboring county, he points out that the majority of residents are black and that they could conceivably vote in an all-black slate of city and county officers. That would mean the county was entirely run by people without the education or experience to do a good job. Atticus seems to be in favor of allowing black rights, but of doing so slowly. His attitude is clearly prejudiced and he tries to justify it by this line of reasoning.

Another example of this theme is seen in the attitudes of women. Many of the women simply repeat what their husbands say, accepting that the men in their lives must be right. The women are also very limited in their experiences and opinions. This is seen clearly during the Coffee hosted by Aunt Alexandra in Jean Louise's honor. The purpose of the Coffee is to put a visiting young lady on display for the locals to see.

Yet another example of this theme is seen in Aunt Alexandra's attitudes toward Jean Louise's modern ways. Jean Louise wears slacks and Aunt Alexandra doesn't approve. She also doesn't approve when she learns that Jean Louise and Henry went swimming. By the morning after the swim, there are rumors that Jean Louise and Henry were naked while they were swimming. Jean Louise really doesn't care about the rumors but Aunt Alexandra does and she sets out to put a stop to them as soon as she begins to see people at church.

The Duty to Follow One's Conscience

The title of the story refers to a “watchman,” which comes from a Biblical reference indicating that a person should listen to his or her conscience and do whatever that conscience dictates. For Jean Louise, the biggest problem is that she momentarily flounders, unable to figure out what's true and what isn't. When she learns that Atticus and Henry are participating in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. Jean Louise is horrified. She feels that Atticus has lived one way all his life and that he's now doing something completely contrary to his life. She is horrified that members of her family make racist comments. Jean Louise speaks out. She calls out these people and makes it clear that she doesn't agree with them.



In her clash with Atticus, Jean Louise is particularly outspoken. She says that he's a hypocrite and is infuriated when he doesn't stand up for himself. He says only that hypocrites have a right to live in the world just like anyone else. Atticus knows that Jean Louise is hurt and angry, and he knows that she won't listen to him if he tries to explain his stand on this issue. It's not until Jean Louise has another conversation with Uncle Jack that she finally realizes Atticus has exhibited a high level of tolerance. For example, he says that he allowed Mr. O'Hanlon to talk at the Maycomb County Citizens' Council because Mr. O'Hanlon asked to be heard. Uncle Jack points out that same level of tolerance, saying that people have a right to be heard, even if they are spouting stupidity. However, Uncle Jack also assures Jean Louise that she has a duty to do what she feels is right.

An important aspect of this theme is that Jean Louise is standing up for what she believes is right, but she isn't ready or willing to listen to any opinions that don't agree with her. She comes to realize that other people have the same right. In the case of Atticus, he is participating in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council because he believes that outsiders shouldn't be able to force the people of Maycomb County to take actions. He fears that big government will step on individual rights, given the chance, and sees the Council as one way to keep local issues in local hands. It's not until Uncle Jack spells it out for her that Jean Louise is willing to see that Atticus has the responsibility to do what's right, just as Jean Louise has that responsibility, and that it doesn't matter if the two have different opinions of what the right thing is.

Jean Louise feels that she isn't certain what's right because she has a difference of opinion with Atticus. This is tied closely with another of the book's themes, coming of age, and most readers will identify with this time in Jean Louise's life. She expects Atticus to be angry that they argued but he is proud of her for standing up for what she believes to be right.



Styles

Point of View

The book is written in third person. The majority of the view is limited to the perspective of Jean Louise, meaning the reader knows only what Jean Louise knows. There are a few cases in which the view becomes briefly omniscient. For example, when Jean Louise leaves Uncle Jack's house, he uses the telephone to call Atticus. Jean Louise doesn't know about the phone call until later. The reader knows the call was made, but doesn't know who Uncle Jack called or the details of the call.

Jean Louise is an idealistic young woman who believes people should take a stand for what they believe. There is no middle ground for her and her actions demonstrate that. She believes fully that racial prejudice is wrong and is horrified when she finds that her father and close friend, Henry, are involved in a group called the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. The group seems intent on continuing racial segregation and promoting white supremacy. She is so upset when she sees the group in action that she throws up. She tries to ignore both her father and Henry but finds she can't stop herself from confronting them. She argues with them both and is unwilling to see that they might have their own ideas and motives for being involved.

Jean Louise considers her own view as the right one and won't listen to any explanation until her Uncle Jack forces her to stop and reconsider. Her own intolerance for anything she considers to be prejudice makes Jean Louise an unreliable perspective on this point, though she seems to present full and honest accounts of other aspects of her life.

Language and Meaning

The story stands on its own but it is closely related to another book by the author, "To Kill a Mockingbird". Jean Louise, her family, and some other characters appear in both books. The reader who is not familiar with the first book will miss some minor points, though this book will still make sense and carry the same overall themes and ideas. One of those points is seen in Jean Louise's attitude toward her father and his actions related to the racial tension. In the first book, Atticus defends a young black man who is accused of the rape of a white woman. Atticus takes the case because he believes the young man deserves a good lawyer and that he isn't guilty of the crime. Jean Louise learns that her father believes that the young man deserves a good lawyer, despite the fact that he's black. Her earliest attitudes about race are forged in this setting. That makes it more devastating when she finds out that her father is participating in a local group that appears to be dedicated to promoting continued segregation and white supremacy.

The overall tone of the story is one of confrontation and tension, though there is love and hope between Jean Louise and her family. At least one character touts extreme



views of white supremacy and some readers may find this difficult to read. There is also extensive use of the word “Negro” and a ruder word for blacks. This was an unfortunate attitude of the time and place but it may be offensive to some readers.

The story is written in relatively modern English but there are some dated words and terms. These are generally self-explanatory and most readers will have no trouble understanding the meaning. There are, however, some convoluted conversations between Uncle Jack and Jean Louise. Uncle Jack makes some veiled literary references and these conversations may be difficult for some readers to follow. Jean Louise says that she leaves one visit saying that Uncle Jack is “mad as a hatter,” but that “he knows he’s crazy.”

Some readers may find the book offensive in the level of prejudice and the outright hatred being expressed. Atticus tries to explain his way of thinking but there is really no way to justify the bigotry being expressed. The main story line is that of Jean Louise learning about herself and the ability to tolerate other opinions.

Structure

The book is divided into 7 parts. Each is titled by Roman numeral only. Chapters 1-3 appear in Part 1. The reader is introduced to several of the main characters, including Jean Louise and her immediate family. Part 2 consists of Chapters 4 and 5. The reader learns more about Maycomb, Alabama, and about Jean Louise's relationship with Henry Clinton. Chapters 6-10 are in Part 3. Jean Louise's relationship with her father is explored in depth during this section, explaining why she is so upset to learn that Atticus is part of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council.

Chapters 11 and 12 make up Part 4. The reader learns more about Jean Louise's childhood and her relationship with Calpurnia. Chapters 13 and 14 are in Part 5. Jean Louise endures the Coffee hosted by Alexandra and hears racial hatred by young women of the community. Part 6 is made up of Chapters 15-17. Jean Louise confronts both Henry and Atticus about their role in the Council and she's devastated by her father's attitude. Part 7 is the final section of the book and it consists of Chapters 18 and 19. Uncle Jack forces Jean Louise to look deeper at the issue and to consider that she is not allowing anyone to have an opinion that differs from her own, including her father.

There are some interesting literary devices in the story, including the use of capitalization to show that something is important. One example of this is seen when Aunt Alexandra talks to Jean Louise about her choice of clothes. She asks Jean Louise if she's been “visiting out of the family Like That?” The fact that the words “Like That” are capitalized indicates that this is a concept important to Aunt Alexandra. It makes the term a proper noun to help the reader understand that it's a common theme in the Finch household. Aunt Alexandra would never go outside without what she considers proper attire. She doesn't think Jean Louise's slacks are proper, especially if Jean Louise has gone to visit people other than close family.

Another example of the literary devices is seen in personification. The author makes Maycomb into a character, capable of communicating with Jean Louise. At one point, Jean Louise imagines the town's buildings saying that there are secrets here that she can't possibly understand, and that she's no longer welcome.



Quotes

She was a person who, when confronted with an easy way out, always took the hard way.”

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 76)

Importance: This is an important look at Jean Louise's character. She does make some things more difficult than other people would make them, but she does what she believes is right. In this quote, Jean Louise is looking at her relationship with Henry but this attitude applies to other areas of her life as well.

To all parties present and participating in the life of the county, however, Alexandra was the last of her kind: she had river-boat, boarding-school manners; let any moral come along and she would uphold it; she was a disapprove; she was an incurable gossip.”

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 6)

Importance: The reader has just met Aunt Alexandra and this is an inside look at Jean Louise's attitude about her aunt. As an interesting point, Jean Louise admires Aunt Alexandra when they aren't together but those qualities she admires get on her nerves whenever they are together.

It's just that I'm so afraid of making a mess of being married to the wrong man – the wrong kind for me, I mean. I'm no different from any other woman, and the wrong man would turn me into a screamin' shrew in record time.”

-- Jean Louise (chapter 4 paragraph 30)

Importance: Jean Louise is talking to Henry and she's trying to make him understand why she still hasn't agreed to marry him. She has dragged her feet when it seems most women would have married him by now, but as it turns out she has probably made the right decision. At the end of the book, Uncle Jack tells her that they aren't compatible because they aren't alike.

For thus hath the Lord saith unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.

-- Mr. Stone (chapter 7 paragraph 15)

Importance: Jean Louise is in church when she hears this verse about the watchman. It becomes an important idea for her as she struggles to figure out her place in this new world and she wishes she had a watchman who could tell her the truth about people and events so that she would understand from the beginning rather than being surprised to learn she's misunderstood something important.

With the same suddenness that a barbarous boy yanks the larva of an ant lion from its hole to leave it struggling in the sun, Jean Louise was snatched from her quiet realm and left alone to protect her sensitive epidermis as best she could, on a humid Sunday afternoon at precisely 2:28 P.M.”



-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 8)

Importance: This is a paragraph of foreshadowing that something serious is about to happen to Jean Louise. This is when she finds the racial pamphlet that leads her to discover the prejudicial views expressed by Atticus and Henry.

Below her, on rough benches, sat not only most of the trash in Maycomb County, but the county's most respectable men."

-- Narrator (chapter 8 paragraph 46)

Importance: Jean Louise is looking down at the courtroom from a balcony at a gathering of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. The important part of this quote is that men have united on this front when they would normally not associate for any reason.

She did not stand alone, but what stood behind her, the most potent moral force in her life, was the love of her father.

-- Narrator (chapter 9 paragraph 14)

Importance: Jean Louise has, from an early age, depended on Atticus to help her learn what's right. He encourages her to leave home so that he can be certain she can fend for herself. In this verse, she expresses the idea that she never felt she was alone because she always had Atticus. This is also why Jean Louise struggles so much when she finds that she doesn't agree with Atticus's actions.

I wish to God I had caught you both at a jook with two sleazy women – the lawn needs mowing."

-- Narrator (chapter 12 paragraph 8)

Importance: Jean Louise is struggling with the understanding that Atticus and Henry are participating in the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. She believes the Council stands for everything she hates about racism and she's devastated that Henry and Atticus are involved. Her thought is that she would have been hurt if she'd caught them at a bar with "sleazy women," but wouldn't have been this devastated. She tries to turn her attention to the lawn to avoid thinking about it any longer.

Jean Louise, nobody in Maycomb goes to see Negroes any more, not after what they've been doing to us. Besides being shiftless now they look at you sometimes with open insolence, and as far as depending on them goes, why that's out."

-- Aunt Alexandra (chapter 13 paragraph 16)

Importance: Aunt Alexandra is expressing what she's apparently come to believe about the current state of race relations. Her comment is racist and shocks Jean Louise. This is one of many examples of racism in this book, which is one of the book's overriding themes.



Has it ever occurred to you – have you never, somewhere along the line, received vibrations to the effect – that this territory was a separate nation?

-- Uncle Jack (chapter 14 paragraph 19)

Importance: Uncle Jack is explaining to Jean Louise the idea that the people of the South tend to feel they are separate from the United States. He goes on to explain that this is part of the reason the South is so far behind on resolving racial issues.

A man can appear to be part of something not-so-good on its face, but don't take it upon yourself to judge him unless you know his motives as well. A man can be boiling inside, but he knows a mild answer works better than showing his rage."

-- Henry (chapter 16 paragraph 50)

Importance: Henry is trying to explain why he and Atticus are members of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council. He's talking to Jean Louise, who has just confronted him with her hatred of that Council and all she believes it stands for. Henry is trying to make her see that she needs to look into the hearts of the men involved because some of them might have good motives for their participation. It's left to the reader to decide whether there can be any good motives.

Every man's island Jean Louise, every man's watchman, is his conscience. There is no such thing as a collective conscious."

-- Uncle Jack (chapter 18 paragraph 88)

Importance: Uncle Henry is making Jean Louise understand that she has the duty to her own opinions. Up to this point, she has always shared the opinions expressed by Atticus and has never had to stand up for herself against her father. It was difficult for her to face that first conflict but Uncle Jack is helping her realize that she has the right to her opinions, and the right to stand up for them, and that they aren't going to always match Atticus's.