CHAPTER 1: Connection Questions

1. In the second paragraph of the novel, Scout says that the events leading up to Jem’s broken arm started with the Ewells (another family in Maycomb), but Jem “said it started long before that.” How does Jem’s comment relate to the family history Scout provides over the next couple of pages? What is Harper Lee suggesting about the influence of the past on the events that take place in the novel?

2. Read aloud Scout’s description of Maycomb in the first chapter, beginning with “Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it.” What words does Harper Lee, with Scout as the narrator, use to paint a picture of Maycomb? If Maycomb were a person, how would you describe its personality?

3. What kind of figurative language does Harper Lee use in the following description?

Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o’clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

What does this description suggest about the role of women in Maycomb?

4. Harper Lee does not directly tell the reader what years the novel takes place during. What are some clues that she provides to help the reader determine the time period?

5. What facts are revealed about the history of the Radleys in this chapter? What gossip and legend about the Radleys is revealed? How do you know the difference between the facts and the gossip?

CHAPTER 2: Connection Questions

1. Scout tells us the following about her teacher on the first day of school:

Miss Caroline was no more than twenty-one. She had bright auburn hair, pink cheeks, and wore crimson fingernail polish. She also wore high-heeled pumps and a red-and-white-striped dress. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop.

Analyze the descriptive language Lee uses to describe Miss Caroline. What words or phrases help you visualize her? What figurative language does the author use?
How does the author use the description of Miss Caroline to suggest something about her personality and style as a teacher? How does the description accentuate the personality clash between Scout and her teacher?

2. Scout reflects: “Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.”

What comparison is Lee suggesting in these two sentences? What does it suggest about how Scout thinks about reading?

3. When Scout introduces Walter to her teacher by saying, “Miss Caroline, he’s a Cunningham,” what does Scout assume that Miss Caroline will automatically understand about him? What characteristics do the residents of Maycomb automatically associate with “the Cunningham tribe”?

4. How does our membership in various groups—families, schools, neighborhoods, nations—affect how others think about us? How does it affect how we think about ourselves? Are those impressions ever accurate?

5. How are readers and Miss Caroline similar in their understanding of Maycomb society at this point in the novel? How does Harper Lee use the character of Miss Caroline to introduce readers to what everyone else in Maycomb already “knows”?

6. What words and phrases do Scout and Atticus use to describe the Cunninghams in this chapter? How are the Cunninghams different from the Finches? How are they similar?

CHAPTER 3: Connection Questions

1. What does Scout mean when she says, “By the time we reached our front steps Walter had forgotten he was a Cunningham”?

2. According to Atticus, who are the “common folk” in Maycomb? What characteristics does he say, or imply, are shared by the “common folk”? Who does Atticus say are not included in the “common folk”? Why are they excluded?

3. What do we mean when we talk about someone’s social or economic class? What is it supposed to tell you about someone?
4. How does Atticus distinguish between the Cunninghams and the Ewells? Is either family part of the “common folk” of Maycomb? How do the two families differ in class and status from each other and from the Finches? What specific evidence from the text helps explain why his opinion of the two families differs?

5. Compare and contrast the descriptions Scout provides of Burris Ewell and Little Chuck Little. How do the similarities and differences between these two classmates support Atticus’s opinion about the Ewell family?

6. In this chapter we learn about more about the Finches, the Cunninghams, and the Ewells. Which of the characters in this chapter have the most power and the highest status in Maycomb? Which have the least power and status? What accounts for those differences?

7. How does Calpurnia fit into the social hierarchy in this chapter? Which characters have more power than she does? Who has less?

8. How do race, class, and gender affect one’s position in Maycomb society? How might Atticus use race, class, and gender to describe the “common folk”? What role do they play in determining one’s position in your society today?

9. How do particular situations and circumstances affect how our identity is perceived? How might Calpurnia’s identity be different in the Finch home from her identity in her own home?

10. Atticus tells Scout, “If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Can you ever fully understand another person’s point of view? What is the value in trying? How does Atticus’s advice relate to empathy? Take a moment to write a working definition for empathy in your journal.

CHAPTER 4: Connection Questions

1. Jem and Dill continue to swap gossip, superstition, and exaggeration in this chapter. What are some examples of superstitions that they discuss? What effect do they have on Scout?
2. What do Jem and Scout agree to do with the items they find in the tree on the edge of the Radleys' yard? What conclusions about these items does Jem seem to be making without sharing with Scout? Scout says, “Before Jem went to his room, he looked for a long time at the Radley place. He seemed to be thinking again.” What do you think Jem was thinking about?

3. How does the fact that Scout is the narrator affect the reader's ability to understand Jem's point of view?

4. Despite Jem's disagreement, Scout says she thinks that Boo Radley is in the Radley home and watching the kids play. Why does Scout feel so certain? When does Scout share her evidence with the reader? How does Lee foreshadow that revelation?

5. According to Scout, Calpurnia called the Hot Steam superstition that Jem and Dill describe “nigger-talk.” What does Calpurnia mean?

6. How can words divide people? Why do some words create more powerful divisions than others?

7. How does Jem use stereotypes about gender to influence Scout? How does Scout feel about her gender? How do you know?

8. How can stereotypes, especially about race, gender, and class, affect our behavior, even when we are trying to disprove them?

CHAPTER 5: Connection Questions

1. What does Miss Maudie mean when she says that Jem “gets more like Jack Finch every day”? What details in the story she tells about her relationship with Jack help explain why Maudie thinks that Jem and Jack are similar?

2. What does Maudie’s comparison between Jem and Jack reveal to us about what Jem might really be thinking about Boo and the items left in the tree?

3. What is the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law? How does Maudie and Scout’s discussion about different kinds of Baptists explore that difference? How does the conflict between Jem

* We have chosen to include this word in order to honestly communicate the harshness of the bigoted language. We recommend that teachers review “Discussing Sensitive Topics in the Classroom” on page xv before using these questions in class.
and Atticus over playing the Boo Radley game explore that difference? Who in this chapter follows the letter of the law? Who follows the spirit of the law? What is the difference? What are the consequences of each approach for the characters in this chapter?

4. Why does Jem declare at the end of the chapter, “I thought I wanted to be a lawyer but I ain’t so sure now”?

**CHAPTER 6: Connection Questions**

1. Why is it so important to Jem to risk his safety to retrieve his pants from the Radleys’ fence in the middle of the night?

2. Scout states in this chapter, “It was then, I suppose, that Jem and I first began to part company.” What prompts her to draw this conclusion? What does she mean? As you continue to read the novel, look for evidence that Scout and Jem are growing apart.

**CHAPTER 7: Connection Questions**

1. Why is Jem moody at the beginning of Chapter 7? Is Scout able to understand by “climbing into Jem’s skin”? What does the rest of the chapter reveal about the source of Jem’s moodiness?

2. Jem tells Scout that when he retrieved his pants from the Radleys’, “they were folded across the fence like they were expectin’ me.” Of what type of figurative language is this an example? How does this language contribute to the sense of mystery around the Radley house? Does Jem know how his pants ended up that way?

3. What evidence does Chapter 7 provide to help the reader understand how Scout and Jem were “parting company”? What was Jem beginning to understand (about Boo Radley) that Scout could not yet see? Why does Jem keep his feelings secret from Atticus and Scout?

4. How do Jem’s responses to the objects left in the tree change in this chapter? What does this suggest about how he feels about the items and the person leaving them?

5. Why does Jem cry at the end of Chapter 7? What does Jem understand about Boo and Mr. Radley that he did not understand before? Find evidence in the text to support your answer.
AFTER READING SECTION 2: Connection Questions

1. What do Scout, Jem, and Dill know about Boo Radley? What parts of their understanding of Boo are based on facts and reliable information? What parts are based on gossip and legend? How can the reader tell the difference between the facts about the Radley family and the legends?

2. How does the relationship between Scout and Jem change over the first seven chapters? How does Scout understand the changes Jem undergoes?

3. In Chapter 3, Atticus and Scout talk about “Maycomb’s ways.” What stands out to you most about the customs, traditions, and unwritten rules of Maycomb’s society?

4. What is “the other”? Who are “the others” in Maycomb? What roles do race, class, and gender play in establishing who is the other? What role does gossip and superstition play? What about stereotypes? What about fear?

5. What events and experiences begin to change Jem’s feelings about Boo Radley in these chapters? What does this suggest about how we can better understand people different from us?

6. How does race complicate the circumstances of the characters we have met so far? What role does Calpurnia play in the Finch family? What authority does she have in the Finch household that she might not have elsewhere in Maycomb?