



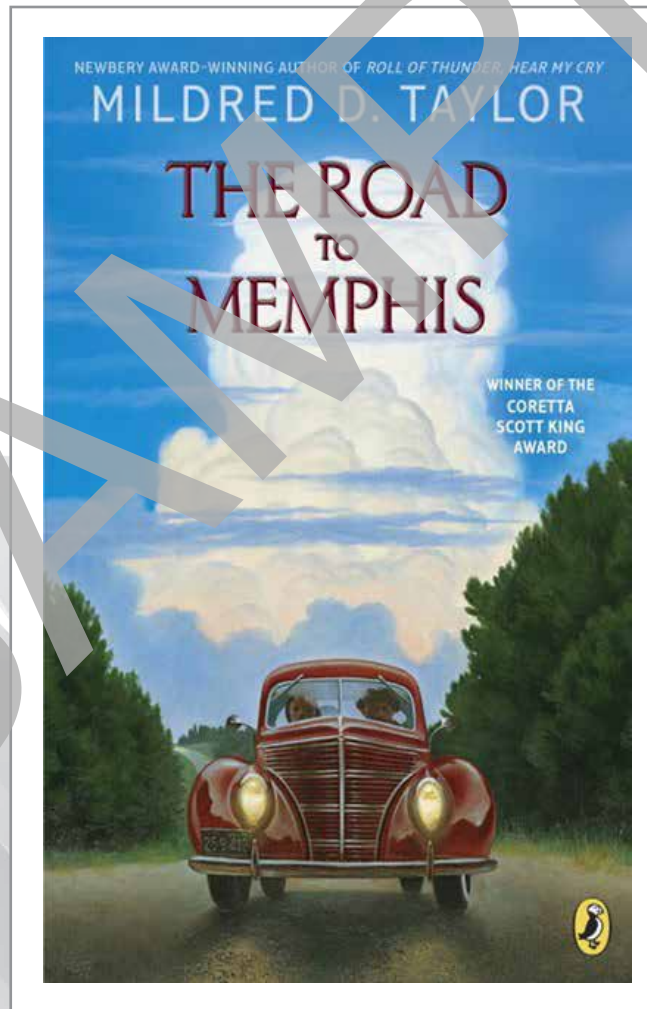
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Road to Memphis

Mildred D. Taylor



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Road to Memphis

Mildred D. Taylor

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, brainstorming, creative thinking, critical thinking, compare/contrast, decision-making, attributes, multiple perspectives, literary interpretation

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, inference, summarizing

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentations, plays

Vocabulary

Word maps, defining, parts of speech

Writing

Creative writing, reports, essays

Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, character analysis, similes, metaphors

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—developing maps, research, time lines, geography; Science—medicines, health; Math—distance measurement; Language—poetry, outlines, research; Music—choosing mood music; Art—illustrations, dramatization

Genre: fiction

Setting: Mississippi, 1941, prior to American involvement in World War II

Point of View: first person, from Cassie Logan's point of view

Themes: racism, pride, coming-of-age, courage, friendship, trust, perseverance

Conflicts: person vs. society, person vs. person, person vs. self

Date of First Publication: 1990

Summary

The Road to Memphis, the fourth book in the Logan family series, begins with Cassie Logan planning her future, including high school, college, and law school. She goes to school in Jackson, Mississippi, and on a trip back to school her entire life changes. Her close friend, Moe, hits three young white men and must be taken to safety in the North. The trip presents many obstacles, most of which are race-related. Cassie experiences a new kind of discrimination previously unknown to her. While in Memphis, Tennessee, Cassie and her friends have their car repaired, buy Moe a ticket to Chicago, and Cassie develops an interest in an older man, Solomon Bradley. During the return trip to Jackson, tragedy strikes again when they lose a dear friend and must return him home to be buried. The denouement of the book finds the boys talking of joining the Army to fight in World War II and Cassie wondering whether she can attain her dreams with so many changes taking place in the world.

About the Author

Mildred D. Taylor was born in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1943. She lived in Jackson for only three months because her parents wanted to raise their children in the North where racial discrimination and harassment were less of a problem. Her early education took place in all-white schools, and she graduated from the University of Toledo. Regaled with stories of the South by her father and family trips to Mississippi each summer, Taylor holds a fondness for the South in her heart. *The Road to Memphis* received the Coretta Scott King Award. Mildred Taylor's other award-winning books about the Logan family are *The Land* (written as a prequel in 2001; Coretta Scott King Award), *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976; Newbery Medal), and *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981; Coretta Scott King Award).

Characters

Cassie Logan—17-year-old African-American girl; outspoken; goal-oriented; well-educated

Christopher-John Logan—Cassie's 15-year-old brother; loyal; ready to join in any fight

Little Man Logan (aka Clayton Chester)—Cassie's 14-year-old brother; protective; wants to be treated like an adult

Stacey Logan—oldest Logan sibling; works in Jackson at a box factory; responsible; trustworthy; loyal

Sissy Mitchum—17-year-old African-American girl; twin sister of Harris; causes unnecessary trouble

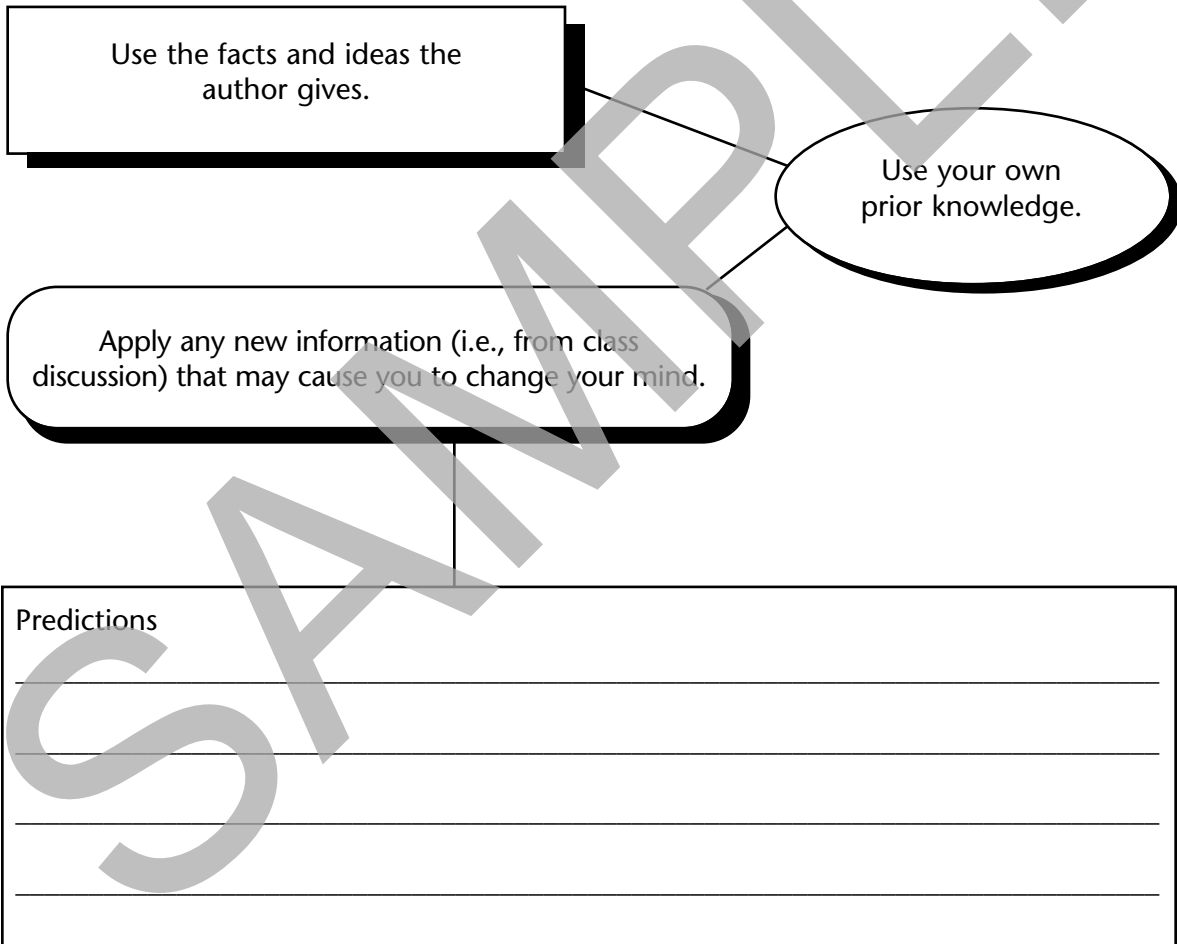
Harris Mitchum—Sissy's twin brother; robust but soft-spoken

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could either be an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.



The Memphis Prince—A Final Farewell, pp. 220–290

After arriving in Memphis, Cassie and her friends ask for help from Solomon Bradley. He helps them get the car repaired and gets Moe a ticket to Chicago. Cassie becomes further infatuated with Solomon, and he momentarily returns her affections. When the group returns for Clarence, they discover that Clarence has died as a result of his worsening headaches. Stacey and Cassie return to Strawberry to deliver the bad news to Clarence’s family and Sissy. They discover that Harris has been arrested on suspicion of helping Moe get out of town. Jeremy Simms admits that he helped Moe, and his father angrily disowns him. Harris is released, and he, Stacey, Cassie, and Sissy leave for home. When the news of Clarence’s death reaches Sissy, she refuses to believe it at first. Jeremy and other young men leave to fight the war, and Cassie begins to question whether things will ever be right again.

Vocabulary

brusque (224)
lynching (226)
somberly (226)
interjected (228)
bemused (232)
acquiescence (235)
incredulous (237)
ensure (255)
pallor (265)
bleary (266)
perplexed (273)
intervened (274)
asunder (280)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Cassie chooses not to tell Stacey and the others the truth about what happened at the gas station? (*She isn’t ready to talk about her horrific experience yet, and she fears what Stacey will do. p. 222*)
2. What has Cassie never considered about African-American involvement in the war? (*She has never thought about the possibility that the war could mean more opportunities for African Americans to have a voice. p. 225*)
3. Why does Cassie have such a narrow view of the war? (*She thinks it is the white people who got America involved in the war, and they should be the ones to fight it, not the African Americans whom they treat unfairly. p. 230*)
4. Do you think Solomon is lucky because he settled in Memphis? Explain your answer. (*Answers will vary. Suggestions: Solomon is lucky because he can help the African-American community be more informed about what is going on in the world. He is also able to help people because of his knowledge of the law. He is probably doing more good in Memphis than he would have done in the North.*)
5. Why is Cassie so concerned about Moe’s feelings after he sees her and Solomon together? (*She realizes Moe cares deeply for her. Although she cares for him as well, she knows her affection for Moe will never move beyond friendship. She doesn’t want Moe to be hurt. pp. 252–254*)
6. Why does Mag speak to Cassie about Solomon? (*She has seen too many women set their sights on Solomon and then get their hearts broken. It is best for Cassie to forget Solomon. p. 255*)
7. Why do you think Ma Dessie repeats “...he ain’t got no war to fight now. He got no war to fight” following Clarence’s death? (*Ma Dessie is deeply troubled about the war and is happy one less African-American boy will be fighting. She believes he’s in a better place. p. 263*)
8. Of what has Harris been accused? How does Sissy protect her brother? (*He is accused of helping Moe get out of town. He is so scared that he can’t speak on his own behalf. Sissy screams at the sheriff to let Harris go and demands that Jeremy tell people the truth about his involvement in Moe’s escape. pp. 268, 271–273*)

9. Why do you think Mr. Simms reacts so violently toward Jeremy when he tells about Moe's escape? *(Answers will vary. Suggestions: Mr. Simms believes that Jeremy has betrayed his "own kind" by helping an African American. He believes Jeremy did this purposely because he has always enjoyed the company of African Americans. Mr. Simms feels humiliated, ashamed, and repulsed by his son. He is an extreme racist, more interested in his bigotry than protecting his family. pp. 274–275)*
10. Why do you think Jeremy chooses to tell the truth even though he must know how his father will react? *(Answers will vary. Suggestion: Jeremy realizes that his father will never change. He is not willing to betray his friends a second time just to keep the affections of his racist father.)*
11. What evidence does the reader have that Stacey has forgiven Jeremy for the night on the Rosa Lee? *(He is concerned about how Jeremy is doing. He apologizes to Jeremy for getting him involved in Moe's mess. He offers to give Jeremy a ride wherever he needs to go. He plays the wind pipe Jeremy gave him for Christmas. pp. 284–289)*
12. Why does Cassie think Jeremy has always seemed like "a lonely figure" (p. 288)? *(Answers will vary.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. History: Use the Internet and books from the library to research the events of December 7, 1941. What makes this date so significant in American history?
2. Writing: Write about a time that you felt helpless or scared. What happened? Did you attempt to improve the situation? If so, how?
3. Art: Create a collage depicting the South, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement. What images represent each? What theme might combine all three ideas?