

## Sample Answer – Ending of the Novel

Choose a novel or short story you have studied that had an unexpected twist at the end.

- (a) Describe what happens at the end of your chosen text. (15)
- (b) Did you find the ending satisfying? Explain your answer with reference to the novel or short story you have chosen. (15)

### Sample Answer 2 (a):

The novel I have studied for my Junior Certificate is Harper Lee's classic 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. Set in the sleepy town of Maycomb, Alabama during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the novel is narrated by Scout Finch who lives with her widowed father Atticus and her brother Jem. I found the ending of this novel most unexpected as it features a dramatic event at a point in the story when I thought the tension had more or less subsided. As if that weren't surprising enough, a mysterious recluse who has fascinated the children for years appears in time to the day.

Every Studied Fiction answer should begin with these same two opening sentences. The final sentence/s in the paragraph should refer directly to the question and show the examiner the direction your answer will take.

The incident occurs as Scout and Jem are walking home from the Halloween pageant. Their journey is slow because Scout is dressed as a ham and her elaborate outfit is like 'a wire prison'. As the children walk, they hear footsteps behind them and realise they are being followed. They try to get home as quickly as possible, but are hampered by Scout's awkward and bulky costume.

Suddenly, the children are attacked. Scout is unclear about what happens, as she is knocked to the ground and her costume tangled around her. Jem fights with the unknown assailant, and is knocked unconscious. Amidst all this confusion and panic, someone comes to the children's aid. Scout cannot see who it is, but this person defeats their attacker and saves their lives. She feels her way around in the dark, but does not find Jem, only the body of a man smelling of 'stale whiskey'. As Scout makes her way home, she sees Jem's limp body being carried into the house by the man who defended them. It turns out that the hero of the hour is Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbour who hasn't been seen out of his house for many years. Boo has saved the children from the violent drunkard Bob Ewell who bitterly resented Atticus for defending the black man accused of raping Ewell's daughter, and obviously

decided to seek revenge by attacking Atticus' children. This was a most surprising twist in the story-line as I never expected Bob Ewell to come after Scout and Jem rather than their father.

Fortunately, Jem is not seriously injured. The sheriff is called and says that the official story will be that Bob Ewell fell on his knife. He does this to protect the vulnerable and timid Boo from the publicity that would undoubtedly follow news of his heroic action. Scout finally gets the chance to talk to Boo and sees that he is nothing like the terrifying, ghost-like creature she and Jem had imagined. He is a gentle, fragile man who asks Scout to take him home 'in the voice of a child afraid of the dark'. Scout leads him back to his own house and as she stands on his porch she reflects on the truth of her father's words, 'you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.'

### **Sample Answer 2 (b):**

*Note: Underline the word 'satisfying' in the question and remember to keep referring to this in your answer. You don't have to use the word 'satisfying' throughout your answer, but you should make sure that you are constantly explaining why you feel this way about the ending.*

I found the end of the novel very satisfying because the vile Bob Ewell is dealt with once and for all; because the mystery of Boo Radley is solved in a most pleasing way and because we get to see just how much Scout has grown up over the course of the novel.

The description of Scout and Jem's walk home is full of suspense and although the attack ends in a death, it does eliminate a threat that would otherwise have hung over the Finch family as long as Bob Ewell lived. After all, he did spit at Atticus after the trial and tell him that he would 'get him if it took the rest of his life'. His attack is so vicious that the doctor said it was as if he had tried to wrench Jem's arm off, and Sheriff Tate finds the 'shiny clean line' of a knife stroke on the remains of Scout's costume. It is hard not to agree with the sheriff's declaration that by killing Bob Ewell, Boo Radley did Atticus and all the citizens of Maycomb 'a great service'. I felt a sense of relief when I realised that this dreadful man could never hurt anyone again.

Another aspect of the ending which I found satisfactory was that we finally got to meet the reclusive and intriguing Boo Radley. Scout's fascination with this 'malevolent phantom' has ensured that the reader is as intrigued by him as she is. There is no sense of anti-climax

when we discover that he is a gentle, child-like man with a 'timid smile' which brings tears to Scout's eyes. Instead, we are moved by his affection for Scout and Jem and his obvious devotion to them. Any threat he ever posed existed only in the children's imaginations, but nonetheless it is pleasant to think that he and Scout have at last met face to face.

The final reason that I found the ending of the novel so rewarding was that we saw Scout take yet another step towards adulthood as she agrees to take Boo home, but takes his arm so that anyone looking on would see 'Arthur Radley escorting [her] down the sidewalk, as any gentleman would do'. Her sensitivity in this is admirable as is her realisation that exposing Boo to the grateful but curious eyes of the town would be 'sort of like shooting a mockingbird'. As she gently leads her child-like neighbour home, Scout is more of a young woman than a little girl.

All in all, I found the ending to this novel to be most satisfactory. It evoked a range of emotions in me; from fear to hope to pity and finally, to an overwhelming sense of respect for Scout's understanding and maturity.