to kill a mockingbird

# Notes, chapter 12

* Jem's hit the middle school years, and everyone knows what that means: he's angsty, moody, prone to prolonged silences broken by angry outbursts, and he all of a sudden thinks Scout should act like a girl.
* Scout asks Atticus and Calpurnia what's up with Jem and whether she can fix it by beating him up, but they say he's just growing up and she should leave him alone.
* To make things worse, Dill isn't coming for the summer.
* And then to make things the absolute *worst*, Atticus (who's a member of the state legislature) gets called into a special session and is away for two weeks.
* With Atticus away, Calpurnia doesn't trust Jem and Scout to go to church by themselves (there was a past incident involving tying up one of their Sunday School classmates in the furnace room), and decides to take them with her to her church instead.
* On Saturday night, Cal scrubs Scout down to her bare skin and makes sure that there's not a thread out of place on the kids' clothes.
* Why? As she says, "I don't want anybody sayin' I don't look after my children" (12.31).
* On Sunday, they head over to First Purchase [African M.E. Church](http://www.ame-church.com/) outside of town.
* Everyone's happy to see them, except one: a tall woman named Lula who asks Calpurnia why she's brought white children to the African-American church.
* For a minute, things look like they might get ugly, but then the crowd drives Lula off and welcomes the kids.
* The church is plain and there aren't any hymn-books, but Cal won't let Scout ask questions.
* The priest, Reverend Sykes, begins the service by welcoming the Finches, and then reads some announcements.
* One of the announcements is that the day's collection will go to Helen, Tom Robinson's wife.
* Zeebo leads the congregation in a hymn by reading out each line of the lyrics, which everyone else sings after him, surprising both Scout and Jem, who had never heard of such a thing before.
* Reverend Sykes gives a sermon, which like that of the Finches' usual preacher, focuses on "the Impurity of Women" (12.79).
* Contrary to the Finches' usual church experience, the Reverend names names as to who's been sinning lately, and tells them individually to cut it out.
* After the collection, Jem and Scout are again surprised when Reverend Sykes counts the collection money in front of everyone and then announces they don't have enough—they need at least ten dollars to get Helen and her family through the week.
* The Reverend goes so far as to lock the doors and hold the congregation hostage until they cough up enough cash.
* Jem and Scout put in their dimes from Atticus.
* Once the ten dollars is finally collected, the doors are opened and the service is over.
* Afterwards, Scout asks Calpurnia why Helen can't find work. She says that Tom's family is being shunned because of his alleged crime.
* So, what'd he do? Cal reluctantly tells her that Bob Ewell has accused him of raping Ewell's daughter.
* First, Scout wonders why anyone would listen to the Ewells, and then asks Calpurnia what rape is.
* Uh, ask Atticus, Cal says.
* Now it's Jem's turn to ask questions. Why does the congregation sings their hymns the way they do, instead of saving up for hymn-books?
* Well, hymn-books wouldn't do them much good—hardly any people in the church can read.
* Cal only can because Miss Maudie's aunt, Miss Buford, taught her to read.
* Some other facts about Cal, which Jem and Scout only now think to ask her:
* She's older than Atticus though she doesn't know her age exactly, or even her birthday—she just celebrates it on Christmas to make it easy to remember.
* She grew up near Finch's Landing, and moved to Maycomb with Atticus when he married.
* She taught her oldest son Zeebo to read, too.
* Nope, she brought out the big guns: the Bible and a book Miss Buford used to teach her—Blackstone's [*Commentaries*](http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/blackstone/), a gift from the Finch kids' grandfather.
* Jem's blow away that she learned and taught English out of such a difficult book as the *Commentaries*. That must be why she doesn't talk like the other African-Americans he knows.
* Scout is blown away to think that Calpurnia has a whole other life besides being their cook, much like a child realizing that teachers don't sleep at school.
* One last question. Why does Cal talk differently at the African-American church than she does with white people? She says that it makes more sense to fit in.
* Okay, this is actually the last question: can Scout visit Calpurnia at her home some time? Sure.
* And then they arrive home to find Aunt Alexandra installed on their front porch.

to kill a mockingbird

# Notes, chapter 13

* Scout asks Aunt Alexandra if she's come for a visit, and aunty says that she and Atticus have decided that it's best if she stays with them for a while, as Scout needs some "feminine influence.” Scout does not agree with this, but keeps quiet about it.
* That evening Atticus comes home and confirms Aunt Alexandra's reason for her coming to stay, though Scout thinks it's mostly her aunt's doing, part of her long campaign to do "What Is Best For The Family.”
* Aunt Alexandra is popular in Maycomb and takes a leading role in the feminine social circles, even though she makes obvious her belief that Finches are superior to everyone else (even though, as Jem says, most people in town are related to the Finches anyhow).
* Aunt Alexandra is a firm believer in Streaks—each family has one (a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, etc.), though Scout doesn't really understand her aunt's obsession with heredity.
* Scout mostly ignores her aunt, unless she gets called in to make an appearance at a luncheon or tea.
* Alexandra also attempts to instill family pride, by, for example, showing them a book their cousin Joshua wrote.
* Unfortunately, the kids already know his story from Atticus: he went crazy at college and tried to assassinate the president of the school.
* After this Aunt Alexandra sends Atticus to talk to the kids about being proud of their superior heritage, but he just scares them because he doesn't usually talk to them in that way.
* Scout ends up crying on his lap, and Atticus tells them both to forget it.

# Notes, chapter 14

* That incident is enough to make Aunt Alexandra shut up about the Finch Family Pride, just in time for Scout to get some hints that the townspeople are obsessed with the Finch Family Shame.
* After overhearing a passerby's cryptic comment, Scout asks Atticus what rape is. Atticus defines it for her as "carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent.”
* Scout doesn't really get what that means, and asks Atticus why Calpurnia wouldn't explain it to her, leading to the story of how Calpurnia took Scout and Jem to her church. Aunt Alexandra is not too pleased to find this out, and tells Scout she can’t go to Calpurnia’s.
* Scout talks back to her aunt and then hides in the bathroom, later returning to overhear her aunt and father quarrelling about an unnamed "her."
* Scout is worried that she's the "her," and feels "the starched walls of a pink cotton penitentiary closing in on" her.
* In other words, she's afraid they're going to make her wear frilly dresses for the rest of her life. Figuratively *and* literally.
* Eventually she figures out with relief that it's Calpurnia they're talking about: Alexandra wants to fire her, but Atticus won't hear of it. Jem tries to intervene by telling Scout not to get on her aunt's nerves, but little sis doesn't want her bro telling her what to do.
* This ends in a fistfight, naturally, until they make up when they overhear Aunt Alexandra launching yet another attack on their way of life.
* On the way to bed, Scout steps on something. Snake? Nope. It's Dill. And he's hungry. Dill tells a story (actually two, mutually contradictory stories) about how he escaped from his cruel father and journeyed to Maycomb. Scout brings him some food, and Jem breaks the no-tattling rule of childhood to tell Atticus.
* After Scout has been asleep for a while, she wakes up to find Dill joining her in bed. Don't worry: nothing happens to heat up the G rating. They just talk about families. See, Dill felt like his mom and her new boyfriend weren't paying him any attention and didn't want him around.
* Scout's problem is that her family pays her too much attention, but realizes that she would hate it if she didn't feel like they needed her. Dill says that he and Scout should get themselves a baby, and tells her a story about where babies come from (no sex is involved in his account, fortunately), and they slowly doze off.
* Just before they fall asleep, Scout asks Dill why Boo Radley has never run off. Maybe, Dill answers, because he doesn't have a place he can run to.

# Notes, chapter 15

* It's arranged that Dill can stay in Maycomb for the summer.
* After an uneventful week, one evening Mr. Heck Tate knocks on the front door of the Finch house. Some men want Atticus to step outside.
* The bits of the conversation Scout can hear are about Tom Robinson: Tate doesn't want to keep him in the town jail the night before the trial starts.
* There are some back-and-forth threats, and then Atticus says that he's going to make sure that the truth gets told.
* Tension rises, until Jem shouts that the telephone's ringing. Atticus tells him to answer it, causing the men—whom Scout now recognizes as people she sees every day—to go off laughing.
* Was that a gang? Nope, Atticus says. Those were their friends.
* Yeah, some friends.
* What about the Ku Klux Klan? They're gone and will never come back.
* (Sadly, not true. They came back [in the 1950s](http://www.history.com/topics/ku-klux-klan), when the [Civil Rights Movement](http://www.shmoop.com/civil-rights-desegregation/) took off.)
* Sunday comes, and Scout sees some men at church who don't usually attend, including Mr. Heck Tate and Mr. Underwood, the editor of *The* *Maycomb Tribune*.
* Tom Robinson has arrived at the Maycomb jail.
* The evening, something weird happens: Atticus comes into the living room with a light bulb and an extension cord. He says that he's going out for a while and won't be back till after the kids are in bed.
* Strange event #2: Atticus takes the car, instead of walking like he usually does.
* Obviously, the kids sneak out to follow him.
* Finally they see him in front of the jail, reading by the light of the light bulb he went off with.
* Four cars drive up.
* Atticus puts down his newspaper, and Scout thinks that he seems to be expecting these visitors.
* The kids hide in a nearby doorway and overhear a man telling Atticus to move away from the door and let them through.
* Atticus tells them to go home and that Heck Tate's nearby.
* Another man says that they decoyed Tate out into the woods. He's not coming back any time soon.
* There's some threatening talk, and Scout can't take it: she runs out to Atticus.
* For a moment Atticus looks afraid when he sees Scout, and Scout's upset, too: these aren't the same men as last night.
* Atticus tells Jem to take Scout and Dill home, but Jem doesn't want to. Father and son face off.
* One of the men grabs Jem, and Scout kicks him right where it counts, making him back off.
* Finally, Scout sees a familiar face: Mr. Cunningham. And she starts talking.
* She asks him about his entailment, tells him to say hi to Walter for her, and keeps prattling away until his lack of answers really starts to get to her.
* Just then, Mr. Cunningham squats down and tells Scout that he's going to give Walter her message. He tells the other men that they're going to leave, and they do. Whew!
* A voice comes from above: Tom Robinson is asking if the men have gone.
* From across the square, another voice: Mr. Underwood has been playing sniper backup from *The Maycomb Tribune* office.
* Atticus and Mr. Underwood talk for a while, and then Atticus and the kids take Atticus's stuff to his car to go home.
* Scout thinks Jem is going to get royally chewed out for following Atticus into town, but her dad actually just rubs his head affectionately.