

To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 23

Atticus took it all in stride although Ewell's threat worried Scout and Jem.

Tom Robinson was at a work prison seventy miles from home where his family was not allowed to visit him, but there was an appeal in the works. If he lost that appeal, he'd go to the chair, but Atticus insisted that it wasn't time to worry yet because they had a good chance. Jem still complained that it wasn't right that a jury could convict Tom, but more than that, they didn't have to sentence him with death. What it all boiled down to was that a white jury convicted a black man because he was a black man and they couldn't rule in his favor against white folks. Atticus was adamant that any white man who would take advantage of a black man is trash.

The conversation turned to the kind of people who sit on juries, and Atticus pointed out that the reason the deliberation for Tom's sentence took so long was because one man had to be worn down from his stance on acquittal. He mentioned that that man was one of the Old Sarum group who had come for Tom the night before his trial. He was one of the Cunninghams, and Atticus had kept him on the jury on a hunch that he would try to do the right thing, and for a moment he had tried. It was at least a step in the right direction.

Scout was so impressed that she decided she'd invite Walter Cunningham home for lunch one day when school started again. Alexandra insisted from her corner that the Cunninghams were not the kind of people Finches associated with socially. Alexandra said that the Cunninghams were trash and although Scout should be polite to them in public, she was banned from inviting any of them over socially. Scout then burst into tears, and Jem took her upstairs.

After he cheered her up a little, Jem tried to explain that he'd discovered that there were four kinds of people in Maycomb -- ordinary folks like their family, people like the Cunninghams, people like the Ewells, and then colored people. Now the ordinary folks hated the Cunninghams; the Cunninghams hated the Ewells; and the Ewells hated the colored folks. Scout disagreed again because she believed that there was just one kind of people. Jem seemed to think for a while and then said that he used to think that, but if there was only one kind of people, why couldn't they get along? He said that he understood then why Boo Radley stayed inside -- he wanted to.