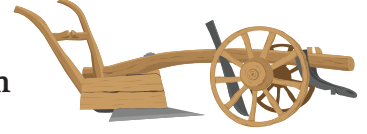




ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY: PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The prompts below focus on three major elements in Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*—Jim Crow laws, sharecropping, and the Great Depression in rural Mississippi.



Choose one of the major topics to learn more about. Read the background information, conduct your own research to learn more, and complete the mind map on the next page. Then, respond to the question about the topic you chose.

1. Jim Crow laws

Prejudice and racism were legally protected by the government during the 1930s. Jim Crow laws were a set of unfair laws that denied equal treatment to African American people between the end of the Civil War and the 1960s. The laws segregated, or separated, people according to race, impacting public places such as schools, transportation, and restaurants. Consequences for standing up to or openly defying the laws included arrest, fines, jail time—even beatings or death.

2. Sharecropping

Sharecropping is a system of farming in which a farmer rents a small piece of land from a landowner in exchange for a share of the crop. Sharecropping benefits landowners and often leaves the farmer indebted to the landowner. Many formerly enslaved people became sharecroppers after slavery was outlawed.

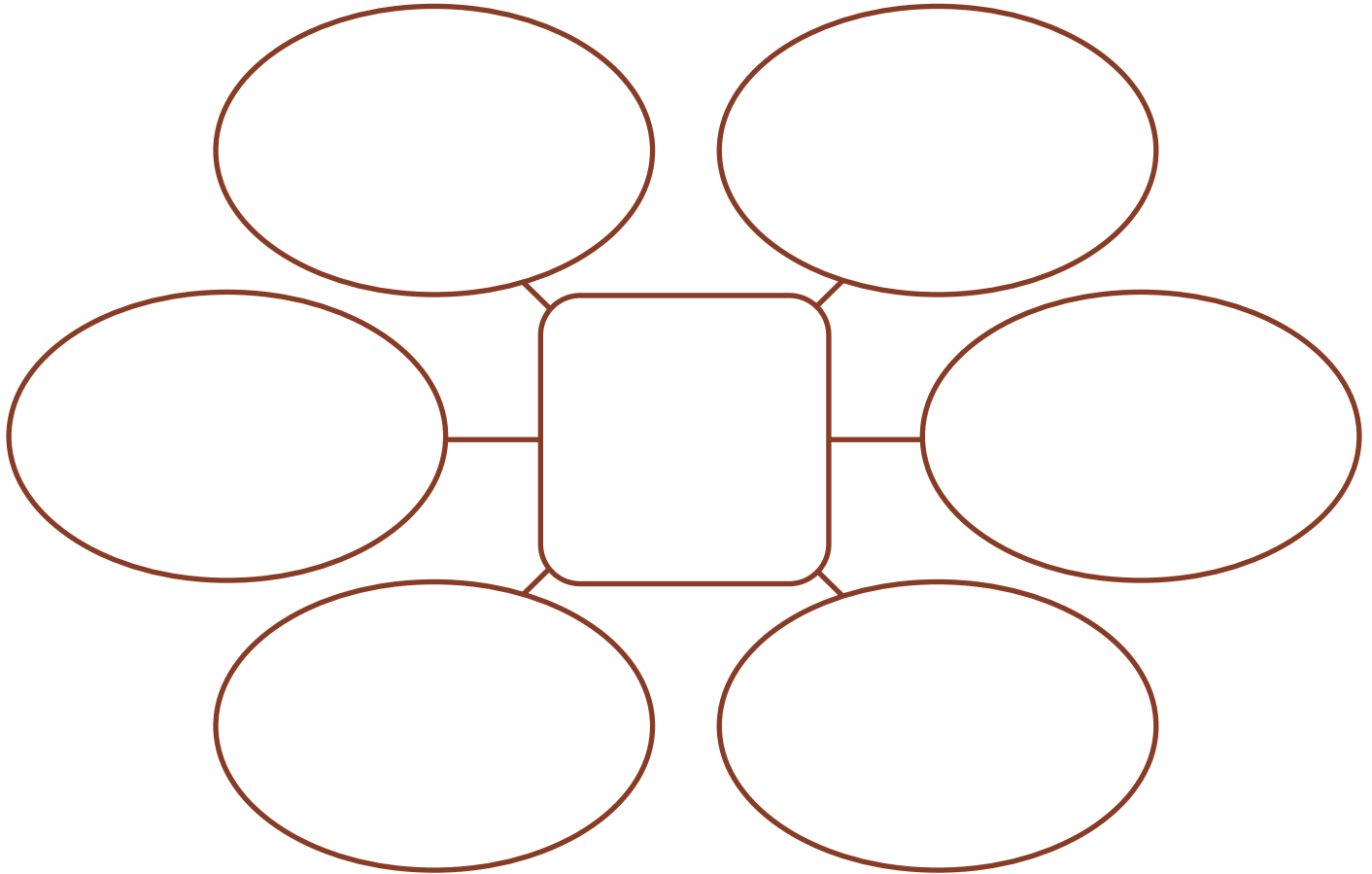
3. The Great Depression

The Great Depression was a time of great economic crisis during the 1930s. While it began with a stock market crash in the United States, the depression spread worldwide. Many people were out of work and unable to meet their basic needs, such as food and shelter. In addition to the harsh economic conditions in the 1930s, the Great Plains in the United States faced harsh environmental conditions—the worst drought in U.S. history. Things became even worse for farmers when high winds stirred up the dry soil, causing huge dust storms. The affected area became known as the Dust Bowl.



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Complete the mind map. Write the topic in the center, and add information you learned in the outer circles.



Respond to the question about the topic you chose.

Jim Crow laws

What are some specific examples of Jim Crow laws?

sharecropping

What are some advantages and disadvantages of sharecropping for the landowner and the tenant?

Great Depression

How did the Great Depression affect people living in cities and people living in rural areas differently?