

# Reading & Writing Workshop: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

This is a **Reading & Writing Workshop** for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor. This workshop emphasizes **racial injustice, family resilience, and voice**, integrating both **literary analysis** and **historical context** (Jim Crow South, Great Depression).

**Theme: Justice, Dignity, and the Power of Family**

**Historical Context: The Great Depression and Jim Crow Mississippi (1930s)**

**Structure: 5 Sessions + Group Writing Project**

**Course Fit: Middle–High School Literature, U.S. History, or Civil Rights–themed unit**

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## Session 1: Setting the Stage — Family, Land, and Identity

**Objective:** Understand the Logan family’s world and the historical background of 1930s Mississippi.

**Group Focus:**

- **Group 1:** Setting — The rural South, sharecropping, and segregation.
- **Group 2:** Family — The Logan family’s values, land ownership, and community pride.
- **Group 3:** Character Introduction — Cassie, Stacey, Mama, Papa, T.J., and Mr. Morrison.
- **Group 4:** Historical Context — The Great Depression, racism, and the social hierarchy of the South.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 1–2

**Activities:**

- Group “Character Web” — chart connections between Logan family members and community figures.
- Create a **Mississippi 1930s Map** showing economic and racial divisions.
- Discussion: *Why is land ownership so important to the Logan family?*

**Writing Task:**

- Reflective paragraph: *What do you think the land symbolizes for the Logans and why?*

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## Session 2: Injustice and Resistance — Standing Up for What’s Right

**Objective:** Examine early conflicts and examples of injustice; analyze how characters resist oppression.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 3–5

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Conflict Mapping — Identify key moments of racial injustice (e.g., the bus, the store).
- **Group 2:** Character Growth — How does Cassie learn about racism through her experiences?
- **Group 3:** Author’s Craft — How does Taylor use imagery and tone to build tension?
- **Group 4:** Historical Lens — Compare these events to real-life Jim Crow laws.

**Activities:**

- Read aloud and annotate Cassie’s confrontation in Strawberry.
- Create a “Resistance Wall” listing examples of courage, protest, or quiet defiance.
- Discussion: *How do the Logans balance dignity with danger?*

**Writing Task:**

- Journal entry from Cassie’s perspective about the Strawberry incident — include emotions, reflections, and lessons learned.

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## Session 3: Community and Conflict — The Power of Unity

**Objective:** Analyze relationships between characters and explore the idea of collective resistance.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 6–8

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Family and Friendship — Cassie, Stacey, and T.J.’s changing relationships.
- **Group 2:** Economic Power — How the boycott of the Wallace store becomes an act of resistance.
- **Group 3:** Symbol Tracker — The land, the trees, and the road as recurring symbols.
- **Group 4:** Social Commentary — How does the novel critique the justice system and society?

**Activities:**

- Group “Cause and Effect” chart showing how actions (boycott, loyalty, betrayal) lead to consequences.
- Analyze the conversation between Papa and Stacey — what lessons are passed down?
- Discussion: *How does collective action challenge injustice?*

**Writing Task:**

- Analytical paragraph: *Explain how the Logans use courage and community to resist racism. Include at least one quote from the text.*
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## Session 4: Violence and Courage — The Price of Standing Up

**Objective:** Explore the novel’s climax, moral choices, and the cost of standing up for justice.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 9–11

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Character Analysis — Stacey’s maturity and T.J.’s downfall.
- **Group 2:** Symbolism — The fire and the cotton fields as metaphors for both destruction and renewal.
- **Group 3:** Theme — The balance between revenge, justice, and survival.
- **Group 4:** Historical Connection — Compare the mob scene to real historical acts of racial violence.

**Activities:**

- Close reading of the fire scene: track imagery, tone, and character reactions.
- Each group creates a “Turning Point Chart” identifying key moral decisions.
- Discussion: *Why does Papa start the fire, and what does that choice represent?*

**Writing Task:**

- Analytical response: *How does Mildred Taylor use the fire to symbolize both destruction and hope?*
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## Session 5: Group Writing Project — Echoes of Strength

**Objective:** Reflect on the themes of justice, dignity, and legacy through writing and presentation.

**Group Project Options:**

1. **Creative Rewrite:** Write a missing chapter or alternate ending showing Cassie’s later reflections on the events.
2. **Historical Comparison:** Create a mini-documentary or essay connecting *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* to a real Civil Rights event (e.g., Emmett Till, Rosa Parks, or local activism).
3. **Family Heritage Project:** Design a “Logan Family Album” combining character reflections, diary entries, and photographs representing strength and unity.
4. **Poetry of Resistance:** Write a series of poems from different perspectives (Cassie, Stacey, T.J., Mama) expressing courage and hope.

**Final Reflection (Individual):**

“What does *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* teach us about courage, family, and justice?”

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**Assessment Rubric (20 points total)**

| Category                 | Excellent (4)                    | Good (3)                   | Developing (2)          | Beginning (1)         |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Reading Comprehension    | Deep, text-based analysis        | Accurate understanding     | Partial comprehension   | Limited comprehension |
| Collaboration            | Strong leadership and teamwork   | Good participation         | Uneven effort           | Minimal engagement    |
| Writing Quality          | Clear structure, strong evidence | Mostly clear, some support | Needs more organization | Weak or unclear       |
| Historical Understanding | Rich historical context          | Some context               | Basic context           | Minimal connection    |
| Creativity / Engagement  | Insightful and original          | Thoughtful and detailed    | Basic creativity        | Minimal effort        |

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**Extension / Enrichment**

- Listen to excerpts from Taylor’s *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (sequel) to extend themes.
  - Research Jim Crow laws or Depression-era Mississippi for a short history brief.
  - Explore songs of the era — spirituals and protest songs — and discuss how music reinforces hope.
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