

Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*?



What have other people thought of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*? They think it's great! "The events and settings of the powerful novel are presented with such verisimilitude [like real life] and the characters are so carefully drawn that one might assume the book is autobiographical [about the author's life], if the author were not so young," said one adult reviewer. "This is a tremendously powerful, dramatic, and beautifully written book," wrote another critic in a major newspaper.

The person reviewing *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* for *The New York Times Book Review* understood that the book describes indignities, insults to black people. This writer was impressed that Mildred Taylor wasn't nasty about the hatred her black characters had experienced. According to this critic, "Taylor . . . writes not with rancor [hatefulness] or bitterness of indignities, but with pride, strength, and respect for humanity."

Many critics admire how Taylor created the Logan family. The critics liked the love that Taylor had for Cassie, her brothers, and their parents. For example, a critic for the *Kirkus Reviews* wrote: "The strong, clearheaded Logan family . . . are drawn with quiet affection."

What about the kids who read this book? Here's a review written by a child and posted on Amazon.com: "THIS IS THE GREATEST

BOOK I EVER READ!!!!!! I would recommend this to anyone with good taste because it has a lot of detail and meaning. I give it a 5 [out of 5] because of the great story line.”

Adults and kids agree: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is a great book. It's not surprising, then, that the novel has won many very impressive awards. These awards include being named a *New York Times Book Review* Best of Children's Books award, 1970–1980, and an American Library Association Notable Book. These are big awards given to books that tell important stories in a way that people enjoy. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* received an honor book citation from *The Boston Globe* and a Jane Addams Honor citation, too. The novel also won the Pacific Northwest Young Readers Award and was a finalist for a National Book Award. And there's more!

Look at the front cover of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Do you see the gold seal? That's proof of another important award: the Newbery Award. This prize is given every year to the writer who has made “the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.” *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* became an instant classic when it won this award.

The book was published more than twenty-five years ago and is still very popular. As proof of its popularity and wide appeal, in 1978 the book was made into a miniseries for ABC-TV. Many people tuned in to the show. They enjoyed watching this story of the Logan family.

Thinking about what other people think of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

- Which parts of this book seem most like real life? Which parts seem made up? Explain.
- One critic called *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* “tremendously powerful, [and] dramatic.” What do you think makes this book powerful and dramatic?
- Imagine that you were on the committee that awarded *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* the Newbery Award. Why would you have voted to honor this book?

Glossary



Here are some important words and terms from *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Understanding these words will make it easier for you to read the novel.

acre a unit of land measurement. One acre is equal to 43,560 square feet. The Logans own four hundred acres of land.

aloof distant; remote; detached from other people

bootleg Originally used to refer to alcohol made and sold illegally, the word is now often used to refer to any goods that are made and sold illegally. The word *bootleg* comes from the way people smuggled liquor by hiding the bottles in their tall boots.

boycott to avoid doing business with a person or a company to force them to take a specific action. The Logans and some of their neighbors boycott the Wallace store to protest the Wallaces' racism.

chain gang a form of punishment in which prisoners are chained together, especially when working outside

Confederacy the group of eleven Southern states that seceded from the United States in 1860–1861. When spelled with a lowercase *c*, *confederacy* means a group of people joined together to achieve a specific purpose.

Depression the Great Depression; the economic crisis that began with the stock market crash in 1929 and continued through the 1930s

fretting worrying

lynching a murder by a mob, usually by hanging

meticulously doing something carefully; playing close attention to detail

moping brooding or worrying.

mortgage the loan a bank gives to people so they can buy a house and/or land

nightriders a group of men, also called night men, who commit violent actions to scare people. The term is often used to refer to members of the Ku Klux Klan, a secret group of white men who suppressed the rights of African Americans and others.

Packard a type of automobile

plantation a farm or estate on which cotton, tobacco, or similar crops are grown. Plantations are located in warm climates, like the American South.

racism prejudice; the belief that one race of people is better than another race of people

ransack to search and mess everything up; to plunder

revenge to get back at someone for a hurt he or she has done to you

rural of or relating to country or agriculture

sharecroppers farmers who work someone else's land. They give the owner part of their crop as rent for the use of the land.

tenant farmer a sharecropper

testily in an irritable or cranky mood

triumphant successful; winning

uppity acting in an arrogant way; not knowing your supposedly appropriate place in society; often used in a derogatory way to describe African Americans who demanded equality.

wheedle to coax or beg