To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 19 Notes

* Tom Robinson tries to use his good right hand to put his bad left one on the Bible, but it keeps falling off, and the judge tells him not to bother.
* After the basic questions about his age and family, Atticus asks Tom about a previous conviction for disorderly conduct; Jem whispers that Atticus is showing the jury that Tom has nothing to hide.
* Gee, we're glad Jem is here to interpret for us.
* Tom's testimony continues: he passes the Ewell place on his way to work for Mr. Link Deas every day; he did go inside the Ewell yard to chop up a piece of furniture, but that was last spring, not in November like Mayella said, and that he went home without incident after turning down the nickel she offered him for the job.
* Atticus asks if he ever crossed into Ewell property after that, and Tom says he did lots of times, provoking a murmur from the audience.
* Atticus asks why, and Tom says Mayella kept having little jobs for him to do, and he never took payment because he knew how poor she was.
* Tom says the children were always around when he was there, and Mayella would talk to him.
* Scout thinks that Mayella must have been terribly lonely, even more lonely than Boo Radley, and that Tom was probably the only person who had ever treated her with real kindness.
* Did Tom ever go on the Ewell property without being invited? He says no.
* So, what happened that night in November?
* Tom was going home as usual and passed the Ewell place, which seemed awfully quiet. Mayella asked him to come in to fix a door, even though nothing seemed wrong with it.
* And then he suddenly realized that the reason it seemed so quiet was that the other children weren't around. Mayella said she'd been saving her nickels for a year to get enough money for all seven to buy ice cream.
* Well, isn't that nice, he said. He tried to leave, when she asked him to get something down from the top of a wardrobe; he stood on a chair to get it, when she grabbed his legs from behind; he jumped in fright, knocking the chair over.
* He swears that was the only furniture disturbed in the room when he left it.
* And then he turned around and Mayella hugged him.
* The courtroom erupts, but the judge intervenes and Tom continues: Mayella kissed him, saying that she'd never kissed an adult man before, and that what her father does to her doesn't count.
* Tom says that he tried to get away without touching Mayella, when Mr. Ewell shouted through the window.
* Atticus forces Tom to repeat Mr. Ewell's words, even though he doesn't want to: he said, "you goddamn whore, I'll kill ya" (19.68).
* And then Tom ran away as fast as he could.
* Scout doesn't understand Tom's dilemma until her father explains it to her later: pushing Mayella would have been as good as signing his death warrant, so he had to run, even though it made him look guilty.
* While Mr. Gilmer is getting up to question the witness, Mr. Link Deas suddenly stands up and vouches for Tom's character to the whole courtroom, sparking Judge Taylor's wrath.
* The judge tells everyone to forget the interruption and the court reporter to erase it from the record, and the case continues.
* After revisiting Tom's previous criminal record, Mr. Gilmer asks him about his physical strength, establishing that after all he's strong enough to chop up furniture with his one good hand.
* Why did Tom spend so much time doing Mayella's chores when he had his own to do at home? Tom says, after persistent questioning, that he felt sorry for her.
* Mr. Gilmer shows shock and horror at this answer (how dare a black man feel sorry for a white woman?), and pauses to let the jury feel it too.
* When Mr. Gilmer asks questions about that night, Tom refuses to accuse Mayella of lying, but persistently says that she is "mistaken in her mind" (19.135).
* Why did he run? Isn't running away evidence of guilt?
* Tom basically says that he ran because he knew most white people would assume he was guilty no matter what.
* By this point Dill is crying uncontrollably, and Jem makes Scout take him out of the courtroom.
* Dill tells Scout it just made him sick to hear how Mr. Gilmer was talking to Tom. There's a difference between the condescending way Mr. Gilmer talked to Tom and the politeness Atticus showed to Mayella.
* Scout replies that the difference is between Atticus and Mr. Gilmer, not their witnesses, but Dill doesn't believe it.
* A new voice breaks into their conversation: Mr. Dolphus Raymond, who agrees with Dill.

To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 20 Notes

 Mr. Raymond offers Dill his paper bag. Scout think it's whisky, but nah, says Dill, it's just Coca-Cola.

 This is Mr. Raymond's secret: he just pretends to drink all the time because it gives other people an excuse for his bad behavior.

 He's telling them his secret because they're kids and they know better than their elders—Dill's crying shows that the world hasn't gotten hold of him and made him blind to its meanness.

 Atticus sees it, too. He's an unusual case. All you have to do is look back inside the courthouse to see how unusual.

 They head back to the balcony, to find Atticus already halfway through his closing remarks.

 Atticus, after asking permission from the judge, takes off his coat, unbuttons his vest and collar, and loosens his tie—shocking his children, who have never, ever before seen him so undressed outside of his bedroom.

 Atticus's tone sheds a few layers, too, becoming conversational rather than businesslike.

 Basically, he points out that there's no evidence and that the prosecution is banking on the stereotype that all African-Americans are immoral liars who rape white women whenever they get the chance. He tells the jury that they're smart enough to see that for the lie it is, and to know that African-Americans are no worse than any other race.

 At this point Scout notices another first: Atticus is sweating.

 Atticus continues to the jury: he cites Thomas Jefferson's famous line that all men are created equal, and says that this doesn't mean that everyone is just as talented as everyone else, but that everyone is equal under the law.

 He ends his speech with a plea to the jury: "In the name of God, do your duty" (20.52).

 Atticus turns to go back to his seat, softly saying something else that Scout doesn't hear; she asks Jem, and he says that Atticus said "In the name of God, believe him" (20.54).

 Calpurnia is making a beeline up the center aisle of the courtroom towards Atticus.

To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 21 Notes

* The judge allows Cal to hand Atticus a note from Aunt Alexandra, which says that the kids are missing.
* Uh, they're in the balcony and have been there all afternoon.
* Atticus sends the kids home with Calpurnia, but after some strategic whining he agrees that they can come back once they've had their dinner.
* Aunt Alexandra is ready to faint from horror when she hears where they've been, but they head back anyway.
* Scout and Jem are surprised that hardly anyone has left—usually everyone heads out once the jury leaves to deliberate.
* Jem says that they've won the case, but the Reverend says that he's never seen a jury support an African-American man over a white one.
* The court audience waits patiently. For over three hours. Without a single piece of technology in sight.
* If you're wondering how people killed time before smartphones, they apparently slept a lot more: Scout dozes off, and when she wakes up she's thinking about the morning when Atticus shot the mad dog.
* Finally, it's time for the (unanimous) verdict: guilty.
* Atticus whispers something to Tom Robinson, packs up his papers, and leaves.
* As he walks down the aisle alone, the African-Americans in the balcony silently stand up to honor him.

To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 22 Notes

* Jem is weeping tears of injustice.
* At home, Alexandra softens up enough to tell Atticus she's sorry he lost the case—but she still doesn't think he should have let the kids listen in.
* Atticus says that they have to deal with the fallout from it anyway, and that racism is just as much a Maycomb standby as missionary teas are.
* In the morning, he tells his family that it's not over yet—there's still the appeal process.
* Breakfast is a lavish affair, as it seems every African-American in the county has sent the Finches a gift of food.
* The kids head out to see Miss Stephanie Crawford giving a blow-by-blow account of the trial to Miss Maudie Atkinson and Mr. Avery.
* Miss Maudie keeps Miss Stephanie from asking rude questions and offers the kids some cake. There are two little cakes and one big one, and Scout thinks that Miss Maudie has uncharacteristically forgotten Dill, but then finds out the big cake is for Jem.
* Scout realizes this is Miss Maudie's way of saying everything is still cool between them.
* Jem is pretty bummed out. He always thought that Maycomb folks were good people, but it doesn't seem like that to him any more, since no one stepped up to support Tom Robinson.
* Actually, Miss Maudie says, some did. Judge Taylor usually appoints an inexperienced local lawyer as public defender, but made an exception in Tom Robinson's case to appoint Atticus instead.
* And even though Atticus didn't win, he made the jury think about their decision for a long time.
* That's a step in the right direction.
* They leave Miss Maudie's house, and Dill says that he's going to be a clown when he grows up, because the only possible response to humanity is to laugh at it.
* Jem says that Dill's got it wrong: clowns get laughed at by everyone else.
* Nope, Dill says. He'll be a new sort of clown, one who looks at the audience and laughs at them.
* Miss Rachel and Aunt Alexandra tell the kids to get off the street, there's trouble coming, and Miss Stephanie butts in to tell them why: that morning Mr. Ewell spit in Atticus's face and told him that he had it out for him.

To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 23 Notes

* Atticus just jokes about the attack, even though his kids are really terrified that Mr. Ewell will follow through on his threat.
* He says that nothing can happen to Tom until the appeal, which might have a better result than the original trial.
* Tom is now at the Enfield Prison Farm seventy miles away, where his family can't visit him.
* If Tom loses the appeal, he'll go to the electric chair unless the governor grants him a stay of execution.
* Jem and Atticus now have a fairly long discussion about the law and fairness, which covers rape, circumstantial evidence, the (non)inclusion of women on juries, and taking sides. Check it out—there are super important issues.
* And Atticus knows who kept the jury from convicting Tom right away: a cousin of Mr. Walter Cunningham, part of the group who wanted to lynch Tom when he was in the Maycomb jail the night before the trial but was turned back by Scout.
* Scout decides to make friends with the younger Walter Cunningham, but Alexandra has some things to say about that (apparently the Cunninghams are the wrong class).
* Jem gives Scout a Tootsie Roll to calm her down (or at least shut her up by giving her a mouthful to chew on), and Scout notices that Jem looks different.
* He's growing up.
* Growing up has given him so new chest hair (or so he claims) and some new advice: instead of telling her to avoid annoying Alexandra, he tells her not to let Alexandra annoy her.
* Scout just doesn't want to hear Walter called "trash," because that makes him sound no better than the Ewells.
* Jem says that he thinks he's got it figured out, and there are four kinds of people: the ordinary (the Finches and their neighbors), the ones who live in the woods (the Cunninghams), the ones who live by the dump (the Ewells), and the African Americans.
* Everyone hates the ones a step below them.
* The pair try to puzzle out why Aunt Alexandra is so hung up on the notion of Family.
* They end up by slinging some clichés around: Scout finally concludes that people are just people and that's all there is to it, and Jem asks that, in that case, why can't we all just get along?
* Maybe this is why Boo Radley never comes out—because he wants to stay away from the weirdness that is humankind.