

# AS I LAY DYING

WILLIAM FAULKNER

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

## LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

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### SYNOPSIS

Former school teacher Addie Bundren, dying of an unnamed disease, lies near her window where she can watch Cash, her oldest and most normal son, construct her coffin. Her 17-year-old daughter Dewey Dell watches over Addie, dissipating the July heat with a fan and making inept attempts to cook and clean for the seven-member family. Neighbor women, including Cora Tull, help out. Life on a shirrtail farm in rural Mississippi in the first quarter of the twentieth century is difficult, particularly for Anse Bundren, Addie's bumbling, ne'er-do-well husband for thirty years. A humpbacked, toothless, snuff-dipping dirt farmer, Anse doesn't call a doctor to treat her, but he makes good his promise to transport her remains forty miles to Jefferson, the county seat, where she can lie in peace in her family's plot. A strong motive for the trip is Anse's intent to buy dentures in town.

Though Addie's death is slow in coming, the family is ill-prepared for it. When she expires around sundown, Dewey Dell throws herself over her mother's emaciated remains. Vardaman, Addie's youngest, is traumatized and backs away from the room. Cash, impervious to his limp, works steadily and meticulously into the night on the coffin, despite heavy rains which hamper his work. Vardaman associates his mother's death with the fish he has just caught and cleaned. Irrational with grief and anger, he beats Dr. Peabody's horses with a stick, spooking them into a wild gallop. The skies pour out the long-threatened rain. In shock and soaked to the skin, Vardaman appears at Tull's door around midnight, muttering incoherently about the fish. Later, Vardaman fishes in the slough for his mother.

Vernon Tull returns with Vardaman to the Bundren farm to help Cash finish the coffin, complete with beveled edges and lozenge shape to accommodate the skirt of Addie's wedding dress. Dewey Dell, lost in her own thoughts about her undisclosed two-month pregnancy, prepares a meager meal of greens and cold bread for Dr. Peabody and the others. Panic-stricken that his mother cannot breathe, Vardaman sneaks back to the coffin and bores auger holes through the lid, marring the face of the corpse. Cash painstakingly repairs the holes in the lid with plugs of wood. Mosquito netting swaths Addie's face to cover the injury.

Earlier that day, Jewel, Addie's illegitimate son conceived during her affair with Reverend Whitfield, and Darl, the strange, introspective, and sometimes psychic second son of Addie and Anse, attempt to deliver a load of lumber with the family's rickety wagon to earn a

badly-needed three dollars. When a wheel breaks, the boys are away from their mother during her last moments. After three days' work to repair the wheel, they return to the farm to load Addie's casket for the trip to Jefferson. Anse shaves and wears a white shirt. The rising river, which washes out local bridges and impedes the Bundrens' journey, hinders Reverend Whitfield on his way to perform the funeral. A gathering of women sings hymns; Reverend Whitfield intones a forceful sermon.

Accompanied by his five children and fortified with a package of food from their own kitchen, Anse stubbornly rejects all offers of neighborly advice and assistance. He sets out for Jefferson with five in the wagon and Jewel on horseback. When Anse finds the first bridge washed out eight miles from home at Samson's farm, he and his family spend the night and return over the same road, rejecting the turnoff to New Hope where the Bundrens are buried. An ever-increasing swarm of buzzards circles overhead as the wagon arrives back at Vernon and Cora Tull's farm.

While Vernon watches, the Bundrens ford the swollen river. Anse, Vardaman, and Dewey Dell walk across the remnants of the bridge. Jewel, Darl, and Cash attempt to guide the wagon through the icy, roiling water. A log hurtles into them; the wagon founders. Jewel saves the coffin from the muddy water. More setbacks afflict the family: both mules drown and Cash breaks the same leg he injured in a fall from a church he was building. Steadying themselves with a rope, Jewel and Vernon Tull dive for Cash's carpentry tools, of which they eventually recover the hammer, saw, chalk-line, rule, plane, and square. They attempt to comfort Cash with the tools as Dewey Dell wipes his face with the hem of her dress. The family takes temporary refuge with the Armstids.

On the fifth day after Addie's death, Anse sets out to bargain for a new team. To pay for a span of mules from Flem Snopes, Anse mortgages his cultivator and seeder, takes eight dollars Cash was saving for a graphophone, and sells Jewel's horse, which Jewel bought when he was fifteen by doing farm work at night by lantern light. In the meantime, Jewel rides to the bend to get Dr. Peabody, who is unavailable. In his place, Bill "Uncle Billy" Varner applies veterinary skills to the broken leg. The family loads Cash atop the coffin and continues toward Jefferson.

Eight days after Addie's death, the family passes through Mottson, where the smell of the rapidly decaying body causes consternation among citizens. Dewey Dell clutches ten dollars that her lover Lefe gave her to buy medicine to abort the fetus. Diffident and slatternly,

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she enters a drug store and haltingly indicates to Moseley, the druggist, her need for medicine for "female trouble." A high-principled professional in his sixties, he scolds Dewey Dell for suggesting that he break the law of God. Moseley exhorts her to return home and marry the baby's father. The family leaves Mottson on the last leg of their trek. They arrive at Gillespie's farm and shelter overnight in the barn.

During the night, Darl sets fire to the barn to relieve the family of its embarrassing burden. Jewel and Gillespie risk their lives to rescue two mules, a horse, and a cow. Despite Gillespie's efforts to stop him, Jewel runs back into the blaze to save the coffin. Thrusting it end-over-end, he forces it to safety, burning his back in the process. Cash, who is suffering the effects of a homemade cement cast, refuses medical attention until his mother's body reaches its resting place. The family moves on. At the approach to Jefferson, Dewey Dell runs into the brush and changes into her Sunday best. Vardaman occupies himself with fantasies of a red toy train in a store window. Jewel, sensitive to comments about the bad corpse's smell, starts a fight with an innocent man.

On the ninth day, the family reaches Jefferson. Skeet MacGowan seduces Dewey Dell in the drugstore basement. He gives her a liquid that smells like turpentine and prescribes capsules filled with talcum powder, both phony remedies for her unwanted pregnancy. Anse stops at a house where music from a record player issues into the street. From the woman in residence, he borrows two spades to dig Addie's grave. At the gate of the graveyard, men strongarm Darl and transport him to Jackson to a state mental institution in punishment for setting fire to Gillespie's barn. Darl, who is appalled that his brother Cash did not warn him of the ambush, responds with a violent struggle followed by a fit of demented laughter. Like a shrieking cat, Dewey Dell attacks Darl.

The family takes Cash to Dr. Peabody, who must remove dead tissue from the blackened, clumsily-dressed leg, which is permanently shortened. After a night in a local hotel, the Bundrens sit in the wagon, ready for their trip home. Anse wrests the ten dollars from Dewey Dell and disappears. While she placates Vardaman with a sack of bananas, Anse purchases new teeth and woos the owner of the graphophone. Slouching and self-conscious, he returns to the wagon and introduces his family to "Mrs. Bundren," the determined duck-shaped woman who replaces Addie.

### TIMELINE

- 1888 The bridge is built.
- ca. 1895 Addie marries Anse Bundren.
- ca. 1896 Cash Bundren is born.
- ca. 1897 Darl Bundren is born.
- ca. 1900 Flem Snopes sells wild Texas ponies.
- ca. 1905 Jewel Bundren is born following Addie's affair with Reverend Whitfield.
- ca. 1908 Dewey Dell is born.

ca. 1924 spring Lon Quick lays out a forty-acre plot of ground to clear.

July Jewel works nights clearing land for Quick. He later uses the money he earned to buy a horse.

1925 May Lafe gets Dewey Dell pregnant.

June Cora Tull begins visiting Addie daily.

July Addie dies.

### AUTHOR SKETCH

Although he was born in New Albany, Mississippi, William Cuthbert Faulkner lived most of his life in Oxford, Mississippi, and made the residents and environs the focal point of his novels and short stories. One of the South's greatest spokesmen, Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897, the great-grandson of lawyer and politician Colonel William Culbert Falkner (the u was added to the author's name in 1926) and was heavily influenced by his ancestor's involvement in the Mexican War, Civil War, and Reconstruction Era, especially the building of the railroad through Mississippi.

Faulkner received little formal education, having left school after the tenth grade. Because of his diminutive size, military authorities rejected him for service during World War I. Determined to fight, he journeyed to Canada to join the Royal Air Force. Following honorable but limited involvement in the war, he spent a year at the University of Mississippi, where he published stories and poems in school literary journals. He moved to New York City, but failed to launch a career with publishers. Upon his return to Oxford in 1922, he took a job as postmaster, which he held for two years.

After the publication of his first work, a book of poems entitled *The Marble Faun* (1924), Faulkner moved to New Orleans to write novels and stories. Encouraged by Sherwood Anderson, he published *Soldier's Pay* (1926), a financial failure. With the completion of a second novel, *Mosquitoes* (1927), he returned to Oxford and married Estelle Oldham Franklin two years later. To support his wife and their daughter Jill, he worked at the University of Mississippi power plant.

Faulkner evolved his characteristic style and subject in a third novel, *Sartoris* (1929), which preceded an outpouring of his best fiction, totaling 80 stories and 19 novels. In 1932, he moved to Hollywood to write screenplays for *Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Air Force*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Gunga Din*, *To Have and Have Not*, *The Big Sleep*, and *High Noon*. In 1957, he began a four-year stint as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. By the 1960s, he had become the South's literary patriarch.

### CRITICS' CORNER

William Faulkner achieved little of his enormous success in tangible form, often traveling to Hollywood to eke out a living by writing movie scenarios. Influenced by the innovations of James Joyce, Faulkner remained virtually unnoticed and his books unread throughout much of his career. Not until his receipt of the Nobel Prize in

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1949, a National Book Award in 1951, and the Pulitzer Prize in 1955 and posthumously in 1963, did his work come to the attention of most readers. His intuitive creation of an imaginary county and the montage of generations that populated it has since passed into literary legend.

Faulkner followed his masterwork, *The Sound and the Fury*, with a companion piece, *As I Lay Dying*, the latter describing the agrarian class and the former white aristocracy of Mississippi as viewed in Jefferson, seat of a tiny fictional microcosm named Yoknapatawpha County. The overlay of forces impinging on poor whites depicts the external pressures of poverty and the internal workings of greed. In honor of Faulkner's unique ability to create a voice for the voiceless and to reward humanity with a suitable tribute, pilgrims still prowl the streets of Oxford, chatting with oldtimers who claim to have known the man ridiculed as Count No'Count. Faulkner scholars visit Ole Miss and tour the antebellum homes that carry on Southern traditions immortalized in his fiction. At Rowan Oak, the Faulkner homeplace, tourists admire the Underwood portable from which came some of America's most profound writing.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the purpose of stream-of-consciousness style
2. To account for the impact of shifting point of view
3. To interpret Southern dialect
4. To contrast the thinking style of the various characters
5. To discuss the themes of greed and selfishness
6. To explain the main events in time order
7. To analyze the story in reference to other works by Faulkner
8. To describe family attitudes in the rural South
9. To describe elements which delineate atmosphere and tone
10. To analyze the role of a surrogate parent

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain how Addie evaluates each member of the family
2. To analyze the meaning of the title
3. To account for Cash's importance to the Bundren family
4. To analyze the effects of weak authority figures on the Bundren children
5. To justify the long funeral cortege to Jefferson
6. To predict Dewey Dell's success in getting an abortion
7. To summarize the new Mrs. Bundren's place in the family
8. To discuss evidence of Darl's madness
9. To describe Anse's role as head of household
10. To contrast Addie and Cora Tull in terms of their beliefs about God
11. To explain Addie's life before and after her marriage to Anse
12. To analyze the symbolism of earth, fire, and water on the funeral

## THEMES AND MOTIFS

### Themes

- despair
- poverty
- invalidism
- death
- greed
- ignorance
- promiscuity
- loss
- compassion
- survival

### Motifs

- coping with family crises
- living on reduced finances
- seeking comfort in ritual
- assuming the role of rescuer
- comprehending the decline of a family

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

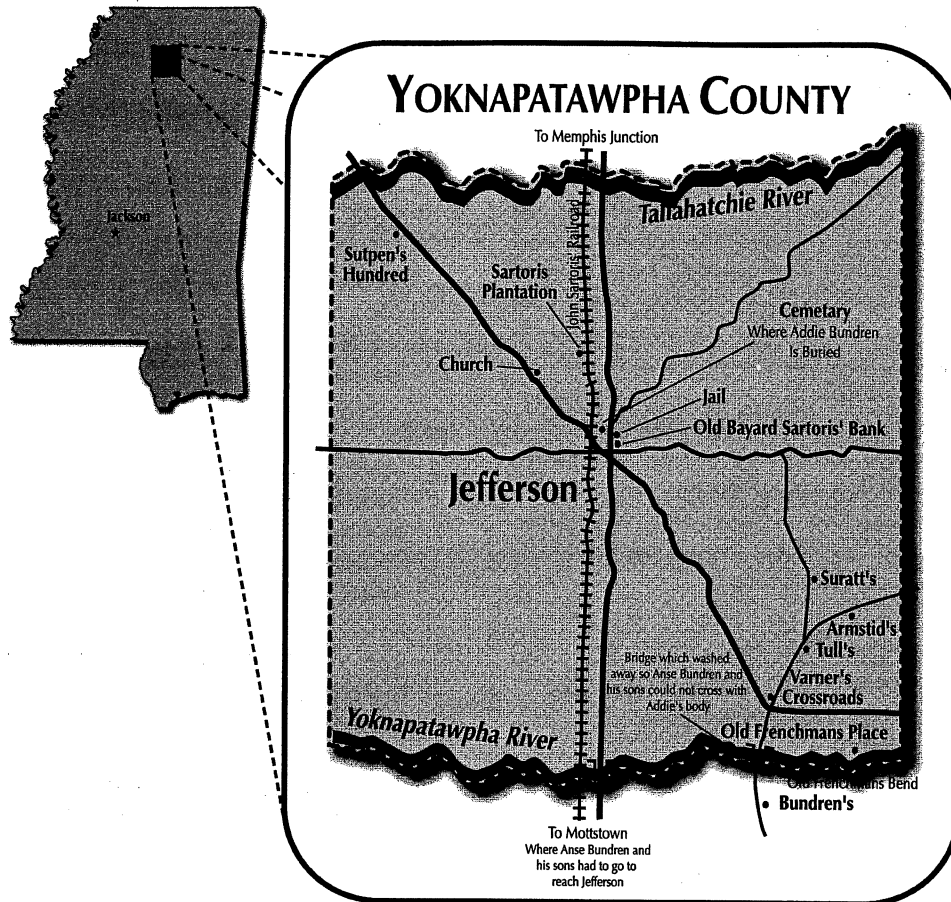
For a better understanding of William Faulkner's fiction, present the following terms and applications:

**anti-hero, anti-heroine** a protagonist or central figure who is devoid of the usual heroic qualities of an admirable person or leader, particularly skill, grace, honesty, courage, and truth; a non-hero who does not embody admirable traits or who blunders into heroism by chance. Anti-heroism marks the entire Bundren family, particularly Addie, who tolerates life with a shiftless husband. The most admirable quality family members display is devotion to Addie and an unwavering intent to see her properly buried in Jefferson rather than among the Bundrens.

**dilemma** a plot that depicts human characters in dire predicaments which they must resolve by making some sacrifice. The Bundrens commit themselves to a lengthy funeral trip at a time when heavy rains cause flooding and damage to bridges. The loss of an easy route symbolizes the family's lack of connection with town and a more civilized lifestyle. Their dilemma grows as the body decays, causing a greater divide between the family and outraged local people.

**irony** an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant. Dewey Dell's grief for her mother parallels her own despair at an early stage of pregnancy and her hopes to find a druggist who will sell her an abortifacient. Completing the circle of female life in the Bundren family is the new Mrs. Bundren, a nameless character who marries Anse only nine days after his first wife's death and a brief time after her burial.

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is decidedly Southern. The Mississippi lifestyle of the Bundrens is typical of poor whites of the Delta region who depend on neighbors for assistance in farming and personal affairs. Faulkner introduces Anse's courtship of Addie at the spring, her retreat from the job of teaching school and a source of restful solitude. At a site suggesting refreshment and renewal, she speaks to Anse, who has been passing the school regularly to observe her. Out of despair and loneliness, she agrees to marry a man far below her station.

Anse's inability to care for a family burdens the Tulls, Armstid, and Gillespie and calls attention to the Bundrens' crises. The author stresses their miserable lifestyle in the pathetic farmhouse, broken wagon wheel, dinner of greens and bread, homemade coffin, and doomed trek across flooded waters. Adding to their disgraceful transfer of a decaying body to Jefferson is the ignorant application of a cement cast to Cash's broken leg, the drowning of the mules, Darl's burning of Gillespie's barn, Dewey Dell's visits to two drugstores to search for drugs to end her pregnancy, and the family's arrival in town without a shovel to complete the burial. A few details contrast the backwardness of the Bundrens, particularly a graphophone in a local house, the availability of bananas from a Jefferson store, and the display of a red train in a store window.

Note: Faulkner's works interact with each other in a fictionalized county of Mississippi and many side characters and places in *As I Lay Dying* are more fully developed in other books. Varner, Old Frenchmans Place, Flem Snopes, the horses, and others all contribute elements or events that affect how the Bundrens are viewed in this sample of Yoknapatawpha County life.

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers note the context in which the item appears.

1. 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. (Anse, p. 38)  
(Describing his attitude toward religion, Anse Bundren accepts his human failings and denies that he deserves bad luck. He refers to God with plantation language, as though Anse were a slave working on the master's land. He compares himself to the innocent sparrow, whom God watches over in the Southern folk hymn "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." This elaboration of his place in the scheme of things reveals that Anse considers himself a helpless being consigned to an ignoble lot.)

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2. Jewel's hat droops limp about his neck, channelling water onto the soaked towsack tied about his shoulders as, ankle-deep in the running ditch, he pries with a slipping two-by-four, with a piece of rotting log for fulcrum, at the axle. (Darl, p. 52)  
*(Jewel applies the principle of leverage to the problem of the broken wheel on the family wagon. By means of the log, he redistributes the bulk of the axle and the wagon above it, thereby relieving himself of all the weight at the other end of a single two-by-four. The concept of leverage links Jewel to early humankind, who learned how to spare themselves heavy applications of muscle through simple mathematics and physics.)*
3. 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. (Tull, pp. 73-74)  
*(Vernon Tull makes a humorous statement about his wife's piety. He believes that Cora is so devoted to her faith that God could trust her to run the universe. Even then, Cora would find reason to "make a few changes, no matter how He was running it." Vernon trusts that Cora's alterations in God's plan would "be for man's good." Vernon's added fillip—that human beings would have to like her changes or else pretend to like them—implies that Cora is accustomed to getting her way.)*
4. Vernon holds the board steady while Cash bevels the edge of it with the tedious and minute care of a jeweler. (Darl, p. 79)  
*(To retard the seepage of water into his mother's coffin, Cash constructs the edges on a slant rather than use the simpler right angle made from abutting two edges. The meticulous care he takes with the added detail illustrates his respect for Addie. The task keeps him out in the rain, working by lamplight until dawn.)*
5. The animal magnetism of a dead body makes the stress come slanting, so the seams and joints of a coffin are made on the bevel. (Cash, p. 83)  
*(Cash speaks of "animal magnetism," a colloquial term referring to the physical attraction between bodies. He applies the concept to the force that causes a grave to settle. Actually, as the body decays, it releases fluids and shrinks. When the ground settles around the collapsing frame of a wood coffin, the mass takes up less space and recedes from the surrounding soil.)*
6. When they told me she was dying, all that night I wrestled with Satan, and I emerged victorious. (Whitfield, p. 177)  
*(The Reverend Whitfield loosely compares his emotional struggle with his conscience to Jacob's all-night struggle with God's angel in Genesis 32:24-32. The mysterious opponent ends the match by throwing Jacob's thigh joint out of alignment.)*
7. The flood, the danger, behind, and as I rode on across the firm earth again and the scene of my Gethsemane drew closer and closer, I framed the words which I should use. (Whitfield, p. 178)  
*(The Reverend Whitfield considers the meeting with Addie's husband and family as his nemesis, similar to the scene of Christ's agony, betrayal, and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is described in Matthew 26:36.)*
8. Because about a hour after breakfast next morning Eustace Grimm that works Snopes' place come up with a span of mules, hunting Anse. (Armstid, p. 192)  
*(For the trip, Anse needs a pair of mules, called a span from the Dutch term. Mules are paired according to their ability to work well together.)*
9. So I thought maybe her ma or somebody had sent her in for some of this female dope and she was ashamed to ask for it. (Moseley, p. 199)  
*(Moseley, the druggist whom Dewey Dell consults in Mottson, objects to patent medicine for female complaints because it contains alcohol. He believes that makers of patent nostrums deceive users into believing that they are curing their ailment when they are only masking the symptoms. The most famous brand of female medicine, Lydia Pinkham's compound, continued in use well into the twentieth century.)*
10. They are like two figures in a Greek frieze. (Darl, p. 221)  
*(Faulkner goes to great lengths to compare the scene at the burning barn to the action of a classic Greek play. He describes the observers' point of view as "[watching] through the dissolving proscenium of the doorway as Jewel runs crouching to the far end of the coffin and stoops to it. For an instant, he looks up and out at us through the rain of burning hay like a portiere of flaming beads." By alluding to aspects of classic drama, Faulkner suggests a link with Greek tragedy, notably the sin of pride and the part played by fate in human life.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

#### Character

1. How does Anse Bundren trade with Flem Snopes for the span of mules?  
*(Bit by bit, Anse divulges the deal he made with Flem Snopes for a second team of mules to replace the two that drowned while swimming the swollen river. First, Anse builds himself up by mentioning the mortgage of his cultivator and seeder. Armstid, who knows the value of mules as opposed to farm equipment, realizes that the implements are not worth forty dollars. Anse mumbles a bit as Darl thinks over past events and surmises that Anse robbed Cash's pockets of the eight dollars he was saving to buy Surratt's "talking machine.")*

*Darl presses Anse for the rest of his confession, and Anse admits that he traded Jewel's horse as well. When Jewel reacts with disbelief and dismay, Anse quickly points out his own sacrifice with*

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a touch of fundamentalist sanctimony—the money that he saved to buy dentures “so I could eat God’s appointed food.” Jewel swears and rides away “like some kind of a spotted cyclone.”)

### Action

2. Describe Addie’s death.

*(In the July heat, Addie Bundren lies in bed with her head propped up. For three weeks, she receives the visits of neighbor Cora Tull. In her last hours, Addie looks out the window on the building of her coffin, inspecting each board that Cash uses while Dewey Dell cools her with a hand-held fan. Dr. Peabody arrives, perceiving that Addie “has been dead these ten days” and is barely clinging to life by sheer will. He teases her, calling her “sister,” and sends Anse and Vardaman from the room while he examines her. Addie moves nothing but her eyes.*

*Later, on the porch, Dr. Peabody and Anse discuss Addie’s approaching death. Dewey Dell summons Anse. Dewey Dell interprets her mother’s silent eyes and urges the doctor to leave the room. From outside the doctor hears the patient’s last words, “You, Cash.” Cash lifts the board he is sawing for her to inspect. He holds two boards together, “shaping with his empty hand in pantomime the finished box.” Addie lies back and turns toward Vardaman, “her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant. Then they go out as though someone had leaned down and blown upon them.”)*

### Conflict

3. How does Skeet MacGowan trick Dewey Dell?

*(Intent on ending her pregnancy, Dewey Dell is too ignorant, too embarrassed to press for a pharmacist’s credentials and believes that Skeet MacGowan is a doctor. She drinks the proffered dose of foul-tasting medicine, commenting that it tastes like turpentine. She brings Vardaman with her at 10:00 that night, when she returns for the rest of the treatment. In her desperation for an end to the unwanted pregnancy, she accepts a box of capsules filled with talcum powder. MacGowan indicates that she is to follow him to the basement. In the next scene, she curses MacGowan for tricking her.)*

### Character

4. How does Faulkner reveal ignorance in the Bundrens during the treatment of Cash’s broken leg?

*(The Bundrens lack the simplest understanding of the human body and first aid. When Jewel cannot locate Dr. Peabody, Jewel brings Uncle Billy Varner, a horse doctor, to tend Cash’s leg. Uncle Billy gives the patient whiskey, then sets the break. As the Bundrens continue their jogging wagon journey, they adjust the rope that holds the leg in place.*

*In Mottson, one of the sons buys ten cents’ worth of cement from Grummet’s store. Outside of town they borrow a bucket, mix the cement with water, and hold the mixture where Cash can judge its consistency. He suggests they add sand, which Vardaman finds at a nearby stream branch. Loosening the splints, they pour*

*cement on Cash’s bare flesh. He worries all the while that they will spill the mixture on Addie’s coffin. Dewey Dell uses a piece of paper from her package to wipe away dribbles of wet cement.)*

### Flashback

5. How does Anse court Addie?

*(Addie, a lonely, inward woman, teaches school and withdraws to the spring in her free time to contemplate her misery in a dead-end job and loveless life. Anse, a “tall man and young” in his Sunday clothes, passes the school house “three or four times” before Addie learns that he is driving four miles out of the way just to see her. When he finds the courage to speak to her, “turning his hat round and round in his hands,” she notices his hunched posture and shaggy hair, which attest to his inability to care for himself.*

*Addie suggests that Anse ask a woman in his family to cut his hair and get him to straighten his shoulders. Anse replies indirectly, “That’s what I come to see you about.” Eventually he explains that he has no family, but that he owns a little property and a farmhouse. Of his own character, he says, “I’m forehand-ed; I got a good honest name.” Addie accepts his proposal and, while giving birth to five children, continues her life unchanged, lonely, miserable, and despairing.)*

### Interpretation

6. How does Dewey Dell rationalize her seduction?

*(Dewey Dell is depressed by the alienation and disunity within her family. She is annoyed with Jewel, who does not seem like “care-kin”; with Cash, who saws his “hot sad yellow days up into planks and [nails] them to something”; with Pa, who is content to let “neighbors do for him”; and with Darl, his eyes on some distant entity beyond his grasp. Dewey Dell takes her pleasure as she finds it—in the company of Lafe, who works alongside her, harvesting into her sack.*

*Like her father, Dewey Dell interprets events as though they are acted upon her rather than by her. As she and Lafe approach the shady woods, she decides that “if it dont mean for me to do it the sack will not be full . . . but if the sack is full, I cannot help it.” Lafe wordlessly acknowledges her rationalization, picking into her sack, “so it was full when we came to the end of the row and I could not help it.”)*

### Character Development

7. How does Cash defend Jewel’s absence from home?

*(Thinking that his fifteen-year-old brother Jewel is keeping a nightly tryst with a married woman over a period of five months, Cash admires his brother’s staying power, which he discusses with Darl. One night, Cash follows Jewel to the barn and deduces that his younger brother, gaunt and sleepy-eyed, has been working at Lon Quick’s farm. Over five weeks, the boy clears forty acres of new ground by lamplight so he can pay for Quick’s spotted horse.*

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When Jewel returns home on his horse, Pa interrogates him about the boy's expense of money on himself, an extravagance that the father shares with his son. Cash intervenes to defend Jewel, explaining his absence and justifying his ownership of a horse. Undaunted in his desire to gain independence, Jewel sets out to earn enough for a bridle and saddle.)

### Allusion

8. Why does the Reverend Whitfield feel forgiven for his affair with Addie Bundren?

(On his way to visit Addie's deathbed and conduct her funeral, Whitfield intends to confess his liaison with her eighteen years earlier, when he sired Jewel. Whitfield interprets the events of his journey as signs from God—the flood, the road toward “my Gethsemane,” and the safe arrival at the Bundren home, where Dewey Dell comes out to inform him that Addie is already dead. He feels freed of guilt, having made up his mind to divulge his intimacy with Addie to Anse.)

When Whitfield realizes that he is too late to speak with Addie, he interprets her dying as a sign that God has already forgiven him by restraining “the tale from her dying lips as she lay surrounded by those who loved and trusted her.” Greatly relieved that he will not be found out by Addie's husband and children, the minister enters in a magnanimous mood. He grandly wishes peace to Addie's ashes and “God's grace upon [the Bundren] house.”)

### Theme

9. Contrast the members of the Bundren family in terms of selfishness and greed.

(The Bundrens waste little sympathy on each other. Instead, each concentrates on personal desires. Anse, shiftless and self-seeking, allows neighbors to assist him and his farm. He seems oblivious to the fact that he is an object of scorn by all who minister to the family. Addie, too, is locked in on self, wrestling with the depression and alienation that inhibit her love for the family. In her despair with life soon after her marriage, she waits in the woods for her lover, the Reverend Whitfield, imagining herself dressed in sin.)

Jewel, the child of Addie's adultery, focuses his need for freedom on his horse, which he purchases by sacrificing five months' sleep and by endangering his health. Cash, the oldest and most normal of the Bundrens, concentrates his energies on carpentry, which expresses his pride in precision and creativity. The youngest two children display an infantile greed. Dewey Dell embraces a sexual encounter that frees her from an oppressive family situation and gives her hope for the future. She later hoards money for the drugs that will negate her folly. Vardaman, an introverted dreamer, fantasizes about the shiny red train that endlessly circles the track in a shop window in Jefferson.

Like the train, the Bundrens spin around on single orbits of desire, lust, and greed, shutting themselves off to each other's need. The singular nature of their membership in a family unit

creates walls around each person—Cash in the struggle for perfection, Jewel in his oneness with the wild horse, Dewey Dell intent on a ten-dollar abortion to free her from responsibility for casual sex with Lefe, and Vardaman following in the family pattern in a monomaniac desire for the toy train. It seems appropriate that Addie and Anse, a couple who have remained apart in thirty years of conjugal life spawned children who continue to live separate, need-filled lives.)

### Style

10. Why does Faulkner choose stream-of-consciousness technique for the telling of Addie's story?

(The loosely connected thought patterns of individual tellers reveals better than any other narrative style the alienation of the Bundren family from each other and from neighbors and other outsiders. As the author plunges into the psyches of each, he discloses the extent of their separation from each other and from events. The major episodes appear splintered, distorted by the idiosyncrasies of individual members. One of the most bizarre disruptions of reality is Vardaman's relation of his fish to the loss of his mother.)

By furnishing the reader with multiple, subjective statements about Addie's death and burial, Faulkner embroiders the event with overlays of meaning. To Darl, the death of his mother is an impetus for deeper burrowings within his tortured mind. To Vardaman, rationality halts with the skinning and mutilation of the fish, which he puts in place of his mother to avoid acceptance of her death. To Cash, loss of Addie must be worked off through greater attention to mechanical details as a means of avoiding shapeless, uncontrollable psychic pain. To Dewey Dell, dismay at her own approaching maternity inhibits her from serious thought about Addie's death, which leaves the lone daughter as the woman of the house.

To Anse, losing Addie is but a single block in the wall that forms around him. Unit by unit, life adds more burdens for him to bear—loss of his teeth, the broken wagon wheel, the failing farm, and the sickness and death of his wife. The road carries a stream of human suffering from distant parts direct to his doorstep. After Addie's death, the wall continues to grow with successive tragedies, obligations, and annoyances—a flood and collapse of a bridge, drowned mules, Cash's broken leg, the purchase of more mules, censure from neighbors and strangers, the insanity of his son Darl, Gillespie's burned barn, even the lack of a shovel to dig Addie's grave.

To balance the family's views, Faulkner inserts the comments of outsiders, including Cora and Vernon Tull, Reverend Whitfield, Skeeter MacGowan, and Moseley. Yet, these characters are also burdened with characteristic distortions of perception—Cora's piety, Vernon's contempt, Whitfield's self-righteous ecstasy, MacGowan's venality, and Moseley's outrage. Perhaps Faulkner suggests that human beings are forever locked into personal views of reality, that objectivity is not possible where human weakness intercedes.)

## AS I LAY DYING

### HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Faulkner creates character motive and attitude through stress on individual desires. For example:

1. Anse expresses his selfish need for a helpmeet in denying his wife's fatal illness or attendance by a doctor: "You lay you down and rest you . . . I knowed you are not sick. You're just tired."
2. Cash attempts to satisfy his need for perfection in an outlined passage explaining beveling: "There is more surface for the nails to grip," a suggestion of his own attempt to grip the truth of losing his mother.
3. Darl, who loses his grasp of reality, tries to explain his mother to Vardaman in terms of verb tenses: "I haven't got ere one. . . Because if I had one, it is was. And if it is was, it cant be is."
4. Cora Tull, a self-righteous Christian neighbor to the Bundrens, displays her judgment of others in the admonition of Addie: "There is your sin. And your punishment too. Jewel is your punishment. But where is your salvation."
5. Dr. Peabody expresses his professional outlook through disdain for the ignorant, backwoods Bundrens: "I be damned if the man that'd let Anse Bundren treat him with raw cement aint got more spare legs than I have."
6. Addie, who justifies late in the text her decision to marry, ponders why she chose so unlikely a husband: "Anse. Why Anse. Why are you Anse."

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Cinema

View the films *The Reivers*, *Tobacco Road*, *Hurry Sundown*, *The Long Hot Summer*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Queen, Charms for the Easy Life*, *Ellen Foster*, *Raintree County*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Roots*, and *Band of Angels*. Compare the movies' settings, themes, and dialogue to those of *As I Lay Dying*. Comment on the interplay of people of different ethnic, economic, social, and religious backgrounds.

#### Drama and Speech

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of a scene from the book. Supply sketches of costumes and props.
2. Create a storyboard account of Cash's investigation of Jewel's night-time job and Addie's reaction to Jewel's new horse. Include Addie's efforts to perform Jewel's chores so he can sleep in daytime.
3. Role-play the response of Moseley the druggist to Dewey Dell's request for an abortifacient. Contrast his reaction to recent refusals of pharmacists to dispense morning-after pills.
4. Read aloud Faulkner's short story "Spotted Horses." Explain to a group how the plot intersects with the novel by explaining the connection between Flem Snopes's horse sale and Jewel's purchase of a horse from Lon Quick.

#### Education

1. Brainstorm the elements of a literacy campaign in rural areas outside Jefferson, Mississippi. Determine which of Anse's family are more likely to profit from education, especially Jewel, Vardaman, and Cash. Why is the new Mrs. Bundren an unknown element in family dynamics and attitudes?
2. Outline a course in health, hygiene, birth control, and first aid that people like the Bundrens need to improve their lives. Suggest the best teacher for the course, e. g., Dr. Peabody, Moseley, a public school teacher, or a Red Cross volunteer.

#### History and Social Studies

1. Discuss with a small group family patterns of behavior and expectations, particularly Anse's need of a woman in his life. Justify why Addie conceals a variety of private feelings concerning her children. List actions that reveal her attitudes toward Cash, Darl, Jewel, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman.
2. Report orally on the physical and psychological effects of financial decline. Explain why Anse believes he has the right to Dewey Dell's money and Jewel's horse. Summarize the opinions of Lon Quick, Dr. Peabody, Skeet MacGowan, Lefe, Armstid, Flem Snopes, Lula, the new Mrs. Bundren, Cora and Vernon Tull, Uncle Billy Varner, Moseley, Samson, and Gillespie toward the Bundren family.
3. Divide the class into small groups to brainstorm ways to improve the Bundrens' lifestyle. Suggest methods of involving the sons in upgrading Anse's farming methods and ways to improve family health and nutrition, for example, through discussions with Social Services or visitation by a county nurse.
4. Compose an extended definition of subsistence farming. Explain why the term describes the Bundrens and others who barely scrape by on what they raise.
5. Make a web site or bulletin board that identifies the number of farm families in Mississippi who live in poverty, poor health, and illiteracy. Using a variety of sources, such as census records and state almanacs, compile a comparative chart listing median education, annual income, and property ownership for the most prosperous state, Mississippi, and the nation.
6. Make a web site or bulletin board characterizing Delta region religious and social customs in the early twentieth century, for example, the building of homemade coffins, the cooperation of neighbor women in washing and dressing a corpse for burial, service of food to family and helpers, the family's digging and



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filling of a grave, homemade grave markers, and singing and preaching at funeral services.

### Language Arts

1. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, and stories that contrast images of Southern poverty.
2. Explain in a theme the significance of the title, particularly as it applies to Addie's observance as Cash builds her coffin. Propose other titles that express the decline of a Mississippi farm family after the death of the matriarch.
3. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character. Determine which characters realize and are sympathetic to the Bundrens' poverty and ignorance.
5. Citing specific examples of interaction and attitude, compare the relationship of any two of the Bundren children to the older and younger brothers in Faulkner's "Two Soldiers."
6. Read "The Odor of Verbena," "The Bear," or "Rose of Lebanon," a recovered Faulkner short story first published in 1996. Determine how the concept of honor revealed in these stories relates to the Bundrens' wish to transport Addie's remains to a cemetery in Jefferson rather than the Bundren burial plot.
7. Contrast news releases for radio, television, or print announcing the funeral and burial of Addie Bundren, the incarceration of Darl Bundren, the birth of a child to Dewey Dell and Lefe, and the marriage of Anse Bundren to a woman from Jefferson. Indicate which source is the best vehicle to express their social status among farm families.
8. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing local dismay at the slow funeral cortege carrying a rotting corpse through town and past people's homes. List officials who might intervene, for example, the sheriff, mayor, or director of health services.
9. Lead a debate about Dewey Dell's reaction to seduction at a drugstore cellar and a failed abortion from a liquid and talcum powder capsules dispensed by Skeet MacGowan. Determine the likelihood that she will be a worthy and responsible parent or that Lefe will participate in the support and rearing of his child.
10. Rewrite passages of conversation from the novel, replacing dialect with standard English. Make a list of grammatical changes and elisions that mark the style of dialect. Compare the Mississippi Delta dialect with other Southern regional speech, particularly Cajun, Gullah, Southern mountain, and Tidewater.
11. Add a chapter to the book written from the point of view of Reverend Whitfield, Dr. Peabody, Flem Snopes, Lula, Lon Quick, Uncle Billy Varner, Armstid, Skeet MacGowan, Moseley, Lefe,

the new Mrs. Bundren, Cora or Vernon Tull, Samson, or Gillespie. Explain public reactions to the Bundren family's deterioration.

12. Write an extended definition of stream-of-consciousness narrative. List its strengths and weaknesses as a means of conveying chronology and mood in a story about a family funeral ritual.
13. Write an essay describing Southern attitudes toward neighborliness, especially toward a needy or grieving family. Quote Cora or Vernon Tull, Anse, Samson, Gillespie, Lula, Lon Quick, Uncle Billy Varner, Armstid, and others to support your thesis.
14. Make a timeline of the history of Southern literature, including the works of dramatists, poets, short story writers, and novelists. Mark the birthplaces of each writer on a map of the South.

### Law

Read aloud state laws governing the rights of the dying, the insane, and pregnant women. Comment on Addie Bundren's death at home and health regulations governing her burial. Determine whether the Gillespies violate Darl's rights by confining him and sending him by train to the state asylum at Jackson. Explain why regulations are so stringent in matters concerning how such people are diagnosed, housed, restrained, and treated. List agencies that can advise Dewey Dell on legal options concerning a minor's rights to end a pregnancy and to force the father of the fetus to help pay for the procedure.

### Psychology

1. Describe aloud the drive for survival. Explain why Cash survives two breaks to the same leg, how Jewel betters himself through extra work, and why Anse remarries. Project how the family will manage Dewey Dell's pregnancy and the birth of an illegitimate child.
2. Summarize ways that the burial in Jefferson both honors and dishonors Addie Bundren while allowing Anse to feel that he has done his best for his wife.
3. Using incidents from the book, comment on radical changes in the Bundrens before and after Addie's death. Discuss how repeated loss wears down family hopes, finances, unity, and social mores.
4. List the stages of grief as described in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying*. Explain how Faulkner displays each stage and how the characters assuage their negative emotions.

### Religion

1. Describe Addie's funeral service. Why do women begin the singing? Why is it appropriate that Reverend Whitfield officiate?
2. Design a marker for Addie's grave. Cite dignified, non-religious passages for the headstone of a non-believer.

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### Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on first aid for burns and a broken leg. Account for Cash's ability to tolerate the pain of a broken leg during a five-day wagon ride.
2. Discuss symptoms of madness in Darl. Summarize the type of treatment he is likely to receive around 1925 at the Mississippi state mental institution at Jackson, for example, electroshock therapy or water therapy. Add details of current treatments, particularly psychotropic drugs.
3. Write an encyclopedia entry on the effects of guilt. Add details that explain why Addie conceals the reasons for her special affection for Jewel and why she chose to conceive a child out of wedlock.
4. Make a chart of the changes in the body after death. Place the changes in time order, including rigor mortis, discoloration, sinking of flesh from the skeleton, and putrefaction.

### Speech

1. Organize a discussion of Addie's relationship to her husband and five children, to students, and to Reverend Whitfield. Determine why her secret thoughts are complicated and filled with regret. How does withdrawal to a spring help her cope with loneliness and despair?
2. Compose a tour guide of places significant to William Faulkner's life and legend, especially the state asylum in Jackson, Mississippi, Canada, Hollywood, and New Orleans. Name sections of Oxford that are meaningful, particularly the college campus, power plant, and post office.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of alienation and miscommunication between members of the Bundren family, for example, Vardaman's comparison of his and Darl's parentage, Addie's preference for Jewel over her other children, and Anse's outrage that Jewel bought a horse.
2. List events from the novel that express strong attitudes toward kinship, sex, hope, obedience, the future, memories, education, children, luck, travel, religion, and loss. Indicate Faulkner's apparent philosophy on each subject.
3. Summarize scenes that depict conflict.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each.

### OTHER WORKS BY THE AUTHOR

*Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)  
*Big Woods: The Hunting Stories* (1955)  
*The Collected Stories Of William Faulkner* (1950)  
*Dr. Martino And Other Stories* (1934)  
*A Fable* (1954)

*Flags In The Dust* (1973)  
*Go Down, Moses* (1942)  
*The Hamlet* (1940)  
*If I Forget Thee Jerusalem* (1939)  
*Intruder In The Dust* (1948)  
*Knight's Gambit* (1949)  
*Light In August* (1932)  
*The Mansion* (1959)  
*Mosquitoes* (1927)  
*New Orleans Sketches* (1958)  
*The Reivers* (1962)  
*Requiem For A Nun* (1951)  
*Sanctuary* (1931)  
*Sartoris* (1929)  
*Soldier's Pay* (1926)  
*The Sound And The Fury* (1929)  
*The Town* (1957)  
*The Unvanquished* (1938)  
*Wild Palms* (1939)  
*The Wishing Tree* (1964)

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### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

#### Novels

*All Over But the Shoutin*, Bragg, Rick  
*Bastard Out of Carolina*, Allison, Dorothy  
*Ellen Foster and Charms for the Easy Life*, Gibbons, Kaye  
*The Good Earth*, Buck, Pearl  
*The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck, John  
*Praying for Sheetrock*, Greene, Bette  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston, Zora Neale  
*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee, Harper  
*Tobacco Road*, Caldwell, Erskine

#### Short Stories

"Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird," Bambara, Toni Cade  
"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," Porter, Katharine Ann

#### Nonfiction

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou, Maya  
*Life on the Mississippi*, Twain, Mark

#### Internet

"Children and Grief,"  
<[www.psych.med.umich.edu/web/aacap/factsFam/grief.htm](http://www.psych.med.umich.edu/web/aacap/factsFam/grief.htm)>  
"Crisis, Grief, and Healing,"  
<[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)>  
"Stream of Consciousness Narration,"  
<[webserver.maclab.comp.uvic.ca/writersguide/pages/LTStreamConNar.html](http://webserver.maclab.comp.uvic.ca/writersguide/pages/LTStreamConNar.html)>.

#### Videos/DVDs

*Bastard Out of Carolina*  
*Charms for the Easy Life*  
*Ellen Foster*  
*The Grapes of Wrath*  
*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*  
*Ordinary People*

## AS I LAY DYING

### VOCABULARY TEST

Fill the blanks in the following sentences with pairs of words from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

|                              |                            |                                 |                              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>abject, sibilance</b>     | <b>cud, volitional</b>     | <b>impact, dissociated</b>      | <b>rapt, timbre</b>          |
| <b>bereavement, erring</b>   | <b>defy, extend</b>        | <b>infinite, restrained</b>     | <b>ravel, recapitulant</b>   |
| <b>bounteous, omnipotent</b> | <b>engendering, nimbus</b> | <b>juxtaposition, precursor</b> | <b>reproach, irrevocable</b> |
| <b>censure, approbation</b>  | <b>flouting, caliper</b>   | <b>perverse, desists</b>        | <b>soporific, uninferant</b> |
| <b>components, ammoniac</b>  | <b>grimed, interstices</b> | <b>radius, agility</b>          | <b>travail, penurious</b>    |

1. Then it topples forward, gaining momentum, revealing Jewel and the sparks raining on him too in \_\_\_\_\_ gusts, so that he appears to be enclosed in a thin \_\_\_\_\_ of fire.
2. We go on, with a motion so \_\_\_\_\_, so dreamlike as to be \_\_\_\_\_ of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing us and it.
3. It's like they touch us, not with sight or sense, but like the stream from a hose touches you, the stream at the instant of \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ from the nozzle as though it had never been there.
4. For a while yet she looks at him, without \_\_\_\_\_, without anything at all, as if her eyes alone are listening to the \_\_\_\_\_ cessation of his voice.
5. For a while still she looks down at him from the composite picture, neither \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Her voice is strong, young, tremulous and clear, \_\_\_\_\_ with its own \_\_\_\_\_ and volume, the fan still moving steadily up and down, whispering the useless air.
7. He tries to smoothe it again, clumsily, his hand awkward as a claw, smoothing at the wrinkles which he made and which continue to emerge beneath his hand with \_\_\_\_\_ ubiquity, so that at last he \_\_\_\_\_, his hand falling to his side and stroking itself again, palm and back, on his thigh.
8. It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of \_\_\_\_\_—snuffings and stampings; smells of cooling flesh and \_\_\_\_\_ hair.
9. It was He in His \_\_\_\_\_ wisdom that \_\_\_\_\_ the tale from her dying lips as she lay surrounded by those who loved and trusted her.
10. Praise to Thee in Thy \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ love; O praise.
11. I entered the house of \_\_\_\_\_, the lowly dwelling where another \_\_\_\_\_ mortal lay while her soul faced the awful and irrevocable judgment, peace to her ashes.
12. He applies the curry-comb, holding himself within the horse's striking \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ of an acrobat, cursing the horse in a whisper of obscene caress.
13. I \_\_\_\_\_ him to repeat it or I'll prosecute him to the full \_\_\_\_\_ of the law, and you can tell him so.
14. How do our lives \_\_\_\_\_ out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Our brother Darl in a cage in Jackson where, his \_\_\_\_\_ hands lying light in the quiet \_\_\_\_\_, looking out he foams.

## AS I LAY DYING

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Identify each character who is described below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. a head taller than his brothers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. goes four miles out of the way in order to pass the school
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. fears he will die if he sweats
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. helps fill Dewey Dell's sack
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. must be hauled up the hill with a rope
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. born "to negative Jewel"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. can't swim
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. bakes cakes for a townswoman
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. gives Cash whiskey to ease his pain
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. falls asleep at his plate
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. sees Darl set fire to a barn
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. worries that the coffin is not balanced
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. decides to confess a sin to Anse
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. communicates silently with his sister
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. urges Anse to get a haircut

**Addie**  
**Anse**  
**Cash**  
**Cora Tull**  
**Darl**  
**Dewey Dell**  
**Dr. Peabody**  
**Jewel**  
**Lafe**  
**Uncle Billy**  
**Vardaman**  
**Whitfield**

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

Fill in each blank with T for True or F if any part is false:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The cement cast causes Cash to lose sixty inches of skin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. MacGowan leaves Jody to watch for the druggist.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Vardaman hears buzzards coming from inside the coffin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. With her last breath, Addie calls out to her oldest child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Dewey Dell cleans and cooks fish for supper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Cora Tull visits Addie Bundren every day for three weeks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Bundrens' closest neighbors are the Armstids.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Addie carried Jewel on a pillow when he was small and frail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Cash fell 28 feet, 4 1/2 inches from the barn roof during the fire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Rafe and Lafe are Anse Bundren's twin brothers.

#### Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

In each line below, supply the name of the character who is speaking. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. He did it single handed, working at night by lantern. I saw him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It's Mrs. Tull's. I sold the cakes for it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I aint got no people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Did you ever hear me worrying a fellow before he was ready to pay?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A body is not square like a crosstie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I am not religious, I reckon. But peace is my heart: I know it is.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Nowhere in this sinful world can a honest, hardworking man profit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Plain turnip greens is mighty spindling eating for a mah my size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. God's grace upon this house.

## AS I LAY DYING

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the effect of Anse's selfishness on the family.
2. Explain how Darl embarrasses the Bundrens.
3. Compare Cora and Addie in their attitudes toward God.
4. Discuss the assistance of outsiders to the Bundrens.
5. Express Addie's strengths as a mother figure.

## As I Lay Dying

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Supply a conclusion to each of the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Darl expresses madness by  
A. laughing at inappropriate times.  
B. getting into fights when he fears people are ridiculing the family.  
C. staying out all night with married women.  
D. fearing that his mother is a fish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Vernon and Jewel risk their lives to  
A. rescue a cow from a burning barn.  
B. get sand to set a broken leg.  
C. dive for Cash's chalk-line.  
D. stop a runaway team.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Vardaman awakens the Tulls around midnight to  
A. tell them Addie died.  
B. justify Vardaman's story about the fish.  
C. get help for Cash's broken leg.  
D. report that the bridge is washed out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The wagon accident is the result of  
A. a sandbar  
B. the plowline.  
C. a floating log.  
D. two stifflegged mules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The Bundrens traditionally bury their dead  
A. without help from outsiders.  
B. near Mottson.  
C. in the family plot in Jefferson.  
D. in New Hope.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The preacher believes that God will  
A. relieve Addie of suffering.  
B. cause water to rise and postpone the burial.  
C. punish Anse for mistreating Addie and for not calling a doctor.  
D. keep him alive so he can ask Anse's forgiveness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Cash, Anse, Vernon, and Dr. Peabody carry  
A. the empty coffin into the house.  
B. raincoats to cover the coffin and lantern.  
C. Addie's body out to the coffin.  
D. the heavy coffin down the hill to the wagon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Vardaman runs to the barn to cry because  
A. Addie made him clean the fish.  
B. Dewey Dell thinks Santa Claus will give the red train to town boys.  
C. he must accept bananas instead of the red train.  
D. he believes the doctor killed Addie.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Dewey Dell fans Addie and tries to  
A. keep people away.  
B. finish baking cakes for a lady in town.  
C. cook greens.  
D. conceal her pregnancy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. To buy a span of mules from Flem Snopes  
A. Jewel must sell his horse.  
B. Anse mortgages farm implements.  
C. Anse sells Cash's tools.  
D. Jewel gives up the money he saves for a graphophone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Dewey Dell orders Vardaman not to tell about  
A. the lantern that Jewel takes from the barn.  
B. Darl's setting fire to Gillespie's barn.  
C. her trip to the woods with Lafe.  
D. the woman who accompanies Anse down the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Cash blames women for  
A. causing him to fall over 28 feet from a church roof.  
B. luring Jewel out every night.  
C. placing Addie the wrong way in her coffin.  
D. covering Addie's face with netting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. At Armstid's house, the men  
A. carry Cash to the bed Lula has prepared.  
B. wait while Quick and Anse make a trade with Flem Snopes.  
C. take off their nightshirts and fight a barn fire.  
D. listen to Whitfield's sermon about God's gifts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. At the doctor's office, Cash declares that  
A. Darl is crazy.  
B. he will help bury Addie in Jefferson.  
C. the leg did not hurt during the long wagon ride.  
D. Anse stole eight dollars while Cash was unconscious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Dewey Dell tries to convince Anse that  
A. Addie would not mind being buried in Mottson.  
B. Cora Tull gave Dewey Dell ten dollars.  
C. the family must bring shovels.  
D. Lafe has gone to Texas.

## AS I LAY DYING

### Part II: Completion (30 points)

Complete each statement with a word or phrase.

1. Darl and Jewel break a \_\_\_\_\_ when they try to deliver a load of lumber.
2. In his confusion, Vardaman thinks Jewel's mother is a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ has not been to town in twelve years.
4. After giving birth to \_\_\_\_\_, Addie asked to be buried in Jefferson.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ helps Dewey Dell by picking into her sack.
6. MacGowan puts \_\_\_\_\_ into capsules.
7. Cora is disappointed when the lady in town doesn't buy the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ insists on beveling edges and balancing a wood frame.
9. Even though Addie urges him, Anse refuses to get a doctor for \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Anse drives out of his way to pass the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Name the setting of the following events and explain their significance.

1. A carpenter falls over 28 feet. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Men ambush Darl. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Moseley refuses to treat Dewey Dell. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Jewel helps a cow escape. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Vardaman sleeps in a trough. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Whitfield conducts a funeral. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Jewel clears forty acres. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Whitfield crosses the river. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. The teacher retreats from the school. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. MacGowan fills capsules. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## AS I LAY DYING

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain in chronological order the barriers to Addie's burial.
2. Discuss how Anse responds to neighborly advice.
3. Contrast the medical advice of Moseley and Skeet MacGowan.
4. Justify Addie's decision to marry.
5. Summarize causes of Anse's bad luck.

# ANSWER KEY

## VOCABULARY TEST

1. engendering, nimbus
2. soporific, uninferant
3. impact, dissociated
4. reproach, irrevocable
5. censure, approbation
6. rapt, timbre
7. perverse, desists
8. components, ammoniac
9. infinite, restrained
10. bounteous, omnipotent
11. bereavement, erring
12. radius, agility
13. defy, extend
14. ravel, recapitulant
15. grimed, interstices

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### PART I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |                |                |               |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Jewel       | 6. Dewey Dell  | 11. Vardaman  |
| 2. Anse        | 7. Cash        | 12. Cash      |
| 3. Anse        | 8. Cora Tull   | 13. Whitfield |
| 4. Lafe        | 9. Uncle Billy | 14. Darl      |
| 5. Dr. Peabody | 10. Jewel      | 15. Addie     |

### PART II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

### Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Cash        | 6. Cash        |
| 2. Darl        | 7. Anse        |
| 3. Dewey Dell  | 8. Anse        |
| 4. Anse        | 9. Dr. Peabody |
| 5. Dr. Peabody | 10. Whitfield  |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. D  | 11. B |
| 2. C | 7. A  | 12. C |
| 3. B | 8. D  | 13. A |
| 4. C | 9. A  | 14. C |
| 5. D | 10. B | 15. B |

### Part II: Completion (30 points)

- |          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| 1. wheel | 6. talcum powder |
| 2. horse | 7. cakes         |
| 3. Anse  | 8. Cash          |
| 4. Darl  | 9. Jewel         |
| 5. Lafe  | 10. school       |

### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. new church        | 6. Bundren farm         |
| 2. Armstid's farm    | 7. Lon Quick's farm     |
| 3. Mottson drugstore | 8. old ford             |
| 4. Gillespie's farm  | 9. spring               |
| 5. Samson's farm     | 10. Jefferson drugstore |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

**AS I LAY DYING**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**

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