

Mississippi Bridge

by Mildred D. Taylor

Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by John Chua

A Perma-Bound Production

SYNOPSIS

Mississippi Bridge is a short story set in the rural South of the 1930s. Told from the perspective of Jeremy Simms, a ten-year old boy who enjoys spending time with his father and brothers at the Wallace general store during the wet season before spring planting. The Simms are poor white tenant farmers while their neighbors, the Logans, the descendants of slaves, are landowners. Jeremy's father is a short-tempered racist who is particularly irritated that his black neighbors are doing better than his family. He also does not like his son enjoying the company of the Logan children.

One rainy day, while sitting on the porch of the Wallace store, Jeremy meets Rudine Johnson and her mother who are both waiting to catch the weekly bus from Jackson. In the store, Rudine wants to try on a hat but John Wallace would not let her because she is black. Jeremy then meets Miz Hattie, an elderly white woman. She and her granddaughter Grace-Anne are also there to catch the bus. Miz Hattie was Jeremy's teacher at the Jefferson Davis school before she retired. Jeremy likes her and her granddaughter very much. Inside the store, Miz Hattie takes an interest in the same hat. In a blatant act of racism, John Wallace urges Miz Hattie to try on the hat.

Soon, Josias Williams a young black man arrives. Josias and Jeremy sometimes go fishing together by the river but today Josias is catching the bus because he has been promised a job with a lumber company if he can make it to Natchez Trace right away. When John Wallace and Jeremy's father hear about his job offer, they become angry and vent their anger upon Josias. They feel that since whites could not find employment during the depression, surely blacks do not deserve jobs. Jeremy is uncomfortable about how his father is mistreating Josias but realizes that Josias must take the abuse. Jeremy saw his father and brothers beat up a black man just because he stood up to them.

Just then, members of the Logan family—Stacey, his grandmother Caroline, his sister Cassie and his brothers Christopher-John and Little Man—approach the store. Grandma Caroline is there to catch the bus to visit a sick relative.

Jeremy helps Miz Hattie and Grace-Anne with their luggage while the Logan children help their grandmother board the bus. Cassie finds a seat at the front of the bus but Stacey furiously grabs her and warns her that the front seats are reserved for whites only. After settling in her seat at the back of the bus, Grandmother Caroline tells the Logan children not to wait until the bus leaves but instead go run an errand for her.

As the four Logan children take off on their errand, Jeremy decides to join them. Along the way they cross an old bridge. With the heavy rain and fog, little Christopher-John becomes

worried about crossing the bridge. Cassie wonders if the bridge, with its rotten wooden planks, will collapse soon and watches in amazement at the gushing water beneath the bridge. Because Jeremy doesn't feel particularly welcomed by the group, he decides to let them continue their journey and he heads back to the store.

As he approaches the store, he hears a commotion. Several white passengers who arrived late are waiting to get on the bus. The driver is yelling and motioning to the black passengers to get off the bus in order to make room for the late arrivals. In 1930s Mississippi, blacks could not ride the bus when there are not enough seats for whites. At first, Josias resists getting off the bus as he has an important appointment to make. But the driver simply grabs him and kicks him out of the bus. As the black passengers begin their walk home, Jeremy is saddened by what happened.

Jeremy's father gives him a lecture about how blacks have "got their place in this world and we got our'n and they place ain't long side us cause they ain't the same as us." Then, with his father out of earshot, Jeremy begins running after Josias. As he gets to the old bridge, he sees the speeding bus crash into the rails of the bridge and fall into the river. Watching the fast-sinking bus below, Jeremy immediately thinks of Miz Hattie and Grace-Anne. Josias instructs Jeremy to run back to the store to inform everyone.

The men from the Wallace store immediately run to help. Jeremy watches Josias pull Miz Hattie and Grace-Anne out of the river but the two are now dead. Jeremy's father tells him to go ring the church bell to alert the town. As tears run down his cheeks in the driving rain, Jeremy is confused and heartbroken by the turn of events. He "couldn't understand nothing about the day, and how come Miz Hattie and Grace-Anne was on that bus, and Josias, and Stacey's and them's grandmama and Rudine and her mama wasn't. Mysterious ways, Josias done said. Well, if the Lord was punishing, how come Grace-Anne and Miz Hattie? They ain't hurt nobody."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mildred D. Taylor was born on September 13, 1943, in Jackson, Mississippi, the daughter of Wilbert Lee Taylor and Deletha Marie Davis. She is known for writing about the African-American struggle for civil rights and equality. As a child, she was unhappy with the texts used in her school which marginalized or neglected the contributions made by blacks. Taylor spent her childhood in Ohio but her family made many trips to Mississippi. She remembers vividly the different forms of racism she felt in the South as well as the North. Most of her

novels are drawn from the stories her father told of growing up in Mississippi. The character Stacey in *Mississippi Bridge* is loosely based on the experiences of her father.

Taylor graduated from the University of Toledo in 1965 and worked as an English teacher in Arizona before spending two years in Ethiopia with the Peace Corps. She received her master's degree in journalism from the University of Colorado in 1971 and worked as an editor in Los Angeles from 1971 to 1973. She began writing for children in 1973. Her first book, *Song of the Trees*, was an immediate success, winning a prize from the Council on Interracial Books for Children. She has written several stories about the Logan children and their town in rural Mississippi. She credits her family, particularly her father, for inspiring her to tell these stories. Mildred D. Taylor now lives in Colorado.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Critics have in general praised Taylor's ability to tell powerful and vivid stories about the injustice of segregation and the struggles of African-Americans. She won the Newbery Medal in 1977 for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The novel was made into an ABC-TV miniseries.

The Christian Science Monitor called her next work, *Let the Circle be Unbroken*, a universal story about growing pains and self-discovery. Critics also praise her other works. *The Friendship* won the Coretta Scott King Award in 1988 as did *The Road to Memphis* in 1990. *The Gold Cadillac*, a story about a black family visiting relatives in the South and the discrimination they face, received a New York Times Notable Book citation in 1987 and a Christopher Award in 1988. While Taylor is appreciative of the praise from critics, she stresses her goal is to inform children today of the struggles of a younger generation in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1988, the Children's Book Council awarded her a prize "for a body of work that has examined significant social issues and presented them in outstanding books for young readers."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To gain a better understanding of the effects of the Great Depression on rural America in the 1930s
2. To examine the difference between sharecroppers and tenant farmers
3. To examine institutionalized racism in America
4. To examine how racism is passed from one generation to the next
5. To think critically about how people form opinions about others
6. To expand vocabulary through contextual clues, class discussions, and by asking critical questions
7. To study how the Civil Rights movement grew out of resistance against Jim Crow laws
8. To define racism and victimization

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To appreciate Mildred D. Taylor's use of non-standard English in a short story and to place such language in context
2. To examine any conclusions that the narrator draws from the disaster

3. To describe Jeremy's sense of responsibility and sense of guilt
4. To describe Jeremy's future as a young man
5. To contrast the lives of Jeremy, Josias, and Stacey
6. To describe John Wallace's racism
7. To understand why Jeremy's father is a racist
8. To examine how the town is affected by the bus accident

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in this work. Students should be able to explain the meaning of each in its context.

1. Miz Hattie was a widow lady. She used to be my teacher and she lived right up the road from Jefferson Davis School....They were quality folks. (p. 11)
(Miz Hattie and her granddaughter are waiting for the bus when Jeremy meets them. The McElroys are respected members of the community. Jeremy looks up to them not because they have a bit of money but because they seem genuinely nice.)
2. "And we have plenty of milk!" declared Little Man. (p. 31)
(The Logans, although black and living in rural Mississippi, are relatively better off than their white neighbors. Even four-year old Little Man Logan realizes this. However, the white community resents the Logans' land and wealth. As Jeremy's father says "it wasn't right for Negroes to have more than white folks." [p 25])
3. "Girl, hush!" Stacey hissed at her. "Them's white folks seats!" (p. 31)
(From the era of the Reconstruction until the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s overthrew Jim Crow laws, the South implemented a "separate but equal" doctrine of segregation. In reality of course, these "separate but equal" laws violated basic human rights. African-Americans were not allowed to use the same public facilities and services as whites and were given separate and often inferior facilities or services. Thus they had to take blacks-only train carriages, attend schools reserved only for blacks, use wash-rooms for colored people only, and so forth. On buses, African-Americans were obligated to sit in the back seats.)
4. Now Josias he looked on me long and hard. "You want me to say different? You want me dead?" (p. 22)
(Josias has to lie about his job to protect his life. The white men in town get angry whenever a black person accomplishes something the white men can't. To the men in that town, getting a job during the Great Depression is an extraordinary feat. Josias, like other black men, has to be meek and play to the white men's sense of superiority in order to survive.)
5. I know'd I wasn't welcome. All I wanted was to be friends with them Logans.(p. 44)
(Jeremy is curious about the Logans and likes them for who they are, without considering their race. However, his friendship is not entirely welcomed. Stacey, who is old enough to recognize racism in his community, is wary of becoming a friend to Jeremy. Having been a victim of racism, Stacey seems to want to keep a distance from other whites but it is not clear whether Jeremy understands

Stacey's feelings.)

6. To me, folks was just folks, but Pa he jus' ain't stood for no wrong way of thinking, so I ain't spoke up.
(Jeremy is afraid of his physically abusive and racist father. When Jeremy's father tells him that blacks are different from whites and he should not be friendly to blacks, Jeremy does not understand. Jeremy prefers to see people as they really are, instead of judging people by their skin color.)
7. Story was it had been built way before the War 'tween the States and it looked like it ain't had much work done on it since.
(The bridge over the Rosa Lee creek was an old one in need of serious repair. The war Jeremy mentions is the Civil War. As a bridge built decades ago, it is certainly in no shape to support modern vehicles. Here and also later when Cassie mentions that the bridge can easily collapse because it is so weak, the author uses the literary technique of foreshadowing to suggest an imminent disaster with the bridge.)
8. "Now, Rudine, you know I can't let you try on that hat," said Mr. John. (p. 10)
(John Wallace treats his black customers poorly knowing that they could not complain. He would not let Rudine try on a hat unless she buys it right away. In contrast, Wallace urges Miz Hattie, an old white widow, to try on the hat without obligation to buy it. It is also likely that the Wallace store is the only store in town and thus blacks are obliged to shop there. This fact, coupled with Wallace's racism, are reasons for his arrogance towards black customers.)
9. "Wasn't...wasn't 'nough room for everybody, and the bus driver, he... he done made all the colored folks get off."
(p. 56)
(Jeremy at first could not convince the Logan children that their grandmother was not on the bus. Stacey and the rest had seen her get on the bus. However, when Jeremy explains that the black passengers were told to leave because there were not enough seats for the white passengers, Stacey understood right away. Although Cassie is still a bit confused, Stacey understands clearly that the driver's racism has inadvertently saved his grandmother.)
10. Me and Josias, we was there all the day.
(The story apparently ends on an upbeat note. The closing image of the story is not just Jeremy and Josias working together but also black and white people in the town united to help victims of the bus accident. Despite the disaster, the author suggests that blacks and whites can work and live well together. The sadness of the story is tempered by this hopeful ending. The ending suggests that Jeremy will indeed grow up to be a compassionate and kind person.)

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgement is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-4 Literal Level

1. What does Jeremy tell the Logan children about their

grandmother after the bus crashes?

- (Jeremy tells the panic-stricken Logan children that their grandmother was not on the bus when it crashed. At first, the children do not believe Jeremy. But when Jeremy explains that some white passengers arrived late and the bus driver forced the black passengers to disembark to make room for the new arrivals, the Logan children rush home to find their grandmother.)
2. Why does Josias want to catch a bus to Natchez Trace?
(Josias needs to catch a bus that day because he has been promised a job with a lumber company if he can make it to Natchez Trace immediately. During the Depression, jobs were scarce and therefore, the trip was an important one for Josias to make.)
 3. Why are the Logan children bringing milk to Miz Georgia?
(The Logans, although descendants of black slaves, are land owners and are comparatively better off than many of their white neighbors. They have healthy cows and plenty of milk. The children are delivering milk to a less fortunate neighbor.)
 4. Why does Cassie tell her grandmother to sit at the front of the bus? What does Cassie not understand?
(Cassie, too young to know all about the rules of segregation in public places, wants her grandmother to sit near the front so that she can have a better view. Under Jim Crow laws, blacks must sit at the back of the bus and use public facilities reserved for blacks only. Cassie is at an age when she is just beginning to understand racism and its effects.)

Questions 5-7 Interpretive Level

5. Why does Jeremy feel bad about his father's attitudes concerning African-Americans?
(Answers will vary. As Jeremy explains, "folks was just folks." (p. 51) Jeremy likes to consider people not by the color of their skin but by their character. He enjoys the company of Josias, a black adult, as much as he does Grace-Ann, a four-year-old white girl. He simply likes them because they are all good people. He is therefore confused, embarrassed, and saddened when his father and other whites judge others by their race.)
6. Explains why Miz Hattie shakes her head when Cassie creates a scene on the bus when she asks her grandmother to take a seat reserved for whites.
(Answers will vary. We know that Jeremy thinks highly of Miz Hattie and she appears to be a gentle and genuinely nice person. However, the author left it ambiguous regarding whether Miz Hattie is sympathetic to the plight of the blacks in her community the way we know Jeremy is. Miz Hattie shaking her head can be interpreted as her disapproval of racial segregation on buses or her displeasure at Cassie for creating a scene. We would like to think that since Jeremy holds her in high regard, she does not hold racist views. But the story is unclear about her views.)
7. Contrast Jeremy with his brothers R.W. and Melvin.
(R.W. and Melvin are "man-size" while Jeremy is only ten. Jeremy doesn't feel like he is old enough to hang out with his brothers and father. Instead he sits outside the Wallace store and watches the roads. More importantly, we sense that Jeremy doesn't like the attitudes of his brothers who

have grown to be like his father. R.W. and Melvin are happy to see their father humiliate Josias. On a previous occasion, his brothers joined his father to beat up a black man who dared stand up for himself and argued with the white men in the community.)

Questions 8-9 Critical Level

8. Why does the author, a black person, choose to tell the story from the perspective of a young white boy?

(Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable answers. Mildred D. Taylor has written several stories about the Logan children but *Mississippi Bridge* was the first to tell a story from the perspective of a white person. There could be many reasons why the author used a ten-year old white boy as the narrator, such as.

- allowing the author to portray the feelings of a white person sympathetic to the plight of African-Americans
- attempting to show how not all whites conform to racist views
- trying to understand the experiences of another person who is of a different gender, age, and race.)

9. Is there a moral lesson in *Mississippi Bridge*? If yes, does religion play a role in it?

(Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable answers. We are not sure whether the author wants us to connect divine punishment with the disaster in the story. We are also not sure if the deaths must be interpreted as punishment for the town's racist views. Young Jeremy is confused about why, if God is punishing the white passengers for allowing the black passengers to be forced out of the bus, Miz Hattie and Grace-Ann are "punished" as well. Rather than presenting this story as a morality tale (i.e., bad things happen to bad people), Taylor is more concerned about presenting the injustice of racism, segregation, and discrimination. The bus disaster itself is almost incidental to the moral of the story.)

Questions 10-11 Creative Level

10. Write an epilogue for *Mississippi Bridge*. What does Jeremy learn from this disaster? Do you think racial relations will improve after this nightmare?
11. Write a skit dramatizing the difficulties of growing up as a minority in the South during the 1930s. What kind of experiences would an African-American undergo in everyday life? How would an average white Southerner expect a black person to behave?

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Social Science and History

1. Investigate the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the roles Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King played in the Civil Rights movement. How was the bus boycott a key event in the fight against segregation?
2. Write a report about the difference between a sharecropper and a tenant farmer in rural America of the 1930s.
3. Who was Jefferson Davis? Why is Jeremy's school named after him?

Math and Science

1. Chart the price of cotton from 1929 to 1939. Between the

beginning of 1929 and the end of 1932, how much did the price of cotton change? (Extra credit. **Social Science:** What effect did this price drop have on rural Mississippi?)

2. Investigate why planting is done in the spring. What are the major crops planted in Mississippi?

Language Arts

1. Create a list of Jeremy's non-standard English sentences. Why does the author have Jeremy make grammatical "mistakes"? Do these "mistakes" follow a pattern? If so, what kinds of grammatical "mistakes" does Jeremy repeat?
2. Create a different ending for *Mississippi Bridge*. Would you prefer a happier ending? Why or why not?
3. Compose a definition of racism. Has the meaning of racism changed in the last fifty years?
4. Pick a scene involving Josias and retell it from his perspective. How does one person's race affect his or her perspective of the events in *Mississippi Bridge*?

Art

1. Max Ginsburg created the illustrations for *Mississippi Bridge*. Replace some of his illustrations with some of your own.
2. Use your imagination to draw a map of Jeremy's town indicating the following locations: the Rosa Lee creek, the Wallace store, the wooden bridge, the church, the Jefferson Davis school, the Logan farm, and Jeremy's house.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of racism in *Mississippi Bridge*. What are some blatant acts of racism? How are some acts of racism more subtle?
2. Make a list of adjectives describing Jeremy. Make another list describing Stacey. Compare how the two characters are similar and how they are different.
3. Compose a scene in which Jeremy explains to Rudine and her mother what happened to the bus.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine Jeremy as an adult. How do you project his future? Discuss what kind of person he would become.
2. Discuss how people become racists. Why do R.W. and Melvin adopt the racist views of their father while Jeremy does not?
3. Summarize *Mississippi Bridge* with a flow chart showing the important events in the story.
4. Discuss the characters of Miz Hattie and Grace-Ann. Why do you think they have been included in the story? What roles do they play to make the story a more complete one?
5. Imagine how the town would get along after this bus accident. Do you think this disaster would unite all the townspeople?
6. Locate and read the book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* which depicts life of sharecroppers in the rural South during the Great Depression. Is *Mississippi Bridge* an accurate portrait of rural life in the South? Why or why not?
7. Write an obituary for Miz Hattie. How would you describe her?
8. Imagine yourself as an adult living in Jeremy's town. What advice would you give him to guide him through this con-

fusing and troubling period of his life?

9. What would you do if you were in Jeremy's place? How would you help ease racial tension in this town? How would you fight racism?

LITERARY TERMS AND LANGUAGE

Students should be aware of the following literary terms and language. The notes below may help students better understand the work.

Historic milieu is the setting of events within a time period. This story is set in rural Mississippi around 1931, possibly the spring of 1932. (We know this because Jeremy mentions that cotton prices has been dropping for more than two years since the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929.) Until the 1960s, Jim Crow laws were in effect in the South and these laws relegated blacks to second class status. No matter what their financial status, blacks in the South could not attend the same schools and colleges as whites, could not take seats reserved for whites on buses, and were generally denied their civil rights. The Great Depression lowered the standard of living for many Americans, black and white. Many whites in Jeremy's town therefore resent the Logans for being "better off" than themselves. In economically bad times, minorities often become an even greater target of racism.

First person narrative. *Mississippi Bridge* is told from the point of view of Jeremy Simms, using the first person. A first person narrative can often be powerful because it brings the reader inside the mind and feelings of the narrator. We understand Jeremy's pain, embarrassment, and sadness better because of the personal nature of this narrative.

Language. This short story is told in non-standard English. Young Jeremy does not speak "normal" standard English. Instead he speaks a dialect of English. From the perspective of standard English, he makes many grammatical "mistakes"—for example, his verb conjugations are wrong. However, Jeremy's violations of English grammar seems to follow a pattern. He often uses only the past participle such as "I gone" or "I seen" in describing his actions rather than "I have gone" or "I have seen." Thus, even in his violations of grammar rules, Jeremy follows the grammatical rules of his dialect. Some linguists do not consider his English improper because in effect he follows the rules of grammar of his Southern dialect.

OTHER WORKS BY MILDRED D. TAYLOR

The Friendship and The Gold Cadillac
Let the Circle be Unbroken
The Road to Memphis
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Song of The Trees
The Well

RELATED READING

Haskins, Jim. *The Day Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Shot: A Photo History of the Civil Rights Movement*
Myers, Walter Dean. *Now Is Your Time! The African-American Struggle for Freedom*
Siegel, Beatrice. *The Year They Walked: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*

Tate, Eleanora E. *Thank You, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!*
Tate, Eleanora E. *Front Porch Stories at the One-Room School*

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Moore, Emily R., "The Bookshelf: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*," *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, Vol. 7, 1976.
Something About the Author, Vol. 70, Detroit: Gale, 1993.
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VOCABULARY TEST

Using the terms below, complete each quote from *Mississippi Bridge*. You may use each term more than once.

backlip
burlap
clan

clenched
curious
Depression

hollering
mite
potbellied

primping
quilted
riled

rukus
satchel
slur

1. Pa and R.W. And Melvin and the other men who gathered there would sit around that old _____ stove.
2. Miz Hattie seemed a _____ displeased cause she gave a frown.
3. I wasn't sure if that was a _____ against my daddy.
4. It wasn't right and I just know'd that, but I ain't never let Pa know how I was feeling, cause Pa he could get awful _____ and _____ quick.
5. By the time I got to the store, I found there was a bit of a _____ going on.
6. The bus was still there, and the bus driver was _____ to high heaven.
7. "Well, it sure is pretty all right," confessed Miz Hattie, _____ at herself in the mirror.
8. Cotton had been down lower than ever for a long spell—more than two years—ever since the _____ come in '29 and everything hit bottom.
9. Stacey, he was lugging a _____ sack.
10. Ma and my sister, Lillian Jean, they stayed inside and cooked and sewed and ironed and _____ and cleaned.
11. Their grandmama was carrying a _____ in one hand and an umbrella held over herself with the other.
12. Standing there in the aisle was more of that Amos _____.
13. "Don't you _____ me!" He boxed my ears real good.
14. Cassie, I had learned a long time ago, was a mighty _____ girl, so I wasn't hardly surprised when she leaned down to get a better look, then lay right flat down on the bridge and peered through that hole.
15. His mouth was _____ tight.

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 Points)

Match the following descriptions with a character. Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided. You may use some of the answers more than once.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| A. Cassie | C. Josias | E. John Wallace | G. Rudine | I. Miz Hattie |
| B. Stacey | D. Jeremy | F. Uncle Moses Thompson | H. Grace-Ann | J. The Bus Driver |

- ___ 1. owner of the general store.
- ___ 2. was not allowed to try on a hat in the store.
- ___ 3. is Miz Hattie's granddaughter.
- ___ 4. does odd jobs for Miz Hattie.
- ___ 5. takes Grace-Ann to see her mother.
- ___ 6. has a job offer from a lumber company.
- ___ 7. is the narrator of the story.
- ___ 8. is the oldest of the Logan children.
- ___ 9. forces all black passengers to get off the bus.
- ___ 10. is the only girl among the Logan children in this story.

Part II: Short Answer (20 Points)

Write a word or phrase to complete each sentence.

- 1. The story opens with Jeremy watching _____.
- 2. R.W. and Melvin, along with Jeremy's father, like to spend time at _____.
- 3. Grace-Ann shares her candy with _____.
- 4. John Wallace encourages Miz Hattie to try on _____.
- 5. Once on the bus, the black passengers are required to sit at _____.
- 6. The Logan children run an errand for their grandmother by delivering _____.
- 7. Cassie gets down against the wooden planks of the bridge to get a closer look at _____.
- 8. Jeremy rings the church bell to notify the _____.
- 9. Josias gets into the creek to pull _____.
- 10. After being denied seats on the bus, Rudine and her mother _____.

Part III: True/False (20 Points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- 1. Rudine buys a hat at the Wallace store.
- 2. Jeremy likes to sit outside the Wallace store.
- 3. Jeremy goes fishing with Josias sometimes.
- 4. Josias has been offered a job.
- 5. John Wallace apologizes to Josias at the end of the story.
- 6. The Logan children accompany their grandmother on her bus trip.
- 7. Grace-Ann is Miz Hattie's daughter.
- 8. Jeremy's father tells his son to go ring the bell.
- 9. Miz Hattie was once Jeremy's teacher.
- 10. Jeremy likes the Logan children.

Part IV Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare Stacey and Cassie. How are they different in their understanding of racism.
2. Do you think the bus accident is a punishment for the town's racism? Why or why not?
3. Describe Jeremy's attitude towards the Logans and Josias.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part 1: Setting Identification (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with the setting. Choose from the list below. You may use each location more than once.

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| A. The bridge | D. Jackson | G. Jefferson Davis |
| B. Wallace Store | E. Church | H. Miz Georgia |
| C. Wallace porch | F. Natchez Trace | I. Rosa Lee |

- ___ 1. where the white men in the town like to spend time during the rainy season
- ___ 2. the creek which became a dangerous watery grave during the heavy rains
- ___ 3. where Jeremy went to ring the bell
- ___ 4. town from where the bus came from to pick up Josias
- ___ 5. where Josias has been promised a job
- ___ 6. school where Jeremy was a student
- ___ 7. where the Logan children headed to deliver milk
- ___ 8. where Miz Hattie was trying on a new hat
- ___ 9. where Jeremy sits to watch the world go by
- ___ 10. where Cassie got down to watch the scene below

Part II Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the correct answer.

1. The bus driver physically kicks (Rudine, Grandma Caroline, Josias) out of the bus.
2. Jeremy watches (Josias, John Wallace, Stacey) pull Grace-Ann's body out of the water.
3. (Rudine, Grace-Ann, Melvin) offers Jeremy some candy.
4. (Josias, Rudine, Stacey) tells Jeremy that the cause of the accident is divine will.
5. (Rudine, Miz Hattie, Grandma Caroline) buys a hat.
6. (Miz Georgia, Rudine, Jeremy's mother) needs milk from the Logans.
7. (Josias, Jeremy, Stacey) runs back to the store to tell the men about the disaster.
8. Jeremy enjoys fishing with (Josias, his brothers, his father).
9. (John Wallace, Jeremy's father, Grace-Ann) encourages Miz Hattie to try on the hat.
10. (A taxi driver, Miz Hattie's husband, Uncle Moses Thompson) drives Miz Hattie and Grace-Ann to the Wallace store.

Part III Identification (20 points)

Place an **X** by any statement that is true of Jeremy.

- 1. likes the Logan children
- 2. is afraid of his father
- 3. won't help Josias pull bodies out of the water
- 4. stays at home during the rainy season
- 5. goes to school with Shorty Amos
- 6. follows the Logans all the way to Miz Georgia
- 7. takes a trip to Jackson
- 8. tells Grandma Caroline to move to the back of the bus
- 9. helps Miz Hattie with her luggage
- 10. phones to tell his mother about the accident.

Part IV Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Jeremy feels guilty about his father's racism while R.W. And Melvin do not.
2. In what ways are the characters in this novel realistic and credible?
3. Discuss how the younger Logan children look to Stacey for guidance and leadership.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. potbellied | 9. burlap |
| 2. mite | 10. quilted |
| 3. slur | 11. satchel |
| 4. riled, riled | 12. clan |
| 5. rukus | 13. backlip |
| 6. hollering | 14. curious |
| 7. primping | 15. clenched |
| 8. Depression | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 Points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. C |
| 2. G | 7. D |
| 3. H | 8. B |
| 4. F | 9. J |
| 5. I | 10. A |

Part II: Short Answer (20 Points)

Answers may vary.

1. the roads and the rain
2. the Wallace store
3. Jeremy
4. the hat
5. the back of the bus
7. the flowing water below
8. townspeople of the accident
9. bodies out of the water
10. walked home

Part III: True/False (20 Points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. G |
| 2. I | 7. H |
| 3. E | 8. B |
| 4. D | 9. C |
| 5. F | 10. A |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Josias | 6. Miz Georgia |
| 2. Josias | 7. Jeremy |
| 3. Grace-Ann | 8. Josias |
| 4. Josias | 9. John Wallace |
| 5. Miz Hattie | 10. Uncle Moses Thompson |

Part III Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. X | 6. |
| 2. X | 7. |
| 3. | 8 |
| 4. | 9. X |
| 5. X | 10 |

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.



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