

Let the Circle Be Unbroken Study Guide

Let the Circle Be Unbroken by Mildred Taylor

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Plot Summary

Let the Circle Be Unbroken is a story of a small Mississippi town in the 1930s, and the troubles that plague its black community. Picking up where its precursor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, leaves off, Mildred Taylor recounts the trials of this small community through the characters of the Logan family. More specifically, it focuses on the children of the family; Stacey, Cassie, Little Man and Christopher. This family struggles with the changing world around them, living the hard and poor life of farmers, and in the end, realizing what really matters in life.

As seen through the eyes of Cassie, a preadolescent girl who is growing up in a turbulent time, the story opens with the impending trial of TJ Avery. TJ, a young black man and friend of Stacey, is accused of murder and must stand trial. He is found guilty and sentenced to death for a crime he clearly did not commit.

Meanwhile, the Logan family is facing its own problems. As the only black landowners in town, Mama and Papa are chronically worried about the taxes they must pay. To earn extra money, Papa ventures south to work on the railroad. While he is gone, major events unfold, and the Logans face numerous challenges.

The trouble begins in the schoolyard, when Cassie directly disobeys her father, and Stacey huddles in private conversations with boys who dream of more than they have. More is revealed about the life of the farmer here, and the entire community of sharecroppers almost always convenes here, as it is on the same grounds as the church. They discuss problems in the fields, and the struggles they must face.

Mama's cousin, Bud, begins the unraveling of the Logans' values by announcing his marriage to a white woman. To boot, the couple has a daughter, and with a mixed background, she is struggling to find her own identity. She is sent to live on the Logan farm to learn about her heritage. It is there that she discovers the dangers that she faces. When a white boy shows an interest in her, she threatens her own safety by pretending to be white. And as the only other young female in the house, she is greeted by Cassie's feelings of jealousy and contempt.

She is not the only teenager going through an identity crisis, though. Stacey, the eldest son, is struggling to become a man. He feels that in order to do so, he must take actions beyond growing a mustache and distancing himself from his younger siblings. He wants to get a job, but his own mother's reluctance to approve such an act leaves Stacey to devise a secret plan. He will put himself into unspeakable danger to make his living, and he will send his entire family into a tailspin of worry and distress.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The story opens with Cassie, Stacey, Christopher-John and Little Man all packed inside a wagon as Papa drives them to the home of the Page Ellises and Mrs. Lee Annie Lees. Along the way, Cassie thinks she sees Wordell scurrying out of one edge of the woods and into another across the street.

After reaching their destination and greeting Son Boy and Don Lee Ellis, Papa exits through the house, leaving his children on the front porch with the Ellis boys, along with Willie and Maynard Wiggins, who are waiting on Clarice.

The children's conversation soon turns to TJ Avery, and it is slowly revealed that he is currently in jail, after he is accused of killing Mr. Barnett while robbing his store in Strawberry. He claims that RW and Melvin Simms actually did it, and he just went along with them, but the two white brothers are blaming him. The only reason he survived long enough to go to jail is because a fire in the Logans' fields interrupted his lynching.

This conversation is short-lived as well, as Dube Cross suddenly arrives. He is barefoot with ragged clothes, and he has a stutter. He is in search of work, because he needs to buy milk for his younger siblings. Stacey offers his family's extra milk, over the protests of Little Man, if Dube will milk the cows himself. A boy of pride and principle, Dube gladly accepts the terms. Willie, Maynard and Clarice leave.

Enter Mrs. Lee Annie, who demands hugs and kisses from the children. While they all obey begrudgingly, Cassie inwardly confesses that they all really like Mrs. Lee Annie.

Mrs. Lee Annie reveals that her son Russell, whom everyone adores, has come back from Indiana for a visit. When he appears, he is in full Army uniform and declares that he must report for duty in a few days' time. This sparks an argument as to whether or not he should wear his uniform on the return journey, since it could attract the attention of bigoted white folks along the way. Beatings and murders of black soldiers occur regularly along the path that Russell must take back to Indiana.

Meanwhile, the children return outdoors, where Son-Boy and Don Lee show the other children their gift from Russell, a collection of marbles. There is a blue and green one that Cassie desperately wants, but Son-Boy refuses to share. A game of marbles begins, and Cassie is winning. Then, Papa appears. He demands that the game stop, and that his children stop playing marbles for good, because it could later lead to gambling. Gambling is something he is against, as he has seen the trouble it can cause people. He takes away his children's marbles, and insists they return their winnings to the other children.

The next day, Cassie decides to defy her father and play marbles with Son-Boy, in order to get his prized blue-and-green marble. She hatches a plan to win it, even after she is



asked to recite the commandment about not coveting thy neighbor's goods. After a secret game in the woods, she gets the emerald marble. Her victory is short-lived, though, as two things happen. First, she notices how upset Son-Boy is, and second, her father finds her before church, and he somehow knows about the game. Cassie is ordered to return the marble to Son-Boy.

On the way to church, directly after the marble incident, Papa is stopped by Lou Ella Hicks, who is searching for her very young daughter, Doris Anne and Joe, who is watching her at the time. Suddenly, the group spots Doris Anne hanging from the rope that rings the church bell. It is the job of Joe, Doris Anne's watcher, to ring that bell. When Papa and Mr. Ellis run to her rescue, they discover Wordell holding her as she holds the rope. After Mr. Ellis accuses Wordell of putting Doris Anne on the rope, Wordell runs off and disappears into the woods. At Papa's insistence, they let Wordell go. Cassie sees Joe follow Wordell into the woods.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The opening chapter serves mostly as an introduction of characters, and the lifestyles they lead. It also sets the stage for the entire novel, and as it is a sequel to a previous novel, it restates events that will be of greater importance at a later date. The first of these events is the impending trial of TJ Avery.

The game of marbles is symbolic of temptation, as well as greed. Greed is what drives the rich landowners to keep the black community dependent upon them, and Papa wants to separate his children from that life.

The reader also gets a glimpse of Stacey's position throughout the novel. Within the first few pages, he separates himself from his siblings in a silent statement of his emerging maturity.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

News comes that TJ Avery will have his trial next month in Strawberry. As the children discuss the fate of their friend, each one reveals that he has no faith in the justice system. No jury would believe a black man's story over a white man's word.

Cassie starts thinking back to the night that TJ was almost lynched. The only thing that stops the mob from hanging him is the fire that suddenly breaks out in the Logans' own fields. It is while thinking back that Cassie reveals who set the fire: Papa. He does it to save TJ from the lynching, and nobody has ever discovered the truth.

After school, the children deliver the news of TJ's trial to their family, starting with Big Ma, their grandmother. "She is at her usual place at the stove," and she can instantly sense that something is wrong. Stacey tells her the news, and then goes to his room. Cassie goes to her room as well, and as she's changing, she hears a car pull up. It's Mr. Morrison, the farm hand that lives in their shed, and she rushes to greet him and tell him about TJ. Mr. Morrison takes the news with only the smallest hint of surprise. He doesn't say much about it after that, but he continues to watch the children with some concern and worry.

Cassie finds her mama chopping firewood behind the house. As she approaches her, she thinks back to when Mama was a teacher, before she was fired for organizing a boycott. As Cassie asks Mama questions about the trial, Mama is very honest in her responses. She admits that TJ will probably be hanged, but it is still alright to hope.

Papa, Stacey and Mr. Morrison join the conversation. Stacey says that he wants to go to the trial, but his parents refuse to allow it. They worry about the possible outcomes of Stacey going. For example, Stacey helped TJ on the night of the murder, so the court could charge Stacey as an accomplice to murder. Papa then explains how unfair life is to black people, and that all the laws are made for white people, not them.

After dinner, the entire family; including Mr. Morrison, gathers in Mama and Papa's room, as they do every night. Each has his/her own work. Papa fixes Stacey's shoes; the kids do their homework. Mr. Jamison, TJ's attorney and a very trustworthy man within the black community, arrives. He is eager to help his client, despite the problems he faces by representing a black man, like vandalism and threats.

The family and Mr. Jamison sit on the front porch to discuss the trial. His first bit of news is bad. They got a difficult judge, who could negatively affect the trial. Also, Mr. Jamison is worried about the children's involvement with TJ on the night of the murder, but he and the prosecutor agree that neither will mention it at the trial. As their conversation nears its end, Mr. Jamison mentions the fire that saved TJ. He gives Papa a look that



suggests he knows Papa started the fire. After he leaves, Little Man begins to worry about Papa. He's afraid that if Papa leaves his sight, he won't ever come back.

It's the day of the trial, and Stacey is secretly planning to attend, regardless of the whipping he will most likely get when Papa finds out. Stacey meets Moe and Clarence at the crossroads on the way to school, who tell him they can get a ride with Wordell and Joe. Cassie decides that if Stacey is going, then she is going, too. She and her brothers sneak into Joe and Wordell's wagon without Stacey seeing them.

They ride along undiscovered for a while, but when Little Man and Christopher-John start snoring, Stacey discovers them. They have already come too far to turn back, so Stacey lets them stay. When they reach Strawberry, Joe gives the children instructions on when and where to meet for the return trip.

The children reach the courthouse, and they find that there is nowhere to sit inside, so they will be forced to watch from outside.

Before the trial starts, Cassie takes Little Man and Christopher-John inside to use the restroom. While she waits for them, she sips from a water fountain. Mid-gulp, Jeremy Simms rushes in and pulls her away from the drinking fountain and grabs her brothers out of the restroom. Cassie gets angry and calls him a "peckerwood," but Stacey explains his reason for doing it. The indoor restrooms and water fountains are for white people only, and a black person would get in a lot of trouble if he is caught using those facilities.

Chapter 2 Analysis

TJ's trial is a scaled-down representation of a much bigger conflict, the struggle of the black community against the white community. This is where the reader begins to see the mistreatment of one race by another. Even by taking her brothers to the bathroom, Cassie is made to suffer the injustice within her community.

On the other hand, when this particular conflict is presented, it brings with it the camaraderie and brotherhood of the black community. The entire town takes the news of TJ's trial to heart, Stacey risks a bad beating to attend the trial, and the courthouse lawn is filled with friends of the family.

Also, by growing up in a period of turmoil, the children of this novel have a much better understanding of the world. As they discuss the trial, each child expresses a lack of faith in the justice system, and they are right to do so. Even when Mama and Papa discuss the trial with the children, they are honest and open, never sugarcoating TJ's certain death.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Cassie and Stacey watch the trial from the window. The first witness is called: Mrs. Jim Lee Barnett, wife of the deceased. She tells her story of retiring to their apartment around 6:00 and going to bed around 8:00. An hour later, she and her husband are awakened by a noise in the store. They go downstairs to find three black men inside, opening their safe. When the intruders see the Barnetts, they attack Mr. Barnett, hitting him in the head with the blunt end of an axe. They knock Mrs. Barnett out as well.

When she comes to, Mrs. Barnett calls for help. Courtney Jones and the Simms brothers come to her aid, but Mr. Barnett dies. Everyone in the courtroom shows obvious sympathy for Mrs. Barnett, as the prosecutor finishes his questioning.

Mr. Jamison begins his questioning in his gentle, sympathetic tone. He starts by establishing that the only light during the entire incident is from a flashlight, and that Mrs. Barnett does not have her glasses on during the robbery. Mrs. Barnett also states that she and her husband stop on the stairs and see the intruders, two by the safe and one by the counter. They are all approximately the same height.

Mr. Jamison then asks a few people from the courtroom to stand up, in an attempt to gauge the accuracy of Mrs. Barnett's eyesight. She chooses RW and Melvin Simms as the correct height, but she cannot tell who they are without her glasses on. Then TJ is asked to stand up, and he is noticeably shorter than Mrs. Barnett claims the attackers are, but she is reluctant to admit it. After that, Mr. Jamison pulls a pair of black stockings from evidence, explaining that they were found in Mrs. Barnett's trashcan. She says they are not hers. Mr. Jamison then places a stocking over his hand, causing his skin to appear black. With this demonstration to consider, Mrs. Barnett can't be totally sure that the intruders were black.

Next on the stand are RW and Melvin Simms, who both testify that they saw TJ and two other black men running from the back of Barnett's store. TJ tells them that he and his friends were caught cheating in a card game and are running away.

After the Simms, Mr. Macabee takes the stand. He is the farmer that gives TJ a ride home on the night of the murder. He claims that TJ was badly beaten, but he would not tell who did it to him. Sheriff Dobbs then testifies that Clyde Parsons found the pearl-handled pistol that was taken from the store. He found it in TJ's mattress.

Then, it is TJ's turn to testify about the events of that night. He begins by telling the story of meeting up with the Simms brothers at a revival, and riding with them into Strawberry. He is momentarily interrupted when RW jumps up and calls him a liar. TJ begins again, explaining that the Simms brothers offer to give him a pearl-handled pistol, and that they fool TJ into breaking in the store. TJ claims that he goes along with it, because he thinks



they are his friends. When TJ gets through the window of the store and finds his way to the front, he sees the Simms brother with stockings on their heads.

Cassie is interrupted from the trial, as Joe comes into the yard. He is complaining quite loudly that he wants to get home before dark, and he is not comfortable on "this white folk street." Stacey and Wordell walk over to him. Wordell says something quietly, and Joe stops complaining and walks away. Cassie is just shocked that Wordell actually spoke, and she wonders what he said.

Meanwhile, TJ is in the process of explaining the actual murder, and that he has nothing to do with it. Also, he argues that his only reason for breaking into the store is because the Simmses tell him to.

Mr. Macabee, the prosecutor, begins his questioning. He starts by defending the Simms, and reminds TJ that they are always nice to him, buying him things and giving him rides. He doesn't understand why TJ would blame these boys. They were friendly to him. This makes TJ cry, and he says no more.

Reverend Gabson is called to the stand, and he testifies that TJ is with RW and Melvin at the revival, and they leave together. At the time, he also overhears them discussing the pistol.

Mr. Jamison then recalls RW Simms. He denies any involvement in the crime as well as having any conversations about the pistol. He states that after giving a TJ a ride near to his house, he goes to Strawberry to play pool. Mr. Jamison continues questioning and sets up a time frame for the Simms brothers' arrival in Strawberry.

RW describes his truck as well. It's a beat-up Ford with a blue right fender. Mr. Jamison has a witness who can testify to seeing that car parked outside of Mr. Barnett's store a full hour before RW claims to arrive in Strawberry. This causes RW to completely lose his temper. He jumps up and starts yelling at Mr. Jamison, calling him a liar and accusing him of just trying to protect black people.

The two attorneys make their final arguments, each summing up the trial, and each asking for a fair verdict, regardless of the defendant's race. Afterwards, the jurors leave to make their decision.

While Cassie and the other children discuss the trial and what the outcome will be, Mrs. Jamison spots them. She offers them all a ride home, but not before she reprimands them for sneaking to the trial and possibly worrying their parents.

The jury returns with the verdict in under an hour. TJ is found guilty. He shows no emotion as they bring him out of the courthouse. Stacey and Cassie run to see him. They get his attention, but he says nothing in return. He only smiles. They never see him again.



Chapter 3 Analysis

This is the first and last encounter the reader has with TJ and his tragic story. What is predicted in Chapter 2 is realized here, and the verdict surprises no one. Even the facts presented should clear TJ of the murder charge, but he is still found guilty with virtually no deliberation.

This chapter is about retribution. Everyone wants someone to blame the crime on, and a young black man is a more acceptable murderer to the white community.

Also, the tension between the two communities surfaces, and even the seating arrangements, with white inside the courtroom and black outside on the lawn, suggests an elitist versus suppressed society, with reluctance on both sides to integrate. Mrs. Jamison's encounter with Little Man further exemplifies this, as even at such a young age, Little Man is unwilling to accept a white woman's affection.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Winter comes to town. School is let out early enough for children to start working in the fields again. More importance is placed on working than on education, because "cotton sustains life."

With the trial of TJ Avery behind them, the town finds it best to keep from speaking about him. The only news that people discuss is that his appeal was rejected. There will be no new trial.

Mama is teaching again, but not at a school. With exams nearing, Cassie and Stacey's classmates start having study sessions at home, led by Mama.

With work starting up in the fields again, Moe begins planning for his family's future freedom from sharecropping. This is an agreement where the landowner rents out pieces of land to farmers. After paying the landowner for the use of his land, and accruing debt by buying supplies on credit from the owner, the sharecropper is never able to save enough money to buy his own land. To add to it, there is now a government program in effect that limits the amount of crop a sharecropper can grow and sell.

On the way home from school, Moe starts talking about his father. Moe Turner's father is a sharecropper, but Moe wants something more for himself. He is determined to finish high school and receive his diploma, to the extent that his walk to and from school takes three hours every day.

Cassie and Stacey listen to him talk about leaving sharecropping, and Cassie begins to argue that he will never get off the land. Her brother silences her, and the conversation turns to government programs that will train and give jobs to young black men. Stacey and Moe are both interested in joining one of these.

As they continue walking home, Joe Billy, the son of Moe's landowner, approaches them. He drives up and offers Moe a ride home. Moe politely refuses the offer, even though it will be after dark before he reaches home. When Cassie and Stacey arrive home, Cassie sees Papa talking to Mr. Farnsworth, the county agent who handles all of the farming regulations. Their conversation is about the government program, and how the check meant to reimburse Papa for scaling back his crop has gone to Mr. Granger, the white landowner whose property borders the Logan's. This is done, no doubt, because of Mr. Granger's sneaky dealings.

Papa decides to quit the government program to avoid further problems like this one. By quitting, he will be heavily taxed. Nonetheless, Papa thinks he will be better off.

As soon as Mr. Farnsworth leaves, Harlan Granger himself shows up. He is the most powerful landowner in the county, and he desperately wants Papa's land. After



defending the government program and the heavy taxing, Mr. Granger offers to pay Papa's taxes, just as a favor. Papa quickly refuses. Cassie wonders why Mr. Granger is being so nice, which makes Papa laugh. He explains that it isn't a favor. If Mr. Granger pays their taxes, his name will be on their records, and he could claim the land as his own.

On the way to school the next day, Christopher-John announces that Papa won't be going to the railroads this year. The railroad is his other job, and he leaves for nine months out of the year to earn more money for the family. When the other children ask Christopher-John how he knows this, he explains that he overheard a conversation between Mama and Papa. As it turns out, he simply misunderstands the situation. Papa just hasn't decided if he'll go or not. Mama continually begs him not to go, because his children need him here, and because the last time he went, he was shot in the leg.

At school, Cassie reflects on how happy she is to have a new teacher, and not Miss Crocker, who she despised. Then Cassie answers a question about their former governor, calling him a name, just like she hears every adult around her call him. For that, she is asked to stay after class, where her teacher explains to her that she could lose her job if Cassie keeps saying things about the Senator. As Cassie leaves, she is taunted by Mary Lou Wellever, whose father is the school principal.

During lunch break, Joe Billy, Stuart and Pierceson, who are three local white teenagers, drive up and start talking to Jacey Peters and Alice Charles. Stacey, Moe and Little Willie watch them with quiet anger. Before the conversation can go any further, though, Miss Crocker breaks it up and sends the boys on their way.

Before she can eat lunch, Cassie is summoned to Mrs. Lee Annie's house by Son Boy. Mrs. Lee Annie wants Cassie to write a letter for her. She doesn't want the letter to have any mistakes, because she is returning correspondence to the white daughter of her old boss. The daughter sent her a letter with a bound copy of the Mississippi constitution, something she has always admired.

This package sparks a new interest in Mrs. Lee Annie, and she decides that she wants to vote, just like her daddy did, even though he was beaten by the "night men" for doing so. In order to vote, she will need to learn the constitution, and tells Cassie to ask her parents if she could spend time reading it to Mrs. Lee Annie.

Papa gives Cassie permission to do so, on the condition that she brings her younger brothers with her. Cassie assumes he wants her to take them in order to protect Cassie from Wordell, the silent grandson of Mrs. Lee Annie. Cassie is somewhat afraid of him, because he doesn't talk, and he always hangs out with Joe, who most people believe to be mentally retarded.

One day at Mrs. Lee Annie's, Cassie's reading is interrupted by Joe, who comes storming in with blood on his hands. He comes for help, because Wordell has hurt his head in the forest.



The next time Cassie goes to read to Mrs. Lee Annie, she finishes and begins searching for Little Man and Christopher-John. She comes upon Wordell, chopping firewood, and musters the courage to speak to him. In the course of her conversation, she figures out that Wordell isn't responsible for the Doris Anne incident. He is just protecting Joe. Wordell picks up his axe, and Cassie is sure he will kill her, so she starts to run away. But, she trips. Wordell just looks at her curiously, tells her where she can find her brothers, and begins chopping the wood again.

As Cassie walks away, she realizes that those are the first words she has ever heard Wordell speak.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The various aspects of 1930s farming are explored in this chapter, starting with Moe's experiences as a sharecropper. No matter how hard he works, his family is chronically tied to its borrowed land, either by debt through credit purchases, a poor crop, or a new farming regulation. All in all, it just a more modern version of slavery. The rich white landowners still control everything, even their tenants' practices and activities. The black and white community of sharecroppers must watch its behavior as well. The landowner has the right to evict his tenants on a whim. This is the basis for the underlying theme of oppression that runs throughout the book.

On a smaller scale, Mr. Granger wishes to have this same power over the Logans. That is why he wants to take their land away.

All of the tenant farmers grow cotton, which is symbolic of hope. It not only sustains the life of the community, but it gives some farmers the chance for greater things. A good crop means an opportunity to own land, automobiles, etc.

Wordell, while quiet, is positioned as at one with nature, and his constant outings in the forest would suggest that he is a protective force within the story. This will be explored further in later chapters.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

On the way to school, Christopher-John stops and waits for Claude Avery at their usual meeting place. Cassie reminds him that since the trial, TJ's brother hardly ever attends school. She inwardly reflects that when he does attend, he keeps to himself and cries over his lost brother.

Stacey hurries his siblings on to school, and along the way, they carefully listen for the white school bus. If it comes up the road they are on, they will have to jump into the forest to avoid the mud that the bus sprays up. To their surprise, Jeremy Simms catches up to them. They have not seen him since Christmas, His mother took him to Jackson when people started to believe RW and Melvin were involved in the murder.

Jeremy is a little nervous, worrying what the Logan children now think of him, knowing that his brothers are responsible for TJ's death. To his relief, Stacey welcomes him back. Pleased, Jeremy offers both Cassie and Stacey a picture of himself. It's the first photograph he ever posed for. He signs the backs of the pictures and leaves. He is no longer going to school.

On Saturday morning, Dube Cross and his sister sit with Cassie on her porch, waiting for Mama's lessons to begin. Dube asks Cassie how her family owns their land. Cassie tells the story of Grandpa Paul Edward, who was a furniture maker that saved the money he earned from his trade to buy 200 acres from a Yankee, and later took out a loan to buy the other 200 acres from Mr. Jamison. It was all originally Mr. Granger's land, but he was forced to sell it during the Reconstruction. Mr. Granger has since been able to reacquire all of his land, with exception of what the Logan family still owns.

More students begin to arrive for the study session. With exams coming up, the house is crowded with Cassie's classmates. They are mostly sharecroppers and day laborers, and they are all quite intimidated by Cassie's house.

After the lesson, Cassie finds Papa and Mr. Morrison looking at Dynamite, their bull. They are thinking about selling him to help with the taxes. Dube, who arrives out back with two men, Mr. Wheeler and John Moses, interrupts their conversation. Mr. Wheeler is a white man who is trying to organize a union for the sharecroppers and day laborers in the area. John Moses is his first member, and he has a tragic story about his sharecropping experiences.

Mr. Wheeler comes to Papa because of the boycott Papa organized. Mr. Wheeler wants him to help. During their talk, Mr. Wheeler reveals that the union will be integrated. He reasons that there is strength in numbers, and they need everyone involved to take on the rich, white landowners that control agriculture. Papa tells Mr. Wheeler that he needs to think it over before he reaches a decision. Dube leaves with the union men.



The Logan children are told to bring in the horses. As they ride the two horses closer to the barn, they spot an unfamiliar yellow car. As it turns out, it's their Uncle Hammer, and they happily run to greet him. Big Ma makes everyone a late breakfast, and the adults discuss the union and farm taxes. When Uncle Hammer asks Papa about his other job on the railroad, Papa tells Hammer that he might not go this year.

After breakfast, Hammer lets Papa drive to the Wiggins' to fix their grist mill. Along the way, they see Joe Billy and Stuart stopped on the road, talking to Jacey Peters. The Logans stop, and Papa tells Jacey to get on home. Stuart gets angry at this, but before he can do anything more than call them names, Uncle Hammer is out of his car and headed straight for him. Papa stops Hammer, and Joe Billy forces Stuart back into his car. The Logans continue on to the Wiggins' without further incident.

Cassie doesn't understand Uncle Hammer's anger, so Stacey tries to explain it. He tells her that when a white boy talks to a black girl, he is usually up to no good. White men don't respect black women. They use them.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Even the walk to school is a reminder of inequality. The white children are driven to school in a bus, whereas the Logan children are forced to walk and dodge the mud that the bus flings in their direction.

The Logans position in the black community becomes abundantly clear in this chapter. Cassie tells the story of how her family bought their land to a wide-eyed and wistful Dube (once again, hope for a better life is always on the minds of the farmers and day laborers}. When the children from school arrive at the Logan farm for their tutoring lessons, their reactions to the house suggest its grandeur by comparison. This further exemplifies the poverty of the community, and the living conditions of the time.

Distrust is also a constant problem, and it is further explored through the relationship between Jeremy Simms and the Logan children. Neither Jeremy nor the Logan children are ever fully at ease around each other, and there is always a tension to their conversations, as well as a carefulness about what they say.

Also, when Mr. Wheeler talks to Papa about his past experiences as a county agent, he reveals the dangers of such a position. This, in fact, foreshadows the future beating of Mr. Farnsworth, the current county agent.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

It's Sunday, and the family packs into Uncle Hammer's Ford to drive to church. The congregation buzzes with excitement as Hammer pulls up. They all think of him as a success, because so few southerners ever go north. On top of that, he owns a car.

The family stops to chat with the crowd, and the conversation quickly turns to Uncle Hammer's old car, the Packard. Everyone quickly agrees that the Packard is a much better car than the Ford he now drives. The Packard, they say, is just like the one Mr. Granger drives.

Joe interrupts everyone and announces that he prefers the yellow Ford to the Packard. When asked why, he explains that the Ford is a happy color, while the Packard was a cold gray. After getting Hammer's permission, Papa takes Joe for a ride before church begins. Before they go, Mr. Lanier asks Papa what he thinks about the union. Papa says he doesn't trust a union that includes both white and black people, but he admits that he will probably go to the meeting.

As Papa and Joe drive off, the conversation reverts back to the Packard. One man in particular, Jake Willis, keeps pestering Uncle Hammer about his cars. He doesn't understand how Hammer could afford a car. He's new in town, so a friend pulls him aside and warns him of Hammer's temper.

In church, Cassie tries to pay attention to the Reverend's sermon. He tells the story of the birth of Jesus, his and Cassie's favorite. He follows it with a lecture about loving your neighbors, and not mistrusting them. As he continues to preach, Cassie falls asleep. Big Ma wakes her up, and Cassie looks around the church. She spots Jake Willis, and then she notices a stranger sitting in the back row.

When they leave the church, Cassie soon discovers who the stranger is. It's Mama's nephew, Cousin Bud. There is a tearful reunion, and they all leave together. As they do, Cassie notices Jake Willis again, and despite what the preacher says, she is suspicious of him.

Once the family returns home, they listen to Mama and Bud reminisce for hours. Bud even sings a song. Then, he reveals a shocking secret; his wife is white. He is actually in town to get her back. She left him, and she's staying with family nearby. The news shocks everyone, but especially angers Uncle Hammer. He calls Bud a fool and storms out. The next day, the children discuss it, and Stacey angrily reminds Little Man that he can never love a white woman.

After Papa privately instructs Hammer to say nothing more about it, the family sits down to a very tense breakfast. Cousin Bud offers to leave, but Mama insists he stay. Cousin Bud then privately confesses to Mama that he doesn't feel he's done anything wrong by



marrying a white woman. He then mentions his daughter, Suzella, and how her mother encourages her to pass for white. Suzella has trouble making friends, and she has no interest in black people. Cousin Bud thinks it would be good for Suzella to stay with the Logans, and Mama agrees to it.

On the way to school, the Logan children find Mr. Farnsworth lying in a ditch by his car. He is badly beaten, and at the risk of being blamed, the children decide to help him. They find Jeremy Simms and, together, they drive Mr. Farnsworth to the nearest farm. The Logan children leave Jeremy to handle it from there, and they run and hide in the woods.

That night, Cassie and Stacey tell their parents what happened. The entire family hopes that Mr. Farnsworth doesn't die. He is the only one that can keep the Logan children and their parents safe from accusations.

The kids are studying by the fire when Uncle Hammer walks in. He starts up a conversation, but stops immediately when he finds Cassie's picture of Jeremy Simms. When he sees her name on it, he becomes angry. Stacey tries to defend Cassie, but this just further infuriates Uncle Hammer, and he lectures both Stacey and Cassie on the dangers of being friendly with a white person. He forbids Cassie see Jeremy anymore, and throws the picture into the fire.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The reverend's sermon in church is obviously a parallel to Cassie's concerns over Jake Willis. On a much larger scale, it speaks of the racial friction and farming practices of that time. The black community's distrust of the white community could eventually do more harm than good, especially with the emerging integrated union.

This distrust is thematic throughout the chapter, starting with Bud's revelation. He is married to a white woman, and the family's reaction is one of distrust, bafflement, even betrayal. The same is true for Cassie's picture of Jeremy Simms. Uncle Hammer's anger over the situation stems from his mistrust of white people. He doesn't trust Jeremy's intentions toward Cassie. By throwing Jeremy's picture into the fire, he is symbolically severing the relationship between the two children.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Cassie and Papa are sitting on the front porch. They talk about the incident with Uncle Hammer and Jeremy's picture. Papa tells Cassie that everything Uncle Hammer says is true, even if he acts a little hard on her. Papa then explains that his grandfather was a white slave owner, the owner of his father's mother. He uses this as an example of how white men can act with black women. They take advantage of black women.

He then mentions that boys will start courting Cassie very soon, but Cassie inwardly protests. She wants to remain friends with the boys she knows. The conversation turns again to race, and Papa suggest that everyone is of a mixed race in some way. No one can pick who his ancestors are. He then wishes for the day when white people will just leave black people alone. He knows that he might not ever see that day, but he hopes that Cassie will.

Cousin Bud leaves. Mama blames Uncle Hammer and refuses to speak to him, but they "mend their differences" the following morning. It's Saturday, and the Logan family is sowing the cottonseeds when Sheriff Dobbs arrives. With him is Mr. Peck, Mr. Farnsworth's replacement as the new county agent.

Sheriff Dobbs tells Papa not to worry. Mr. Farnsworth said white men beat him up, so Papa is not a suspect. The Sheriff blames the beating on the union that's forming. He calls it a "Socialist conspiracy." He then asks Papa and Hammer about Jake Willis. He wants to put Jake in jail for a few days for knifing another black man. Uncle Hammer lies and says he doesn't know Jake Willis. As Sheriff Dobbs drives away, Papa decides to have the union meeting in his barn.

The meeting is held in the Logans' barn, but there are only black farmers present, and they all know each other. The kids listen through a crack in the door. They hear the new union members discuss what to do and how to do it.

Later on, Papa makes his final decision about the railroad. He is going back. Mama begs him not to go this year, even though they need the money for taxes He goes anyway.

Papa and Hammer leave on Saturday, but before they go, Hammer finds Cassie and talks to her about their argument concerning Jeremy. Over a game of horseshoe, Uncle Hammer explains that he loves Cassie and doesn't want anything bad to happen to her. Papa and Uncle Hammer leave after dinner. It is a very tearful goodbye. In mid-April, Mrs. Lee Annie announces that she wants to vote, because her father voted. Mama and Big Ma try to talk her out of it. They explain that even after she pays her poll tax and takes the test, the voting officials will still find a reason not to let her vote. Also, the people in positions of power will give her problems for even trying, most especially Mr.



Granger. Mrs. Lee Annie is unmoved by their argument. She asks Mama to help her learn the constitution better for the test. Mama agrees, and her first lesson is that the constitution only applies to white people.

As May comes, Stacey and Little Willie try to get jobs at the hospital site. Mr. Crawford, one of the men in charge of construction, refuses them. His coworker, Mr. Harrison, offers Stacey a job whitewashing for a week. Stacey wants to take the work, but Mama refuses to let him, because he's too young to bow and scrape. Stacey throws a fit and speaks disrespectfully to his mother. Instead of punishing him, Mama just lets him run off. She realizes that he really needs his father.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter marks the beginning of the rebellion. Mrs. Lee Annie's decision to vote has nothing to do with wanting to elect a candidate. Rather, the act of voting is a symbolic act of freedom, and Mrs. Lee Annie wants to live with the freedom that she is entitled to have.

Stacey is struggling with maturity, and he believes that in order to become a man, he must get a job. Mama's refusal to let him work upsets him on a superficial level, because he wants to make money for the family, but on a deeper level because her refusing his request is another reminder that he is not yet a man.

There is also a new struggle for Cassie, a struggle with identity. She finds out that her grandfather is half-white, meaning that she, too, is part white. With the tension between the two races and the segregation that results, Cassie must come to terms with the idea that she is trapped in the middle of these racial struggles.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Cassie is beginning to notice changes in Stacey: he's taller, his voice is deeper, and he has a little mustache, which he grooms and cares for daily. More than that, though, he has become much more private, and he rarely spends time with his younger siblings.

In an attempt to keep things the same, Cassie follows Stacey everywhere he goes, hoping to be included. One day, she follows him and Moe into the forest, and overhears their conversation about Jacey Peters. Stacey is very interested in her, and he's curious about her involvement with Stuart and Joe Billy. The conversation is cut short, and Cassie is discovered when she is attacked by fire ants and cries out. Before Stacey can yell at her, though, Christopher-John and Little Man find them and tell them to get home. Their cousin Suzella has arrived, and they claim she is beautiful.

When they get home, Suzella is changing in Cassie's room. Cassie notes that she resembles Mama, except her skin and eyes are lighter, and she has long, flowing hair. Cassie dislikes her immediately, and gets off on the wrong foot by asking Suzella what it's like to be "colored" and have a white mother. This angers Suzella, who claims she is not "colored."

Everyone else loves Suzella, which angers Cassie even more. Suzella tries desperately to befriend Cassie. She even helps Cassie by pulling jiggers out of her feet with a needle. Suzella performs the task expertly, even though it's her first try. Cassie doesn't even thank her.

The kids decide to go fishing one day. While the boys help Suzella with her rod, Cassie finds a sweet gum tree. When she tries to borrow Stacey's knife to cut out the gum, he won't let her have it. She complains that he never lets her use it. Instead, he cuts the sweet gum himself, passing the first piece to Suzella. He doesn't offer Cassie a piece until last, so she refuses.

As the kids sit on the riverbank, the conversation turns to Mr. Morrison. Little Man starts to tell a story about Mr. Morrison breaking another man's back, but Stacey quickly quiets him.

On the way home, Cassie is convinced that Suzella is just making things worse for everyone, and she decides to talk to Mama about it. She finds Mama with none other than Suzella, trying on her city dresses. Seeing that Mama is busy, she goes to Big Ma instead. Big Ma reprimands her for disliking Suzella, because she's half white. She claims that Cassie is simply jealous.

Cassie takes up her reading with Mrs. Lee Annie, and she begins with the constitution's section on mixed-race marriages. It states that people of two different races cannot legally be married. They both understand this section very well.



After the reading, Cassie follows the sound of Wordell's harmonica into the forest. He stops playing as she approaches. When she reaches him, she looks over to find her brothers and Suzella playing in the water. The sight sends Cassie into a fury, and she vents her rage to Wordell by complaining about Suzella. As she walks away, Wordell tells her she's wrong to talk about her cousin like that.

At Sunday school, Cassie searches for Wordell. She regrets speaking badly of Suzella and wants Wordell to know she's sorry. When she doesn't find him, she joins a group of boys talking about Suzella. She notices Suzella, surrounded by a group of friends. Jake Willis is standing nearby, watching her.

Cassie's group of boys notices that Moe is very quiet. When they ask him why, he says that his cow has died.

After church, Cassie stands in front of her mirror and assesses her adolescent body. She compares herself to Suzella, and tries to fix her hair like her cousin. When she unbraids hers, though, it does not hang down. It merely stands straight out. Suzella walks in and offers to help Cassie with her hair. When Cassie attacks her, Suzella asks Cassie why she doesn't like her. Cassie doesn't answer, so Suzella thinks it is because she is half white.

At dinner, Stacey tells the family about Moe's cow dying. The next day, Big Ma takes one of the Logans' cows to the Turner farm. While at their house, Sheriff Dobbs and Mr. Peck show up. Mr. Peck explains that there is a miscalculation of crop amounts in the government program. Mr. Turner will have to pull up a good portion of his cotton. Mr. Peck insists that he do it directly.

Moe takes the news badly. He throws a fit, and even threatens Mr. Peck. Mr. Turner has to hold him back from attacking the county agent. Mr. Turner then picks up his equipment and destroys a portion of his fields, as Mr. Peck requests. Moe follows him, quietly crying.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Jealousy rears its ugly head in this chapter, as Cassie must share her attention with the beautiful Suzella. Trust is also an issue, because jealousy is not the only emotion Cassie feels toward Suzella. The fact that Suzella is half white causes some tension between the two girls. It is analogous to the overall racial tension of the story, but on a more personal level. The chewing gum incident further enrages Cassie for the same reason. The gum itself is a symbol of the societal hierarchy of the time. Suzella is half white, so she gets served first.

Moe's father plowing up their crops is symbolic of an even bigger destruction. It's the destruction of their hopes and dreams. By plowing up the crops, Moe's family is rooted even deeper in the life of a sharecropper. They will not have the money to pay off their debts, and thus their hopes of owning their own land are destroyed.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

As it turns out, many farmers, black and white, have to plow up cotton. People are in an uproar, because everyone is losing money. On their walk from school, the children of the community all talk about getting jobs to help out, but the only work is at the site of the new hospital. Someone mentions the cane fields, and Moe says he's thinking about going.

As Cassie, Little Man, Christopher-John and Suzella walk on, Stuart drives up. He thinks Suzella is white, and Suzella is happy to play along. Her dishonesty upsets the Logan children, and they walk home in silence.

Russell is at their house when they arrive, and he takes an instant liking to Suzella. Dube arrives and delivers the news that Mr. Wheeler is organizing a meeting to discuss how Mr. Granger and Mr. Montier are taking advantage of the tax laws. He explains the union to Russell, who shows an interest. They both decide to go to the meeting at Mr. Wheeler's the following day.

Later that day, the kids are helping Mr. Morrison unload the wagon, and in the process, Little Man calls Cassie "gal." Mr. Morrison scolds Little Man, explaining that it is a derogatory term, but Cassie is unconcerned. She is too busy trying to tell Stacey that Suzella is pretending to be white, but he won't listen.

Cassie finds her mother inside and complains that Stacey won't listen to her. Mama reminds Cassie that Stacey is growing up, and he is just going through a phase. One day, Stacey and Cassie will be closer than they ever were before.

Cassie then tells her mother about Suzella and the events from earlier, silently admitting to herself that she wants Mama to think ill of Suzella. Mama immediately confronts Suzella about the incident, but Suzella doesn't think she's done anything wrong. Afterward, Cassie confronts Suzella as well. She accuses Suzella of disliking "colored" people. Suzella denies this, thinking she is misunderstood.

The next morning at Bible class, word spreads that Jacey Peters is pregnant with Stuart's baby. Stacey takes the news hard, and threatens to kill Stuart. He stays in the forest until classes are over, and runs off by himself once they get home.

Later, Dube and Russell come over, after going to Mr. Wheeler's. They witness the "night men" burning down Wheeler's house and chasing after all the men inside. Luckily, Dube and Russell are able to slip away unnoticed. Tragically, John Moses' body is later found in a creek bed, and the town is scared into canceling their union meetings.

Things settle down, and the Logans focus on their farm work. Papa writes often from the railroad, asking about the cotton. Stacey says it is one of their best crops ever, but they



will not get near what it is worth at harvest. The entire family is worried about money, and no one knows if they'll be able to pay the taxes. Once again, Stacey decides to get a job, but he promises Cassie that he will ask Papa about it when he returns home for the revival. Immediately after that, the family receives a letter from Papa. He is not returning home for the revival. He will stay on at the railroad in order to make as much money as he possibly can.

It is time to sell the cotton, and without Papa there, the rest of the family loads up their wagon and takes the cotton to the mill. Once the cotton is ginned, they take it to the warehouse to sell it. While they wait in line, Moe pulls Stacey aside for a private conversation. Cassie is not included.

That night, Stacey kisses everyone goodnight and goes to bed early. Big Ma remarks that he never kisses her anymore, and she's surprised by it. When Cassie goes to bed, she hears a knock at her exterior door. It's Stacey, and he gives her his knife before saying goodnight. Cassie thinks he is merely going through "a new kind of phase," and she goes to bed happy.

In the morning, the family finds a note from Stacey. He has run away to get a job. He doesn't tell them where.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The issue of identity resurfaces in this chapter, when Suzella pretends to be white. Being half white, she is torn between two heritages, and her failure to choose one race over the other leaves the Logans feeling betrayed. They think she is choosing to pass as white, because she is ashamed of her black heritage, and because they consider her as one of them. She is in fact both black and white, but during this era, there is no middle ground. A person could not mingle between the two communities. Therefore, Suzella feels she has to choose a "side" and stick with it.

When Moe and Stacey talk with the other boys about getting jobs, Moe's mention of the cane fields foreshadows his and Stacey's future actions of running away to work the fields. Also, Stacey's behavior the night of his departure makes apparent his plan to leave. Giving Cassie his knife is his final farewell, and the knife itself symbolizes a right of passage for the Logan siblings. For Stacey, it is his right of passage to let go of his childhood toys, and for Cassie, it is her right of passage to receive a more mature toy, something that she has coveted since early childhood.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The Logan family begins searching for Stacey immediately. Their first stop is at the Turner farm. They hope that as his good friend, Moe will know something. Unfortunately, Mr. Turner informs the Logans that Moe is missing as well. He has not given any hints as to where he is. In fact, the only clue that the Logans get is from Little Willie, who remembers Moe talking about jobs down south in the cane fields. As news of the disappearance travels, the entire town becomes involved in the search. Still, no one finds anything that will lead them to Moe and Stacey.

Papa returns from the railroad to head up his own search. Uncle Hammer arrives as well, and the two of them leave immediately to begin looking.

The kids witness the events that are unfolding, and they discuss Stacey's whereabouts. Cassie must reassure Christopher-John and Little Man that Stacey didn't leave because he dislikes them. He loves them, but he just wanted to help the family's financial situation. As she explains this, Jeremy Simms shows up. He, too, is extremely concerned.

In the midst of this drama, another school year begins. Since Suzella is still living in Mississippi, she enrolls as well. She is instantly skipped to the 11-12 grade class, and she still receives her lessons from New York. Needless to say, she is extremely busy, but she is still occupied with thoughts of Stacey.

Papa and Uncle Hammer return from their first search with no news and no leads. When Mama hears this, she demands that they return to their search immediately. Without knowing where to go, Papa refuses. This begins to cause problems in Mama and Papa's marriage. They practically stop talking altogether.

Later that night, Cassie overhears Papa leaving his bedroom. He talks to Uncle Hammer about Stacey, and Uncle Hammer decides to leave his car with Papa. Papa suddenly begins to cry. He worries that Stacey hasn't written, because something bad has happened to him. He ends the conversation by refusing to search again without any leads.

Mama constantly demands that Papa continue his search, but Papa just doesn't know where to look. Papa talks to the kids about Stacey. He tells them that as a family, they are all one body. With Stacey gone, they are incomplete. He ends by telling Cassie to have faith that Stacey will return.



Chapter 10 Analysis

Cassie's passage into adulthood continues, and her maturity begins blossom. She starts by realizing the importance of family, and stops worrying about trivial, childish things. This theme of family grows to include the entire community, as a strong camaraderie forms within the black community. The search for Stacey and Moe becomes a community effort.

Faith is another theme of this chapter. Papa tells his worried family to have faith that Stacey will return. In this particular situation, that is all they have to get through the pain and worry of his absence.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Stacey has been gone for eight weeks. At school, Mary Lou Wellever talks about Stacey. She says he might be dead. This sends Cassie into a rage, and she attacks Mary Lou. Miss Crocker breaks up the fight, and takes Cassie into a classroom. She leaves her with Suzella so that they can talk. Suzella takes Cassie for a walk in the forest, and they talk about their emotions, and how they react to things differently. Suzella admits that she could be more hot-tempered, like Cassie.

After school, Cassie and her friends wait for Suzella. The boys talk about Stacey, wishing he had invited them to go along. Then, Stuart pulls up in his car, looking for Dube Cross. He heard that Dube is helping with the union, and he wants to know where he can find Mr. Wheeler. Dube is so scared he can barely speak, but he manages to say he knows nothing.

At dinner, Mama still blames Papa for Stacey leaving. Papa stays in Mr. Morrison's cabin that night. After another reading lesson with Mrs. Lee Annie, Cassie looks for Wordell. Ever since Stacey left, the Logan children have been spending a lot of time with him. He takes them on hikes through the forest, and he shows them things, like a bird he is nursing back to health. While searching for him, Cassie sees Son Boy. He looks very sick. Instead of talking to him, she continues her search.

Cassie, Little Man and Christopher-John find Wordell at the tree where he keeps his sick bird. He is staring at the nest, and there is a dead cat at his feet. He kills the cat because the cat killed his bird. Cassie suddenly remembers Mrs. Lee Annie telling her that Wordell would never let anything hurt the things he loves. Without speaking, Wordell leaves, and the kids bury the cat.

At home, Mr. Jamison arrives. He is helping the family look for Stacey, and he has new information on a cane field recruiter. Papa will leave tomorrow to further investigate it. Before he leaves, he and Mama reconcile.

With Papa gone again, the women of the family begin canning season. Cassie tries to help, but she is feeling sick. As it turns out, she has scarlet fever. She is taken to Mr. Morrison's cabin to keep from spreading the illness to the other children. She is in bed for a week, and she is continually plagued by dreams of Stacey dying.

As Cassie starts to recover, she finds out that Don Lee has died of scarlet fever. She is also told that Wordell plays his harmonica for her every day that she is sick.

Mama is forced to send out telegrams to Papa, to inform him of Cassie's illness. When he returns with no news of Stacey, Cassie apologizes for being sick. She knows that telegrams cost a lot. Papa responds by telling her the story of the day she was born. Papa was working at a saw mill run by a white man who drank a lot. On the day Cassie



was born, the boss tries to attack Papa, so Papa quit. On his way home, he worried about finding a new a job, but when he saw Cassie for the first time, he stopped caring about a job and money altogether.

The first day Cassie can get out of bed, she runs straight to Wordell to thank him for playing every day. She sits to talk, and tells him about her nightmares. She is frightened that Stacey might be dead. Wordell tells her that if Stacey is dead, then that's just the way it will be. He leaves, and doesn't come to play for her again.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The forest plays protector once again, as Suzella takes Cassie into its protection in order to open up and speak honestly. It also hides the cruel act that Wordell commits, by killing the cat. This incident reveals the true character of Wordell, and is in no way an act of cruelty, but one of love scorned. This also places Wordell in a more omniscient position, because he takes life from and gives life to the cat and bird, respectively. He also becomes a guide to Cassie and her brothers, in the absence of Stacey. He takes them on walks through their safe haven of the forest, and Cassie is constantly confiding in him. Their conversations are analogous to a sinner confessing to a priest. She tells him her private thoughts and actions, and he simply listens.

Cassie's illness is symbolic of the loss of innocence, as it is her last stop on the path to maturity. When she awakens from her delirium, she instantly has the mindset of an adult. She can contemplate death on a mature level, and she is worried about more important things, like her brother's whereabouts. Wordell's music throughout her illness further exemplifies his role, as an omniscient guide. He is guiding her back to health, metaphorically breathing new life into her, as he did the bird.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Uncle Hammer arrives a few days before Christmas. Papa is on another search, so Uncle Hammer prepares the traditional hoghead souse in his absence. When he finishes, he puts it in the well until New Year's Day. Next, he takes the children to the forest to pick out a Christmas tree. While they chop it down, they talk about Stacey.

Papa comes home on Christmas Eve. On Christmas morning, they sing "Will the Circle Be Unbroken." It is a song about family that they sing every year. It creates a solemn atmosphere, and the family prays together.

At church, Russell and Mrs. Lee Annie greet Hammer enthusiastically. They all go inside, but Cassie can't keep her eyes off of Son Boy. He looks so alone without his brother, Don Lee, beside him.

At Christmas dinner, the Averys, the Ellises, the Laniers and Tom Bee join the Logans. Their conversation about losing loved ones is cut short by Mrs. Lee Annie, who announces that she will register to vote in a few days. Everyone tries to talk her out of it, but she is determined. She also wants Mama to go with her.

Jake Willis comes over. He has a present for Suzella, but Papa refuses to accept the gift on her behalf. He tells Jake that Suzella is too young to be courted, and Willis is over twenty years older than her. Jake Willis gets angry, but leaves calmly.

That night, Cassie gets out of bed and asks her parents if she can go with Mrs. Lee Annie when she registers to vote. Her parents don't answer. Rather, they tell her to give them time to decide.

The day after Christmas, Cousin Bud arrives. He and Suzella's mother are getting a divorce, and he is taking Suzella back to New York the following day, where she will live with her mother. Everyone is saddened by Suzella's departure, even Cassie.

Meanwhile, Tate Sutton and Charlie Simms come over. Jeremy is with them. The two white farmers want to get the union reorganized, both for whites and blacks. Simms is quite insulting throughout the conversation, and Jeremy is embarrassed. As they leave, Jeremy asks about Stacey.

Before returning to New York, Cousin Bud takes Suzella to Mrs. Lee Annie's house to say goodbye. The Logan children go with them. While the children and Bud visit with Mrs. Lee Annie, Russell takes Suzella for a walk. When they return, Cassie sees Russell kiss Suzella.

As Bud drives everyone back to the Logan farm, they see Dube and give him a ride.



While still on the road, Stuart, Joe Billy and Pierceson catch up to them and ask them to pull over. They force Bud out of the car and make him strip down to his underwear. They question him about Suzella's mother, wanting to know if she is a white woman. As they humiliate Bud in front of everyone and threaten him for sleeping with a white woman, Mr. Morrison pulls up in the wagon. With a reputation for losing his temper, he scares the boys off and gets everyone back home safely. Cousin Bud and Suzella leave that night.

Chapter 12 Analysis

This chapter emphasizes an already present theme that family is the strongest bond. The song that the Logans sing on Christmas, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," reinforces this idea, and it literally speaks to the fact that the Logan circle has been broken by Stacey's absence. No one is complete without the missing link in the chain that holds everyone together.

Jake Willis's true colors emerge in his attempt to court Suzella. Although he is polite and exits without further incident, there is a sinister quality about him that suggests a future conflict, one that could possibly be explored in a sequel. More importantly, though, this occurrence reasserts the patriarchal role of Papa, after his long absence on the railroad. It is he who refuses Jake, thus reclaiming his previous role as the head of the household.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

It's New Year's Day, and Little Man waits for Stacey by the window all day long. Mr. Jamison comes over and tells everyone that he has a message from the Buford Sheriff. The Sheriff has information about some boys who work a plantation near Baton Rouge. Mr. Jamison will have to wait until tomorrow to call the Sheriff back. Mama and Papa will meet him at his office in the morning. Everyone spends a restless night waiting.

Early in the morning, Mama wakes Cassie up and tells her that Mrs. Lee Annie will go register this day, and that Cassie may come along. She also tells Cassie that no matter what happens, she must not say a word.

Uncle Hummer, Mama, Papa and Cassie, followed by Mr. Morrison, the Ellises, Tom Bee, Russell and Wordell, drive to Strawberry. Thinking that the men could cause more problems for them inside the registrar's office, only the women accompany Mrs. Lee Annie to the courthouse. Papa and Uncle Hammer wait at Mr. Jamison's office.

The secretary at the registrar's office is taken aback by Mrs. Lee Annie's request, and she runs to get Mr. Boudein, her boss. He sends for Mr. Granger, who happens to be at the courthouse. Mr. Granger reprimands Mrs. Lee Annie for trying this "stunt," but tells Mr. Boudein to give her the test anyway. Stuart, who looks flustered and takes Mr. Granger outside, interrupts them.

Mrs. Lee Annie's test is to write an explanation of Section two forty-three of the constitution. As she works, Russell comes in and pulls Mama, Mrs. Ellis and Cassie out, because Mr. Jamison has the Buford Sheriff on the phone. Mrs. Ellis, who falters under Mr. Granger's intimidation, offers to stay with Mrs. Lee Annie.

On the way to Mr. Jamison's office, Mama and Cassie run into Jake Willis, who is stranded in Strawberry and needs a ride back with them. Mama tells him to wait with the other men, and goes into Mr. Jamison's office. She leaves Cassie outside with Mr. Morrison.

Suddenly, a caravan of farmers rolls down the street and stops in front of the courthouse, forming a massive crowd. While Cassie watches this, Mama and Papa emerge from Mr. Jamison's office with news. Five boys from a plantation near Baton Rouge ran away with stolen money. Four have since been caught, but one boy is dead. They must wait for the names of the two boys being held in Buford.

Cassie spots Mrs. Lee Annie leaving the courthouse, but she and Mrs. Ellis stop on the steps with Mr. Granger. Russell and Jake Willis are with them as well. Sheriff Dobbs comes out of the courthouse and speaks to the mob. They explain that they are here in protest of the government policies on farming.



While the crowd demands their land back and better wages for the day laborers, Mr. Granger himself comes forward to speak. He claims that their mixed-race union will lead to complete integration, with mixed marriages and integrated schools. This causes the excitement of the crowd to falter. He then tells them that Mrs. Lee Annie is trying to vote, and the crowd is shocked and angered by it. Russell and Mr. Wheeler both speak up; trying to calm the crowd, but Mr. Granger has them convinced that the union is a bad idea.

The crowd is fired up, and someone throws a bottle at Russell. It hits both him and Jake Willis, who is standing next to him. Amidst the chaos, the Logans start to run inside Mr. Jamison's office, but Cassie stops when she sees Wordell coming through the crowd. She remembers what Mrs. Lee Annie said about him not letting anything he loves get hurt, and she remembers the cat that hurt his bird. She runs for him herself, trying to stop him from hurting the man who threw the bottle at Russell. Mr. Morrison rescues her from the crowd, and then goes after Wordell himself.

Cassie is taken into Mr. Jamison's office. There is still no word from Stacey. Mrs. Lee Annie, Russell and Mrs. Ellis join them later. Russell's head is bandaged, and they say that Jake Willis has to have his eye removed, because of the bottle. Uncle Hammer and Papa go to check on Jake, and when they come back, Uncle Hammer warns Russell that Jake is blaming the incident on him.

Mama, Papa, Uncle Hammer and Cassie decide to drive down to Shokesville, where the boys are being held, rather than wait for another phone call. As they prepare to leave, Mr. Granger pulls up in his Packard and tells Mrs. Lee Annie and the Ellises to vacate his land by tomorrow morning.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Fear of change and its conflicting counterpart guide the characters in Chapter 13. Mrs. Lee Annie's determination to change herself and her life is met with fear and disbelief by the white community, because it is afraid to change its ways. When the protestors gather at the courthouse and are seemingly inconsolable, only a reminder of what change their actions will provoke is enough to stop the protest.

Registering to vote is really, for Mrs. Lee Annie, a demand for recognition as an equal. Her view of the world and how she is treated is only justified by the reactions of the white community. She is patronized, called childlike, and forced off of her farm as punishment. In effect, she is seen and treated as a child, which is completely opposite to what her original intention was.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The Logans reach Shokesville early the next morning. They wait for the sheriff's office to open, and when it does; they go in and tell the sheriff who they are. The sheriff orders a deputy to bring up "the boy that's feeling some better." While they wait, the sheriff tells them that the two boys he is holding are cleared of any crime. Two other boys were found out west with the stolen money out west.

He also tells them that the boys have both been very sick, and "an old colored woman" has been taking care of them every day, Aunt Mattie Jones. The sheriff admits that he is letting them go because he disagrees with the way the landowners treat the cane field workers. They bring one of the boys up. It is Stacey. Moe is with him, but he is too sick to walk. The Logans have a tearful reunion, and they take the boys.

Before returning home, they stop to thank Aunt Mattie Jones. After Stacey cleans himself up he tells his story. They crowded everyone into a truck and took them down to the plantation. They made them stay in a shack with no beds. If they wanted a blanket, they had to buy it with credit. The work was brutally hard, and after ten weeks, Stacey decided to go home. He was sick, but the owner of the plantation refused to pay him. He said the boys still owed money on the things they bought with credit. That night, the five boys decided to run away. Charlie, the boy who stole the money, and one of the other runaways, went off on their own, and were eventually caught. The last runaway, Jimmie B., was shot by a couple of hunters. Moe and Stacey were too sick to keep running, so they were caught and sent to jail.

They get back on the road after breakfast with Aunt Mattie Jones, and when they reach their town, they take Moe home first. They witness his reunion with his family, and then they speed to their own house. Stacey receives a big welcoming, and declares that "home is the best place to be." Cassie agrees.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The final chapter and conclusion of the story is basically the family's reunion with Stacey. Metaphorically, it is the re-forging of the circle, the rekindling of the familial bond that was present at the beginning of the story. In fact, the family emerges as the one strength that doesn't diminish, and all the other major conflicts of the story are set aside. Unresolved issues still remain, like Jake Willis's ill will, or even the family's financial troubles. The circle, on the other hand, is no longer unbroken, which reveals the issues of true importance in this book. Family is what matters, and Stacey's last thought as they pull into their drive reminds the reader of where the Logan story began and where it will go in the future.



Characters

Cassie

The main character of the story, Cassie is a black adolescent girl that is witnessing the turmoil of the pre-Civil Rights era firsthand. As the only daughter of a farmer, she surrounds herself with her male siblings and almost-exclusively male friends. She is, by definition, a tomboy. With an admiration for her older brother that's typical of any little sister, she grieves the inevitable ordeal of growing up.

In the wake of numerous events that challenge the class systems and social behaviors of her time, Cassie is always more focused on the inner workings of her family. Racial slurs and other abuses, while not acceptable to her, seem to be perfectly normal to her. She is at an age, though, where she is beginning to question the actions of the white community. She recognizes the first seeds of injustice, and guided by her family and the community, she is forming her own opinions about the world, and in doing so, she is slowly growing up.

Stacey Logan

Stacey Logan is at a difficult age. The eldest son of Mama and Papa, he is determined to be a man, and will stop at nothing to prove his worth to his family. He takes his parents' worries as his own, like the farm taxes and the constant need for money. He hopes to contribute financially, but when he runs away to work in the cane fields, he realizes that he is still young, and he has a lot to learn.

His determination to mature affects his relationship with his younger sister, Cassie. He separates himself from her, pursuing older interests. He develops a crush on Jacey Peters, an older girl, and his conversations subsist almost exclusively of farm work.

Although Stacey hopes to be seen as a man, he is still ever-thoughtful of his young siblings, and his reaction to Cassie's continual attempts at inclusion is patience and reluctant acceptance. That in itself is reason enough to believe that he has reached the level of maturity of an adult.

Little Man

The youngest of the Logan children, Little Man is meticulous in his appearance. He likes to stay neat and clean, and becomes agitated when his clothes are soiled. He loves his brothers and sisters, and follows them everywhere. He and Christopher-John are mostly dealt with on a singular basis throughout the book, as they are almost always together. Rarely are they separated, but when they are, Little Man is always worrying, either about Papa's well-being or Stacey's whereabouts.



Christopher-John

The middle child of the Logan children, Christopher-John is usually grouped with Little Man in any given situation, as the two are almost always together. He is the sensitive brother, who is very in tune with everyone's emotional state. He is still a child, though, and therefore has more in common with Little Man than with Stacey. Also, he is especially affected by TJ's trial, because his best friend is TJ's younger brother. After TJ is sentenced to death, Christopher-John no longer sees his friend, and mourns his loss. Like Little Man, he desperately wants to do everything that Stacey does, and ends up causing some trouble in the process.

Mama/ Mary

An educated woman, she has a teaching career, until she is fired for organizing a boycott. She does her fair share of work on the farm, and remains involved in the community. She loves her family and treats her children with respect, but her marriage is constantly challenged by her husband's frequent absences. No longer a teacher, she organizes tutoring sessions at her house, and thoroughly enjoys them. As the story progresses, her struggles expand to include her son, Stacey. They are at odds over his request to work, and she constantly feels that her parenting alone is not enough. She needs her husband's help.

Papa/ David

Papa is a very hard worker, who tries his best to provide for his family. Like his wife, he is intelligent, and he has pride in the land he owns. In fact, the entire black community looks to Papa for advice. He is questioned about everything, from unions to taxes. Like all black characters in this novel, he distrusts all white people, to the point that he never gives out any information about himself or his business. He always plays dumb. His hard work doesn't end on the farm. He works nine months out of the year on the railroad, and this year is no different.

Big Ma

Big Ma is usually in the kitchen, hovering over the stove. As Papa and Uncle Hammer's mom, she makes all the meals and shares a room with Cassie. She is always the first to know when something is wrong with the children, and as one of Cassie's many confidants, she is quick to reprimand the child for any bad feelings toward Cassie's half-white cousin.



Uncle Hammer

As Papa's brother, Uncle Hammer makes frequent visits to the Logan farm. He lives in the north, and his somewhat mysterious means of income, along with his automobile, lead the Mississippi community to believe that he is well-to-do. He is, in fact, struggling just like the rest of his family, but when he is able to, he helps the family financially. His niece and nephews love him dearly, but his occasional reprimands cause friction between himself and the children. He has an extreme distrust and displayed hostility toward the community, and his raging temper always threatens to endanger his well-being. He has never been married, and having no children of his own, he considers the Logan children as his own.

Suzella

Cousin to the Logan children, Suzella is in the midst of an identity crisis. With a white mother and a black father, she doesn't quite what her place in the world is, or who she is for that matter. She is spending time at the Logan farm at the request of her father, Cousin Bud. She is doing this in order to better understand that half of her heritage and here she comes from. When her crisis leads her to certain mistakes with the neighborhood white boys, she is greeted with the dismay of her new family. She is extremely intelligent, and wants nothing more than to be friends with her extended family, but she struggles to befriend her cousin Cassie.

Wordell

The grandson of Mrs. Lee Annie, Wordell rarely speaks and is therefore considered slow by much of the community. He spends most of his time out in the forest, and as Cassie gets to know him, she joins him on his outdoor adventures. She also comes to realize that Wordell has a big heart, and is always ready to defend his loved ones. However, he is capable of violence, if only in protection of those people he loves.

Mr. Morrison

He lives on the Logan farm, and works the fields alongside Papa. He is considered and treated as one of the family, and is involved in all of their worries and joys. It is rumored that he broke a man's back in fit of rage once, and this story causes a lot of people, including some of the white community to fear and respect him.

Mr. Jamison

This is the lawyer from Strawberry who takes a special interest in the Logan family. He is TJ Avery's council, and he genuinely wishes to help the family. He is perhaps the only

white man that the Logans trust. He eventually helps the family find Stacey when he disappears.



Objects/Places

Strawberry

This is the nearest town to the Logan farm. It is the scene of TJ's trial and the sharecropper protest.

The Logan farm

This is where Cassie's home is, and it is considered one of the nicest black homes in the community.

The forest

It is where the children spend most of their play time. It surrounds the town and serves as a protective shroud to the community.

Church

The church is in walking distance from the Logan farm, and it is a gathering place for the black community every other weekend.

Stacey's knife

This knife is coveted by Cassie, but Stacey never lets her use it. When he runs away to get a job, though, he gives it to her.

Yellow Ford

This is Uncle Hammer's bright yellow car. It is not as nice as his previous car, and people constantly remind him of that.

Harmonica

The harmonica is Wordell's most frequent mode of communication. He plays for Cassie while she is sick with scarlet fever.



Cotton

All of the farmers in the area grow cotton. Therefore, it is their livelihood. It keeps them fed and clothed, and is respected for that reason.

Cane fields

This is where Stacey eventually goes to get a job. It is extremely rough work, and Stacey falls very ill while working there.

Courthouse water fountain

This is where Cassie first realizes the depth of injustice that plagues her people. By being denied the simple act of drinking water, she is thrown into the fight for equal rights.



Themes

Nature

Let the Circle Be Unbroken addresses the importance of nature. Even the title itself suggests a natural cycle that always continues, despite the hardships that arise along the way. Nature is treated with the utmost respect by the characters, which is understandable. They are all farmers, and they depend upon the land for their basic human needs. The land sustains them and always provides. This gives the sharecroppers hope for their futures. Anything is possible, as long as nature does its part and brings forth a good crop. When Mr. Peck orders the Turners to destroy a portion of their crop, Moe disregards any rules of social. He reverts back to his primitive self, and actually attacks the white man. This is because Mr. Peck is not just taking away their crop; he is taking away their hope and faith in the land.

Along with that, nature protects the people of this small Mississippi town. The reader can see this even in the first chapter. When Doris Ann is found in the church bell tower, Wordell is blamed. Both he and Joe (the real culprit) seek refuge in the forest. Throughout the entire story, the forest acts as everyone's protective shield of sorts. When Cousin Bud is humiliated by Stuart Walker and forced to undress in front of his daughter, his only request is that they let him do it under the cover of the forest. Likewise, all of Cassie's private dealings occur within the shelter of the forest. When she goes against her father's wishes and plays marbles again, it is in the forest. Cassie's relationship with Wordell develops almost exclusively outdoors or in the forest. Wordell is, to some extent, the forest personified. He rarely speaks, never judges people, and he nurtures the innocent. He not only nurses an injured bird back to health, but he also takes care of his slow friend Joe.

Oppression and Rebellion

Throughout the story, there are countless instances of overt oppression. Besides the flagrant racism and disrespect that weaves through the text, there are also countless practices that are established to keep the white community in control. For instance, the sharecroppers are kept trapped in their position, with no means to free themselves from their situation. They must bend to the will of the landowners, and with taxes to worry about; these people are left with barely enough to feed their families. Of course, the government programs give the impression of being for the common good, but at the end of the day, their high taxes and planting restrictions only benefit the well-to-do, white landowners.

Closely tied to the oppression that plagues the south are acts of rebellion that subsequently occur. When Mrs. Lee Annie decides that she will vote, it is an act of rebellion against the people and the system that have told her what to do for her entire



life. She is aware of the cost of her attempt at equal rights, so it is a fully informed decision.

The establishment of an integrated union is, among other things, an act of rebellion, en masse. On the individual level, many join it as a way to improve their quality of living. On the other hand, when Papa decides to participate, it is directly after Sheriff Dobbs has talked down to him, demanding he steer clear of the union. Even though Papa won't directly benefit from the actions of the union, he decides to join, partly just to spite Sheriff Dobbs and Mr. Granger.

Coming of Age/ Loss of Innocence

Closely tied to the theme of rebellion is the undercurrent of coming of age. The loss of innocence and the acceptance of new responsibilities go hand-in-hand with growing up, and Stacey Logan is a prime example. What could be classified as many acts of rebellion by a teenage boy are actually attempts to embrace adulthood. By defying his parents' wishes and seeking employment of his own, he is desperately searching for his own place in the adult world. It is interesting that he equates maturity with working, and not education. That is mostly indicative of the time period, and suggests that true power comes from wealth, not wisdom.

Cassie, on the other hand, is vehemently opposed to growing up, because she equates it with change. As a young girl with no concrete concept of the way the world works, she fears change and all that it suggests. Mainly, she sees relationships strained as the story progresses, as well as loved ones put into harm's way. Her change (journey to maturity), in opposition to her brother's, is not something she seeks. Rather, she rebels against change, wherein Stacey rebels in an attempt to change.



Style

Point of View

Let the Circle Be Unbroken is written in the first person limited, with Cassie as its only narrator. Everything that happens occurs in the presence of the main character, and every internal dialog is Cassie's own thoughts.

This story is told through the eyes of child, and it is through these eyes that the reader is able to see the world in which she lives, without any prior knowledge of society at the time. Basically, as the character Cassie learns, the reader does as well. Cassie is smart, extremely honest, and curious enough to seek out the interesting. This is a good tool to employ, as Taylor does, because pacing is set by Cassie's rate of gaining knowledge.

Also, this device allows the author an avenue for explaining certain events and laws that the reader would have no prior knowledge of. Most of all, though, this is a story about racism, oppression, and the evil deeds of man, and there is no better way to honestly present this story than through the eyes of innocence.

Setting

Let the Circle Be Unbroken opens in a small Mississippi town. The town of Strawberry anchors the farmers of the area, but most of the story takes place in the outlying areas. More specifically, most scenes occur either outdoors, or inside the Logan farmhouse. The indoor scenes are mostly comprised of serious conversations about life, relationships and even acts of rebellion. The front porch connected to the house is also a place for discussion, and is more often than not a place for confessions, spoken or otherwise. Papa silently reveals to Mr. Jamison that he was the one who started the fire in the fields. Papa also discusses racial tensions and faith while on the porch. This further emphasizes the importance of family, by presenting the home as church-like, or as a sanctuary.

The walk to school involves the passage of a crossroads. This is obviously an allusion to the different decisions that the children of this book must make, as they grow older and come of age.

The town of Strawberry is home to the more public actions of the story, like TJ's trial and the sharecroppers' protest. This is practical, because cities are less personal, and involve people in a general way, as opposed to the individual and his/her struggles.

Language and Meaning

This book is a fairly equal mix of dialogue and prose, and it has a fairly relaxed pace. The language is simple, opening the possible audience to include young-adult readers.



The dialogue includes large amounts of country slang of the 1930s, authenticating the characters within that time and lifestyle.

Mama and Papa treat their children as their intellectual equals, and they are very honest about difficult subjects. This allows Cassie, as well as the reader, to always prepare for the worst. The tragedies that occur within the story are anxiously arrived at, with heightened anticipation.

With the exception of TJ's hanging, violent and humiliating events are described in detail, but usually after the fact. For instance, Mr. Farnsworth is badly beaten, but Cassie doesn't see him until the actual beating is over. Even then, though, she freely describes his injured state, just as she describes the violent protest in the town of Strawberry. All the violence within the story, though, is used as necessary examples of life in that time, and the treatment of the black community.

Structure

This book consists of fourteen chapters, with a one-page introduction by the author. In it, she states that she hopes her books will one day be used as learning guides for children everywhere. She wants all people to know the struggle of the Civil Rights movement, and the place of Cassie's generation within that struggle.

The plot is extremely linear, without even so much as a flashback to interrupt the pace. A little background information about the main characters is given early on, and the story progresses to its end with virtually no interruptions.

The author employs dialogue liberally, in order to tell the story, and to explain crucial facts about the era. The fact that the story is limited to Cassie's own narration is an efficient way to include all needed information.

Quotes

"They were day laborers, who picked cotton for wages, and day laborers were the least paid and the worst treated of the farming community. For them life was even harder than it was for the rest of us." Chapter 1, pg. 5

"That water in there and them toilets, they belong to the white folks, and the white folks don't want no colored folks using neither one." Chapter 2, pg. 59

"...cotton sustained life, and no matter how greatly learning was respected, the cotton had to be planted, chopped, weeded and picked if the family was to survive. Few parents expected their children to do any work other than what they and their parents had done, and education was usually sacrificed if a choice had to be made between it and the fields." Chapter 4, pg. 89

"Then them night men took to the road. Tarrin' black folks goin' to vote, beatin' 'em up, lynchin' 'em. Beat my papa somethin' terrible...seen it myself." Chapter 4, pg. 114

"Don't trust nothin' white folks gonna be part of." Chapter 6, pg. 152

"We go joinin' unions 'round here, some heads gonna roll. Mr. Granger done already told me that. Said anybody joins can jus' get off his land." Chapter 6, pg. 152

"...no one could bring themselves to trust the white farmers of the area, or even Morris Wheeler. There had been too many years of distrust, too many years of humiliations and beatings and lynchings and inequalities." Chapter 7, pg. 186

"...if the judges and the courts really saw everyone as equal instead of as black or white, life could have been a lot pleasanter. Mama said that maybe one day equal rights would be for everyone..." Chapter 7, pg. 198

"...we can't hardly be talking 'bout not working for the white folks. They the ones got the money, then they the ones we gonna hafta get it from." Chapter 7, pg. 205

"I just want things back the way the was before" Chapter 8, pg. 228

"It's always the same. After the deducts, we got nothin'. I tell ya'll, this kind of stuff keep up, me and Don thinkin' about goin' into the CCC or maybe goin' up to Jackson looking for work, cause we don't much see how we gonna hold out this year we don't get none of that government money Mr. Granger holding on to." Chapter 9, pg. 242

"He's changing and he's looking for his life to change too, and he really doesn't have much patience with folks he's been around all his life." Chapter 9, pg. 253

"I done come home...and it's the very place to be." Chapter 14, pg. 394



Topics for Discussion

What is Papa's motivation for joining the union?

Discuss the role of the forest throughout this story.

Describe the tension between the Logan children and Jeremy Simms.

Why is Cassie hostile toward Suzella, aside from the reasons she states?

Discuss the different obstacles that face Stacey and Cassie as they come of age. How do these obstacles differ?

How do the events in the story affect Mama and Papa's relationship? More specifically, what strains their relationship, and what makes it stronger?

What are Stacey's motivations for running away and getting a job in the cane fields?

Why does Suzella pretend to be white when she encounters Stuart? Why does he react the way he does when he discovers the truth?

Explain the practice of sharecropping. How does it differ from slavery? What are the similarities?