

Chapter One

Standards Focus: Exposition—Setting the Story in Motion

When you first begin reading a book, you enter a new world. You might not be familiar with the history, setting, or characters of the story. Or, while you read, you might feel lost or confused until you learn enough about the story world to feel comfortable.

Good readers know that authors will help them navigate the new world of a novel. Authors do this by creating an element of the plot called the *exposition*. This is the background story, history, or character information the reader needs to know in order to understand the world of the novel.

In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Chapter 1 contains exposition that helps the reader learn about the Logan family and their life. But, instead of beginning the story with a long family history, Mildred D. Taylor starts the story “in medias res,” which means “in the middle of things.” The novel begins with the children walking to school, and right away, there is a conflict. By starting the story this way, the author draws the reader into the story, and then weaves the exposition around the actions of the first chapter.

The basic elements of a plot include:
 exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Once you have finished reading Chapter 1, look back at the chapter for exposition that helps explain the world of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* to the reader.

Directions: Complete the graphic organizer on the next page by writing some background information or explanation given in Chapter 1. To do this, you may have to reread or scan the text of Chapter 1. This important background information given in Chapter 1 will actually help you understand the events that occur later in the novel. Write two or three ideas or sentences for each topic. The first one has been started for you.

**Harlan
Granger's
Land**

- Borders the Logan's land
- Farmed by sharecroppers

- _____
- _____

Name _____ Period _____

**The Wallace
Store**

- _____
- _____
- _____

**The School
Bus**

- _____
- _____
- _____

**Great Faith
Elementary
and
Secondary
School**

- _____
- _____
- _____

**The
Schoolbooks**

- _____
- _____
- _____