

YEAR 10 ENGLISH: PASSAGE ANALYSIS
***TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* by Harper Lee**
Excerpt taken from Chapter 19

Mr. Gilmer smiled grimly at the jury. “You’re a mighty good fellow, it seems—did all this for not one penny?”

“Yes, suh. I felt right sorry for her, she seemed to try more’n the rest of ‘em—”

“You felt sorry for *her*, you felt *sorry* for her?” Mr. Gilmer seemed ready to rise to the ceiling.

The witness realized his mistake and shifted uncomfortably in the chair. But the damage was done. Below us, nobody liked Tom Robinson’s answer. Mr. Gilmer paused a long time to let it sink in.

“Now you went by the house as usual, last November twenty-first,” he said, “and she asked you to come in and bust up a chiffarobe?”

“No suh.”

“Do you deny that you went by the house?”

“No suh—she said she had somethin’ for me to do inside the house—”

“She says she asked you to bust up a chiffarobe, is that right?”

“No suh, it ain’t.”

“Then you say she’s lying, boy?”

Atticus was on his feet, but Tom Robinson didn’t need him. “I don’t say she’s lyin’, Mr. Gilmer, I say she’s mistaken in her mind.”

To the next ten questions, as Mr. Gilmer reviewed Mayella’s version of events, the witness’s steady answer was that she was mistaken in her mind.

“Didn’t Mr. Ewell run you off the place, boy?”

“No suh, I don’t think he did.”

“Don’t think, what do you mean?”

“I mean I didn’t stay long enough for him to run me off.”

“You’re very candid about this, why did you run so fast?”

“I says I was scared, suh.”

“If you had a clear conscience, why were you scared?”

“Like I says before, it weren’t safe for any nigger to be in a—fix like that.”

“But you weren’t in a fix—you testified that you were resisting Miss Ewell. Were you so scared that she’d hurt you, you ran, a big buck like you?”

“No suh, I’s scared I’d be in court, just like I am now.”

“Scared of arrest, scared you’d have to face up to what you did?”

“No suh, scared I’d hafta face up to what I didn’t do.”

“Are you being impudent to me, boy?”

“No suh, I didn’t go to be.”

This was as much as I heard of Mr. Gilmer's cross-examination, because Jem made me take Dill out. For some reason Dill had started crying and couldn't stop; quietly at first, then his sobs were heard by several people in the balcony. Jem said if I didn't go with him he'd make me, and Reverend Sykes said I'd better go, so I went. Dill had seemed to be all right that day, nothing wrong with him, but I guessed he hadn't fully recovered from running away.

"Ain't you feeling good?" I asked, when we reached the bottom of the stairs.

Dill tried to pull himself together as we ran down the south steps. Mr. Link Deas was a lonely figure on the top step. "Anything happenin', Scout?" he asked as we went by.

"No sir," I answered over my shoulder. "Dill here, he's sick." "Come on out under the trees," I said. "Heat got you, I expect." We chose the fattest live oak and we sat under it.

"It was just him I couldn't stand," Dill said.

"Who, Tom?"

"That old Mr. Gilmer doin' him thataway, talking so hateful to him—"

"Dill, that's his job. Why, if we didn't have prosecutors—well, we couldn't have defense attorneys, I reckon."

Dill exhaled patiently. "I know all that, Scout. It was the way he said it made me sick, plain sick."

"He's supposed to act that way, Dill, he was cross—"

"He didn't act that way when—"

"Dill, those were his own witnesses."

"Well, Mr. Finch didn't act that way to Mayella and old man Ewell when he cross-examined them. The way that man called him 'boy' all the time an' sneered at him, an' looked around at the jury every time he answered—"

"Well, Dill, after all he's just a Negro."

"I don't care one speck. It ain't right, somehow it ain't right to do 'em that way. Hasn't anybody got any business talkin' like that—it just makes me sick."

"That's just Mr. Gilmer's way, Dill, he does 'em all that way. You've never seen him get good'n down on one yet. Why, when—well, today Mr. Gilmer seemed to me like he wasn't half trying. They do 'em all that way, most lawyers, I mean."

"Mr. Finch doesn't."

"He's not an example, Dill, he's—" I was trying to grope in my memory for a sharp phrase of Miss Maudie Atkinson's. I had it: "He's the same in the courtroom as he is on the public streets."

"That's not what I mean," said Dill.

"I know what you mean, boy," said a voice behind us. We thought it came from the tree-trunk, but it belonged to Mr. Dolphus Raymond. He peered around the trunk at us. "You aren't thin-hided, it just makes you sick, doesn't it?"