

Activity III / ch. 9

You see that fig tree over there, Cassie? Them other trees all around...that oak and walnut, they're a lot bigger and they take up more room and give so much shade they almost overshadow that little ole fig. But that fig tree's got roots that run deep, and it belongs in that yard as much as that oak and walnut. It keeps blooming, bearing good fruit year after year, knowing all the time it'll never get as big as them other trees. Just keeps on growing and doing what it gotta do. It don't give up. It give up, it'll die. There's a lesson to be learned from that little tree, Cassie girl, 'cause we're like it. We keep doing what we gotta, and we don't give up. We can't. (Pgs. 205-206)

This quotation from Papa is an extended metaphor comparing society to nature, or more specifically, certain members of society to certain trees. According to the passage, the larger trees would easily overtake the small fig tree if the fig tree were to give up. Papa declares that he and his family are like the fig tree; therefore, the Wallaces, Mr. Granger, and other racist members of the white community must be like the larger trees. Your job is to determine the meaning of Papa's message to Cassie.

To understand the meaning of the metaphor, you should first read the selection, and then look at the phrases listed in the **Meaning Chart**. Look in the **Phrase** for **Key Words** that represent or describe the people of the novel and the situations they experience. Then, considering the subject of the metaphor and the key words, write the **Meaning** that the metaphor implies. The first one is done for you as an example.

Meaning Chart

Phrase	Key Words	Meaning
that oak and walnut, they're a lot bigger	oak, walnut, bigger	White society has more strength and power.
they take up more room and give so much shade they almost overshadow that little ole fig		
that fig tree's got roots that run deep, and it belongs in that yard as much as that oak and walnut		
It keeps blooming, bearing good fruit year after year, knowing all the time it'll never get as big as them other trees.		
Just keeps on growing and doing what it gotta do. It don't give up. It give up, it'll die.		