**Part Two, Chapters 12–13**

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**Summary: Chapter 12**

By this time, [Jem](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/jem-finch/) has reached the age of twelve, and he begins to demand that [Scout](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/scout-finch/) “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](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/character/atticus-finch/) 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.

**Analysis: Chapters 12–13**

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. Scout’s journey to Calpurnia’s church is the reader’s first glimpse of the black community in Maycomb, which is portrayed in an overwhelmingly positive light. 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. The devotion of the black church contrasts starkly with the hypocrisy of the white ladies’ missionary circle that Scout attends in Chapter 24. There, one of the missionary ladies, Mrs. Merriweather, bemoans the plight of the oppressed indigenous people of Africa at the same time that she complains about how moody Maycomb’s blacks are.

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. 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.

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. When she goes to church, her language changes; she speaks in a “colored” dialect rather than the proper, precise language that she uses in Atticus’s household. Jem asks her why, and she explains that the churchgoers would think she was “puttin’ on airs fit to beat Moses” if she spoke “white” in church. This speech demonstrates the gulf between blacks and whites in Maycomb: not only do class distinctions and bigotry divide the two races, but language does as well.