

TKAM Comprehension Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences and detailed examples to support your writing.

CHAPTER 1:

1. Why were the children fascinated with the Radley house?
2. What was the first “dare” they made concerning this house?
3. How did the Radley house acquire its reputation? Do you think it was a deserved reputation?
4. How did the Finches originally come to Montgomery?
5. What was the “disturbance between the North and the South?”
6. Describe several similarities and differences with Dill’s family vs. Scout’s family?
7. What evidence showed that Scout was a bright young girl?
8. Would you like to live in a town like Maycomb, Alabama? What would be the advantages and disadvantages?
9. What do you think about the children’s goal to make Boo Radley come out? Was it a cruel activity or just a game? Why?

CHAPTERS 2-3:

1. Why was Scout’s first day at school a terrible disappointment to her? Why did she continue to be bored?
2. Why did Scout tell Miss Caroline about Walter Cunningham? Explain.
3. Why do you think Miss Caroline was distraught after punishing Scout?
4. What evidence indicated that Atticus, in contrast to Miss Caroline, had respect for Walter’s country manners?
5. What advice about human nature did Atticus give to Scout?
6. Do you agree with Miss Caroline that parents should not instruct their own children? Why or why not?
7. What do you think of Atticus’s bargain with Scout concerning their “illicit” reading? Is it a way of teaching Scout to be dishonest or a practical necessity? Explain.
8. Create a Venn Diagram showing the differences and similarities between the Cunninghams and the Ewells.

Chapters 4-6:

1. (A) How do you think the gum and the pennies got into the knothole in the oak tree?
(B) Why do you think they were there? Do you agree with Jem that it was a hiding place, or something else? Explain.

- (A) How did the children amuse themselves during Dill's second summer in Maycomb?
(B) If you were their parents, would you allow them to play this game? Explain.
- (A) How did Jem and Dill cause Scout to become closer to Miss Maudie?
(B) What message was she trying to convey about Boo Radley?
- Why do you think the neighbors concluded that a black person had been in Mr. Radley's collard patch?
- Why was Jem willing to risk danger and ignore Scout's warning in order to retrieve his pants?
- Why did Jem, Scout, and Dill consider Miss Maudie their friend despite the difference in age?
- Why do you think Dill fabricated so many stories about himself and his father?
- Describe several things Scout has learned by the end of chapter 6 (refer to all 6 chapters).

CH 7-8:

- Who do you think sewed up Jem's pants? Explain your answer. Why do think that this person mended the pants?
- What new objects did Scout and Jem find in the Radley Oak? Why were the kids certain that the items in the tree were for them?
- Why do you think that Jem and Scout were so devastated when they found out that the knothole in the tree had been cemented shut?
- Why did Scout fear that the world was coming to an end? Explain.
- What did Atticus mean when he said to Jem, "You've perpetrated a near libel here in the front yard?"
- Why do you think that Jem confessed to Atticus about the children's activities regarding Boo Radley?
- Why do you think that Boo Radley covered Scout as she watched the fire?
- Why did Atticus decide NOT to have the children return Boo Radley's blanket? Explain.
- What was Miss Maudie's reaction to the loss of her house? Why?

CH 9-11:

- Although Atticus told Scout that he was "simply defending a Negro," what evidence was there that this was not a simple case at all?
- Why did Atticus accept Tom Robinson's case knowing he wouldn't be paid and that it would cause a tremendous furor?
- Why did Uncle Jack spank Scout?
- Why did Atticus believe she deserved this punishment even after Jack admitted his error?
- What kind of case was Atticus referring to when he told Jack, "I was hoping to get through life without a case of this kind?"
- What happened to change the children's perception of their father? Give specific evidence.

7. Why did Jem destroy Mrs. Dubose's flower garden?
8. What was Jem's punishment? Do you think it was fair and appropriate? Explain.
9. Symbolism in literature refers to a tangible object that represents an abstract idea or set of ideas. Consider Mrs. Dubose's camellias and how they grew back after Jem mutilated them. What might the camellias symbolize in this novel? Why?

CH 12-14:

1. Why did Calpurnia fuss over the children so much before taking them to First Purchase?
2. How did Calpurnia's church differ from the white people's church in town?
3. What did Jem and Scout learn about segregation and inequalities between blacks and whites during their visit to Calpurnia's church?
4. What did Scout mean when she commented that Calpurnia "had a separate existence outside our household?"
5. Why did Atticus agree with Aunt Alexandra's wish to move in for the summer? How did the children feel about this? Explain.
6. Why could it be said that "Aunt Alexandra fitted into the world of Maycomb like a hand into a glove, but never into the world of Jem and me {Scout}?"
7. What sense of values did Aunt Alexandra try to impart to the children? Explain.
8. Why did Dill run away from home? Explain.
9. What was the difference between the way Dill perceived his relationship with his mother and the way Scout perceived her relationship with her father?
10. What evidence showed that Jem was starting to grow up and was beginning to identify with the adult world? Be specific.

CH 15-18:

1. Why did Heck Tate, and the men accompanying him, want Tom Robinson moved out of the local jail? Why didn't Atticus agree?
2. How do you think Mr. Cunningham felt about Scout's conversation with him in front of the jail? Why?
3. Why did Miss Maudie complain that Maycomb looked like a Roman carnival on the day the trial began? Why were so many people in town?
4. How would you characterize the crowd that came to the trial? Why do you think Harper Lee described them in such detail?
5. What did the men in the Idler's club mean as they echoed town sentiment saying, "the court appointed him [Atticus] to defend this nigger ... but Atticus plans to defend him. That's what I don't like about it?"

6. On what single issue did Atticus build his case?
7. Why did Mayella resent Atticus?
8. Explain what the following two moments and gestures had in common: when Atticus stood in the middle of an empty street pushing up his glasses and the moment in the jail house when he folded his newspaper .
9. Do you think Atticus built a good case for his client Tom Robinson? Why or why not?