

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: A Unit Plan

By Molly McGovern and Rick Vanderwall
Price Laboratory School
University of Northern Iowa

Unit Overview

This language arts/social studies unit is for middle school students, grades six through nine. The lessons blend a study of the basic structure, laws, and etiquette of the Jim Crow System with a reading of Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Students then apply what they have learned to a web quest to create a TV news investigative report documenting the downfalls of sharecropping during the Jim Crow era.

American Literature Curriculum Standards

- Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g. sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- Adjust their spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- Participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., to learn, enjoy, persuade, and exchange information).

Lesson Plan Menu

I. Pre-reading Activity

1. **What Was Jim Crow?:** In this reading/vocabulary activity, students learn about the history of Jim Crow and the vocabulary associated with the period so they can prepare for reading the novel.

II. Reading Activities

1. **A Child's Diary, Reader Response:** Have students journal their responses to what they read to help them get into the minds of the characters.
2. **Spelling/Vocabulary List, Lesson Suggestions:** Ask students to keep an extensive vocabulary list from the novel allows teachers the flexibility of a variety of applications.

III. Post-Reading: WebQuest Lesson

1. **WebQuest:** Instruct students to research sharecropping by going straight to the WebQuest.

Rick Vanderwall is the Chair of the Language Arts Department at Malcolm Price Laboratory School in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Molly McGovern is an English Education Student at the University of Northern Iowa.