

To kill a mockingbird

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



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"(13. 10). Scout has trouble making any kind of conversation with her aunt. 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"(13. 22). Aunt Alexandra is popular in Maycomb and takes a leading role in the feminine social circles, even though she makes obvious her belief that the Finches are superior to everyone else. Aunt Alexandra is a firm believer in Streaks - each family has one, though Scout doesn't really understand her aunt's obsession with heredity. The history of the town suggests that Aunt Alexandra is not totally crazy: its location far away from the river forms the area's main transportation route. That means that hardly anyone ever moves to Maycomb or away from it. Because of this, families have known each other for generations, establishing the reputations which Aunt Alexandra refers to as "Streaks." Scout mostly ignores her aunt, but occasionally gets called in to make an appearance at a luncheon or tea. At one such event, Scout fails to recognize a woman as her cousin, prompting her aunt to try to instill some family pride into the Finch children. 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 manner. Scout ends up crying on his lap, and Atticus tells them both to forget it. After overhearing a passer-by'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" (14. 5) 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 none too pleased to find this out, and inserts a resounding " No" into the conversation when Scout asks Atticus if she can visit Calpurnia. Scout turns rudely on her aunt for intruding into her conversation with Atticus, but her father makes her apologize. Trying to save face, Scout goes to hide in the bathroom, and returns 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 (14. 24). As Scout reenters the room, Aunt Alexandra vents her emotions by stabbing her embroidery angrily. Jem pulls Scout out of the room and tells her to try not to get on her aunt's nerves. Scout bristles at Jem's assumption that he can tell her what to do and his insistence on talking like he's so much older and wiser than her. On the way to bed, Scout steps on something and thinks it's a snake. Dill tells a story about how he escaped from his cruel father and journeyed to Maycomb, and Scout brings him some food. Scout had had fallen asleep for a while. She wakes up only to find Dill joining her in bed. Scout asks Dill why he ran away, and Dill eventually tells her that he felt like his mom and her new boyfriend weren't paying him any attention and didn't want him around. Just before they fall asleep, Scout asks Dill why Boo Radley has never run off, and Dill answers that maybe he doesn't have a place he can run to. Atticus goes outside, while Jem, Dill, and Scout peer through the windows, to Aunt Alexandra's dismay. Mr. Link Deas says that Atticus has everything to lose from this case, and Atticus answers, " Do you really think so?" (16. 21), which Scout recognizes as his "

Dangerous question"(16. 22), meaning that he's not going to take being messed with. Jem breaks the tension by shouting out that the telephone's ringing and Atticus tells him to answer it, causing the men - whom Scout now recognizes as people she sees every day - to go off laughing. Atticus tells Scout that Tom Robinson has arrived at the Maycomb jail, and that they should have kept him there in the first place. One man tells Atticus to move away from the door and let them through, but Atticus tells them to go home and that Heck Tate's nearby. For a moment Atticus looks afraid when he sees Scout, and then again when he sees Jem and Dill. One of the strangers tells Atticus to get rid of the kids, and Atticus pleads with Jem to leave, but Jem isn't budging an inch. Scout asks Atticus if they can go home now, and Atticus nods. Scout thinks Jem is going to get royally chewed out for following Atticus into town, but she sees her father massaging Jem's hair in affection instead. Atticus says he's glad the kids came along, though Aunt Alexandra sniffs that Mr. Underwood would have made sure nothing too bad happened. Alexandra tells Atticus not to make comments like the one he just made about Mr. Underwood in front of " Them"(16. 8), i. e. Calpurnia, i. e. African-Americans. Scout asks Atticus why, if Mr. Cunningham is a friend of theirs, he wanted to hurt Atticus last night. Atticus says that Mr. Cunningham is a good man, he just has a few " blind spots" (16. 18) and he wouldn't have killed him even if Scout hadn't stepped in. But Scout's appearance, Atticus continues, made Mr. Cunningham think about what it would be like to be in Atticus's place, and that moment of empathy made him back off. As Atticus leaves for the courthouse, Dill bounces in, saying that the gossip mill is having a field day about how three kids fought off a hundred men with their

bare hands. The kids go out to the front porch, and Alexandra tells them to stay inside. When Atticus comes home and tells them that they spent the morning picking the jury, Scout, Jem, and Dill join the crowds at the courthouse. Scout overhears some old men saying that Atticus was appointed by the court to defend Tom Robinson, and she wonders why Atticus hadn't told them that - it would have been a convenient excuse in schoolyard brawls. Scout remembers a drive past the Ewell place when she went with Atticus to drop off their Christmas tree at the dump: while the nearby African-American houses were warm and inviting, the Ewell residence was not. After Ewell settles back down in the witness chair, Atticus begins his questioning, which begins with the same query he directed at Mr. Tate: whether Ewell called a doctor, or even thought of it. Atticus has Ewell write his name, and then states what that action demonstrated: Ewell is left-handed.