

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: Notes and Activities for KS3

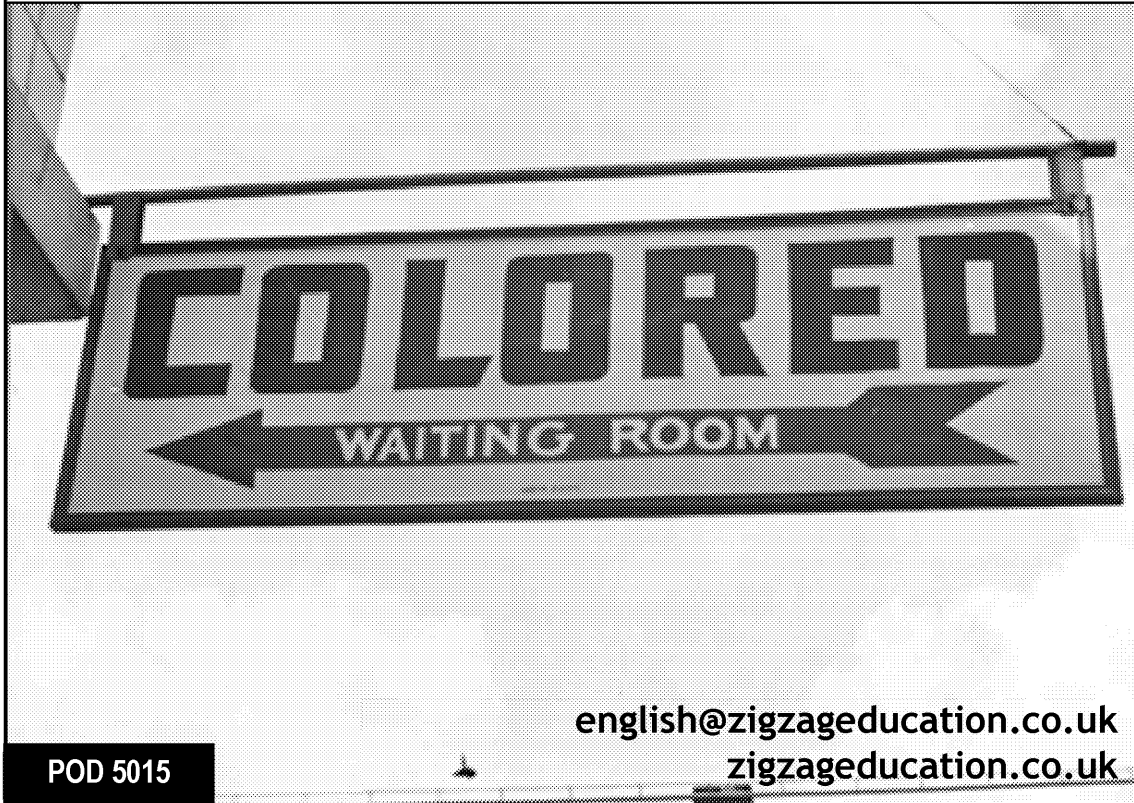
Preparing for GCSE

Update v1.1, February 2016



Suitable for the New National Curriculum

KS3 English
(2014)



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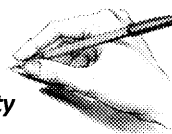
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Teacher's Introduction

Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is an exceptional novel to teach. It deals with racism; however, the scope of the novel is far greater than this. Readers have to grapple with themes of family and friendship which are directly relevant to students' experience. At heart the novel is about the nature of humanity and what it means to be part of a community based on human values.

The first section of this guide comprises a wide range of background material ranging from summaries to notes on the author herself. Most importantly it contains an extensive list of themes which could be raised during whole class reading. The second section contains a list of activities including making exercises, suggestions for creative writing tasks, speaking and listening tasks and has been labelled as 'differentiation and extension activities where appropriate'.

Every effort has been made to differentiate this resource to cater for a wide range of abilities. Some exercises are quite simple in design, focusing principally on plot, while others are more complex and encourage students to come to their own conclusions about the novel, thus fostering critical thinking. Themes and ideas in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

This novel can be a very sensitive work to teach. Many of the themes and discussions raised are not handled with discretion and care. In particular, issues of race may be delicate in some culturally diverse classes and monoethnic classes; this, however, only adds to the challenge of this challenging novel.

Update v1.1, February 2016: References to AFs and APP grids removed.

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* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers.

Using pre-September 2014 National Curriculum AFs

I recognise that many English teachers will continue to value the Assessment Focuses from the pre-September 2014 KS3 English National Curriculum. As such, the table below cross-references the activities/lessons/worksheets in this resource to these elements. This means you can use the table as a guide for your assessment and to help you choose appropriate resources for your lessons.

Activity	Reading	Writing
Online Research Challenge	AF2	
Speaking and Listening Exercises		
<i>Foundation Task: Exploring a Character</i>		
<i>Presenting a Character</i>		
<i>Performing a Scene</i>		
<i>Extension Task: Court Cases</i>		
Creative Writing Exercises	AF3	All
<i>Foundation Task: Diary Entry</i>	AF3	All
<i>The Next Chapter</i>	AF3	All
<i>Change of Perspective</i>	AF3	All
<i>Short Story</i>	AF3	All
<i>Open Letter</i>	AF3	All
<i>Extension Task: Speech</i>	AF3	All
Crossword	AF2	AF3
Quiz	AF2	AF3
Character Sheet	AF5	
Character Studies	AF3 AF6	AF3 AF6
Are Mama and Papa good parents?	AF2	
Southern Dialect	AF5	
The Land	AF2 AF6	
The Land	AF2 AF3 AF6	AF3 AF6
Positive or Negative Novel	AF3 AF6	
The Weather	AF5 AF6	
The Poem	AF5 AF6	
The Black and White Communities	AF6	
Racism in Modern Britain	AF6	
The Author's Narrative Technique	AF4	

Reading AFs:

AF2 – Understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotations to support your response | AF3 – Deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from the text | AF4 – Identify and comment on the writer's use of language, including grammatical and presentation features at text level | AF5 – Comment on writers use of language features at word and sentence level | AF6 – Identify and comment on the writer's purposes and viewpoints | AF7 – Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts

Writing AFs:

AF1 – Write interesting, imaginative and thoughtful texts | AF2 – Produce texts appropriate to task, purpose, audience and context | AF3 – Organise ideas and whole texts effectively | AF4 – Construct paragraphs and link paragraphs together using appropriate sentence structures and punctuation | AF5 – Write using a range of correct punctuation and spelling | AF6 – Write using a range of correct punctuation and spelling

Speaking and Listening AFs:

AF1 – Talk in purposeful and imaginative ways to explore ideas and feelings, adapting and varying style, purpose, listeners, and content | AF2 – Listen and respond to others, including in pairs and groups, showing understanding and making comments and questions | AF3 – Create and sustain different roles and scenarios, adapting technique to suit the purpose | AF4 – Explore texts, ideas and issues | AF5 – Understand the range and uses of spoken language, comment on this when talking to others

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Mildred Taylor: About the Author

Summary

- ★ Born in 1943 in Jackson, Mississippi. 'A segregated city, in a segregated America.'
- ★ Moved to Toledo, Ohio at the age of 10 and was the only black student.
- ★ She wrote her first novel at the age of 19.
- ★ After time teaching in Ethiopia she returned to America.
- ★ In 1975 she published her first book, *Song of the Trees*.
- ★ In 1976 she published *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* which was a success. She has written four more books about the Logan family.



Mildred Taylor was born in 1943 in the town of Jackson, Mississippi. Her father, Wilbert Lee, was a great storyteller, and she admired him. But 1943 was a bad time to be in Jackson. There were several incidents of racial violence and Wilbert Lee decided to move elsewhere. Mildred Taylor later described the town as 'a segregated city, in a segregated state, in a segregated America'.

The family moved to Toledo in Ohio, where they lived for a while. At school, at the age of 10, she was the only black student. She tried to share the black history she learnt from her father, but the teachers thought it was all made up. She was shocked to see that the class textbooks were full of lies.

While Mildred Taylor was at high school a black girl was killed. Taylor was homecoming queen. Racial prejudice and some violence erupted, reminding Taylor of the events in Jackson. Taylor was involved in incidents such as this, and the visit of John Kennedy to the South. The Civil Rights Movement was pioneered by Martin Luther King.

She went to university in Toledo, and it was there that she first started creative writing. Her writing style was similar to great English authors such as Dickens, but after finding that she was not happy with her writing, she started writing in her own way. She wrote her first novel at the tender age of nineteen. It was the story of a blind white man in black Chicago. After graduating from university, she spent time teaching in Ethiopia, Africa.

On her return, Mildred Taylor pursued her interest in black rights. She joined the NAACP and helped in the creation of a new subject at her university: Black Studies. She married in 1975 with the publication of her novel *Song of the Trees*. It was the prequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and concerned the destruction of the Logans' trees by money-hungry whites. *Song of the Trees* is an interracial children's book.

The sequel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* was released in 1976. It was a great success. It won the Newberry Prize for Best Children's Book, which Mildred Taylor dedicated to her father. Taylor went on to write four more books about the Logan family, the last being *The Well: David's Story*. This was the story of Cassie's Papa as a boy.

Mildred Taylor lives in Colorado today where she still writes. She has received many awards for her work.



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Chapter One

Summary

- ★ On the way to school T.J. tells Cassie about the burning of a
- ★ The bus carrying white children covers Little Man with dust.
- ★ At school Cassie refuses to accept a 'new' book which has be now too scruffy to be used by white children.

We are introduced to the main characters as they head for school on the first day. The narrator, a young girl, is Cassie Logan and her brothers Stacey, Christopher John and Little Man. The Logans are black, their family means a lot to them, and they own their own land. They are immensely proud. On the way to school we meet T.J., a gangly lad of Stacey's age. He belongs to the family, the Berrys, who have been set alight by a group of white men. The children tell the others how he got his brother into trouble to save himself. T.J.'s character is a question. A busload of white school children passes; the dust cloud produced covers the black children. Onlookers laugh uproariously; another example of racial prejudice, which is becoming a theme of the novel.

Once at school, the children are excited to hear that they will be receiving new books. To their disappointment, their books are shabby and messy. When Little Man realises that his books are the same as the white children and have only been given to the black school because of their bad behaviour, Cassie does likewise, showing the family solidarity they enjoy. Their teacher reports to Cassie's mum (who is also a teacher at the school). But to her surprise, Mama supports Cassie's actions. She understands.



Discussion Questions

1. How do you think of the opening lines of the novel? Are they effective?
2. What do we learn about each of the Logan children in this chapter? How does this relate to their characters?
3. How are the Logan family different to their black neighbours?
4. Discuss the importance of land as shown here. Why does Cassie value the importance of owning land?
5. Is Cassie unfair in her dislike for T.J.? Are T.J.'s weaknesses his own fault?
6. How are the differences between the black and white children shown?
7. Why is the episode with the books important? What does it show us about the Logans' family solidarity?
8. Discuss the contrast between characters who accept prejudice and those who fight it (Mama).

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Chapter Two

Summary

- ★ Papa Logan brings home Mr Morrison, a big man he met working on the railroad.
- ★ The family learn at church that Mr John Berry has died following his burning by the Wallaces.

While the Logan family are harvesting cotton, Cassie spies two men approaching Papa, returning from his work on the railroad track. The children are delighted at the news. Papa brings home Mr Morrison, a giant of a man to whom Papa has offered work. Morrison says he only needs the work as he has been sacked, but we suspect there is more to his arrival.

At church the following day we learn that Mr John Berry, one of the Berry family, has died following his burning. Despite the fact that everyone knows who killed him and attacked the rest of his family, the sheriff refuses to do anything, suggesting the lack of justice for black people. Papa warns his family not to visit the Wallace store. It is the Wallaces who carried out the burning, and they are a very low-down bunch.



Discussion Points

1. What more do we learn about the closeness of the Logan family from their reaction to their father's arrival?
2. Is it surprising that Papa's decision to welcome Mr Morrison into the family?
3. Why does the sheriff ignore Henrietta's evidence? What does this say about the powerlessness of the black community?
4. Does Papa's decision to boycott the Wallaces mirror Mama's actions? What sort of example are the parents trying to set for their children?
5. Is it ironic that the Wallaces, who are clearly very bad people, are more powerful than the principled and hardworking Logans?

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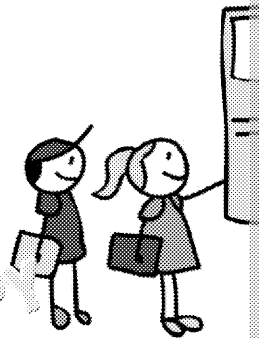
Chapter Three

Summary

- ★ The Logan children take revenge on the white children's bus by crashing it.
- ★ The children hear that the white men are coming to take revenge, but they leave having done nothing.

Having been splashed by the white children's bus once too often, the Logan children decide to sneak out at lunchtime with spades borrowed from the school, and dig a trench across the road. One day, torrential rain has turned the trench into a muddy lake. The children hide, and the white children's bus crashes into the trench and becomes stuck, its axle broken. For once, the white children are muddy too.

That evening the children cannot help but laugh at the day's events. However their merriment turns to terror when they hear Mr Avery warning Mama that 'they are riding tonight'. The implication is that white men are coming to take revenge for the incident with the bus. In the middle of the night Cassie is awoken by a sound on the porch. She cannot see Mama or her grandma, Big Ma, so she ventures outside. To her horror she sees the headlights of seven cars approaching. They all stop, and one man gets out. It seems that white people have come to take revenge. But instead, the cars merely turn around and drive off once more. Cassie is surprised to see Mr Morrison crouching in the moonlight, brandishing a shotgun.



Discussion Points

1. What is your reaction to the white bus driver and his passengers?
2. Discuss the contrast between the character of Jeremy and that of the driver.
3. Is it likely that Cassie would have been alone when witnessing this? Why does Mildred Taylor choose to have Cassie alone at this point?
4. How is it shown that the blacks have little money provided for their children? What are the contrasting attitudes to this injustice?
5. How is the strength of the Logan family bond evident in this chapter?
6. Who are the night men? Why do they pose a threat to the blacks?

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Chapter Four

Summary

- ★ T.J. tells the children that the white men had not come to take their land but because of a black man accusing a white man of lying.
- ★ Big Ma tells Cassie about how the Logans acquired their land and how they lost it.
- ★ The children visit Mr Berry and see how the white men's 'burial' affects the black community.

The children are still worried that the night men were riding because of what they heard. Stacey reveals the true reason: a black man had accused a white man of a history test, taking the answers from Mama's desk, but Stacey gets the blame. After teaching him a lesson, but T.J. has gone to the Wallaces' store. T.J. knows that the Logans are not there. Nonetheless, Stacey disobeys his parents' direct order, and goes to the Wallace brothers and sisters following. Stacey catches T.J. and a fight ensues, only for Mr Morrison decides not to tell Mama, letting Stacey's conscience decide. Stacey decides to stay at home.

Big Ma and Cassie walk into the forest on their land and sit. Big Ma tells Cassie about how they met, and about how the family managed to acquire its own land. We realise how much the family as a whole. Mama takes the children to see Mr Berry, the man who was disfigured by his disfigurement; his nose has been burnt away and he cannot talk. Mama says that is why she wants the children not to visit their store.



Discussion Points

1. Are the white trees on the Logan land a symbol of white oppression?
2. What do we discover about the importance of land to the Logans?
3. What lessons does Stacey learn in this chapter?
4. Why does Mama take the children to see Mr Berry when it is so late?
5. What does the black community's inability to boycott the Wallace store show us about their inequality?

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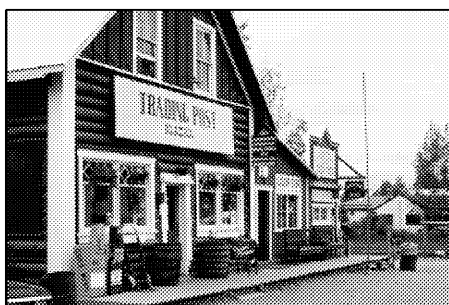


Chapter Five

Summary

- ★ Cassie accompanies Big Ma to town, a place she has always withstood humiliations.
- ★ Cassie is thrown out of the shop for complaining that the shopkeeper refused to serve white customers.
- ★ Cassie accidentally bumps into Jeremy's sister Lillian Jean and her father.

Cassie is excited when she learns that she is to accompany Big Ma to town to sell produce. She has always wanted to go to town all her life, but when she arrives the town is a great disappointment. To get the produce, Big Ma visits a lawyer, leaving the children to please themselves. They go to the grocery store and T.J. is fascinated by a pearl-handled gun on display. The shopkeeper refuses to serve them, but to Cassie's dismay he repeatedly stops serving them to wait on white customers.



During the protests, the shopkeeper angrily throws out the children and uses other obscenities.

On the way back to meet Big Ma the day after, Cassie bumps into Jeremy's sister Lillian Jean, but Lillian Jean orders her to walk in the road. Cassie's father violently forces her to apologise. As she is forced to do so, she returns to the wagon where her entire life has been so cruel.



Discussion Points

1. How does Mildred Taylor ensure that we sympathise with Cassie?
2. What does Cassie learn about the realities of life as a black person?
3. Discuss the dramatic irony the second-time reader experiences when Stacey says 'I get me that gun and ain't nobody gonna mess with me' for the pearl-handled gun.
4. He also says, 'I get me that gun and ain't nobody gonna mess with me'. Consider in detail the actual grammar Stacey uses in this sentence and what it might mean that people will mess with him if he gets that gun!
5. Does Lillian Jean symbolise the prejudice that spoils otherwise good people?
6. How does Mildred Taylor show Mr Barnett's sheer prejudice against black people?
7. Discuss the dramatic impact generated by Big Ma's warning to Cassie to humble herself and forcing Cassie to do something neither she nor Big Ma would have wanted.

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Chapter Six

Summary

- ★ Uncle Hammer comes to stay. He is driving a new Packard.
- ★ At church the crowds are amazed to see a black man driving a car. Uncle Hammer makes the Wallaces' car wait while he drives.

The children are delighted to find their Uncle Hammer has come to stay; he is driving a new Packard. Despite Big Ma's attempts to stop her, Cassie tells Uncle Hammer about the event. Uncle Hammer has a short temper, is furious to hear that a grown man knocked Cassie down, and tells her to go to the shopkeeper. Luckily, Mr. Wilkerson persuades him to think better of it; such a confrontation would ruin Uncle Hammer's reputation.

The next morning Uncle Hammer gives Stacey a new coat, with which he is delighted, though his excitement is somewhat spoiled by T.J.'s jealous reaction. The crowds at church are amazed by Uncle Hammer's Packard as they have never seen a black man driving a car like that. On the way back the car approaches a bridge only wide enough for one vehicle to pass at a time, but the Wallaces' car is approaching from the other direction. Uncle Hammer speeds up and forces his way through; the Wallaces look amazed that a black man could be driving such a car. Mama warns that there may be bad consequences from this.



Discussion Points

1. When Mama explains the incident to Cassie, does she become a mentor figure for her? What is her subject?
2. How does Mama / Mildred Taylor seek to guide us, the readers, through this incident? What are her main arguments and points?
3. What reasons does she give that some white people are racist? Does she justify it, but she does not justify.
4. Why is the incident on the bridge such an unforgivable snub to the Wallaces?
5. In what ways did Big Ma's refusal to back Cassie against Lillian J. Burdett had been bought up to believe?
6. How is Cassie's relative immaturity shown in this chapter?
7. In what ways are Papa and Uncle Hammer shown to be very different?
8. Why is the fact that Uncle Hammer's relations fought and died for freedom? Why does this add insult to injury?
9. What does T.J.'s reaction to Stacey's coat show about his character? What trait of all humans?

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Chapter Seven

Summary

- ★ It is Christmas. On Christmas Day Jeremy arrives with gifts for the family that he has made for Stacey.
- ★ Mr Jamison, the lawyer, visits with an offer to financially support the boycott that the Logans are organising.
- ★ Harlan Granger, the white landowner, visits the Logans and makes it clear that he disapproves of their actions.



T.J. has tricked Stacey into giving him a gift. When she finds out, she is furious, but she is also hurt. She doesn't get angry as well. He uses this as a valuable lesson about letting others know your feelings.

Christmas is approaching. On Christmas Day, the family is together. Papa is talking about the future of the land and in particular the racially motivated boycott. Later that night Cassie awakes to find Papa talking about the land; she is concerned, but Papa tells her not to worry. She never loses it. On Christmas day the family is together.

Jeremy comes to visit. He gives the family a bag of nuts and he gives Stacey a flute. She refuses to be hurt by T.J.'s spiteful comments because she has learnt from the affair. She knows that Stacey not to be friends with a white boy as it could bring more trouble than it is worth.

When Mr Jamison, the lawyer, visits the Logans he makes an unexpected offer. He is trying to organise a boycott of the Wallaces' shop. He is unable to organise other shops. He offers to secure the loan for them with his own money. The boycott is successful. The first loads of groceries have started coming from the Wallaces' rival store in Vicksburg. Mr Granger, the white landowner, who wants to keep the land, and he makes it clear that he disapproves of the Logans' actions. He makes it clear that he can do as he pleases.



Discussion Points

1. Why does Uncle Hammer refrain from telling Stacey to get his education here? How does that help him later in the novel?
2. Why is storytelling so important to the Logan family? It may help you to note at the beginning of the novel, and to know a little about the family.
3. Why does Mildred Taylor choose this moment for Mr Morrison to visit? Why is it particularly relevant?
4. Why does Papa discourage a friendship between Stacey and Jeremy? Is such a friendship between a black and white seems a good thing?
5. Why does Mr Jamison want to help the Logans at his own risk?
6. What is Mr Granger's specific grudge against the Logans? How does this relate to the importance of land to their family and beliefs?
7. Is the boycott of the store a direct accusation against the Wallaces?
8. Does this accusation suggest that the Wallaces should be punished? How would the Wallaces feel about this sort of accusation coming from the Logans? What are the implications of this accusation for inequality and prejudice against the Logans?



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Chapter Eight

Summary

- ★ Cassie gets her revenge on Lillian Jean.
- ★ T.J. fails a test and blames Mrs Logan. As a result he gets Mrs Logan as a bad teacher, but really for teaching the truth about racism.
- ★ T.J. says he doesn't need the Logan children as friends because

Despite her father's warnings, Cassie begins to plan her revenge on Lillian Jean. But Cassie first has to gain the trust of the spiteful Lillian. She apologises to her and shows her books and papers to her 'Miz Jean'. Sure enough Lillian Jean begins to trust Cassie and shares her secrets: who she likes, who she hates, and so on. Then one day Cassie beats up Lillian Jean, and everything she has done. When Lillian Jean threatens to tell on her Cassie reminds her that she has shared. Lillian Jean cannot tell on Cassie or she will spread all her secrets.

T.J. fails his test, and angrily blames Mrs Logan (Cassie's mum) for victimising him, and complains that she is a bad teacher. As a result of this the authorities pay a visit to Mrs Logan; she is fired. Although officially it is for her bad teaching, the real reason is the harsh truths of white prejudice against blacks. This is Harlan Granger's way of damaging Mrs Logan. Logan children respond by ending their friendship with T.J. He responds by shouting that he has other friends, and they are white!



Discussion Points

1. How does Papa show his wisdom in this chapter?
2. Lillian Jean can't really understand why Cassie has taken her revenge on her. Why doesn't she? Or is it the fault of the society she is in? Is she a victim too?
3. Is it right that school governors can insist that Mama teaches a certain curriculum? Mama disagrees with certain areas of this curriculum?
4. Is Mildred Taylor critical of education throughout the novel?
5. What is the real reason that Mr Granger dismisses Mama?
6. In what ways is the unity and closeness of the Logan family under threat?
7. Do you blame T.J. for his actions? Or is he a victim too? Do you think he begins to spiral into self-destruction?

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Chapter Nine

Summary

- ★ Pressure from white landlords is affecting the boycott of the Vicksburg. Mr Avery warns that the Wallaces will cause trouble.
- ★ On the way back from buying supplies in Vicksburg Mr Logan Morrison rescues him, breaking the arm of one of the attackers.

Winter has turned to spring and the weather is good for the children. During a brief visit, Mr Avery warns the Wallaces of the difficulties they will cause if the boycott continues. Mr Avery comes to visit his family. He decides to stop shopping in Vicksburg; their white landlord is raising the price. The Wallaces begin shopping from the Wallaces again. Several other families continue the boycott. Papa, Stacey and Mr Morrison head to Vicksburg for the latest groceries needed. Mama begins to worry. When they are finally spotted approaching, to the horror of the family, they are carrying the broken form of Cassie's father. They have been attacked!

They had been travelling back when both wheels of the cart had fallen off, and it was suspected that the Wallaces had sabotaged them. As they tried to repair the cart, the Wallaces pulled up in a truck, and shot Cassie's father; luckily the bullet only grazed his head. The cart had then fallen on his leg, mangling it. Mr Morrison had then come to the rescue, beating up his attackers and breaking one of their arms. After returning Papa is put to bed to recover and the children spend a restless night worrying.



Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn about T.J.'s increasing troubles? Do we sympathise with him? Is his eventual result of his downfall predictable?
2. What does the plight of Mr Lanier and Mr Avery focus our sympathy on?
3. Does the planned attack show why Papa really invited Mr Morrison?
4. In what ways would the family have been affected by the events?
5. In what ways would Stacey have been affected? What has he learnt?
6. How has what Stacey learnt earlier in the novel helped him in this situation?

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Chapter Ten

Summary

- ★ T.J. has started stealing from friends. He arrives at the Revival.
- ★ Mr Morrison has faced down Kaleb Wallace.
- ★ The bank has called in the Logans' mortgage, but Uncle Hammer has the car.

When the children accompany Mr Morrison on a journey they are dismayed to see the truck of Kaleb Wallace deliberately blocking their way to prove a stupid point. Morrison calmly approaches the truck and using his massive strength merely lifts it.

Meanwhile, T.J. seems to be getting ever worse; he has started stealing from friends. Mr Morrison beats up the Wallaces. Mama tries to persuade him to leave for his own good, but none of it. More bad news arrives, when it is revealed that the bank have called in the mortgage to force the Logans off their land. Papa is forced to appeal to Uncle Hammer for help.

The annual Revival begins. This is essentially a black community festival climaxing in the dance. When the children arrive they see Uncle Hammer approaching. He has raised the money to pay for his precious car. T.J. also appears at the festival with his new white friends. He is more popular than ever. His friends have bought him clothes. They even promise him the pearl-handled pistol. He is coldly received by the children and leaves for Strawberry looking alone and sad.



Discussion Points

1. What qualities does Mr Morrison display in this chapter? Consider both his physical and moral qualities.
2. What does Jeremy's tree house symbolise? His isolation from his friends? Is he isolated?
3. How does Harlan Granger show his influence? Can we blame him for his actions? Is he just a product of his society?
4. 'He's got a need to show us where we stand in the scheme of things.' Comment on why Harlan Granger is racist? Does it show a need to belong?
5. How does the Revival portray the closeness of the black community? Is this closeness partially what the whites fear?
6. Why does Uncle Hammer sell the car? What do we learn about him from this?
7. What does this sale show about Uncle Hammer as a person?
8. What techniques does Mildred T. use to portray T.J. as such? How does she generate sympathy for him when he is behaving badly?

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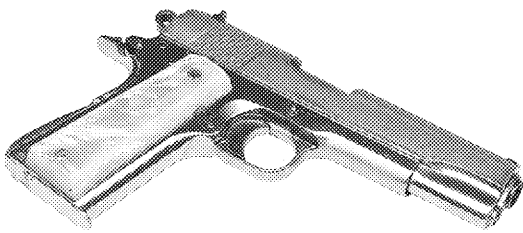


Chapter Eleven

Summary

- ★ T.J. arrives in the middle of the night after committing a robbery then falling out with them.
- ★ Just as they have returned T.J. home a gang of white men, led by Mr Jamison, arrive to lynch T.J. If Mr Jamison hadn't arrived they would have succeeded.

Cassie is surprised when T.J. comes home in the middle of the night. He is badly hurt and has children what has happened to him. He had gone to Strawberry with Melvin and R.W. to buy him the gun. When they got there the store was shut. The white boys persuaded them to leave and they all went home. But halfway through the robbery the shopkeeper and R.W. knocked both of them down. After the robbery T.J. had threatened to tell on them and had beaten him up as a warning about what would happen if he did.



The children leave for the Avery place to his home. T.J. slips in through the back. Little Man and Christopher John are waiting. The cars are approaching in the night. The cars are full of armed men get out led by, of all people, Mr Jamison. They attack the house, throwing T.J.'s sister out and savagely beating T.J. They find T.J. and hang him from the porch.

Mr Jamison proves T.J. was involved, and R.W. and Melvin claim they saw T.J. carrying out the robbery. The arrival of Mr Jamison saves T.J. from being hanged there and then. The children also begin to suggest going to kill Mr Morrison. Stacey sends Cassie, Little Man and their father and Mr Morrison.



Discussion Points

1. How does Mildred Taylor use different types of weather to enhance the story? Think of specific examples. What light does this shed on the time?
2. What are we supposed to take from the poem? Does this shed light on the story? What is it about? Defiance? What is its meaning to the novel?
3. Does it shed further light on the verse to discover that it is in fact a song?
4. How do T.J.'s actions further prove his vulnerability and naivety despite the robbery?
5. How racially prejudiced do you think Mrs Barnett is from her dialogue?
6. What do you think of Mr Jamison failing his attempt to save T.J. and losing hope in the fight against racism?
7. How does Mr Jamison contrast with Harlan Granger? What do you think of his actions?
8. How does Stacey's near-adult maturity come to play in this chapter? Earlier in the novel coming to the fore now?

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Chapter Twelve

Summary

- ★ Mr Logan and Mr Morrison leave to rescue T.J.
- ★ Cassie smells smoke and discovers the cotton is on fire. They men fighting the fire and Cassie realises her father started the
- ★ Cassie cries for T.J. and the land.

The children explain what happened and their father and Mr Morrison get guns to them not to shoot. Papa doesn't think there will be another way. They anxiously. Suddenly they smell smoke, and Cassie realises the cotton is on fire. Mr Morrison goes to fight the fire while the children wait. When the rain quenches the flames, Cassie goes to and black people are working together to quench the flames, including members of the lynch mob that attacked T.J. Fighting the fire has united them, and further violence has been avoided.

Mr Jamison arrives with the news that the shopkeeper has died and the children realise that T.J. will probably hang for it. Cassie also realises why the fire started: Papa had found another way to stop the lynch mob. He had started a fire in his own cotton. As the novel ends Cassie cries for T.J. and cries for the land.



Discussion Points

1. To what extent are the night events the culmination of racial violence? To what extent are such events inevitable to some extent when racial prejudice is so widespread?
2. How successful do you, the reader, work out that it was Papa who started the fire?
3. How significant is it that the cotton fire brings black and white people together? How do you draw together the two main themes of the novel (prejudice and land)?
4. Why does Cassie believe she can never discuss how the fire started with her father? How would have in later life?
5. Is it important that, for the first time, Christopher John refuses to join the mob? Why?
6. How significant is it that the weather, rain, puts out the fire? Consider the title of the book, and the dependence of both black and white people on the land.
7. Why doesn't Papa cover up the truth about T.J.: that he will probably hang for it? Why?
8. Why does Cassie cry for T.J. when she has never really liked him? Why do the other people at this point?
9. Why does Cassie cry for the land? Does this mean the farming land is more important to her than her father? Why?
10. Overall, why is land such an important theme? What do you think this says about the importance of land to Afro-American farming communities? What relevance to all ethnic minorities in all walks of life? Why?

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Character Summaries

Cassie

Cassie is the narrator of the novel and we see the events through her eyes.

Cassie is confronted by injustice and we see she is unafraid to face the harsh reality. Throughout the novel we see Cassie grow and learn through her experiences.

The narrator of the novel, Cassie is an intelligent and sensitive nine-year-old girl. She is inquisitive and possesses a quiet strength, reminiscent of Uncle Hammer. We see the world through her eyes, particularly the cruelty, injustice and harshness of her society. We learn from her experiences in the novel. She learns the importance of family; indeed her existence is defined by her advice, love, security and role models. She also learns about land: a lesson repeated throughout the novel. However her most important lesson is that Papa sets fire to the cotton to save T.J., thus proving that even land must be sacrificed. Throughout the novel she questions the injustices of the world, for instance on her first day at school. She is unafraid to face the harsh reality that there are many bad things in the world.

Stacey

Stacey is the eldest of the Logan children and is courageous and loving.

We see Stacey learning through events in the novel and becoming an adult. For instance, he learns about white friendship from his friendship with Jeremy and learns about tolerance from his experience with T.J.



The eldest child of the Logan family, Stacey is a courageous and loving boy. He is seen as the 'man of the family', which is perhaps the reason why he feels responsible. He is instinctively the leader of the children, but he still reveals his reluctance towards the end of the novel that he is learning to lead and finally becomes a man. He learns through events that teach him about life, including the loss of his new coat and his friendship through his relationship with Jeremy. He learns most, however, from T.J. He learns tolerance and sympathy; he is able to still care for T.J.'s life even after he is killed. It is fascinating to watch him, like his sister, age and mature.

Little Man

Little Man is the youngest but is moved as much as Cassie by injustice.

Little Man is very concerned about his appearance, but is also keen to be involved in the family.

Little Man is the youngest of the Logan children at just six, but he is no less sensitive. He retains Cassie's sense of stubbornness, as shown by his refusal to take a textbook. He is extremely proud of how he looks, taking extreme care over his clothes. Little Man is brave throughout; his bravery and willingness of spirit seem to defy his years. While Christopher John has many adventures, Little Man refuses to be left out.

Christopher John

Christopher John is the Logan child least likely to be involved; he is mild and unadventurous. Christopher John grows in stature throughout the novel and speaks out against T.J. when he is killed.



Christopher John is a chubby and likeable boy, the Logan child who is least likely to be involved. He is mild and unadventurous, preferring to stay out of trouble and not get into fights. As the narrator, still clearly displays her affection for him; he is an intelligent boy. In his initial wariness, Christopher John grows in stubbornness as the novel progresses. He is the first to angrily speak out against T.J. after he gets Mama sacked and, in the end, he joins the other children at the fire.

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T.J.

T.J. is often dislikeable as he is impressionable, arrogant and selfish; however, his parents and society.

Despite getting their mother fired the Logan children still help T.J. when he gets into trouble. At the end he faces execution.

Though often foolish and impressionable we still feel sorry for T.J. throughout the novel. He is an angry and unhealthy boy from a poor black family who is often Stacey's friends at the school. He is often arrogant, selfish and critical. However, his dislikeable and badly behaved behaviour is the fault of his parents and society at large. When he gets their mother fired, the Logan children stop contact with him, but they are still sympathetic when T.J. gets into trouble. At the end he faces execution, a fact that Taylor wants us to confront. Cassie eventually comes to terms with his fate.

Papa

Papa is the head of the family and a role model. His main concerns are his family and his land. He is a contrast to the short-tempered and rash Uncle Hammer.

At the climax of the novel he places humanity above his land.



Papa is portrayed as a good parent to the Logan family, a lovable man. His main concerns are for his family, and his land; he brings up his children. Yet it is arguable that, at the climax of the novel, he puts humanity above his land to save a gunfight and T.J.'s death. We see Papa as wise and a role model for Stacey to aspire to. He is a source of advice, for instance when he advises Cassie on revenge on Lillian Jean. He contrasts sharply with his brother Uncle Hammer.

Papa is considered, and short-tempered while Papa is calm. Despite playing a small role in the novel, Papa becomes one of the central figures by the end.

Mama

Mama is a good mother and a well-educated and intelligent teacher.

She is principled and refuses to accept racism and discrimination.

In many ways Mama reminds us of Cassie.

The mother of the Logan family, Mama is a pretty and intelligent school teacher. She is beyond many of her peers, yet her fellow teachers regard her as a loose cannon for her behaviour during the episode with the books. She shows her principles when she helps coordinate the boycott following their racist attack. Thus Mama is a stubborn and principled woman who refuses discrimination. Her radical refusal to accept racism both in school and out eventually makes her a good mother too, fair and kind to her children. With Papa away for much of the novel, she is the guiding force in her children's lives. Her intelligence, principles and stubbornness are key to the Logan family's survival.

Uncle Hammer

The Logan children's rash and short-tempered nature is a contrast to their measured and calm Uncle Hammer. He gets angry in the face of racism and injustice.

As a Logan Uncle Hammer is a strong man and sells his precious car to save it.



Uncle Hammer, Papa's brother, is the Logan children's rash and short-tempered father. He is a strong but kind to the children; for instance he gives Stacey and Cassie a car. He gets angry when it is given away. He only gets angry when white prejudice is shown, like the Wallaces, or when the Logan family is harmed, as when Cassie is knocked down by the Logan he, too, loves the land and the family; he is even willing to sell his land. His short temper and unwillingness to accept prejudice are reflected in his actions.

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Mr Morrison

Mr Morrison is invited to live with the Logans by Papa purportedly to work on the farm to protect the family from racist violence.

Mr Morrison is incredibly strong, but also quiet, kindly and reserved.

The children learn from Mr Morrison.

Mr Morrison comes to live with the Logan family early in the novel on Papa's invitation to work; but we soon realise that Papa wants him there to protect the family from away. Mr Morrison is a giant of a man, incredibly strong and powerful, able to lift and beat off Papa's attackers. He is also quiet and reserved, and soon becomes a person the children learn from him. For instance when he catches Stacey at the Wallaces' family's dinner table, he tells her of white racists. We grow to like and respect Mr Morrison for his kindness and strength.



Big Ma

Big Ma is the children's grandmother who works on the farm.

Big Ma ensures the children know their history and the importance of the land.



Big Ma is the children's grandmother, though she is far from as much involved in all the running of the family and works like a man. She offers advice and comfort to the whole family, and ensures they know the importance of their land. Despite often being a secondary character, she is important to both the Logan family and the novel as a whole.

Harlan Granger

Harlan Granger is a white landowner who represents the 'old south' before the civil war, for the black community very difficult.

Harlan Granger is a white landowner who controls much of the local farming land and has a lot of influence over both the black and white communities. He believes in the 'old south' way of things where the blacks were slaves. He also wants the Logans' land back, as they had once owned. He tries to make life very difficult for the blacks when they start to farm. He attempts to threaten the Logans. He doesn't attempt to stop T.J. from hanging – he just wants to see them suffer. Harlan Granger is a dislikeable character, but his beliefs are the fault of his upbringing.



Kaleb Wallace

Kaleb Wallace is a vicious, bitter racist. But he assists with putting out the fire at the Logans' house.



Kaleb Wallace is a member of a large and racist family and is responsible for the attack on the Berry family. Despite this attack, the guilty Wallaces are not arrested, hence the black boycott of their store. The Wallaces are portrayed as 'trash'. They represent the worst of the 'old white American culture'. Kaleb, believing himself to be different from black people, is eventually killed by the common need to put out the fire.



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The Historical Context

1930s

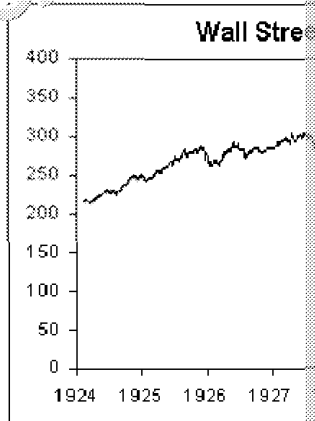
To fully appreciate *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* it is helpful to gain an understanding of the events set in, 1930s America. In particular a brief appreciation of the historical events that help you more fully understand the themes of racism and prejudice in the novel.



Before the American Civil War of 1861–1865 most black people were slaves. Yet even after they were freed they were not equal. The general white attitude to ethnic minorities was not that of today. Black people were widely seen as criminals or ignorant, but lovable and childlike. This was embraced by the likes of Mr Jamison in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. It had been nothing short of radical in its day. Equalities granted today – good schools, equal employment with white companions – were virtually non-existent. The Ku Klux Klan, a secret and evil society which persecuted black people, had an estimated three million members and racial hatred was widespread.

By the 1930s the Ku Klux Klan's membership may have fallen, but America was still a racist country. This is clearly illustrated in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Jeremy, for instance, is allowed to be friends with the Logans. There is not a single white child in Cassie's school and not a single black child is literate. Of course the most flagrant example of inequality is the fate of T.J. It was in the 1930s that T.J. was lynched. A black boy robbed a store with two white boys and was killed by a very lynch mob that took its revenge on the black boy.

There were other historical events that have a strong bearing on the novel. The great depression had struck America. In 1929 there was a crash on Wall Street and share prices plummeted. The economy collapsed in the space of a few hours. Some bankers and stockbrokers even committed suicide as they saw their paper fortunes disappear in the space of hours. This led to a great recession that lasted years. There was massive unemployment and rural country areas were particularly badly hit. We see the effects of this in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, set in the aftermath of the crash and the ensuing recession. The Logans are so badly hit that Papa has to go and work on the railroad; the other black families are not allowed any credit at shops. The depression deepened any existing racial tension as poor white families felt jealous and bitter about any success that black families achieved. For instance Harlan Granger's jealousy of Uncle Hammer's Packard. There is no doubt that it was a tough place to grow up as a black child.



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Online Historical Research Challenge

Answer all the following questions on the historical setting of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* on the Internet.

1. In what years did the American Civil War start and end?
2. What were the issues in the American Civil War fighting about?
3. When was slavery abolished in America?
4. When it was abolished, did the end of slavery mean the end of racism?
5. What was the general public attitude among whites to blacks in the 1930s?
6. What disadvantages did black Americans have during the 1930s?
7. What was the Ku Klux Klan?
8. In what year was the Wall Street Crash?
9. What is the name given to the long period of unemployment starting in the 1930s?
10. Which areas of America were worst affected by the Wall Street Crash?
11. How did the Wall Street Crash and the following recession affect America?
12. Who was the American President during the 1930s?
13. What was the name given to the 1930s movement that campaigned for the rights of black Americans?
14. Who was the leader of this campaigning movement?
15. Write down some lines from his most famous speech (the 'I have a dream' speech).

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Speaking and Listening Exercises

Hot seating

Give students time, in groups of three, to prepare some ideas about each of the following characters:

- ❖ Cassie
- ❖ T.J.
- ❖ Mama
- ❖ Stacey
- ❖ Papa

Other characters could be prepared depending on the size of the class. They then prepare questions about the characters' feelings and intentions for the future. Students then go to the front of the class in their groups of three and one student takes the character to answer the questions. You could give the students the idea of a press conference (maybe about the fire.) If the student in role cannot answer the questions then they can take advice from the other two students.

Presentation

Give your class a homework or lesson time to prepare a presentation, the length dictated by time constraints / student numbers. Presentations can be prepared individually or in groups, again, as time or students lacking confidence require titles from which to choose. I would suggest:

- ❖ How do the children change and grow up throughout the novel?
- ❖ Character study of one of the main characters.
- ❖ Character comparison to study the similarities and differences between pairs of characters: Papa and Stacey; Cassie and Uncle Hammer; Mr Jamison and Mr. Jamison.
- ❖ What have we learned from this novel about racial prejudice?
- ❖ How does the weather mimic the events in the novel?

But of course, add your own titles as well. Give students one lesson to carry out their presentations.

Performing a scene

Divide the class into groups and let each group choose a short scene to act out. Give them two lessons to prepare, emphasising the need to interpret the text for performance. Will the dialogue or action be altered in any way? Will things be left out of the scene? What stage directions should be used? Would it be best to nominate someone to make decisions? I would discourage students from choosing scenes that are too long or too complex.

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Court cases

Divide the class in two. Each half will be given one imaginary court case to work out. The first shall try T.J. for the murder of the shopkeeper; the second shall try Kaleb Wallace for the murder of John Berry. For each court case nominate a prosecutor, an accused, and several witnesses to be called. The teacher will act as judge. The class is of such a size that there are not enough parts to go around and have two different casts. Give the class a lesson to prepare for. Lawyers must prepare arguments for and against, select evidence, and plan cross-examinations. The witnesses and accused must prepare notes on their positions in the novel, motives and general feelings. The trial begins. Each half must take it in turn to call a witness and interrogate him or her. When all witnesses and accused have been interrogated, the whole class can vote on their guilt. This is essentially a class debate cum role-play. The probability is that T.J. will be acquitted and Kaleb Wallace found guilty. Discuss with the class whether, had the novel included these trials, the decisions would have been reached by a white jury, and why.

❖ *Trial 1:*

The accused: T.J. Witnesses: Mrs Barnett, R.W., Melvin, one Logan and Kaleb Wallace

❖ *Trial 2:*

The accused: Kaleb Wallace. Witnesses: Mr Berry (having recovered from his trauma) and a representative of the black community.

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Creative Writing Exercise

Diary

At some point during the novel stop reading and ask students to complete a diary entry from the perspective of one of the characters. Suggested points: T.J. after he has fallen out with the Logan children in Chapter 8 OR a diary entry about an attack on her father in Chapter 9.

The next chapter

Write a piece concerning the later life of one of the children: Cassie, Stacey or Melvin. What do they do for a living as an adult? What are their hopes and beliefs? How have they been affected by their childhood experiences? Are they still in contact with any of the other characters? Do they own land? What are the events that occurred in the novel?

Change of perspective

Rewrite one of the chapters, or an event from the novel, from another character's point of view than Cassie – in other words with a different narrator. How will this affect the story? How will it contradict Cassie's account of events? How will this character's attitude and beliefs affect the story? Will it affect the rewritten part if the new narrator is white? How will you adapt the character's way of speaking?

Short story

Write a short story describing what happens to T.J. after the novel. You can write from T.J.'s point of view, or from another person's point of view. Will he be brought to trial? Will he be murdered before the trial? Will he get off scot-free? Will R.W. and Melvin be caught? What are the criminals?

Open letter

Write an open letter to the white community from a member of the Logan family. What events have occurred during the novel. You are angry with the prejudice and discrimination and are trying to make them change their ways. What tactics will you use to convince them? How persuasive will you be? Will you try to make them feel guilty? What examples will you use? What argument?

Speech

Imagine that you are either Kaleb Wallace or Cassie on the night when T.J. was attacked by the angry mob. Try to write a speech to be spoken to the mob. Kaleb Wallace wants the immediate hanging of T.J. and possibly of the other Logans. Cassie wants T.J. to be left alone, for Melvin to be caught, and for the crowd to see the error of their ways. How will you convince the crowd? What language will you use? Will you be aggressive and angry, or calm and persuasive? What examples will you use? What sort of language you would expect from your character.

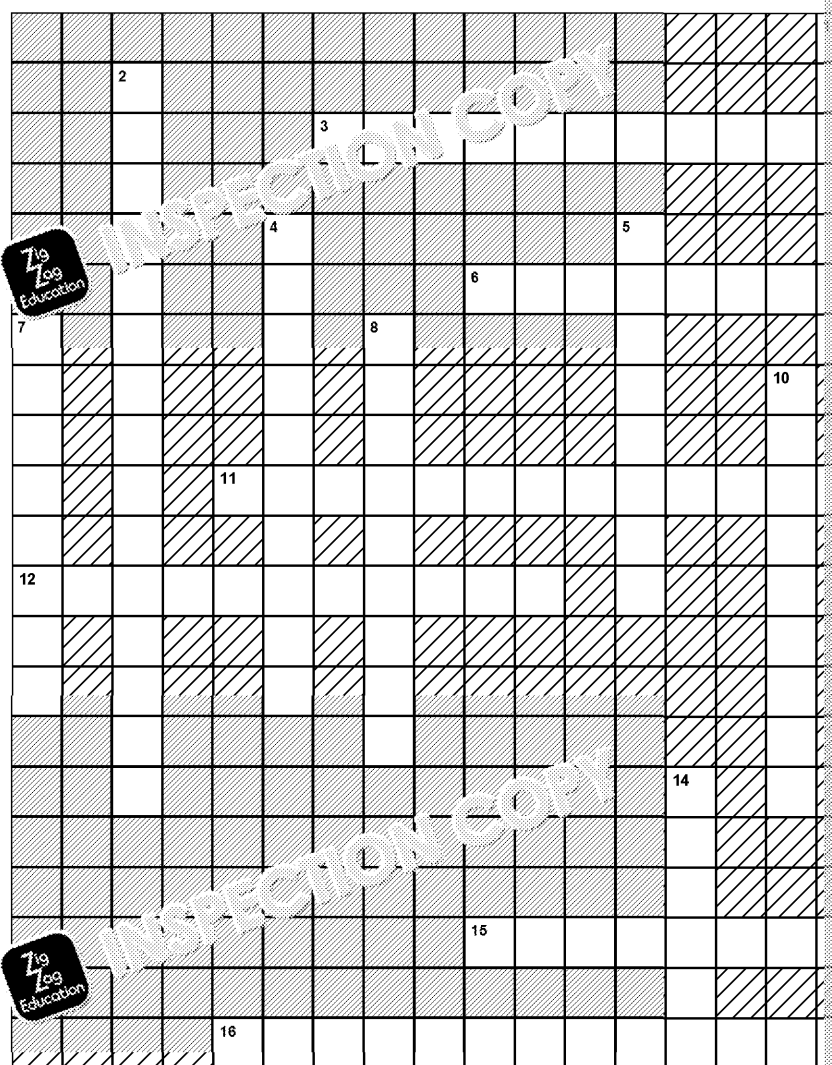
Once you have written your speech write a short paragraph discussing who would listen to your speech and be convinced; and why or why not.

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Crossword



ACROSS

- 3 Arguably the most vile character in the novel (5,7)
- 6 The town in which Cassie experiences the cruellest day of her life (10)
- 11 The Logan children's school (5,5,6)
- 12 The US State in which the novel is set (11)
- 13 The most important thing to the Logan family (4)
- 15 Papa's brother (5,6)
- 16 The author (7,6)

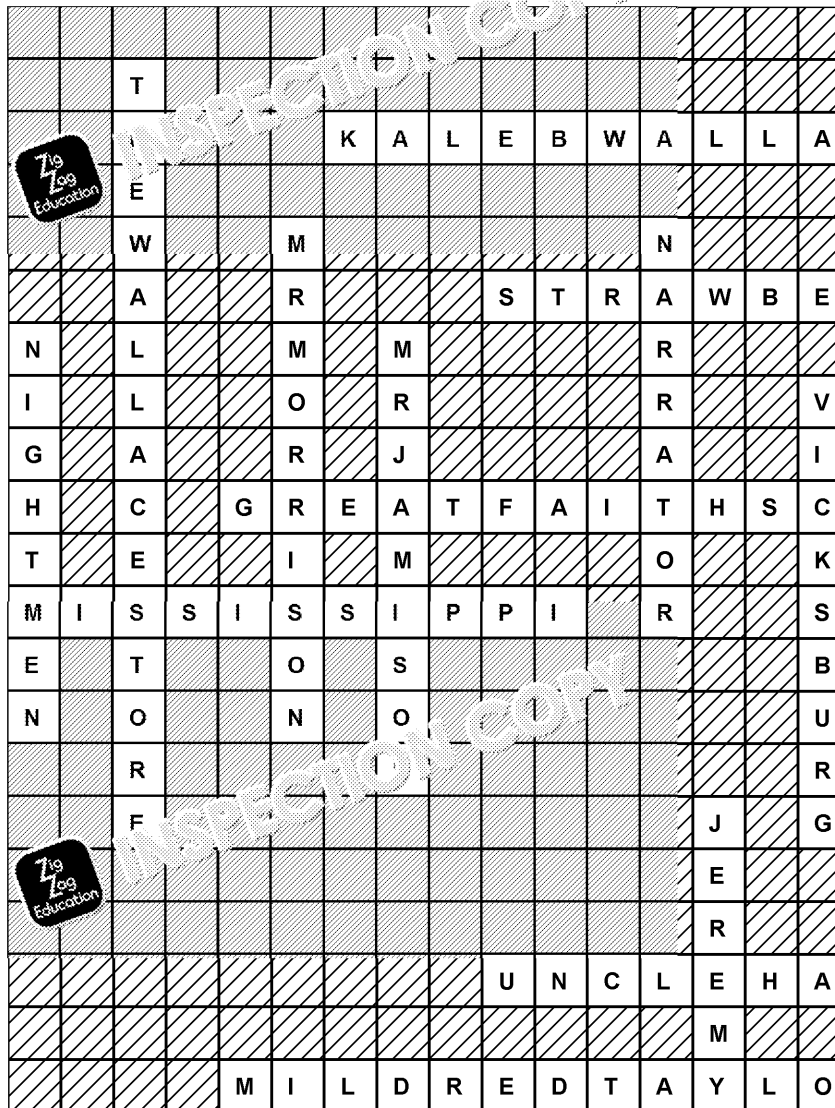
DOWN

- 1 The make of car owned by the Logan uncle (7)
- 2 The Logan child who is killed here (3,7,5)
- 4 A man with the same name as the town (5,3)
- 5 The story is told from the perspective of – therefore she is the only one who can tell the story (11)
- 8 The white landowner who is the most commendable (5,3)
- 9 The white landowner who is the most villainous (5,3)
- 10 The town the Logans' land (10)
- 14 The white boy who is the most villainous (5,3)

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Crossword Solution



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Quiz

How would Cassie's role in the novel best be described?

- Main character ☐ Narrator and main character ☐

Where is the novel set?

- Mississippi, USA ☐ Texas, USA ☐

Why do the children hate the bus?

- It is an ugly vehicle ☐ They always seem to miss it ☐

Who are the night men?

- Men who pick crops at night for extra freshness ☐ Men who commit racist attacks at night ☐

What is most important to Cassie's family?

- Land ☐ Their animals ☐

Why does Little Man refuse his book?

- He cannot read ☐ He got it when it was too tatty for a white child ☐

Who probably caused the burning of the Berry family?

- Rod Wallace ☐ Kaleb Wallace ☐

How do the children take revenge on the school bus?

- They puncture its tyres ☐ They smash its windows and slash the seats ☐

Why does Stacey beat up T.J., who had previously been his friend?

- He caught T.J. kissing his girlfriend ☐ T.J. insulted Big Ma, Stacey's grandma ☐

What is the name of the author?

- Harper Lee ☐ Mildred Taylor ☐

What sees Cassie hate T.J. at the store in Strawberry?

- A solid gold dollar ☐ A beautiful red toy tractor ☐

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What does Uncle Hammer give Stacey?

A shiny new Packard car ☐

A new coat ☐

A be

Who offers to back the loan so the black people can shop in Vicksburg?

Harlan Granger, the rich white landowner ☐

John Henry, the badly injured black man ☐

Why is Mama really stuck in her job as a teacher?

Because she explained she was a bad teacher ☐

Because Mr Granger wanted to hurt the Logans financially ☐

Beaus

What injuries does Papa receive when he is attacked at night?

His nose is broken and his chin snaps off ☐

A tooth is broken, and his face is badly bruised ☐

He is

How does Mr Morrison move the Wallaces' truck when they block the road?

He lifts it up and carries it out of the way ☐

He pushes it out of the way ☐

He

How does T.J. get into serious trouble?

He is present at a bungled shop robbery ☐

He steals Mr Henry's coat ☐

He is

How does Papa stop T.J. being killed by the lynch mob?

He shows them the mob is dead ☐

He starts singing 'Tainted Love' by Soft Cell, thereby shocking them all to death ☐

He

Why did Papa really invite Mr Morrison to stay?

To help with the harvest ☐

To protect the family from attack ☐

Be

What did the author say she wanted to show in this book?

A family united in love and self-respect ☐

The failings of the justice system ☐

T

Why are all the families unusually poor in this novel?

It is set during World War Two ☐

It is set in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash ☐

It is

What does the ending of the novel tell us about at the end of the novel?

The end of innocence, the darkness in man's heart, and the fall through the air of her true wise friend called T.J. ☐


The cotton ☐

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Timeline

Connect the events to the timeline in the right



**The children
take revenge
on the bus**

**Cassie visits
Strawberry**

**The children
hear of Mr
Berry's attack**

**Cassie takes
revenge on
Lillian Jean**

Start



**Stacey
beats up
T.J.**

**Little Man
refuses his
new books**

**Mr Jamison
offers to back
the loan**

**Mr Morrison
arrives**

**Uncle H
gives Stacey
coat**



1. Add chapter numbers to the timeline.
2. Are there any other important events you think should have been included? Add them.
3. Create your own timeline, with your own choice of the most important events of the story.

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Character Sheet

Fill out one of these sheets for each of the following characters: Cassie, Star, Big Ma, Uncle Hammer, Mr Morrison, Mr Granger, Kaleb Wallace, Jeremy

<p>Who is this character in the novel? (What do they do? Who are they related to? etc.)?</p> 	<p>Describe this character</p>
<p>What happens to this character during the novel?</p> 	<p>Note down any uses of this character</p>

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Character Study

Write a character study of one of the following characters: Cassie, Stacey, Ma, Uncle Hammer, Mr Morrison, Mr Granger, Kaleb Wallace, Jeremy

Sources of Information

- Worksheet: Character sheet
- Speaking and Listening Activity: Hot Seating



Character Study

Introduction: Who is the character in the novel? What basic information do we know about them? Who are they related to?

Personality: How would you describe this character's personality?

What happens: What happens to them in the novel?

Interactions: What other characters do we see them with? How do people in the novel?

Their role: What is their importance in the novel? What ideas are they connected with?



Structure

Use the following structure to ensure that you integrate quotations into your study.

Point: What point about the character are you making?

Evidence: Use an example or a quotation.

Explore: How does the quotation or example illustrate the point you suggest about the character?






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Are Mama and Papa Good Parents?

It is debatable whether Mama and Papa are good parents. Note down any reasons why you think they are good or bad parents. Then note down specific examples of their parenting from the novel.

Reasons why you think they are good parents	Reasons why you think they are bad parents
	
	
Examples of their good parenting	Examples of their bad parenting
	

Now that you have filled out the sheet, write a short paragraph on the back of this separate sheet, outlining whether you think Mr and Mrs Logan make good parents or not.

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Southern Dialect

One notable feature of the novel is Mildred Taylor's use of a southern dialect. Fill out the sheet to help to collect your thoughts on this.

<p>Give an example of the type of southern dialect Mildred Taylor uses.</p>	<p>1. 'Not to be apologises to my gal, y'all ain'</p>
<p>How does Taylor help you to imagine the actual sound of the words being spoken in dialect?</p>	
<p>Do all the characters use the same dialect? Do adults use the same dialect as children? Do the black characters use the same dialect as whites?</p>	
<p>Are there any characters who never speak in dialect? Who?</p>	
<p>What effect is Taylor hoping to achieve through her use of a southern dialect? What does it do to the novel?</p>	




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The Land

The land is an important theme in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Note down quotations you find concerning it while you read the book. You can then use them as evidence for the essay that follows.

Chapter One 	Chapter Two
Chapter Three	Chapter Four
Chapter Five 	Chapter Six
Chapter Seven	Chapter Eight
Chapter Nine	Chapter Ten
Chapter Eleven 	Chapter Twelve

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The Land Essay

Using the notes made on the previous worksheet use the guidelines below to write an essay explaining why the land is so important to the Logans.

Essay Title

'He don't know nothin' 'bout me an' my land, he think I'm gonna sell!' Explore the importance of the land in the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.



Essay Structure

Introduction:

Have a look back at the sheet you have completed during the novel and very briefly summarise to whom the land is important and why it is important.

Paragraph 1:

How did the Logans come to acquire the land? Why is it important to them? How does it benefit them?

Paragraph 2:

What does Big Ma say about the land and its importance? Use your sheet and explore what the land means to her.

Paragraph 3:

What do Mama and Papa say about the land and its importance? Use your sheet and explore what the land means to them.

Paragraph 4:

What does Uncle Hammer say about the land and its importance? Use your sheet and explore what the land means to him.



Paragraph 5:

How do the white characters feel about the Logans' land? Explore the feelings of Harlan Granger, the Wallaces and Mr Jamison.

Conclusion:

At the end of the novel Pa sets fire to the cotton. This is a significant part and has a significant effect on Cassie. What does this mean for the readers?

Structure

Make sure you use the following structure: Point ⇒ Evidence ⇒ Explore



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Is *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* a Positive or Negative Novel?

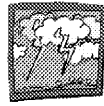
Given the amount of racism and poverty described in this novel, it may be difficult to see the novel to have a positive message of hope. Fill out this sheet to help you decide.

<p>List any positive events from the novel. E.g. The children's father beats their own back on the white children's land.</p>	<p>List any negative events from the novel. E.g. Papa is beaten up at Vicksburg.</p>
<p>List anything from the novel that gives us hope for the future. E.g. The friendship between Jeremy and Stacey regardless of the racial differences.</p>	<p>List anything from the novel that gives us hope for the future. E.g. Harlan Granger's land from them.</p>
<p>Bearing these answers in mind, decide whether YOU think the novel has a positive or negative message. Explain your answer and give examples.</p>	

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The Weather

There are several times in the novel when the weather seems to reflect the characters and events below as you find them.

Examples from Chapters 1–6



Examples from Chapters 7–12



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Group Work

Discuss the questions below and, on a large sheet of paper, explain in full sentences.

1. What effect is generated by letting the weather mirror the characters and events?
2. Why does Crawford Taylor use this technique?
3. Is there any difference between the weather references in the first and second?
4. What light does all of this shed on the title of the novel?

Now report back your ideas to the whole class.



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: T

Roll of Thunder
hear my cry
Over the water
by the bridge
A man comin'
down the line
Whip in hand to
beat me down
But I ain't
gonna let him
Turn me 'round



What do you think this poem is about?

Do you like the style of language used?

What relevance does this poem have to *Roll of Thunder*,



These verses originally come from a blues song. Use the Internet to try to find out more about it.

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The Family

In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Mildred Taylor strove to portray 'a family in respect.' The Logans are this family. Fill in the following boxes.

Describe how Cassie is life-centred around her family.

E.g. Cassie shares the passion for the land because of what she is told by Papa.



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Describe how Mama's and Papa's lives are centred around the family.

E.g. Papa knows the children may be in danger when he is not around so he stays with them.

Describe why the land is linked so strongly to the Logan family.

E.g. The land gives them independence.



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Describe the Avery and the Simms families. In what ways do they differ from the Logans?

E.g. The Averys and the Simms do not have the benefit of parents committed to the right.



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Answer the following question in full sentences giving examples:

What makes the Logan family so united in love and respect?

The Black and White Community

The black and white communities in the novel are portrayed as being very different. Using the following table, completing an answer on both the black and white communities. Write in full sentences and give examples.

	Black Community	White Community
 <p>How wealthy and educated is this community?</p>	E.g. Second-hand school books.	E.g. Have no money.
<p>What social standing does this community have?</p>	E.g. Served in the shop only when there are no white customers.	E.g. Feel they have to do, even though they don't want to.
 <p>What beliefs does this community have?</p>		
<p>How united and supportive are the members of this community?</p>		



- Now answer the following two questions in one or two paragraphs
1. In what ways and why are the two communities so different?
 2. Why does the fire bring together two such different communities?

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Racism in Modern Britain

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is a book about racism in 1930s America. But what about modern Britain of today? What lessons can we learn about racism from the novel? Is modern Britain similar to modern America as far as racism is concerned? Discuss this and write out this sheet to help you collect your ideas on the issue.

What examples of racism from the novel can you think of?

E.g. Books that are considered too damaged for white students are given to black students.



What (if any) examples of racism have you found in your own life, or in the news?

E.g. The election of BNP Party candidates.

Is modern Britain more or less racially prejudiced than 1930s America? Write your answer.

What lessons do we learn from the novel about racism?

E.g. Racist attitudes can lead directly to violence.

Are these lessons relevant to modern racism you have seen?



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The Author's Narrative Technique

The narrative technique used in this novel puts several limitations on the way the story can be told. Cassie cannot be told everything by the adults and she is only likely to be involved in the most important events. On the other hand, Mildred Taylor did target the novel at a young audience. This viewpoint enables the author to engage their sympathy; because she is like a young girl, the readers will identify with her, a further advantage.

Note in the boxes below the ways in which Cassie finds out what is happening.

Overheard conversations	Actions in the novel
Events which the adults tell her about	Events which she finds out for herself



Now you have filled in the boxes, write an essay on:
What are the advantages and disadvantages of Mildred Taylor's choice of narrative technique?

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