



Actors' Insights



CATRIN RHYS Scout

Q: What is the key moment in the play when Scout begins to understand Atticus' saying " you never really understand a person until you climb into his skin..."?

The turning point for Scout is after the mob scene when she asks Atticus what she had done? Then she starts to think about his saying and realises how true it is. The meeting with Boo shows her compassion and how she has developed in the play into an understanding person.

Q: Would Scout have understood the irony of Miss Gates's statement "We don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced."?

No, she wouldn't have understood the word prejudice, but I am sure she would have asked Atticus that evening. All the children would have believed Miss Gates because she is the teacher and teachers always know everything.

Q: What are your personal feelings about Scout?

I love her - she is gutsy, fun, innocent. Because she lives in the world of academia she is very inquisitive, maybe if her mother had been alive she would have been a more typical girl.



GWYN VAUGHAN JONES..... Atticus Finch

Q: Do you feel that Atticus is too good to be true?

On the surface yes he is, but partly I think that because Harper Lee was young when she wrote the book we are getting a rose-tinted view of Atticus. He is not perfect, he does have his foibles and I will try to bring those out when playing him. Of course living in the 1930s was difficult and I think Atticus is probably depressed and lonely but tries to get through it by working hard.

Q: Thinking of the night Atticus sat outside the jailhouse, did he think he would be able to prevent an attack on Tom ?

I think he felt that as a lawyer everyone in the town would know and respect him and this would deter any trouble.

Q: In the court scene Scout is worried that Atticus is " frog-sticking without a light" by asking Bob Ewell to write his name. Would you agree with her concern?

In a sense yes, because I don't think he did know the answer. He picked up on Heck Tate's testimony about Mayella's face being beaten on the right side and only then thought of questioning Bob on which hand he uses primarily.



SIMON WATTS Jem Finch

Q: It seems that Atticus being a lawyer is not good enough for Jem, is he not proud of his father's job?

I think it is probably peer pressure because his friends' fathers have manly jobs eg. car mechanic, and Atticus as a lawyer does not fit into that image. When he is older Jem's opinion will change.

Q: What reaction does Jem feel Atticus should have had after Bob Ewell spat in his face?

Initially Jem wanted Atticus to hit Bob, but on reflection he realises that Atticus's reaction was correct.

Q: Jem says "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me" - how is Jem a gentleman ?

He thinks of himself as a gentleman because he is clever enough to use his head in difficult situations and not to react quickly with his hands. Jem has a lot of respect for Atticus particularly after he has shot the mad dog.



DENISE ORITA Calpurnia

Q: What role do you see Calpurnia playing ?

Calpurnia is the backbone for Mr Finch and I feel if she was white they would have been married. Atticus totally relies on her trust and judgment, in particular with his children, for whom she is a surrogate mother. As Calpurnia is more educated than the other black people in Maycomb she comes between the two communities, which can cause a problem if she is trying to support Atticus and her own community at the same time.

Q: When Calpurnia takes the children to her own church why does she make more of a fuss about their appearance ?

Calpurnia knows that everyone in her church will scrutinise the children and be quick to criticise her ability to look after them properly so she has to ensure that they are particularly clean and well-dressed. Whilst in the church she is very aware of their behaviour and afterwards she becomes embarrassed at Scout's continued questioning of the Reverend.

Q: What are your personal feelings about Calpurnia ?

At the start of rehearsals I was very aware of the possibility of Calpurnia being played as "the mammy", as I see her as a stronger woman. I feel she is a very positive character with a certain amount of wisdom; whenever she is asked a question she always knows the answer. However there are occasions in the play when because of her colour she has to take a back seat eg. when Atticus tells Helen, her friend, of Tom's death with Calpurnia standing behind.



ENOCH FROST.....Tom Robinson

Q: Why does Tom not foresee the potential trouble he could be in by entering the Ewell house ?

He did realise but being a kind man who was used to helping Mayella he felt he couldn't refuse. It was a spur of the moment decision, which he obviously later deeply regretted.

Q: When he says in court that he feels sorry for Mayella does he realise how damaging that statement will be ?

Yes, but he always knew that he would be found guilty so his testimony will be his final words and he may as well tell the truth - he does feel genuinely sorry for Mayella. Throughout the trial he is thinking of his family and how he will miss his children growing.

Q: Did he expect his attempted escape from prison to be successful ?

Well, he had considered the height of the fence before and decided he could make it as he was a strong man, unfortunately his disability prevented him from reaching the top quickly enough.



LUCY DONOVAN Mayella Ewell

Q: At the start of her testimony Mayella is frightened but this appears to change and we see a more confident side of her - why is this ?

She is frightened because she was not expecting Atticus to be so perceptive, she has been told by Bob and Mr Gilmer that you go on to the stand tell your story and that's it. Atticus questions her on parts of the story that she and Bob have not thought about, and because she has little education she cannot make up the answers. Also, Atticus asks very personal questions about her relationship with her father, which she hasn't confronted and that is when she breaks down. Her only mechanism is defence, and that is why she changes.

Q: In the courtroom we see Mayella and Bob having close physical contact; is this significant in terms of their supposed incestuous relationship ?

Yes it is. A behavioural psychologist talked to us and explained that in situations like these the line of appropriate behaviour is blurred and so even in public there will be signs of inappropriate affection.

Q: Tom is the only person who shows Mayella respect so why does she accuse him of rape, therefore signing his death sentence?

I think it is probably fear of what her father would do to her if she didn't testify against Tom. The sad part of it all is that Tom is the only person who has shown her respect. She is not in love with him because she doesn't know what love is, but she is in awe of him and to think that she is the one who will effectively kill Tom is very sad.



JON CLAIRMONTE Reverend Sykes

Q: Is “To Kill a Mockingbird” a play about goodies and baddies?

It’s the kind of story that goes beyond that - I think it is a play about the good and bad within the characters, for example Bob Ewell is “bad” but we need to look at his circumstances to see why he is bad.

Q: What role do you see Reverend Sykes playing? And why is he used as a narrator?

He is an outsider inasmuch as the violence is not directed at him but at his flock, everyone respects him as a “Man of God”. He brings another perspective because he is looking at events from an observer’s point of view. I think he is used as a narrator possibly because, as a Reverend, he is used to public speaking and telling stories.

Q: Why does Reverend Sykes interact a lot with Jem and Scout?

The Reverend is aware that it is about the children growing up and their need for questions to be answered so they can fully understand the world they inhabit.



TIM BAKER Director

Q: Should we feel empathy for Bob Ewell?

We should, inasmuch as we should try to “stand in his skin”. Although we should also have empathy with the social situation he finds himself in. Not to do so would be behaving as the Whites did towards the Negroes.

Q : What purpose has the music and singing in the play ?

I wanted the story to be presented by a company of actors showing that in spite of the racial prejudice in the story we can work together; and music, particularly close harmony music, portrays a fantastic image of collaboration.

Q: Why did you decide to keep the actors on stage throughout the piece?

Again to show how we can work together but also because I wanted a smooth transition between the scenes. This has the effect of encouraging the audience to listen alongside the actors, therefore everybody has had the same experience. Using the image of the court and finding truth we have all been “witnesses”.

Q: The piece is obviously a very strong one, what thoughts and feelings are you hoping the audience will take away with them?

I want them to be confronted, head on if possible, with the cruelty which people display towards each other, but also the potential for harmony.