

Kill a Mocking Bird The story is set in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, in the middle of the Great Depression. Atticus explains that Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict and used Jem's daily reading to break herself of her addiction before she died--she wanted to die free. That year, Atticus is appointed by the court to defend a black man, Tom Robinson, who is accused of raping Mayella Ewell, the daughter of a poor, unemployed, alcoholic white man named Bob Ewell. Atticus admits that he made Jem read because he wanted Jem to see that courage isn't, "seeing a man with a gun, but it's doing something you know is right, even if you know you'll fail." Calpurnia takes the children to attend her black church one Sunday. Scout, is shocked to discover that Calpurnia lives a double life, as she speaks one way in the Finch home and another way among her black community. When they return home, Aunt Alexandra, Atticus's sister, is there to stay with them for "a while" and to be a "feminine influence" on Scout. Calpurnia recognizes that the dog has rabies, she alerts the neighbours, and calls Atticus and the Sheriff, Heck Tate. Jem realizes that Boo must have done it. Scout is horrified, but Atticus just hides his laughter. Later in the winter, as Scout and Jem take out their new air rifles to hunt for rabbits, they discover a beloved Maycomb dog named Tim Johnson behaving strangely. Scout and Jem occasionally find treasures stuffed into a knothole of a tree next to the Radleys' fence. A few months later, in the dead of the night in winter, the Finch's neighbour Miss Maudie Atkinson's house catches fire, and as Scout and Finch watch it burn, someone puts a blanket around Scout's shoulders. As Atticus is appointed to fight on behalf of Tom, there are racial tensions in Maycomb. Scout and Jem become targets of abuse from schoolmates, neighbours, townspeople, and even some family members. Later at home, Scout tells Uncle Jack her side of the story and tells him he punishes her based on Francis's incorrect statement. She also begs him to keep this a secret from Atticus. As punishment, Mrs. Dubose asks Jem to read to her every day after school for a month, and Atticus agrees he has to do so. Mrs. Dubose is nasty and frightens both Jem and Scout, as she has fits of some sort. Six-year-old Jean Louise Finch (Scout Finch) lives with her older brother, Jeremy Atticus Finch (Jem), and her father, Atticus Finch. The three children become friends, and, pushed by Dill's wild imagination, they soon become fascinated with the spooky house called Radley Place. Dill dares Jem to run up and touch the Radley house, and Scout is sure she sees someone watching them from inside behind a curtain. When they find several sticks of gum, Scout and Jem ignore the rumour that everything on the Radley property is poisoned. Dill, Scout, and Jem sneak onto the Radley property one night to look in through the window, but Nathan Radley sees them and thinking they're thieves, goes after them with a gun. When Jem goes back to Radleys' fence to get the pants later that night, he finds them mended and folded. Meanwhile, Scout and Jem continue to find gifts in the knothole until Nathan Radley cements it shut one day, saying that the tree is dying. Jem is very hurt, especially when Atticus mentions that the tree doesn't look ill. Scout and Jem receive air rifles for Christmas, though Atticus refuses to teach them how to shoot. In the spring, Scout and Jem walk down the road to meet Atticus after work, they go past the house of Mrs Dubose, an unpleasant woman. Jem is able to ignore her abuse for a while, until one day when she insults him about Atticus defending Tom Robinson.