**Chapters 4–6**

**Summary: Chapter 4**

The rest of the school year passes grimly for [Scout](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/scout-finch/), who endures a curriculum that moves too slowly and leaves her constantly frustrated in class. After school one day, she passes the Radley Place and sees some tinfoil sticking out of a knothole in one of the Radleys’ oak trees. Scout reaches into the knothole and discovers two pieces of chewing gum. She chews both pieces and tells [Jem](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/jem-finch/) about it. He panics and makes her spit it out. On the last day of school, however, they find two old “Indian-head” pennies hidden in the same knothole where Scout found the gum and decide to keep them.

Summer comes at last, school ends, and Dill returns to Maycomb. He, Scout, and Jem begin their games again. One of the first things they do is roll one another inside an old tire. On Scout’s turn, she rolls in front of the Radley steps, and Jem and Scout panic. However, this incident gives Jem the idea for their next game: they will play “Boo Radley.” As the summer passes, their game becomes more complicated, until they are acting out an entire Radley family melodrama. Eventually, however, [Atticus](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/atticus-finch/) catches them and asks if their game has anything to do with the Radleys. Jem lies, and Atticus goes back into the house. The kids wonder if it’s safe to play their game anymore.

**Summary: Chapter 5**

Jem and Dill grow closer, and Scout begins to feel left out of their friendship. As a result, she starts spending much of her time with one of their neighbors: Miss Maudie Atkinson, a widow with a talent for gardening and cake baking who was a childhood friend of Atticus’s brother, Jack. She tells Scout that Boo Radley is still alive and it is her theory Boo is the victim of a harsh father (now deceased), a “foot-washing” Baptist who believed that most people are going to hell. Miss Maudie adds that Boo was always polite and friendly as a child. She says that most of the rumors about him are false, but that if he wasn’t crazy as a boy, he probably is by now.

Meanwhile, Jem and Dill plan to give a note to Boo inviting him out to get ice cream with them. They try to stick the note in a window of the Radley Place with a fishing pole, but Atticus catches them and orders them to “stop tormenting that man” with either notes or the “Boo Radley” game.

**Summary: Chapter 6**

Jem and Dill obey Atticus until Dill’s last day in Maycomb, when he and Jem plan to sneak over to the Radley Place and peek in through a loose shutter. Scout accompanies them, and they creep around the house, peering in through various windows. Suddenly, they see the shadow of a man with a hat on and flee, hearing a shotgun go off behind them. They escape under the fence by the schoolyard, but Jem’s pants get caught on the fence, and he has to kick them off in order to free himself.

The children return home, where they encounter a collection of neighborhood adults, including Atticus, Miss Maudie, and Miss Stephanie Crawford, the neighborhood gossip. Miss Maudie informs them that Mr. Nathan Radley shot at “a Negro” in his yard. Miss Stephanie adds that Mr. Radley is waiting outside with his gun so he can shoot at the next sound he hears. When Atticus asks Jem where his pants are, Dill interjects that he won Jem’s pants in a game of strip poker. Alarmed, Atticus asks them if they were playing cards. Jem responds that they were just playing with matches. Late that night, Jem sneaks out to the Radley Place, and retrieves his pants.

#### **[Chapters 4–6](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)**

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**[Analysis: Chapters 4–6](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)**

[These chapters serve primarily as a record of](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)[[Jem](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/jem-finch/)[and](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)[[Scout](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/scout-finch/)[’s childhood adventures with Dill and the specter of Boo Radley. Even as the children play the “Boo Radley game,” make their attempts to give a message to Boo, and peek through his shutters, Boo’s character is transformed from a monster into a human being. Although Boo’s relevance to the main plot of the novel is still unknown, the compelling human story that these chapters weave around Boo keeps the reader interested in him, even if he serves only as a diversion to the young Finch children at this point.](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)

[Boo makes his presence felt in these chapters in a number of ways. First, the presents begin to appear in the Radley tree, and, though Scout does not realize who has been putting them there, the reader can easily guess that it is Boo. Second, Miss Maudie offers insight into the origins of Boo’s reclusiveness and a sympathetic perspective on his story. Miss Maudie has only contempt for the superstitious view of Boo: he is no demon, and she knows that he is alive, because she hasn’t seen him “carried out yet.” From her point of view, Boo was a nice boy who suffered at the hands of a tyrannically religious family. He is one of many victims populating a book whose title,](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)*[To Kill a Mockingbird,](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)*[suggests the destruction of an innocent being. In fact, as a sweet, young child apparently driven mad by an overbearing father obsessed with sin and retribution, Boo epitomizes the loss of innocence that the book, as a whole, dramatizes. For the children, who first treat him as a superstition and an object of ridicule but later come to view him as a human being, Boo becomes an important benchmark in their gradual development of a more sympathetic, mature perspective.](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)

[In these chapters, the first person other than](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)[[Atticus](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/atticus-finch/)[to display a sympathetic attitude toward Boo is Miss Maudie, who, like Boo, emerges as an important character in this section. Miss Maudie is one of the book’s strongest, most resilient female characters. One of the few people in the town who share Atticus’s sense of justice, she is also Scout’s closest friend and confidante among the local women. Atticus’s wife is dead, leaving Scout with Miss Maudie and Aunt Alexandra as her principal maternal figures. Whereas the latter provides a vision of proper womanhood and family pride, the former offers Scout understanding instead of criticizing her for wearing pants and not being ladylike. Miss Maudie is a stronger role model for Scout: she serves as a conscience for the town’s women, just as Atticus does for the men, and her sharp tongue and honesty make her the opposite of vapid gossips like Stephanie Crawford.](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/section3/page/2/)