

As I Lay Dying Book Notes

As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner

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Author/Context

William Faulkner (1897-1962)

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born into a world heavily burdened and illustrated by America's strong Southern culture. His paternal heritage is richly decorated by heroism, giving him little need to study history through a textbook as a young boy. Since his father worked at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, his parents constantly encouraged reading outside of formal education. Faulkner lives America's history in his daily life and relationships, thereby gaining insight into the Southern mentality. He leaves high school shy of graduation to work in his grandfather's bank. Despite his lack of formal education, Faulkner reads extensively and surrounds himself with modern culture. He tries to enlist in the Air Force during World War I, but is rejected due to his small size. Faulkner then travels around the South, New York, and spends a lot of time in Europe. He returns to Mississippi, marries his high school girlfriend Estelle Oldham Franklin, and holds many odd jobs while he writes short stories and novels.

Faulkner's extensive body of work takes place almost entirely within his fictional setting of Yoknapatawpha County, a Southern world in which characters intermingle freely and human nature is explored in a realistic venue. This connection with the South yields the following novels: *The Sound and the Fury*; *As I Lay Dying*; *The Hamlet*; *Mosquitos*; *Absalom, Absalom*; and many more. Faulkner's name becomes synonymous with the South and the provincial, namely plain people. He becomes as important to Southern literature as Yeats becomes to Irish literature and is hailed as a sociologist and staunch observer of human nature. According to Faulkner scholar Cleanth Brooks, "Faulkner's treatment of history is, then, a confirmation of our disowning the past, Faulkner's famous county (obviously a rural slum) a way of reminding us how far we have progressed" (Brooks 4). Although associated with the American South, his talent and work extend far beyond the confines of Yoknapatawpha.

As I Lay Dying was scribbled on the back of a wooden wheelbarrow until its publication while Faulkner worked at an electric company shoveling coal. He came up with the title the day after the stock market crashed on Wall Street. *As I Lay Dying* is often considered Faulkner's most accomplished work. It takes a simple plot and examines human nature on a journey both metaphorically and physically. Written as a series of inner monologues and thoughts by different characters, Faulkner takes the reader on an emotionally disturbing and sometimes confusing voyage not only through Yoknapatawpha County, but through the human psyche. Faulkner's lengthy sentences and disjointed writing and paragraphs often make his stories difficult to absorb at times, creating a divide between his readers.

As I Lay Dying hails not only as a voyeuristic eye into the rural slums of Mississippi, but as a pastoral novel and staunch examination of humanity under duress. Despite its mixed reactions amongst critics and readers, Faulkner's powerful novel delivers several universal messages including the fact that "Man's capacity to spend himself in a cause is always a remarkable thing and nowhere more so than when it springs from an

unlikely soil" (Brooks, 94). Because of Faulkner's ability to express these themes in novel methods, *As I Lay Dying* hails as one of the classics of American literature.

William Faulkner died of a heart attack in 1962, soon after falling off of a horse in Oxford, where he is buried. His literature is studied in every high school and college as a staple in American history and literature and has won countless awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. There is currently a William Faulkner Prize for Literature for budding American writers.

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Plot Summary

In a rural farming town in Yoknapatapha County, the Bundren family prepares for the death of its matriarch, Addie Bundren. An ex-schoolteacher and mother of five children, Addie becomes ill and requests that she be buried with her family in the town of Jefferson. She had four children with her husband Anse, Cash, Darl, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman, and one son - Jewel - from her extra-marital affair with a local priest named Whitfield. A master carpenter, Cash persistently works on her coffin, as neighboring farmers Vernon and Cora Tull offer their help and sympathy. Feuding sons Darl and Jewel depart on a lumber job as their mother lay dying, in order to make three dollars in wages. While they are absent, Addie closes her eyes and takes her final breath.

When the boys return, Anse prepares the family for the journey to Jefferson. They place Addie in the homemade coffin and then inside the rickety wagon. It has been raining heavily, causing the land to be troublesome for traveling. When they reach their first destination, they discover that the bridge has been washed away. Tull has followed them to the bridge wanting to help, while his wife Cora prays for their souls. Convinced that they must persist, they travel across the river without Tull's mule. He eventually gives it to them. However, as they attempt to cross the ford, a loose log disturbs the wagon, injuring Cash's healing leg, almost losing the coffin in the water, and killing the mules.

Anse mortgages his farming tools and trades Jewel's horse for a new team of mules, so that the family can move forward. Enraged by Anse's chicanery, Jewel vanishes from the farm in which they are staying. As the Bundrens pass through Mottson, they pour concrete around Cash's leg in a futile attempt to set and heal it, and Dewey Dell tries to get an abortion from a local pharmacist, with no luck. When the evening comes, they stay at the Gillespie barn. Vardaman becomes fascinated with the buzzards surrounding his mother's coffin and Jewel returns to bicker with Darl. One night, Vardaman sees Darl set fire to the barn, causing its imminent destruction. Jewel dashes into the barn to save his mother's coffin and several farm animals and burns his back while doing so.

The family sets out the next day for Jefferson and arrives prepared to bury Addie. A local pharmacy worker seduces Dewey Dell as she attempts to get an abortion, while Peabody tends to Cash's now-destroyed leg. The family discovers that Darl is the man responsible for setting fire to the Gillespie barn and realizes that Gillespie plans to sue them. Instead of sending him to jail, Anse arranges for Darl to be committed to a mental asylum. Darl laughs hysterically on the train to Jackson, his new home.

Anse visits a local house to borrow spades to bury his dead wife, and consequently spends time with another woman. After they bury Addie, Anse returns the spades and does not come back to the wagon until the following morning. When he returns, he is clean-shaven, has a mouthful of new teeth, a gramophone, and a new wife.

Major Characters

Addie Bundren: Addie Bundren, the matriarch of the Bundren family dies at the beginning of the novel, sparking the journey to Jefferson. She wishes to be buried with her family in the city and therefore causes the week and a half journey to Jefferson. She is an unhappy woman during her life, who believes that living her life is repentance enough for her sins. She bears four children from Anse (Cash, Darl, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman), and one from her extra-marital affair with Whitfield (Jewel). Her corpse is carried throughout the counties, surviving fires, floods, and a horrific emission of odor, until she is laid to rest in the final destination of her wishes.

Anse Bundren: Anse Bundren, the patriarch of the Bundren family, is a poor, low class farmer, who simply wants to honor his wife's last wish and get himself a new set of teeth. He has been toothless for fifteen years and cannot eat like a normal human being. He is careless and does not think before he acts. He forces the family onward to Jefferson, through flooding and outlandish circumstances, sending Darl away upon discovery of the fire's source, trading Jewel's horse for the team of mules, and stealing Dewey Dell's ten dollars from Lave. He returns from town at the conclusion of the novel with a new set of teeth, a gramophone, and a new wife.

Cash : Cash is the oldest son and a passive, kind person. A master carpenter, he consistently works on Addie's coffin throughout the first portion of the novel. As the family journeys closer to Jefferson, his leg breaks and he becomes ill. The family pours cement over it in order to set it, causing him permanent injury and the eventual loss of the leg. He never complains and always does as he is told, in order to cause as little conflict as possible.

Dewey Dell: Dewey Dell is the only daughter of Addie and Anse Bundren and has a penchant for seduction and flirtation. She is impregnated by Lave and wants to go to Jefferson to get an abortion in addition to burying her mother. Each time she enters a pharmacy, her penetrating gaze strikes the men working.

Jewel : Jewel is the illegitimate son of Addie by the priest Whitfield. A strong man, he is usually treated as part of the family. He and Darl live in competition and conflict, despite their companionship in the work field. Cash and Darl discover one night that Jewel has been working during the middle of the nights clearing a field so that he may earn enough money to buy his own horse. Anse trades Jewel's beloved horse for a team of mules to take the family to Jefferson. Jewel loves his mother dearly and follows the family on his horse throughout most of the journey. He rescues Addie's coffin and other barnyard animals from the fire in Gillespie's barn.

Vardaman: Vardaman is the youngest child and son of Anse and Addie Bundren. Addie gave birth to him, in a sense, to make up for the affair which created Jewel. He is simpleminded and has difficulty dealing with and understanding his mother's death. After she dies, he must cut up fish for dinner, consequently conditioning his mind to relate fish to his mother. For the duration of the novel, he believes his mother to be a

fish. He observes Darl setting fire to the Gillespie's barn and tells only Dewey Dell. He feels sorry for his brother Darl when he is sent to Jackson, but knows that Darl is in a better place for his type of life.

Darl: Darl is the somewhat crazy son of Anse and Addie Bundren, who is constantly in competition and conflict with Jewel. They work together and fight together. Darl speaks the most monologues in the novel and eventually goes insane. After setting fire to the Gillespie's barn, Anse pounces him in the town streets and sends him on a train to Jackson. Cora believes him to be the honorable and blessed son of Addie, instead of Jewel. He is typically unemotional at her death and has difficulty accepting his family's fate.

Minor Characters

Peabody: Peabody is the doctor closest in proximity to the Bundrens, and consequently helps during Addie's death. He is an older, overweight man who must be pulled up the mountain to the Bundrens in order to see them. He looks at Cash's leg in Jefferson and cannot believe that his family has treated him with such carelessness. He believes Anse to be a horribly unfit parent and person and tells Cash that he will no longer be able to use his leg.

Vernon Tull: Vernon Tull, simply called 'Tull' throughout most of the narrative, is a neighboring wealthier farmer to the Bundrens. They are not struggling, yet are not excessively prosperous either. Tull is constantly trying to help the Bundrens and visits them during Addie's time of illness, death, and mourning. He tries to help them in the journey and lends his mules to their cause.

Cora Tull: Cora is Vernon's wife and a devout Christian. She is constantly praying and singing to the Lord, asking for forgiveness both for her and for Addie. She does not understand Addie's belief system and wants to help her confess her sins. She cooks several cakes that are unable to be sold in town, and are therefore transferred to the hands of Dewey Dell.

Kale and Eula: Kate and Eula are the young daughters of neighboring farmers Vernon and Cora Tull.

Lafe: Lafe is Dewey Dell's lover and the man who impregnates her. He gives her ten dollars and tells her that if she goes into any pharmacy and asks to stop her problem they will help her.

Samson: Samson is a farmer who offers his barn to the Bundrens for the first night of their funeral pilgrimage. He argues with his wife, Rachel, over allowing them to stay. He ponders the complexities of womanhood and furthermore, ponders the Bundrens' choice of route to Jefferson. He is close to the town of New Hope and understands that the river must die down before the Bundrens can continue on their journey.



Quick: Quick is a local farmer who is friends with Samson. He attends Addie's funeral and informs everyone that Tull's bridge is down. Jewel buys his beloved horse from Quick, after cleaning his field during the midnight hours.

MacCallum: MacCallum is a local farmer who helps the Bundrens on their journey, as well. He travels through Mount Vernon - a much easier route - causing Samson to question the Bundren's choice of direction to Jefferson.

Gillespie: Mr. Gillespie is a hospitable farmer who puts the Bundrens up for a short time. He is shocked to see such a spectacle of a family carrying a dead corpse, and is even more stunned when he sees Cash's leg engulfed in cement without first having been greased. Darl sets fire to Gillespie's barn in the middle of the night, causing his imminent departure from the family and commitment to a mental institution.

Whitfield: Whitfield is the local priest with whom Addie has an affair years earlier. Jewel is the product of their relationship. When Whitfield learns of Addie's illness, he rushes to see Anse, so that he may be forgiven before she dies. He is too late, consequently asking the Lord for forgiveness and blessing Tull's house.

Armstid: Armstid is a kindly farmer who offers his hospitality to the Bundrens for the second and third evenings of their journey. He helps the sick Cash and offers his mules to them for their trip. They do not want to accept. Anse makes his deal with Snopes while the family stays at his house.

Lula: Lula is Armstid's wife and the hospitable hostess of the Bundrens for a short break in their journey.

Moseley: Moseley is an elderly pharmacist with a respectable business and name. He is appalled when Dewey Dell enters looking for a way to rid herself of her feminine problem - her unborn child.

MacGowan: MacGowan is the young worker in the pharmacy of Jefferson who flirts with Dewey Dell and helps her with her possible abortion. He tells her that he is a doctor and gives her turpentine in order to seduce her in the basement.

Snopes: Snopes is powerful man who makes a deal with Anse. Anse trades his equipment and Jewel's horse for a team of mules to take them to Jefferson.



Objects/Places

Yoknapatawpha: The Bundren family lives in Yoknapatawpha County, a small fictional town in Mississippi. Most of Faulkner's novels take place in this county, created from the imagination of Faulkner. It is rural, dirty, poor, and worn down, and is the source of much turmoil for many of Faulkner's characters. The majority of *As I Lay Dying* does not take place in the county; however, country life is always remembered as their soul and their home.

Jefferson: Jefferson is the town to which the Bundren family makes the pilgrimage and journey and is the capital of Yoknapatawpha County. Addie Bundren's family hails from this 'big city' and her wish is that she is buried with them within the city limits.

Coffin: The coffin in which the family places Addie Bundren is a homemade wooden box made by master carpenter and eldest son, Cash. He is persistently working on it throughout the first half of the novel and is devoted to creating an everlasting home for his mother which she will like and find comfort in. The coffin survives the wagon ride, water, drilling, and a barn fire.

Wagon: The old wagon is the home for the Bundren family on their journey from Yoknapatawpha to Jefferson. It is old, rickety, and decrepit, and miraculously survives the nine-day trip. Outsiders are stunned when they see the family pull up in such an old piece of wood and wheels.

New Hope: New Hope is one of the cities in which the Bundrens stop on their journey.

Mottson: Mottson is another town in which the Bundrens stop on their journey to Jefferson. While in Mottson, Dewey Dell visits a pharmacy, from which she is thrown out of for inquiring about an abortion and where Anse throws Darl on the ground in public for setting fire to the Gillespie barn.

Anse's teeth: Anse possesses an empty, sunken mouth devoid of teeth. He wants to get to Jefferson desperately so that he can buy himself false teeth. He eventually gets his wish at the conclusion of the novel.

Cora's cakes: Cora Tull bakes cakes at the beginning of the novel for a society event that is cancelled. She does not mind, for she has not lost money in the order. She brings the cakes to the Bundren's house when Addie passes away. Dewey Dell carries them throughout their journey to Jefferson.

Jewel's horse: Jewel is extremely possessive and passionate about his horse. He had spent his nights cleaning up a field in order to buy it with his own money. Anse takes the horse and trades it for a team of mules to bring the caravan to Jefferson.

Fish: Vardaman catches a fish on the day his mother dies and cuts it up and brings it inside to be cooked. However, because the blood of the fish is smeared all over him on

the same day Addie passes away, he associates fish with his mother and believes her to be a fish for the remainder of the novel.

Quotes

Quote 1: "Riches is nothing in the face of the Lord, for He can see into the heart." Cora, p. 7

Quote 2: "The quilt is drawn up to her chin, hot as it is, with only her two hands and her face outside. She is propped on the pillow, with her head raised so she can see out the window, and we can hear him every time he takes up the adze or the saw. If we were deaf we could almost watch her face and hear him, see him. Her face is wasted away so that the bones draw just under the skin in white lines. Her eyes are like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets of iron candlesticks. But the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her." Cora, p. 8

Quote 3: "I know her. Wagon or no wagon, she wouldn't wait. Then she'd be upset, and I wouldn't upset her for the living world. With that family burying-ground in Jefferson and them of her blood waiting for her there, she'll be impatient. I promised my word me and the boys would get her there quick as mules could walk it, so she could rest quiet." Darl, p. 18

Quote 4: "I have heard men cuss their luck, and right, for they were sinful men. But I do not say it's a curse on me, because I have done no wrong to be cussed by. I am not religious, I reckon. But peace is my heart: I know it is. I have done things but neither better nor worse than them that pretend otherlike, and I know that Old Marster will care for me as for ere a sparrow that falls. But it seems hard that a man in his need could be so flouted by a road." Anse, p. 37

Quote 5: "I knew that nobody but a luckless man could ever need a doctor in the face of a cyclone." Peabody, p. 40-41

Quote 6: "It's because I'm alone. If I could just feel it, it would be different, because I would not be alone. But if I were not alone, everybody would know it. And he could do so much for me, and then I would not be alone. Then I could be all right alone." Dewey Dell, p. 56-57

Quote 7: "I reckon if there's ere a man or woman anywhere that He could turn it all over to and go away with His mind at rest, it would be Cora. And I reckon she would make a few changes, no matter how He was running it. And I reckon they would be for man's good. Leastways, we would have to like them. Leastways, we might as well go on and make like we did." Tull, p. 70

Quote 8: "The wagon moves; the mules' ears begin to bob. Behind us, above the house, motionless in tall and soaring circles, they diminish and disappear." Darl, p. 98

Quote 9: "[Vernon] watches Jewel as he passes, the horse moving with a light, high kneed driving gait, three hundred yards back. We go on, with a motion so soporific, so

dreamlike as to be uninferant of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing between us and it" Darl, p. 101.

Quote 10: "I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon. It's not that I wouldn't and will not it's that it is too soon too soon too soon." Dewey Dell, p. 114

Quote 11: "She cried hard, maybe because she had to cry so quiet; maybe because she felt the same way about tears she did about deceit, hating herself for doing it, hating him because she had to. And then I knew that I knew. I knew that as plain on that day as I knew about Dewey Dell on that day." Darl, p. 129

Quote 12: "It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread an not the interval between." Darl, p. 139

Quote 13: "Because it is not us that can judge our sins or know what is sin in the Lord's eyes. She has had a hard life, but so does every woman. But you'd think from the way she talked that she knew more about sin and salvation than the Lord God Himself, than them who have strove and labored with the sin in this human world." Cora, p. 159

Quote 14: "While I waited for him in the woods, waiting for him before he saw me, I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me as dressed also in sin, he the more beautiful since the garment which he had exchanged for sin was sanctified. I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo o the dead word high in the air. Then I would lay with Anse again - I did not lie to him: I just refused, just as I refused my breast to Cash and Darl after their time was up - hearing the dark land talking the voiceless speech." Addie, p. 166-7

Quote 15: "I give that money. I thought that if I could do without eating, my sons could do without riding. God knows I did" Armstid, p. 182

Quote 16: "It had been dead eight days, Albert said. They came from some place in Yoknapatawpha County, trying to get to Jefferson with it. It must have been like a piece of rotten cheese coming into an anti-hill, in that ramshackle wagon that Albert said folks were scared would fall all to pieces before they could get it out of town, with that home-made box and another fellow with a broken leg lying on a quilt on top of it, and the father and a little boy sitting on the seat and the marshal trying to make them get out of town." Moseley, p. 193

Quote 17: "Jewel came back. He was walking. Jewel hasn't got a horse anymore. Jewel is my brother. Cash is my brother. Cash has a broken leg. We fixed Cash's leg so it doesn't hurt. Cash is my brother. Jewel is my brother too, but he hasn't got a broken leg." Vardaman, p. 200

Quote 18: "When I went to find where they stay at night, I saw something that Dewey Dell says I mustn't never tell nobody." Vardaman, p. 215

Quote 19: "Life was created in the valleys. It blew up into the hills on the old terrors, the old lusts, the old despairs. That's why you must walk up the hills so you can ride down." Darl, p. 217

Quote 20: "Sometimes I aint so sho who's got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he aint. Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It's like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it." Cash, p. 223

Quote 21: "She looked pretty good. One of them black eyed ones that look like she'd as soon put a knife in you as not if you two-timed her. She looked pretty good." MacGowan, p. 232

Quote 22: "Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes." Darl, p. 244

Quote 23: "'It's Cash and Jewel and Vardaman and Dewey Dell,' pa says, kind of hangdog and proud too, with his teeth and all, even if he wouldn't look at us. 'Meet Mrs Bundren,' he says." Cash, p. 250

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion

Family Devotion 1: The novel begins as Addie Bundren's sons work for her dying wishes. Her eldest son, Cash, is perpetually working on her coffin, sawing outside for everyone to see. All of their actions seem to be with Addie's desires in mind.

Family Devotion 2: Anse does not want to upset his dying wife and plans to honor her dying wishes in any way possible. Jewel and Darl do leave on a job, but plan to return the following evening so that they can be with their mother before she passes away.

Family Devotion 3: Anse is bitter and frustrated over his wife's current ill condition and is concerned over his sons' actions in terms of their mother. He blames the roads for Addie's illness. He knows that they are difficult boys, but praises Addie simultaneously for doing the best job she could in raising them.

Family Devotion 4: The Bundren family says their final goodbyes to their beloved mother. Addie cries out for Jewel, only to discover that her so-called devoted son is not present. Cash comes to her bedside and Dewey Dell drapes her body over her dying mother to show the love and necessity she feels for her.

Family Devotion 5: The family works hard in order to set up everything perfectly for their mother's final wish. Cash has made a personalized coffin that Addie can lie in properly in her wedding dress, and prepares the wagon especially for the journey.

Family Devotion 6: Anse explains his promise to Addie to his host, Samson. Most outsiders do not understand the Bundren persistence in traveling to Jefferson in such terrible weather. Anse, however, cares nothing about others' opinions and vows to honor his late wife's last wish despite all obstacles.

Family Devotion 7: Dewey Dell is confused about her feelings towards the men in her family. She wishes that she could have more time with her mother, but understands that she cannot because her mother has passed away. Despite her uneasy feelings, she remains a part of the Bundren family and does not care to desert them.

Family Devotion 8: When Addie's body and coffin fall out of the wagon and into the river, Jewel jumps in to find her. Vardaman screams after him to find his beloved mother. Addie's sons stop at nothing to save her corpse and continue onward to honor her last wishes.

Family Devotion 9: Addie's idea of family devotion seems different than her children's. While they love her and journey far to honor her dying wishes, she has difficulty appreciating their life. She is unhappy after giving birth and has more children to make up for past mistakes.

Family Devotion 10: Jewel rushes into a burning barn in order to save his beloved mother's corpse from incineration. He risks his life so that Addie can have her last wish, even in death. This heroic feat results in deep burns on his back.

Family Devotion 11: As soon as Anse honors Addie's final wish, he loses his devotion to the former wife and finds a new one. In less than a fortnight, the family he has known from the past is changed without hesitation.

Topic Tracking: Poverty

Poverty 1: Anse and Addie Bundren live in a poor section of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. It is a fictional setting in which Faulkner sets most of his stories. Because of their poverty, they are forced to live life in a more difficult manner than those who have more money for the better things in life.

Poverty 2: Although the Tulls are not as poor as the Bundrens, they also feel the financial strain of life. Kate is frustrated when the wealthy townswomen no longer need Cora's cakes. Cora tells her that money is unimportant in the eyes of the Lord.

Poverty 3: Vernon Tull offers Anse a lumber job for which he and his sons can earn a total of three dollars. Because money is so scarce, Jewel and Darl decide to take the job so that they can make the money, and leave home despite their mother's illness.

Poverty 4: Peabody is a doctor who comes from greater wealth than the Bundrens and thinks them lower class. He enters the poor family to help Addie as she dies. The stark distinction between class and money is obvious as Peabody speaks with Anse.

Poverty 5: Because of Anse's promise to Addie in conjunction with their poverty, the Bundrens travel in a rickety wooden wagon to Jefferson County. They do not have enough money to travel any other way, and have also promised their mother to bury her with her family.

Poverty 6: Anse complains of the differences between city and country folk. One of the distinctions is money and he wishes that all people would get the same profits and be treated equally. He has no teeth and has not had enough money or means to buy a new set. He hopes to get some in Jefferson.

Poverty 7: Jewel spends his night hours doing hard manual labor, cleaning a field, in order to purchase his own horse. Since money is scarce in the County and among the Bundrens, Jewel tells nobody about his nocturnal activities, until he brings home the new stag. He tells Anse that he will take care of it without a cent of monetary aid from him.

Poverty 8: Anse trades Jewel's horse in for a new team of mules to help the family get to Jefferson. He also mortgages some of his farming equipment, for he does not have enough money on his own to get the mules. Armstid feels badly for the Bundrens, for they are poorer than he and in need of help. He wants to lend them his mules for their journey.

Poverty 9: Dewey Dell walks into the pharmacy in Mottson with her mere ten dollars from Lave seeking an abortion. The pharmacist is appalled by her request and throws her out, telling her that the ten dollars should be used to get married. Dewey Dell does not understand and sees the financial means necessary for her predicament and furthermore does not understand the image of bringing her abortion into a wealthier city.

To Moseley the pharmacist, she looks like a poor country girl with only ten dollars begging for an abortion. Moseley also hears the story about the Bundrens describing them as a poor family in a dilapidated wagon from the country.

Poverty 10: Peabody is shocked to learn of the poor method in which the Bundren family takes care of Cash. Their personal methods of fixing his broken leg will now leave him permanently disabled. They did not have the money and time to help Cash during his time of need, and therefore continued onward. Cash never complains about his pain and now accepts his station in life as a poor cripple.

Poverty 11: Anse questions Dewey Dell on the source of her ten dollars. She cannot tell him that it comes from Lavee for an abortion. Because he has no money and is desperate for new teeth and a new life, he takes her money and runs.

Poverty 12: Anse returns from town with new teeth, a gramophone, a new clean-shaven look, and a new wife. It seems that he has used whatever money he has to bring his appearance out of the poverty level.

Topic Tracking: Religion

Religion 1: Cora Tull bakes cakes and speaks of the Lord with her daughter Kate. She reminds Kate that money is unimportant in the eyes of God. God only cares about people's hearts and emotions.

Religion 2: Cora Tull relies on her strong faith in God to direct her during this hard time. She wants to help her neighbor, Addie, and will do whatever she can to aid the family in her dying days. She witnesses, what she believes to be, Darl's deep concern for his mother and Jewel's supposed cold-heartedness. This initial observation taints her opinion of the family for the remainder of the novel.

Religion 3: After Addie dies, Tull sees his pious wife helping the Bundren family. He thinks that if anybody were to replace the Lord, Cora would be the best person for the job. She might make a few changes, but they would be changes that would be good for all mankind.

Religion 4: Whitfield is the local minister with whom Addie had an affair years earlier. The relationship resulted in Jewel. He arrives at the Bundren home to direct the funeral according to Christian faith. Cora continues to sing to the Lord for Addie's soul to rest in heaven.

Religion 5: When the men are finally seated in the wagon, Cash prays to the Lord that he made his mother's coffin well. Despite their lack of religious observance, the Bundrens still pray to God in their times of need.

Religion 6: As Dewey Dell looks around at her family and the land, she decides that she believes in God. Despite her unbridled lust and unborn child with Lame, she thinks that she may believe in a higher power.

Religion 7: When Tull finally offers his mules to Anse, he gives him his word of honor. Anse tells Tull that Addie will bless him in heaven for being so kind a man and so good a Christian.

Religion 8: Cora recalls a conversation she had with Addie about sinning. Addie believes her daily life to be absolution of sin, while Cora insists upon religious observance. They disagree on the religious methods in which they live their lives. However, Cora continues to pray for Addie and believes her only sin is loving Jewel over Darl.

Religion 9: Cora tries to convince Addie to confess her sins so that she can go to heaven after death. Instead of submitting to religious observance, Addie submits to the sin of adultery with a man of the cloth - Whitfield the priest.

Religion 10: Whitfield wants to see Anse before Addie dies so that he can be forgiven for his sins. He never gets to see Addie before her death and consequently blesses

Tull's house as a seeming replacement. His religious devotion seems to be interchangeable.

Part One: Pages 3-79

Darl

Addie and Anse Bundren live in a small, rural farming town in Yoknapatawpha County, a poor section in Mississippi with their children Cash, Darl, Dewey Dell, Vardaman, and Addie's son Jewel from another affair. Darl walks fifteen feet ahead of his illegitimate brother, Jewel, who stands a full head taller, up a path, through the cotton fields, to their dilapidated house. Tull, their neighboring farmer, is manning the wagon, while Cash is sawing wood. He is making a sturdy, fine coffin for their mother, Addie Bundren, to lie in when Darl continues forward inside the house.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 1

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 1

Cora

Cora busies herself frantically baking a cake with saved eggs, her mind and body moving quickly for townswoman Miss Lawington's order. However, when the cakes are no longer necessary, her daughter Kate rants about the wealthy townspeople not paying for their orders. "Riches is nothing in the face of the Lord, for He can see into the heart" Cora, p. 7. Kate tells Cora she won't even make two dollars a cake if she tries to sell them at Saturday's bazaar. Cora responds by saying it cost her nothing to make the cakes in the first place.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 2

Topic Tracking: Religion 1

When Cora and her two daughters, Eula and Kate, see Addie Bundren lying by the window watching Cash, they remember the cakes she used to make.

"The quilt is drawn up to her chin, hot as it is, with only her two hands and her face outside. She is propped on the pillow, with her head raised so she can see out the window, and we can hear him every time he takes up the adze or the saw. If we were deaf we could almost watch her face and hear him, see him. Her face is wasted away so that the bones draw just under the skin in white lines. Her eyes are like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets of iron candlesticks. But the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her." Cora, p. 8

Darl

Darl watches Anse and their wealthier farming neighbor Vernon Tull sitting on the back porch chewing tobacco. As Anse looks for Jewel, Darl ponders the wonders of a fresh bucket of water. Jewel tries to calm his horse by feeding and wrestling with it. It kicks at Jewel, hitting the wall instead, and Jewel responds by kicking the horse in the stomach and ordering him to eat.

Jewel

Jewel bitterly wishes that Cash would not carve his wood so overtly in public for everyone to witness. He believes Cash does it only so that Addie will praise him and thank him for being so worthy a son. Angrily, he dreams of a world in which only he and his mother live, without the presence of the others. Jewel is sick of the redundant sound of the adze and saw piercing through the household and community.

Darl

Anse and Vernon discuss a possible lumber job for Darl. However, due to the possibility of rain, they don't initially leave with the horses. Anse continues to chew tobacco despite his fallen cheeks and lack of teeth, and persistently reprimands Darl for not caring enough about his family. Darl bickers with Jewel over their mother's desires; however, Anse reminds them that it is her wish to be buried in Jefferson with her family and to lie in a box made by her kin, carried in her own wagon. Although the wagon and coffin are not yet ready, rain is imminent. Darl and Jewel leave with the horses on the job for Vernon and plan to return the following evening. They will hurry to come home in time to appease their mother's dying wish.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 3

"I know her. Wagon or no wagon, she wouldn't wait. Then she'd be upset, and I wouldn't upset her for the living world. With that family burying-ground in Jefferson and them of her blood waiting for her there, she'll be impatient. I promised my word me and the boys would get her there quick as mules could walk it, so she could rest quiet." Darl, p. 18

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 2

Cora

Cora overlooks Darl staring at his mother and expresses her abrasive opinions on the Bundren family. Cora gossips over what she believes to be the truth about Addie's dying wishes and cannot believe that the supposedly cruel Jewel would want to leave his dying mother for a mere three dollar job. She praises Darl for being a good-natured boy and reminds herself that she is a good upstanding woman who comes to visit her dying friend each week. She cannot believe that Addie's family is carting her off to be buried before she has even died. Tull tries to explain the truth to Cora about Addie's true wishes. Yet, Cora's mind is fully established with the false notions that a good natured Darl truly cares for his dying mother, and his horrible brother Jewel forced them to leave home on a job while their mother lay dying. Cora falls back on her faith in God to cement her strong desire to help Addie, who in her opinion is desperately lonely. Dewey Dell asks Darl what is troubling him as he watches his dear mother lying almost dead.

Topic Tracking: Religion 2

Dewey Dell



Dewey Dell recalls the time she went harvesting with Lafe. They were together for the first time that day and were later discovered by Darl. She pictures that day as she catches Darl on his way out with Jewel. Realizing that their mother is going to die, she questions how he is going to tell their father about the future loneliness.

Tull

Vernon Tull attempts to appease Anse, for he is still unsure about taking the job. While they talk, Vardaman comes to the house to display a large fish he caught that day and brought home. Anse tells him to wash it before he brings it inside to show to his beloved mother. Soon, Vernon's wife Cora prepares for the evening as they discuss the Bundren's unfortunate predicament with their children, Kate and Eula. They continue to offer their help in any way possible.

Anse

Anse is frustrated with the road, the rain, and his boys. He is perplexed on how he plans to move Addie on the road in the rain to Jefferson, and at the same time wants to honor her. He is convinced that roads are not meant for living, but for traveling, and rambles on miserably against the road on which they live, blaming it for Addie's illness. He vents about Cash constantly sawing away on the coffin and Darl for making him pay for the road, trip, and burial. As Anse tends to his tired wife, Peabody enters, offering his medical assistance. After Anse orders him away, he ponders his bad luck in life:

"I have heard men cuss their luck, and right, for they were sinful men. But I do not say it's a curse on me, because I have done no wrong to be cussed by. I am not religious, I reckon. But peace is my heart: I know it is. I have done things but neither better nor worse than them that pretend otherlike, and I know that Old Marster will care for me as for ere a sparrow that falls. But it seems hard that a man in his need could be so flouted by a road." Anse, p. 37

Vardaman returns to Anse, with blood smeared all over his legs, claiming that he chopped up all the fish. Anse orders him to clean up, and then praises Addie for raising them as best she could.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 3

Darl

Darl and Jewel discuss their work on the road and Dewey-Dell's secret desire to go Jefferson for personal reasons. She has not told Anse, but needs to get rid of a baby she is carrying from her harvest with Lafe. They cannot believe that Addie is going to die.

Peabody

Peabody complains of his last minute medical request by Anse to check on Addie. He thinks Anse is low class, low on luck, and always too late. "I knew that nobody but a



luckless man could ever need a doctor in the face of a cyclone" Peabody, p. 40-41. When he arrives at the house, he must be pulled up the mountain on a rope to get to the top, because Jewel and Darl have the horse that would normally carry him up. He is seventy years old and weighs two hundred and fifty pounds.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 4

He sees Dewey-Dell fanning Addie, who he claims has been dead already for ten days. Once the mind and spirit are dead, the body is nothing. His youthful idealism has long since passed and he sees Addie as a bundle of rotten sticks beneath a quilt. She eventually cries out to Cash.

Darl

Addie asks for Jewel to come to her on her deathbed, when Anse tells her that he has left with Darl to earn three dollars on a lumber job for Tull. Her eyes are completely drained of life. She calls to Cash outside and watches his stationary impression as a carpenter. She looks at Vardaman one last time until her eyes lie still. Dewey Dell cries to her mom to stay alive, while Anse and Vardaman stand over her pale as ghosts. Anse curses his missing boys. Cash comes inside to see his mother take her last breath and then returns to his perpetual sawing outside. Dewey Dell drapes her body over her mothers while Anse soberly desires new teeth. He tells her to start cooking dinner. Although not present, Jewel and Darl sense that their mother has just passed away.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 4

Vardaman

In shock of his mother's death, Vardaman runs around the porch of the house, and through the road to where he cut the fish. All that remains is blood and 'not-fish', causing Vardaman to become nauseated and upset. He wants to cry and vomit and blame everything around him for killing his mother. Cash comes behind him and Vardaman complains about the chopped fish that Dewey Dell is about to cook.

Dewey Dell

Dewey Dell contemplates her pregnancy and relationship with Lavee, hoping that they will not be interrupted again, as they were with Darl. She feels alone, despite the living person inside of her. "It's because I'm alone. If I could just feel it, it would be different, because I would not be alone. But if I were not alone, everybody would know it. And he could do so much for me, and then I would not be alone. Then I could be all right alone" Dewey Dell, p. 56-57. She thinks that Peabody can help her as a doctor, and invites him to dinner. Cash comes into the kitchen looking for Vardaman and Dewey Dell neglects to cook the fish he has just killed. Anse pushes away the food and Dewey Dell leaves to milk the cow before it rains. While in the stalls, she finds a frightened Vardaman, crying that his mother has been killed. She shakes him, brutally asking why he is in the stalls, and tells him that he has no idea what worrying truly is. She doesn't even know if she can cry. She prepares to milk the cow, again think of how Peabody can help her.



Vardaman

Vardaman, still upset and confused by his mother's death, asks Cash if he plans to nail their mother up in the coffin like a rabbit. He remembers the fish he cut up and recalls how everyone saw the fish guts and blood on the ground. Again he thinks of his mother, in disbelief of her passing.

Tull

Because of the noise by Peabody's team, Tull realizes that Addie Bundren has died. Vardaman knocks on their door, dripping wet and speaking of fish. When Tull comes back inside, he finds Vardaman speaking with the pious Cora, over his misfortune. The three go to the Bundren house, where they place Addie in a coffin and nail it shut. He accidentally bores two holes into Addie's face through the wood. Tull thinks of his wife's good nature and overweening need to help in others' business.

"I reckon if there's ere a man or woman anywhere that He could turn it all over to and go away with His mind at rest, it would be Cora. And I reckon she would make a few changes, no matter how He was running it. And I reckon they would be for man's good. Leastways, we would have to like them. Leastways, we might as well go on and make like we did." Tull, p. 70

Topic Tracking: Religion 3

Darl

Darl and Jewel run the wagon into a ditch, forcing Darl to return home for an extra wheel. It begins to rain as Darl watches Cash complete the coffin. Cora and Tull arrive at the Bundren home and Cash sends his father away. Everyone works hard to finish the coffin, and just before dawn, it is complete. The rain has stopped and Peabody, Tull, Anse, and Cash carry the coffin inside. Jewel and Darl leave, once again, to complete their job. Darl, however, lies awake the following evening, remembering home and his family.

Cash

Cash states thirteen reasons and rules by which he makes the coffin using the bevel.

Vardaman

Vardaman says that his mother is a fish.

Part Two: Pages 80-160

Tull

The following morning, Tull brings Peabody's team to the Bundren home, where they immediately discuss the river's current high level. As Anse greets the men at the door, the women leave to go to the house. Cash prepares the final seal on Addie's coffin, and the family places her in it reverse, as to allow enough room for her wedding dress to fit properly.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 5

Whitfield, the local minister with whom Addie had an illicit affair, arrives at the house to direct her funeral. Quick and Armstid, two local farmers, think it will take too long to go to Jefferson in such a miserable state of weather and turmoil and do not understand why the Bundren family is vehemently set on such a journey. Tull reveals the loss of the bridge, washed away by the heavy rain. Cash walks into the house clean and newly dressed, and the women begin to sing for their lost friend. Cora continues to sing to the Lord, even as the men leave. She sings, even as she walks home with Tull. On their way home, they see Vardaman fishing in a slough, perpetually stunned and in a state of awe.

Topic Tracking: Religion 4

Darl

Darl tells Jewel that it is not his horse that is dead, but their mother. Jewel curses Darl as they realize that the family is ready to move Addie to Jefferson.

Cash

Cash argues that the family is trying to balance the coffin poorly. He believes it will fall unless they balance it properly. He is cut off and does not finish his thoughts and directions on the proper placement of the coffin in the wagon.

Darl

Cash, Darl, and Jewel struggle to bring the coffin down the mountain and into the wagon. Because of its heavy weight, the boys struggle. Anse tells them to be careful and take their time, but Jewel seems to be in a hurry. Jewel runs ahead, carrying the coffin alone in its front, allowing it to slip. Cash runs behind him to catch up and help. Jewel curses Darl.

Vardaman

Vardaman is still convinced that his mother is a fish. When Darl tells him that Jewel's mother is a horse, Vardaman believes that his mother must also be a horse, since Jewel



is his brother. Darl claims that he has no mother. Anse reprimands his boys for being disrespectful of himself and his wife. Dewey Dell holds Cora's cakes in a box to deliver them to town for her, on the onset of the journey.

Darl

Darl sees Jewel go into the barn, intentionally skipping out on the funeral journey to Jefferson. Dewey Dell sits in the wagon next to Vardaman and places the parcel of cake on her lap. Anse thinks it is wrong and disrespectful to stay at home, and he disapproves of Jewel's behavior. They finally leave for their destination. "The wagon moves; the mules' ears begin to bob. Behind us, above the house, motionless in tall and soaring circles, they diminish and disappear" Darl, p. 98.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 5

Anse

Anse is angry when he sees Darl sitting in the backseat of the wagon laughing mercilessly. He thinks that this type of behavior is what makes people speak pejoratively about him. He also believes Darl to be disrespectful of his mother and women for acting in such a lowly manner. Cash sits next to him and prays to the Lord to have made the coffin the best he could.

Topic Tracking: Religion 5

Darl

Darl, Anse, Cash, and Dewey Dell watch Jewel come racing on a horse behind the wagon and then past it. Tull watches on from afar. "[Vernon] watches Jewel as he passes, the horse moving with a light, high kneed driving gait, three hundred yards back. We go on, with a motion so soporific, so dreamlike as to be uninferant of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing between us and it" Darl, p. 101.

A piece of mud has landed on the coffin, of which Cash is still worried about sitting unbalanced. Jewel watches the family on his horse from afar. Cash takes one of his tools and calmly removes the mud.

Anse

Anse complains of man's struggle on land. He hopes that all men would be treated equally and make the same profits, whether townspeople or country folk. By the time they arrive at Samson's, a local farmer, another bridge had been washed away. There has never before been such a strong rain or high river. He takes comfort in the hope that as soon as they get to the city, he can get new teeth.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 6

Samson

Samson, Quick, and MacCallum see the Bundren's wagon pull up near their house and are consequently curious as to their destination on such a dark day and so recently following their mother's death. Quick, who attended Addie's funeral, tells them that Tull's bridge is also washed away. Cash says that they can make it still to the next town of New Hope, despite the obstacles. To the dismay of his wife Rachel, Samson offers his barn as shelter to the Bundrens until the morning when the river dies down. Dewey Dell stares at Samson with devilish eyes as Anse explains Addie's wish to his host. Rachel insists on serving dinner to the Bundrens and Jewel insists on paying Samson for his horse bait.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 6

Addie's body begins to smell. Rachel and Samson fight over their guests, leaving Samson to ponder the complexities of womanhood that he does not understand. The following morning, the Bundrens leave early without saying goodbye. Samson wonders if they could not have gone a different way to get to Jefferson - perhaps through Mount Vernon, like his friend MacCallum has just completed.

Dewey Dell

Dewey Dell repeatedly hopes to arrive in New Hope and wishes that she had more time with her mother.

"I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon. It's not that I wouldn't and will not it's that it is too soon too soon too soon." Dewey Dell, p. 114

Her neurotic thoughts turn to her sexual past, her desire to kill Darl, and her affair with her brother Vardaman. She is confused about her feelings and urgings and wants the three miles to pass quickly before they arrive in New Hope. She observes her family around her and thinks that she believes in God. Instead of going into New Hope, the family turns back to Tull's lane to cross the unruly river.

Topic Tracking: Religion 6

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 7

Tull

Tull observes Anse, Vardaman, and Dewey Dell staring mindlessly at the river and fallen bridge. Darl and Cash stare at him, while Jewel remains stoic and erect, with the same unchanged look as the previous day. As the men try to devise a method of crossing the river, Dewey Dell seems to seduce Tull through her gaze. Jewel breaks his silent power with an explosion at Tull, asking him to leave them alone and claiming that nobody has asked for his help. The Bundrens plan to cross the river with the hopeful use of Tull's mule. He does not allow it.

Darl

When Anse finds Jewel asleep again, Darl recalls his history of so-called narcolepsy. He would constantly fall asleep and lose weight, looking gaunt and ill. Addie worried about him and consequently gave his chore of milking the cow to Dewey Dell. One night, Cash and Darl discovered him coming home in the middle of the night, so they believed he was having an affair with a married woman. Cash follows him one night and discovers his true whereabouts with the barn's missing lantern. Soon, he brings home a healthy white horse that he bought from Quick with his own money. He had been working each night, cleaning up a field, so that he could buy this animal and feed it without an ounce of support from Anse.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 7

Anse scolds him as Vardaman gleefully begs for a ride. Dewey Dell is confused by her emotions and love for the men in her life:

"She cried hard, maybe because she had to cry so quiet; maybe because she felt the same way about tears she did about deceit, hating herself for doing it, hating him because she had to. And then I knew that I knew. I knew that as plain on that day as I knew about Dewey Dell on that day." Darl, p. 129

Tull

Tull sees the Bundren family struggle across the bridge and thinks of his mule. Remembering his wife Cora and the jars of milk, he decides to offer his mule and helps them across. Anse tells Tull that his word is sacred and that Addie will bless him in heaven.

Topic Tracking: Religion 7

Darl

Darl describes the dark current as sinister and lively. The family begins to cross the river, with Darl, Jewel, and Cash on horses in the water, and Vernon, Anse, Vardaman, and Dewey Dell in the wagon. Jewel sensitively convinces his horse to make it across. As they go farther into the water, the tide pushes them downstream. Cash realizes that Addie's coffin is not balanced. Jewel wants to get on the wagon, despite the imbalance. The four on the bridge in the wagon seem distant from the brothers in the water. Jewel does not want to abandon his horse, despite his longing to be with Addie.

"It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread and not the interval between." Darl, p. 139

They fix Addie's coffin in the wagon and continue across. Jewel has difficulty keeping his horse down the current in the river and the family struggles with the strong current,

Addie's balance, and the horses and mules. When everyone finally reaches the bank, Darl jumps out of the wagon and sees the mules roll up out of the water, with their feet extended in the air, dead.

Vardaman

Addie's body falls out of the wagon and floats away in the river. Vardaman cries after her and screams at Darl to find and catch her. His strong brother tries to fish her out from the current. Vardaman wonders where his mother is, because although he believes her to be a fish, he cannot believe her to be lost.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 8

Tull

Tull tells a singing Cora about his experience getting the Wagon over the bridge with the Bundrens. It tilts over as the rope holding the bridge seems to get thinner. The coffin tilts, as well, forcing Cash to go after it, despite his inability to swim. Jewel tries to manage his horse and the entire family falls into chaos to avoid the floating logs. Darl had jumped out of the wagon earlier, leaving Cash to man it, causing even greater problems in the water. Tull winds up knee deep in mud and water, desperately trying to help the family. Cash eventually holds onto the horse as a large shoat comes by and bumps into the rope, slanting into the water. The entire group watches the shoat cause its destruction.

Darl

Cash washes up on the shore, unconscious and injured in his previously hurt leg. He has vomited and worries about his lost tools. The men see the wagon, safe but practically destroyed across the river's shore. Vardaman and Tull hold on to the rope for support as Jewel and Tull return to the water to find Cash's saw and carpentry devices.

Cash

Cash recalls that he told everyone that the coffin wasn't on a balance and if they wanted to tote and ride on a balance, then they would have to do something different. Before he says what it is that would have prevented the wagon from capsizing, he stops.

Cora

Cora remembers a conversation she had with Addie in the past about God and sinning. A devout follower of Christ, Cora cannot understand or accept Addie's lack of religious observance. Addie claims that her daily life is an acknowledgement of her sins, while Cora disagrees by saying that only the Lord can absolve her of sin.

"Because it is not us that can judge our sins or know what is sin in the Lord's eyes. She has had a hard life, but so does every woman. But you'd think from the way she talked

that she knew more about sin and salvation than the Lord God Himself, than them who have strove and labored with the sin in this human world." Cora, p. 159

She thinks Addie's only sin is loving her bastard son Jewel and not the blessed Darl and the Lord above. Cora prays for Addie.

Topic Tracking: Religion 8

Part Three: Pages 161-250

Addie

Although she has died, Addie recalls her youth and courtship with Anse. As a young schoolteacher, she hated her job and her students, secretly craving to whip them. Her father always spoke negatively about life and marriage, and children thereupon seemed to be a hassle. When Cash was born, she learned that living was terrible and that words are no good. The word "love" means nothing more than another word, such as the word "Anse." When Darl is born, she is even more depressed and believes words and Anse to be playing a trick on her. She makes him promise that he will take her to Jefferson when she dies to be buried with her family.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 9

Cora Tull tells her that words are important and she must be forgiven for her sins. However, Addie believes her clothes and her daily life to be absolution from sin by recalling her affair with the man who gave her Jewel - Whitfield, the local priest.

"While I waited for him in the woods, waiting for him before he saw me, I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me as dressed also in sin, he the more beautiful since the garment which he had exchanged for sin was sanctified. I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo o the dead word high in the air. Then I would lay with Anse again - I did not lie to him: I just refused, just as I refused my breast to Cash and Darl after their time was up - hearing the dark land talking the voiceless speech." Addie, p. 166-7

She never hides her affair and later gives Anse Dewey Dell as a negation of Jewel. Vardaman comes along to replace Anse of a robbed child. Addie consistently remembers her father telling her that the reason for living is to get ready for staying dead. Addie lives by these words, causing the devout Cora to pray for her at every moment possible.

Topic Tracking: Religion 9

Whitfield

Whitfield is stunned to learn of Addie's illness and believes he must beg forgiveness from the man whom he betrayed by sleeping with Addie - Anse. He believes he has wrestled with Satan and feels remorse for his affair. When he learns of Tull's bridge falling down, he is thrilled because he may have the chance to speak with Anse in time for salvation.

By the time Whitfield reaches Tull's house, one of Tull's daughters tells him that Addie has already died. Whitfield is sad and tells the Lord that he has sinned, begging



forgiveness from the Almighty, since he now cannot confess to Anse. He blesses Tull's house.

Topic Tracking: Religion 10

Darl

The Bundren family arrives at Armstid's house to sleep for the evening. Cash lies over the coffin, for he is sick to his stomach and has been vomiting profusely. Dewey Dell and Mrs. Armstid take care of him while Armstid offers his home and food to the Bundrens. Anse tells him they will sleep in the barn while Darl observes Jewel tending to his horse in the barn, separate from the rest of the family.

Armstid

Armstid wants to offer his help and his mules to Anse, for he believes him to be a good Christian man. He wants to tell Anse about a better way to get to Jefferson, but Anse will not hear of it. Jewel goes into town to fetch Peabody to help Cash with his stomach and broken leg (from the previous summer), but returns alone. The next day, Jewel lends Anse his horse to go to town to see Snopes to get a team. It is the first time Jewel has ever lent his horse to another soul.

The smell from Addie's corpse spreads throughout the barn and people from all over the country wonder what Armstid may be keeping in it. Vardaman is captivated by the buzzards flying around the coffin. When people realize what is in the wagon in the barn, Lula, Armstid's wife is outraged. Armstid defends Anse and remembers that it takes a long time to make a trade with Snopes the local trader, so he could be gone for a while longer. Jewel and Darl begin to argue over taking the wagon out of the barn. Dinner is ready as Armstid looks at his mules, thinking that he will pass them on to Anse for his journey.

Anse eventually comes riding back to Armstid's with a look of success painted over his face. He got a team successfully; however, he traded Jewel's horse in order to do so. Jewel becomes livid and is in disbelief of Anse's heartless actions. Anse truly wants to get to Jefferson so he can buy teeth. "I give that money. I thought that if I could do without eating, my sons could do without riding. God knows I did" Armstid, p. 182. Seeing such family strife and tragedy, Armstid again offers his team. The Bundrens, however, leave that the house, with Cash lain out across the coffin, despite Armstid's offer to keep him with them until he is well.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 8

The next morning, one of Snopes' workers comes searching for Anse. Jewel has taken off with the horse during the night and might be somewhere in Texas by now.

Vardaman



Vardaman observes the little black circles - buzzards - not moving in the sky. The Bundrens worry about Cash, thinking they should have left him at Armstid's. Cash says he is fine. They will get him medicine at Mottson, the next town, and also try to sell the cakes that Dewey Dell has been holding. Vardaman thinks that the smell coming from the coffin cannot be his mother, because his mother is a fish.

Moseley

The Bundrens stop in the small town of Mottson where Dewey Dell walks into a drug store owned by the elderly Moseley. He is a respectable pharmacist who is fascinated by Dewey Dell's dark eyes and penetrating gaze. When he finally approaches her, she tells him that she needs something to make 'it' stop. He understands that she is pregnant and believes she must speak with her mother over such a matter (who Dewey Dell says is in the wagon) and must take the ten dollars that Lave gave her to get a marriage license. He will not give her anything she needs for an abortion, despite Lave's supposed claim that she can buy what she needs for ten dollars in any drugstore for her problem. Dewey Dell leaves the store in desperation and defeat.

Moseley soon learns from his friend Albert about the Bundrens' story.

"It had been dead eight days, Albert said. They came from some place in Yoknapatawpha County, trying to get to Jefferson with it. It must have been like a piece of rotten cheese coming into an anti-hill, in that ramshackle wagon that Albert said folks were scared would fall all to pieces before they could get it out of town, with that home-made box and another fellow with a broken leg lying on a quilt on top of it, and the father and a little boy sitting on the seat and the marshal trying to make them get out of town." Moseley, p. 193

Topic Tracking: Poverty 9

The Bundrens go to Grummet's hardware store to get cement to fix Cash's leg. The townsfolk tell Anse to get him to a doctor immediately so he doesn't lose his leg, but the family persists onward. They keep traveling toward Jefferson, despite the rotting corpse, absence of Jewel, and illness and injury of Cash.

Darl

Since Cash's leg is broken, the family uses the cement they buy in Mottson to set it, in fear that he might bleed to death from his injury. They loosen the wooden splints and pour wet cement over his leg. Cash has no complaints, thinking this the best way to heal his wounded body. They turn around to see Jewel coming back to the wagon, silent and stoic, speaking to them only through his pale eyes. As the family approaches a hill, they realize that they must get out of the wagon and walk.

Vardaman

Vardaman thinks about his brothers and contemplates their differences in his young, naïve mind. "Jewel came back. He was walking. Jewel hasn't got a horse anymore.



Jewel is my brother. Cash is my brother. Cash has a broken leg. We fixed Cash's leg so it doesn't hurt. Cash is my brother. Jewel is my brother too, but he hasn't got a broken leg" Vardaman, p. 200. That night while sleeping in the next barn, Vardaman plans to see where the buzzards go at night.

Darl

The family stays at the Gillespie barn that evening and set the coffin up against an apple tree. Darl persistently questions Jewel on the identity of his father. Angrily, Jewel curses him and refuses to answer. Darl tells him that he knows his mother is a horse, but he doesn't know who his father is. Dewey Dell and Darl pour water over Cash's leg because it starts to get hot and boiled.

Vardaman

Vardaman asks Darl a series of questions about Addie, for they believe they can hear her speak and move inside the coffin. Darl says that their mother wants God to hide her away from the sight of men, and is therefore within the coffin permanently. Cash's leg becomes more and more infected. Every time they throw water on it, he is thankful and at ease.

While watching the buzzards at night, Vardaman sees the Gillespie boy, Darl, Anse, and Jewel carrying the coffin on their shoulders into the barn in the middle of the night. He then witnesses Darl set fire to the barn after everyone has gone inside. He tells only Dewey Dell who instructs him not to say anything to anyone about what he has just seen.

Darl

Darl sees Jewel watching him from afar with his penetrating gaze. The barn suddenly erupts in flames burning brightly, causing the Bundren and Gillespie families to come outside and watch the red spectacle. Jewel hears the horses scream and runs inside to save them. Jewel looks for the cow and then runs back into the burning barn for his mother's coffin. Gillespie tries to prevent Jewel from returning to the fire; however, Jewel punches him in order to get through the fraternal resistance keeping him from his mother's body. Dewey Dell screams for her brother's life. As the edifice falls to ashes, Jewel holds the enormous wooden box in his arms until they are safely outside the flames.

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 10

Vardaman

Gillespie does not understand how the family placed cement around Cash's leg, especially without even greasing it first. Cash's foot is black and infected and they take a hammer to break off the cement. When they finally do so, it bleeds. Jewel's back is also black from the burns in the fire and Dewey Dell tends to it with butter and soot. Darl cries under the apple tree with Addie's body. Vardaman tells him not to cry, for Jewel

rescued her from the fire. Vardaman looks at the red barn again and thinks again of what he looks for at night: "When I went to find where they stay at night, I saw something that Dewey Dell says I mustn't never tell nobody" Vardaman, p. 215.

Darl

The family sees increasing signs of proximity to Jefferson on the road. Anse comments on life in the country and the differences of city life. "Life was created in the valleys. It blew up into the hills on the old terrors, the old lusts, the old despairs. That's why you must walk up the hills so you can ride down" Darl, p. 217. Dewey Dell tells Anse she needs to stop to go to the bathroom. They stop on the side of the road and Dewey Dell takes her cakes with her in the bushes. When she returns, she is wearing her Sunday clothes.

Anse wonders why he didn't call ahead so that the grave might already be dug by the time they get there. Darl doesn't understand why he didn't take that advice from both Armstid and Gillespie, but Jewel doesn't think it's that hard to dig a hole in the ground. Anse yells at them for disrespecting their mother.

As they approach the town of Jefferson, they see Negroes and whites around them, in shock of their wagon and curious as to its malodorous contents. Jewel erupts at one of the white men, causing him to start a fight and pull a knife on him. Darl calms them down and convinces Jewel to take back his derogatory comment about townsfolk while he convinces the man to put away his knife. The family continues on in the wagon towards their destination.

Cash

Cash and Anse realize that it is Darl who set fire to the Gillespie barn in order to cause harm to Jewel and the phantom of his horse and incinerate their mother. They understand that he will stand trial, but Anse believes he should have the pleasure of seeing his mother buried before more chaos ensues. According to Anse, there is no end to bad luck as soon as it starts. Cash thinks about his father's words and the family's current predicament:

"Sometimes I aint so sho who's got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he aint. Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It's like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it." Cash, p. 223

Cash thinks Jewel is too hard on Darl, but Darl still has no excuse for destroying another man's property and livelihood. Anse and Darl discuss Cash and whether or not they should take him to the doctor before they bury Addie, leave him there while they do it, or wait until after they bury her. Addie has waited nine days already, so she can wait a few more. Anse leaves them alone while he goes to get spades to dig. While inside, he flirts with a woman in the back of the house and listens to the gramophone playing in the background. When he returns, he takes Dewey Dell into privacy, and later comes out to throw Darl on the ground to commit him to a mental institution. Since Gillespie



plans to sue the family for the fire, Anse decides to commit Darl instead of sending him to jail. The brothers begin to fight when they discover Darl's clandestine activity at night in the barn. Cash ponders sanity as he thinks of Darl's destruction of the barn.

Peabody

Peabody is in shock and horror at Anse's activities of the past nine days. He cannot believe that they have been riding on a wagon with no springs, help, and a broken foot. He thinks Anse is a horror of a human being to throw Darl down in the public street and handcuff him and to pour concrete on Cash's leg, forever destroying it. He thinks he should be buried in the hole, instead of Addie, so that the rest of the family could be safe.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 10

MacGowan

Young MacGowan works in a pharmacy in town when Dewey Dell walks in looking for a doctor to perform her abortion. MacGowan knows that he is not a doctor and that there is no doctor working at the store. He pretends to be one because Dewey Dell is attractive and young. "She looked pretty good. One of them black eyed ones that look like she'd as soon put a knife in you as not if you two-timed her. She looked pretty good" MacGowan, p. 232. Dewey Dell tells him that she has female problems without explicitly stating her problem. MacGowan jokes with his coworker about the low class country folk and their unwanted pregnancies and decides to take her on. He understands what she wants and convinces her, through lies and chicanery, that he is in fact a doctor. She questions his honesty due to his youth, and he tells her that people stopped getting sick in Jefferson when all the doctors were old and unattractive. Now, people are sick all the time so that they can come and see the young medicine men. MacGowan gives her turpentine to drink and tells her to come back at ten o'clock that evening to finish the treatment. When the store is empty, she returns wanting her abortion, leaving Vardaman waiting directly outside. He gives her a box of capsules and tells her to go downstairs to the basement.

Vardaman

Vardaman observes the surroundings of the city and notes that Darl is going to Jackson because he has gone crazy. He sees the lights, the trees, the courthouse, and knows that everyone in town has gone home by now, except for him and Dewey Dell. He believes Darl went crazy because of their wagon, not because of anything else along the way. Dewey Dell worries that 'it' won't work. Vardaman repeats that Darl is his brother, is on a train to Jackson, and that he, Vardaman, is not on a train to Jackson.

Darl

Darl is on the train to Jackson, laughing hysterically at everything in his path. Two men on the train try to guess at the source of his laughter and suppose it is either from a spy-glass with the impression of a woman on one side and a pig with two backs and no face



on the other, or the image of his family eating bananas in the wagon. Darl's only repeated response throughout the entire train ride is "Yes yes yes yes yes yes" Darl, p. 244.

Dewey Dell

Anse questions Dewey Dell on the source of her ten dollars. She cannot tell him that it is from Lave for an abortion, so he believes her to be an ungrateful daughter. Dewey Dell accuses Anse of stealing over the grave of her mother when he plans to take the money from her. Anse blesses and resents Addie for dying, and then takes Dewey Dell's money and leaves.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 11

Cash

The Bundren family stops to borrow the shovels used from burying Addie and Cash ponders the trip they just completed. Cash must have his leg fixed by Peabody. Dewey Dell and Vardaman wait for Anse in the wagon, eating bananas in the back. Looking svelte and clean-cut, Anse comes back from town with a new look. Cash wishes that Darl could be with the family, but knows that it is better for him that he is not. He believes this world is not meant for him.

Anse leaves for the evening to return the spades he borrowed from the woman in the house. Upon his return, Anse has a gramophone in his possession to listen to music on those long winter nights, a new set of teeth, and a new wife. "'It's Cash and Jewel and Vardaman and Dewey Dell,' pa says, kind of hangdog and proud too, with his teeth and all, even if he wouldn't look at us. 'Meet Mrs Bundren,' he says" Cash, p. 250.

Topic Tracking: Poverty 12

Topic Tracking: Family Devotion 11