

Toys R Us:

The End of an Era

If you spent your childhood anywhere from the United States to France to Spain to Hong Kong, it is likely that you remember at least one visit to Toys R Us, the massive kid's toy chain store with its bright and bold sign. You may remember running up and down the aisles, looking at all the exciting offerings from dolls to bikes to Legos.

Toys R Us opened its doors in the 1950s. By the 1990s, it was the biggest toy seller in the United States. Because the store focused on just one type of product -- toys-- it was able to quickly become the most popular destination. In fact, many smaller toy shops went out of business because they could not compete with the huge selection and low prices of Toys R Us.

But from now on, children around the world will be purchasing their toys elsewhere. Toys R Us has officially closed all of its U.S. stores. It is out of business.

Money, Money, Money

The closing of Toys R Us is newsworthy for a few different reasons. This shutdown will have a big economic **impact**. It also shows us an example of how American shopping trends are changing.

Toys R Us closed because it had a lot of

debt. This means that the store had borrowed money and was having trouble paying it back. They owed 5 billion dollars. This is because the store was struggling financially.

One reason Toys R Us struggled was because of larger companies like Amazon and Walmart. In recent years, many customers stopped shopping at Toys R Us because they were able to find cheaper prices and free shipping online. In fact, the number of toy sales made online has doubled in the past five years.

Because Toys R Us owed so much money, they were not able to spend money on improvements to their stores. They were not able to create a better online shipping system that could compete with Amazon, pay their workers better wages, or update their stores.



Oh, Baby!

When Toys R Us announced their decision to close their U.S. stores, they talked about competition with Amazon and Walmart. However, they also talked about the declining birth rate in the United States. They explained that their products are made for babies and small children, and in recent years fewer babies are being born in many countries around the world.

For the past decade, birth rates have been dropping. Some think this may be a result of an event called the **Great Recession** that occurred in 2008. The Great Recession was a time of economic struggle and high unemployment in the United States and around the world. Many people lost their jobs, their homes, and their retirement savings. This event may have made people become more cautious about having children.

Birth rates have dropped much more for families in their 20s than families in their 30s.

This suggests that people are also waiting until a later age to have children. This may be a result of changing gender roles-- more women are choosing to focus on building their careers before starting a family.

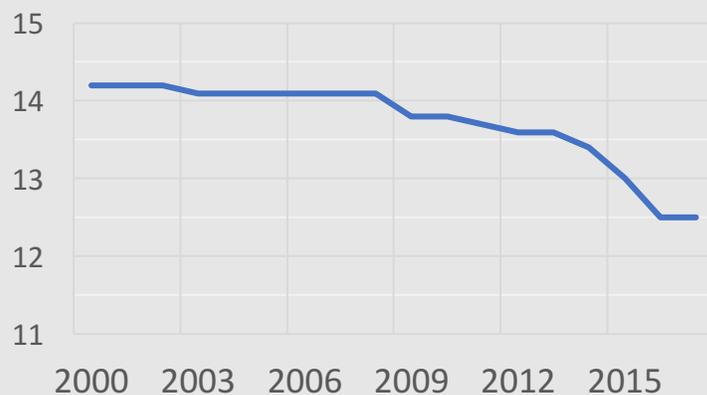
If birth rates continue to drop, there will be economic impacts far beyond the closure of one big toy store. Many companies will have to change their approach to meet the needs of an older population.

Regardless of the reasons for closing, the closure of Toys R Us will have a big impact



U.S. Birth Rates

(births/1,000 population)



Birth rates in the U.S. have been declining since 2008.

Source: CIA World Factbook

on families. The store employed 60,000 people worldwide, and 30,000 just in the United States. All these workers will need to find new jobs. The more people without jobs, the more competition there is for the jobs that do exist. Also, when people don't have jobs they are less likely to buy new things for themselves. This hurts the economy, or the

money system, of their country because now other stores are making less money.

Play On!

On its website, Toys R Us posted this message to its customers:

Thanks to each of you who shared your amazing journey to (and through) parenthood with us, and to every grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, and sister who's built a couch-cushion rocket ship, made up a hero adventure, or invented something goeey. Promise us just this one thing: Don't ever grow up. Play on!!

Comprehension Quiz

Choose the best answer.

1. Where did Toys R Us have stores?
 - a. a small city in New York
 - b. all across the world
 - c. in three U.S. states
 - d. in France only
2. What kind of company is Toys R Us?
 - a. a furniture company
 - b. an outdoor supply company
 - c. a media company
 - d. a toy store company
3. Why weren't other similar companies able to compete with Toys R Us?
 - a. Because Toys R Us had a large selection and low prices.
 - b. Because they were the only store that sold dolls.
 - c. Because they had a small selection but low prices.
 - d. Because Toys R Us could charge customers higher prices.
4. How did the company struggle?
 - a. low stock
 - b. poor inventory habits
 - c. financial problems
 - d. logistical problems
5. Which factor made the company struggle?
 - a. slow shipping
 - b. cheap online prices from other retailers
 - c. terrible customer service
 - d. not enough employees
6. The article gives the names of two retailers that were able to compete well against Toys R Us. Who are those retailers?
 - a. Target and Zappos
 - b. Amazon and Walmart
 - c. Macy's and JC Penney's
 - d. Dillard's and Sears
7. Because Toys R Us was in debt, what were they unable to do?
 - a. improve their stores
 - b. close their stores
 - c. fire employees
 - d. help customers
8. What event in history is credited for a drop in birth rates?
 - a. The Great Depression
 - b. The Baby Boomers
 - c. The Iraq War
 - d. The Great Recession



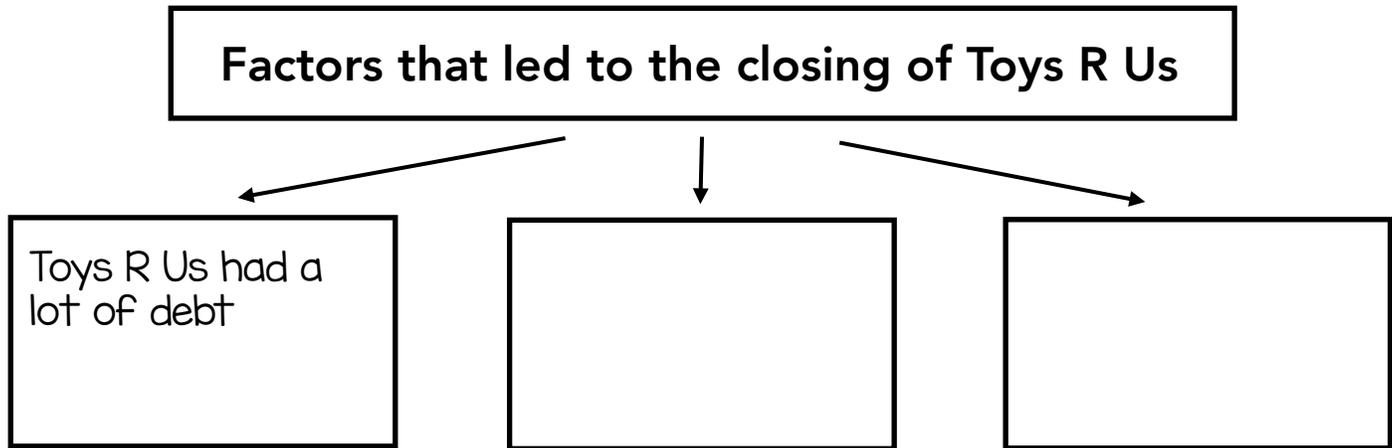
Main Idea & Details

Use the article to answer the questions and complete the graphic organizers.

1. What was the **main idea** of the entire article? Write it in the box below.
2. What are the names of the subheadings in the article? Write them on the lines provided.
3. What is the first subsection mostly about? Write it in the space provided.
4. What is the second subsection mostly about? Write it in the space provided.

Toys R Us: The End of an Era	
(1)	
(2a) _____	(2b) _____
(3)	(4)

5. According to the article, what factors led Toys R Us to close their doors?

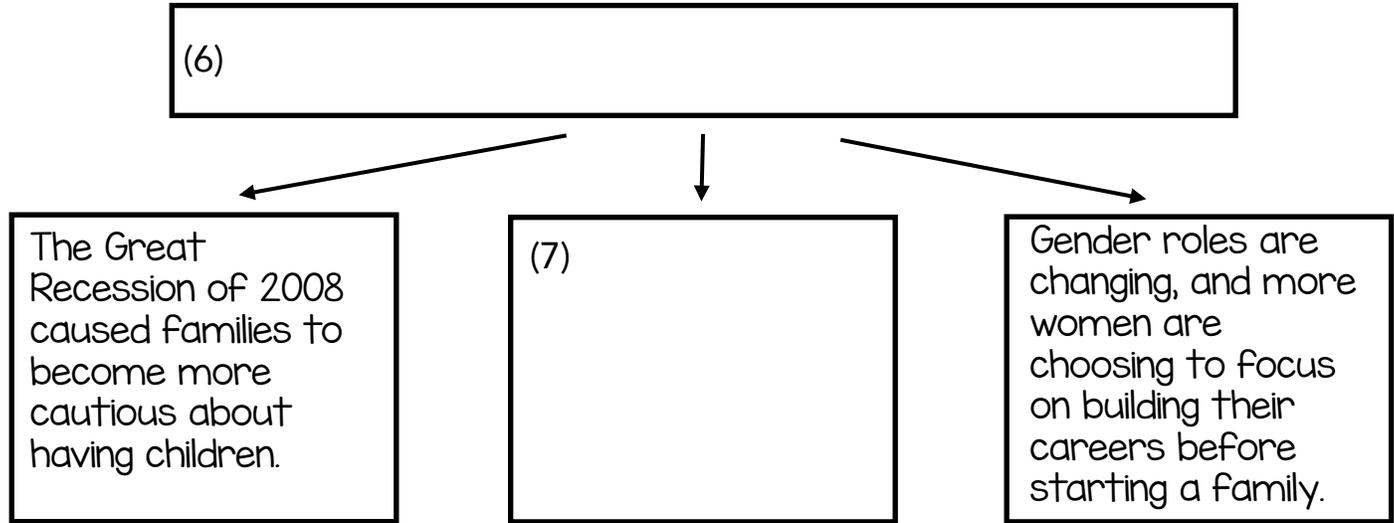


6. Look at the graph on the second page of the article. Which statement from the article does the graph support? Circle your answer.

If birth rates continue to drop, there will be economic impacts far beyond the closure of one store.

For the past decade, birth rates have been dropping.

- In the graphic organizer below, two details are provided. Think about the idea that these two details support and write it in the space provided.
- Now, find one more detail that supports this idea.



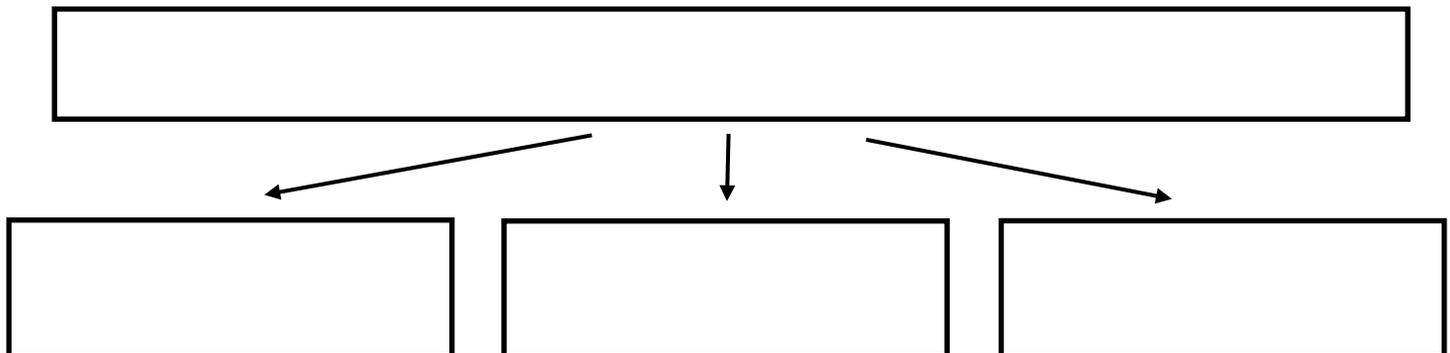
Re-read this paragraph from the article.

Because toys R Us owed so much money, they were not able to spend money on improvements to their stores. They were not able to create a better online shipping system that could compete with Amazon, pay their workers better wages, or update their stores.

- What is the main idea of this paragraph?

- List three details from the paragraph that support this idea.

- Now, fill in the graphic organizer below with your answers from questions 8 and 9 above.



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Novel Work Packet

Characterization

For each of the following characters listed, give a direct quote from the novel that captures that character's true essence/personality. Note the page number of the quote. Then after each quote, write a brief explanation of that character's purpose in the novel (for some you will have to think "big picture").

Character	Quote (with page number)	Explanation
Cassie Logan		
Stacey Logan		
Christopher-John Logan		
Little Man Logan		
Big Ma		
Ma		
Papa		
Uncle Hammer		
TJ Avery		
Jeremy Simms		
Lillian Jean Simms		
Mr. Morrison		

Reflection Journal

Writing Prompt #1 (After Chapter 1)

At the beginning of the chapter, what are two ways that Cassie's and Little Man's attitudes toward school are different? By the end of the day, what is something they agree on?

Writing Prompt #2 (After Chapter 1)

Why did Little Man stomp on his book during the first day of school? Do you think he was right or wrong to do so? Explain your opinion.

Writing Prompt #3 (After Chapter 2)

If you were Cassie, how would you feel about Mr. Morrison staying with you? Explain some of the good and bad things about Papa bringing this man to live with your family.

Writing Prompt #4 (After Chapter 2)

At the end of this chapter, the reader learns that John Henry was killed by racist white men. The author has described other times when black people like Mr. Morrison were harmed by white men and the police didn't do anything about it. How does racism affect the lives of Cassie's family and friends? Think about things her family must do, or must not do, because of racist people.

Writing Prompt #5 (After Chapter 3)

Cassie suggests running next to the bus so it will speed up before crashing into the ditch. Stacey then says they should not be seen when the bus hits the ditch. Explain why it is so important that Cassie and her brothers stay hidden and do not brag about digging the ditch.

Writing Prompt #6 (After Chapter 3)

In chapter three, we see the joy that Cassie and her brothers feel at getting revenge on the bus driver, but then the fear they experience of having the white men think they dug the ditch. How do you feel about the way that Cassie and her brothers got revenge on the Jefferson Davis bus driver? Do you think it was worth it, or should they have not dug the ditch?

Writing Prompt #7 (After Chapter 4)

Do you think Stacey was foolish or wise for telling his mother what happened at the Wallace store?

Writing Prompt #8 (After Chapter 4)

Do you think Cassie and her brothers will ever go back to the Wallace store? Why or why not? Then explain whether you think seeing Mr. Berry for an hour was an easier or harsher punishment than getting whipped.

Writing Prompt #9 (After Chapter 5)

Before chapter five, Cassie frequently asked to go to the market, but had always been told "no." Describe something you frequently ask your parents for, but always get told "no." Then explain why you keep asking for this, and what you could do to persuade your parents to say "yes."

Writing Prompt #10 (After Chapter 5)

Why do you think Big Ma made Cassie apologize to Lillian Jean?

Writing Prompt #11 (After Chapter 6)

When Mama starts talking to Cassie about her experiences with Lillian Jean and Mr. Barnett, she tells Cassie, "You had to grow up a little today." What do you think Mama meant by that?

Writing Prompt #12 (After Chapter 6)

Describe why Mama was not pleased with the way Uncle Hammer cut off the Wallaces on the bridge. What does she think could happen because of it?

Writing Prompt #13 (After Chapter 7)

Uncle Hammer does not allow T.J. to return Stacey's coat. Even though Stacey is really mad when T.J. brags about it, he does not do anything because "...a man did not blame others for his own stupidity; he learned from his mistake and became stronger for it." Describe a time in your life when you made a mistake and explain what you learned from it.

Writing Prompt #14 (After Chapter 7)

Why do you think Jeremy did not tell his father that he was going to visit Cassie's family? Then explain why you think Jeremy gave presents to Cassie's family and what will happen if Jeremy's dad finds out that he did this.

Writing Prompt #15 (After Chapter 8)

How do you feel about the way that Cassie got back at Lillian Jean? Then explain whether or not you would have done anything differently if you were Cassie.

Writing Prompt #16 (After Chapter 8)

T.J. has done lots of things to make Stacey and Cassie angry at him. Explain why T.J.'s actions in chapter eight have finally caused Stacey to say he will never be friends with T.J. again. Then predict whether you think Stacey will ever talk to T.J. again.

Writing Prompt #17 (After Chapter 9)

We learn a little about why Jeremy does not like his siblings. Do you think people should always like their family members? Explain your opinion and give examples from your life to support your opinion.

Writing Prompt #18 (After Chapter 9)

After what happens to Papa in chapter nine, do you think they should go back to shopping at the Wallace's store or continue shopping in Vicksburg? Explain your reasoning, then predict what you think will happen with both choices.

Writing Prompt #19 (After Chapter 10)

Cassie watches in awe as Mr. Morrison picks up the truck and moves it out of the way. Describe a time in your life when you saw someone do something extraordinary and what you were thinking as you watched it happen.

Writing Prompt #20 (After Chapter 10)

As Jeremy describes his tree house, he gives a few reasons why he would like to live there all the time. Describe why Jeremy might want to live in a tree house. Then explain whether or not you would like to live in a tree house in the middle of a forest with no one else around you.

Writing Prompt #21 (After Chapter 11)

If you were Stacey, would you have helped T.J. when he showed up at the house in the middle of the night? Explain why you would or would not have helped him.

Writing Prompt #22 (After Chapter 11)

Describe some lessons that T.J. learned about friendship in chapter 11.

Writing Prompt #23 (After Chapter 12)

Explain why Papa started the fire. Describe the good and bad things that happened as a result of the fire. Be sure to explain what would have probably happened if Papa had not started the fire.

Writing Prompt #24 (After Chapter 12)

Which character in this book did you respect the most? Explain several things this character did during the story and why those things caused you to respect him/her.