



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

by Mildred D. Taylor

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Spunky, independent Cassie Logan, age nine, narrates events during nearly a year in her close-knit black family's life in the rural South in the 1930s. The Logans, unlike most black farmers in the area, own their land, 400 acres. The land is both the source and the symbol of the family's strength. For the past three years, the cotton crop hasn't brought in enough money to pay the mortgage and taxes on the land, so Papa (David) Logan has had to work on the railroad in Louisiana for nine months out of each year to earn the needed money. Meanwhile, Mama (Mary) Logan teaches school and runs the farm, while Big Ma (David Logan's mother) helps with both the field and house work.

As the novel opens, we meet Cassie and her three brothers—responsible Stacey, age 12; sensitive Christopher-John, age 7; and fastidiously neat and clean Little Man, age 6. It is October 1933, the opening day of classes at the black school. As usual, the white school bus driver harasses the Logan children and their glib-talking pseudo-friend T.J. Avery, using his bus to force the black children to leap off the road as they walk to school. At school, Little Man and Cassie both object to the "new" books the children receive—worn-out, dirty discards that the authorities now consider good enough only for "nigras." This gets them in trouble with their teacher, Miss Cocker, but Mama understands why they objected.

Chapter 2

Papa comes home briefly, bringing with him the awesomely large and powerful Mr. Morrison, who lost his job on the railroad for fighting with white men. Cassie rightly suspects Mr. Morrison is joining

the family as protector as well as farm worker; "night men" have just burned three black men for allegedly flirting with a white woman, and another black man has been lynched for being "uppity."

Chapter 3

In rainy late October, the white children's school bus constantly splashes the children with red mud. Stacey leads his siblings in revenge: they secretly dig a ditch across the road, which becomes a deep trench that traps and disables the bus. When the night men ride again shortly after this incident, the children are very afraid that the men are looking to punish someone for the bus accident, but the night riders turn away from the Logan farm.

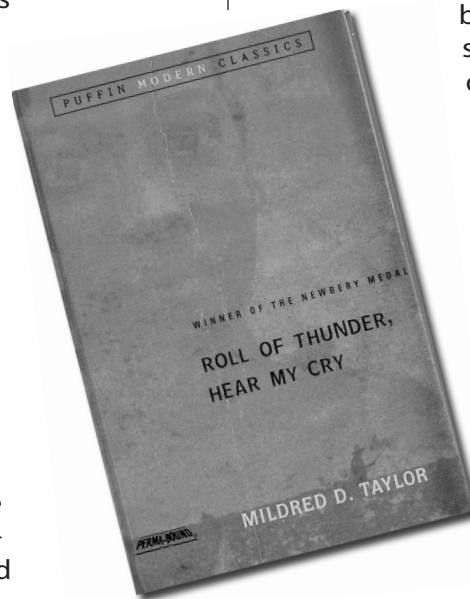
Chapter 4

At school, T.J. plants his cheat notes on Stacey, so Mama (their teacher) must whip Stacey and fail him on the test. After school, Stacey chases T.J. at the Wallace store and fights him, until Mr. Morrison arrives and breaks up the fight. The younger Logans had followed Stacey; however,

both Papa and Mama had forbidden the children to go to the Wallace store, because the Wallaces disrespect black people—and because the Wallaces burned the Berry men. Stacey, in a step toward manhood, tells Mr. Morrison he will voluntarily confess to Mama about the fight and being at the store.

Chapter 5

For the first time, Big Ma allows Cassie (along with Stacey and T.J.) to come with her to the nearby town of Strawberry on market day, and Cassie learns some hard lessons about the place of blacks in Southern white society. At the mercantile (where T.J. longingly admires a pearl-handled pistol), Cassie indignantly objects when the proprietor, Mr. Barnett, turns his attention to each new white cus-



tomers while filling T.J.'s order. For this, Cassie is kicked out of the store. Outside, she bumps into Lillian Jean Simms, a white girl whose father then knocks Cassie off the sidewalk into the street and forces a reluctant, scared, and angry Cassie to say, "I'm sorry, Miz Lillian Jean."

Chapter 6

Papa's older brother, nattily dressed Hammer, arrives from Chicago for Christmas. Hammer is driving a Packard exactly like the one owned by Harlan Granger, the powerful white plantation owner who covets the Logan land because it was Granger land before Reconstruction. Mr. Morrison just barely manages to restrain the hot-tempered Hammer from retaliating against Charlie Simms for hitting Cassie, which would have gotten Hammer killed. Mama explains to Cassie that "in the world outside this house, things are not always as we would have them to be." Cassie and other black people may have to act respectful towards whites, Mama says, but black people reserve their real respect for themselves.

Chapter 7

Stacey allows T.J. to talk him out of a fine coat Uncle Hammer has given him for Christmas. Papa arrives home for the holiday. Mama organizes a boycott of the Wallace store; the Logans and other black families will buy their goods in Vicksburg, their credit backed by the white lawyer from Strawberry, Mr. Jamison. Papa and Mr. Morrison will haul the goods back in the Logans' wagon. This is a risky undertaking. It will anger the dangerous Wallaces as well as the powerful Harlan Granger, who shares in the profits of the Wallace store, where all the local sharecroppers are forced to shop.

Chapter 8

Cassie embarks on a project of pretending to be Lillian Jean's little subservient pet, enticing Lillian Jean to tell Cassie all her own and her friends' secrets. After a month, Cassie thrashes Lillian Jean, who has to keep silent about the whipping so Cassie won't tell all those secrets to everyone. Harlan Granger and Kaleb Wallace visit Mama's schoolroom while she is teaching a true lesson about slavery, for which she is fired. The children find out that T.J. is the real cause of Mama's job loss: angry that Mama caught him cheating on a test and failed him, T.J. has told Kaleb Wallace that

Mrs. Logan is the boycott organizer. T.J. is now ostracized in and out of school.

Chapter 9

Spring arrives; the black school closes so the children can work in the fields. Papa delays going off to his railroad job, worrying about trouble he sees coming. Harlan Granger forces his sharecroppers to drop out of the boycott by threatening to call in all their debts, which they can't pay, if they don't start shopping at the Wallace store again.

One night in early summer while returning from Vicksburg with goods for the seven families still in the boycott, Papa's sabotaged wagon breaks down, and the Wallaces shoot Papa but flee when attacked by Mr. Morrison. Mr. Morrison and Stacey bring Papa home with a superficial wound to the head, and a broken leg.

Chapter 10

Now both Papa and Mama have no jobs, but they figure the family can just get by and meet their mortgage payments until the cotton crop is ready late in August. When August arrives, the bank demands full payment of the balance due on the Logans' mortgage, immediately; Harlan Granger is behind this. Uncle Hammer sells his Packard and provides the needed cash. T.J. shows up briefly at the annual revival in late August with his new "friends," Melvin and R.W. Simms, older white boys who are letting the 14-year-old T.J. hang around with them for their own amusement, a reality which is lost on T.J.

Chapter 11

The novel moves to its climax. A badly beaten T.J. slips into the Logan boys' bedroom that night after the revival and tells his story. The Simms brothers had driven into Strawberry with T.J. and promised him the pearl-handled pistol if he would squeeze through a back window into the closed mercantile and open the doors for them. When Mr. and Mrs. Barnett confronted the masked Simms brothers and the unmasked T.J. in the store, the Simmses knocked out both Barnetts, flee outside, and beat up T.J. to keep him quiet. Stacey, with his younger siblings, helps T.J. home. At the Avery house, the Logan children hide in the woods and watch as white men in a lynch mob headed by the Simms brothers drag all the Averys out and yell that they are going to take T.J. with them, move on to the

Logan farm, and hang T.J., David Logan, and Mr. Morrison.

Chapter 12

Cassie, with her younger brothers, races back home and tells her parents what’s happening. Papa and Mr. Morrison leave with guns to confront the mob as lightning and thunder fill the skies. Then fire breaks out in the cotton field and heads towards the woods. Mama and Big Ma leave to fight the fire. As dawn comes, Cassie learns what has happened: The fire diverted the mob, whose members—along with everyone else in the vicinity—spent the night fighting it, to keep it from spreading for miles around. The sheriff has T.J. in jail. Cassie suddenly understands: Papa set the fire, losing a quarter of the Logans’ cotton crop, to disperse the lynch mob. There will be enough cotton left to make expenses, so the land is saved. However, Jim Lee Barnett has died; T.J. is doomed.

Timeline

- 1865-77** Reconstruction in the South; the Grangers sell 2,000 acres of their land.
- 1887** Paul Edward Logan buys 200 acres of the former Granger land.
- 1910** Paul Edward pays off the mortgage on the 200 acres.
- 1918** Paul Edward buys 200 more acres of former Granger land.
- 1914-18** World War I; military production causes mass black migration from the South to the North, which continues after the war ends.
- 1929** The Great Depression begins.
- 1930** The price of cotton drops.
- 1932** Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected U.S. president.
- 1933** The New Deal begins.
- October** School year begins for Logans and other black students. Night riders become active, and Mr. Morrison joins the family.
- December** Cassie goes to Strawberry and learns hard lessons about the place of black people in Southern society. Uncle Hammer comes for Christmas, and Papa returns from the railroad job.
- 1934** Mama organizes a boycott against the Wallace store, then loses her job. Cassie takes revenge on Lillian Jean Simms.
- spring** School year ends for black students.

Most people drop out of the boycott. Papa is attacked by the Wallaces and injured.

- August** The bank demands full payment of the Logans’ mortgage. T.J. Avery and Simms brothers break into Barnetts’ store. Lynch mob goes after T.J., Papa diverts it by setting fire to the Logans’ cotton field.

Author Sketch



Mildred Taylor was born in 1943 in Jackson, Mississippi. When she was three months old, her father moved the family to Toledo, Ohio, so his two daughters could grow up in an unsegregated (if still prejudiced) community. Each summer, though, the family would return to visit their many relatives in the South, and young Mildred would soak up the lively, proud storytelling of the family history. After attending Toledo public schools, where she was often the only black in college preparatory classes, Taylor went on to the University of Toledo, earning a degree in education in 1965. She then fulfilled a long-held dream, going to Ethiopia as a Peace Corps volunteer. After this, Taylor earned a master’s degree from the University of Colorado, where she also worked to create a black studies program.

Relocating to California, Taylor began writing stories based on her oral family history. In her first novella, *Song of the Trees*, Taylor found an effective voice: feisty, proud, curious Cassie Logan, age nine. *Song* was a tale taken from Taylor’s family history about trees being cut on family land. Taylor continued the Logan saga, with its themes of family unity and pride, love of the land, and racial injustice, in the Newbery winner, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976) and its sequel, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981). *The Road to Memphis* (1992) tells about seventeen-year-old Cassie Logan’s involvement in the civil rights movement, and *The Well* (1995) goes back to David and Hammer Logan’s childhood. Other Taylor books and stories involve characters featured in the Logan series, such as *The Friendship* (featuring the Logan children, Mr. Tom Bee, and the storekeeper John Wallace) and *Mississippi Bridge* (narrated by the white youngster Jeremy Simms), creating a remarkably unified and critically praised body of work.

Critic's Corner

Mildred Taylor has a mission in her writing. In her high school history books, she didn't find the black history and black people she was familiar with. So she decided to paint a picture of the black world she knew and that had been revealed to her through the rich well of family stories. "I wanted to show happy, loved children...I wanted to show a black family united in love and pride, of which the reader would like to be a part" (Newbery acceptance speech). Taylor also says, "I included the teachings of my own childhood, the values and principles by which I and so many other black children were reared, for I wanted to show a family united in love and self-respect, and parents, strong and sensitive, attempting to guide their children successfully, without harming their spirits, through the hazardous maze of living in a discriminatory society" (*Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*, Vol. 25). That Taylor has succeeded fully in her aim is reflected in her legions of readers, admiring critics, and many awards, including the Newbery Medal for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

A mark of the success with which Taylor has incorporated vividly remembered family tales into *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is seen in the *Horn Book* comment, "The events and settings of the powerful novel are presented with such verisimilitude and the characters are so carefully drawn that one might assume the book to be autobiographical, if the author were not so young." *Horn Book* continued, "There is little relief from the tension of frightening events, and the reader is able to identify with Cassie's frustration and anger." *Booklist* added, "This [novel] grows with convincing detail of character and situation, punctuated by tension-building incidents....Entirely through its own internal development, the novel shows the rich inner rewards of black pride, love, and independence despite the certainty of outer defeat." *School Library Journal* concluded, "Readers will undoubtedly be propelled by the forceful momentum of mounting conflicts."

Other Books by Mildred Taylor

Song of the Trees (1975)
Let the Circle Be Unbroken (1981)
The Friendship (1987)
The Gold Cadillac (1987)

The Road to Memphis (1990)
Mississippi Bridge (1990)
The Well: David's Story (1995)
Land (2001)

Related Reading

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
William H. Armstrong, *Souther and Sour Land*
Bebe Moore Campbell, *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*
Pat Edwards, *Nelda*
Ernest J. Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*
Rudolpho Gonzales, *I Am Joaquin*
Alex Haley, *Roots*
Dirlie Herhily, *Ludie's Song*
William H. Hooks, *Circle of Fire*
Irene Hunt, *No Promises in the Wind*
Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Mildred Lee, *The Rock and the Willow*
Lois Lenski, *Strawberry Girl*
Sylvia Lopez-Medina, *Cantora*
Walter Dean Meyers, *The Glory Fields*
Nicolasa Mohr, *Felita*
Yvette Moore, *Freedom Songs*
Vaunda Nelson, *Mayfield Crossing*
Violet Olson, *View from the Pighthouse Roof*
Robert Newton Peck, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*
Ouida Sebestyn, *Words by Heart*
Ethel Footman Smothers, *Down in Piney Woods*
Crystal Thrasher, *A Taste of Daylight*
Leon Tillage, *Leon's Story*
Yoshiko Uchida, *A Jar of Dreams*
Brenda Wilkinson, *Ludell*
Richard Wright, *Black Boy*
Laurence Yep, *Child of the Owl*

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Taylor, Mildred D., "Growing Up with Stories." *Booklist*,
December 1, 1990, pp. 740-41
———, "Newbery Award Acceptance." *Horn Book*,
August 1977, pp. 401-09

Mildred Taylor videos:
Meet the Newbery Author: Mildred Taylor (American School
Publications, 21 min.)
Mildred D. Taylor: Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Thames
TV/Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 26 min.)
Audio version of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Recorded
Books (6 cassettes, 8 hours)

General Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of relations between blacks and whites in the rural South in the 1930s
2. To examine the role and importance of family in one's life
3. To consider the strength and sense of continuity that family landownership can convey
4. To analyze the sources and effects of racial prejudice and injustice, and ways to deal with this
5. To identify ways in which people can maintain pride and dignity in a setting designed to strip it away
6. To consider the forces that can draw a young person into a changed and then possibly unlawful lifestyle
7. To observe the effects of the hard times of the Depression on people's lives in the 1930s

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the instances of injustice and indignity suffered by the black characters in the novel
2. To understand the role that ownership of the land plays in the Logans' lives and in the events of the novel
3. To note the ways in which Cassie matures and gains a sometimes unhappy knowledge of the realities of life in her world
4. To comprehend the ways in which the Logans are able to deal with the constant indignities and injustices of their lives and yet maintain a deep pride and dignity
5. To analyze the ways in which the Logan family's unity and love and pride maintain and support each family member
6. To study the ways in which T.J.'s character draws him into deep trouble
7. To analyze the meaning of the novel's title
8. To gain a better understanding of the novel's rich vocabulary and its use of nonstandard language
9. To understand the economic forces that affect the Logans, the sharecroppers, the storekeepers, and the plantation owners

Literary Terms and Applications

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present these terms:

Autobiographical Novel: a novel that draws largely from the author's own life experiences. In this case, Mildred Taylor creates a variance of the autobiographical novel, basing *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* on the life experiences of members of her family as related in the many family stories she heard from relatives while growing up.

Dialect: nonstandard language, often language characteristic of a particular region. The characters in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* speak in a rural Southern dialect of the 1930s.

First-Person Narration: the telling of a novel or short story from the point of view of only one person. In this novel, Cassie Logan relates the events, so we know how she thinks and feels about what happens. Ask the students how the stories would be different in another voice, especially that of an impersonal narrator. Comprehension Study activity #13 asks students to tell events of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* as seen from another character's point of view.

Foreshadowing: hints or suggestions about something that will occur later in a novel. This novel contains several instances of foreshadowing, as in T.J.'s recurring expressed admiration for the pearl-handled pistol that will be his downfall, and the repeated instances of violence against blacks by the night men, which foreshadow the violent confrontation at the novel's climax. Comprehension Study activity #10 asks students to identify instances of foreshadowing in the novel.

Historical Fiction: a narrative that presents an imaginative series of events occurring in an actual historical setting. The characters are usually both fictional and historical. The author often does considerable research to incorporate much accurate everyday historical detail into the novel. In Taylor's case, she bases her novels and stories on tales she heard from members of her own family, especially her father, with the aim of presenting young readers with a picture of life for black people in the era before the civil rights movement.

The Importance of Setting

The novel is set in rural Mississippi in the 1930s, the Depression era. Many scenes take place in the Logan family home and on their farm of four hundred acres. The wooden house surrounded by porches was built by Cassie's grandfather and features a warm, comfortable main room with family portraits and furniture built by hand. This room doubles as Mama and Papa's bedroom. The house also includes the kitchen and two other bedrooms, one for Cassie and Big Ma and the other for the boys. Cassie frequently sneaks out of bed and across the porch to whisper with the boys in their room.

Also on the farm are a barn for the animals and the farm wagon, a tenant shack where Mr. Morrison stays, the forest that was the focus of *Song of the Trees*, and the cotton field that produces the all-important cash crop and the fire that diverts the lynch mob. Other major scenes are set at Great Faith School, where Cassie and Little Man object to the worn-out, discarded reading books and where Harlan Granger and Kaleb Wallace come to observe Mama teaching and have her fired.

The dirt road that the Logan and Avery children walk to school provides the arena where the white students' school bus pursues and torments the black children, coating them with red dust or red mud as the season dictates, and the road is also the scene of the bus' downfall as engineered by the Logan children. The nearby town of Strawberry—specifically Barnett's store and the sidewalk and street outside it—is the setting where Cassie learns her first painful lessons about the place of black people like herself in the world outside her safe and loving family home and black community. Barnett's store holds the object of T.J.'s desire, the pearl-handled pistol, and the store is also the place where the Simms brothers, accompanied by T.J., confront and assault the Barnetts, an action that causes the mob to attack the Averys' home and nearly lynch T.J.



Cross-Curricular Sources

- James Agee and Walker Evans, *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*
American Journey—History in Your Hands: The African-American Experience (CD-ROM)
- Michael L. Cooper, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Great Black Migration*
- W. E. B. DuBois, *Writings*
Eyes on the Prize (6-part series, PBS Video)
- Virginia Hamilton, *Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom*
- James Haskins, *The Scottsboro Boys*
- William Loren Katz, *An Album of the Great Depression*
- Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*
- Ellen Levine, *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*
- Patricia and Frederick McKissack, *The Civil Rights Movement in America* and *Taking a Stand Against Racism and Racial Discrimination*
- Milton Meltzer, *The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words*
- Walter Dean Meyers, *Now Is Your Time: The African-American Struggle for Freedom*
- Daphne Muse, *Prejudice: Stories About Hate, Ignorance, Revelation, and Transformation*
- Beatrice Siegel, *The Year They Walked: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*
- Jerry Silverman, *Just Listen to This Song I'm Singing: African-American History Through Song*
- Mildred Pitts Walter, *Mississippi Challenge*
- Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson, *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil Rights Days*
- Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years* (companion to the PBS series)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* should include these aspects.

Themes

- pride
- land
- family unity
- dignity
- family love
- injustice
- racism

Motifs

- childish revenge
- coping during hard times
- Southern foods and cooking
- vicissitudes of cotton farming
- cheating on school tests
- covetousness
- childhood lessons learned

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the quote in context if you wish.

1. "...Mama's gonna wear you out." (p. 4)
(Cassie is telling Little Man that their mother is going to give him a hickory-stick switching if Little Man's slow walking to school in an attempt to stay clean makes all the Logan children late for school.)
2. ...vast farming fields, worked by a multitude of sharecropping families... (p. 6)
(In the sharecropping system of farming, a tenant farmer gets credit for tools, seed, food, and living quarters from a landlord and in return works the land, receiving an agreed share of the value of the crop minus the charges that have accumulated. Sharecropping was common in the rural South of the 1930s. Most of the Logans' black neighbors are sharecroppers.)
3. The Grangers had sold it [the land] during Reconstruction to a Yankee for tax money. (p. 6)
(Reconstruction was the period after the U.S. Civil War, from 1865 to 1877, when Northern soldiers and politicians oversaw the rebuilding of the South. During this period, many Southern families had no money to pay their land taxes and so had to sell all or part of their land, often to a transplanted Northerner, or Yankee, as the Grangers were forced to do.)
4. But there was a mortgage on the two hundred acres bought in 1918 and there were taxes on the full four hundred. (p. 6)
(This is the crux of the Logans' economic problem. Paul Edward took out a loan—a mortgage—in order to buy the second two hundred acres. The Logans must make monthly payments to repay the mortgage amount plus interest. They must also pay local taxes on the full four hundred acres each year. If any one of these payments is late, white bankers and government officials

could use that as an opportunity to seize the Logans' land for nonpayment, which is what Harlan Granger would love to see happen-then he could get the land back.)

5. "Come Monday, we'd better haul it [the cotton] up to the Granger place and have it ginned." (p. 33)
(Once the Logans have harvested their cotton, they have to have the crop ginned-put through a cotton gin, a machine that automatically separates the cotton fiber from its seeds.)
6. "Heard tell they lynched a boy a few days ago at Crosston...." "Sayin' they'd do it again if some other uppity nigger get out of line." (p. 40)
(This illustrates the precarious status of blacks in the South at this time. A black who doesn't act subservient toward whites is considered "uppity" and subject to a possible lynching-a killing by a mob of whites, outside the law. At the novel's end, a lynch mob goes after T.J. for what happens at Barnett's store, and the mob almost goes after David Logan as well, for being an "uppity" black man with the nerve to own land and behave with pride and dignity.)
7. "Miz Logan, ...you know I feels the same way you do 'bout them low-down Wallaces, but it ain't easy to jus' stop shoppin' there. They overcharges me and I has to pay them high interest, but I gots credit there 'cause Mr. Montier signs for me." (p. 99)
(This shows how black sharecroppers are entirely within the economic control of the white landowners and storekeepers. Mr. Turner depends on credit at the store to buy the necessities of life for his family, because he has no cash until his crop comes in. The only way Mr. Turner can get credit is if his white landlord signs for him, guaranteeing that Mr. Turner will pay his debt. Then, since Mr. Turner can't shop anywhere else, the Wallaces overcharge him and charge a lot of interest on what Mr. Turner owes them. When the crop does come in, Mr. Turner has to give a large share to the landlord, Mr. Montier, then pay his inflated credit bill at the Wallace store, and then even pay Mr. Montier extra for signing for his credit.)
8. "You think my brother died and I got my leg half blown off in their German war to have some red-neck knock Cassie around anytime it suits him?" (p. 124)
(Uncle Hammer is referring to World War I, in which he got wounded and their brother was killed. Hammer expresses the anger many black WWI veterans felt when, after risking their lives to fight for their country, they returned to the United States and had to face discrimination and prejudice instead of honor for their service.)
9. "Don't forget that Harlan leases that store land to the Wallaces and gets a hefty percentage of its revenue." (p. 163)
(Harlan Granger has an interest in stopping the boycott of the Wallace store, because he makes good money from the store-he charges the Wallaces rent for the land the store is located on, and he takes a percentage of the profits the Wallaces make by running the store.)
10. "...You're pointing a finger right at the Wallaces with this boycott business." (p. 164)
(A boycott is an organized refusal to have dealings with a person, business, or organization, usually to express disapproval or to force some type of change. Mary Logan has organized a boycott of the Wallace store by local blacks because it is widely known, though not spoken about, that the Wallaces spearheaded the horrifying burnings of the three Berry men.)
11. "I got too many worries of my own to worry 'bout Cassie Uncle Tomming Lillian Jean." (p. 173)
("Uncle Tomming" means acting eagerly and overly subservient to whites. Cassie is pretending to be Lillian Jean's docile little black pet in order to learn enough of Lillian Jean's secrets so she can then fight the white girl and blackmail her into saying nothing about the fight.)
12. "Said we can't pay our debts, they gonna have the sheriff out to get us...put us onto the chain gang to work it off." (p. 204)
(Black people who couldn't pay their debts would be put in jail and then sent out to do hard laboring jobs on a chain gang-a group of prisoners chained together by the legs as they worked. This threat is too much, and forces many participants in the boycott to withdraw.)
13. On the third Sunday of August the annual revival began. (p. 233)
(A revival is usually a very emotional evangelistic religious meeting, or series of meetings. In Cassie's rural area, the annual revival is a social as well as religious event, bringing the black farm families together in a serious and also very enjoyable celebration.)
14. "I say what we oughta do is take him [T.J.] on down the road and take care of that big black giant of a nigger at the same time!" "And why not that boy he working for too?" (p. 255)
(In this exchange, the Wallaces are turning the attention of the lynch mob toward the Logans. The "big black giant of a nigger" is Mr. Morrison, and "that boy he working for" is David Logan-"boy" being the derogatory, slighting term whites used for black men.)

Comprehension Study

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

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. How did the Logans come to own four hundred acres of land? What threatens their ownership of the land?

(During Reconstruction, the Grangers had to sell off two thousand acres of their land. When Reconstruction ended, the Yankee who had bought the Granger land resold it in various parcels. Paul Edward Logan, Cassie's grandfather, bought two hundred acres of this land. He paid off the mortgage on it in 1910 and then bought two hundred more acres of former Granger land from the Jamisons in 1918. In order to keep the land, the Logan family must earn enough money, after basic living expenses, to pay the real estate taxes and make the mortgage payments. Papa's job on the railroad provides the tax and mortgage money. Harlan Granger is determined to get the Logan acres back and is constantly trying to buy the land or get it from the bank or local government if the Logans fail to make any mortgage or tax payments.)

2. Compare the black and the white schools that the children in the novel attend. Why are the differences between the two so striking? *(White children attend Jefferson Davis County School—named after the president of the Confederate States of America. It is a large white building with an expansive front lawn and a wide sports field surrounded by tiers of benches. Black children attend Great Faith Elementary and Secondary School, a collection of four weather-beaten wooden houses on stilts of brick with a crabgrass lawn trimmed by the caretaker's cow. The white school is well funded by the county, and two yellow school buses transport its students. The black school is barely funded at all by the county; it has inadequate supplies of almost everything, including books. Children walk for as much as an hour or more to attend the black school; the county does not provide buses for black students. Because black students need to work in the cotton fields, Great Faith School opens in October and dismisses in late March; students at Jefferson Davis attend from late August until mid-May. The differences reflect the institutionalized racism of the times; state and local governments provided black children with the bare minimum in all aspects of education, part of the low status and bars to opportunity for all black people in the South of the 1930s.)*

3. What instances of injustice against black people do you find in the novel?

(Such instances abound, woven intrinsically into the fabric of the story. Instances include: the disparity between the educational opportunities for black and white students; the harassment of the Logan and Avery children by the white school bus driver; the night riders burning the Berry men, tarring and feathering Mr. Tatum, and brutalizing the Averys; sharecroppers being eternally in debt to the plantation and store owners; Big Ma's wagon being parked in the back of the farm market field; Mr. Barnett waiting on white customers ahead of blacks in his store; Mr. Simms pushing Cassie off the sidewalk and forcing her to apologize to "Miz" Lillian Jean; unfairly low wages paid to blacks; the bank calling the mortgage loan on the Logans before it is really due; Mama Logan losing her job because of teaching real black history and because of leading the boycott; the attack on Papa Logan by the Wallaces in the night; and the Simms brothers being able to blame the robbery and attack on the Barnetts on T.J. and incite a lynch mob to go after T.J. and, almost, Mr. Morrison and David Logan.)

4. Why does Mama Logan instigate a boycott against the Wallace store? Why is it risky for people to join the boycott? Why does the boycott collapse?

(At first, Mama simply forbids her children to go to the store, because the Wallaces don't treat black people fairly. But when the Wallaces burn the three Berry men, laughing openly about it, Mama decides to take strong action. She persuades other black families to do their shopping in Vicksburg, with Mr. Jamison backing their credit and David Logan and Mr. Morrison making the overnight trip in the family wagon to shop from people's lists and haul the goods back home. Being a part of the boycott is risky because it will anger the plantation owners that the black sharecroppers are dependent on. The boycott is successful at first, but then the plantation owners turn up the heat: if their sharecroppers don't go back to shopping at the Wallace store or the mercantile in Strawberry, the owners will kick the sharecroppers off their land and insist on the sharecroppers paying all their debts—which the sharecroppers couldn't do, so they'd end up on the chain gang. This tactic forces most people taking part in the boycott to drop out.)

Questions 5-8 (Interpretive Level)

5. In what ways does Cassie mature in the course of the novel?

(During the course of the novel, Cassie has to learn some hard lessons about injustices and inequities that, as a black person in the South of the 1930s, she will have to deal with as an ongoing part of her life. Cassie learns that it is too dangerous to openly defy the dominant white society, that she must accommodate outwardly to unequal treatment and not burst out indignantly

when she encounters prejudice, but she also learns how to hold on to pride and dignity inside herself. She comes to realize how vulnerable non-land-owning black farmers are and, therefore, why the Logans' land ownership is vitally important to her and her family. Through terrifying incidents of violence against blacks, Cassie loses more and more of her childhood innocence and sees that life for blacks in her much-loved rural homeland is tenuous and potentially dangerous indeed. Cassie is still very young, but she is beginning to understand the reasons why the adults around her act in the ways that they do.)

6. Write a character sketch of each member of the Logan family.
(Stacey, age twelve, is maturing into a young man; he is responsible, looking out for his younger siblings, and he also has spells of preadolescence moodiness. Cassie, age nine, is spunky, independent, and hot-tempered; she is beginning to grasp how things work in her society and the motivations behind people's actions. Christopher-John, age seven, is the cheerful peacemaker, always wanting to be on good terms with everyone and always sensitive to other people's feelings. Little Man, age six, takes great pride in being clean and keeping everything he owns clean and neat. David (Papa) Logan and Mary (Mama) Logan are both hard workers and loving parents, full of common sense, pride, and dignity that they carefully instill in each of their children. Big Ma, David's mother, is a tireless field and household worker at age sixty, a solid rock of foundation for the family. Uncle Hammer, David's brother, is very hot-tempered and full of well-deserved personal pride; wisely, he has taken his temper to Chicago so he can earn a decent living and avoid trouble with Southern whites. Mr. Morrison is an honorary member of the family, a hired hand who works for food, shelter, and a sense of family; tremendously big and strong, yet self-restrained, he acts as the Logan family protector as well.)
7. How do the Logans deal with the constant injustices and inequities of their lives and yet maintain a deep pride and dignity?
(The adult Logans have a deep sense of pride in themselves, their family history, and their ownership of the land. They live with the injustices, which they cannot stop, but inside themselves they do not accept that they deserve such treatment. As Mama explains to Cassie, when black people have to address whites as "Miz" or "Mister," they do so not out of respect for the white people, but out of fear of the consequences for not doing so. Respect, Mama says, we reserve for our own people, and for whites who treat us fairly. The Logans respond to white injustices with a quiet calm, an inner rather than an outer defiance. The adults work hard to pass this response strategy on to their children. The children are able to deal with injustices much more directly—booby-trapping the school bus, luring Lillian Jean into her own defeat—but as they get older, they will have to settle more for inner rewards.)

8. What unites the Logan family and keeps its members strong?
(The Logans are united by a deep sense of family love and unity and loyalty, plus a cherished story-telling tradition that celebrates the many aspects of family history. In times of crisis or difficulty, each family member can count on all the others for loving support, understanding, and whatever help is needed, emotional or practical. The family also has deep ties to the land that Paul Edward Logan bought years ago; the family pulls together to earn the money to keep the land and keep living on it.)

Questions 9-12 (Critical Level)

9. What do we learn about Cassie's character in the first chapter of the novel?
(Cassie hates wearing a ladylike Sunday dress and shoes and going to school; she'd much rather be running barefoot through the forests and wading in the forest pond. Cassie has strong feelings and isn't afraid to show them; she scowls "ferociously" at Mary Lou Wellever and exclaims "Good!" when T.J. says she almost got him whipped. Cassie will take what is fairly due to her; she won't give up the seat of her choice in her new classroom to Mary Lou. Cassie's independent and spunky nature often gets her in trouble in the classroom; in the opening minutes of class, her teacher reprimands Cassie for failing to take part in a group response. "Here it was only five minutes into the new school year and already I was in trouble," Cassie remarks, indicating that is par for the course for her. In fact, Cassie seems to get in trouble at home frequently, too, since she tells us that "nine years of trial and error" have taught her to tell the "whole truth to Mama on my own before she had heard anything from anyone else." Cassie also shows a sense of pride and self-worth, refusing to accept without a second thought that it's perfectly all right for the county to pass on old, badly worn, marred books as fit only for "nigra" students.)
10. What instances of foreshadowing do you find in the novel?
(Instances include T.J.'s reporting of the night riders' burning followed by Mama's comment that the family is lucky to have Mr. Morrison with them "especially now." These incidents point toward the increasing tensions that build during the novel, capped by the events of the novel's climax, as the night-rider lynch mob goes after T.J. and the Averys and threatens to move on to the Logans. Foreshadowing is also evident when T.J. reveals his fascination with the pearl-handled gun at the Barnett store. T.J. correctly predicts his future when he says, "I'd sell my life for that gun. One of these days I'm gonna have it, too." T.J. does get the gun, but only briefly, and it will in fact cost him his life.)

11. How does T.J.'s nature get him into serious trouble?
(T.J. likes to slide by life in the easiest, most pleasant way possible. He blames his misdeeds on others whenever possible—unfairly blaming his presence at Wallace's store on his brother Claude, for example, or planting his own cheat notes on Stacey. He ducks out on work at home regularly and has no compunctions about cheating on tests. He's an insincere friend and a ready liar; he doesn't hesitate a moment to fast-talk Stacey out of the best coat his so-called friend is likely ever to have during his youth. Because of his nature, T.J. is not equipped to realize that the older Simms boys are simply using him for their own amusement. He thinks they really are his friends, and he thinks it's perfectly reasonable for them to get him the pearl-handled revolver, even though he's done nothing to earn it. T.J. doesn't hesitate to break into the Barnett store for the Simms boys, realizing only too late that he's gotten himself into a potentially deadly situation.)

12. How does the title of the novel relate to the novel's content?
(The author, Mildred Taylor, has said that the title is part of a song that came to her as she was struggling to write the climactic chapters of the novel. In the context of the song, which opens Chapter 11 of the novel, "Roll of thunder" relates to a black person's determination not to let an approaching "ole man" with "whip in hand" "beat me down." As actual thunder rolls in the distance and approaches ever closer, the Logans fight to save themselves from the lynch mob and then their farm and the cotton crop from the fire. As a metaphor, the roll of thunder is the underlying tension between whites and blacks that builds throughout the novel, starting with the burning of the Berrys, continuing through the growing antagonism between the Logans and their black neighbors on the one hand and Harlan Granger and the Wallaces on the other hand, and bursting into a deafening roar on the night the lynch mob goes after T.J.)

Questions 13-14 (Creative Level)

13. Write about an incident in the novel from the point of view of a character other than Cassie, for example, Jeremy Simms when he's trying to be friends with the Logan children, or Stacey when T.J. arrives at the Logans' house after the break-in at the Barnett store, or Lillian Jean when Cassie finally turns on her.
14. Write a short story about the incident that got Mr. Morrison fired from his railroad job.

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Draw or create a model of your dream car, or the typical car 50 or 100 years from now.
2. Create an illustration/plan or a model of the Logan family farm.
3. Illustrate one or more of your favorite scenes from the novel.

Science

1. Create a relatively simple illustrated guide-book on how to grow and market cotton successfully.
2. Demonstrate to the class how to provide first aid for wounds and injuries like the ones Papa Logan suffers on the night he, Mr. Morrison, and Stacy are returning from Vicksburg.
3. Show in poster or model form how roads are engineered and built so that rain water runs off and doesn't accumulate on a road or along the side of a road.

Mathematics

1. How much did a 1933 Packard cost? How much is this in today's money?
2. Suppose you wanted to buy a car. How much could you afford to pay for it? If you took out a loan, what size payment could you afford? How much would you have to pay in interest each month, and over the life of the loan?
3. Make a chart showing changes in the price of cotton in the late 1920s and 1930s. Compare these prices with today's prices.
4. Calculate the amount of interest that you would pay on a 15- or 30-year mortgage for a piece of property you would like to buy.

Social Studies/Geography

1. Create a class display detailing the geography, ecology, and climate of Mississippi.
2. Report orally or in writing on segregation in the U.S. South and how civil rights activists worked to end it.

3. Find out about how the justice system worked for black people in the 1930s in and out of the South.
4. Report on the history of lynching in the United States.
5. Show in chart form the migration of black people from the South to the North during World War I and the following decades.
6. Report orally or in writing on how the sharecropping system worked.
7. Report orally or in writing on ways in which life for black people in the South changed during Reconstruction and then changed again after Reconstruction ended.
8. Write a brief biography of Jefferson Davis.
9. Research successful boycotts, local, national, or international. What causes a boycott to succeed or fail?

Language Arts

1. Read other Logan family stories written by Mildred Taylor. Make a list of recurring characters, and note the role each one plays in the various novels and stories.
2. View the film/video of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Discuss the portrayal of the various characters and events.
3. As you read, create a list of vocabulary words you're not familiar with. Then look up and write a definition of each word; also note its part of speech. When you're done, alphabetize your list to create a glossary that other readers of this novel could use.
4. Read about Mildred Taylor's life and family and family influences in *Something About the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 5*. Then describe how Taylor has drawn on her life experiences and family history in her writing.
5. Mildred Taylor frequently uses personification in her writing, as in "The dust seemed to be rejoicing in its own resiliency and laughing at the heavy drops of rain thudding against it."

Find at least five more examples of personification in the novel, and then write five of your own.

6. Write a biography of the prolific and colorful writer Alexandre Dumas (the elder).
7. Read at least one of the books the Logan children receive as Christmas presents: *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *Aesop's Fables*.

Music

1. Set the lyrics of "Roll of Thunder" (p. 242 of the novel) to music. Create more verses for the song.
2. Play and/or perform (with classmates) songs from the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Student Involvement Activities

1. With classmates, create a meal of foods that the Logan family and their friends commonly cook, or create a multicultural class holiday feast.
2. With classmates, act out a dramatic scene from the novel, as when the Logan children take revenge on the school bus.
3. Create a class display of cars of the 1930s, including a Packard like the ones Uncle Hammer and Harlan Granger drive.
4. Create a Logan family tree and/or create your own family tree.
5. Develop and carry out a family oral history project.
6. Suppose you were going to run a general mercantile store like Barnett's in your community today. Draw up a detailed list of the merchandise and produce you would carry and sell in your store.
7. Invite someone from the local community who is experienced in fighting brush fires to explain and demonstrate to the class how this is done.

8. Discuss the answers to these questions in class or in a small group: Have you ever encountered prejudice, either directed against you or against someone you know? How did it (or does it) make you and/or the other person feel? How did you handle it? Why do you think the prejudice existed (or exists)? What caused it? How can prejudice best be dealt with and reduced or eliminated?
9. Create a photo or art montage showing seasonal changes in the area where you live.

Alternate Assessment

1. Draw up a detailed list of the major and important minor characters of the novel. Beside each name, write a physical and character description, note the person's family relationship (if any) and the person's place in his or her society, and describe the role that person plays in the events of the novel.
2. Catalog the instances of forced indignity and injustice suffered by the black characters in the novel.
3. Describe the settings of the novel, and write summaries of the main events that take place at each setting.
4. Explain the sharecropping and store-credit system of the rural 1930s South as shown in the novel. Note the specific effects of these systems on the novel's characters.
5. Mildred Taylor has said about her writing, "I wanted to show a [black] family united in love and self-respect, and parents, strong and sensitive, attempting to guide their children successfully, without harming their spirits, through the hazardous maze of living in a discriminatory society." Discuss how well Taylor has fulfilled this purpose in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

Teacher's Notes

Vocabulary

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| A. acting uninterested | F. proudly mad | K. warned | P. thought about |
| B. able to be heard | G. discontented | L. fearless | Q. with ill will |
| C. worthy of contempt | H. nerve, boldness | M. owners | R. made fun of |
| D. having no end | I. inspiring awe | N. pretended | S. sadly thoughtful |
| E. with too much pride | J. extremely thin | O. excused | T. with much gloom |

- ___ 1. We trudged along in moody silence, my brothers growing as pensively quiet as I.
- ___ 2. A tall, emaciated-looking boy popped suddenly from a forest trail and swung a thin arm around Stacey.
- ___ 3. "Ain't no need gettin' mad," T.J. replied undaunted. "Jus' an idea."
- ___ 4. "I tell ya, Stacey, man," said T.J. morosely, shaking his head, "sometimes I jus' don't know 'bout that family of yours."
- ___ 5. "Dirty!" Miss Crocker echoed, appalled by such temerity.
- ___ 6. Little Man just stood staring down at the open book, shivering with indignant anger.
- ___ 7. Gazing upward at the most formidable-looking being we had ever encountered, we huddled closer to Papa.
- ___ 8. A disgruntled Mr. Grimes leaned moodily against the raised rear end of the bus.
- ___ 9. The three of us forced ourselves to stare into the fire in feigned disinterest.
- ___ 10. Stacey remained aloof and had little to do with Mr. Morrison.
- ___ 11. Stacey turned toward me haughtily. "I could've taken care of that too."
- ___ 12. Mama also spoke of finding another store to patronize, one where the proprietors were more concerned about the welfare of the community.
- ___ 13. "Shut up, Cassie!" His dark eyes flashed malevolently as he pushed me in front of him through the crowd.
- ___ 14. T.J. sulked for a while with a few audible grumbles which no one paid any attention to.
- ___ 15. In quiet anger Mama glared at Stacey and admonished, "In this house we do not give away what loved ones give to us."
- ___ 16. The last days of school before Christmas seemed interminable.
- ___ 17. "I don't think your Paul Edward would've condoned something like this and risked losing this place."
- ___ 18. I pondered Papa's words, then I promised, "Mr. Simms ain't never gonna hear 'bout it, Papa."
- ___ 19. "It's just in yo' mind, child," Big Ma scoffed unconvincingly. "Them menfolks all right."
- ___ 20. Perhaps Stacey felt that even a person as despicable as T.J. needed someone he could call "friend."

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. Assaults Barnett and leads the lynch mob against T.J. | A. Cassie |
| _____ 2. White landlord who wants the Logans' land | B. Stacey |
| _____ 3. Gets boiling mad when his clothes get filthy | C. Little Man |
| _____ 4. In her sixties, she works hard in the field and in the home | D. Papa Logan |
| _____ 5. A human tree of a man, his body is massive and bulges with muscle | E. Mama Logan |
| _____ 6. A spunky nine-year-old who fights with a white girl | F. Big Ma |
| _____ 7. Works on the railroad nine months of the year | G. Uncle Hammer |
| _____ 8. Thinks two white boys are his best friends | H. Melvin Simms |
| _____ 9. A white lawyer who works for and with the Logans | I. Lillian Jean Simms |
| _____ 10. Runs the local store with his father and his brother | J. Mr. Jamison |
| _____ 11. Loves her job as a teacher | K. Kaleb Wallace |
| _____ 12. A hot-tempered man who now lives up North, in Chicago | L. Harlan Granger |
| _____ 13. Feels responsible for Papa's broken leg | M. T.J. Avery |
| _____ 14. White person who owns and operates the mercantile with his wife | N. Mr. L.T. Morrison |
| _____ 15. Enjoys having Cassie carry her school books for her | O. Jim Lee Barnett |

Part II: Word Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

- The Grangers lost two thousand acres of their land during **(the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Depression, World War II)**.
- Lillian Jean knocks Cassie off a **(sidewalk, staircase, horse, swing)**.
- The Logans lose a quarter of their **(soybean, corn, peanut, cotton)** crop.
- One Berry is killed and the other two are critically injured by **(whipping, burning, lynching, beating)**.
- A white boy who wants to be friends with the Logan children is **(T.J., Melvin, Jeremy, Dewberry)**.
- Stacey gives his brand-new **(coat, flute, car, shoes)** to T.J.
- In school, Mama punishes both Stacey and T.J. for **(disobedience, teasing, being late, cheating)**.
- The lynch mob threatens to go after **(Harlan Granger, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Jamison, R.W. Simms)**.
- The Logan children are very excited to get **(video games, gift certificates, books, toys)** for Christmas.
- Most black people use **(cash, checks, barter, credit)** to shop at the Barnett and Wallace stores.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. What is the name of the town where both Cassie and T.J. get into trouble at the store?

2. Who says things he shouldn't say to the Wallaces that get Mama Logan fired from her job?

3. Who is the author of this novel? _____
4. What item does T.J. yearn to possess? _____
5. What color is the dust and mud that the school bus sprays on the Logan children?

6. What title does Cassie have to use when she speaks to Lillian Jean? _____
7. Which students attend the Jefferson Davis School? _____
8. What items at school do Cassie and Little Man object to on the first day of classes?

9. Who or what is the target of the boycott that Mama Logan organizes? _____
10. What kind of wheeled vehicle do the Logans usually use when they do their shopping?

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How and why does the school bus torment the Logan children?
2. What rules does Cassie learn during her visit to Strawberry that she didn't know before about black and white relationships and conduct?
3. Write a character sketch of Mama and Papa Logan.
4. Why must Papa Logan leave the family for so many months each year? Why is it so important for him to do this?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. Use each name only once.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| A. Cassie | D. Papa Logan | G. Uncle Hammer | J. Jeremy Simms | M. T.J. Avery |
| B. Stacey | E. Mama Logan | H. Miss Daisy Crocker | K. Mr. Jamison | N. Mr. L.T. Morrison |
| C. Little Man | F. Big Ma | I. Lillian Jean Simms | L. Harlan Granger | O. R.W. Simms |

- _____ 1. "But, Cassie, why? You was such a nice little girl..."
- _____ 2. "They grown and it's they land. I got no more say in it."
- _____ 3. "I ain't never had no children of my own. I think sometimes if I had, I'd've wanted a son and daughter just like you and Mr. Logan...and grandbabies like these babies of yours..."
- _____ 4. "It's m-my fault Papa's leg's busted!"
- _____ 5. "They're bad people, the Wallaces. That's why I don't want you to ever go to their store again-for any reason."
- _____ 6. "Here the county is giving us these wonderful books during these hard times and you're going to stand there and tell me that the book's too dirty?"
- _____ 7. "I tell you this one thing: You plan on getting this land, you're planning on the wrong thing."
- _____ 8. "Got me better friends than y'all! They give me things and treat me like I'm a man and...and they white too..."
- _____ 9. "I'm a Southerner, born and bred, but that doesn't mean I approve of all that goes on here."
- _____ 10. "Y'all go ahead and get dirty if y'all wanna. Me, I'm gonna stay clean."
- _____ 11. "Come these hot nights, I just climbs in my tree and it's like going into another world."
- _____ 12. "Wouldn't have lost this section if it hadn't been stolen by your Yankee carpetbaggers after the war. But y'all keep on playing Santa Claus and I'm gonna get it back-real easy."
- _____ 13. "I ain't nobody's littler nigger! And you ought not be waiting on everybody 'fore you wait on us."
- _____ 14. "You think my brother died and I got my leg half blown off in their German war to have some red-neck knock Cassie around anytime it suits him?"
- _____ 15. "You comin' ain't you? You still want that pearl-handled pistol, don't you?"

Part II: Word Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

- Uncle Hammer lives in the Northern city of (**Memphis, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles**).
- A (**mad dog, sheriff's deputy, lynch mob, chain gang**) attacks T.J.
- The Logans lose a quarter of their cotton crop to (**insect pests, drought, disease, fire**).
- This novel takes place in the (**1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s**).
- Papa has to spend many months every year working on a (**railroad, chain gang, sugar cane plantation, volunteer job**).

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

6. The school for black children is named (**Jefferson Davis, Great Faith, Malcolm X, Caroline Logan**) School.
7. Cassie is afraid of the night (**storms, dreams, ghosts, riders**).
8. Mr. Jamison is a (**teacher, lawyer, sheriff, storekeeper**).
9. Jeremy gives Stacy a (**flute, coat, pistol, book**) for Christmas.
10. Big Ma is Cassie's (**aunt, mother, grandmother, stepmother**).

Part III: Fill-In (20 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. The Logan boys are named Stacey, Little Man, and _____.
2. The novel's events take place in the U.S. state of _____.
3. The Logan children trap a _____ in a ditch that they dig.
4. Farmers who give part of their crops to the person who owns the land they farm are called _____.
5. Uncle Hammer buys a Packard _____ just like the one Harlan Granger owns.
6. During the boycott, the Logans and other black families do their shopping in the town/city of _____.
7. Mama Logan is very sad when she loses her job of _____.
8. The "mercantile" is a general _____.
9. The Logans need extra money to pay the taxes and _____ on their land.
10. Mama disapproves of the Wallace store because black people go there to drink and _____.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How did the Logans come to own four hundred acres? What threatens their ownership of the land? Why is this ownership so important to the Logans?
2. Why does Stacey give his new winter coat to T.J.? What lesson does Stacey learn from this episode?
3. Write a character sketch of Cassie.
4. Comment on the role of these white people in the Logans' lives: Jeremy Simms, Harlan Granger, and Mr. Jamison.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. S | 6. F | 11. E | 16. D |
| 2. J | 7. I | 12. M | 17. O |
| 3. L | 8. G | 13. Q | 18. P |
| 4. T | 9. N | 14. B | 19. R |
| 5. H | 10. A | 15. K | 20. C |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. H | 6. A | 11. E |
| 2. L | 7. D | 12. G |
| 3. C | 8. M | 13. B |
| 4. F | 9. J | 14. O |
| 5. N | 10. K | 15. I |

Part II: Word Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Reconstruction | 6. coat |
| 2. sidewalk | 7. cheating |
| 3. cotton | 8. Mr. Morrison |
| 4. burning | 9. books |
| 5. Jeremy | 10. credit |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Strawberry | 6. Miz (Miss) |
| 2. T.J. | 7. white |
| 3. Mildred Taylor | 8. (dirty, worn-out) books |
| 4. (pearl-handled) pistol | 9. Wallace store |
| 5. red | 10. wagon |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. I | 6. H | 11. J |
| 2. F | 7. D | 12. L |
| 3. N | 8. M | 13. A |
| 4. B | 9. K | 14. G |
| 5. E | 10. C | 15. O |

Part II: Word Choice (20 points)

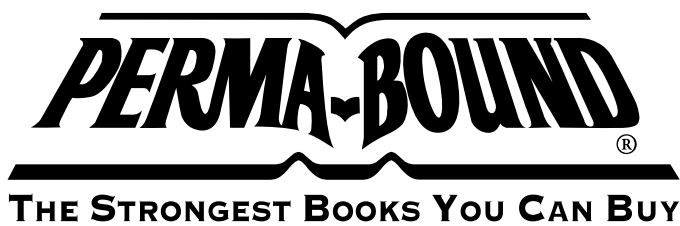
- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Chicago | 6. Great Faith |
| 2. lynch mob | 7. riders |
| 3. fire | 8. lawyer |
| 4. 1930s | 9. flute |
| 5. railroad | 10. grandmother |

Part III: Fill-In (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Christopher-John | 6. Vicksburg |
| 2. Mississippi | 7. teaching |
| 3. school bus | 8. store |
| 4. sharecroppers | 9. mortgage |
| 5. car (automobile) | 10. dance |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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