

# Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

## Chapter One

### VOCABULARY

amiably – friendly  
chignon – a hairstyle, like a bun  
disdainfully – proudly  
dismally – gloomily  
dubious – doubtful  
emblazoned – decorated  
exasperation – frustration  
flounced – walked in a showy manner  
frail – weakened  
imperiously – like royalty  
jauntily – cheerfully  
morosely – sadly  
motley – jumbled mix of colors  
murmured – mumbled quietly  
penchant – a taste or liking for  
pensively – thoughtfully  
raucous – loud  
reconstruction – the time immediately after the Civil War  
reverberated – echoed  
sheepish – embarrassed  
tarpaulin – a covering; a tarp  
temerity – boldness  
threadbare – worn; ragged  
towheaded – blonde  
undaunted – not bothered or discouraged

1. At the beginning of this story, the children in the Logan family are introduced on their walk to school. Briefly identify each of them.

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2. Who is Harlan Granger?

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3. Why do you suppose the children's father has to go away and lay track? What is the setting of this story?

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4. How does the father respond to Cassie when she asks why the land is so important that he has to go away to find work?

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5. What does the land seem to represent to the father?

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6. They meet T.J. Avery, the son of a sharecropper, on Harlan Granger's land. What is a sharecropper?

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7. T.J., who is not liked by Cassie, is tolerated by Stacey. What story did T.J. tell his mother about his younger brother Claude that got Claude in trouble? Why?

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8. Although T.J. is, at fourteen, two years older than Stacey, what seems to be their relationship?

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9. This is the first mention of "the burning." Who was badly burned?

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10. What indignity do the children suffer from the school bus. How is the bus driver responsible for this?

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11. Who is Jeremy Simms?

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12. Who are his brothers and sisters, and what is his family's social position?

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13. Why is the black school only in operation from October to March?

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14. What are we told about Moe Turner that suggests he will do well when he grows up?

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15. Why are Little Man and Cassie upset by the books they are given?

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16. The children's mother, Mrs. Logan (Mama), is also a seventh-grade teacher in the school. What does she do?

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17. For what reason does Miss Crocker say Mama is destroying school property?

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18. What does Miss Crocker mean when she says, "Well, I just think you're spoiling those children, Mary. They've got to learn how things are sometimes"?

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19. What is the mother's response?

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20. The people in the story speak an informal way, using "ain't," "sho," etc. What is this use of language called?

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## Chapter Two

### VOCABULARY

chiffonier – a dresser  
ebony – black  
formidable – fearful-looking  
sinewy – tough

1. Find a simile in this Chapter.

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2. Who is Mr. Morrison and why had he come home with Cassie's dad?

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3. What can you infer is the reason that the father brings Mr. Morrison home?

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4. Why do the parents want the children to avoid going to the Wallaces' store?

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**CHAPTER THREE**

## VOCABULARY

adamantly – stubbornly  
flippantly – disrespectfully  
haggard – weary looking  
relent – to give in  
resiliency – the ability to recover  
sodden – soaked

1. As the children walk to school in the mud and rain, why do they continually look over their shoulders?

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2. Of all the children, Little Man is the most angered about getting dirtied by the school bus. He says to Big Ma that if the bus driver would only slow down, or if the black school had a bus like theirs white school does, he would not get muddied. What is his mother's response?

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3. What is the implied significance of the fact that Jeremy Simms never rides the school bus, no matter how bad the weather is?

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4. Describe Stacey's plan for getting even with the school bus?

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5. Why does he wish to make it appear that part of the road has been washed away, rather than dug out.

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6. Why does Stacey pile rocks where they have dug?

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7. Mr. Avery comes to the Logan house to warn Mr. Morrison that the night riders might be out that night. Who are the night riders, and why may they be out?

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8. Why is Christopher-John in a panic?

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9. What is Mr. Morrison doing when the seven cars come down the road and pull into the driveway?

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**CHAPTER FOUR**

## VOCABULARY

absurd – foolish; awkward  
admonished – cautioned  
aloof – standoffish  
barren – empty  
clapboard – cheaply made  
densely – tightly  
discreetly – with caution and care  
emphatic – forceful  
engrossed – totally absorbed mentally  
expounding – talking about  
intermingled – mixed  
mercantile – having to do with merchants  
patronize – shop at  
proprietor – owner  
reaped – harvested  
scowled – frowned  
subtle – faint and mysterious  
wavered – hesitated  
wizened – wrinkled

1. As this chapter opens, why is Cassie moping around the house, as if she were sick?

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2. T.J. has news about what happened to Sam Tatum. What news does he have, and why does T.J. always have to drag his news out?

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3. Why did the night riders do that to Sam Tatum?

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4. Why are the children relieved at hearing the cause for the night riders' actions.

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5. T.J. says he forgot his hat and goes back in the Logan house. Why does he really go back to the house?

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6. Why is Stacey upset with Mr. Morrison being at their place?

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7. As his teacher, not his mother, Miss Logan whips Stacey. Why?

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8. Why do the children disobey the strict orders of their father and go to the Wallaces' store?

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9. Why does Mr. Morrison not tell the children's mother about their going to Wallace's store?

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10. Why do you suppose Stacey decides to tell his mother the truth rather than lying about it and staying out of trouble.

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11. Who is Mr. Jamison, and why does Harlan Granger hold a grudge against him?

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12. Why does Mama take the children to see the Berrys?

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13. Mama is upset because the Turners and other black families still shop at the Wallaces' store. Although these families know they are being cheated by the Wallaces, why do they keep shopping there?

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14. How do you think Mama will get someone to sign for Mr. Turner's bills?

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

## VOCABULARY

ambled – walked  
bland – blank and inoffensive  
envisioned – pictured  
malevolent – evil  
promenading – parading  
pussyfooting – wasting time  
splotched – marked sloppily  
sullen – sad and angry  
veranda – porch  
wheedle – to persuade

1. T.J. longs for the pearl-handled gun in the mercantile store. Why?

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2. What happens in the mercantile store that T.J. and Stacey understand but Cassie does not?

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3. Upset with what happens in the store, Cassie bumps into Lillian Jean. What happens after Cassie apologizes?

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4. As Cassie is about to push pass Lillian Jean, what happens?

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5. Why does Big Ma make Cassie apologize?

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6. What overall idea is the scene in Strawberry, Mississippi portraying?

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**CHAPTER SIX**

## VOCABULARY

indignant – showing displeasure  
languidly – lazily  
spindly – thin and long

1. Cassie is angry with Big Ma and thinks Big Ma sides with Mr. Simms only because they are both adults. Stacey says, "There's things you don't understand, Cassie." What does not Cassie still not understand?

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2. When Uncle Hammer asks Cassie about her visit to Strawberry, Big Ma does everything she can to stop Cassie from telling her story. Why?

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3. How does Uncle Hammer respond? How is Hammer different from the other black people in the book?

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4. Why does the Logan family want to get all the people to buy their supplies in Vicksburg?

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5. Why does Mr. Jamison say that he will back the credit of the people who buy in Vicksburg?

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6. Mr. Jamison says, "The sad thing is, you know in the end you can't beat him [Granger] or the Wallaces." What is Papa's response?

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7. Granger visits and expresses his displeasure at what the Logans are doing in Vicksburg. He says that there are a number of ways of stopping them. What do you think some of those ways might be?

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**CHAPTER EIGHT**

## VOCABULARY

astonishment – amazement  
daintily – delicately  
feigned – phony  
flailed – hit  
jovial – happy  
pondered – thought about  
scowl – an angry frown  
sentinels – guards

1. T.J. thinks that Cassie is “Uncle Tomming” Lillian Jean. What clues are there that Cassie has something else in mind?

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2. Do you think Stacey guesses that Cassie is up to something?

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3. What does she promise her father?

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4. Why is Mama fired from her teaching job?

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5. Why will Mama's losing the job create a hardship on the family?

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6. Who tells on Mama and probably contributes to her losing her job? Why?

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7. Why does not Stacey not beat up T.J. ?

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8. What is T.J.'s punishment?

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9. Do you feel that Cassie's revenge on Lillian Jean is enough?

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**CHAPTER NINE**

VOCABULARY

prod – to push  
resigned – gave up  
rile – anger  
seep – flow  
wisteria – a sweet-smelling plant

1. What do we learn about T.J. from Jeremy?

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2. Why does Mr. Jamison come out to the Logan farm?

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3. Cassie does not want her father to leave to go back to work on the railroad, but he tells her that he has to. Why is it necessary?

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4. To what does Papa compare the fig tree?

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5. Mama mentions that T.J. is heading for a lot of trouble. This might also be foreshadowing. What kind of trouble could he be heading for?

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6. Why do most of the people drop out of the Vicksburg buying co-operative?

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7. What happens on the road from Vicksburg?

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8. For what reason does Papa chastise Stacey in this chapter?

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**CHAPTER TEN****VOCABULARY**

condescending – pretending one is equal to a supposed inferior  
deflated – emptied of air  
desolate – empty of life  
digesting – thinking about  
frenzied – crazed  
lethargically – lazily  
persistent – lasting; enduring  
phenomenal – amazing  
reluctantly – unwillingly  
shimmering – shining  
shroud – a cloth to cover a body

1. Since Papa cannot work on the railroad with his broken leg, the family is going to have trouble making the mortgage payments. Why does Papa not want to let Uncle Hammer know this?

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2. Why does Mama think that Mr. Morrison ought to move on?

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3. What is Papa's response?

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4. Why do you suppose that Mr. Morrison wishes to stay?

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5. Kaleb Wallace stops Mr. Morrison on the road but does not do anything. Why?

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6. Why can Papa not say anything to the sheriff about the attack on the road?

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7. What bad news about the mortgage does the family get?

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8. How is this problem with the mortgage resolved?

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9. At the end of this chapter, why does Cassie almost feel sorry for T.J.?

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**CHAPTER ELEVEN**

## VOCABULARY

compassion – sympathy  
despicable – horrible; disgraceful  
interminable – never-ending  
vulnerability – able to be hurt

1. An allusion, which in this case refers to the title and begins this chapter, is usually related to the novel's major theme. In this story, what major theme is revealed by the poem and the title?

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2. Why do R.W. and Melvin beat T.J.?

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3. Why does Mrs. Barnett think it is black men who break into the store?

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4. Why do R.W. and Melvin need T.J. for this burglary?

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5. Besides the beating, what does T.J. get from the robbery?

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6. Just after T.J. climbs into his house, what do Stacey, Cassie, Christopher-John, and Little Man see?

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7. What do the children fear will happen?

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8. What evidence against T.J. do the men find in his possession?

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9. In what sense may this pistol be a grim and ironic symbol?

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10. Mr. Jamison and the sheriff arrive, but they do not seem to be able to stop what might happen. Who is the only person who has the power to stop it? Why do you suppose he has this power?

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11. What does the message Granger sends do?

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**CHAPTER TWELVE**

## VOCABULARY

flimsy – weak; without substance  
fragile – easily broken  
glint – gleam  
oblivious – unaware  
traipsing – walking with no purpose  
wan – pale

1. As Papa prepares to leave his house with the shotgun, Mama begs him to get Harlan Granger to stop the mob and for him not to use the shotgun. What is she afraid of? What does he say about Harlan Granger?

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2. In earlier chapters, Cassie has told us that when there is trouble Papa, unlike Uncle Hammer, does not lose his temper but thinks through the problem. Why does he not do that now?

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3. Shortly after they leave, a fire breaks out in the family cotton field. How do the people assume that the fire starts?

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4. Why does Harlan Granger order the mob to give T.J. to the sheriff and to start fighting the fire?

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5. Stacey tells Cassie that Mr. Morrison came to get him. Cassie is puzzled and asks, "Where was Papa?" Why is this response important?

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6. What news does Mr. Jamison bring and what will this mean for T.J. ?

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7. Why does Mr. Jamison not want Papa to go into town with the Averys to see T.J.?

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8. Cassie says, "I cried for those things which had happened in the night and would not pass. I cried for T.J. For T.J. and the land." What is suggested in this ending?

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