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EDUC 320 Teaching Literacy
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Portfolio 9.2 Develop a rubric to evaluate a student's book report. Prepare a book report on one of the children's books you've read this semester and apply the rubric you developed to evaluate your work.

Book Report Criteria:

Students are to produce a written book report on a novel of their choice, addressing each element of literature: plot, characters, setting, theme, and style. To fully address these elements, students should make at least three comments demonstrating depth of thought and reflection on the specific element. This report is to be written as a traditional essay, with correct use of conventions of standard English, but it can include first person pronouns.

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Student Name: _____

Book: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor

Rubric Categories	5 - Great	4 - Good	3 - Average	2 - Needs More	1 - Not Ready
Plot	3 or more comments which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	3 comments, 2 of which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	At least 3 relevant comments	2 relevant comments	1 relevant comment
Characters	At least 3 thoughtful, relevant comments	3 comments, 2 of which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	At least 3 relevant comments	2 relevant comments	1 relevant comment
Setting	At least 3 thoughtful, relevant comments	3 comments, 2 of which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	At least 3 relevant comments	2 relevant comments	1 relevant comment
Theme	At least 3 thoughtful, relevant comments	3 comments, 2 of which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	At least 3 relevant comments	2 relevant comments	1 relevant comment
Style	At least 3 thoughtful, relevant comments	3 comments, 2 of which demonstrate depth of thought and reflection	At least 3 relevant comments	2 relevant comments	1 relevant comment
Sentence Fluency	Reads smoothly, Transitions flow, Varied & purposeful beginnings	Varied & purposeful beginnings, Missing transitions and/or sentence variation	Repetitive, Flows, Some awkward phrasing	Awkward phrasing, disjointed, Tough to read-a-loud	First Draft Quality
Conventions	No Errors: spelling, grammar, punctuation, caps & paragraph	Very Few Errors: spelling, grammar, punctuation, caps & paragraph	Some Errors: spelling, grammar, punctuation, caps & paragraph	Many Errors: spelling, grammar, punctuation, caps & paragraph	Rough Draft Quality

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SAMPLE:

Setting

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is set in the 1930s in rural Mississippi. The setting is very important in this book because it is tied so heavily to the conflicts that arise for the Logan family. The events of this book could only happen in this setting because of the intensity of racially fueled injustice associated with the southern states in the 1930s, although there would be some flexibility with the exact details because racism colored the events in that region for several decades. The setting and historical context form the background which makes the plot believable, interesting, complex, and relevant and can give readers new perspectives on current societal issues.

Plot

It is difficult to explain the plot of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* because there are so many conflicts that make up the story. The central conflict is blacks, specifically the Logan family, against racism, but the majority of the sub-conflicts play a part in this central conflict. Another crucial conflict is the Logan family against Harlan Granger as he tries to take their land. This struggle is so important because the land is essentially the Logan's freedom to do as they please. It allows for their slight civil disobediences, such as causing the school bus to crash, boycotting the Wallace Store, and eventually starting the fields on fire. They have the resources and education which allow them to approach the problem of racism in a more unorthodox and radical way than the poorer black families who sharecrop for white plantation owners. An unexpectedly important conflict is TJ against the basically the world. At first TJ's struggles with the Logan children, particularly Stacey, seem menial and insignificant, but it is this conflict that leads him into a supposed friendship with RW and Melvin, and the climax of the story wherein a mob is trying to lynch TJ.

Characters

TJ's character becomes much more important throughout the book. He is a minor character up until the last two chapters and it is then his portion of the story that is the catalyst for Mildred Taylor to reveal her ultimate comment about racial injustices and the need for resolution. However, it is in Papa's act of setting his own field on fire that Taylor makes this comment. Taylor makes it clear that TJ's lynching, that racial injustice as a whole, must stop by any means. When Papa sacrifices his own well-being by starting the fields on fire, she tells the reader that those means will be unorthodox and difficult. Papa is revealed to be the strongest character in the novel because of this decision. He not only sees the big picture, but is willing to make sacrifices to better the big picture. Of all the characters in the book, it is Stacey that demonstrates the most growth. The book starts with him as a sullen sixth grader, resentful of having his mother as his teacher. As the story continues we see that he has an understanding of the world he lives in, and that he is willing to fight his own battles, that he is willing to own up to his behavior. At the very end

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of the novel, he is a friend to TJ, no matter how little TJ deserves it. He chooses to accept a tremendous risk for TJ's sake, not out of loyalty, but out of genuine goodness.

Theme

The most evident theme is the injustices that stem from racism. This theme shows up time and time again--the incident with the readers, the school bus, visiting the mercantile in Strawberry, Harlan Granger and the bank forcing the Logans to pay everything left on their mortgage, the burnings, the segregated schools, blaming TJ for the death of the store owner. Yet, Taylor does not seek to make blacks the victims or all whites the villains; instead she works to show that goodness can overpower these evils and that everyone's actions count in the facing of such a tremendous problem. Another important theme is land ownership as independence. Because the Logan family owns their land, they own their lives. They have a greater autonomy than most black families and as a result are more able to make a stand against the racial inequalities of the time. A third theme that is evident in the novel is the importance of family and community support. The black community forms a group that allows black individuals to prop each other up in order to face the racism and injustice of the South. They form this community through storytelling and going to Church, and by organizing in specific instances to stand up for the community, such as the boycott of the Wallace Store.

Style

Taylor brings all of these elements together to form a phenomenal narrative, but it is bound by the style that she uses. An important element of Taylor's style is her use of dialect. It makes the book more believable and serves as a constant reminder to the reader of the setting of the book. Taylor writes in the first person, with Cassie Logan as the narrator. Taylor's speaking through the words of a ten year old gives the book more weight. If the story was told through Mama or Papa, who already understood the potency of racism and racial injustice, it would not have had such an effect on the reader as witnessing first-hand the loss of Cassie's innocence regarding racial injustice. I would have liked if this book was told from an omniscient perspective as well. It would have been interesting to know what Mama felt after she was fired or what TJ was thinking when his friends rejected him and at the end, when he was in such danger. Perhaps it is more powerful that we are left on our own to think of it. Taylor does not spoon feed readers, but uses this narrative to challenge them to think and reflect on historic racism and how that influences our lives and decisions today. She uses this narrative as a charge to readers to recognize and fight any injustice.