

Focus ON READING

Vocabulary

READING
COMPREHENSION

Roll of Thunder,
Hear My Cry

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ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Reproducible Activities

Focus Your Reading (continued)

A **bale** is a large bundle of goods, such as cotton or hay, that is compressed, bound, and sometimes wrapped.

“**The war**” in this book refers to World War I.

Nigger is a derogatory term for a black person. It is considered to be inappropriate today because of the history of racial hatred and bigotry that the word implies.

Lynching refers to the act of a mob of people murdering a person who has not been given a trial.

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why is owning land so important to the Logan family?
2. The Berrys' burnin' is mentioned several times in this section of the book. How can you tell that the Logan children are nervous about this?
3. What does the condition of the schoolbooks show about the attitude toward the Great Faith Elementary and Secondary School in the county?
4. Why do you think Mary Logan glues the books she has for her class?
5. Why do you think that Papa has brought Mr. Morrison to stay with the Logan family?

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “Always **meticulously** neat, six-year-old Little Man never allowed dirt or tears or stains to mar anything he owned.”
meticulously: _____
2. “Christopher-John’s whistling increased to a raucous, nervous shrill, and grudgingly I let the matter drop and trudged along in moody silence, my brothers growing as **pensively** quiet as I.”
pensively: _____
3. “‘Ain’t no need gettin’ mad,’ T.J. replied **undaunted**. ‘Jus’ an idea.’”
undaunted: _____
4. “In the very center of the expansive front lawn, waving red, white, and blue with the emblem of the Confederacy **emblazoned** in its upper left-hand corner, was the Mississippi flag.”
emblazoned: _____
5. “But even so, after today a number of the older students would not be seen again for a month or two, not until the last puff of cotton had been **gleaned** from the fields, and eventually most would drop out of school altogether.”
gleaned: _____
6. “As the last gong of the bell **reverberated** across the compound, I swooped up my pencils and notebook and ran inside.”
reverberated: _____
7. “My anticipation at having my own book **ebbed** to a sinking disappointment.”
ebbed: _____
8. “‘Dirty!’ Miss Crocker echoed, appalled by such **temerity**.”
temerity: _____
9. “Although Mama had been a teacher at Great Faith for fourteen years, ever since she had graduated from the Crandon Teacher Training School at nineteen, she was still considered by many of the other teachers as a disrupting **maverick**.”
maverick: _____
10. “But now, gazing upward at the most **formidable**-looking being we had ever encountered, we huddled closer to Papa.”
formidable: _____

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why does Papa go to work on the railroad?
2. What does T.J. tell the Logan children about the Berrys?
3. Why doesn't the bus stop to pick up the Logans?
4. Why is Miss Crocker teaching the fourth-grade students and the first-grade students for the first few days of school?
5. What is wrong with the books that the Great Faith School has for the students?
6. Why does Miss Crocker think that Little Man can't read the inside cover of the book?
7. How does Miss Crocker punish Little Man and Cassie?
8. Why doesn't Cassie talk to Mama after Miss Crocker leaves Mama's room?
9. Why does Mr. Morrison get fired from the railroad?
10. What does the sheriff do when Henrietta Toggins reports what she saw happen to the Berrys?

*Focus Your Reading**Vocabulary Words to Know*

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

resiliency—the ability to recover strength, spirits, or good humor quickly

embittered—made resentful or sad; aggravated

coddling—treating someone tenderly, such as an infant or an invalid. (The term can be used negatively when it is applied to someone who should not be treated in this way, such as a healthy adult.)

flippantly—disrespectfully

rash—too hasty or incautious in acting or speaking

oblivious—forgetful or unmindful

haggard—having a worn look, as from sleeplessness, grief, or illness

riveted—fixed or held firmly

nauseous—feeling a sickness of the stomach; feeling disgusted

fathom—to get to the bottom of; to understand thoroughly

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Calfskin refers to soft, flexible leather made from the hide of a calf.

A **reader** is a schoolbook containing stories, poems, and other reading selections. It is used by students learning to read.

“**Devilish night men**” refers to members of the Ku Klux Klan, a secret society of white men that was founded in the Southern states after the Civil War to keep and maintain white power.

Whooping cough is a disease affecting children. Symptoms include repeated attacks of coughing that end in a forced intake of breath, or whoop.

“**Tarred and feathered**” describes someone who has been coated with tar then feathers as a punishment.

Macon is a city in central Georgia.

Vicksburg is a city on the Mississippi River west of Jackson.

Tenant farming is farming land owned by another person and paying rent in cash or crops.

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “At first the rain had merely splotted the dust, which seemed to be rejoicing in its own **resiliency** and laughing at the heavy drops thudding against it; but eventually the dust was forced to surrender to the mastery of the rain. . .”
resiliency: _____
2. “. . . each day when he found his clean clothes splashed red by the school bus, he became more and more **embittered** until finally one day he stomped angrily into the kitchen and exploded, ‘They done it again, Big Ma! Just look at my clothes!’”
embittered: _____
3. “Big Ma was not one for **coddling** any of us, but now she turned from the stove and, wiping her hands on her long white apron, sat down on the bench and put her arm around Little Man.”
coddling: _____
4. “‘Jus’ ole Harlan,’ said T.J. **flippantly** as the expensive car rounded a curve and disappeared. . . .”
flippantly: _____
5. “Again, Christopher-John and I looked questioningly at each other, wondering how Stacey could make such a **rash** promise.”
rash: _____
6. “And for once in his life, Little Man was happily **oblivious** to the mud spattering upon him.”
oblivious: _____
7. “He collapsed in silence by the door, breathing hard, and although I could not see him, I knew that his face was drawn and that his eyes had taken on a **haggard** look.”
haggard: _____
8. “Suddenly, all eyes turned from the fire and **riveted** themselves upon him.”
riveted: _____
9. “Once the truth had been disclosed, I waited with dry throat and **nauseous** stomach for Mr. Morrison to say something.”
nauseous: _____
10. “How we had managed to escape a whipping we couldn’t **fathom** until Saturday, when Mama woke us before dawn and piled us into the wagon.”
fathom: _____

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. What reason does Jeremy Simms give for walking to school with the Logan children?
2. What are the Logan children doing when the Jefferson Davis bus hits the ditch they have made?
3. Why do the children keep laughing when they are supposed to be doing their homework?
4. What does Big Ma get from under the bed?
5. How many cars are part of the caravan that approaches the Logan house?
6. How does Stacey get blamed for cheating?
7. Why does Mr. Morrison say that he's not going to tell Mama that the children were at the Wallace store?
8. How did Mr. Hollenbeck originally buy land from the Grangers?
9. Who did Paul Edward Logan buy the second two hundred acres of land from?
10. Why, according to Mr. Turner, would it be hard to stop shopping at the Wallaces' store?

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

prevailed—gained advantage or mastery;
triumphed

warily—cautiously

bunions—swellings at the first joint of the
big toes

sleek—smooth and shiny; well-kept;
polished

malevolently—wishing evil or harm to
others

sullenly—showing resentment and ill
humor; gloomily; sadly

audible—loud enough to be heard

nattily—trimly or smartly in appearance

triumphantly—successfully; happily

languidly—sluggishly; indifferently; slowly

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

A **cockatoo** is a type of parrot with mainly white feathers that may be tinged with yellow or pink.

An **attorney** is a lawyer.

A **pot-bellied stove** is a stove with rounded, bulging sides.

“**Their German war**” refers to World War I.

A **red-neck** is a slang word for a poor, white, rural Southerner, often thought to be ignorant, prejudiced, and violent.

Rebel soldiers are soldiers who fought for the South (the Confederacy) during the Civil War.

The **Yankee** Army is the army that fought for the North (the Union) during the Civil War.

Model-T’s were Ford automobiles—the first cars that were mass-produced.

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “When hers had **prevailed** and Jack had settled into a moderate trot, she replied moodily, ‘Mr. Avery come by after y’all was asleep last night wanting T.J. to go to Strawberry to do some shopping for a few things he couldn’t get at the Wallace store.’”
prevailed: _____
2. “But by dawn, when the December sun was creeping **warily** upward shooting pale streams of buff-colored light through the forest, he was fully awake and chattering like a cockatoo.”
warily: _____
3. “‘Shoot,’ I mumbled, taking one of the buckets from Stacey, ‘by the time a body walk way back here, they’ll have **bunions** on their soles and corns on their toes.’”
bunions: _____
4. “‘Protection of what?’ I asked, thinking of Papa’s sturdy shotgun that hung over his and Mama’s bed, and the **sleek** Winchester rifle which Big Ma kept locked in the trunk beneath our own bed.”
sleek: _____
5. “His dark eyes flashed **malevolently** as he pushed me in front of him through the crowd.”
malevolently: _____
6. “He crossed the street **sullenly** then, his hands jammed in his pockets.”
sullenly: _____
7. “He sulked for a while with a few **audible** grumbles which no one paid any attention to, but finally he fell asleep and did not awaken until we had driven up the Granger road and stopped in front of the Avery house.”
audible: _____
8. “Instead of Mr. Granger, a tall, handsome man, **nattily** dressed in a gray pin-striped suit and vest, stood by the fire with his arm around Big Ma.”
nattily: _____
9. “I glanced **triumphantly** at Big Ma, but she wasn’t looking at me.”
triumphantly: _____
10. “Uncle Hammer stopped the car at the intersection and, leaning his right arm heavily over the steering wheel, motioned **languidly** at the Wallace store.”
languidly: _____

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. How does Cassie feel when she sees Strawberry for the first time?
2. What item is T.J. especially interested in at the store in Strawberry?
3. When a woman warns Cassie to be quiet, what does Mr. Barnett do?
4. What emotion is in Big Ma's eyes when she encounters Mr. Simms?
5. Why doesn't Big Ma want Cassie to tell her story about what happened in Strawberry?
6. How does Mama explain why Mr. Simms has to believe that white people are better than black people?
7. How does Mama explain why white people taught slaves Christianity?
8. Although there are some things they can't control, what does Mama say people can control?
9. Why does Stacey say that Cassie should be glad that nothing happened between Uncle Hammer and Mr. Simms?
10. What does T.J. say Stacey looks like in his new jacket from Uncle Hammer?