

Chapter 12

Characterization

Objectives: Categorizing characters according to values
Identifying and defending characters' values and motivations

Activity I

Throughout the novel, prejudice splits the community. The African-American community is subjugated to the will of powerful, outspoken white landowners. These white landowners control their sharecroppers, and detest the Logans because they are African-American landowners. In the novel, the whites that control the African-American community maintain their power through fear and dominance. They do not earn respect, and they certainly do not offer any. Their opinions reflect the attitudes of slave owners and slave traders, who did not acknowledge the humanity of African-Americans. Consequently, lynch mobs assemble to attack and kill innocent victims in order to keep the power structure in place.

Society during the time period covered in the novel contained members of the white community who believed very much in equal rights. Unfortunately, most feared retribution for their words and actions as much as the African-Americans did.

1. In this final chapter, we encounter both noble and shameful characters. Choose two characters from this chapter, and explain why they are either shameful or noble. Include details from the novel to support your opinion, including page numbers for each quotation. Write one paragraph for each character.

2. Considering that the Logan crops are burning, why does everyone, including the mob that wants to kill T.J., work together to fight the blaze? Explain.

Activity III

The major source of conflict in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is racism, which traps and angers the characters, both young and old, and which causes a large portion of the injustice of the novel.

In small groups, consider the role racism plays in the lives of the characters. Which characters are trapped by racism? Choose four to discuss. How are they trapped? Is there any way for them to overcome their situation?

You will present the results of your group's discussion to the class. Each member of the group should assume the persona of one of the characters you discuss. Then, in character, tell the class about how you have been trapped by racism, how it has affected your life, and whether you can think of a way to overcome your situation.

Effects of Racism

Character	How is this character trapped by racism?	Can this character overcome the situation?		Explain why or why not.
		Yes	No	