Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

Assignment: To Kill a Mockingbird- Chapter 23

1. **What had happened according to Miss Stephanie? How did she know all this?**

Ans: According to Miss Stephanie Crawford, Atticus was leaving the post office when Mr Ewell approached him, cursed him, spat on him and threatened to kill him. Miss Stephanie knew all this because she had seen it all as she was passing by.

1. **How did Atticus react to Mr Ewell spitting on him?**

Ans: Atticus didn’t even bat an eyelid. He just took out his handkerchief and wiped his face and stood there and let Mr Ewell curse him and call him names which could not be repeated . He only said he wished Mr Ewell wouldn’t chew tobacco.

1. **How did Mr Ewell try to provoke Atticus? Was he successful?**

Ans: Mr Ewell tried to provoke Atticus by asking him if he was too proud to fight and called him a nigger-lover and gave him a bad word. Atticus only answered coolly that he was too old to fight. He then put his hands in his pockets and strolled on. Thus Mr Ewell had not been successful at provoking atticus.

1. **What remark did Miss Stephanie make about Atticus attitude towards the whole episode? What did she mean by it?**

Ans: Miss Stephanie said that one had to hand it to Atticus Finch for he could be dry sometimes. She meant that it was a wonder how Atticus could keep his cool in such adverse situations.

1. **What was the reaction of the kids on hearing the whole incident of Mr Ewell Spitting on Atticus?**

Ans: Both Jem and Scout were extremely vexed and also worried about the safety of their father. Scout felt that Atticus should have retaliated by shooting Mr Ewell. Jem reminded her that their father wouldn’t carry a gun and he didn’t even have one.

1. **What were the ways the children thought of to convince Atticus to carry a gun for his self -defense? Did any of the means work?**

Ans: Jem, Scout and even Dill strongly believed that Atticus should carry a gun with him. They asked him to borrow one but he flatly refused. Later Dill was of the opinion that they should emotionally blackmail Atticus by highlighting the plight of the children and Calpurnia if he were to die at the hands of Mr Ewell. Jem suggested that Scout should cry and fling a fit as she was young and a girl. None of the ways worked.

1. **When did Atticus discover how frightened the kids were for his safety? What did he do?**

Ans: When Atticus noticed the kids dragging around the neighbourhood, not eating , taking little interest in their normal pursuits, he discovered how deeply frightened they were . He tempted Jem with a new football magazine but that too didn’t work.

1. **When Atticus asked Jem what the matter was, how did Jem respond?**

Ans: When Atticus asked Jem what the matter was, Jem told him that they were scared for him and they thought he ought to do something about Mr Ewell.

1. **How did Atticus try to put Jem’s fear to rest?**

Ans: Atticus told Jem that he could and need not do anything about Mr Ewell. He couldn’t put him under a peace bond. He further told him that when Mr Ewell threatened Atticus , he had meant it then. He then justified Mr Ewell’s act by saying that anybody in his shoes would have done the same. Atticus had destroyed Mr Ewell’s credibility during the trial and thus he had to take revenge. It were better that Mr Ewell vent out his anger and revenge on Atticus than on his poor innocent children specially Mayella Ewell. He further assured Jem that they had nothing to fear from Bob Ewell has he had got it all out of his system.

1. **What was Atticus belief about Tom Robinson’s case? Where was Tom currently?**

Ans: Atticus was sure that nothing would happen to Tom Robinson until the higher court reviewed his case and Tom had a good chance of being acquitted or at least of having a new trial. Tom was currently at Enfield Prison Farm, seventy miles away from Maycomb.

1. **What were Jem’s views about Tom’s conviction and the death sentence that he would be given? What did Atticus tell him?**

Ans : Jem said that it wasn’t right to take away someone’s life ( to give capital punishment) even if he was guilty, especially as Tom had not taken away any one’s life. He said that the jury should have given him twenty years’ imprisonment but not a death sentence. Atticus told him that Tom was a coloured man and no jury in their part of the world was going to sentence him anything less than death.

1. **What was Atticus annoyed about? What is his stand about a death sentence?**

Ans: Atticus said that he had no quarrel with the laws related to rape cases but he had deep misgivings when the state asked for and the jury gave a death penalty on only circumstantial evidence He further said that before a man is sentenced to death for murder there should be at least one or two eye-witnesses. He believed that in the absence of an eye witness there is always a doubt and the defendant is entitled to the benefit of a doubt as there is always a possibility that he is innocent.

1. **What were Jem’s views about the jury? What were Atticus’ views?**

Ans: When Atticus tried to explain to Jem that the jury decided to convict Tom Robinson as he was a coloured man, Jem said it was all up to the jury and that every man in the jury brings with him , his beliefs about black men and white men and juries cannot make wise decisions and should not be given that responsibility. Atticus suggests a better way to handle the situation would be to change the law so that only the judges had the power to decide the penalty. Jem further advises his father that he should go to Montgomery to change the law. Atticus tells him that that would be very difficult and seemed to be a farfetched possibility in his lifetime.

1. **What does Atticus think about a white man cheating a black man?**

Ans: Atticus told Jem that as he would grow older, he would see white men cheat black men every day of their life. He further declared that whenever a white man cheats a black man, no matter who he is , how rich he is or how fine a family he comes from , that white man is trash.

1. **Which question from Jem pleased Atticus? What reasons did he give for women not being a part of the jury?**

Ans: When Jem asked Atticus why children like him and people like Miss Maudie were not allowed to sit on juries, Atticus was very pleased with his question. He said that women were not the jury because the law wanted to protect the frail ladies of Maycomb from sordid ( dishonourable) cases like Tom’s. In jest ,he further adds that women were not allowed as they keep asking questions. He gives the example of Miss Dubose.

1. **What made Atticus think that a positive change with respect to the law was imminent?**

Ans: Atticus said that generally in a case like Tom’s which was between a white and a black, the jury generally would have taken a quick decision against a black. This time however the jury took a few hours which meant there was someone or maybe more than one person who was in favour of Tom and it took time for the other members some time to convince him to change his vote. Thus Tom thought that there appeared to be at least some shift in the minds of the people in Maycomb and it was a new beginning even if it was the shadow of a beginning.

1. **Who was on the jury who supported Tom ?**

Ans: One of the Cunninghams was on the jury and he had supported Tom’s case.

1. **Why was Jem confused about the Cunninghams? What were Atticus’ views about the Cunninghams?**

Ans: Jem said that one moment the Cunninghams wanted to kill Tom and the other moment they were trying to turn him loose. He said he could never understand those folks all his life. Atticus said that one had to just know them. He said that the Cunninghams had not taken anything from or off anybody since they migrated to the New World. He further said that the other thing about them was that once anyone earned their respect they were for them tooth and nail.

1. **Why had Atticus taken the risk of putting one of the Cunninghams on the jury?**

Ans: Atticus had a feeling that on the night that the Cunninghams had attacked him, they had left the jail that night with considerable respect for the Finches. Atticus realized that probably they were a little disturbed about Tom being convicted and so thought it appropriate to have him on the jury.

1. **When Scout heard about a Cunningham being on the jury, what did she want to do?**

Ans: Earlier Scout had got into a brawl with Walter Cunningham but Jem had come to his rescue. Since then Scout had a grudge against Walter. When Scout heard about a Cunningham being on the jury and having supported Tom, she had a change of heart. She wanted to now make friends with Walter and to have him over to their house.

1. **What was Aunt Alexandra’s reaction when Scout wanted to invite Walter home? What does this tell us about her?**

Ans: Aunt Alexandra just refused to have Walter home. She believed that the Cunninghams were inferior to the Finches. This shows that Aunt Alexandra considers family’s dignity and image to be her responsibility and looked down upon people from the lower strata of the society.

1. **What were the differences in the opinion of Jem and Scout about the different types of folks in Maycomb?**

Ans: According to Jem there were four kinds of folks in the world- the ordinary kind like them and their neighbours , the kind like the Cunninghams , the kind like the Ewells and the Negroes. Their kind of folks didn’t like the Cunninghams, the Cunninghams didn’t like the Ewells and the Ewells hated the coloured folks. Scout’s views were different as compared to Jem. She believed there were only one kind of folks.