**English B**

**Grade 10**

**March 31, 2020**

To Kill a Mockingbird

Chapters 11-14

**Summary: Chapter 11**

On the way to the business district in Maycomb is the house of Mrs. Dubose, a cantankerous old lady who always shouts at Jem and Scout as they pass by. Atticus warns Jem to be a gentleman to her, because she is old and sick, but one day she tells the children that Atticus is not any better than the “niggers and trash he works for,” and Jem loses his temper. Jem takes a baton from Scout and destroys all of Mrs. Dubose’s camellia bushes. As punishment, Jem must go to her house every day for a month and read to her. Scout accompanies him and they endure Mrs. Dubose’s abuse and peculiar fits, which occur at the end of every reading session. Each session is longer than the one before. Mrs. Dubose dies a little more than a month after Jem’s punishment ends. Atticus reveals to Jem that she was addicted to morphine and that the reading was part of her successful effort to combat this addiction. Atticus gives Jem a box that Mrs. Dubose had given her maid for Jem; in it lies a single white camellia.

**Summary: Chapter 12**

By this time, Jem has reached the age of twelve, and he begins to demand that Scout “stop pestering him” and act more like a girl. Scout becomes upset and looks forward desperately to Dill’s arrival in the summer. To Scout’s disappointment, however, Dill does not come to Maycomb this year. He sends a letter saying that he has a new father (presumably, his mother has remarried) and will stay with his family in Meridian. To make matters worse, the state legislature, of which Atticus is a member, is called into session, forcing Atticus to travel to the state capital every day for two weeks.

Calpurnia decides to take the children to her church, a “colored” church, that Sunday. Maycomb’s black church is an old building, called First Purchase because it was bought with the first earnings of freed slaves. One woman, Lula, criticizes Calpurnia for bringing white children to church, but the congregation is generally friendly, and Reverend Sykes welcomes them, saying that everyone knows their father. The church has no money for hymnals, and few of the parishioners can read, so they sing by echoing the words that Zeebo, Calpurnia’s eldest son and the town garbage collector, reads from their only hymnal. During the service, Reverend Sykes takes up a collection for Tom Robinson’s wife, Helen, who cannot find work now that her husband has been accused of rape. After the service, Scout learns that Tom Robinson has been accused by Bob Ewell and cannot understand why anyone would believe the Ewells’ word. When the children return home, they find Aunt Alexandra waiting for them.

### Summary: Chapter 13

Aunt Alexandra explains that she should stay with the children for a while, to give them a “feminine influence.” Maycomb gives her a fine welcome: various ladies in the town bake her cakes and have her over for coffee, and she soon becomes an integral part of the town’s social life. Alexandra is extremely proud of the Finches and spends much of her time discussing the characteristics of the various families in Maycomb. This “family consciousness” is an integral part of life in Maycomb, an old town where the same families have lived for generations, where every family has its quirks and eccentricities. However, Jem and Scout lack the pride that Aunt Alexandra considers commensurate with being a Finch. She orders Atticus to lecture them on the subject of their ancestry. He makes a valiant attempt but succeeds only in making Scout cry.

### Summary: Chapter 14

The impending trial of Tom Robinson and Atticus’s role as his defense lawyer make Jem and Scout the objects of whispers and glances whenever they go to town. One day, Scout tries to ask Atticus what “rape” is, and the subject of the children’s trip to Calpurnia’s church comes up. Aunt Alexandra tells Scout she cannot go back the next Sunday. Later, she tries to convince Atticus to get rid of Calpurnia, saying that they no longer need her. Atticus refuses. That night, Jem tells Scout not to antagonize Alexandra. Scout gets angry at being lectured and attacks Jem. Atticus breaks up the fight and sends them to bed. Scout discovers something under her bed. She calls Jem in and they discover Dill hiding there.

Dill has run away from home because his mother and new father did not pay enough attention to him. He took a train from Meridian to Maycomb Junction, fourteen miles away, and covered the remaining distance on foot and on the back of a cotton wagon. Jem goes down the hall and tells Atticus. Atticus asks Scout to get more food than a pan of cold corn bread for Dill, before going next door to tell Dill’s aunt, Miss Rachel, of his whereabouts. Dill eats, then gets into Jem’s bed to sleep, but soon climbs over to Scout’s bed to talk things over.

Notes from Chapter 11-14:

Chapter 11

* The subsequent events surrounding Mrs. Dubose give him an opportunity to show Jem what he considers real courage. Mrs. Dubose, in many ways, represents everything wrong with Maycomb: she is unforgivably racist, raining curses on the children and denigrating Atticus for representing a black man. Yet the darkness in her is balanced by her bravery and determination, and just as Atticus loves Maycomb despite its flaws, he respects Mrs. Dubose for possessing “real courage,” which he explains as “when you know you’re licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what.” This attitude, of course, fittingly describes Atticus’s approach to the Tom Robinson case. Atticus puts into practice every moral idea that he espouses, which is the key to his importance in Maycomb and his heroism in the novel.
* When Jem rejects Mrs. Dubose’s gift, it highlights his immaturity in understanding that good and evil can coexist within the same person. She has sloughed off her mortal persona, one that is racist and irritable, and the whiteness of the flower symbolizes the purity of soul that Atticus attributes to everyone.

Chapter 12:

* Dill’s absence from Maycomb coincides appropriately with the continued encroachment of the adult world upon Scout’s childhood, as Dill has represented the perspective of childhood throughout the novel.
* An air of desperate poverty hangs over the church—the building is unpainted, they cannot afford hymnals, and the congregation is illiterate—yet the adversity seems to bring the people closer together and creates a stronger sense of community than is found in Scout’s own church.
* In addition, Lee introduces the black community at a crucial moment in the narrative—just as race relations in Maycomb are thrown into crisis by the trial of Tom Robinson. By emphasizing the goodness and solidarity of the black community, Lee casts the racism rampant among Maycomb’s whites in an extremely harsh and ugly light. One of the main moral themes of the novel is that of sympathy and understanding, Atticus’s tenet that Scout should always try to put herself in someone else’s shoes before she judges them. Lee enables us to identify with the black community in a way that makes the townspeople’s unwillingness to do so seem mean-spirited and stubborn. Simply because of their racial prejudice, the townspeople are prepared to accept the word of the cruel, ignorant Bob Ewell over that of a decent black man.
* The visit to the church brings Calpurnia to center stage in the novel. Her character serves as the bridge between two worlds, and the reader develops a sense of her double life, which is split between the Finch household and the black community.

Chapter 13:

* If the novel’s main theme involves the threat that evil and hatred pose to innocence and goodness, it becomes clear that ignorant, unsympathetic racial prejudice will be the predominant incarnation of evil and hatred, as the childhood innocence of Scout and Jem is thrown into crisis by the circumstances of the trial.
* Aunt Alexandra, meanwhile, takes over the Finch household and imposes her vision of social order. With her rigid notions of class and her habit of declaring what’s best for the family, she naturally clashes with Calpurnia, whose presence she deems unnecessary, and Scout, who wants no part of what her aunt represents—namely, respectable Southern womanhood. The reader may side with Scout at this juncture and consider Aunt Alexandra inflexible and narrow-minded, but (like most of the book’s characters) she has many redeeming qualities. She may not have her brother’s fierce yearning for justice or his parenting abilities, but her eagerness to rear Jem and Scout properly and her pride in the Finch name demonstrate that she cares deeply about her family.

Chapter 14:

* If Aunt Alexandra embodies the rules and customs of the adult world, then the reappearance of Dill at this juncture offers Scout an opportunity to flee, at least for a short time, back into the comforts of childhood. However, Dill’s return also emphasizes the growing gulf in development between Scout and Jem. In the previous section, we saw the twelve-year-old Jem indignantly urging Scout to act more like a girl, indicating his growing awareness of adult social roles and expectations. Here again, Jem proves clearly too old for the childhood solidarity that Dill’s presence recalls. Scout relates that, upon seeing Dill under the bed, Jem “rose and broke the remaining code of our childhood” by telling Atticus. To Scout, this act makes Jem a “traitor,” though it is really an act of responsibility that marks Jem’s maturation toward adulthood.
* Dill’s account of his family troubles reminds both Scout and the reader of the Finch household’s good fortune. Atticus is a wonderful father, and Aunt Alexandra’s faults result from caring too much rather than too little. Dill’s parents have treated him with apathy and disregard, perhaps the greatest offense a parent can commit.

**Emerging themes:( theme is focus)**

**Prejudice: (racial prejudice/discrimination/inequality):** As the events in the novel unfold, it becomes clearer that the theme of racism and inequality is a central aspect explored in the novel. Through the background and actions of the characters, Lee reveals to the reader how the differences in social status are explored largely through the overcomplicated social hierarchy of Maycomb, the ins and outs of which constantly baffle the children. The relatively well-off Finches stand near the top of Maycomb’s social hierarchy, with most of the townspeople beneath them. Ignorant country farmers like the Cunninghams lie below the townspeople, and the white trash Ewells rest below the Cunninghams. But the black community in Maycomb, despite its abundance of admirable qualities, squats below even the Ewells, enabling Bob Ewell to make up for his own lack of importance by persecuting Tom Robinson. These rigid social divisions that make up so much of the adult world are revealed in the book to be both irrational and destructive. For example, Scout cannot understand why Aunt Alexandra refuses to let her consort with young Walter Cunningham. Lee uses the children’s perplexity at the unpleasant layering of Maycomb society to critique the role of class status and, ultimately, prejudice in human interaction.

It is important to note that the prejudice that exists in the novel is not limited to race. This theme also highlights the cruelty that people inflict upon others by the holding of preformed ideas. It is not just a matter of deep racial prejudice which is present in Maycomb but the intolerant, narrow, rigid codes of behavior that most townspeople wish to impose on others. This bigotry is made all the more menacing by being depicted as ‘normal’ behavior by many characters in the book. Against the background of this small town, such people as Boo Radley, Dolphus Raymond and to some extent, Maudie Atkinson, are persecuted because they do not conform. This situation alone speaks volumes to the fact that a black man, Tom Robinson who may very well be innocent of the crime for which he is being accused, will not be given a fair chance in the fight for justice.