Quick summary: The book is set on a Virginia plantation in 1862. Eleven-year-old Summer and her older brother Rosco live with their mother on the Parnell Plantation as talk of President Lincoln’s coming proclamation to free slaves reaches the community. Each of the main characters harbors a "silent thunder" or secret passion that creates family tensions. Surely this book belongs with study of the Civil War. The characters are well developed, and historical information is skillfully interwoven into the fiction. After the notion of "silent thunder" is introduced (about a third of the way into the book), learners may want to select a character (or two) and keep track of evidence of the character pursuing his/her desires. Issues related to family may also provide a focus for discussion or writing, as may differences in perspective between the adults and the children or between the families of Kit (slave mother) and Clair (plantation owner’s wife).

Possible reading assignments: (8days)

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<th>Summary</th>
<th>Difficult vocabulary</th>
<th>Purpose for reading/Comp. Strategy</th>
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<td>1:p 3-23 Ch.1-3</td>
<td>The slave children get to visit the master in his study on their birthdays. Rosco is the personal slave to Lowell, who is the master's son. Rosco stole a book from Lowell and taught himself how to read. He gave a book to Summer for her birthday, but she must keep it hidden. Rosco hates being a slave and wants to fight in the war for freedom, but his mom doesn't know. Momma helps Lowell get over his wheezing attacks.</td>
<td>mahogany plantation menace</td>
<td>Foreshadowing-p.13 &quot;Keep it hid away&quot;, do you think she will? Will that be our problem I the story?</td>
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<td>p.24-55 Ch.4-7</td>
<td>Roscoe sees an article in the newspapers that blacks can enlist in Union Army. Rosco overhears Mr. Parnell talking to the doctor and saying he's upset his son can't even fight. He thinks it's not right that blacks can enlist. Rosco teaches Summer letters and he starts with the &quot;p&quot; that has been burned into their skin for &quot;Parnell.&quot; Rosco tells us a story about Clem, a slave who once tried to run away, but was found. He knows how to enlist...Thea finds out Summer knows her letters and said that's a &quot;silent thunder&quot; coming, because you want to share it, but you can't.</td>
<td>reputation nigra Union Army</td>
<td>How does Mr. Parnell feel about his son's sickness? (He's upset he can't fight like a normal man).</td>
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<td>p.56-78 Ch.8-11</td>
<td>Mr. Parnell suffered from a stroke at church and they say he will slowly decline. Mama caught Summer with a book and got mad once again. They don't know who their father is.</td>
<td>quarters (living spaces) -p.62 agitation-p.68 Emancipation Proclamation-p. 70</td>
<td>Why did Roscoe give Summer a doll? (So she can tell the doll everything she has learned, so she won't blurt it out.) Questions-Write down all of the questions you have.</td>
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<td>Page</td>
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| 81-111 | 12-16 | Mama has taken control since Parnell's sick. Missy's brother from Louisiana is coming around Christmastime to take over and he's a harsh master, so Clem and Rosco begin working on a plan to join the Union Army. Roscoe teaches Lowell to sing. Roscoe finds out from Clem that Doc. Bates (Mr. Parnell's doctor) is an abolitionist and might be able to help them escape!  
Predict-Do you think Roscoe will ever join the Union Army?  
Look for who is coming to take over the plantation? |
| 112-135 | 17-19 | Momma catches Roscoe teaching Summer and gets so mad she throws a walnut into the fire. Lowell is encouraged to recite his poem in front of his dad and although he's scared, Ms. McKracken, his tutor, encourages him. Thea talks to Summer in riddles and encourages her to talk to mama.  
connections-Have you ever not seen eye to eye with your mom/dad like Summer? P.113  
p.114-Language "winter pokin' it's icy fingers around the corner." IMAGERY  
How would you feel if you were Summer at this point in the story? |
| 136-154 | 20-21 | The south just won Fredericksburg and Clem and Roscoe sneak down the road where there's a vigil of mourners (including Rose McKracken). Roscoe feels bad thinking of leaving. Summer finds mom with her book and discovers Mama was almost taught to read my Gideon, the master, and she finds out that Gideon is her and Roscoe's real father! Roscoe probably figured it out, but didn't say anything.  
Procession-p.141 "in a family way"-p.149 cotillion-toast-(with drinks at the party)  
Look for the high point of this chapter.  
Look for what Summer finds Mama doing. |
| 157-188 | 22-25 | Doc. Bates came to visit Gideon and brought L'Union, a negro paper for Roscoe, pretty much encouraging him to flee. Thomas Farnsworth comes and is "secesh to the bone." He gathered all boy slaves and beat Clem. Thea, mama and Summer were rented by Dr. Bates for the cotillion party. Dr. Bates came very late to the party and toasted that all people were equal…people were not happy. Clem and Roscoe are gone when they return home.  
anteroom (front room)-p.157  
bough (wreath) - p.157  
pleurisy (sickness)-p.159  
hors de oeuvres (appetizers)-p.128  
Why didn't anyone toast to Dr. Bates? Because he said something about freeing slaves.  
What does serendipity mean?  
Infer-who do you think gave Summer the doll?  
Why do you think Doc. Bates was so late to his own party? |
| 186-216 | 26-end | Roscoe and Clem meet Dr. Bates who takes them to the river, before he has to get back to the party. Thea says they're probably safe. The slaves are hearing more about the Emancipation Proclamation and Mama tells Missy Claire that if it passes, she'll go where freedom "suits her best"-p.202 Roscoe and Clem get to Talley Pembroes house and cut firewood. She tells them of how to escape. (Underground Railroad). Clem and Roscoe reach the North and the Emancipation Proclamation is hoax-p.200  
What sign do the boys look for on the Underground Railroad? (broom on the door)  
How does Mama feel about Roscoe leaving? Why do you think so?  
Why is p.202 so big for Mama? (she speaks to Missy and says she is not truly free |
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<th>passed...FREEDOM!</th>
<th>and will decided where she can and will be free if the Emancipation Proclamation passes. She's caught “the silent thunder.”</th>
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<td>Epilogue-The author has roots traced back to slavery. Used sources to get a realistic story.</td>
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End of book response activities:
Write a newspaper article for Harper's Weekly.