**Chapters 26–27**

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**Summary: Chapter 26**

School starts, and [Jem](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/jem-finch/) and [Scout](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/scout-finch/) again begin to pass by the Radley Place every day. They are now too old to be frightened by the house, but Scout still wistfully wishes to see Boo Radley just once. Meanwhile, the shadow of the trial still hangs over her. One day in school, her third-grade teacher, Miss Gates, lectures the class on the wickedness of Hitler’s persecution of the Jews and on the virtues of equality and democracy. Scout listens and later asks Jem how Miss Gates can preach about equality when she came out of the courthouse after the trial and told Miss Stephanie Crawford that it was about time that someone taught the blacks in town a lesson. Jem becomes furious and tells Scout never to mention the trial to him again. Scout, upset, goes to [Atticus](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/atticus-finch/) for comfort.

**Summary: Chapter 27**

By the middle of October, Bob Ewell gets a job with the WPA, one of the Depression job programs, and loses it a few days later. He blames Atticus for “getting” his job. Also in the middle of October, Judge Taylor is home alone and hears someone prowling around; when he goes to investigate, he finds his screen door open and sees a shadow creeping away. Bob Ewell then begins to follow Helen Robinson to work, keeping his distance but whispering obscenities at her. Deas sees Ewell and threatens to have him arrested if he doesn’t leave Helen alone; he gives her no further trouble. But these events worry Aunt Alexandra, who points out that Ewell seems to have a grudge against everyone connected with the case.

That Halloween, the town sponsors a party and play at the school. This plan constitutes an attempt to avoid the unsupervised mischief of the previous Halloween, when someone burglarized the house of two elderly sisters and hid all of their furniture in their basement. The play is an “agricultural pageant” in which every child portrays a food: Scout wears a wire mesh shaped to look like ham. Both Atticus and Aunt Alexandra are too tired to attend the festivities, so Jem takes Scout to the school.

**Analysis: Chapters 26–27**

These short chapters are marked by a mood of mounting mischief laced with a growing sense of real danger. They begin with a reference to the Radley Place, the source of childhood terror that no longer scares Jem and Scout—“Boo Radley was the least of our fears,” Scout comments. The dissipation of Jem and Scout’s youthful fear of Boo reflects how the trial has hardened them and how, in the wake of the trial’s injustice and Bob Ewell’s threats, the children have become increasingly mired in the more serious concerns of the adult world. The Radley Place is part of the past now. The aura of scariness attached to the name “Boo” has dissolved into curiosity, perhaps even into fondness. As Jem and Scout gain a greater understanding of Boo, he seems less like a town freak to them and more, in a strange way, like a pet or a plaything. Scout still expresses a wish to see Boo someday, and she remembers fondly the near encounters with Boo during summers past. These memories restore Boo Radley to the reader’s consciousness, which has been occupied with the trial for most of Part Two, thereby foreshadowing Boo’s appearance a few chapters later.

Meanwhile, the aftereffects of the trial continue to loom, and Jem and Scout’s fading fear of Boo accentuates the real danger that Bob Ewell’s various attempts at revenge present. Bob Ewell shows himself to be sinister, and the fact that he has not yet attempted anything against the Finches only increases the sense of foreboding. Atticus remains confident in his own safety, but this confidence begins to seem like wishful thinking. In fact, rather than offer further thematic commentary, Lee devotes a great part of these chapters to building tension and suspense by focusing on the unpredictable threat that Bob Ewell poses. The misdeeds of the previous Halloween, which lead to the idea of a Halloween play this year, hint again at the damage caused by those who act without conscience.

Meanwhile, the incident involving Miss Gates reveals the extent to which Jem remains affected by the trial. Despite the grim experience of the trial, Scout retains her faith in the basic goodness of others, and thus her teacher’s obvious hypocrisy confuses her. Jem, meanwhile, has become disillusioned, and when Scout tries to talk to him about Miss Gates, he shuts himself off from the painful memory of the trial. Bob Ewell’s threats are not the only dark cloud hanging over the Finch household in this section: the injustice of the trial has changed Jem irrevocably.

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