

Why you should read To Kill A Mockingbird...

1. **Scout!** Harper Lee achieves an unforgettable, unique voice in this first person narrator. Scout's sense of humor and sassy attitude are priceless.
2. **Maycomb!** Lee creates a sense of place with this small, Southern town that is reminiscent of those aspects of childhood – and of human nature – that resonate and allow the reader to be compassionate, even when justifiably judging the myopic nature of the town.
3. **Characters!** Beyond the character of Scout, Atticus, Jem, Dill, and Boo Radley have entered the national consciousness in an enduring manner.
4. Lee's portrayal of America's burden: **racism**. Through the narration, setting, and characterization, Lee allows us to face America's regrettable legacy of racism, as well as the courage it required to overcome the institutional aspects that have been and are continuing to be overcome throughout society.
5. It is simply **a good read**. It is the 4th most often taught novel in American schools and even 9th graders love it...☺

Why you may struggle with To Kill A Mockingbird...

1. Readers have struggled with Atticus' role as a “great white hope,” saving the “helpless” African American characters.
2. Scout seems wise beyond her years (although the novel is told as a flashback, so she is actually reflecting on the events after a few years have passed).
3. Some school districts have banned the novel due to a degrading portrayal of the African American characters who can be 2-dimensional.
4. The novel feels overly moralistic at times – especially a few of Atticus' platitudes.
5. The first chapter is a little slow, but Lee's attention to detail and ancestral history is one of the great legacies of Southern storytelling.

To Kill A Mockingbird – Fast Facts

Pages – 336 (Hardcover 40th anniversary edition)

Author -- Harper Lee

Date Published -- 1960

Setting – Maycomb, Alabama / 1933-1935

Point of view – first person narrator (Scout Finch)

Genre – coming-of-age; Southern fiction

Issues/Conflicts – good vs. evil, human nature, innocence, racial inequality, courtroom drama, social class

Awards – Pulitzer Prize, 1961

Beyond the Basics...

Annotations (explanations of references and vocabulary):

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/

History of Scottsboro Trials (possible inspiration for trial):

www.Library.thinkquest.org/12111/SG/SG5.html#author

History of why banned in schools:

www.ala.org (search: banned books)

To Kill A Mockingbird -- Author Information

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama, and To Kill A Mockingbird is her only published novel. Although the plot of the novel bears some resemblance to events in her childhood, Lee once said, "People are people anywhere you put them." Nevertheless, her father was an attorney and the case in To Kill A Mockingbird somewhat resembles "the Scottsboro Case" – which involved nine black men accused of raping two white women. The case occurred in 1931 and was highly publicized and widely thought to be motivated by racial prejudice. It is also believed that the character of Dill was based on Lee's friendship with Truman Capote. Harper Lee wrote To Kill A Mockingbird in New York City, between the years of 1950 and 1957, and she has requested that future publications not include a critical introduction, because "Mockingbird still says what it has to say; it has managed to survive the years without preamble." Although Lee is very private and refuses to be interviewed or appear on television, in 2005 she did attend a benefit at the Los Angeles Public Library at the special request of Veronique Peck, widow of Gregory Peck.

Other resources on Harper Lee:

http://www.biographyshef.com/harper_lee_biography.html

http://books.google.com/books?vid=ISBN080507919X&id=j8cm3hxUd7MC&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&ots=bTyDHNa9Mf&dq=Mockingbird:+A+Portrait+of+Harper+Lee&sig=79f3Lc4jL_lbAyN9sZMjlCtY2X8#PPP1,M1

Printable Bookmark! Please print and then cut to use as a reference as you read!!

Only basic information has been provided to avoid “spoilers.” The “Intro” column indicates the chapter in which each character is first introduced. Enjoy!

Character	Description	Intro
Jean Louise “Scout” Finch	First person narrator; six years old when events occur.	Ch. 1
Atticus Finch	Father of Scout and Jem; defense attorney for Tom Robinson.	Ch. 1
Jeremy Atticus “Jem” Finch	Scout’s older brother; ten years old during story.	Ch. 1
Arthur “Boo” Radley	Reclusive neighbor of the Finches.	Ch. 1
Charles Baker “Dill” Harris	Miss Rachel’s nephew from Mississippi; friends with Scout and Jem.	Ch. 1
Calpurnia	Housekeeper and mother-figure to Jem and Scout.	Ch. 1
Miss Stephanie Crawford	Meddlesome neighbor who gossips.	Ch. 1
Simon Finch	Distant relative of the Finches who owned slaves and settled in Maycomb.	Ch. 1
Mrs. Dubose	Dying neighbor, addicted to morphine.	Ch. 1
Nathan Radley	Brother of Boo Radley.	Ch. 1
Mr. Walter Cunningham	Poor farmer represented by Atticus when his farm was threatened.	Ch. 2
Walter Cunningham	Classmate of Scout.	Ch. 2
Bob Ewell	Father of the woman who accuses Tom Robinson of rape.	Ch.3
Aunt Alexandra	Atticus’ sister.	Ch. 9
Tom Robinson	Accused of rape.	Ch. 9
Francis	Grandson of Aunt Alexandra.	Ch. 9
Uncle Jack	Atticus’ brother who is a doctor.	Ch. 9
Heck Tate	Sheriff of Maycomb.	Ch.10
Mr. Underwood	Runs the local newspaper.	Ch.15
Mr. Dolphus Raymond	Wealthy man who lives with his African American mistress and their children. Pretends to be drunk.	Ch.16
Mayella Ewell	Accuses Tom Robinson of rape.	Ch.17

To Kill A Mockingbird – Creating the Mood!!

Here are some ideas to set the mood, get the conversation started, and put dishes on the table that compliment Harper Lee's classic. Enjoy!

Introductory Game Ideas:

Since "voice" is one of the distinguishing characteristics of To Kill A Mockingbird, here is a warm-up game to tap into this particular literary device:

Since the characterization is so vivid in this novel, ask members to bring an object that represents their favorite character. Before discussing the novel, have members try to guess the character represented by each object. Be sure members explain why the object represents their character. (This game would work even if every member hasn't finished the novel).

Variations of this game: Have members bring an object that represents something they have in common with one of the characters. This could be a positive or negative quality and they would not need to choose a "favorite" character in this case. Members could also bring objects that represent the setting or time period of the novel.

Ask members to bring an appetizer, snack, or dessert that represents a character, theme, or the setting of the novel. Have members guess the connections between the food and the novel. (This game would work even if every member hasn't finished the novel).

Check out the film page – consider watching the film version as a group!

To Kill A Mockingbird – Menu Ideas

The following web site is a showcase of Alabama cuisine and includes many interesting recipes. A few to recommend would be the Fried Green Tomatoes, the Potato Chip Chicken, and the Peach and Pecan Pies. Enjoy!

Menu Ideas: <http://www.800alabama.com/yof/recipes/results.cfm>

Sweet Potato Casserole

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Ingredients:

Sweet Potato Filling

- 3 cups cooked, mashed Alabama sweet potatoes
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine

Topping

- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup chopped Alabama pecans

Directions:

Mix all together and pour into greased casserole.

Topping

Mix topping ingredients together and sprinkle over potatoes. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Fried Green Tomatoes

Description:

Fried Green Tomatoes with ginger-peach chutney and goat cheese

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

Fried Green Tomatoes

- 4 green tomatoes, sliced
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup flour, seasoned with salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup corn meal
- 3 oz. goat cheese
- Oil for frying

Ginger Peach Chutney

- 2 peaches, peeled and diced
- 3 TB onion, diced finely
- 3 TB red bell pepper, diced finely
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 2 TB pickled ginger, diced
- 3 TB sugar
- 3 TB rice vinegar

Directions:

Fried Green Tomatoes

Mix half of the flour with the corn meal. Beat the eggs with a little water. Bread the tomato slices, first in the flour, then in the egg and finally in the corn meal mix. Fry until crisp in hot oil. Drain on paper towels.

Serve topped with peach chutney and topped with crumbled goat cheese. It is also good as a sandwich with a slice of ham and a little sour cream dressing.

Ginger Peach Chutney **Submitted**
By:

Mix all ingredients and allow to marinate overnight in the refrigerator. The chutney can be made spicy with the addition of either pepper sauce or jalapenos.

Pepper
Place
Market

Baked Cheese Grits

Description:

No Alabama food book would be complete without a grits recipe. This one would be good as a side dish, whether you're serving breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Servings: 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup quick grits
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons butter (or margarine)
- 3 cups grated cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten

Directions:

Put water and salt in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add grits slowly, stirring as you add. Let water return to boil, lower heat, and cook for five minutes. Stir occasionally while cooking. Remove from heat; add flour and butter and stir until well blended. Add cheese and stir until the cheese is melted. Add a little hot cheese mixture to eggs and stir. Then add this to remaining hot cheese mixture and stir until well blended. Pour into greased 1 1/2 quart baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes or until mixture is firm. Serve hot.

Potato Chip Chicken

Recipe Type: Main Course

Servings: Makes 12 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 20-ounce bag regular Golden Flake salted potato chips, crushed
- 1 16-ounce container of sour cream
- 2 1/2 pounds chicken tenderloins
- 1 can cooking spray (butter flavored)
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder/granulated garlic
- 1/2 cup butter (1 stick)
- Salsa (optional)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450°F. Place sour cream in a medium bowl. Dip chicken tenderloins in sour cream, then coat with potato chips. Place coated chicken on greased cookie sheet. Bake chicken 5 minutes, then reduce heat to 375°F. and bake 10-12 minutes. While chicken is baking, melt butter; add garlic powder. Return oven to 450°F. and brush garlic butter over each piece of chicken and bake for an additional 5 minutes or until chicken is golden brown. Serve with salsa if desired.

Tea Cakes

Recipe Type: Dessert and Breads

Ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup shortening (may use butter)
- 1 cup milk
- 3-5 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- Salt to taste
- Nutmeg to taste

Directions:

Cream sugar and shortening. Add eggs and mix well. Sift 3 cups flour with baking powder, salt and nutmeg; add alternately with milk to sugar-shortening-egg mixture. Add enough additional flour to make dough stiff enough to roll. Roll out on floured surface. Cut with biscuit cutter and place on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for about 15 minutes or until brown.

Miss Kay's Favorite Pecan Pie

Recipe Type: Dessert and Breads

Ingredients:

- 3 eggs beaten
- 1 cup Karo syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups Alabama pecans
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp. Melted butter
- 1/8 tsp. Salt
- 1 unbaked pie shell

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together. Pour into pie shell. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Then at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Cool before serving.

Submitted By: Burris Farm Market

Miss Kay's Favorite Peach Pie

Recipe Type: Dessert and Breads

Ingredients:

- 5 cups sliced fresh Alabama peaches
- 1 unbaked 9-inch pastry shell
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 egg

Directions:

Place peaches in pastry shell. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over peaches. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour and 10 minutes.

Submitted By: Burris Farm Market

Patriotic Potato Chip & Pretzel Pie

Recipe Type: Dessert and Breads

Ingredients:

For Pie Crust:

- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups Golden Flake potato chips, crushed
- 2 tablespoons granulated or brown sugar
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 4-6 tablespoons cold water

For Pie Filling:

- 1 gallon vanilla ice cream
- 1 quart fresh Alabama-grown strawberries, sliced
- 1 pint fresh Alabama-grown blueberries
- 2 tablespoons corn syrup
- 1 package Golden Flake pretzel sticks

Directions:

Pie Crust

In a medium bowl, mix flour, potato chips and sugar. Mix in 1 tablespoon of shortening at a time with a fork until thoroughly mixed. Stir in water until well-mixed. In a 12x8 inch baking dish, press mixture evenly to coat bottom and sides of dish. (Don't let the mix gather in the corners. More bare spots on the bottom are better than on the side.) Bake at 425°F. for 20 minutes. Check the last few minutes so pie doesn't burn. Remove pie from oven and let cool.

Pie Filling

Let ice cream soften in a large bowl out of the package. Blend together with fork until it is smooth but not liquidity. Spread the softened ice cream on top of the cooled pie crust. Refreeze the ice cream and pie crust for at least 30 minutes. While ice cream is refreezing, cut up the strawberries into 5-6 slices each and mix with corn syrup in a pour able container. Remove ice cream from freezer and decorate in the shape of a flag. Use pretzel sticks to outline the strips on the flag. Blueberries are stars and the strawberry mix can be poured into every other stripe. Place red on top and bottom and 13 stripes if you can. Keep in freezer for at least one hour before serving. Just cut and serve from the same dish.

To Kill A Mockingbird – The Film!

"I think it is one of the best translations of a book to film ever made."

Harper Lee, author

In 1963, an award-winning movie was made of the novel. Your group could watch the movie as a group and discuss your impressions, or group members could watch it before the meeting and then discuss impressions as a group. Here are a few possible movie questions:

- Do you agree with Lee's quote? Why/not?
- While viewing the movie, which characters were most unlike how you pictured them while reading the novel?
- Which characters seemed most accurate in their portrayal?
- What plot elements were left out or changed in the movie?
- How was your enjoyment affected by what was left out/changed?
- If this movie were remade today, who would you cast as Scout, Atticus, Jem, Dill, Boo, etc.?
- This movie won Oscars for Best Actor, Best Art Direction, and Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, and was nominated for Best Picture, Best Music Score, Best Director, Best Cinematography, and Best Supporting Actress (Scout). Do you believe these awards and nominations were justified? Which ones seemed best or least earned?
- In 2006, the American Film Institute ranked this film the second most inspiring movie of all time (after It's A Wonderful Life and before Shindler's List) and #25 on its 100 greatest movies of all time. Why do so many people find this film inspiring? Does it stand the test of time?

More information on the film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056592/>

More information on AFI, including the complete lists of most inspiring and greatest movies of all time:

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipea/A0934314.html>

<http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/cheers.aspx>

<http://www.afi.com/>

Literary Terms – To Kill A Mockingbird

Exposition – the introduction of the setting, characters, conflict(s) at the beginning of a novel. Many of my questions focus on the exposition since our first impressions are so influential to our enjoyment and impressions of the novel. After finishing a novel, skim the first chapter again to see how the author shaped and influenced your first impressions.

Focus questions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10

Diction – word choice. Notice how formal, colloquial, or archaic the word choice is and how that influences your reading speed as well as enjoyment level. Mayella’s diction is very different from Atticus’ diction and this contributes to her belief that he is mocking her on the stand.

Focus questions: 7, 18

Syntax – style of sentence structure. Does the author employ complex, verbose, formal, or simplistic sentences? How does the author’s crafting of syntax affect your engagement as a reader? Complexity of syntax does not determine literary merit; the pairing of syntax to meaning does.

Focus questions: 3, 5, 9

Tone – author’s attitude toward subject. Think “tone of voice.” Tone is created through diction and can be very subtle, but is extremely important. If you misinterpret the tone, you most likely misinterpret the meaning or theme of the narrative. Notice the quote referred to in question 10:

“His first two clients were the last two persons hanged in the Maycomb County jail. Atticus had urged them to accept the state’s generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty to second-degree murder and escape with their lives, but they were Haverfords, in Maycomb County a name synonymous with jackass… and insisted that the-son-of-a-bitch-had-it-coming-to-him was a good enough defense for anybody.”

We understand Scout’s tone of voice as that of amusement toward the Haverfords as she assumes we pity Atticus’ predicament. The use of “the state’s generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty… and escape with their lives” and then the following explicatives leads to this understanding.

Focus question: 10

Mood – emotional atmosphere of novel. When we read a novel, we “read ourselves,” so think about what type of mood your favorite novels tend to have and how different moods may influence your enjoyment level. One common quality of Southern storytelling is the inclusion of “gothic” elements – i.e., disturbing elements or a polarity between good and evil. Consider how the unsettling elements in the novel affect your emotional experience (i.e., the shooting of Tim Johnson, the snowstorm, etc.).

Theme – main idea that runs through and unifies novel. Theme should be stated as a complete thought and not one word, which would be a topic of the novel. Instead of “love,” ask what the author is saying about the nature of love in the novel. In classics, themes are frequently not “morals” of the novel; they may or may represent the ideal.

Focus questions: 4 – 7, 10, 12 – 18

Irony – the opposite of what is expected. **Dramatic irony** is when the reader has more information than the character does, providing the reader with an all-knowing perspective. **Situational irony** is when a situation turns out differently than expected. **Verbal irony** is when the speaker means the opposite of what is said, so correctly interpreting tone becomes crucial to the reader’s understanding of the events and particularly of the themes. An example of verbal irony is when Scout describes what constitutes “fine folks”:

“Everyone in Maycomb, it seemed, had a Streak: a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, a Funny Streak… I had received the impression that Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had, but Aunt Alexandra was of the opinion, obliquely expressed, that the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was.”

Notice Lee’s use of capitalization to indicate Scout’s ironic tone. Focus question: 2

To Kill A Mockingbird Discussion Questions

The following questions approach the novel from a number of different angles, i.e., how the novel functions as a work of art, how it reflects the time period, how it addresses fundamental questions of humanity, and how it engages the reader. A good discussion tends to start with our “heads” and end with our “hearts.” So, you may want to save subjective opinions of taste until after you have discussed the more objective elements of why this work is considered a classic. It is tempting to begin with, “What did everyone think?” But if a number of people really didn’t like the novel, their opinions may derail a discussion of the novel’s merits. On the other hand, I recommend starting with an accessible question and asking every member to respond to ensure that all voices are present and heard from the beginning. Just a few suggestions! Enjoy…

Warm Up Questions (to get everyone talking…):

1. Which character(s) did you like / dislike the most?
 2. What one adjective comes to mind when you reflect on the novel?
-

Time Crunch Twenty!!

1. Dill is introduced with the following description:

“Dill was a curiosity. He wore blue linen shorts that buttoned to his shirt, his hair was snow white and stuck to his head like duckfluff; he was a year my senior but I towered over him. As he told us the old tale his blue eyes would lighten and darken; his laugh was sudden and happy; he habitually pulled at a cowlick in the center of his forehead.”

This is one of many detailed descriptions Lee provides, yet we do not get a detailed physical description of Scout since she is the narrator and chooses not to describe herself. How do we picture her?

2. The first chapter has been criticized for rambling a bit and including too much unnecessary background. However, in addition to providing exposition, the reader is able to grow accustomed to Lee's narration, steeped in the tradition of Southern storytelling. For example, the description of Atticus' first court case:

"His first two clients were the last two persons hanged in the Maycomb County jail. Atticus had urged them to accept the state's generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty to second-degree murder and escape with their lives, but they were Haverfords, in Maycomb County a name synonymous with jackass...and insisted that the-son-of-a-bitch-had-it-coming-to-him was a good enough defense for anybody."

Any other examples of Harper Lee's unique storytelling and sense of humor that stood out early on?

3. One of the first times the word "nigger" appears, Scout is quoting Calpurnia regarding Hot Steams and ghosts. Scout says:

"Don't you believe a word he [Jem] says, Dill...Calpurnia says that's nigger-talk."

What does Calpurnia mean by "nigger-talk"? Does the fact that Calpurnia is using the word soften or justify it?

4. In chapter 10, Atticus tells the kids it is "a sin to kill a mockingbird." Why does he believe this? Who would be the two obvious "mockingbirds" in the novel? Any other, less obvious ones?
5. When Scout and Jem attend Calpurnia's church, why are a number of the congregants unwelcoming to the children? Why does Lee include this scene?
6. Why does Dill seem worse off once he has a father figure in his life?
7. Why does Scout addressing the Cunningham's entailment disarm the potentially violent mob that surrounds Atticus outside the jail?
8. Why does Mayella think Atticus is mocking her?

9. Why does Miss Maudie refuse to watch the court case? Would you go?

10. Aunt Alexandra criticizes Atticus' raising of his children. From a modern perspective, how are Atticus' parenting skills deficient? Which of his parenting skills are strongest? Although it would be unusual nowadays for a parent to miss his child's first day of school or performance in a pageant, do we judge Atticus for this?

11. Boo Radley is a memorable character – from our initial impressions fueled by the children's imagination to the town rumors to his mysterious appearances. How would we “categorize” Boo today? Simply an extreme introvert? Borderline autistic?

12. When Scout and Aunt Alexandra discuss what constitutes “fine folks,” Scout notes that

“Everyone in Maycomb, it seemed, had a Streak: a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, a Funny Streak...I had received the impression that Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had, but Aunt Alexandra was of the opinion, obliquely expressed, that the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was.”

Later she describes the Cunninghams as “trash.” What influences our view of “fine folks” and “trash” and why does this change as we get older?

13. At one point, Atticus tries to explain the difference between bending the law and compromise. How do we decide which “laws” should be bent?

14. When explaining why he must defend Tom Robinson, Atticus tells Scout,

“They’re [townspeople] certainly entitled to think that [defending Tom is wrong], and they’re entitled to full respect for their opinions…but before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.”

Is this statement by Atticus too simplistic or overly moralistic? Do you believe that the townspeople are entitled to full respect if their opinions are racist? *Does* our conscience ignore majority rule?

15. Another enduring theme is expressed by Atticus as:

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view…until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Why is it so difficult for us to do this, especially as adults?

16. In his closing arguments, Atticus states that all men are not created equal. What does he mean by this? Why does he state this in his closing arguments?

17. In the last chapter, after walking Boo home, Scout thinks how

“Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch…and our lives. But neighbors give in return…we had given him nothing, and it made me sad.”

Why would Boo disagree with her?

18. At the end, Scout puts herself in Boo’s shoes and imagines the events of the novel through his eyes. Then, while putting her to bed, Atticus’ parting wisdom to Scout is “Most people are [nice], Scout, when you finally see them.” Do you agree? What does it mean to “see” someone?

19. To Kill A Mockingbird has been controversial and even banned from schools since 1977. One of the most recent criticisms, in 2003, was of its negative portrayal of African Americans. Do you agree that the African American characters are portrayed unfairly? Who is portrayed most negatively? How can even a positive portrayal be degrading?

20. In chapter 2, Scout says, after a rough first day of school,

“Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.”

When did you first realize you loved to read?

Additional Questions to Ponder...

1. Harper Lee begins the novel with Jem’s broken arm, then moves to a unspecified time in the future

“when enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. I maintain the Ewells started it all, but Jem...said it started long before that. He said it began the summer Dill came to us...”

We do not find out what “it” [the attack] is until the end of the novel. What effect does leaving “it” unspecified have on the reader? What effect does this time lapse have on Scout’s voice as the narrator?

2. Was Jem’s broken arm an “accident,” as Scout states? If not, why does Lee choose to present the attack that way?

3. Setting is obviously crucial to the themes of this novel. Lee introduces Maycomb in the first chapter:

“Somehow it was hotter then...People moved slowly... A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Looking back on this passage after having finished the novel, how does the allusion to F.D.Roosevelt’s famous speech seem ironic?

4. In chapter one, Scout states,

“Being Southern, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of the Battle of Hastings...”

and then continues with a history of Simon Finch and other ancestors. Although Simon Finch is not central to the narrative, how is Scout preparing us for Aunt Alexandra and future themes regarding social class and community?

5. Notice the matter of fact manner with which slavery is introduced:

“...Simon, having forgotten his teacher’s dictum on the possession of human chattels, bought three slaves and with their aid established a homestead...”

Did that affect your first impressions of the story or of the Finches?

6. Many of the children in the novel have only one parent. Scout and Jem’s mother is dead, Mayella’s mother and Dill’s father are absent. Why does Lee do this? Other than the obvious “lady-like” deficiencies that Aunt Alexandra tries to remedy, how does being motherless make Scout unique?
7. Another uniquely Southern aspect of her storytelling are the characters’ names – Charles Baker Harris (Dill), Jean Louise Finch (Scout), Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem) – even the pets’ names are unique – Rose Alymer (Uncle Jack’s cat) and Tim Johnson (rabid dog). What is the effect of these unique names? Why not use more common names like “John” or “Spot”?

8. Harper Lee uses 1 or 2 sentence paragraphs effectively to increase suspense or draw attention to an event. For example, in chapter one –

“That was the summer Dill came to us” or “But by the end of August our repertoire was vapid from countless reproductions, and it was then that Dill gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.”

How are these “mini-paragraphs” particularly effective in light of her otherwise verbose Southern storytelling?

9. One of the unifying themes of this novel is how social class determines one’s identity. Since the time period is during the depression, few families had much money, but three families – the Ewells, the Cunninghams, and the Finches – approach poverty and identity very differently. What distinguishes these families?
10. Why does Harper Lee have Boo Radley rescue the kids from Bob Ewell’s attack? What seems to be his function in the novel?

Wrap Up Questions…

1. Which character did you relate to the most?
2. Would you recommend the book to others?
3. If you could change anything, what would it be?
4. Do you believe this should be considered a classic?
5. Do you believe this should be the 4th most taught book in schools?