

# **The Sound and the Fury Study Guide**

## **The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner**

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# Plot Summary

The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner is a story about the brothers of the Compson family and their obsession with their sister, Caddy. The story is told in four chapters, three chapters are told in the viewpoint of the three brothers. The chapters do not follow a strict timeline, but jump back and forth in time. This is confusing to the reader and difficult to understand.

The story is told in the viewpoints of the following characters: Benjy Compson, a severely mentally-challenged thirty-three year-old man in April, 1928; Quentin Compson a Harvard student speaking in June, 1910; Jason Compson, IV, a farm-supply store worker speaking in April, 1928; and Dilsey, the Compson cook who has helped raise the children. The brothers' stories are told through memories, thoughts, and interactions with others. Their thoughts center upon their sister Caddy. Through their memories and thoughts, they silhouette the fall of their once prominent family. Faulkner uses the Compson family to show the fall of the Southern aristocracy after the Civil War.

The Compson family was once considered to be one of the prominent families in Jefferson, Mississippi. Caroline Compson took great pleasure in feeling superior to those around her. The slow decline of the family has dwindled their wealth, land, and significance in the community. Mr. Compson is an alcoholic, and Mrs. Compson is a hypochondriac, who leaves the raising of her children to the Negroes who work for the family. Quentin is the oldest, who feels that it is his job to look after the others. Caddy is a free-spirit who stubbornly does what she wants. Jason is mean-spirited and spies on the other children for his mother. He is not liked by the other children. Benjy is severely mentally-challenged and does not understand time and space. Caddy becomes the central figure in the boys' lives since their mother does not care for them. The mother stays in her bedroom complaining of an illness that will soon take her from them.

Caddy becomes pregnant as a teenager, and this leads to the downfall of the family. Quentin feels it is his responsibility to take care of her and tries to claim the baby is his. His family does not believe this and sends him to Harvard. They sell part of their land to pay for his tuition. This leads Quentin to drown himself before the end of his first year at Harvard.

Caddy meets and marries a man attempting to pass the baby off as his. He is a banker and offers to give Jason a job at his bank. He soon learns that Caddy is pregnant and not with his child. He divorces her. The Compsons' disinherit Caddy over her pregnancy. However, when her husband throws her out, they take in her child Quentin. Quentin, named after her brother, is just like her mother. She sneaks out and meets boys.

Jason, bitter about losing out on a good job, takes the money that Caddy sends for raising Quentin. He works at a menial job in a farm supply store and blames Caddy for his lack of success. Quentin and Jason do not get along. She is rebellious like her mother. Quentin steals the money that Jason has acquired over the years of taking from Quentin's mother and runs away. Jason goes after her, but he does not find her.



Faulkner displays the three men in Caddy's life. The first is a sensitive man who cannot handle the problems of his family so takes his own life. The second is a mean-spirited cynic who does not trust anyone. The third is a man who does not understand anything around him.



# Section 1, April 7, 1928

## Summary

Section 1, April 7, 1928

Benjy Compson is being taken care of by Luster. Luster is trying to find the quarter he lost so that he can go to the minstrel show that is coming to town. As Luster takes Benjy around the property looking for the quarter, each place brings up memories of his past. It is Benjy's thirty-third birthday and Luster has bought him a cake from town. Benjy is watching the golfers and moaning as they play. Luster threatens that he will eat Benjy's cake if he is not quiet.

Benjy snags his pants on the fence and this sends him back to a time when his sister Caddy helped him get his pants unhooked from the same fence. He remembers wanting to go and wait by the gate for Caddy to come home from school. In the past, Versh, a young Negro boy, takes care of Benjy and makes sure he does not leave the property. Benjy's thoughts slip from the past to the present seamlessly.

Caddy looks after Benjy as if she were his mother. Uncle Maury sends Caddy with a letter for his mistress Mrs. Patterson. She takes Benjy along and the two are caught by Mr. Patterson attempting to give Mrs. Patterson the letter. In the present, Mrs. Compson is seeing that the carriage is prepared for her and Benjy's ride to the cemetery. She treats Benjy as if he were a baby even though he is a thirty-three-year-old man.

Luster takes Benjy down to the stream and he has memories of when he was younger and he and his brothers Quentin and Jason and his sister Caddy played by the stream. Caddy was very independent and liked to do things when she wanted to do them. Jason would not follow her lead and would threaten to tell on her. Quentin would follow Caddy's lead. Caddy, Quentin and Benjy play together, while Jason plays nearby by himself.

Benjy remembers Caddy's wedding and Quentin beating up T.P. because he allowed Benjy to drink alcohol and get drunk. His mind then switches back to a time they were playing in the stream and Caddy is leading him home. It is supper time and the children are hungry. There are guests at the house so the children eat in the kitchen and are told to keep quiet. The children are to mind Dilsey, the Compsons' Negro cook. Caddy pleads with her father to let the children mind her and he agrees. Jason refuses to mind her. The children hear their mother crying and are not allowed to go to her. Her mother has died and the guests have come to mourn with the family.

Dilsey's husband, Roskus says the Compson's have no luck. The family changed Benjy's name from Maury to Benjamin when they found out he was mentally challenged and the name change did not help him. Roskus feels that there is something off about the place and the people.



Benjy's memories go back to Caddy's wedding and drinking sarsaparilla with T.P. His memories slid from the night his grandmother, Damuddy died to Caddy's wedding without any breaks. His memories slip to a time when Caddy is fourteen and beginning to wear perfume. Benjy does not like the smell because she no longer smells like Caddy. Mrs. Compson lies in bed as she does most often complaining that she is ill. She lets Caddy be like a mother to Benjy.

Mr. Compson does not like his wife's brother. He sponges off of the family. This makes Mrs. Compson feel that he looks down on her family and feels that he is superior to her. Caddy sleeps in the same bed as Benjy. He cries when she is not there. She is like a mother to him.

In the present, Caddy's daughter Miss Quentin is seeing a suitor on the porch swing. She is upset when Benjy and Luster come near them. She thinks that were sent to spy on her. This takes Benjy to a time when he came upon Caddy with her first suitor, Charlie. Benjy is very upset and takes hold of Caddy's dress trying to pull her away from the boy. She takes him inside and holds him and begins to cry. She then goes to the kitchen sick and washes out her mouth.

Luster tells Quentin's suitor that Benjy has been deaf and dumb since he was born. He tells him that boys come to see Quentin every night and she climbs out of her window to meet them. Luster and Benjy go to the fence to see if Luster can sell a golf ball to the golfers for a quarter. Going to the fence reminds Benjy of standing by the gate to wait for Caddy to come home from school when she had gotten married and left town. The girls walking home from school would turn their heads and not look at him. He gets out of the gate once and attacks a girl going along the road.

Dilsey gives Benjy and Luster cake to celebrate Benjy's birthday. Dilsey blames Luster when Benjy cries out for no reason. Luster proclaims that he did nothing to make him cry.

Mrs. Compson is always complaining of being ill. The family must be quiet so not to disturb her. She feels that Caddy and Mr. Compson coddle Benjy too much. She is a harsh woman who does not know how to deal with him. When he starts to cry she has someone take him away. Caddy fights with Jason for cutting up Benjy's dolls.

Benjy thinks of when Caddy came into the house and would not look at him. He cried and pulled at her dress. His thoughts slip from present to past, the family eating dinner in the past and then the present. Caddy loves Benjy and offers to feed him, while her daughter Miss Quentin asks why he has to eat at the table. It is like eating with a pig. She threatens to run away.

Miss Quentin gives Luster a quarter so that he can go to the minstrel show. He prepares Benjy for bed so he can make it to the show on time. Mrs. Compson locks Quentin in her room each night and looks in on Benjy and kisses him good night. Luster and Benjy watch Quentin climb down the tree outside of her bedroom window.



Benjy's mind goes back to when he shared a room with Caddy, Jason and Quentin. Their father looked in on them. Caddy holds him and he does not mind the darkness and falls asleep.

## Analysis

This chapter introduces the Compson family. Unfortunately this introduction is in the viewpoint of the youngest son who is a deaf mute. It makes the section difficult to understand. Benjy's mind is jumbled and flits from past to present and present to past so that the reader is left confused about when the events are taking place.

Benjy does not understand the events that he witnesses. He tells what happened without judgment or prejudice. He does not have a sense of morality so he views his family with innocence. He does not understand that his sister has become pregnant out-of-wedlock and that this will cause the family shame. She is still his sister that he loves and misses when she is gone. She is like a mother to him. She is the only family member who shows him complete love and understanding rather than sticking him in a corner.

Through Benjy's memories, the readers see Caddy as a spirited young lady who wants others to follow her lead. She likes to tell others what to do, but does not listen to what others say. This leads her into trouble as she grows older. Her actions have an adverse reaction on every member of the family. She tarnishes the family name. Her daughter, Quentin is just like her mother. She does not like being told what to do and she runs around with lots of different men. She does not want to be like the other members of the Compson family so she emulates her mother except in showing any respect to Benjy. Miss Quentin says he belongs in Jackson. Caddy loves her brother and would not see that happen to him. Quentin is missing the capacity to love because she never received it. She has only known Mrs. Compson, Jason, Benjy and Dilsey. Of the three, Dilsey is the only one who shows her love and she dismisses it as the rest of the family dismisses her.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do the Compson's change Benjy's name from Maurice to Benjamin?

## Discussion Question 2

How are Caddy and her daughter alike? How are they different?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Benjy associate Caddy with trees? What kind of a connection do the two have with one another?

## Vocabulary

Jounce, rheumatism, surrey, loony, conjure, lattice, scoundrel, ambush, bedrudge, putrefaction, beller, younder, rile.





## Section 2, June 2, 1910 (Part I)

### Summary

Section 2, June 2, 1910 (Part I)

Quentin listens to his Grandfather's watch that his father gave him before sending him off to Harvard. He lays in his room listening to it tick. He hears his roommate get up to go to class. Quentin gets up and turns the watch over and goes back to bed.

Quentin thinks of his sister and how he told his father he committed incest to save his sister's reputation. He tries to convince his father to send his brother, Jason, to Harvard instead. His roommate comes to his door asking him if he is cutting classes that morning. Quentin says he did not know it was so late. He tells Shreve to go without him and he would be along later.

He watches the students out the window running to class. It makes him think how his classmates have taunted him for being a virgin. Quentin wishes he was the one who lost his virginity instead of his sister. He does not like it when his classmates call the girls 'dirty sluts.' It does not want to think that people see his sister in such a way.

Quentin breaks his watch to stop the ticking. He cuts his finger on the broken glass. He packs his trunk with his clothes and addresses it. He folds the trunk key into a sheet of paper and envelope and addresses it to his father. He writes two other notes and seals them. He bathes shaves and puts on a new suit. The suit makes him think of his sister's wedding day.

Quentin stamps his letters, mails the one to his father and puts the one for his roommate, Shreve, in his pocket. He eats his breakfast and buys a cigar. He takes his watch to a jeweler to see if they can fix it. He tells them it fell of his dresser. He tells the man that he is dresses up to celebrate his birthday. He does not leave his watch with the man. He can hear the watch in his pocket, but it cannot tell time. He goes to the hardware store and buys two six pound weights.

He gets in a car not knowing or caring where it is going. Quentin thinks of his classmate Gerald. He is from Kentucky and thinks himself a prince. His mother has come to Harvard with him and has an apartment in town. Gerald and his mother paint him as a lady's man who had every woman in Kentucky. Quentin does not believe in the reputation. Quentin is accepted by Gerald and his mother because he is a Southerner.

Quentin thinks about his sister and her husband, Herbert, a Harvard graduate. He is not the father of her child and she attempts to make him think it is. His classmates think of woman as bitches. Quentin does not like to think of his sister in this way. Herbert buys her a car as a present making her the first person in Jefferson to own a car. He offers to give Jason a job in his bank when he finishes high school. Caddy wants Quentin and Herbert to be friends. Mrs. Compson is thrilled at the marriage, and Herbert is very



suave. Quentin tries to understand why Caddy became pregnant. He feels that she has no respect for herself because she will be with anyone. He feels it is his and his father's duty to protect Caddy and they failed.

Mrs. Compson sees Benjy as punishment on her and Caddy's pregnancy as yet another burden she must carry. She believes her children are all selfish except for Jason. She feels she must pay for her husband's sins as well as her own. She feels Mr. Compson punishes Jason more than the other children because he is more like her than the others. She feels he lets Caddy do whatever she wants with no consequence and that she will contaminate the other children. She wants to take Jason away to protect him from the shame and immorality of her daughter.

Caddy tries to make Quentin agree to take care of Benjy and their father once she is married. He asks when she has ever thought of them. She does not want Benjy sent to Jackson. Herbert tries to be friendly with Quentin, but, Quentin knows that Herbert is a cheat. He cheated at cards and got caught cheating on his midterms and was expelled. Herbert thinks nothing of it and tells Quentin in five years he will think the same. Herbert tries to give him money to keep quiet, but Quentin will not take it. Quentin tries to convince Caddy not to marry him, but she is pregnant and feels that she must marry someone. He asks have there been many, and she says too many.

Quentin gets off the car and walks across a bridge watching some boys fish. The boys argue about the best place to fish. Quentin asks them about places in town where he will be able to find out the time. They ask him why he doesn't look at his watch. He tells them it is broken.

His mind flits back to the past when he tried to get Caddy to take the money that was given to him for Harvard and run away. Caddy, Benjy, and he could have gone where no one knew them. His father got the money by selling pasture land. Their father drinks heavily and is not expected to live much longer. He drinks because of Caddy and her indiscretions.

Quentin goes into a bakery and orders two buns. A small girl is in there and eyes him enviously. The woman accuses the girl of trying to steal something and calls her a foreigner. Quentin comes to her defense. He shows the nickel in her hand to buy bread. The two leave the bakery together.

## Analysis

Quentin feels guilt for his sister's indiscretions and is contemplating suicide. He packs up all of his belongings and addresses letters to his father and friends. He buys weights at a hardware store and is extremely fascinated with water. Quentin breaks the hands off his watch to signify how time is no longer important because he does not have much time left. The ticking he keeps hearing is time ticking closer to the end.

Quentin tries to protect Caddy. He does not want her to marry a man she does not love, but he cannot stop her. His father is slowly drinking himself to death because of Caddy's



actions and disregard for the family's reputation. Quentin has opted to choose a faster way to deal with the guilt and shame that he feels. The family revolves around Caddy and her actions affect them all.

Quentin is upset that she chooses to marry an immoral man rather than run away with him and Benjy. He sees it as her choosing a cad like Herbert over her family. This is a disloyal act. Quentin does not like the world that he is living in where women are treated like sluts and men use them as a means to an end. He does not want his sister treated this way, but he cannot stop her from acting as she does or accepting the degrading treatment by the men.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Quentin obsessed with his grandfather's watch that his father gave him? Why does he break the watch?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Quentin tell his father he committed incest? Is he obsessed with his sister? Why do you think so?

## Discussion Question 3

Is Quentin jealous of Dalton Ames? How do you think he feels about the father of his sister's baby?

## Vocabulary

Mausoleum, reducto, illusion, oblivious, idle, crucified, excrement, shirk, raucous, contradictory, paradoxical, subterfuge, noblesse, cojole, affinity, subjugate, ubiquitous, raiment, diffident, benignant, profound, fecundity, acrimony, apotheosis, infinity, cupola, expenditure, certitude, acquiescent, cognizance, nefarious.



## Section 2, June 2, 1910 (Part II)

### Summary

#### Section 2, June 2, 1910 (Part II)

Quentin attempts to take the little girl home, but she will not talk. He tries asking locals if they know her, but they do not know anything about the girl. He thinks he finds her home and leaves her by the gate. He runs away so that she will not follow him, but she catches back up with him and continues to follow him around. Her angry brother, Julio, attacks Quentin accusing him of kidnapping his sister. He has had the sheriff tracking Quentin all over town trying to save his sister. Julio threatens to kill Quentin. Quentin is being taken to see the Squire when Shreve, Gerald, Mrs. Bland, Gerald's mother, and his friend Spode appear with two girls in tow. They went out looking for him when he did not answer a summons by Mrs. Bland.

They cannot believe that Quentin is under arrest and follow him to see the Squire. The Squire orders Quentin to pay Julio a dollar and pay six dollars to the constable for having to chase him around town. He is then released.

The group had been going on a picnic, so they continue their plans. Watching the two girls with the boys makes Quentin think of Caddy and her foray with boys. He asked her if she loved the boys. It is important to him that Caddy have a reason for behaving the way she does. Benjy is upset about Caddy. He knows something is not right. Quentin is upset that Caddy has gotten herself pregnant. He asks her if he forced himself on her and threatens to kill him if he did. She asks Quentin if he is a virgin, and he denies it. They are at the stream, and Quentin puts a knife to her throat telling her that he can cut her throat and then his own. She tells him to push the knife in, but he cannot. He drops it in the grass.

Caddy leaves him to go see Dalton Aames. He lies in the grass looking at the sky. Caddy and Dalton walk back to the house. Quentin is very upset. He does not like the situation that Caddy is in. He blames everyone, except her, for it. He meets with Dalton, the father of Caddy's baby, and they fight. Quentin tells him that he must leave, and he will not. He tells Quentin it is not his fault that women are all bitches. If it had not been him, it would be someone else. Quentin attempts to hit him, but he grabs his hand. Dalton carries a gun and shows Quentin how good a shot he is by shooting bark in the water. Quentin passes out trying to attack Dalton once again. He offers to let him ride his horse back to his house.

Caddy finds Quentin resting against a tree. She was out looking for him and heard the shots. He asks her if she loves Dalton. She puts his hand to her throat so he can feel her heart beat and asks him to say his name. When Quentin says Dalton Aames, her heart beat quickens.



In the present, Quentin has had a fight with Gerald and took the worst of it. He is with Shreve and Spoade attempting to clean himself up. Quentin is not sure how the fight happened. Spoade tells him that he jumped up yelling, "Did you ever have a sister? did you?" and when he said no, he hit him. Gerald had been talking about women and sex. Quentin leaves the picnic. He walks down the street and gets a trolley car. He goes back to his room and tries to clean the blood out of his clothes. He thinks about his family as he fixes his clothes and brushes his suit to look his best.

## Analysis

Quentin is surprised when he is accused of kidnapping. Julio is very protective of his sister as Quentin is of Caddy. He will fight to protect her and this shows a connection between the two.

Quentin has an unnatural obsession with his sister. He does not like that she is not a virgin and he is. Caddy feels that because he is a virgin he cannot understand what she is feeling. He has to experience it for himself to understand. Quentin threatens to kill her to protect her from the shame of being an unwed mother and to protect the family name. It will also erase the guilt he feels for allowing her to put the family in such a situation.

Caddy loves Dalton Aames, but the reader is unsure of what happens to him. He is the father of her child, but not the man that she marries. Quentin fights him to save Caddy's honor, but he is not a fighter. This is also clear when Quentin fights Gerald because of his disrespectful rant about women. Quentin does not believe that women should be talked about because of their bodies and any man with a sister would be respectful of this and not want to think that their sister has only that to offer society.

He walks home on his own to clean himself up to prepare for cleansing himself of the guilt and sin that he feels are his because of his sister's actions. The only way he thinks that he can release himself from this burden is to drown himself.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the little girl follows Quentin after leaving the bakery? What kind of home life do you think she has?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Julio's protection of his sister parallel Quentin's desire to protect his own sister? How is Julio different from Quentin?



## Discussion Question 3

Why is Quentin's appearance so important to him? He puts on his new suit at the beginning of the day and must clean it when he returns to his room that evening. He plans to kill himself on this day so why is he worried about his suit?

## Vocabulary

Paradoxical, perverse, relevance, inherent, cavalier, immortal, derivation, tranquil, peremptory, earnest, expedient, sublimate, chicanery.



## Section 3, April 6, 1928

### Summary

Section 3, April 6, 1928

Jason Compson IV is upset with his mother and Miss Quentin. He believes his mother should let him discipline Quentin so that she does not end up like her mother, Caddy, pregnant out-of-wedlock. He does not want her to further damage the family name. Mrs. Compson does not want the community to think that she cannot control her granddaughter. She believes that Jason will lose his temper and harm Quentin.

Jason goes to the kitchen where Quentin is having her breakfast. He grabs her by the arm and drags her into the dining room kicking the door closed in Dilsey's face as she tries to help the young girl. He questions where Quentin goes when she is supposed to be in school. Dilsey comes in the room. Jason believes the Quentin is running off with boys into the woods. He goes for his belt to whip her. Quentin cries for Dilsey to help her. Dilsey holds onto his arm. Jason hears his mother on the stairs and lets go of Quentin. She runs up the stairs to her room. Jason goes to get the car to drive her to school.

Quentin comes scantily clad and heavily made up. She comments that none of his money paid for any of it. He tells her that Mrs. Compson burns all of the checks that Caddy sends for the care of her daughter. Quentin tells Jason that if she thought any of his money paid for her belongings that she would tear off her dress and throw it in the street. She attempts to tear it and he must stop the car to stop her. He drops her off at school and threatens her if she does not stay there. He tells her that everyone in town knows what she is and what she gets up to.

Jason goes to the post office and picks up the mail. He is late for work and dares Earl, his boss, to say anything to him. He opens the mail. The first one he opens is a letter from Caddy with a check enclosed. She questions if her letters are reaching her daughter because she has had no replies. She asks if she is sick and if she does not hear something she will come to check on her. She knows Jason is opening Caddy's letters to her daughter so tells him to wire her and let her know her daughter is okay.

He goes to the telegraph office to send the telegraph and check the stock prices. He invests in the stock market and keeps a close eye on it. He goes back to the store and reads a letter from Lorraine, a woman that he keeps in Memphis. He burns the letter because it does not want any paper around bearing a woman's name. He never writes her. He tells her not to call him.

He waits on the customers who he feels are rednecks and not smart if they do not listen to his suggestions. He is resentful that he never got the opportunities that Quentin was offered with a Harvard education. He feels that the weight of taking care of his mother



and Quentin have been put on his shoulders without any thought of what he would like to do with his life. Caddy sent Quentin to her mother to raise when she was a baby and agreed not to have any contact with her.

Jason thinks about his father's funeral and how his father drank himself to death. He feels his father did not offer him the same opportunities as Quentin and he feels cheated. Mr. Compson went and picked up the baby and brought it back to the Compson home. He would not say where his daughter was and informed them that her husband would not be providing for the baby. Caddy's husband had discovered that she was pregnant with another man's child and divorced her. Caddy could not provide for the baby by herself. Jason saw this as his doom for he had to stay home to help provide for the family rather than have a chance of a future for himself. Mrs. Compson forbids Caddy's name to be spoken in her house. She does not want Quentin to know what kind of woman her mother is. Mrs. Compson confides in Jason that he is her only hope and that if anyone had to be taken from her she was glad it was Quentin and not him. Jason is a boy still in school at this time.

Jason runs into Caddy after leaving his father's funeral. He questions why she is there because she promised not to come back to Jefferson. No one told her of her father's death, she just happened to see it in the paper. She offers him hundred dollars if he can help her see her baby. He takes her money than goes back to the house for the baby. He has the hack slow down when they get to the corner where Caddy is waiting. She uncovers the baby and holds it up so she can see, but when she comes forward he has the driver drive away. Caddy runs after the carriage. He did it because her husband had promised him a job at his bank, but because of the divorce no job materialized. Caddy comes to his work to confront him. He threatens to tell his mother and Uncle Maury that she is in town if she does not take the next train.

When he gets home, he finds the house in an uproar. Benjy is bellowing and will not be quiet. Jason gets him the slipper they use to keep him quiet, but it makes him bellow louder. Jason then knows that Caddy has been there and Dilsey has let her see the baby. He tells his mother and she has to be carried to her room she is so upset. Dilsey believes Caddy should be able to see her baby and if her father was alive he would allow it. Jason tells Caddy that if she tries that again their Mother will fire Dilsey and send Benjy to Jackson. Caddy does not believe that the money she sends goes to her baby, but cannot prove it because her mother will not acknowledge her. She tries to make him promise to be kind to the child and look after her. Caddy comes once or twice a year to see Quentin, and Jason arranges it.

He opens up the letter addressed to Quentin from Caddy and finds a money order for fifty dollars. He does not understand what the girl needs with that much money. Quentin comes in at lunchtime asking if she has received a letter from her mother. While he is waiting on a customer she goes through his desk and finds the letter. He beats her knuckles on the desk until she lets go. She begs for him to give it to him. He tells her it is only ten dollars and she calls him a thief. She takes the ten dollars and signs the money order without knowing how much it is.





Earl tells him not to go home for lunch because he is expecting a rush, but Jason does not listen. He has to hunt around town for a blank check to substitute for the real check that Caddy sends so that his mother burns a fake check and he cashes the real one. Caddy sends checks for two hundred dollars a month. His mother questions if she is doing right by burning the checks. Jason questions why she would change now after burning them for the last fifteen years. She regrets that he has not had the chances that his brother and sister had.

Jason lies to Earl and tells him that he went to the dentist and not home to lunch. He tells Earl if he doesn't believe him he knows what he can do. Earl keeps him on for his mother's sake. Jason spots Quentin out with a man in a red tie. He follows them to see where they are going. Jason goes home and checks on his money hidden away in his room. Back in town, he sees Quentin in a truck with the man and chases them. He is so angry that his head feels as if it will explode. He finds the truck abandoned and goes into the woods. The two circle back around to their car and blow their horn as they drive away. Jason finds his tire flat on his car. He finds a pump and fixes the tire and heads back to town.

He discovers that he lost money on the stock market. When he gets home Luster is lamenting that he lost his quarter and cannot go to the show. Jason tells him that he has two passes and then burns them in the stove rather than give them to him. He makes his mother and Quentin come down to dinner. He tells his mother a story that he lent his car to a man from the minstrel show so that he could track down his brother-in-law who was running around with a town girl. Quentin becomes upset and storms off to her room. Mrs. Compson feels that the child is the judgment of both Caddy's and Quentin's sins upon her.

## Analysis

Jason Compson IV has grown into a cynical man. He was always left out when the children were young. He feels like an outsider in his own family. Jason feels he did not get the opportunities he deserved and he blames this on his siblings, mainly his sister Caddy.

Jason has a menial job that does not pay much. He feels that he was made to stay with his mother and Benjy to care for him. He was not given a choice in the matter. His dreams and aspirations mean nothing to the family. This makes him not care for any of them. He treats people how he has always been treated with disdain.

This leads him to not have any significant relationships in his life and to bully his sister's child into following in her mother's footsteps and have no regard for anyone, but herself.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Jason follow Miss Quentin? How is Quentin like her mother? Should the family be worried about her? Why?



## Discussion Question 2

Why is Jason so upset with Caddy? Is she to blame for his lack of prosperity? Why or Why not? Why is he so secretive? Does it have anything to do with his relationship with his siblings? Why or Why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you think Jason thinks too highly of himself and his abilities? Does this affect his attitude toward others and how they view him?

## Vocabulary

Contaminate, hertiage, impunity, degenerate, leprosy, indorsement, misappropriate, gratitude, formality, vulgarism, timorous, begrudge, solvent, defraud, usuary, hypocrite, byword, invalid, precedent, discretion, prosperity, reproach, bedlam.



## Section 4, April 8, 1928

### Summary

Section 4, April 8, 1928

April 8, 1928 is narrated by the author with a focus on Dilsey, the Compson's cook. It is Easter Sunday. Dilsey emerges from her cabin on the Compson property in her Sunday finery. She reenters the cabin and then emerges in her working clothes. She enters the Compson's kitchen and then emerges to gather firewood from the woodpile.

Mrs. Compson calls to her from the head of the stairs. Dilsey busy preparing the stove to get it ready to prepare breakfast does not answer fast enough and Mrs. Compson continues calling. Mrs. Compson wants her hot water bottle filled and chastises Dilsey for not being in the kitchen sooner. Dilsey painfully makes her way up the stairs to take the bottle from Mrs. Compson.

Luster has overslept and not prepared the stove. He was out late at the minstrel show. Mrs. Compson says it is Dilsey's fault for allowing Luster to stay out late. She says Jason will not be happy to hear about Luster's slacking in his duties. Mrs. Compson goes back to bed and listens to Dilsey's slow procession down the stairs. She finds it annoying.

Dilsey calls for Luster and he appears around the corner of the kitchen. She questions where he was and he tells her in the cellar. He will not say what he was doing. She has him carry in more firewood. Dilsey then sends him upstairs to get Benjy out of bed. Dilsey starts making biscuits for breakfast, but is interrupted by Mrs. Compson calling her once again. Mrs. Compson complains that Luster has not gotten Benjy up and she does not want Benjy disturbing Jason on his one day to sleep late. Dilsey offers to get Benjy up, but Mrs. Compson complains that breakfast will be late and the Jason does not like when breakfast is late. Dilsey discovers from Mrs. Compson that Benjy is not awake yet so getting him dressed is not a priority. She just shakes her head and tells Mrs. Compson that she will send Luster up to take care of Benjy.

Dilsey goes to the cellar to look for Luster. He emerges before she gets to the door. Luster tells her he is looking for a water leak in the cellar that Jason wanted fixed. She sends him again to tend to Benjy. Luster brings Benjy into the kitchen to sit in front of the fire and tells Dilsey that Mrs. Compson is still waiting for her hot water bottle. Dilsey gives it to Luster to take to her and tells him to check on Jason to let him know breakfast is ready.

Luster returns saying that Jason is complaining that he and Benjy broke the window in his room. Luster denies doing it. Dilsey sets the dining room table for breakfast, but gives Benjy his breakfast in the kitchen. Luster feeds him.



Jason and his mother descend the stairs talking about the broken window. Mrs. Compson comments that she does not have a key to Jason's room so she could not tamper with it. Jason asks about Quentin and demands that she come down for breakfast even though her normal routine is to sleep late on Sunday and Dilsey puts her breakfast in the warmer. Jason demands that Dilsey go get her to have breakfast with him and his mother. Dilsey chastises him for being mean toward Quentin and Luster and Benjy and asks Mrs. Compson why she allows it. Mrs. Compson says it is neither Dilsey's place or hers to question Jason's actions. Dilsey leaves to get Miss Quentin.

Jason complains that the servants are not worth anything. Mrs. Compson says that she has to depend on them so much they must be humored. Jason is upset that his mother has given permission for the servants to go to Easter Sunday service. He complains that he will have a cold dinner. Dilsey cannot get Quentin to come out of her room. Jason becomes upset thinking about his broken window and a thought occurs to him. He runs up the stairs and demands the key from his mother. She locks Quentin in her room at night. They find the room empty. Jason runs to his room and looks into his secret hiding place. He finds his money missing. He calls the sheriff and tells him that he has been robbed and that he will be at his house in five minutes to help track the culprits.

Luster tells Dilsey that he and Benjy saw Quentin climb out the window the night before. They see her do it every night. Luster takes Benjy outside so that he will not disturb anyone. Dilsey cleans up the kitchen and then changes for church. She, Luster and her daughter Fronny take Benjy to church with them. A reverend from St. Louis is supposed to be preaching at the church. Fronny complains that people talk about them taking Benjy to church. Dilsey says it is white trash that is doing the talking. They think that he is not good enough for white church, but that the Negro church is not good enough for him.

The reverend is a small man in a shabby coat. The parishioners are not impressed by him, but he gives a powerful sermon that changes their minds. He has a powerful voice and a persuasive demeanor. Luster takes Benjy off to play when they return home. Dilsey goes to check on Mrs. Compson. Mrs. Compson believes that Miss Quentin has committed suicide and wants to know where the note is. Dilsey tries to convince her that Quentin has not killed herself.

Jason has driven to town and after being blown off by the sheriff goes to look for Quentin on his own. He believes Quentin to be with the man from the traveling minstrel show so heads to the town where they were headed. He is experiencing an intense headache. He makes it to the town and finds the show. He goes into a trailer to look for Quentin and the man in the red tie. He finds another man who attacks him for entering his trailer. He makes it out of the trailer and runs into the owner of the show who tells him that the two are not with the show. He ran them off because he runs a respectable show. Jason is in so much pain that he hires a man to drive him back to Jefferson.

T.P. has not returned and Benjy is upset because the golfers keep saying caddy. Luster offers to drive him to the cemetery, but Dilsey is not keen on the idea. He



convinces her to let him. Benjy is so upset that Dilsey finally agrees. He agrees to go the same way that T.P goes every Sunday. On the way, Luster begins to feel important and wants everyone to see him driving the surrey. They see Jason's car as they enter town. He also sees a group of Negroes who he wants to impress and deviates from the usual path that T.P. takes to the cemetery. He takes a left at the Confederate monument and Benjy begins to bellow. It is a bellow of horror, shock and astonishment.

Jason comes running toward them. He hurls Luster aside and takes the reins. He swings the surrey to the right of the monument and then strikes Luster berating him for taking him to the left of the monument. Jason demands that they go home and threatens to kill Luster if he ever takes Benjy out of the gate. Luster obeys with Benjy stops roaring when he sees familiar surroundings.

## Analysis

This section gives the reader an idea of how the Compson's are seen by the people around them. Dilsey finds Mrs. Compson very annoying. The woman is younger than her, but expects the woman to climb the stairs and wait on her when she is perfectly capable of taking care of herself. She complains about things that are not a problem. Jason finds her annoying as well. she is a matyr who tries to take the blame for everything.

Jason is upset to find Quentin and his money missing. He knows that she has run off with the man from the minstrel show with his money. Mrs. Compson does not understand why Jason is so secretive or so upset by the broken window in his room. He had three thousand dollars hidden away that he has taken from Caddy over the years for the raising of Quentin. The sheriff questions how Jason has three thousand dollars and if his mother knows about it. This makes Jason angry because he is very secretive and does not want people to get into his business. He gets so upset it gives him a headache that renders him unable to drive himself. Unlike his mother, he has a debilitating illness. Where she is a pretender who takes to her bed to hide away. He takes action that makes his body react in an adverse way when he should be resting in his bed.

Dilsey does not worry about what people think. She attempts to protect Miss Quentin no matter the consequence to her and she watches over Benjy taking him to church with her family because she knows no one else will look after him, while her family goes to church. She finds the Compson family exasperating, but she does not abandon the family because she has been with them so long that they are like her family.

Luster lets his pride get the best of him and is immediately put back in his place. He tries to show the other Negroes that he is better than them because he is driving the surrey. This makes him deviate from the path that Benjy is used to taking and makes him bellow in rage. Everything must be done a certain way so that he recognizes his surroundings. He becomes very upset and scared when the surroundings are



unfamiliar. Jason berates Luster because he has scared Benjy and caused a scene in the middle of town. It is an embarrassment to the family.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Mrs. Compson take the responsibility for everything upon herself? Why do the people around her find this annoying?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do people talk about Dilsey taking Benjy to church with her? Do you see it as a problem? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Benjy become so upset when Luster goes to the left of the Confederate monument? Do you think it was right for Jason to berate Luster for doing it? Why?

## Vocabulary

Venomous, regal, moribund, somnolent, fatalistic, undulant, raucous, austere, avatar, profundity, daguerreotype, faccid, obtuse, querulous, transience, sibilant, uncton, virtuosity, succubus, abnegation, arbitrary, ineffable.



# Characters

## Benjy Compson

Benjy Compson is a mentally challenged thirty-three year old man. His family keeps him at home to care for him rather than send him to a mental facility. He is taken care of by the servants of the house. Luther must keep Benjy entertained and from making too much noise and disturbing the other members of the family. The Compsons keep Benjy at home rather than sending him to a mental facility because it would look bad for the family to send their son away. Instead, they keep him in an environment with people who do not understand his condition or how to deal with him.

He has no sense of time or morality. His thoughts slip in and out of the present and past in a confused jumble. This shows how his mind is not like everyone else's and that he does not understand the concept of time. The mention of Caddy's name makes him mewl because he misses her. He does not understand why she is not around. Caddy is like a mother to him, since his own mother does not have anything to do with him. She expects others to keep him quiet and it fell to Caddy to care for Benjy and give him a mother figure.

Faulkner uses Benjy to show how life can seem a meaningless series of the same images and sounds. He is a simple person who views the people around him without prejudice or judgment. It shows a simple view of the world.

## Quentin Compson

Quentin Compson is the oldest child of Jason Compson III and Caroline Compson. He is very close to his sister Caddy and is against his parents' plans to send him to Harvard. The family sells land that Quentin refers to as Benjy's pasture to finance his education. He agrees to go because his mother wishes it. She sees it as a way to maintain their station in the community.

Quentin sees his family as all important. He worries for his family, especially Caddy. She is a wild girl who ends up pregnant as a teenager and will not name the father. Quentin attempts to take responsibility for the pregnancy by telling his father that the baby is his. His father does not believe him and sends him to Boston early to get him away from the situation.

Quentin does not like being separated from his family and does not like Harvard life. He drowns himself in the river before the end of his first year at Harvard. He feels a deep sense of responsibility for what happened to Caddy and to his family. He blames himself for not being able to keep Caddy safe even from herself. Quentin has an unhealthy relationship with his sister. This relationship leads to his inability to process and accept the mistakes she makes and his ability to cope with them.



## Caddy Compson

Caddy Compson is the daughter of Jason Compson III and Caroline Compson. She is a spirited girl who believes in doing what she wants no matter the consequences. This does not fade as she becomes a teenager. Caddy is a mother figure to the rest of the family since their mother stays in bed caring only for herself.

Caddy disgraces the family by becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock. She is unsure who the father is. She meets a banker from Indiana and convinces him to marry her even though she does not love him. He leaves her when he finds out that the baby is not his. She must send her newborn to her family to care for since she cannot care for her by herself and her family has disowned her. Her mother will not let her name be spoken in her house.

Caddy sends money to her mother for her daughter, Quentin's welfare. She attempts to see her daughter, but is thwarted by her brother, Jason. She misses her baby desperately, but cannot give her the life that she deserves.

## Jason Compson IV

Jason Compson IV is the son of Jason Compson III and Caroline Compson. He is not liked by the other Compson children. He spies on them for his mother. Jason thinks Quentin is weak for taking his own life. He is bitter toward Caddy because her husband promises to give him a job in the bank before he realized that her child was not his. Jason is not offered the job in the bank and he blames Caddy for it.

Jason gets a job at a farm supply store, which he feels is beneath him. He, like his mother, feels a sense of entitlement. He feels that he is wasting his time working in the store. To get back at Caddy, he takes the money that she sends for her daughter. He is a mean, bitter man who takes out his resentment of Caddy on her daughter, Quentin. He resents how close Caddy and Quentin were and that he was seen as an outsider to them.

## Jason Compton III

Jason Compton III is the father of Quentin, Caddy, Jason, and Benjy. He is an alcoholic who dies a year after Quentin commits suicide. He drinks to cope with his family life. His wife stays in bed and complains that she is dying every day. He must deal with the family matters on his own and keep his wife in check with her mood swings and thoughts of grandeur.





## Caroline Compson

Caroline Compson is the mother of Quentin, Caddy, Jason, and Benjy. She is a hypochondriac who spends most of her time in bed complaining that she will not be around much longer. She sees her family as being superior to those in the community. She puts the raising of her children off on the Negro staff and expects them to do everything for her. Mrs. Compson feels entitled to be taken care of and sees her family as a burden.

Mrs. Compson disowns Caddy and feels that Quentin let her down. She has nothing to do with Benjy because she finds him too much of a trial to deal with him. The only child she likes is Jason because she feels that he is more like her side of the family than he is a Compson. She gets him to spy on his brother and sister and report to her.

## Miss Quentin

Miss Quentin is the daughter of Caddy. She is raised by Mrs. Compson and Jason in their mother's home. She is like her mother. Quentin is rebellious and promiscuous. She does not get along with Jason because he bosses her around and spies on her. She knows that he is taking the money her mother sends her.

Quentin gets tired of the way she is treated in her grandmother's house. She robs Jason's room taking the money he has kept saved that Caddy has sent for Quentin. It is nearly three thousand dollars. She runs off with a traveling musician.

## Dilsey

Dilsey is the Compsons' Negro cook. She raises the Compson children as if they are her own. She attempts to protect Miss Quentin from the bitterness that Jason and Mrs. Compson feel for her mother. Dilsey cares for the family that she has been a part of for most of her life.

## Luster

Luster is the grandson of Dilsey. He takes care of Benjy and keeps him from annoying the other members of the family. Luster takes Benjy on walks around the property to keep him out of the house so that he does not disturb his mother. The family blames Luster if Benjy is too loud.

## Maurice Bascomb

Maurice Bascomb is the brother of Caroline Compson. He lives with the Compsons' sponging off of them.



## Dalton Aames

Dalton Aames is the supposed father of Caddy's baby. He gets into a fight with Quentin over Caddy.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Benjy's Pasture

Benjy's pasture is sold to fund Quentin's college education. It is made into a golf course, and Benjy follows along the fence watching the golfers. He remembers when he was little and he was able to walk through the pasture to the stream where he and the other children spent much of their time.

## Harvard

Quentin is sent to Harvard for his education. He does not want to go, but his mother wants him to go there. He is unhappy at Harvard because he is away from his family and his way of life. He ends up drowning himself in the Charles River near the campus.

## Charles River

Quentin drowns himself in the Charles River near the end of his first year at Harvard. It symbolizes his attempt to wash away the sin of Caddy's mistakes and his inability to help her.

## Jefferson, Mississippi

Jefferson, Mississippi is where the Compsons' live and where their family has lived for many generations.

## Fire

Fire helps calm Benjy when he is upset. Dilsey and Luster set him in front of the fire to watch the flames to keep him from being too loud.

## Slippers

Slippers are given to Benjy to hold to calm him, while he watches the fire.

## Gate

Benjy runs to the gate to watch for Caddy to come home from school. He does not understand that time has passed and Caddy has left Jefferson, Mississippi.



## Pocket watch

Quentin carries a pocket watch that his father gave him. He breaks the watch, but he can still hear it ticking. It shows his inability to escape time and control it.

## Stream

The Compson children play in the stream when they are young and innocent. Water is a symbol of cleansing and purity. At this time in their lives, the children are uncorrupted and pure.

## Money

Money is important to Jason. He uses it to manipulate Caddy and her daughter. Jason takes the money that Caddy sends their mother for the raising of Miss Quentin. Quentin steals the money and runs away causing Jason to chase after her because money is the only thing that is important to him.

# Settings

## Jefferson, Mississippi

Jefferson, Mississippi is the central setting of the novel. This is the town where the Compson family has resided for many generations. They were considered Southern aristocracy, but have fallen since the Civil War. The town is small and does not offer much opportunity to the younger generation. It is a farming community.

Most of the novel takes place at the Compson home or on their property. The family's identity is centered around their family estate. The loss of part of it to fund Quentin's education affects Benjy who loses the pasture in which he enjoys to roam. Quentin feels responsible for losing the land because their identity is tied to the estate.

## Harvard

Quentin attends Harvard and drowns himself in the Charles River near the end of his first term. He does not like it there. He does not fit in with the other students and is extremely homesick. The culture of the North is different than he is used to.

The North is not as friendly as the South, and Quentin finds it difficult to be away from his family. He does not have the same ideals or morality of his fellow classmates. This makes it difficult for him to matriculate into Harvard and accept his role outside of the family.



# Themes and Motifs

## Time

Time is a central theme of the novel. Time slips back and forth throughout each section giving the reader a glimpse of the past as well as the present lives of the Compson family. Time is seen as ill relevant. The Compson family members make the same mistakes throughout time.

In the April 7, 1928 section, Faulkner uses the view of Benjy Compson a severely mentally challenged man to show the ill relevance of time. To Benjy time has no meaning. His days are the same only the people change. This gives the reader a sense of confusion of the time that the events are taking place. This confusion shows the intensity of the family's relationships and the interwoven connection between the family members.

Benjy interweaves the past and the present seamlessly negotiating time without noticing the time change. Quentin is stuck in the past. He cannot let go of the past and only escapes it by taking his life. The ticking of his watch show the passage of time. He breaks it in an attempt to stop time, but cannot stop it or keep it from being constantly present in his mind. Jason focuses on the future. He always looks to what could be rather than what is. Dilsey focuses on the present and is the only one who seems content with her life.

## Pride

Pride is a theme of the novel. Mrs. Compson believes herself to be superior to those around her because of her family's station. This has fallen over the years, but Mrs. Compson remembers when their family was respected in the community and will not relinquish her feelings of superiority. She lords this over her household staff and makes them wait on her hand and foot as if she is aristocracy.

Jason's pride makes him feel that his job at the farm supply store is beneath him. It leads him to steal from his own sister because he blames her for not being more successful. His pride makes him a bitter cynical man who does not enjoy the simple pleasures in life, but is always looking to the future and how to capitalize on the actions of others. He goes after Quentin when she steals his money because his pride is hurt. She outsmarted him and was able to take back what was hers.

Jason and his mother believe that they deserve better in life because of their family name. Mrs. Compson believes others should wait on her hand and foot and be happy to do so. Jason believes that a good life should be handed to him and he should not have to work hard for it. He blames others for his not having the life he believes he deserves. Pride makes them self-centered and believing that the world owes them a good life.



## Loyalty/Obsession

Loyalty and Obsession are themes of the novel. The Compson family is loyal to one another. Quentin is loyal to Caddy so loyal and obsessed that he feels responsible for Caddy's mistakes and tells his father that Caddy's baby is his. Mr. Compson sends him to Harvard early because he is concerned with Quentin's obsession with his sister.

Jason Compson IV is obsessed with money and has no loyalty for his siblings. He does not like his brothers and sister. He is loyal to his mother. Throughout his childhood and adulthood he has spied on his siblings for his mother telling her all of their transgressions. This loyalty leaves him alienated from his siblings, which affects his forming relationships in adulthood. Jason becomes a cynical man who relies on himself and does not trust anyone else.

Benjy has an obsession with Caddy. When he hears her name, he becomes upset and cries because he misses her. Even when he hears the golfers on the golf course next to the family home call out for their caddies, he becomes upset because it sounds like her name. She is a kindly presence in his life that he misses and mourns its loss.

## Innocence

Innocence is a theme of the novel. Benjy embodies innocence. He cannot be corrupted by the other members of the family. He lives in his own world where the selfishness, greed and lust of the Compson family does not reach him. He loves Caddy like his brothers, but her transgressions do not affect his outlook on life. Quentin is so affected by her pregnancy and the blight on the family name that he takes the blame and kills himself. Jason blames Caddy for the problems of the family and his lack of a proper living.

Benjy does not understand what has happened. He has no sense of time so to him Caddy is still part of the family and he misses her, but as long as her name is not mentioned he does not understand that she is not there. In his mind, he travels to a time when she was there and he cannot differentiate between what is the present and what is the past.

## Love

Love is a theme of the novel. Mr. Compson loves his children and his wife. Quentin loves his family and becomes very homesick in Boston away from his family. He loves his sister, Caddy, so much he risks the wrath of his father by telling him that Caddy's baby is his. He insists he committed incest to try to save his sister's reputation. Benjy loves Caddy. He could always distinguish her because to him she smells like trees. Mrs. Compson loves Jason because he is more like her than any of her children.



Dilsey loves the Compson children as if they were her own. She raised them because their mother is a hypochondriac who spends her time in her bed waiting to die. Dilsey is a kind person who does not begrudge anyone anything, but spends her life looking after someone else's children. She protects Benjy by keeping him calm and from disturbing the rest of the family who get upset with him when he is loud. She also attempts to protect Miss Quentin from Jason. She believes he is too harsh on her and protects her no matter what wrath comes her way. She is like her own granddaughter because she took care of her mother Caddy. Miss Quentin is so much like her that it is uncanny. Dilsey wants to protect Miss Quentin like she was unable to protect Caddy.



# Styles

## Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person in the first three sections and third person in the fourth section. The first section is told in the first person viewpoint of Benjy Compson. The second section is told in the first person viewpoint of Quentin Compson. The third section is told in the first person viewpoint of Jason Compson IV. The fourth section is told in the third person narrative with Dilsey as the central figure. By writing the first three sections of the novel in the first person of each of the Compson brothers, Faulkner is able to show the different mentalities of the brothers and how they reflect the Compson family.

The story is told through dialogue and exposition through the characters memories of their childhood and their present lives. The novel goes from past to present with no rhyme or reason. It is difficult for the reader to comprehend the exact time of when the events are taking place. There is no transition to the memories. The flow from past to present and present to past is unordered and confusing.

The sections are told by different family members to show the different ways that people react to situations. Benjy is mentally challenged so his view is one of innocence and is unprejudiced. Quentin is unstable and cannot handle the gravity of the situation so that he takes his life. Jason becomes cynical toward life and distrusts everyone. Dilsey is the only one who takes the situation in stride and handles events as they come.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple because the sections are told by a mentally-challenged man, a college freshman, a young man who works in a farm supply store and the cook of the Compson family. These people have not had formal education so the language is simple and not complex.

The novel is difficult to read because it slips seamlessly from past to present and the reader is confused by this movement in time. The events that are happening are never fully explained so the reader has to guess at what is happening. The suicide of Quentin is inferred. The reader is never told outright that Quentin committed suicide. The reader has to take what they have read and piece it together with the other sections to understand what is happening in the present and what happened in the past.

## Structure

The Sound and the Fury is comprised of four sections. These sections are long consisting of 50 to 100 pages. The long sections make for a slow read symbolizing the slow deterioration of the Compson family. It makes the novel difficult and slow to read.



The plot of the novel is the deterioration of the Compson family and how each member faces this situation. Benjy has no comprehension of time and morality or understanding of what is happening to his family and their deteriorating status. Quentin cannot accept what is happening to his family and commits suicide. It shows that the past glory of the family is beyond them. Jason becomes cynical and materialistic as a way of dealing with the deterioration of the family. If he does not care and focuses on what he can obtain on his own the past of his family will not matter.

The novel is slow and plodding showing this slow deterioration. It is a story of the struggle of a family as they attempt to accept that the status of their family is declining within the community and how different members accept this decline.



## Quotes

Caddy smelled like trees.

-- Benjy (Section 1 paragraph 10, pg. 6)

**Importance:** Benjy sees Caddy as innocent and pure. As long as she smells like trees, this is his Caddy. When she attempts to wear perfume and have relationships, she no longer smells like trees and loses her innocence.

I've got to marry somebody.

-- Caddy (Section 2 paragraph 3, pg. 113)

**Importance:** Caddy does not love Herbert, but because she is pregnant she must marry someone for face taking care of the baby by herself. She does not have the ability to do this so she must rely on a man to take care of her and her child. Her family will not help her because her situation is shameful to them and will hurt their reputation.

I wish you were dead.

-- Quentin (Section 2 paragraph 22, pg. 157)

**Importance:** Quentin says this to Caddy after her late night meeting with Dalton. It shows Quentin's obsession with Caddy and his unstable mind.

Did you ever have a sister? did you?

-- Quentin (Section 2 paragraph 11, pg. 166)

**Importance:** Quentin says this a lot throughout the novel. He says this to Gerald before he attacks him because Gerald is being demeaning of women and Quentin does not like it. He feels that his sister was defiled by men and she should not be judged for it.

You know if I had my way, you'd have an office of you own to go to, and hours that became a Bascomb. Because you are a Bascomb, despite your name.

-- Mrs. Compson (Section 3 paragraph 1, pg. 182)

**Importance:** Mrs. Compson believes that Jason is more like her than any of her children. She wants the best for him, but cannot provide it. She sees him as the glory of her family.

I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I don't care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere where you are.

-- Miss Quentin (Section 3 paragraph 3, pg. 189)

**Importance:** Miss Quentin says this to Jason. She does not like his attempts to control her life. He treats her like a slut, so she acts like one.



After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It don't belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it.

-- Jason Compson IV (Chapter 4 paragraph 4, pg. 194)

**Importance:** Jason does not value money. He only wants what it buys. He is materialistic.

I know you. I grew up with you.

-- Caddy (Section 3 paragraph 5, pg 204)

**Importance:** Caddy does not trust Jason because during their childhood he spied on her and would always tell their parents when she did something wrong. She did not like him then, and she does not like him now.

We Bascombs need nobody's charity. Certainly not that of a fallen woman.

-- Mrs. Compson (Section 3 paragraph 2, pg. 220)

**Importance:** Mrs. Compson refuses to accept the money that Caddy sends because she is an immoral person. She sees Jason as a Bascomb and they are proud people who rely on no one.

You're not the one who has to bear it. It's not your responsibility. You can go away.

-- Mrs. Compson (Section 4 paragraph 3, pg. 272)

**Importance:** Mrs. Compson feels that the integrity of the family relies on her. She must bear the sins of the family so that everyone else can live their lives.

I have to depend on them so completely. It's not as if I were strong. I wish I were. I wish I could do all the house work myself. I could at least take that much off your shoulders.

-- Mrs. Compson (Section 4 paragraph 1, pg. 279)

**Importance:** Mrs. Compson is lamenting to Jason about how weak she is now. She is unable to help out with her family. She apologizes to him for not being able to help him provide for the family and being a burden to him. She is a martyr who uses illness to gain attention and make her family pay attention to her.

Don't you know any better than to take him to the left?

-- Jason Compson IV (Section 4 paragraph 4, pg. 320)

**Importance:** Jason asks this of Luster when he takes Benjy to the left of the Confederate statue, which deviates from his normal routine. Benjy must have everything a certain way and change does not go over well. Benjy becomes very upset and hard to control.