

# Table of Contents

<b>How to Use This Literature Guide</b> .....	4
Theme Thoughts .....	4
Vocabulary .....	5
Analyzing the Literature .....	6
Reader Response .....	6
Close Reading the Literature .....	6
Making Connections .....	7
Creating With the Story Elements .....	7
Culminating Activity .....	8
Comprehension Assessment .....	8
Response to Literature .....	8
<b>Correlations to the Standards</b> .....	8
Standards Correlation Chart .....	9
TESOL and WIDA Standards .....	10
<b>About the Author—Mildred D. Taylor</b> .....	11
Possible Texts for Text Comparisons .....	11
Note Regarding Subject Matter of this Novel .....	11
<b>Book Summary of <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i></b> .....	12
Cross-Curricular Connection .....	12
Possible Texts for Text Sets .....	12
<b>Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts</b> .....	13
<b>Section 1: Chapters 1–3</b> .....	14
<b>Section 2: Chapters 4–5</b> .....	24
<b>Section 3: Chapters 6–7</b> .....	34
<b>Section 4: Chapters 8–9</b> .....	44
<b>Section 5: Chapters 10–12</b> .....	54
<b>Post-Reading Activities</b> .....	64
Post-Reading Theme Thoughts .....	64
Culminating Activity: Totally Not Fair! .....	65
Comprehension Assessment .....	67
Response to Literature: Researching Reconstruction .....	69
<b>Answer Key</b> .....	71

## How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages will make clear how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

### Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the novel.

Before students begin reading, have them complete *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to have students keep their papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 64). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters of the novel. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before the novel to what the characters discovered during the story.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Vocabulary

Each teacher overview page has definitions and sentences about how key vocabulary words are used in the section. These words should be introduced and discussed with students. There are two student vocabulary activity pages in each section. On the first page, students are asked to define the ten words chosen by the author of this unit. On the second page in most sections, each student will select at least eight words that he or she finds interesting or difficult. For each section, choose one of these pages for your students to complete. With either assignment, you may want to have students get into pairs to discuss the meanings of the words. Allow students to use reference guides to define the words. Monitor students to make sure the definitions they have found are accurate and relate to how the words are used in the text.

On some of the vocabulary student pages, students are asked to answer text-related questions about the vocabulary words. The following question stems will help you create your own vocabulary questions if you'd like to extend the discussion.

- How does this word describe \_\_\_\_\_'s character?
- In what ways does this word relate to the problem in this story?
- How does this word help you understand the setting?
- In what ways is this word related to the story's solution?
- Describe how this word supports the novel's theme of . . . .
- What visual images does this word bring to your mind?
- For what reasons might the author have chosen to use this particular word?

At times, more work with the words will help students understand their meanings. The following quick vocabulary activities are a good way to further study the words.

- Have students practice their vocabulary and writing skills by creating sentences and/or paragraphs in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly and with evidence of understanding.
- Students can play vocabulary concentration. Students make a set of cards with the words and a separate set of cards with the definitions. Then, students lay the cards out on the table and play concentration. The goal of the game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions.
- Students can create word journal entries about the words. Students choose words they think are important and then describe why they think each word is important within the book.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Analyzing the Literature

After students have read each section, hold small-group or whole-class discussions. Questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. Level 1 is indicated by a square, while Level 2 is indicated by a triangle.

These questions focus on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Student pages are provided if you want to assign these questions for individual student work before your group discussion. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the novel with students.

### Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level, that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion/argument. Students have a choice between two prompts for each reader response. One response requires students to make connections between the reading and their own lives. The other prompt requires students to determine text-to-text connections or connections within the text.

### Close Reading the Literature

Within each section, students are asked to closely reread a short section of text. Since some versions of the novels have different page numbers, the selections are described by chapter and location, along with quotations to guide the readers. After each close reading, there are text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Encourage students to read each question one at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Once students have answered the questions, discuss what they discovered. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Close Reading the Literature *(cont.)*

The generic, open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- Give evidence from the text to support . . . .
- Justify your thinking using text evidence about . . . .
- Find evidence to support your conclusions about . . . .
- What text evidence helps the reader understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why \_\_\_\_\_ happens.
- Based on events in the story, . . . .
- Use text evidence to describe why . . . .

### Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to writing, mathematics, science, social studies, or the fine arts. In some of these lessons, students are asked to use the author as a mentor. The writing in the novel models a skill for them that they can then try to emulate. Students may also be asked to look for examples of language conventions within the novel. Each of these types of activities requires higher-order thinking skills from students.

### Creating with the Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing the common story elements in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, and plot can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers discuss these elements daily, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

Students are given three options for working with the story elements. They are asked to create something related to the characters, setting, or plot of the novel. Students are given choice on this activity so that they can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to them. Different multiple intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

## Analyzing the Literature

Provided below are discussion questions you can use in small groups, with the whole class, or for written assignments. Each question is given at two levels so you can choose the right question for each group of students. Activity sheets with these questions are provided (pages 18–19) if you want students to write their responses. For each question, a few key discussion points are provided for your reference.

Story Element	■ Level 1	▲ Level 2	Key Discussion Points
Character	Why does Little Man refuse to take his textbook from Miss Crocker?	Explain why Cassie and her brother react the way they do when they receive their textbooks.	Little Man stomps on and refuses to take the book because of a racial term on the inside cover. Race plays an important role throughout the story. Understanding the symbolism behind many of the prejudiced remarks and actions can help students relate to the main characters in the story.
Setting	Describe the children’s journey to school each morning. What is their school like?	What makes the walk to school each day difficult for the children? What makes the walk worth the effort for them?	Students have to walk over an hour to get to a very old and crumbling schoolhouse. The teachers stress the gift of education bestowed to students and downplay the lack of materials and funds provided compared to white schools.
Plot	Describe the plan to get revenge on the bus and what happens to the bus.	Why do the Logans decide to get revenge on the bus that passes them every morning?	Stacey, Cassie, and the little boys have grown tired of the humiliation from the white students and the bus driver who drive past every day. They decide to dig a gully aided by the driving rain that will cause the bus to get stuck and break down.



## Analyzing the Literature

**Directions:** Think about the section you have just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. Why does Little Man refuse to take his textbook from Miss Crocker?

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2. Describe the children’s journey to school each morning. What is their school like?

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3. Describe the plan to get revenge on the bus and what happens to the bus.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ▲ Analyzing the Literature

**Directions:** Think about the section you have just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. Explain why Cassie and her brother react the way they do when they receive their textbooks.

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2. What makes the walk to school each day difficult for the children? What makes the walk worth the effort for them?

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3. Why do the Logans decide to get revenge on the bus that passes them every morning?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Close Reading the Literature

**Directions:** Closely reread the section in chapter 1 when Miss Crocker confronts Mrs. Logan about Cassie and Little Man’s actions at school. Start with, “Mama’s classroom was in the back . . .” Continue until the end of the chapter. Read each question and then revisit the text to find the evidence that supports your answer.

1. Based on the text, what punishment does Miss Crocker tell Mama she gave the children?

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2. How is Mama’s reaction to the news about her children different from what Miss Crocker expected?

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3. Describe what Mama does with Little Man’s and Cassie’s classroom books and explain why she decides to do it.

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4. Give evidence from the text to support Cassie’s belief that Mama “understood.”

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Creating with the Story Elements

**Directions:** Thinking about the story elements of character, setting, and plot in a novel is very important to understanding what is happening and why. Complete **one** of the following activities about what you’ve read so far. Be creative and have fun!

### Characters

Select one of the children from the book. Write his or her name vertically on a piece of paper. Try to think of a phrase or sentence that begins with each letter of that character’s name. The phrases or sentences should be about the character’s personality or some aspect of his or her life.

### Setting

Use books or the Internet to research facts about the state of Mississippi. Create a poster for the state on a piece of construction paper. Include written and drawn facts about the state that you find interesting. Some ideas might include the state flag, important cities, climate, and the state bird.

### Plot

Create a board game about the children traveling to school. Create spaces on the board that are relevant to the actual journey the children make. Include obstacles and shortcuts that are mentioned in the book. You can also add new obstacles that you think might have been part of their journey.