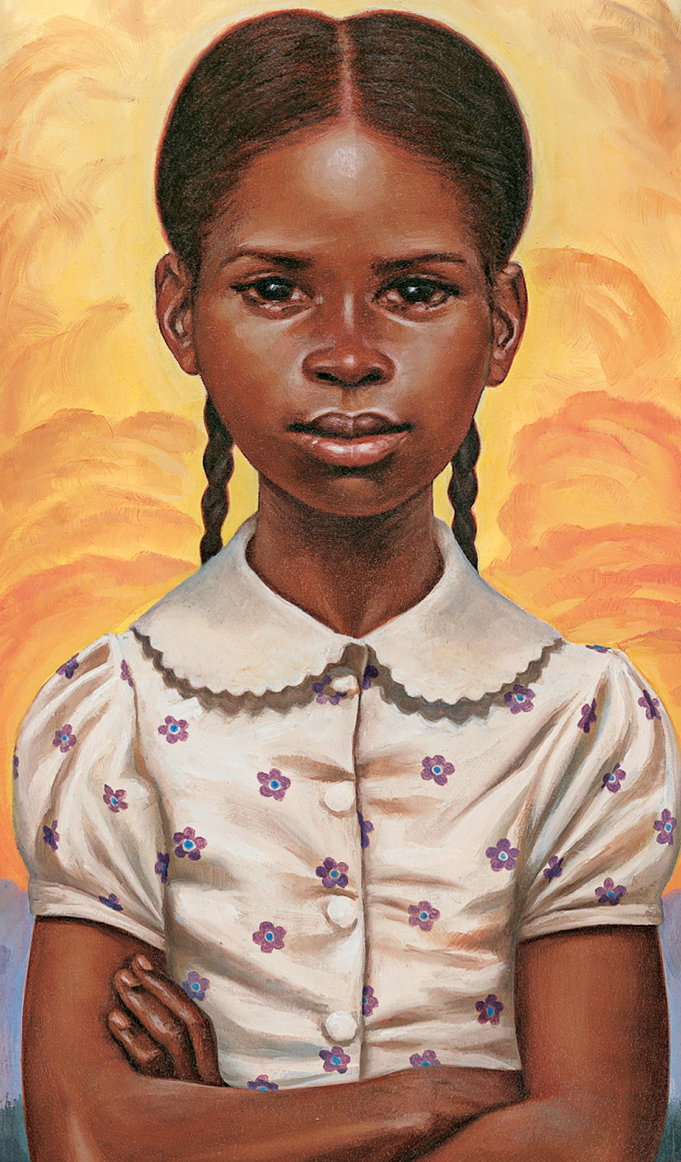


AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO
MILDRED D. TAYLOR'S
ROLL OF
THUNDER,
HEAR MY CRY



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor is one of the greatest classic texts for young readers. The purpose of this educator's guide is to support students as scholars, researchers, and, as educator Ernest Morell states, "producers and consumers of knowledge." This guide engages young readers as knowledge-holders and supports their thinking about the book and the world. Educators and caregivers are encouraged to guide students in discourse and collective meaning-making that supports them in developing a deepened understanding of the systemic racism of the past and how it thrives in the present. It is through such reading and discourse that students can develop the tools they'll need to become agents of change who work to disrupt oppression in all of its forms.

This guide has been created to support the reading and discussion of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* in a three-week book club unit. Book clubs are opportunities to nurture literate communities. Sonja Cherry-Paul and Dana Johansen, authors of *Breathing New Life Into Book Clubs*, write, "Book clubs give students the courage to name the world as they see it, the strength to ask why, and the gumption to imagine change when and where it's needed" (p. 116). Count on students being challenged and changed by reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and the courageous conversations they'll have about this book.

The sign of a dynamic, liberatory English Language Arts classroom is students taking agency of their literate lives. To nurture a more fluid power dynamic between students and teachers, encourage student ownership in book clubs. This means that while numerous discussion questions are provided in this guide, ultimately students drive decisions around what they choose to talk about and for how long. Without autonomy and choice, book clubs can begin to feel stagnant and peter out quickly. Avoid the urge to micromanage and control book club conversations. Instead, see your role as a facilitator and a coach, and work with students to cultivate a vibrant reading experience of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.



This guide was written by **Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul**, an educator, and author, and the co-founder of the Institute for Racial Equity in Literacy. She adapted *Stamped (For Kids)*, a #1 *New York Times* bestselling children's book. Sonja is the Director of Diversity and Equity at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Sonja develops curriculum that centers the work of racial literacy in K–12 schools. She leads presentations at educational conferences and works with educators around the world, providing professional development on antiracist reading and writing instruction.

TEACHING ABOUT RACE AND RACISM

Prior to students reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* in their classroom with peers, it's critical that educators take into consideration the work before the work. This involves setting up conditions prior to and carrying throughout the reading of this book to create a safe and supportive environment, particularly for Black students.

AFFIRMATION

Even and especially when students are reading about vicious racism toward Black Americans, it is critical to do the work of affirming Black identities. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* offers numerous opportunities to do so. Echoed across the research is the importance of Black students developing strong racial and cultural identities and the critical role of schools in fostering such development. White students also need to see Blackness affirmed in the books they read and in classroom teachings. Make sure that teachings and discussions about Black people aren't grounded in oppression and victimization. Point out the rich examples of resistance, resilience, community, family, love, joy, and genius that Black characters in this story, and in the world, exude, experience, and express.

AWARENESS

Research also makes clear the importance of teaching that provides students opportunities to develop their awareness of injustices. Reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and the critical conversations that can emerge during discussions of this book support students in the work of identifying sociocultural issues not only in the text, but in their lives. Make sure that students are able to read and recognize racism beyond individual acts of hate and to identify examples of systemic racism. These kinds of consciousness-raising teaching and discussions help students to understand how oppression works and to acquire the tools to disrupt the status quo.

AGREEMENTS

It is important to cultivate safe and brave spaces for students to talk about race. In order to have productive conversations about race and racism, establish community agreements that you and your students commit to. There are several options and free resources that can be accessed to help educators establish agreements. [Learning for Justice](#) offers support for facilitating critical conversations with students. [Facing History & Ourselves](#) provides guidance for creating a classroom contract. You might even co-construct agreements together as a class community. [Mindful Schools](#) provides prompts and guidance for co-constructing community agreements with students.

Part of the coaching you'll do in each book club includes reminding students to practice the community agreements, and to reflect on whether the club is a space that is encouraging of all members and if not, what they will do to foster conditions that create this. The amount of work you do to establish community agreements and help students within clubs to bond matters tremendously. Asking students to create in their book clubs the kind of space that is supportive of each member will make it possible for you to admire the agency of your students and work as a facilitator as they practice and develop reading and discussion skills.

MITIGATING TRAUMA

It is important to be aware that the N-word is used numerous times throughout *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. In order to truly cultivate safe spaces in the classroom as students read and discuss this book, it must be explicitly stated and agreed upon that this word is not said by any student, nor by their teachers.

Acknowledge that the N-word is imbued with a history of hate, violence, and trauma inflicted upon Black people in the United States. And while there has been a reclaiming and repurposing of this word by Black people, because of the legacy of racism in the United States it is irresponsible and unacceptable for White people to use this term. Assure students that it is not one that will be used in a school setting by anyone.

For White educators and caregivers looking to gain a clearer understanding about why they should not use the N-word, author and journalist [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#) provides keen insights. Coates explains why White people especially should not say the N-word and provides examples of many words said within groups and communities that are not acceptable for outsiders to use. He goes on to explain that the experience of White people not being able to use the N-word is an insightful one. “It will give you just a little peek into the world of what it means to be Black. Because to be Black is to walk through the world and watch people doing things that you cannot do, that you can’t join in and do. So I think there’s actually a lot to be learned from refraining.”

Educators might say to students prior to reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, “This story uses the N-word multiple times to provide a window into the environmental conditions Black people faced in this time and in this location where the story is taking place. It’s important to know that this word has been used viciously toward Black people even before the time period of this story. And it is also used this way today. Because of the hatred and violence associated with this word, we will not use it in our classroom and school. Our classroom and school cannot be a safe place for all students if this word is used. And if our classrooms and school are not safe, then we are unable to learn and to thrive.”

It is also important for educators and caregivers to be aware of antiquated racial terms used in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* such as “colored,” “mulatto,” and “Negro.” Be prepared to support students in understanding that these terms are not used today to refer to individuals or groups of people, and can be offensive.

Explain also that while the terms Black and African American are often used interchangeably, Black people exist all over the world and therefore Black does not always mean African American. For the purposes of this guide, both Black and African American are used to refer to people born in the United States who are most likely descendants from enslaved Africans. It is important to note that racial identity is personal and nuanced. For a variety of complex reasons, some people prefer one term over another or identify as both.

AFFINITY GROUPS

You might also consider the power and purpose of affinity group spaces during the reading and discussing of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. For Black students in predominantly White schools, feeling isolated and othered in these contexts can be a daily experience. Being part of an affinity group can support Black students as they read about a fictionalized Black family who experiences racism, while also navigating racism in their own lives. Learning for Justice’s [Toolkit for Making Space](#) provides further information on creating affinity groups and facilitating these spaces.

THE UNIT

This three-week book club unit is based on a 60–90 minute ELA block ([sample pacing guide](#)). If your schedule provides less time, adjust and extend this unit. Consider adding a week and making adjustments with homework and classroom activities. As you make adjustments that extend this unit, please consider this: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* shouldn't be one of few books students read in your class, but one of many. There can be a tendency to stretch out the reading of a novel in classrooms that causes book clubs to fizzle and fade. And this also shouldn't be the only opportunity students have to learn about race and racism. You'll want to maintain a pace that supports the students in your classroom and keeps momentum high so students are excited to read and are energized by their discussions.

The unit provides opportunities for students to engage in collective meaning-making as well as opportunities for individual reflection. This educator's guide and unit includes several parts:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Encourage students to determine what they'd like to discuss. The discussion questions included in this guide can support students' conversations and be used to coach into clubs in ways that help them to see “beneath and beyond” the text ([Jones, 2006](#)).

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS CHART (ECC):

As students read, invite them to keep track of the social, political, and economic conditions they're noticing that the Logan family and the Black community navigates due to systemic racism. Each book club can develop this chart digitally or on large chart paper and work collaboratively to complete. Each club member can jot ideas on Post-its or contribute digitally, adding to their chart as they read and discussing it when clubs meet. ([Sample ECC](#))

EXTENSION EXPLORATION:

Invite students to extend their learning about events, concepts, and key figures in connection with their reading that support understandings about racism and antiracism. These Extension Explorations can be done independently or with a peer from their club or one from another club. Please note that there are no tasks assigned for this work, as this should truly be a time of exploration that supports students' understanding and raises their awareness. A variety of texts (articles, videos, images) are included to address a range of reading levels.

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK:

Each club will develop a Logan Family Scrapbook as a culminating project that commemorates their reading journey together. Students will create artifacts based on their reading that is reflective of the struggles, triumphs, and treasures of the Logan family. Students might use sepia tones, multicultural colored pencils, and considered paper choices to reflect the time period, mood, and tone of the story.

REFLECTION:

Opportunities for students to independently reflect on their reading throughout this unit are provided. Students can respond in their reading notebook (physical or digital) and these reflections may or may be shared with club members. This is a time for students to process their reading and deeply consider what they're learning about racism and how to be antiracist.

HOMEWORK:

It is recommended that students have time to read in class and are reading as part of their homework. They might annotate as they read using Post-its or jotting down ideas in their physical or digital reading notebooks that can help spark discussions on club meeting days. Students are invited to keep track of the characters of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and to think about traits that describe them. Support students in recognizing that their ideas about characters and traits will change over time and that characters are seldom just one way across a novel. The [Character Portrait Chart](#) is a way for students to keep track of evolving ideas about characters as they read and receive new information and ideas about them.

Expect that students and clubs will not move in lockstep with one another. On any given day, some students may be reading, some may be engaging an Extension Exploration, some may be working on the Logan Family Scrapbook, and some may be writing a reflection in their readers' notebooks. On club days, some clubs may be in spirited discussion about the text and some may be grappling with the placement of their ideas on their ECC. Embrace book clubs as energetic, active spaces. "Creating authentic spaces for discussion and choice allows students to take risks and learn alongside others" ([Cherry-Paul & Johansen, 2018](#)).



Photos of the author's family, upon whom members of the Logan family were based

DAY
1

CLUBS MEET!

Launch *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* book clubs by letting students know the peers they'll be journeying through this text with. Then introduce the book. Read aloud the introduction by Jacqueline Woodson and Mildred D. Taylor's Family by Mildred Taylor at the beginning of the book, providing space and time for students to discuss them with a reading partner in their book club. You might ask students to discuss what stood out to them as they listened to two of the greatest children's authors share about their lives and this book. Specifically, what insights do they provide about the story they are getting ready to read? What questions are they wondering about?

Establish community agreements, providing time for students to discuss what each agreement means to them. Then provide time for each club to discuss the ways it will be exciting to read and be in conversation about this book as a club. Ask students to discuss their intentions for creating a space of consideration and connection toward one another in their club as they read. Specifically, what will they do to cultivate a community of care as they read about race and racism?

Explain the meeting schedule. Let students know that typically, they'll meet in clubs two times per week. When clubs meet, they'll have time to discuss the book and there will be some club work they'll engage together. This work includes developing an Environmental Conditions Chart and a Logan Family Scrapbook. On days when clubs aren't meeting, they'll have some time to read independently, engage an Extension Exploration activity independently or with a peer, and reflect in their readers' notebooks. Let students know that they'll read as part of their nightly homework while also keeping track of characters on their Character Portrait Chart.

Homework

- Read chapter 1
- Character Portrait Chart

DAY
2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "Look out there, Cassie girl. All that belongs to you. You ain't never had to live on nobody's place but your own and long as I live and the family survives, you'll never have to. That's important. You may not understand that now, but one day you will. Then you'll see" (p. 7).

The Logans sacrifice a great deal to hold tight to their land. Beyond economical reasons, in what ways might it be important to own land, particularly to the Logan family?

2. What does the 3.5-mile walk to school for Stacey's friend Moe and other children demonstrate about the value and importance of education to Black families? (p. 17)
3. Discuss Little Man's reaction to the book he was given by his teacher, Miss Crocker. How does the condition of the book and the writing inside it affect his dignity and self-worth? How is his response a form of resistance? (pages 22–24)
4. Discuss this exchange between Miss Crocker and Mama.

"Well, I just think you're spoiling those children, Mary. They've got to learn how things are sometime."

"Maybe so," said Mama, "but that doesn't mean they have to accept them... and maybe we don't either" (p. 30).

5. Miss Crocker and Ms. Logan are two Black teachers with different ideas about how to navigate the conditions for Black people in their school and community. How does this exchange demonstrate the differences between acceptance and resistance?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS CHART (ECC)

Today you and your club members will set up your ECC and start to include your ideas. Before you meet with your club, we'll have a class discussion about systemic racism and Whiteness.

Racism is more than individual acts of hate based on skin color. Racism functions systemically. You'll be paying close attention to the systems and structures in all institutions of society (education, government, legal, policing, financial, etc.) and how the policies and practices within them disadvantage African Americans during the time period of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. And you'll be discussing how systemic racism continues to function today. As you read and discuss *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, be on the lookout for social (interactions between people), political (government, laws, policing), and economic factors (access to resources—money, banking, business, land ownership) that support the racist environment that the Logan family and the Black community navigate daily and track them on your Environmental Conditions Chart.

Note to teacher:

Support students' understanding of social, economic, and political factors and encourage students to talk to a club member about examples from the book so far and provide an example if needed (Example ECC). Anticipate that students and clubs may locate the same example in different areas of their ECC chart. The issue of school buses provided for White children but not for Black children is one example. One club might name this detail from the novel as an economic factor while another club determines this same detail as an example of a social factor. It's important to let students know that while the chart positions these factors as distinct and separate, they are, in fact, interconnected. What matters is they are identifying the details of the novel that create and sustain systemic racism and discussing how.

Then display and or share a definition of Whiteness and White supremacy. You might share the following definitions provided by the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) (NMAAHC):

Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.

White supremacy is an ideology where white people are believed to be superior to nonwhite people. This fallacy is rooted in the same scientific racism and pseudo-science used to justify slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and genocide at various times throughout history. White supremacist ideologies and their followers continue to perpetuate the myth of white racial superiority.

As students continue to read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, ask them to make note of examples of Whiteness and White supremacy and how the Logan family and other characters resist and work to dismantle these constructs.

Provide time for clubs to discuss systemic racism, Whiteness, and White supremacy as they create and contribute to their ECC. Ask them to discuss how they can build community in their clubs and beyond them in ways that are antiracist.

Homework

- Read chapter 2
- Character Portrait Chart

Provide time for students to read chapter 3.
(Students may finish reading this chapter for homework.)

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

- **The Reconstruction Era:** Learn about the setting and time period when the Logan family first acquired two hundred acres of Granger land (1887).

[Civil Rights: Then and Now](#)

- **The Ku Klux Klan (KKK):** In chapter 3, Mr. Avery stops by the Logan's house and says "It's... it's them again. They's ridin' t'night" (p. 60). Learn about this White supremacist organization and how they terrorized Blacks in the United States South.

[Slavery by Another Name](#) | [The Significance of the Ku Klux Klan](#)

- **Sanctity of White Womanhood:** In the United States, there is a legacy of using White womanhood to justify racial terror toward African American men. Take note of this in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and learn about events past and present that demonstrate this.

Tulsa, Oklahoma, Race Massacre: [The history of Tulsa's 'Black Wall Street' massacre](#)

Emmett Till: [Emmett Till's Death Inspired a Movement](#)

Amy Cooper: [White woman charged after Central Park confrontation](#)

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

At the end of this unit, you and your club member will construct a Logan Family Scrapbook. The purpose of the scrapbook is to commemorate your reading journey with your book club by capturing the joys, triumphs, and challenges of the Logan family. Based on what you've read so far, consider an artifact that you'd like to contribute. You might write a first-person journal entry through the perspective of a member of the Logan family or a character from the Black community. You might draw an object that holds significance to the Logan family. Or you might sketch a scene from the story so far. Each member of your club will work to create artifacts that you will arrange at the end of this unit to become part of your club Logan Family Scrapbook.

REFLECTION

Mildred Taylor's use of symbolism in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* provides nuanced understandings of the text. Consider possible symbols so far in the novel, such as:

- the land
- the bus
- the Confederate Flag
- the book Little Man rejected
- others...

As you think more about them, in what ways might these symbols be more than what they initially seem?

Homework

- Read chapter 4
- Character Portrait Chart



CLUBS MEET!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Mama explains to her children why there aren't buses for Black children in their community, "In fact," she said, "the county provided very little and much of the money which supported the black schools came from the black churches" (p. 44). What are you noticing about ways the Black community in this novel work to be self-sufficient? How is this both an example of their resilience and an injustice?
2. Consider reasons why Jeremy Simms doesn't ride the bus. Although Jeremy Simms chooses not to ride the bus, he could if he wanted to. Discuss how this choice is one that the Logan children do not have. How does this example help you to understand [White privilege](#)?
3. What is activism, and what characteristics do you believe activists embody? Mama speaks with Black community members about patronizing a different store. Discuss how Mama's response to what happened to Mr. Berry at the hands of the Wallaces might align with your understanding of activism and activists.
4. Discuss whether you consider the Logan children's trap for the bus to be revenge or justice.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS CHART (ECC)

Consider what you might add to your club ECC. Be sure to talk with one another about where you might locate an example and why, as well as the details from the story that support your thinking. For example, you might discuss what you've learned about the number of buses for Jefferson Davis County versus Great Faith, and funding from the county to Black schools. How might this be reflected on your ECC? What else might you include based on what you've read so far?

Homework

- Read chapter 5
- Character Portrait Chart

“

Baby, we have no choice of what color we're born
or who our parents are or whether we're rich or poor.
What we do have is some choice over what we make
of our lives once we're here.

—Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

”

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

Activist Britt Hawthorne names [three levels of accountability](#) that can move us toward equality. Each level describes what those who have more power and privilege in society can do to support those who have less.

Hawthorne describes each level as follows:

Active Ally: This is the level where people begin to be more accountable. It can look like having a BLM sign on your lawn or even going to a protest. “While these actions support the cause visually... the actions do little to change the institutional and systemic injustices, allowing the status quo to thrive.”

Accomplice: “An accomplice understands an oppressed individual cannot easily cast away the weight of their oppression on a whim. They must carry that weight every single day. You move from ally to accomplice when you understand that this is a weight you must be willing to carry and never put down.”

Co-Conspirator: “Being a co-conspirator means you are willing to disrupt, build, and, when necessary, dismantle for the future you want to see.”

Hawthorne says that we should each aim toward co-conspiracy. “To be able to say, I’m a partner working towards justice.”

Consider the actions of the characters in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and the ways the Black community experiences racism. Where might you place these characters on the Pyramid of Accountability? Are some of the characters, perhaps, not able to be placed on the pyramid at all based on their actions so far? What would they need to do to reach the ultimate goal: Co-conspiracy? You might include your thinking about this on your Character Portrait Chart.

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Create an artifact for the Logan Family Scrapbook. For example, when Cassie goes to Strawberry for the first time with Big Ma, she’s in for a rude awakening. You might create an artifact that captures her experiences at Mr. Barnett’s store, with Lillian Jean, and with Mr. Simms. As you create you can consider: What are the “rules” of Whiteness that Cassie discovers from this experience? How are these rules an assault on her humanity and on all of the Black people, including Big Ma, who follow them? How does she resist these rules?

You might write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the Logan family members, like Cassie or Big Ma, responding to this event or another interaction in the novel.

Your artifact might be a visual representation or symbol. You could think about Uncle Hammer’s car (Packard) and what it represents. You might also think about the use of names as symbolic representations of characters such as Hammer and Little Man.

REFLECTION

Mama explains Whiteness and White supremacy to young Cassie and how people like the Simms have been socialized into racism. She names examples of institutions and systems to explain this, such as slavery and religion. And she also explains how Black people have resisted. Review and reflect on Mama’s words to Cassie (p. 125–129). What can you notice about how systemic racism works in the world today? How does this show up in your life? In your neighborhood? Classroom? School? Other areas? In what ways can you disrupt this? Where might you locate yourself on the Pyramid of Accountability? What actions can you take to move toward co-conspiracy?

Pyramid of Accountability



@BRITTHAWTHORNE

Provide time for students to read chapter 7.
(Students may finish reading this chapter for homework.)

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

Learn about the Black Lives Matter movement and the founders. When did the movement begin, for what purpose, and what are some of their goals?

[Happy 6th Anniversary, #BlackLivesMatter on Vimeo](#)

[#WhatMatters2020: It's on Us! Join the Movement #BlackLivesMatter](#)

[About](#)

[Black Lives Matter Herstory](#)

Mr. Jamison discusses the dangers of Papa and Mama's plans. He says, "...You're pointing a finger right at the Wallaces with this boycott business. You're not only accusing them of murder, which in this case would be only a minor consideration because the man killed was black, but you're saying that they should be punished for it. That they should be punished just as if they had killed a white man, and punishment of a white man for a wrong done to a black man would denote equality. Now *that* is what Harlan Granger absolutely will not permit" (p. 164).

Look across your ECC to make note of the environmental conditions for Black people in Mississippi in the 1930's as demonstrated in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and how this connects to the social and political conditions for Black people today across the United States. What evidence is there today that Black people being killed by White people is still "only a minor consideration?" How is the Black Lives Matter movement working to disrupt this?

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Create an artifact to contribute to the Logan Family Scrapbook. Your artifact can be an illustration of a character, a sketch of an object that is symbolic to the story, a first-person journal entry from the perspective of one of the Logan family members, etc. For example, you might create an artifact about the gifts Stacey has been given: One he gives away. Another he packs away. Consider how Stacey's actions toward the coat from Uncle Hammer, who he gives it to and why, and toward the flute he receives from Jeremy shed light on what they each seem to represent for Stacey.

REFLECTION

Papa tells Stacey, "Far as I'm concerned, friendship between black and white don't mean that much 'cause it usually ain't on a equal basis. Right now you and Jeremy might get along fine, but in a few years he'll think of himself as a man but you'll still be a boy to him. And if he feels that way, he'll turn on you in a minute" (p. 157). Consider how growing up in a racist society creates power dynamics between Jeremy and Stacey. What does friendship mean to you? Can these two characters ever truly be friends considering the environmental conditions you've been capturing on your ECC?

Homework

- Read chapter 8
- Character Portrait Chart



CLUBS MEET!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Mr. Morrison tells the Logan family about one night after the Reconstruction Era when the “night men” burst into his home. Think about what happened to Mr. Berry, to Cassie Logan in Strawberry, and to the night men who caused such destruction in Mr. Morrison’s home. What patterns can you notice about racism? What insights does Mr. Morrison’s story provide about why Papa has brought him home to live on the Logan property?
2. The term “White savior” refers to a White person who helps or rescues a person of color in ways that are self-serving. The supposed help benefits the White savior by causing them to feel good about themselves, and they become the main focus.

Discuss the exchange between Papa and Mr. Jamison about backing the credit so that Black families can shop in Vicksburg instead of in town at the Wallace store. Are Mr. Jamison’s actions an example of or a disruption of White saviorism? Consider the Pyramid of Accountability—and whether you’d locate him on it. If so, where, and why?

3. As Mr. Jamison speaks with Papa about the consequences of encouraging Black families to shop in Vicksburg, he essentially explains the ways racism and white supremacy are deeply entrenched in the hearts and minds of White people.

Mr. Jamison explains that, “Ever since we were boys, Harlan’s lived in the past. His grandmother filled him with all kinds of tales about the glory of the South before the war.” He goes on to explain that for Harlan and his family, “Spokane County practically belonged to them” and that the laws were “basically for whites” (p. 163).

Since African Americans were enslaved before the Civil War, which Mr. Jamison references, what specifically is “glorious” to Harlan’s family about this time? You might review and utilize your ECC in your discussion.

4. Revisit and discuss Harlan Granger’s conversation with the Logan family on pages 165–170. How does Harlan Granger use his power and privilege to oppress the Logans and the African American community? How do the Logans demonstrate resistance during this conversation?
5. When Cassie seemingly befriends Lillian Jean, Lillian Jean says, “God’ll bless you for it” and “God wants all his children to do what’s right” (p. 172). What are you noticing and wondering about the ways religion is used as a weapon against Black characters in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*? Has your thinking about revenge and justice been challenged or changed as you’ve read? Do you think of Cassie’s treatment of Lillian Jean as revenge or justice?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS CHART (ECC)

Spend some time adding to your club ECC. What are you noticing about the ways these factors influence the daily lives of the Logan family and the Black community? In what ways do factors seem to intersect and overlap?

Homework

- Read chapter 8
- Character Portrait Chart

Provide time for students to read chapter 9.
(Students may finish reading this chapter for homework.)

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

The risk for Black people speaking up and taking action against oppression has always been significant. Yet, across the history of this nation, Black people have done so again and again. Learn about a few Black activists from the first half of the twentieth century and the ways we all benefit from their actions today.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson

[Carter G. Woodson - African American Trailblazers](#)

[Why Carter G. Woodson Is the “Father of Black History”](#)

[Knowing the Past Opens the Door to the Future: The Continuing Importance of Black History Month](#)

Ella Baker

[Ella Baker —“The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement”](#)

[Ella Baker, the Grassroots Civil Rights Organizer](#)

[Ella Josephine Baker](#)

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

[Mary McLeod Bethune](#)

[Mary McLeod Bethune Was at the Vanguard of More Than 50 Years of Black Progress](#)

[Mary McLeod Bethune—Mary McLeod Bethune Council House](#)

Thurgood Marshall

[Moments In History: Remembering Thurgood Marshall](#)

[Who Was Thurgood Marshall?](#)

[Justice Thurgood Marshall Profile—Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment](#)

THE LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Create an artifact for the Logan Family Scrapbook. Look back across your reader’s notebook, your ECC, and the artifacts you’ve already created. You might consider making a list of themes that have emerged across the novel. Jot powerful words and phrases that capture the themes you’ve been noticing. Consider how you might artfully write these words using colored pencils or pens. Later, with your club members, you might cut them out and determine ways to display them across the scrapbook.

REFLECTION

Pick one or two themes that are emerging in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Write about them. What do these themes mean to you? What are some powerful moments across the novel that demonstrate this? How do these themes show up in your life?

Homework

- Read chapter 10
- Character Portrait Chart



CLUBS MEET!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. T.J. is a complicated and polarizing character whose antics put Mama's job in harm's way. Although he isn't solely to blame, T.J.'s betrayal in this way seems to be the final straw in his relationship with the Logan children. Discuss the ways T.J. continually jeopardized his friendship with the Logan children leading up to this event. What are the qualities of friendship that matter most to you?
2. Harlan Granger tells Papa, "There's lots of ways of stopping you, David" (p. 170). Mama's firing is one way he lives up to this promise. Discuss how what happens to Papa, Mr. Morrison, and Stacey when they go to Vicksburg is another way of delivering upon that promise. Make note of additional ways that Mr. Granger and others are working to live up to this promise.
3. Jeremy is another complicated character. He tells the Logan children, "I think when I grow up I'm gonna build me a house in some trees and jus' live there all the time" (p. 229). Talk about his presence and actions across the novel. Why might Jeremy want to live in a treehouse? What might the treehouse represent?
4. T.J. introduces the Simms brothers, R.W. and Melvin, to the Logan children as his friends. He says, "Everything I want they give me 'cause they really likes me. I'm they best friend" (p. 240). Think back to Papa's discussion with Stacey about his friendship with Jeremy Simms and with Cassie and Lillian Jean. Can a friendship truly exist between T.J. and the Simms brothers with the existing racial power dynamics between them?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS CHART (ECC)

Work with your club members to add to your ECC. You might look over what you have on your chart so far and discuss whether you'd like to shift ideas from one factor to another or position it in more than one area of the chart. Consider the ways the Grangers, the Wallaces, and the Simms create and work within a system of oppression and the impact on the Logan family and the Black community.

Homework

- Read chapter 11
- Character Portrait Chart



DAY
10

Provide time for students to read chapter 12.
(Students may finish reading this chapter for homework.)

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

- **African American Spirituals:** Mildred Taylor begins chapter 11 with the words of a Negro spiritual. Learn about the significance of African American spirituals. Then look back at the words on the first page of chapter 11. What is their significance? [Underground Railroad: The William Still Story](#) | [Coded Spirituals](#)
- **Lift Every Voice and Sing:** “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is known as the Black national anthem. Listen to and learn about the writing of this poem that later became a song and the brothers who created it. What is an anthem? In what ways is this song so much more than an anthem? [Lift Every Voice and Sing: The history, the lyrics and the impact](#)
- Learn about the history, significance, and connection of cotton and Black people in the United States. [The Role Cotton Played in the 1800s Economy](#) | [African American History Blog](#) | [The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross](#)

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Over the next few days, you and your club will create a Logan Family Scrapbook. You might spend some time looking across the artifacts you’ve created so far and consider whether additional sketches of characters or journal entries would enhance your collection.

REFLECTION

Rather than creating a reassuring narrative, Mildred D. Taylor provides readers with the unsettling truths about racism. And there is much that is unresolved by the end of the novel. Will the Logans manage to hold on to their land? What will happen to T.J.? In what ways will racism and White supremacy continue to threaten the Logans and African Americans in their community? Reflect and respond to one or more of the unresolved issues in *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*. Which issues, while developed in this work of fiction, can you identify in the world today?

DAY
11

Prepare for your club meeting tomorrow.

EXTENSION EXPLORATION

Mildred D. Taylor—Learn more about Mildred D. Taylor and the books she has authored. Make a plan for books you’re excited to read next!

[Mildred D. Taylor, Author, YA Literature](#)

LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Consider quotes from the novel that demonstrate the wisdom, resistance, and resilience of the Logan family as well as moments of laughter and love. You might consider creating symbolic images such as thunder and fire to include in the scrapbook.

REFLECTION

What does Cassie learn about racism? What have you learned and possibly unlearned about race and racism as a result of reading and discussing *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*?

Homework

- Read chapter 12
- Character Portrait Chart



CLUBS MEET!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the novel, thunder has been significant. Trace back across the novel for key places where thunder is part of the physical setting. Discuss what thunder might represent and how the author uses it as a metaphor to capture the emotional setting across the novel.
2. What is the significance of placing the words to an African American spiritual at the beginning of chapter 11?
3. T.J. experiences dire consequences for believing in a friendship with the Simms brothers and is saved, for now, from the most severe. Learn about the work of antilynching crusader Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who died a few years before this novel takes place. [Ida B. Wells \(US National Park Service\)](#)
4. In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* Mildred Taylor demonstrates the ingenuity, resistance, and resilience of Black people. How do Papa, Mr. Morrison, Big Ma, and Mama demonstrate this in particular at the end of the novel? In what ways have they demonstrated this throughout?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS CHART (ECC)

Review your club ECC. What patterns are you able to notice? In what ways do these factors intersect and overlap? What have you learned about how racism works beyond individual acts of hate, but as a system of oppression?

THE LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

Enjoy looking across the artifacts you've each created for the Logan Family Scrapbook. As you admire one another's work, you might notice patterns and repetition. See this as a strength and as reflective of the similar ways you've been influenced by *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Also admire distinctions—the uniqueness you each contribute to this work. Lean into your collective talents to start envisioning how you might group your artifacts and display them in the scrapbook. You might begin grouping artifacts together in various ways—by character, by theme, by event. Consider various options rather than rushing to any decisions. Enjoy the possibilities of how you might organize artifacts and develop a layout for your scrapbook.

“

There are things you can't back down on,
things you gotta take a stand on. But it's up to you to
decide what them things are.

—Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

”



THE LOGAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK

You'll have time today to compile and create your club Logan Family Scrapbook. As you work, be sure to revisit key parts of the text that can help you hone in on themes you've been discussing such as: family, resilience, activism, friendship, hope, resistance. Consider how key symbols across the story helped to bring out these themes. And remember to use artifacts as well as multicultural-colored pencils and other colored pencils strategically to create a scrapbook that is reflective of the Logan family's struggles, triumphs, and treasures.

Note to teacher:

Anticipate that book clubs will complete this work at different times. Clubs who have finished can continue to engage Extension Explorations they may not have had time to access during the unit.



CELEBRATION!

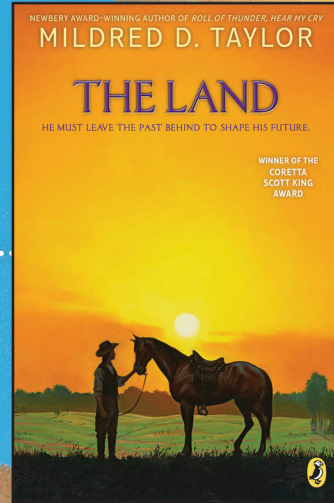
To commemorate students' reading and club experiences, invite them on a classroom gallery walk. As they move from one club's scrapbook to another, ask students to take time to admire one another's work. They can notice how each club created artifacts that capture the experiences of the Logan family across *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Like looking at a photo album, students can reminisce over parts of the study that made them laugh, cry, angry, and rejoice.

REFLECTION

Ask students to respond to the following in their reader's notebook. Let them know that they'll be invited to share some of their thinking with their club.

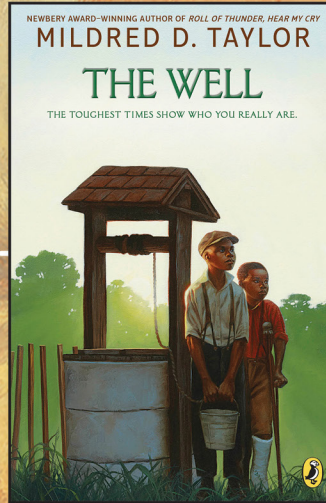
As a result of reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and the discussions you've had in your book club, how have you been challenged and changed to live your life differently? What new understandings do you have about what it means for you to be antiracist?





Prequel: The story of Paul-Edward Logan, the Logan ancestor who bought the family land where the Logans live. 1870s—1880s

- ◆ Originally published in 2001
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Award
- ◆ Scott O'Dell Award



This story's protagonist is young David Logan, father of Stacey, Cassie, Christopher-John, and Little Man, in the early 1900s.

- ◆ Originally published in 1995
- ◆ Jane Addams Book Award



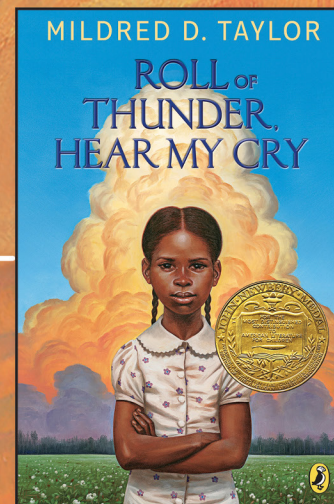
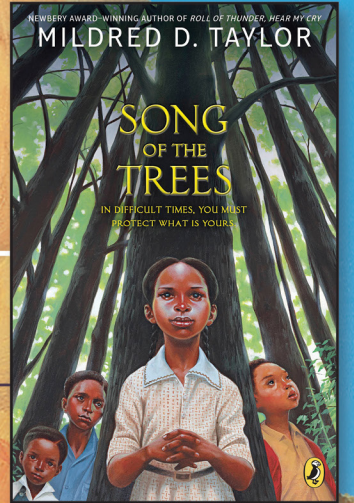
A turbulent day takes a horrible turn for the Logan family. Set in the 1930s.

- ◆ Originally published in 1990
- ◆ Christopher Award



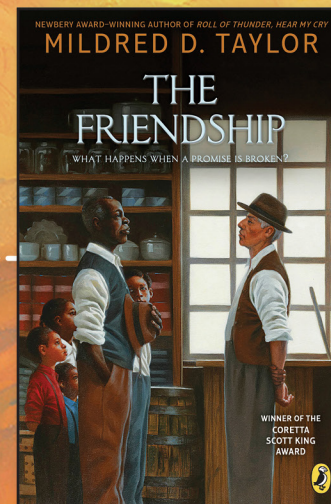
Introduces the Logan children, and especially Cassie, in 1934.

- ◆ Originally published in 1975
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Honor



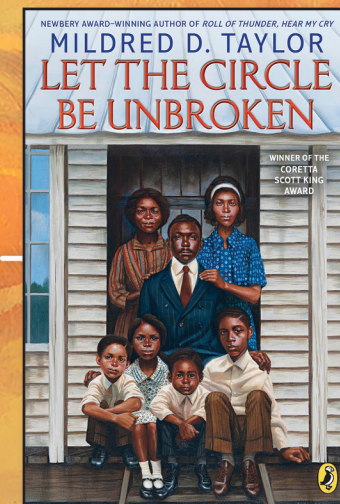
The Logan children are grade-school age in this main novel of the Logan saga, set in the 1930s.

- ◆ Originally published in 1976
- ◆ Newbery Medal
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Honor



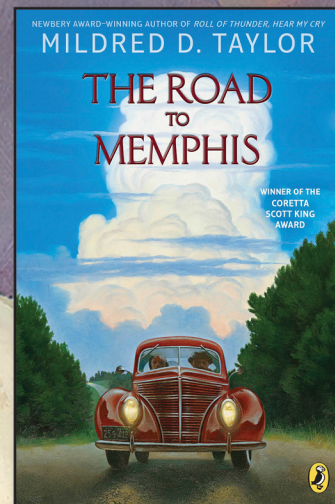
Cassie Logan and her brothers have been warned never to go to the Wallace store. Set during 1933, more or less concurrent with *Roll of Thunder*.

- ◆ Originally published in 1987
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Award
- ◆ Boston Globe-Horn Book Award



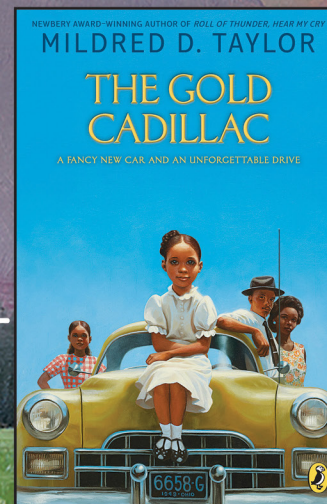
The Logan family stands together to keep their circle unbroken amid T.J.'s trial, the greed of landowners, and more. Set during 1934.

- ◆ Originally published in 1981
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Award



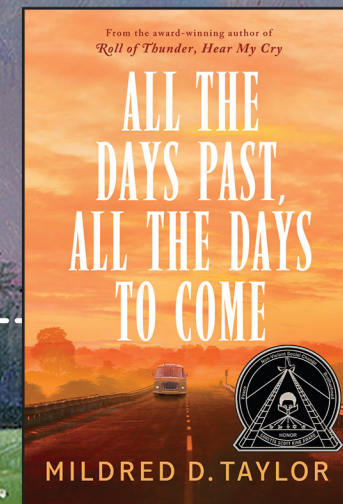
Cassie recounts harrowing events in 1941.

- ◆ Originally published in 1990
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Award



A drive South becomes dangerous for 'lois and her family around 1950.

- ◆ Originally published in 1987
- ◆ Christopher Award



Final book spanning 1950s to 2009.

- ◆ Originally published in 2020
- ◆ Coretta Scott King Honor



THE LOGAN FAMILY SAGA TIMELINE