

Sample Dialectical Journal Entry
To Kill a Mockingbird

Chapter 12, page 115

“This change in Jem had come about in a matter of weeks. Mrs. Dubose was not cold in her grave—Jem had seemed grateful enough for my company when he went to read to her. Overnight, it seemed, Jem had acquired an alien set of values and was trying to impose them on me: several times he went so far as to tell me what to do. After one altercation when Jem hollered, “It’s time you started bein’ a girl and acting right!” I burst into tears and fled to Calpurnia.”

Context-

In her narration, Jem’s sister Scout is describing her brother’s changes as he grows from being a kid to almost being a teenager. At this point in the novel, Jem learns that Mrs. Dubose had died and that she left a gift for him (camellia flower). His father tells him in the previous chapter that Mrs. Dubose was “the bravest person he ever knew.” However, Jem is still frustrated by her and seems to want to just forget about her. A bit later on, Atticus explains to Scout that Jem is moody and that he needs his space.

Analysis-

This passage is important to the characterization of both Jem and Scout. In the beginning of the novel, Jem and Scout are like partners in crime. They play games together with Dill and seem to have strong brother-sister relationship. At this point, Jem is twelve and is about to be a teenager. He is changing and growing up. In this quote, Scout explains her frustration and confusion that her brother is different. While Jem is suddenly concerned about her role as a girl and wants her to “act right,” Scout is still very much a tom-boy and does not understand his new “alien” values. This quote signifies that one sibling is growing up while the other struggles to understand it.