



# ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: DISCUSSION GUIDE #3



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 9 – 10

### Comprehension:

- How do Stacey and Cassie react when Jeremy tells them he'll be lonely without them?  
*Stacey and Cassie are confused and surprised that Jeremy doesn't like his brothers and sister.*
- What does Jeremy tell the Logans about how his brothers, R.W. and Melvin, treat T.J.?  
*Jeremy says that R.W. and Melvin are friendly to T.J.'s face, but they laugh at him and call him names after he leaves.*
- Why does Papa delay leaving for his railroad job?  
*Papa delays leaving for his railroad job because he has a gut feeling that something bad will happen since Thurston Wallace is threatening to "put a stop to this shopping in Vicksburg." Papa sees that some people are getting upset about the Wallace store boycott, and he wants to be around to protect his family if necessary.*
- Why does Mr. Avery come to talk to Papa about the shopping list his wife had brought?  
*Mr. Avery tells Papa that he no longer wants the things on the list. He explains that Mr. Granger has changed the rules on how much Mr. Avery needs to pay him as a sharecropper, which will make paying debts in Vicksburg nearly impossible.*
- What happened to Stacey, Mr. Morrison, and Papa on their way home from Vicksburg?  
*The back wheels fell off the wagon while they were heading home, and when Papa and Mr. Morrison tried to put the wheels back on, a truck approached. The men got out of the truck and shot Papa, causing him to fall with his leg under the wagon. When Jack, the mule pulling the wagon, got scared, he ran and the wagon rolled over Papa's leg.*
- Why does Stacey feel responsible for his father's injury?  
*Stacey's job was to hold the reins tight on Jack the mule to keep him still, but Stacey lost the reins during the commotion. As a result, the wagon rolled over Papa's leg.*
- What does it mean that the bank "calls up the note", and what does Papa think Harlan Granger has to do with it?  
*The bank says that the Logans must immediately pay their mortgage, the debt they owe for the land, or they'll lose the land. Papa believes that Harlan Granger is influencing the bank to demonstrate his power and status in the community. He seeks to punish Papa for organizing the boycott against the Wallace store, and he seeks to remind Papa that, although he owns the land, it can be taken away from him.*



# ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: DISCUSSION GUIDE #3



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 9 – 10

- Why doesn't Papa want Uncle Hammer to know about what the Wallaces did to him? Why don't the Logans report the Wallaces to the sheriff?  
*Papa knows that Uncle Hammer will react wildly and angrily, and he could "get himself hung." The Logans don't report the crime because if they did, the Wallaces would report Mr. Morrison, and he'd be charged with attacking white men.*
- What does Uncle Hammer do to get the money to pay the bank?  
*Uncle Hammer sells his car—and a few other things—to get the money to pay the bank.*

### Analysis:

- What does Papa mean when he tells Stacey that "he was born blessed"?  
*Stacey was born into a Black family that owns their own land. Because most Black families do not own their own land, they sharecrop, leaving them indebted to white land owners. Owning land is a form of freedom, which will be passed down to Stacey as he gets older and takes over the land.*
- After several families pull out of the boycott of the Wallace store, there are only seven families left. The book says "the number was not significant enough to hurt the Wallaces, only enough to rile them." If that's true, why do you think the Logans continue the boycott?  
*The Logan family feels that it's important to not give up and to stand up for what's right. They feel strongly that justice should be served and that others shouldn't be able to get away with their poor, hateful, and even criminal behavior.*
- Why do you think T.J. comes to the revival with the Simms brothers? What might happen to T.J. when he goes to Strawberry?  
*T.J. comes to the revival to show off his new friends to his old friends. He brags that R.W. and Melvin will give him anything he wants because he's their best friend. It appears that T.J. is also trying to show off to the Simms brothers, but when he realizes that his old friends aren't impressed, he accuses them of having no manners. Student predictions will vary, but may mention impending trouble in Strawberry as the Simms brothers treat T.J. in a condescending way, showing that they don't truly care about him.*

### Personal Connection:

- ▶ Cassie's community looks forward to the annual church revival because it's a rare social event that gives people the chance to see friends and relatives. It's a break from their daily routine, and hard times are forgotten for the day. Tell about a tradition or event that you enjoy, and explain what makes it special for you.  
*Student answers will vary.*



# ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: DISCUSSION GUIDE #3

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 11 – 12

### Comprehension:

- Explain what happened with T.J. and R.W. and Melvin Simms when they were at the Barnetts' store. Why didn't the Barnetts recognize the Simms brothers?

After the revival at the church, T.J. and the Simms brothers went to Strawberry to get the pearl-handled pistol, but the mercantile was closed. T.J. and the Simms brothers broke into the mercantile. While the Simmses were trying to steal the gun, the Barnetts tried to stop them. R.W. hit Mr. Barnett on the head and also hurt Mrs. Barnett. T.J. tried to leave, but the Simms brothers refused to let him. T.J. threatened to tell everyone that it was R.W. and Melvin who had hurt the Barnetts unless they took him home, so they beat T.J. Later, T.J. was able to get back by walking and getting a ride with a farmer. The Barnetts didn't recognize the Simms brothers because R.W. and Melvin wore stockings over their faces and gloves over their hands so they wouldn't be recognized.

- How do Stacey and Cassie react to T.J.'s story?

At first, the Logan children are irritated by T.J.'s arrival and request for help. Cassie and Stacey lack compassion and insist that T.J. tell them the truth about what happened in Strawberry. At first, the Logan children suggest getting help from Papa or Big Ma, but T.J. begs Stacey to take him home without involving any more of the Logan family. When Stacey says that he'll take T.J. home, Cassie objects but eventually accepts that she can't change Stacey's mind.

- Who comes to T.J.'s house in the middle of the night, and what happens?

A group of angry men come to the Avery house in the middle of the night, including Kaleb and Thurston Wallace and R.W. and Melvin Simms. With guns, they pound on the door and break windows to enter the house. The men drag the Avery family out of the house and beat them. The men accuse T.J. of robbing the Barnetts' store.

- Who is the first person who tries to help the Avery family?

Mr. Jamison arrives first and tells the angry men that the Barnetts are still alive and that it's up to the sheriff and the law to handle the situation.

- What do the Logan children do when they realize what the men plan to do to T.J.?

Stacey sends Cassie, Christopher-John, and Little Man home to get Papa and Mr. Morrison. Stacey stays so he can see if the men take T.J. off into the woods somewhere.

- What does Mama realize is happening in the forest after Papa and Mr. Morrison leave, and how does she respond?

Mama realizes that the cotton is on fire, and she orders Cassie, Christopher-John, and Little Man to stay at the house while she and Big Ma go to fight the fire.

- What information does Jeremy bring to Cassie, Little Man, and Christopher-John? Why is this information helpful for the Logan children to hear?

Jeremy tells them that he's been fighting the fire with his father and brothers, as well as a bunch of other men from the community. He mentions seeing Papa and Stacey, and he explains how Papa and Mr. Granger are working together to dig a deep trench to stop the fire. This information lets the Logan children know that Stacey and Papa are safe.



# ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: DISCUSSION GUIDE #3

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 11 – 12

- How does Papa stop the men from harming T.J.?

Papa starts a fire in his own cotton field to make Mr. Granger stop the hanging. When Mr. Granger sees the fire, he tells the men to go fight the fire, which keeps them from harming T.J.

- Where is T.J. at the end of the story?

T.J. is in jail.

## Analysis:

- Given the way T.J. treated Stacey and Mrs. Logan in the past, why do you think Stacey decides to help T.J. when he comes back from the Barnetts' store? What does this show about Stacey?

Stacey probably helps T.J. because he might feel sorry for his old friend who's hurt. He might feel a responsibility to help T.J. because of their long history, especially since Stacey now sees that T.J. was deceived by R.W. and Melvin Simms at the mercantile. Stacey probably thinks that helping someone in need is the right thing to do. Stacey's willingness to help T.J. shows that he is loyal, kind-hearted, and willing to forgive.

- Consider T.J.'s relationship with the Simms brothers. What details of their relationship contribute to T.J.'s downfall?

The relationship between T.J. and the Simms brothers isn't a true friendship based on loyalty, respect, and trust. Instead, the Simms brothers use T.J. and laugh at him behind his back. R.W. and Melvin do not look at T.J. as an equal or a true friend—instead, they see him as someone they can control. They protect themselves by covering their faces and skin color in Strawberry at the mercantile, which likely means they planned to place the blame on T.J. the whole time. The Simms know that even if T.J. tells the truth about what happened, the sheriff won't believe him because he is Black. T.J. will suffer major consequences—like jail, the chain gang, or even death—because he trusted the Simms brothers who never truly cared about him.

- What does Papa mean when he says “This thing's been coming a long time”?

Papa's statement means that the white men have been looking for a reason and a chance to go after a Black person in the community. He says that the white men have been planning to kill some of the Black people for a long time.

## Personal Connection:

- ▶ At the end of the novel, Cassie cries when she learns what might be ahead for T.J. She asks Papa, “Does it have to be?” Papa answers, “All I can say, Cassie girl...is that it shouldn't be.” In the world, there are many things that shouldn't be the way they are. Name one that is of particular importance to you. What is something you would do—if you could—to change that situation for the better? Explain.

Student answers will vary.