

To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 26

When school had started again that fall, Scout was no longer afraid of the Radley place, and she was even a little embarrassed that she'd been a part of the attempts to harass Boo Radley into coming out. She still wanted to see him, but she fantasized that if she did, they would talk as if they'd seen each other every day of their lives. So much had happened since that summer that Boo Radley seemed a lifetime ago. Although the Robinson case was over, it left a residue and it seemed to Scout that the adults in Maycomb talked to their children about the case. She felt as if the parents insisted that their children be nice to Scout and Jem in spite of Atticus because it wasn't their fault he was their father. So Scout and Jem were also forced to behave respectably as they had learned in the Dubose days. Despite their distaste for Atticus, it seemed that the townspeople had no problem re-electing him to the state. This contradiction prompted Scout's conclusion that people were just peculiar and it was better to stay away from them in general, so she didn't think about people unless she was forced to.

One day at school Cecil Jacobs presented his current event concerning Adolf Hitler and his incarceration of Jews. Miss Gates, Scout's teacher, discussed this injustice and crime against humanity, lecturing the children at great length about how wrong it was for Hitler to persecute them that way.

That night Scout was confused about something, some discrepancy in what she'd heard that day. She questioned Atticus about whether it was right to hate Hitler, and he told her that it's never right to hate anybody. Then she started to ask Atticus something, but decided that Jem would be better for this question she couldn't articulate.

She went to talk to Jem about it and she explained what Miss Gates had told her class at school that day. Then she asked Jem if it was wrong to persecute anyone. When he answered yes, she told him that she'd overheard Miss Gates talking to Miss Stephanie on the way out of the courthouse at Tom Robinson's trial. Miss Gates had said that what happened served those blacks right because they'd been getting above their station and needed to be taught a lesson. Scout hadn't been able to understand how someone could hate Hitler so much for what he was doing and then be so hateful to the people of her own community. Jem didn't answer her because he was furious. He shook her and told her not to ever talk about that night to him again. His quick anger scared her, and she ran downstairs to climb in Atticus' lap. Atticus had overheard Jem's outburst and explained to Scout that he was just trying to forget something for a little while until he could sort it all out. He was sure that when Jem had sorted through it, he'd be himself again.