

## To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 17

The trial began with Judge Taylor presiding. Heck Tate testified that on the evening of November twenty-first, Bob Ewell came to get him claiming that his daughter, Mayella, had been raped. When Heck and Bob returned to the Ewell home out by the town dump, Mayella was beat up and lying on the floor in one of the rooms of the small, dirty house. When Heck asked her who hurt her, she blamed Tom Robinson for the rape and beating. So Heck took him to jail and that was that. Atticus asked repeatedly if a doctor ever saw Mayella, but no one thought of taking her to the doctor. Atticus also determined from Heck's testimony that Mayella was beaten on the right side of her face. He stressed that observation to the jury because it was important to his defense.

Now the Ewells were the most wretched people in Maycomb County. They lived out by the dump in a cabin roofed with flatted tin cans and insulated with sheets of corrugated iron. A makeshift fence surrounded their house and the yard was littered with refuse from the nearby dump. The most fascinating part of the yard, however, was the slop jars filled with red geraniums. The geraniums seemed to be well tended, and it was rumored that they belonged to Mayella.

Bob Ewell was called to the stand next. In a cocky manner he answered his attorney's questions and explained that he was coming in from gathering kindling when he heard Mayella screaming. He dropped the load and went running to the house, but got tangled up in the fence. When he got away from the fence, he claimed that he ran to the window and saw Tom on top of his daughter. Ewell insisted that before he could get inside, Tom ran out, and because he was so worried about Mayella, he didn't go after Tom. He said he then went to get Heck Tate and brought him back to their home. Mr. Gilmer, the prosecuting attorney, finished questioning Ewell and Atticus began his cross-examination.

Ewell was wary of Atticus' questions and was reluctant to cooperate, but Atticus lured him into a sense of security with a line of questioning about Mayella's injuries. Atticus asked him if he could read and write, and although it seemed irrelevant, the judge allowed the questioning. Atticus gave Ewell a pen and an envelope to write his name on and the room went silent. Everyone stared at him as he wrote his name. He didn't understand why everyone was so interested to see him write, and the judge pointed out that he was left-handed. Seeing the implication in the fact that Mayella's injuries were on the right side of her face and Bob Ewell's dominant hand was his left, Ewell went on a tirade about how Atticus was a tricking lawyer who was taking advantage of him. He stuck to his story about Tom Robinson and Atticus ended his examination.

From the balcony Jem watched the proceedings with glee, certain that Atticus had pinned Ewell and proved Tom innocent. Scout, however, was doubtful. She thought Jem was getting a little ahead of himself because Tom could just as easily be left-handed as well.