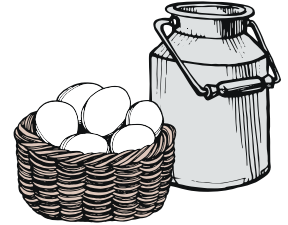




ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: DISCUSSION GUIDE #2

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.



Chapters 5 – 6

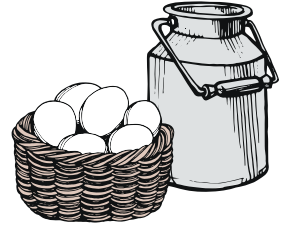
Comprehension:

- At the market in Strawberry, Big Ma parks the wagon on the far end of the field even though there are spaces available near the entrance. Why does she do this, and how does Cassie feel about it?
Big Ma parks at the far end because the spots at the front are for white people's wagons. Cassie is frustrated because there's plenty of space to sell at the front of the market, and she feels as though Big Ma's stall won't get as much business on the far end of the field.
- How does Cassie feel about Mr. Jamison, and why?
Cassie likes Mr. Jamison because he's the only white man who shows respect to Mama and Big Ma by using "Missus" when he addresses them. She also likes the way he answers questions directly, like Papa.
- Why does Cassie disobey Big Ma and go to the Barnett Mercantile without her? What happens there that makes Cassie so upset?
Cassie doesn't want to be left outside alone, so she follows Stacey and T.J. to the store. Inside, T.J. gives his mama's list to the storekeeper Mr. Barnett, but when a white woman comes in, he stops helping T.J. and helps the woman instead. Mr. Barnett takes a long time helping the white woman, and Cassie politely reminds him that she, Stacey, and T.J. had been there first. Mr. Barnett doesn't appreciate being questioned and yells at Cassie. Angry and embarrassed, Cassie screams back at him, and Stacey drags Cassie out of the store.
- Describe what happens between Cassie and the Simmses in Strawberry.
Cassie bumps into Lillian Jean, and Lillian Jean demands that she apologize and get off the sidewalk. Cassie apologizes but doesn't get off the sidewalk, which angers Lillian Jean even more. Mr. Simms, Lillian Jean's father, pushes Cassie off the sidewalk and demands she apologize (again) to Lillian Jean. Big Ma intervenes and makes Cassie apologize despite Cassie's protests.
- Who is Uncle Hammer, and what makes his car so interesting?
Uncle Hammer is Papa's older brother. He lives and works up north. He drives the same fancy car as Mr. Granger, which is surprising to many people.
- How does Uncle Hammer react when he hears about what happened to Cassie in Strawberry?
Uncle Hammer is angry and tries to leave the house. He pushes past Big Ma and Mama to get into his car, but Mr. Morrison is able to get in the car with him as he's driving away. The next morning, Cassie learns that Mr. Morrison was able to talk to Uncle Hammer and prevent him from hurting Mr. Simms.



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Chapters 5 – 6

- According to Mama, why didn't Big Ma stand up for Cassie in Strawberry?
Big Ma was worried that Mr. Simms would hurt Cassie if the argument continued.
- How does Mama explain to Cassie why Mr. Simms forced her to call Lillian Jean "Miz"?
Mama explains that Mr. Simms believes that white people are better than Black people and that this belief makes him feel important.
- What does Uncle Hammer give Stacey for an early Christmas present? How does T.J. react when he sees it?
Uncle Hammer gives Stacey a very fine wool coat. T.J. acts like he doesn't like the coat and tells Stacey he looks like a preacher in it.

Analysis:

- At the mercantile, Mr. Barnett fills white customers' orders before T.J.'s, even though T.J. and Cassie were there first. How do T.J., Stacey, and Cassie react to this injustice, and what do their reactions show about each of them?
Cassie reminds Mr. Barnett that she and T.J. were there first, and she becomes angry. This shows that Cassie has a strong sense of right and wrong and even more so that she's not familiar with this kind of treatment. Stacey and T.J. remain quiet and act as if nothing out of the ordinary is happening, which shows that they're already familiar with this kind of treatment. Stacey hushes Cassie and gets her out of the store, which shows that he's aware of the danger in protesting the unfair treatment.
- In Cassie's town, there is a bridge with only one lane. White drivers are known for pushing through and making Black drivers reverse back across the bridge—even when it's not the white drivers' turn. When Uncle Hammer approaches the bridge, it's clearly the other car's turn. Even so, Uncle Hammer drives forward, forcing the car with the white family to reverse. What does this show about Uncle Hammer?
This shows that Uncle Hammer is not only unwilling to back down to others just because of the color of his skin, but he'll treat white people the same way that they treat Black people.

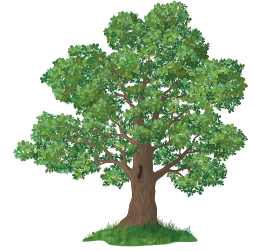
Personal Connection:

- ▶ Cassie feels angry when Big Ma makes her apologize to Lillian Jean instead of standing up for her. Write or tell about a time when someone didn't stand up for you—or when you didn't stand up for someone else. How did this make you feel? Explain.
Student answers will vary.



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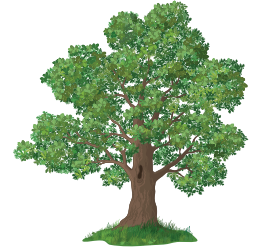
Chapters 7 – 8

Comprehension:

- Why doesn't Uncle Hammer want Stacey to get the coat back from T.J.? What lesson does he try to teach Stacey about the coat?
Uncle Hammer says that if Stacey isn't smart enough to hold on to the coat, he's not good enough for the coat. He tells Stacey that he needs to recognize a good thing when he sees it and not to let anyone talk him out of it.
- What happened to Mr. Morrison's family?
When Mr. Morrison was six years old, two young Black men were accused of hurting a white woman. The men came to Mr. Morrison's father for protection. Night men came and set the house on fire, and Mr. Morrison's entire family died.
- What is Little Man's most treasured Christmas gift, and why does he value it above all the others?
Little Man treasures the book he receives. The book is not a hand-me-down. Little Man treasures it because it's brand new and belongs to him.
- Why does Jeremy stop by the Logans' house on Christmas, and why does Papa discourage Stacey's friendship with Jeremy?
Jeremy comes by with a few gifts, including a handmade flute for Stacey. Papa says that even though Jeremy may see Stacey as an equal right now, that will probably change when they grow up. He also says that right now, the country isn't built for friendship between Black people and white people. Papa warns that Jeremy will probably turn on Stacey in the future.
- How does Mr. Jamison offer to help the Logans with the Wallace store boycott, and why?
Mr. Jamison offers to back the Logans' neighbors' credit at the store so the Logans won't have to risk their land. He also wants to help because he doesn't agree with the racism and mistreatment the Black families face, and he agrees with the Logans' reasons for the boycott.
- Why does Mr. Granger come to visit the Logans, and what does he say?
Harlan Granger leases the store land to the Wallaces and he makes money off the store's sales. Because the boycott interferes with Mr. Granger's money, he wants the Logans to stop helping the neighbors shop at the store in Vickburg. Mr. Granger tells the Logans that they're stirring up trouble and that if they don't stop, he'll make sure they lose their land.



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Chapters 7 – 8

- After Cassie's conversation with Papa, how does her behavior toward Lillian Jean change on the walk to school? What impact does this have on Lillian Jean?
Cassie starts calling her "Miz" Lillian Jean, speaks politely to her, and carries her books. Lillian Jean is delighted that Cassie caters to her, and she brags about it to her friends. Lillian Jean begins telling her secrets to Cassie.
- What does T.J. do that causes Mama to get fired?
T.J. tells the Wallaces that Mama pasted paper in the textbooks and that she's responsible for encouraging neighbors to stop shopping at the Wallace store.
- What consequence does T.J. face for talking to Kaleb Wallace about Ms. Logan and getting her fired?
Nobody will talk to him at school.

Analysis:

- Mama objects to the children hearing Mr. Morrison's story about what the night men did to his family. Papa insists that the children need to hear it because it's their history. Why do you think Papa believes this?
Papa probably believes that the children need to hear the stories of violence and injustice that are part of the history of Black people in the country. He likely believes that it's important for the children to know what has happened and what could still happen.
- When Cassie tells Lillian Jean that she has a surprise for her, she leads her into the woods. How does this scene change the dynamic between the two girls?
Before Cassie brings her into the woods, Lillian Jean thinks she's in control, sharing gossip and telling her secrets to Cassie. But when Cassie beats up Lillian Jean as payback for what happened in Strawberry, Lillian Jean realizes she's no longer in control. If Lillian Jean runs to her father or tells anyone about the fight, Cassie can reveal that Lillian Jean doesn't keep her friends' secrets. They'll also know that Lillian Jean—a thirteen-year-old—was beat up by a nine-year-old.

Personal Connection:

- ▶ Stacey gives his new coat to T.J. after T.J. teases him about how he looks in it. Have you ever let someone's teasing, opinions, or peer pressure influence you to do something? Explain.
Student answers will vary.