***To Kill a Mockingbird***

***Chapter 9***

***Summary:***

* [Scout](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/scout-jean-louise-finch) is ready to fight Cecil Jacobs on the schoolyard when he says that her father defends "n\*\*\*\*\*" (9.3).
* (This is the word the book uses, so we'll use it here, despite its history of offensiveness. See the "Speech and Dialogue" section in "[Tools of Characterization](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters)" for a fuller explanation of how this term functions in the book.)
* When Scout asks Atticus about it, he tells her not to say "n\*\*\*\*\*."
* Scout then asks him if all lawyers defend N\*\*\*\*es, and he says that of course they do.
* So why does Cecil make it sound worse than [bootlegging](https://www.shmoop.com/drugs-america/terms.html) (booze, not music)? [Atticus](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/atticus-finch) tries to explain to Scout the complexities of race relations in Maycomb.
* See, just because lawyers have black clients doesn't mean they actually do a good job at defending them. But Atticus does.
* For him, it boils down to self-respect: he couldn't hold his head up if he did less than his best.
* Is he going to win the case? No, but they have to try anyway.
* Atticus reassures Scout: "But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they're [the residents of Maycomb are] still our friends and this is still our home" (9.27).
* The next day at school, Scout is about to fight Cecil Jacobs when she remembers what Atticus told her and walks away instead, even though she gets called a coward.
* Soon it's Christmas, which means a visit from [Uncle Jack](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/john-hale-finch) (good), but also a visit from [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/alexandra-hancock) (bad).
* Even worse, it means having to spend time with Aunt Alexandra's grandson Francis, who is the yin to Scout’s yang.
* Uncle Jack arrives with two long packages of mysterious contents.
* Scout cusses while Uncle Jack's around, and later he tells her that she shouldn't do that if she wants to grow up to be a lady (which she doesn't).
* The next day is Christmas morning, and they open the mysterious packages to find a pair of long-desired air rifles. (You'll shoot your eye out!)
* Woohoo!
* They head down to Finch's Landing, sans air rifles (to Scout's dismay, as she'd already had fantasies about shooting Francis).
* Jem abandons his sister to schmooze with the adults, leaving Scout to deal with the dreaded Francis—whose main problem so far seems to be liking boring Christmas presents.
* Apparently Aunt Alexandra has strong ideas as to what girls should be and wear (frilly dresses) that are very different from Scout's (overalls).
* Oh, here's the problem: eventually, Francis quotes Aunt Alexandra, calling Atticus a "n\*\*\*\*\*-lover" who's "ruinin' the family" (9.98).
* Scout whales on Francis, gets in trouble with Uncle Jack, and then heads back home to sulk. Eventually, Uncle Jack asks Scout to explain her side of the story. When she explains, Uncle Jack wants to go beat up the little punk himself, but instead he just bandages her still-bleeding hand.
* Later Scout overhears Uncle Jack and Atticus talking. Atticus tells Uncle Jack some things about children: answer them truthfully, and bad language is less dangerous than hotheadedness.
* [Atticus](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/to-kill-a-mockingbird/atticus-finch) says that Scout needs to learn to control her temper because things are only going to get harder.
* How bad are things are going to get? Really bad.
* He also says that he'd rather not have taken the case, but once it was offered to him he couldn't refuse it in good conscience.
* Atticus hopes he can get his kids through the case without their "catching Maycomb's usual disease"—going "stark raving mad when anything involving a N\*\*\*\* comes up" (9.187)—and that they will come to him if they have questions.
* Atticus then tells Scout, still lurking around the corner eavesdropping, to go to bed. Years later, an older Scout realizes that her father meant her to overhear the conversation.

***Brief Summary:***

One day in school, a boy says that Scout's daddy is defending a nigger. She asks Atticus about it that night, he says its true and it's something he has to do even though he knows that he won't win. He asks Scout not to fight about this and she agrees.

Jem and Scout are unsure about spending Christmas with Aunt Alexandra and Francis, but they also get to see Uncle Jack. Atticus tells them they have no choice, they are going to Finch's Landing. When they pick up Uncle Jack at the station, he has two long boxes for Jem and Scout, although he refuses to say what they are.

Scout uses cuss words in the hopes that Atticus won't make her go to school, because that is where she is learning the words. Uncle Jack says the only reason to use cuss words is if there is "extreme provocation."

The children find out the boxes contain air rifles. Aunt Alexandra takes every opportunity to insult Scout about her clothes and behavior. Francis bores Scout and when he calls Atticus a nigger lover, Scout attacks him. The family assumes that Scout is to blame and even Uncle Jack cuts her off when she tries to explain.

Later she tells him what happened and he wants to get Francis in trouble. But, Scout insists that they can't tell Atticus because he asked her not to fight about that. When she should be in bed, Scout is listening outside the door and hears Atticus talking to Uncle Jim about how hard the trial will be for the children. When he's finished speaking, he turns and tells Scout to go to bed. She wonders how he knew she was there.

We see a shift in the story after the fire. Before that, life is light hearted with occasional scrapes. After the fire, the story shifts to Tom Robinson's trial. The dramatic impact of the trial on everyone's lives begins to be unveiled for the reader. Lee shows us the racial thoughts that were a part of Southern life in this time period.

***Synopsis:***

At school, [Scout](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/scout-finch/) nearly starts a fight with a classmate named Cecil Jacobs after Cecil uses an offensive racial slur to declare that [Atticus](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/atticus-finch/) defends black people. Atticus has been asked to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman. It is a case he cannot hope to win, but Atticus tells Scout that he must argue it to uphold his sense of justice and self-respect.

At Christmastime, Atticus’s brother, Jack, comes to stay with Atticus for a week during the holidays. Scout generally gets along well with Uncle Jack, but when he arrives in Maycomb, she begins cursing in front of him (a habit that she has recently picked up). After supper, Jack has Scout sit on his lap and he warns her not to curse in his presence. On Christmas Day, Atticus takes his children and Jack to Finch’s Landing, a rambling old house in the country where Atticus’s sister, Alexandra, and her husband live. There, Scout endures Francis, Alexandra’s grandson, who had been dropped off at Finch’s Landing for the holiday. Scout thinks Francis is the most “boring” child she has ever met. She also has to put up with the prim and proper Alexandra, who insists that Scout dress like a lady instead of wearing pants.

One night, Francis tells Scout that Dill is a runt and then uses an offensive racial slur to belittle Atticus, who sympathizes with black people. Scout curses Francis and beats him up. Francis tells Alexandra and Uncle Jack that Scout hit him, and Uncle Jack spanks Scout without hearing her side of the story. After they return to Maycomb, Scout tells Jack what Francis said and Jack becomes furious. Scout makes him promise not to tell Atticus, however, because Atticus had asked her not to fight anyone over what is said about him. Jack promises and keeps his word. Later, Scout overhears Atticus telling Jack that Tom Robinson is innocent but doomed, since it’s inconceivable that an all-white jury would ever acquit him.

***Critical Analysis(ch8-9):***

For the first time in decades, Maycomb gets snow. School is closed, so Jem and Scout spend their day trying to build a snowman. That night, Miss Maudie's house burns to the ground. Jem and Scout are sent to wait in front of the Radleys' while the fire is still raging. Boo Radley walks up and puts a blanket around a shivering Scout's shoulders, but both she and Jem are too engrossed in the fire to notice. The next day, Scout is surprised to find Miss Maudie in good spirits, working in her yard and talking about expanding her garden.

Near Christmastime, a classmate taunts Scout with the news that Atticus is defending a black man. Atticus asks Scout to promise to "'hold your head high, and keep those fists down.  . . . Try fighting with your head for a change,'" — a promise Scout tries to uphold, with limited success. Uncle Jack Finch comes for Christmas as he does every year; Scout and her family spend Christmas at Finch's Landing with Aunt Alexandra and her family. Alexandra's grandson, Francis, begins teasing Scout about Atticus defending a black man. She attacks Francis and is punished by Uncle Jack, who had warned her not to fight or curse. Christmas evening, she and Uncle Jack talk, and she explains to him where he went wrong in his discipline. The chapter ends as Scout overhears Atticus and Uncle Jack talking about Tom Robinson's trial, which will start soon.

Lee introduces a great deal of symbolism in Chapters 8 and 9. When Scout sees the snow, a very unusual phenomenon in Alabama, she screams, "'The world's endin', Atticus! Please do something — !'" Atticus is reassuring, but, importantly, from this point on in the story, Scout's world as she knows it does end. After Chapter 8, everything Scout believes turns topsy-turvy, and the things she takes as absolutes are going to come into question.

Jem's quest to build a snowman requires some ingenuity on his part. He first constructs a mudman, prompting Scout to say, "'Jem, I ain't ever heard of a nigger snowman.'" But Jem proceeds to cover the mudman with snow, making him white. In some ways their snowman is analogous to the way blacks are treated in Maycomb. Blacks aren't judged on their own merits, but on their relationships with the white folks in town, just as the mudman isn't something to be admired until he is a white snowman. Lee subtly and masterfully drives this point home by having the children create a nearly exact replica of Mr. Avery, a white neighbor who behaves crudely and indecently, unlike any black character in the story.

Lee also introduces bird symbolism into the novel in Chapter 8. When Miss Maudie's house catches fire, Scout says, "Just as the birds know where to go when it rains, I knew when there was trouble in our street." Bird imagery continues throughout the novel to be a pivotal symbol for sensing, and then doing, the right thing. (Readers should note the connection between Lee's use of bird symbolism and Atticus' last name, Finch.) In another nod to how their world is changing, Jem and Scout have a chance to meet Boo Radley, but are too absorbed in something else to notice. And, instead of seeing the blanket as a gift, Scout is sick to her stomach. Miss Maudie's reaction to the fire confuses the children as well. They can't understand how she can be so positive and interested in them when she's lost everything. The children don't realize that the cuts on Miss Maudie's hands are evidence of the grief she chooses not to show.

The fire itself is symbolic of the upcoming conflicts that Scout and the community will face. This jarring event awakens the neighborhood, and Scout, from their peaceful slumber. The heat of the fire contrasts sharply with the intense cold, providing an allusion to the sharply defined sides in the upcoming trial and conflict. Neither fires nor cold are common in Maycomb, and the community is forced to look at situations from a different perspective.

Lee is careful to make clear that the children don't mind Atticus defending a black man as much as they mind the comments other people make about Atticus. She makes her point beautifully when Jem suggests that Miss Maudie get a "colored man" to help her with her yard, and Scout then notes, "There was no note of sacrifice in his voice when he added, 'Or Scout'n'me can help you.'"

Through dialogue in Chapter 9, Lee communicates that Atticus doesn't have a chance to win Tom Robinson's case, bringing the theme of justice to the forefront. Atticus tells Scout that he has to fight a battle he can't win because it is the morally correct thing to do. Atticus is accustomed to facing no-win situations. To their delight, he buys both children air rifles for Christmas, but says, "'I merely bowed to the inevitable.'" Later in the story, Atticus also accepts that Scout and Jem will kill birds; still, he won't teach them to shoot. Likewise, he accepts the fact that the jury will convict Tom, but he still gives him a courageous defense. (Ironically, the Finch family owned slaves at one time, making Atticus' defense of Tom that much more noble.)

Lee foreshadows how the jury will treat Tom in Scout's confrontation with Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack punishes Scout without first hearing her side of the story. In her "trial," she was guilty until proven guilty. However, unlike Tom Robinson, Scout does win on appeal when she tells her uncle, "'you never stopped to gimme a chance to tell you my side of it — you just lit right into me,'" at which point he does listen to her story. Lee adeptly helps readers understand how Tom feels by having a child experience the same emotions.

Still, even after Scout's "acquittal," Uncle Jack continues to fumble with the truth by dodging Scout's request for a definition of "whore-lady." Readers gain a better sense of Atticus' moral code when he reprimands his brother for not directly answering Scout's question: "'Jack! When a child asks you something, answer him . . . children . . . can spot an evasion quicker than adults, and evasion simply muddles 'em.'"

Lee uses Scout's run-in with Francis to foreshadow one more important event. Scout muses, "When stalking one's prey, it is best to take one's time," which is exactly what Bob Ewell does in his attempt to harm Jem and Scout.

The outside world continues to impose standards of femininity on Scout in Chapter 8 and 9. Readers get the impression that Uncle Jack is less upset by Scout's language than by the fact that a girl is using that kind of language. Scout doesn't want to "be a lady," but that doesn't stop her extended family from telling her she should be. Aunt Alexandra is more rigid about Scout's appearance than her male relatives. She abhors the idea of a little girl wearing pants and works diligently to make Scout more ladylike. Curiously, Atticus comforts Scout by telling her that "Aunt Alexandra didn't understand girls much, she'd never had one." And more curious still is that the fact that Scout's not wanting to be a lady doesn't prevent her from also assigning gender roles as evidenced by her reaction to Francis learning to cook.

Glossary

**aberrations**a deviation from the normal or the typical.

**touchous**[Dial.] touchy.

**thrift any of a genus of**dwarf, evergreen, perennial dicotyledonous plants (order Plumbaginales) with narrow leaves and small, white, pink, red, or purplish flowers.

**Appomattox**town in central Virginia, near Lynchburg: In a former nearby village (Appomattox Court House), Lee surrendered to Grant (April 9, 1865), ending the Civil War.

**caricatures**a picture or imitation of a person, literary style, etc. in which certain features or mannerisms are exaggerated for satirical effect.

**morphodite**comic slang pronunciation of hermaphrodite, a term used to describe a human or animal combining both male and female sexual characteristics or organs.

**Missouri Compromise**a plan agreed upon by the United States Congress in 1820 to settle the debate over slavery in the Louisiana Purchase area. The plan temporarily maintained the balance between free and slave states.

**Ol' Blue Light**nickname for Stonewall Jackson, a Confederate general.

**lineaments**any of the features of the body, usually of the face, esp. with regard to its outline.

**hookah**a kind of water pipe associated with the Middle East, with a long flexible tube for drawing the smoke through water in a vase or bowl and cooling it.

**trousseau**a bride's outfit of clothes, linens, etc.

**deportment**the manner of conducting or bearing oneself; behavior; demeanor.

**obstreperous**noisy, boisterous, or unruly, esp. in resisting or opposing.

**ruination**anything that ruins or causes ruin.

***Critical Study:***

Christmas is near, and [Scout](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Scout) and [Jem](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Jem) learn that [Atticus](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Atticus) has taken the case of [Tom Robinson](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Tom_Robinson), a black man accused of raping a white woman. Scout learns this when a classmate announces the news at school to embarrass her. Atticus explains that Tom Robinson is a member of [Calpurnia](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Calpurnia)'s church. He tells Scout that defending Tom is the right thing to do, even if other people don't agree.

The case won't go to trial until the following summer. Atticus tells Scout to keep her wits about her if anyone teases her about his role. When she learns he won't win the case, she asks him why he is taking it. Atticus explains that you should always try, even if you know you can't win.

On Christmas Eve the Finches pick up Atticus's brother, Jack, who has come for the holidays. On Christmas they make their annual holiday visit to Finch's Landing, the family homestead. When Francis, Aunt Alexandra's annoying grandson, calls Atticus a "nigger-lover" to Scout's face, she loses her temper and starts fighting him.

To her disappointment Uncle Jack sides with Francis without hearing her side of the story. Once home Scout angrily tells Uncle Jack what Francis said. He becomes upset and wants to go back to Aunt Alexandra's to tell her what really happened, but Scout swears him to secrecy. She would rather have Atticus think they were fighting about something else than know she had let him down.

Later Scout overhears a private conversation between Atticus and Jack about raising children, Scout's temper, and what Atticus fears his children will face in light of the Robinson trial. Scout is relieved to find that Uncle Jack has respected her request for secrecy. As they talk Atticus explains why he felt taking the case was important and how he hopes the fallout will not change Jem and Scout. Atticus suddenly calls out to Scout to go to bed, and it occurs to her later that maybe she was meant to hear every word that was said.

While Christmas at Finch's Landing should have been a fun time for [Atticus](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Atticus) and his children, it turns out to be anything but when [Scout](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Scout) and Francis start fighting. Francis's criticism of Atticus for defending [Tom Robinson](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-Kill-a-Mockingbird/character-analysis/#Tom_Robinson) is representative of what many Maycomb residents think. In an instance of situational irony, Atticus is concerned about protecting his children from angry outsiders when some of the greatest criticism actually comes from his own family.

Another item to keep in mind is Uncle Jack's treatment of Scout right after the fight. Had he taken the time to actually listen to her side of the story he would have known that Francis incited the fight with hateful comments. Uncle Jack's unfair treatment of Scout, including his unwillingness to hear the whole story, foreshadows the inequity that comes later during the Tom Robinson trial.

***Significance:***This chapter opens with a fight between Scout and her classmate Cecil Jacobs, who announces to the entire school that Atticus "defend[s] niggers." Scout takes offense to this and shouts at him to take it back, but refrains from getting into a physical fight for fear of being punished. Atticus has to tell her not to use the word "nigger" because it's "common," meaning that the only people who say it are people who don't know any better. Thereafter, Scout uses the word Negro, instead, and asks Atticus if all lawyers defend African American people. He explains to her that it's his job to defend Tom and that, if he succumbed to peer pressure and refused to defend Tom, like the other citizens of Maycomb want him to, he wouldn't be able to hold up his head in town. He intends to defend Tom even though he knows he won't win.

Christmas comes, and, with it, Uncle Jack, Atticus's brother, who stays with them for a week. He likes to make Scout laugh, but is also a very serious man—a doctor—who removes her splinters and warns her not to swear. On Christmas morning, Jem and Scout play with the air rifles Atticus bought them, but aren't allowed to bring the rifles with them when they go see Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Alexandra, Atticus's sister, at Finch's Landing. Aunt Alexandra is so unlike Atticus in every way that Jem thinks she was switched at birth and is actually a Crawford. Her grandson, Francis, is the most boring kid alive, according to Scout. He asked for a bowtie for Christmas. What's worse, he says bad things about Atticus defending Tom, which leads Scout to punch him in the face.

Uncle Jack punishes Scout for fighting with Francis. Later, when they return to Maycomb, Scout tells him that he was unfair to her and explains why she punched Francis, but asks him not to tell Atticus, because she doesn't want to disappoint her father. Still later, Scout overhears Uncle Jack and Atticus talking. Uncle Jack says he doesn't want to have children. Atticus says Scout's use of bad language is just a phase. He knows that she tries to obey him, and he's sorry that she's going to have to deal with the ugliness of the trial soon. He knows that she's listening, but wants her to hear this so that later she'll understand.

**Allusion**

**General Hood (1831 - 1879).**John Bell Hood, a brilliant Confederate general whose reputation was destroyed by his defeats in the Atlanta Campaign and the Franklin-Nashville Campaign. According to Scout, her cousin, Ike Finch, the last living Confederate veteran of the Civil War in Maycomb, has a beard like General Hood's, which grows several inches long and juts powerfully out from his chin. That so many of Scout's allusions refer to the Civil War and Confederate generals serves as a potent reminder of the South's dark history.

**House of Commons.** Traditionally, this refers to the lower house of the British Parliament, but may, in other contexts, refer to the equivalent house of the Canadian or Irish parliaments. Uncle Jack alludes to it while trying to answer Scout's question asking what a "whore-lady" is. It's unclear exactly how the two things are related.

**Lord Melbourne (1779 - 1848).** A Whig politician who served as the British Prime Minister from 1835 to 1841. He was involved in a couple sex scandals, one involving his wife, who had an affair with Lord Byron, and another involving his friend, the author Caroline Norton. It's unclear how exactly Lord Melbourne relates to what Scout and Jack were talking about before.

**The Missouri Compromise.** This United States federal statute was devised by Henry Clay and illegalized slavery in Louisiana Purchase territories north of the 36°30′ parallel, except within the state of Missouri. According to Cousin Ike, the Missouri Compromise marked the beginning of the end for the antebellum South, whose way of life was destroyed when they could no longer rely on slave labor.

**Stonewall Jackson (1824 - 1963).** Sometimes referred to as Ol' Blue Light by his men, Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson was a Confederate general who earned his nickname at the First Battle of Bull Run, where he and his brigade of Virginians stood their ground against a Union attack. Cousin Ike alludes to him when discussing the Civil War with Scout and Jem.

**Conflict**

Once again, the primary conflicts in this chapter involve Scout. This time, her conflicts are with men, not women, and therefore have a different feel and character. In this chapter, Scout actively attempts to hold back and keep out of trouble, out of respect for Atticus, but finds this difficult.

**Scout vs. Cecil Jacobs.**This chapter opens with Scout shouting at Cecil to take back the mean things that he's said about Atticus. Remarkably, Scout is able to refrain from getting into a physical fight this time, but only because she has already spoken to Atticus and he has explained to her that he has a moral duty to defend Tom Robinson. Her cousin Francis, however, doesn't get off so easily.

**Scout vs. Francis.** Like Cecil Jacobs, Francis speaks ill of Atticus because he's defending Tom Robinson. However, because he's related to Scout and should know better than to speak that way about relatives, Francis doesn't get off as easy as Cecil did. Scout patiently tortures him for a little while, trapping him in the kitchen and shouting at him occasionally before finally punching him in the face. She doesn't explain why she does this to Aunt Alexandra, and she ends up being punished by Uncle Jack.

**Scout vs. Uncle Jack.** Though Scout loves Uncle Jack, they come into conflict because he doesn't want her using swear words or bad language. When he hears that Scout has been fighting with Francis, he punishes her without first waiting to hear her side of the story. Once he does hear it, though, he apologizes for being cross with her, later telling Atticus that he doesn't want any children of his own, because he doesn't understand them.

**Idiom**

An example of an idiom would be "to draw a bead on someone," which Scout uses when she has a fight with Francis. Generally, the phrase refers to aiming a gun (drawing a bead on your target), but in this context refers to Scout keeping an eye on Cecil Jacobs, whom she decides not to fight.

**Themes**

**Heritage.** In this chapter, Scout relates the particulars of her family's heritage, including the architecture of Simon Finch's house, which is exceptionally peculiar (his daughters all slept in one bedroom, the staircase to which could only be accessed through his master bedroom). Scout tells us this not to impress upon the reader how old and wealthy her family was, but to describe Finch's Landing, a new setting that the reader has never seen before. Thus, the long expositional passages about the house and her ancestors are less a product of Scout's interest in her heritage than they are of Lee's need to quickly orient the reader in a new setting.

***Notes:***A boy at school, Cecil Jacobs, teases Scout, saying that her father "defends niggers". Scout will not accept insults about her father and fights Cecil. Later, she asks Atticus what the phrase means, and he explains that he has decided to defend a black man named [Tom Robinson](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#tom-robinson), who lives in a settlement behind the town dump. Atticus says many of the town people think he ought not defend Tom because he is black. Scout asks why he's still doing it if people don't want him to, and Atticus responds that if he didn't take the case, he wouldn't be able to "hold up my head in town," represent his county in the legislature, or even tell his children what to do. Atticus explains that every lawyer gets at least one case in a lifetime that affects them personally, and that this one is his. He tells Scout to keep her cool no matter what anyone says, and fight with her head, not her hands. Scout asks if he's going to win the case and Atticus says no, but "simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win." He tells her that no matter what happens, the people of Maycomb are still their friends, and this is still their town.

Back at school, Scout works hard not to fight. [Uncle Jack](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#uncle-jack) comes to stay with them in Maycomb for a week, which Scout enjoys, because he has a good sense of humor, even though he's a doctor. Scout has been trying out swear words on the theory that Atticus won't make her go to school if he finds out she learned them there, but after dinner Uncle Jack tells her not to use them in his presence unless she's in an extremely provoking situation. For Christmas, Jem and Scout both get air rifles and are extremely pleased.

Atticus and the children go Finch's Landing, a large house with a special staircase leading to the rooms of Simon Finch's four daughters that once allowed Finch to keep track of their comings and goings. Scout hates going here, because her [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#aunt-alexandra) always tells her that she should be more ladylike - she should wear dresses and not pants, and that she should play with girls' toys like tea sets and jewelry. Aunt Alexandra hurts Scout's feeling and makes her sit at the little table in the dining room at dinner instead of the grown-up table, where Jem and [Francis](https://www.gradesaver.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/study-guide/character-list#francis) are sitting. Francis is Aunt Alexandra's grandson, and Scout calls him "the most boring child I ever met." Talking to Francis gives Scout the feeling of, "settling slowly to the bottom of the ocean." The only good thing about being at the Landing is Aunt Alexandra's excellent cooking.

After dinner, Francis and Scout are outside in the backyard. Francis says that Atticus is a "nigger-lover," and that now Atticus will be the ruination of the family, who won't even be able to walk the streets of Maycomb. Scout patiently awaits her chance, and then punches him squarely in the mouth. Francis screams and everyone comes outside. Francis says Scout called him a "whore-lady" and jumped on him, which Scout does not deny. Uncle Jack tells her not to use that language and pins her when she tries to run away. Scout says that she hates him. Atticus says it's high time they went home.

Back at home, Scout runs to her room to be alone. Uncle Jack comes upstairs to have a talk with her about her language. Scout points out that he doesn't understand children very well, since he never heard her side of the story. Uncle Jack asks her for her side and Scout tells him what Francis said about Atticus. Uncle Jack is very concerned and wants to go talk with Alexandra right away, but Scout pleads with him not to tell Atticus, since she doesn't want him to know that she broke her agreement not to fight anyone over the issue of Tom Robinson's case.

Scout overhears Uncle Jack and Atticus talking. Uncle Jack explains that he doesn't want to have children because he doesn't understand them well enough. Atticus muses that Scout needs to learn to keep her temper under control because in the next few months, there is going to be a lot in store for the family. Jack asks how bad it will be, and Atticus says that it couldn't be worse - the case comes down to a black man's word against the word of the white Ewell family, and the jury couldn't possibly take Tom's word over the word of white people. Atticus just hopes that he can get his children through the ordeal without having them catch "Maycomb's usual disease," when "people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up." Atticus hopes that Jem and Scout will look to him for their answers rather than to the townspeople. Then he calls out Scout's name and tells her to go to bed. She runs back to her room. Years later, the narrator, an aged Scout, explains she eventually came to understand that Atticus wanted her to hear everything he said.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

Things began to get difficult for [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout). [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) forbids Scout from fighting, but [Cecil Jacobs](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) makes her forget this when he announces to their class that Atticus defends black people. Scout denies it and later, asks Atticus if he “defends niggers.” Atticus admits that he does but cautions Scout to not talk that way, as it’s common. Scout points out that everyone at school talks that way, yet another bid to convince Atticus to not send her to school. He looks vaguely amused. Scout asks if all lawyers defend black people and points out that Cecil made it sound bad.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The casual tone with which Scout uses a racial slur suggests that she’s not necessarily using it in a malicious way—rather, she’s parroting language she’s heard others use. Atticus’s reproof of this language, however, suggests that he understands that speaking about black people in this way deprives them of dignity, while using a more appropriate term  (Atticus uses “Negro” at various points in the novel, which suggests that this was proper at the time) shows respect.

***Summary Part 2:***

With a sigh, [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) says he’s defending a black man named [Tom Robinson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/tom-robinson), and some believe that he shouldn’t defend Tom. [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) asks why he took the case then, and Atticus insists that he had to in order to hold his head up and maintain the moral high ground. He tells Scout that she might hear nasty things about it at school and encourages her to not fight. Scout asks if he’ll win the case. Atticus says he won’t, but that it’s important to fight anyway. He pulls Scout onto his lap and says that they’re “fighting friends.” She remembers this when she tells [Cecil](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) to take his taunt back the next day. He refuses. Scout punches him and then walks away, feeling as though she has to obey Atticus since he rarely asks for anything like this.

***Analysis Part 2:***

By being truthful with Scout about what’s going on and what’s going to happen—in other words, by not sheltering her—Atticus gives her the opportunity to grapple with adult ideas, and in doing so, helps her both grow and come to a better understanding of how her world works. When Atticus insists that he has to defend Tom in order to maintain the high ground, it indicates that for Atticus, helping others preserve their dignity is doing the right thing—even if he knows he won’t be successful.

***Summary Part 3:***

Christmas is a mixed bag for [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) and [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout). On the plus side, [Uncle Jack](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/uncle-jack) visits for a week. On the downside, they have to spend time with [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/aunt-alexandra) and her grandson [Francis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) (Aunt Alexandra’s husband is, in Scout’s opinion, not worth mentioning). Atticus insists they spend Christmas day at Finch’s Landing every year, despite Aunt Alexandra being a formidable woman and a gossip and Francis being boring.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Scout’s refusal to mention Aunt Alexandra’s husband reminds the reader that this is truly a child’s account, with all her opinions and thoughts added in. The reader should thus take what Scout says about things with a grain of salt, as it’s impossible for her to look at the world with anything other than her young perspective.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Uncle Jack](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/uncle-jack) arrives on the train with two long packages, pecks [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) on the cheek, and shows [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) and [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) pictures of his cat. He insists she’s getting fat because she eats leftover body parts from the hospital, which Scout declares is “a damn story.” Atticus explains that Scout has decided cussing is fun and to ignore her, and Scout tells the reader that she believes that if Atticus realizes she learned the words at school, he won’t make her go. That night, she asks Uncle Jack to pass the damn ham. Later, he tells Scout that he doesn’t like language like that and asks Scout if she wants to be a lady. Scout isn’t interested in being a lady, but Uncle Jack insists that she actually is. The next morning Scout and Jem receive air rifles from Atticus, but he won’t let them take them to Finch’s Landing.

***Analysis Part 4:***

When even Scout’s beloved Uncle Jack tries to talk her into being ladylike, it reminds the reader that Scout doesn’t fit into people’s conceptions of what a young girl should be like. In this sense, if she were to think about it, she’s a lot like Boo—he, too, doesn’t fit into what people believe Maycomb’s residents should act like. Scout’s inability to make this leap, however, speaks to her youth and innocence, as does her use of rude language.

***Summary Part 5:***

At Finch’s Landing, the children exchange gifts and [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) leaves [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) to entertain [Francis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters). They discuss what they got for Christmas. Francis got clothes—just what he wanted—and doesn’t believe that Jem got a real chemistry set. Scout finds Francis to be extremely boring and a tattletale. He relays everything to [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/aunt-alexandra), who passes everything onto [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch). Atticus only ever got sharp with Aunt Alexandra once when she took offense to Scout’s overalls, as she believed that Scout needed to be a lady and a ray of sunshine for Atticus. At dinner, Scout sits alone at the kids’ table, fuming, but Aunt Alexandra’s cooking almost makes up for it. After dinner, Scout goes outside with Francis, who announces that Alexandra is going to teach him to cook. Scout giggles that boys don’t cook.

***Analysis Part 5:***

This passage is extremely important, as it shows clearly that even though Scout suffers from other people’s prejudiced views surrounding gender roles, she holds questionable views of her own surrounding how boys and girls should act. The fact that Atticus stood up for Scout’s right to wear overalls, meanwhile, indicates that he’s far more concerned with preserving Scout’s individuality and sense of self than forcing her to behave a certain way.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) admits that she and [Dill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/charles-baker-harris-dill) are engaged, which makes [Francis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) laugh—according to him, Dill’s family passes him from relative to relative and declares that Scout’s lack of knowledge speaks to her general ignorance. He calls Atticus a “nigger-lover” who’s ruining the family. Scout chases him into the outside kitchen and waits for him to come out so she can jump him. When [Aunt Alexandra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/aunt-alexandra) appears, Francis whines that Scout cornered him. Francis kicks around the yard, gloating, and repeats his slur again. Scout punches him so hard she splits her knuckle to the bone. Aunt Alexandra and [Uncle Jack](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/uncle-jack) separate them, and Francis bawls that Scout called him a “whore-lady.” Scout doesn’t deny it and Uncle Jack spanks her.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Note the difference here between Scout’s use of the n-word at the beginning of the chapter and Francis’s usage here. Whereas Scout was merely curious about hearing other people say the word, Francis clearly means it to land as an offensive slur. This suggests that he’s more developed than Scout, has a better understanding of how careful one must be with language like this, and knows how to weaponize it against those like Atticus who are sympathetic to black people, and against black people themselves. Francis betrays his prejudice and racism by using it here.

***Summary Part 7:***

At home, [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) locks herself in her room and tries to keep [Uncle Jack](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/uncle-jack) from coming in to talk to her. Scout accuses him of not understanding children and of not being fair and asks to tell her side. She explains that [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) always listens to her and to [Jem](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jeremy-atticus-finch-jem) when they fight, and that Jack told her she could use bad words when provoked. She shares what [Francis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters) said and knows that Francis is in trouble by the look on Uncle Jack’s face. She begs him to let it go, since Atticus made her promise to not fight over this sort of thing. He agrees and then bandages her hand. Scout asks what a “whore-lady” is. Uncle Jack tells her a story about a silly Prime Minister, which Scout thinks makes no sense.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Scout’s query of what a “whore-lady” is betrays that she has no idea what she’s saying—she simply uses words because she hears them and picks up on the fact that they’re offensive. Again, while this doesn’t excuse her use of slurs, it does indicate that she’s generally not using them in a calculating and purposefully racist way, she’s only doing it for attention. Asking for Uncle Jack to be fair with her also shows that her sense of right and wrong is well-developed, even if she’s not fully aware of how her world functions.

***Summary Part 8:***

Later, when [Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/jean-louise-finch-scout) gets up for water, she stops in the hallway and listens to [Uncle Jack](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/uncle-jack) tell [Atticus](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/atticus-finch) that he’ll never have children after Scout’s dressing down earlier. He doesn’t betray his promise to Scout but tells Atticus about dodging Scout’s question of what a “whore-lady” was. Atticus tells Uncle Jack to tell children the truth. He muses that Scout will go through a lot in the next few months and needs to learn to not beat people up. Jack asks about the case. Atticus says that it’s a case of he-said, she-said, and the Ewells are involved—but [John Taylor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/to-kill-a-mockingbird/characters/judge-taylor) told him to take it, and he won’t be able to face his children if he doesn’t. He hopes that they come to him with questions and don’t catch Maycomb’s “usual disease.” Atticus sends Scout back to bed. Years later, she realizes that he wanted her to eavesdrop.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Scout’s reflection that Atticus wanted her to hear what he said shows that Atticus understands how difficult things are for Scout right now. He wants her to understand, however, that he must defend Tom Robinson in order abide by his own conscience and code of ethics. His mention of Maycomb’s “usual disease” is likely a reference to racism, which Atticus is clearly aware exists in force, even if it’s not really on Scout’s radar yet. His advice to Uncle Jack to answer children’s questions truthfully again shows that Atticus believes children are capable of hearing about adult concepts, even if they don’t totally understand them.