

Y7 ENGLISH- NOVEL 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' Mildred D. Taylor

What is the novel about?

- Nine-year-old Cassie Logan lives with her brothers Stacey, Little Man, and Christopher-John on a farm in Mississippi.
- Unlike most of the black families they live near, they own land, because their father has always believed in the power of owning one's own property.
- Even though the children come from a happy home and have more money than some of their neighbours, they are very poor and must endure constant insults and cruelties from the racist white people who live near them.
- In fact, the racial problems in their area seem to be getting worse: some of their neighbours were burned to death recently, for seemingly no reason at all.
- Their father has had to go to work far away just so they can have enough money to live on.
- He sends a friend, Mr. Morrison, to live with the children, their mother, and Papa's own mother "Big Ma" while he is gone.

Key Questions

Why doesn't Jeremy ever ride the bus?

How does the bus incident make us feel as readers?

How is Cassie presented as brave in Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry?

Why do you think Papa started the fire?

Why does Mr. Jamison stand out as an 'exception to the rule'?

Why does Mama take the children to see the Berrys?

How would the story be different if another character acted as narrator?

Why do you think Taylor wrote the novel?

Key Themes

Racism, friendship, loyalty, cruelty, revenge, law and order, justice, education, civil rights, segregation.

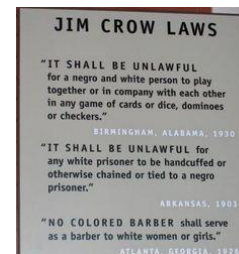
Key Characters

1	Cassie Logan: Protagonist and narrator of the novel. She is 9 years old and naïve about racism.
2	Stacey Logan: Oldest of the Logan siblings at twelve years old. He is protective of his siblings and understands racism.
3	Christopher-John Logan: He is seven years old and is timid, this making him rather different in comparison to his siblings.
4	Clayton 'Little Man' Logan: Youngest of the Logan siblings at six years old. He does not understand racism but he knows that he does not like it.
5	David Logan, 'Papa': He values his independence and works on the railroad.
6	Uncle Hammer: Uncle of the Logan children. He does not like racism. He is hot tempered. He has a lot of money.
7	Mary Logan 'Mama': Mother of the family. Worked at the elementary school until T.J gets her fired.
8	Big Ma: Grandmother of Logan children. Main caretaker of the house.
9	T.J: The Logan children's friend. He goes to the same school as them but has been held back a year.
10	Mr Morrison: Looks after the land and family whilst Papa works away. As a child he survived a fire.
11	Mr Jamison: A white lawyer who genuinely wants to help the black farmers.

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<u>Vocabulary</u>		<u>Definitions</u>
1	First Person Narrative	The story is told from one character's viewpoint
2	Protagonist	The main character in a story
3	Empathy	The ability to understand and feel the emotions of others
4	Social Realism	A setting that shows what the writer thinks about society. A realistic viewpoint.
5	Tension	Where the mood/atmosphere in a novel is strained to engage the reader
6	Phonetic	Spelling of words so you sound them out as they would be spoken
7	Colloquial	Informal language that is used in conversation
8	Accent	A way of pronouncing words that usually is associated with a particular country, area, or social class.
9	Activist	Somebody who is active in political and social causes.
10	Injustice	Unfair behaviour or treatment.
11	Ku Klux Klan	Organisation set up during the civil war to promote white supremacy.
12	Racism	Prejudice against people of different ethnic origin.
13	Segregation	Separating people based on race, class and social factors.
14	The American Dream	The idea of equality and opportunity being available for every American.
15	Civil Rights	A class of rights that protect individuals' freedom from violation by governments, social organisations, and anybody else.
16	The Great Depression	The worst economic downturn in the history of the USA, lasting from 1929 to 1939. It began after the stock market crash of October 1929.

<u>Social and Historical Context</u>	
1	'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' was published in the U.S.A in 1976.
2	The author Mildred Taylor came from the deep south and has suffered racism in her life.
3	Taylor based a lot of the novel on stories she heard from her father.
4	The novel is set in Mississippi that was a slave state up until 1865. The action happens during the Great Depression when racism and segregation was extremely common.
5	Black people could own land, businesses and vote but were still treated as second-class citizens.
6	The 'Jim Crow Laws', as they were nicknamed, deliberately segregated the blacks from the whites. They tried to stop the black population using their rights as citizens of the United States.
7	The novel shows the differences in the attitudes towards racism between blacks and whites. For example, not all the whites are racist and some hate it. Some of the blacks, such as Big Ma, accept the racism as part of life, but others, such as Uncle Hammer, want to fight back.
8	The novel hints at the start of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA.



Real 'Jim Crow Laws' examples



Segregation in the USA



The Great Depression