The Sound and the Fury

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

William Faulkner was the oldest of four brothers born to a wealthy family in Mississippi. His early influences were his mother and grandmother, who were both readers and artists, and Caroline Barr, the black woman who raised and educated him. When he was six, Faulkner's family moved to Oxford, Mississippi, where his grandfather owned several businesses, and Faulkner spent most of the rest of his life there. Faulkner dropped out of high school despite his obvious intelligence and talent. He began writing poetry first, and published his first novel in 1925. His stories center around the South, and many take place in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County in Mississippi. Faulkner suffered from alcoholism all his life, but he still managed to publish nineteen novels and a variety of other stories and screenplays. He was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature, and is now considered one of the most important modern American writers. He died of a heart attack at the age of 64.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Sound and the Fury is set in Mississippi in the early 1900s, and primarily follows the decline of the Compsons, a white aristocratic family. When the South was defeated in the Civil War in the 1860s, slavery was abolished and many of the wealthy families lost their source of income. Reconstruction, a period following the war and intended to both return the South to prosperity and establish rights for freed slaves, was mostly a failure. As a result families like the Compsons lost their wealth and status while still clinging to their old, aristocratic traditions and values, even in the face of the changing modern world. At the same time black families like the Gibsons were still second-class citizens, hardly better off than they were as slaves, and subject to Jim Crow laws, indentured servitude, and the danger of being lynched by the Klu Klux Klan.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Faulkner's contemporary and opposite (in terms of style) was Ernest Hemingway, author of *The Sun Also Rises*. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* both share his use of stream-of-consciousness and other modernist styles.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Sound and the Fury*
- **When Written:** 1928-29
- **Where Written:** Oxford, Mississippi
- **When Published:** 1929
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Modernist Fiction, Southern Gothic Fiction
- **Setting:** Jefferson, Mississippi and Cambridge, Massachusetts
- **Climax:** Miss Quentin steals Jason's money and flees
- **Point of View:** First person in the first three chapters (each chapter from the viewpoint of a different person), third person omniscient in the last chapter

EXTRA CREDIT

MGM. Faulkner was not recognized as a great writer until late in his life, and he often had to take other jobs to earn money. For several years he worked as a writer of screenplays for MGM films, despite not being a personal fan of cinema.

The Compsons. The Compson family appears in other Faulkner works, like the novel *Absalom, Absalom!* and the story "That Evening Sun."

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel's first narrator is Benjy, a mute, mentally disabled man who experiences time as a series of muddled perceptions. He is one of four children of Jason Compson III and Caroline Compson, along with Quentin, Jason IV, and Caddy. The Compsons are an old, aristocratic Southern family from Jefferson, Mississippi. After the Civil War the Compsons declined in wealth, morality, and sanity: Jason III is a philosophical but ineffective alcoholic and Caroline is a self-obsessed hypochondriac, and their children have a host of problems. The central tension of the story involves the three brothers' individual obsessions with Caddy.

The first section occurs on Benjy's thirty-third birthday, the day before **Easter** 1928. Benjy and his teenaged black caretaker, Luster, hang around a golf course where many things remind Benjy of his past, including the death of his grandmother, Quentin and Caddy playing in a stream, Benjy's attack on a passing school girl, Caddy first kissing a boy and first wearing perfume, and her wedding. In the present action, Benjy interrupts Miss Quentin, his niece and Caddy's illegitimate daughter, kissing a man with a red tie. Luster then takes Benjy home for dinner, where his brother Jason scorns him but Dilsey, the Compsons' servant, treats him kindly.

The second section is narrated by Quentin, and takes place at Harvard eighteen years before, on the day Quentin committed

suicide. Quentin's narrative is also interrupted by memories and musings. Quentin is haunted by the constant ticking of his grandfather's **watch**, which he connects to the Compson family pride. Quentin pinpoints the loss of the Compson honor on the loss of Caddy's virginity. He is tormented by memories of Caddy's promiscuity, and Quentin himself lying to his father, saying he and Caddy had committed incest. He remembers his own encounters with Caddy's first lover and then her husband, and his father saying virginity is a meaningless concept. In the present action, Quentin breaks his watch, which still keeps ticking, and stands on a bridge thinking about death. Later he buys bread for a young Italian girl, gets beat up by her brother, and gets a ride with a swaggering, promiscuous Harvard boy, whom Quentin then attacks. When he returns to his dorm room at Harvard, Quentin leaves his watch behind and goes out.

Jason IV narrates the next section, which is the day before Benjy's narration. The bitter, cruel Jason works at a farm supply store and steals money that Caddy, who is disgraced and disowned by the family, sends to Miss Quentin, the daughter she has never met. Jason bitterly dwells on the past and Caddy, as Caddy's husband had offered Jason a bank job, but then retracted it when they divorced because of Caddy's illegitimate child. In the present action Jason argues with Miss Quentin, his boss, and his mother, and bullies Quentin into signing a money order. Later he chases Miss Quentin and her lover, but they eventually leave him stranded miles away from town. Jason makes his way home, torments Dilsey and Luster, and gets in another argument with Quentin over dinner.

The last section begins by following Dilsey as she gets the household ready on Easter Sunday, the day after Benjy's section. Jason wakes up to discover that Miss Quentin has run away and stolen all his money – most of which he himself had stolen from her. Jason rushes off and Dilsey, Luster, and Benjy go to an Easter church service. Meanwhile the police refuse to help Jason, so he pursues Quentin to another town, where he is attacked by an old man and fails to find Miss Quentin. Meanwhile Luster takes Benjy on a carriage ride, but he deviates from the usual course and Benjy starts howling. Jason appears and strikes Luster and Benjy. When Luster returns to the usual path Benjy grows calm, feeling everything is back in order.

In the Appendix, Faulkner describes the history of the Compson family and their fates after the novel. After Caroline dies, Jason sends Benjy to an asylum and sells the Compson house. Years later a librarian sees a picture of Caddy in a magazine, and she brings it to Dilsey, but Dilsey has no desire to "save" Caddy, as she is better off away from Jefferson.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Benjamin (Benjy) Compson – The first narrator of the book, a mute, mentally disabled man. Benjy was originally named "Maury" after his uncle, but Caroline changed his name when she discovered his disability. Benjy has no understanding of time, cause and effect, or morality, and experiences life as a muddled blur of sensations. Despite this, Benjy is able to sense things that the other Compsons can't – he moans when Damuddy dies, and understands the moment that Caddy loses her virginity. The three things Benjy loves most are his sister Caddy, his pasture (which was sold to a golf club), and fire. He was castrated as a teen after trying to talk to a passing schoolgirl about Caddy who had just gotten married; his efforts were perceived as an attack.

Quentin Compson – The oldest Compson child and the novel's second narrator, Quentin is close with his father and Caddy. He feels the constant burden of his family's past greatness and its present decline. This turns into an obsession with time and his place within it, and Quentin carries his grandfather's **watch** everywhere. He also connects Caddy's promiscuity with the loss of the family honor. There is implied sexual tension between Quentin and Caddy, and he is certainly very possessive of her sexuality and "honor." Quentin is intelligent and sensitive, but he is never able to protect (or influence) Caddy or act on his ideas – like his suicide pact with Caddy or his attempt to attack Dalton Ames – except in his suicide.

Jason Compson IV – Jason is the only one of the four siblings—Quentin, Caddy, Benjy, and himself—to receive Mrs. Compson's affection, but he grows up into a bitter, loveless man. As an adult Jason feels like the world is against him, and he has a strong hatred of women, black people, and Northerners. Like the other brothers, Jason is also preoccupied with Caddy, but for him she is another source of bitterness, as her husband, Herbert Head, offered Jason a job at a bank, but then retracted it when he divorced Caddy (because of her illegitimate child). Jason hates Caddy for "losing" him the job. He works at a farm supply store and steals the money Caddy sends to Miss Quentin, and fears and respects no one except Dilsey.

Candace (Caddy) Compson – The only Compson daughter and arguably the novel's most important character, as she is the object of her brothers' obsessions. Caddy is the only Compson who seems capable of loving truly, as she cares for Benjy as a child and is very close with Quentin. She becomes sexually active at an early age, trampling on the notion of the chaste Southern lady. It is her promiscuity that leads to most of the novel's tension, as her "loss of honor" drives Quentin to suicide, and her illegitimate child Miss Quentin leads to Caddy being divorced, disowned, and disgraced. She later sends money to

Miss Quentin, though Jason steals it.

Mr. Compson – Jason Compson III, the father of the family, a cynical, philosophical man who spends all day drinking whiskey and reading Greek and Roman literature instead of caring for his children or working. Mr. Compson instills the importance of the family honor into Quentin, but in practice he seems to ignore it, saying that Caddy's virginity is a meaningless concept.

Ms. Quentin Compson – Caddy's illegitimate daughter who is raised without knowing her mother's name. Quentin becomes promiscuous like Caddy, but she does not feel any shame for her actions. She is also partly raised by the cruel Jason so she grows up in a home without love. She ultimately escapes with the money Jason had stolen from her and disappears.

Dilsey Gibson – The most positive character of the book, the matriarch of the family of Compson servants. She is the only stable force in the lives of the Compson children, and raises them despite Mrs. Compson's incompetence. She retains the old Southern values like family, courage, and religious faith, but avoids the corruption of the Compsons' self-absorption. In this she symbolizes Faulkner's hope for the South.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mrs. Compson – Caroline Bascomb Compson, the mother of the family, a dithering, self-obsessed hypochondriac who is unable to connect with or support her children. She favors Jason for some reason, and is preoccupied with the honor of her Bascomb family name. She is immensely prideful.

Luster Gibson – Dilsey's teenaged grandson, who likes to make mischief but is able to fully care for Benjy.

Roskus Gibson – Dilsey's husband, the patriarch of the Gibsons, Roskus suffers from paralyzing rheumatism and talks about how unlucky the Compsons are.

Damuddy – The Compson children's grandmother, who never appears in the novel except when she dies. A symbol of the old South and its death.

T.P. Gibson – Dilsey's son, who accidentally gets drunk with Benjy at Caddy's wedding.

Frony Gibson – Dilsey's daughter, another Compson servant.

Versh Gibson – Dilsey's son, who is Benjy's caretaker for a while.

Maury Bascomb – Caroline's brother, a man who lives by borrowing money and food from the family, and has an affair with their neighbor, Mrs. Patterson.

The man in the red tie – A man from a traveling minstrel show who runs away with Miss Quentin.

Earl – Jason's boss at the farm supply store, an honorable man who is patient with Jason's sarcasm.

Dalton Ames – Caddy's first lover, and possibly the father of her child.

Herbert Head – Caddy's husband, who was once known for cheating at cards. He divorces Caddy when he learns that Miss Quentin is not his child.

Gerald Bland – A handsome, swaggering Harvard student who boasts of his exploits with women.

Mrs. Bland – Gerald's mother, who accompanies him and brags about him.

Shreve – Quentin's roommate and friend.

Spoade – A Harvard boy who makes fun of Quentin's virginity.

Deacon – A black man who hangs around Harvard and befriends Quentin.

Reverend Shegog – A visiting preacher who delivers a powerful **Easter** sermon.

Lorraine – A prostitute that Jason visits in Memphis.

Mrs. Patterson – The Compsons' neighbor, who has an affair with Uncle Maury.

Mr. Patterson – Mrs. Patterson's husband, who learns of his wife's affair when he intercepts Benjy delivering her a love letter from Maury.

Charlie – The first boy Caddy kisses.

Mr. Burgess – A man who beats Benjy after Benjy chases some schoolgirls. He is the father of one of the girls.

Natalie – A girl Quentin kissed, who makes Caddy jealous.

Julio – The angry brother of an Italian girl who follows Quentin.

Librarian A town librarian who sees a picture of Caddy in a magazine, long after Caddy has left town. She wants to save Caddy, but realizes it would be impossible.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

TIME, MEMORY, AND THE PAST

Faulkner deals with the concept of time in a unique way in *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy, the book's first narrator, is mentally disabled and completely lacks a sense of time. Faulkner creates the sensation of Benjy's perceptions by shifting the narrative years backwards or forwards mid-paragraph, as certain words and sensations remind Benjy of past experiences. This allows Faulkner to make surprising and poignant connections between past and present events. Quentin, the next narrator, is the opposite of Benjy – Quentin is obsessed with time, and cannot seem to escape its inexorable passing. Quentin's main preoccupation is with the

lost glory of his family (as represented by Caddy's lost virginity), so the constant chiming of clocks and the ticking of his grandfather's **watch** becomes a symbol of the decline he cannot escape. Among the main characters, Dilsey has the only healthy relationship with time and the past, as she is able to step back and see herself and the Compson family as a small piece of history – she has seen the beginning, and now she sees the end.

The title of the novel itself, *The Sound and the Fury*, comes from a monologue in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where the speaker laments the pointlessness of an individual life within the relentless march of time and history. This theme then becomes generally symbolic of the overarching decline of the Compson family, as well as its individual members. The characters are unable to forget the past and move into the modern world. They cannot see themselves without pride and self-absorption, even as time marches on and leaves them broken behind it.

DECLINE AND CORRUPTION

One of the overarching themes of the book is the decline of the Compson family, which also acts as a symbol of the decline of the South itself. The family was once a model of the wealthy, slave-owning Southern aristocracy before the Civil War. By the time of the novel, however, the Compsons have lost most of their wealth and land, despite their feeble attempts to halt their downward spiral. They sell off most of their land to pay for Quentin's education at Harvard – itself an attempt to maintain their social status – but this too backfires with Quentin's suicide. By the end of the novel and the appendix, Jason, the last male Compson, has sold everything and lives above a farm supply store.

The Compson decline manifests itself physically, mentally, and morally: Jason III is an alcoholic, Caroline is a self-obsessed hypochondriac, Benjy is severely mentally disabled, Caddy is disgraced and disowned, Quentin is suicidal, and Jason IV is bitter, greedy, and cruel. The Compson line literally ends with *The Sound and the Fury*, as Jason is incapable of loving and so seems unlikely to get married and have legitimate children.

This theme also applies to the "Southern values" held dear by the Compsons, and extends to the Old South itself. Faulkner shows how the aristocracy declined after the Civil War, when the slave-based wealth of the upper-class whites was destroyed, but old families like the Compsons still clung to outdated systems and traditions. Caddy tramples on the ideal of the chaste Southern lady, and Quentin's suicidal obsession with his sister's chastity is a perversion of the chivalrous, honorable Southern gentleman. Only Dilsey seems to preserve the old Southern values – honor, kindness, hard work, and religious faith – without the corruption of self-absorption. This is significant in that Dilsey is also the main black character in the novel, a servant to the Compsons and not actually part of the family. Yet her character is Faulkner's only hint at redemption for the South – that by holding onto purer versions of its original values, the South might someday heal itself.

WORDS AND LANGUAGE

Faulkner's innovative and often confusing language is the most unique part of *The Sound and the Fury*. Each section of the book is told in a different narrative style, where the writing itself blends with the themes and stories it describes: Benjy's section is muddled and subjective, while Jason's is clear but brutal. The winding sentences and stream-of-consciousness style mirror the struggles of the narrators as they try to make sense of a past that seems as real as the present. Within the plot itself, repeated phrases and memories are important to each character, like Caddy's name to Benjy.

While the writing is original and beautiful, the style and use of multiple narrators actually seems to point to the *failure* of language, especially in its ability to capture the truth of an emotion or event. Different points of view, perspectives of time and memory, and narrative styles are needed to properly tell the story of *The Sound and the Fury*, but even then they can only hint at the truths Faulkner is trying to express. The tortured stream of consciousness of sections like Quentin's creates the feeling of struggle, of trying to work through memory and suffering through thoughts and words. In this way Faulkner is both telling the story and offering a meditation on the failure of language to truly capture life.

SIN AND SEXUALITY

For a traditional Southern lady, sexuality is associated with sin and virginity with innocence, but Caddy tramples on "Southern chastity" by becoming sexually active at an early age. The association of sexuality with sin and "uncleanness" is symbolically foreshadowed by Caddy's dirty underwear as a child. Though sexuality is a personal subject and not inherently sinful – except in this traditional Southern worldview – all of Caddy's brothers become obsessed with Caddy's promiscuity. Quentin's guilt involves what he allowed to happen (and how it stained the family honor) but also his own possessive love for Caddy herself. His obsession with her chastity is so tormenting to him because it stems from both a desire to protect her and a repressed desire to have her for himself. Jason, however, sees Caddy's sexuality as a personal affront and another opportunity for bitterness, as her divorce cost him a potential job at a bank.

Miss Quentin, Caddy's illegitimate daughter, inherits her mother's promiscuous nature, but Miss Quentin feels no shame for her actions, as she no longer subscribes to the notion of sex

as inherently sinful. Indeed, when compared to Quentin's obsessions and Jason's bitter rage, Caddy and Miss Quentin become two of the more positive characters in the book. They at least, in comparison to the other Compsons, are capable of love.

RACE AND CLASS

The setting of *The Sound and the Fury* is Mississippi in the early 1900s, when slavery was still a recent memory, and the Compson family has black live-in servants who are basically slaves in all but technicality. Slavery ended with the Civil War in the 1860s, but African-Americans remained as second-class citizens. Most of the policies of reparations and equal rights failed, which left the wealthy, slave-owning aristocracy broken but the former slaves themselves not much better off than before. This left an ever-present tension between blacks and whites in everyday society. Within the novel, the black servants are scorned by the Compsons, but it becomes clear that the Gibsons are more sane and capable than the Compsons themselves, as they have not been corrupted by their own family pride and slave-owning history. The Compson family ends with the novel, but the Gibsons "endured." The Compsons also see themselves as superior to the other whites of Jefferson, clinging to their glorious past and blind to their present corruption.

Dilsey, the matriarch of the Gibsons, is the strongest positive character of the book and has her own section, though she isn't given a narrative voice like the Compson brothers. Instead, the novel's most progressive accomplishment is simply treating the Gibsons with the same unsympathetic, deeply human characterization as the Compsons. Nothing is sentimental or idealized, and it is only Dilsey's calm fortitude in the face of corruption and madness that can endure the tragedy of the Compsons' world.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

QUENTIN'S WATCH

Quentin's father gave him his watch in the hopes that it would make him occasionally forget about time, but the watch only increases Quentin's obsession. Because it belonged to his father and grandfather, the watch reminds Quentin of his family's honor and heritage, which then contributes to his guilt and depression regarding Caddy's sins and his own perception of how the family has fallen. Quentin tries to break the watch to free himself from its constant haunting presence, but the watch keeps ticking even without its hands. When he goes to drown himself, Quentin leaves the watch behind in his room, but it is the sense of time – and his own unimportance within history – that actually drives him to suicide. This watch also symbolizes the larger theme of time itself, and how different characters perceive it in the novel. For Benjy the past and present meld together into one vague series of perceptions, but for Quentin everything is precisely marked off by the defined ticking of his watch.

SHADOWS

Throughout the book Faulkner brings up images of shadows – particularly in Benjy's and Quentin's chapters – as when Quentin looks down from the bridge and watches the shadows in the water, imagining drowning himself. The emphasis on the shadows of objects as well as the objects themselves becomes a symbol of the darker side or past side of every situation and character, such as the declining Compson family, which is only a shadow of its former self. Shadows also mark the passage of time, as they shift with the sun throughout the day, so they also point to the theme of time and memory.

EASTER

Religious symbolism pervades the book, much of it dealing with Christ-figures and resurrection, and the strongest symbol of this is the timeline of the narrative itself – Benjy's, Jason's, and Dilsey's sections take place on the days leading up to Easter and Easter itself. Benjy is the first possible Christ-figure, as he was born on Holy Saturday and is 33 years old at the time of the story, the age at which Christ was crucified. The fact that Benjy is mentally disabled may mean Faulkner is implying that Christ is now impotent or else unrecognizable in the modern world. Dilsey is another possible Christ-figure, as she represents the hope of resurrection for the Compson family – she is the only character to retain pure Southern values and her own religious faith, she has endured Christlike suffering at the hands of the Compsons, and the novel ends with her attending church on Easter Sunday. She is the one figure of hope in the dark, crumbling world of the novel.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *The Sound and the Fury* published in 1990.

April Seventh, 1928 Quotes

❝ Caddy was all wet and muddy behind, and I started to cry and she came and squatted in the water.
"Hush now." she said. "I'm not going to run away." So I hushed. Caddy smelled like trees in the rain.

Related Characters: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

When Benjy thinks "Caddy smelled like trees," we get one of the refrains of his narrative. Caddy, the second-born Compson child after Quentin, is the only one who can consistently comfort Benjy. Caddy loves Benjy deeply, and even in the midst of her argument with Quentin she realizes that someone needs to help Benjy cope with what he cannot understand of his surroundings.

While playing outside, Caddy ends up "all wet and muddy behind." This imagery will also repeat itself throughout this first section, suggesting both Caddy's childhood sloppiness (she doesn't care much for the dress others want her to keep clean) and her transition into adolescence. Faulkner's male characters tend to be deeply afraid of menstruation and female sexuality in general, and as Caddy becomes sexually mature her family members increasingly associate her with dirtiness, earthiness, and lack of purity.

"All right." Versh said. "You the one going to get whipped. I aint." He went and pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb. We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the tree thrashing...
"What you seeing." Frony whispered.
I saw them. Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind. Caddy Caddy

Related Characters: Frony Gibson, Versh Gibson, Benjamin (Benjy) Compson (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

Here, already, the imagery of Caddy's "muddy bottom" finds its way into Benjy's narration. There is something voyeuristic about the others standing around watching from below while she climbs into the tree. There's little indication that Benjy feels anything but adoration for Caddy, but his oldest brother Quentin certainly has confused feelings about Caddy's emerging sexuality.

The kids are trying to spy on their grandmother Damuddy through an upstairs window, compelled by rumors that she is sick and dying. The Compton children, especially Caddy, are driven by their curiosity to find out what is happening in their chaotic home. Given the incompetence of their parents, the kids have to make their own sense of events like their grandmother's impending death.

At the end of this passage, Benjy sees Caddy again and is thrown back (or forward) into a memory of Caddy's wedding. Because both of these events happen in the past, but years apart, it can be extremely confusing to read Benjy's narrative. It is a multi-layered past, and Damuddy's death occurs well before Caddy's wedding. But Benjy links things together through sensation and emotion, not through temporality or cause-and-effect. This allows Faulkner to link Damuddy's funeral and Caddy's wedding thematically: they are both, in part, signals that the Compsons' prosperity is waning.

"It's no joke." Mother said. "My people are every bit as well born as yours. Just because Maury's health is bad."
"Of course." Father said. "Bad health is the primary reason for all life. Created by disease, within putrefaction, into decay. Versh."
"Sir." Versh said behind my chair.
"Take the decanter and fill it."

Related Characters: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson, Versh Gibson, Mr. Compson, Mrs. Compson (speaker), Maury Bascomb

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

This passage provides a glimpse into how each of the Compson parents tends to function throughout the novel. Mrs. Compson is extremely anxious, and when she enters the novel she is almost always brooding over her family's troubles. Mr. Compson, on the other hand, is aloof. He makes huge philosophical pronouncements-- like "Bad health is the primary reason for all life"-- and drinks heavily. He demonstrates a certain level of caring for his children, but does little to engage with them in a deeper way.

In this scene, Mrs. Compson scolds her husband through

tears for a joke he has just made about her brother, Maury. She often worries that the Compson bloodline is cursed, wondering if she should have stayed in her "well born" family and avoided all the tragedy that seems to follow the Compsons around.

Caddy and I ran. We ran up the kitchen steps, onto the porch, and Caddy knelt down in the dark and held me... "I wont." she said. "I wont anymore, ever. Benjy. Benjy." Then she was crying, and I cried, and we held each other. "Hush." she said. "Hush. I wont anymore." So I hushed and Caddy got up and we went into the kitchen and turned the light on and Caddy took the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard. Caddy smelled like trees.
I kept a telling you to stay away from there, Luster said. They sat up in the swing, quick. Quentin had her hands on her hair. He had a red tie.

Related Characters: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson, Candace (Caddy) Compson, Luster Gibson (speaker), Quentin Compson, The man in the red tie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Once again, an occurrence in the novel's present (April 1928) sends Benjy spiraling into a memory. Benjy is trapped inside himself, still mourning his loss of Caddy all these years later but unable to vocalize any of his sadness or anxiety. In this memory, Benjy sees Caddy on the swing kissing a boyfriend, and he panics. After the boyfriend, Charlie, becomes angry at Benjy, Caddy chooses her brother over her boyfriend and runs away with Benjy to comfort him.

Because nearly everyone else is ineffective at comforting Benjy, Caddy is left to do too much of it. What might be seen as a "normal" developmental phenomenon— her first kiss on the swing outside their house— is interrupted by Benjy, who can only understand the kiss as another sign that Caddy is planning to run away. After comforting him, Caddy washes her mouth "hard" with soap. She has internalized much of the shame her family forces upon her, and wants to wash away her sin against the Compson honor.

Once she does this, Caddy once again smells like trees in Benjy's mind; this tells us that Benjy has returned to a relative stability within himself. At the end of the passage, we return to the present, where Benjy has interrupted Miss Quentin (Caddy's daughter) kissing someone (the man with the red tie) on the same swing.

"Candace." Mother said. "I told you not to call him that. It was bad enough when your father insisted on calling you by that silly nickname, and I will not have him called by one. Nicknames are vulgar. Only common people use them. Benjamin." she said.

Related Characters: Mrs. Compson (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson, Benjamin (Benjy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63-64

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Compson is very sensitive to the names used for her children, and sees some connection between using full names and achieving the elevated status she seeks. This seems like a petty, desperate attempt to avoid all the "vulgar" realities of her family, and it is characteristic of Mrs. Compson that she worries about names while failing to take care of her children in any real way.

And, yet, this deep concern with names also makes sense within Faulkner's novel. We learn that Benjy's name was changed from Maury (like his uncle) to Benjamin when his parents discovered his disability. These characters feel pressing emotional connections with, and superstitions about, their names. In their eyes, calling the disabled child "Maury" would dishonor Mrs. Compson's brother Maury. And calling Benjamin "Benjy" would, according to Mrs. Compson, lower their family to "common people" status.

At this point, it is also worthwhile to note how much doubling of names we see in this novel. The young Jason is named after his father Jason; Benjy is originally named Maury after his uncle; Caddy's daughter Quentin is named after her dead brother Quentin. This makes the book more confusing to read, but also suggests important connections between different characters that are worth further consideration.

Caddy came to the door and stood there, looking at Father and Mother. Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry. It went loud and I got up. Caddy came in and stood with her back to the wall, looking at me. I went toward her, crying, and she shrank against the wall and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled at her dress. She put her hands out but I pulled at her dress. Her eyes ran.

Related Characters: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson, Mrs. Compson, Mr. Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68-69

Explanation and Analysis

Even though Benjy is in some ways less aware of the things happening around him, he seems to intuit the emotional states of other characters, especially Caddy, very well. She returns home after presumably having sex for the first time, and the sense of shame emanating from Caddy is tangible. Once again Benjy and Caddy run away together, but this time they stay inside the house. When they are kids, the Compsons are almost always outside; but now, slightly older, they stay more often within the walls of their home.

It's not exactly clear in this passage whether Caddy is comforting Benjy or vice versa. Benjy's crying grows louder when he sees Caddy's eyes, meaning he understands her shame and sadness on an emotional level, if not cognitively. Benjy understands everything, even his own crying, as something happening outside of himself. Here, for example, he understands his crying in this way: "It went loud and I got up." Benjy knows he is crying, but does not seem to connect his crying to whatever noise is growing louder around him.

In passages like this one, Faulkner uses Benjy's perceptual uniqueness to introduce events, like Caddy's first sexual experience, that will end up central to the rest of the novel. By giving us our first glimpse of these events through Benjy's eyes, Faulkner avoids traditional cause-and-effect narration and makes things like sexuality and sibling interaction strange and mysterious once again.

June Second, 1910 Quotes

When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight oclock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire... I give it to you not that may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it.

Related Characters: Quentin Compson, Mr. Compson (speaker), Mr. Compson

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

Here we switch abruptly from Benjy's section to Quentin's, hoping for more clarity but not finding it. The style changes noticeably, from Benjy's scattered narration to Quentin's much more analytical but still very scattered section. Like Benjy, Quentin finds himself thrown from the present back into the past, with all its painful memories.

At the very start of Quentin's section, its two major themes are present: shadows and time. Quentin is disturbed by the shadows following him and everyone else around all the time. He is also tortured by time, embodied in the watch given to him by his father, along with one of Mr. Compson's characteristically vast philosophical pronouncements: "I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire..."

Hearing the watch Quentin is "in time again" and cannot escape it. Though Mr. Compson gives Quentin the watch in the hope that he might "forget it now and then for a moment," it clearly has the opposite effect.

In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it. Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women... and I said, Why couldn't it have been me and not her who is unvirgin and he said, That's why that's sad too; nothing is even worth the changing of it, and Shreve said if he's got better sense than to chase after the dirty little sluts and I said Did you ever have a sister? Did you? Did you?

Related Characters: Quentin Compson, Mr. Compson, Shreve (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout his section of the novel, Quentin is obsessively drawn back to things his father has told him about the world. In this example, Quentin remembers a dialogue with his father about his virginity and Caddy's lack thereof. Even

though Mr. Compson's statements can seem absurdly broad, it often seems like his ideas might be closely aligned with Faulkner's. In other words, because they offer the most lucid abstractions about the world that this novel has to offer, Mr. Compson's monologues might be the place where Faulkner expresses something similar to his view of the world.

Even though this passage contains dialogue, it is effectively monologic. Mr. Compson identifies a phenomenon— boys and men being ashamed of their virginity in the South— and goes on to explain it. He says "it was men who invented virginity," and so men are more worried about it than women.

In the most interesting part of this discussion, Mr. Compson says "nothing is even worth the changing of it." This suggestion that even the saddest and most painful things fade away over time and aren't worth changing betrays a deeply cynical view of the world, one that will be echoed in Quentin's despair that nothing seems to be heavy enough to weigh him down, keeping him grounded in life. At the end of this passage, Quentin's mind jumps to another memory of a discussion with his roommate Shreve, one example of many where Quentin becomes angry at another man suggesting that his sister (Caddy) might be something like a "dirty little slut."

❝ I went to the dresser and took up my watch, with the face still down. I tapped the crystal on the corner of the dresser and caught the fragments of glass in my hand and put them into the ashtray and twisted the hands off and put them in the tray. The watch ticked on.

Related Characters: Quentin Compson (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

In a foreshadowing of his suicide to come, Quentin takes his first step toward ending time (at least as he knows it). Tortured by his watch and its always-ticking insistence on the passing of time, Quentin tries to destroy it. But even once he removes its parts the watch continues to tick; as Quentin has learned, there is nothing he can do to stop either the forward progress of time or the backward pull of his painful memories.

Quentin's narration never seems to build up to big moments like this. It gives little warning that something important is about to happen, and we only find out later that a passage like this one was actually full of significance. Everything is downplayed, and this passage reads as if breaking his watch were something Quentin does every day as part of his routine. Even as he prepares to take his own life, Quentin is obsessively neat, placing the glass and the watch hands nicely in the ashtray. He seems to want things to end without much disturbance for anyone else, but we already know from Benjy's section that Quentin's death will wreak havoc on the Compson family.

❝ That was when I realised that a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among. But I thought at first that I ought to miss having a lot of them around me because I thought that Northerners thought I did, but I didn't know that I really had missed Roskus and Dilsey and them until that morning in Virginia.

Related Characters: Quentin Compson (speaker), Dilsey Gibson, Roskus Gibson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

For much of this section as it builds toward Quentin's suicide, always hinted at but never explicitly narrated, Quentin is an observer of the things around him. He seems removed from everything, and interacts with other people only when he has to. He is, as we might say now, stuck in his own head.

In this reflection, Quentin remembers when he came north to Harvard and began to see black people (or at least the racist conception of them) as a "form of behavior." His move north from Mississippi to Massachusetts is significant, given that it happened in the early twentieth century when the South was still reeling from its defeat in the Civil War and under the influence of reactionary and often violent racism. Quentin, having grown up with black people like Roskus and Dilsey as his family's servants, has to reconcile his southern past with his northern present upon his arrival at Harvard. He does so by deciding that the difference between white and black people lies not in their personhood but in their

varying forms of behavior.

Quentin decides to take people for what they are, but reverts to categorizing black people as an "obverse reflection of the white people he lives among." This is no more humanizing than the alternative— the racism he grew up immersed in— but demonstrates at least that Quentin is attempting to think through his past and his present.

Got to marry somebody
Have there been very many Caddy
I don't know too many will you look after Benjy and Father
You don't know whose it is then does he know
Don't touch me will you look after Benjy and Father

Related Characters: Quentin Compson, Candace (Caddy) Compson (speaker), Mr. Compson, Benjamin (Benjy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 115

Explanation and Analysis

Some of the more emotionally powerful passages in Quentin's section are those in which Faulkner leaves traditional sentence structure behind and allows words and phrases to flood the page. This is one of them. Quentin is hit so quickly and fiercely with memories of a conversation with Caddy about her lost virginity that the narrative has no time for grammar or punctuation.

Caddy has seemingly decided to marry Herbert, one of her suitors, and knows her departure could be somewhat final— this is why she asks "will you look after Benjy and Father." But Quentin is more worried about who Caddy has had sex with. First he asks "Have there been very many," and we know Quentin is tortured by his belief that he should have stopped his younger sister from having sex with anyone at all. Then he says "You don't know whose it is then does he know," hinting at an unborn child belonging to someone besides Herbert. When Caddy says "Don't touch me," we start to imagine a very heated conversation, with Quentin grabbing Caddy and Caddy trying to pull away.

Listen no good taking it so hard its not your fault kid it would have been some other fellow
Did you ever have a sister did you
No but theyre all bitches
I hit him my open hand beat the impulse to shut it to his face his hand moved as fast as mine the cigarette went over the rail I swung the other hand he caught it too before the cigarette reached the water he held both my wrists in the same hand

Related Characters: Quentin Compson, Dalton Ames (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

Quentin confronts Dalton Ames, a man at least a few years older than him who has presumably impregnated Caddy. Dalton condescends to Quentin, calling him "kid" and saying it's not Quentin's fault. But Dalton drastically underestimates the amount of emotional importance this situation has for Quentin, unaware that Quentin fixates obsessively on Caddy's virginity (to the point of threatening to kill Dalton earlier in the passage).

When Quentin says "Did you ever have a sister did you," he gives Dalton one last chance to realize the harm he has done to Quentin's sense of honor. Dalton replies, "No but theyre all bitches," and Quentin tries to hit Dalton. But Dalton is much stronger than Quentin, grabbing both of Quentin's hands with just one of his. Although Quentin holds such a deep conviction that he must protect Caddy from sexual advances, he is physically much weaker than her suitors and finds himself unable to do much of anything. His inability to enforce his internal rule system on the outside world may be part of what makes this memory so disturbing to Quentin.

April Sixth, 1928 Quotes

Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I says you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you. I says she ought to be down there in that kitchen right now, instead of up there in her room, gobbing paint on her face and waiting for six niggers that cant even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them, to fix breakfast for her.

Related Characters: Jason Compson IV (speaker), Ms. Quentin Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

Another abrupt switch in narrative style brings us from Quentin's almost unbearably heavy section into Jason's comparably easy-to-read, but still disturbing, section. Clearly, from his first sentence, Jason is not as troubled as Quentin is by concepts like considering a woman a "bitch." Whereas Quentin's whole sense of self seems to revolve around troubled concepts of masculinity and virginity, Jason is brutally practical and cruel.

We learn that the "she" of this section is Miss Quentin, Caddy's illegitimate child who has been taken from her mother and absorbed into the Compson family as if she has no mother at all. Jason's main concern with this younger Quentin (whose name is confusing until we realize who she is) is to make things as easy for himself as possible. He thinks of his niece as a "bitch" and the black servants, like Dilsey, who have sustained his family throughout his entire life as "six niggers that cant even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them." Jason, unlike the other Compsons, is fiercely focused on making money and making his way through life, and always assumes that he is the victim of other people's laziness and irresponsibility.

"All right," I says. "We'll just put this off a while. But don't think you can run it over me. I'm not an old woman, nor an old half dead nigger, either. You dam little slut," I says.
"Dilsey," she says. "Dilsey, I want my mother."
Dilsey went to her. "Now, now," she says. "He aint gwine so much as lay his hand on you while Ise here." Mother came on down the stairs.
"Jason," she says. "Dilsey."
"Now, now," Dilsey says. "I aint gwine let him tech you." She put her hand on Quentin. She knocked it down.
"You damn old nigger," she says. She ran toward the door.

Related Characters: Jason Compson IV, Ms. Quentin Compson, Dilsey Gibson, Mrs. Compson (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the novel's chronology, the only people left in the Compson home are Mrs. Compson, Jason (the youngest of the four children, now grown up), Benjy, Miss Quentin, and the six black servants. The family has virtually disintegrated, and Jason makes the mistake of thinking that he's the only one holding together what remains of the Compsons.

It has always been, throughout the novel, Dilsey and the other black servants who are the stable core of the family. But Jason struggles to be the leader of the family and establish authority over Miss Quentin, who has a tendency to skip school and ride around in cars with men.

Jason often gets angry at his niece Quentin, and here he calls her a "little slut" and threatens to beat her. Dilsey, sure of her role as the true leader of the Compson family, steps in to protect Quentin. Dilsey has raised Jason from birth on, and knows he will probably back down. Even after Dilsey protects her, though, Quentin disparages her brutally. Quentin is furious that Dilsey cannot honor her request to see her mother, and in her anger easily slips into the same racism that Jason embodies. Quentin is certainly sympathetic in comparison to Jason, but she too can be very cruel and racist.

"Remember what I say," I says. "I mean it. Let me hear one more time that you are slipping up and down back alleys with one of those dam squirts."

She turned back at that. "I don't slip around," she says. "I dare anybody to know everything I do."
"And they all know it, too," I says. "Everybody in this town knows what you are. But I wont have it anymore, you hear? I don't care what you do, myself," I says. "But I've got a position in this town, and I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench. You hear me?"

Related Characters: Jason Compson IV, Ms. Quentin Compson (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188-189

Explanation and Analysis

Jason's relationship with his niece Quentin consists, as far as we can tell, almost entirely of arguments with her in which he accuses her of sneaking around with a boy and she slips away or tells a lie. But here she takes Jason's accusation head-on, daring "anybody to know everything I

do." Jason, concerned about his family honor but more so about his job security, insists that Quentin has earned a bad reputation around town.

We might be able to forgive Jason some of his meanness given all of the tragedies he has lived through, but phrases like this one are especially hard to read: "I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench." This is doubly brutal, as Jason dehumanizes and black women while lowering Quentin to that same dehumanized status. Quentin, meanwhile, seems to revolt at every turn against this family that is at once hers and not hers; she knows her mother, Caddy, is out there somewhere but is always prevented from seeing her.

"You can say nonsense," Mother says. "But she must never know. She must never even learn that name. Dilsey, I forbid you ever to speak that name in her hearing. If she could grow up never to know that she had a mother, I would thank God."

Related Characters: Mrs. Compson (speaker), Dilsey Gibson, Ms. Quentin Compson, Candace (Caddy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 199

Explanation and Analysis

Always conjuring up things to worry about besides the more pressing issues right in front of her, Mrs. Compson seeks to prevent Quentin from ever learning her mother's name. Mrs. Compson even dreams of her granddaughter growing up "never to know that she had a mother."

Dilsey is in a precarious position, knowing that Mrs. Compson's wish for Quentin is absurd but also that she cannot easily disobey her. The amount of shame in the Compson family about Caddy's illegitimate child is somewhat shocking, as it threatens to tear the family apart once again. Mrs. Compson does little of practical note to help her family-- she even burns what she thinks are checks from Caddy-- but instead mostly stays inside her room and dreads whatever might happen next. This passage also once again emphasizes the importance of names, particularly for the character of Mrs. Compson.

"You's a cold man, Jason, if man you is," she says. "I thank de Lawd I got mo heart dan dat, even ef hit is black."
"At least I'm man enough to keep that flour barrel full," I says. "And if you do that again, you wont be eating out of it either."

Related Characters: Dilsey Gibson, Jason Compson IV (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 207-208

Explanation and Analysis

Dilsey takes a more definitive stand against Jason here, calling him cold after he refuses once again to let Caddy see her daughter Quentin. Dilsey, having just reminded Jason that his father would have been much more forgiving toward Caddy and Miss Quentin, puts Jason on the defensive. Dilsey makes one of her boldest claims: "I thank de Lawd I got mo heart dan dat, even ef hit is black." It is surprising in a way that Jason stays as calm as he does, and we might suspect that he has a special softness (or respect) for Dilsey even if he cannot admit it.

Again Jason retorts with an assertion of masculinity and family leadership; as he claims, at least he is "man enough to keep that flour barrel full." Throughout Jason's section, we see a tension between different forms of family leadership. Jason keeps the family financially afloat, while Dilsey feeds the family and keeps them emotionally afloat. Jason probably sees this as external to his patriarchal role, but the novel continues to reveal how essential Dilsey is to the Compson family's survival (even if this survival is limited).

How the hell can I do anything right, with that dam family and her not making any effort to control her nor any of them like that time when she happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she went around the house in a black dress and a veil and even Father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying her little daughter was dead and Caddy about fifteen then... I haven't got much pride, I cant afford it with a kitchen full of niggers to feed and robbing the state asylum of its star freshman. Blood, I says, governors and generals.

Related Characters: Jason Compson IV (speaker), Mrs. Compson, Candace (Caddy) Compson, Mr. Compson, Benjamin (Benjy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 229-230

Explanation and Analysis

In a conversation with his coworker Earl, Jason seems to realize the absurdity of his mother's role in their increasingly small family. First he realizes that Mrs. Compson is "not making any effort to control her nor any of them." Then Jason remembers a time when his mother saw Caddy kissing someone and "all next day went around the house in a black dress and veil." This is one of the only passages where Jason critiques his mother and acknowledges that his father might be a helpful presence. The memory also shows the unhealthy level of shame and pressure placed on Caddy at a young age, and is another illustration of Mrs. Compson's neurotic, melodramatic nature.

Throughout this novel, Faulkner experiments with how little he can give his readers while still giving them the chance to understand what is going on. Here Jason uses only the pronouns "she" and "her" but we can figure out that he is speaking about his mother.

At the end of this passage, we find a brutal assessment of his brother Benjy— "robbing the state asylum of its star freshman"— and then get a seemingly random statement, "governors and generals." Jason refers to the collective history of the South and its defeat in the Civil War, a concept central to Faulkner's fiction. In doing so he tries to link his family's troubled history to that of the South as a whole — emphasizing the idea of how far the Compson "blood" has fallen.

"When they began to sell the land to send Quentin to Harvard I told your father that he must make an equal provision for you. Then when Herbert offered to take you into the bank I said, Jason is provided for now, and when all the expense began to pile up and I was forced to sell our furniture and the rest of the pasture, I wrote her at once because I said she will realise that she and Quentin have had their share and part of Jason's too and that it depends on her now to compensate him... You were right to reproach me."
"Do you think I need any man's help to stand on my feet?" I says. "Let alone a woman that cant name the father of her own child."

Related Characters: Mrs. Compson, Jason Compson IV (speaker), Candace (Caddy) Compson, Herbert Head, Quentin Compson, Mr. Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 262

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mrs. Compson makes a last-ditch effort to explain their troubled finances to Jason and comfort her own guilt about her role in the family's downfall. She summarizes many of the things that have brought the family to where it is now: the sale of part of their land to finance Quentin's Harvard education, the rejection of help from Caddy's husband Herbert, and the tension between Caddy— always just outside the bubble of her own family— and the others.

When Mrs. Compson says Caddy will "realise that she and Quentin have had their share," the name Quentin remains ambiguous. She might be saying that Caddy's brother Quentin had his share when he was sent to Harvard or that her daughter Quentin got her share when she was taken in by the remaining Compsons. Faulkner's doubling of names throughout the novel allows him to leave ambiguities like this, and thereby link two different characters together thematically; in this case, both Quentins have an unacknowledged debt to the Compsons as far as Mrs. Compson is concerned.

After all this, Jason reasserts his fragile patriarchal role and asks, "Do you think I need any man's help to stand on my feet?" And it would be even worse, he says, to accept help from his dishonorable sister Caddy.

April Eighth, 1928 Quotes

"I know you blame me," Mrs. Compson said, "for letting them off to go to church today."
"Go where?" Jason said. "Hasn't that damn show left yet?"
"To church," Mrs. Compson said. "The darkies are having a special Easter service. I promised Dilsey two weeks ago that they could get off."
"Which means we'll eat cold dinner," Jason said, "or none at all."

Related Characters: Mrs. Compson, Jason Compson IV (speaker), Dilsey Gibson

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 279

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Compson opens this passage with her characteristic

self-blame, projected onto Jason. She feels completely uncomfortable making a decision or asserting herself, so she reacts always as if she had no choice but to let things happen as they do. The "them" Mrs. Compson refers to is her six black servants, led to church by Dilsey for the Easter service. She goes on to call them "the darkies," revealing a casual disregard for the people who have always kept her and her children alive.

Jason misunderstands at first, equating church with "that damn show." He seems to feel like he is always letting the servant family go see some show or another, even though it rarely seems like they are away from the Compsons for long (and they are essentially slaves in all but technicality). Mrs. Compson says she promised Dilsey "two weeks ago that they could get off." But in the meantime she has neither told Jason nor made plans to prepare dinner herself. As always, she is a passive observer of the family's affairs, except when she decides to make declarations about them.

> "I wish you wouldn't keep on bringin him to church, mammy," Frony said. "Folks talkin."
> "Whut folks?" Dilsey said.
> "I hears em," Frony said.
> "And I knows whut kind of folks," Dilsey said. "Trash white folks. Dat's who it is. Thinks he aint good enough fer white church, but nigger church aint good enough fer him."
> "Dey talks, jes de same," Frony said.
> "Den you send um to me," Dilsey said. "Tell um de good Lawd don't keer whether he bright er not. Don't nobody but white trash keer dat."

Related Characters: Frony Gibson, Dilsey Gibson (speaker), Benjamin (Benjy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 290

Explanation and Analysis

Unlike her mother Dilsey, Frony is concerned with other people around town and what they might think of the Compsons and their servant family. When Frony says "bringing him to church" she refers to Benjy, whom Dilsey insists on bringing with them. Dilsey remarks on Benjy's in-between status in the eyes of the white townspeople: not good enough for white church, but too good for black church.

Dilsey dismisses the gossipers as "trash white folks," and her willingness to defend Benjy at any cost makes her his Christ figure as they head to Easter service. Benjy cannot offer Dilsey anything besides love, but still she does anything she can to keep people from forgetting him, the man-child Jason wants to have sent off to the asylum.

> In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb.
> As they walked through the bright noon, up the sandy road with the dispersing congregation talking easily again group to group, she continued to weep, unmindful of the talk...
> "Whyn't you quit dat, mammy?" Frony said. "Wid dese people looking. We be passin white folks soon."
> "I've seed de first en de last," Dilsey said. "Never you mind me."
> "First en last whut?" Frony said.
> "Never you mind," Dilsey said. "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin."

Related Characters: Frony Gibson, Dilsey Gibson (speaker), Benjamin (Benjy) Compson

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 297

Explanation and Analysis

In a rare reversal, Benjy is alert and watching while Dilsey cries. The Easter service has moved Dilsey deeply, and when Frony pushes Dilsey after church to explain why she is crying Dilsey explains, "I've seed de first en de last." Using the same language he always uses for these black characters, Faulkner reveals deeper truths about Dilsey's connection to the Compson family and to their overall history.

Even though she has always been a servant to the family, she has a real connection to them. Dilsey is perhaps the one character who sees "de first"— the period of relative happiness when the Compson kids were all children— and "de last"— the Compson family as it stands now after all its tragedies — and can be a relatively objective observer, accepting the sweep of time in a way Quentin or Jason cannot. In the Christian tradition, Easter encompasses an ending and a beginning; first Christ dies, then he goes to heaven to begin his eternal reign. The Easter service inspires Dilsey to consider the Compson's family history as

a whole, and she realizes that there may be no Christ-like rebirth for the Compsons. At the same time, Dilsey herself has been a sort of Christ figure throughout the novel, bearing all of her duties with humility and respect, rarely faltering — and now, ironically, she is the only real hope for a "resurrection" of the Compsons, and figures like Dilsey are the only real hope for a resurrection of the South itself.

"Fiddlesticks," Mrs. Compson said. "It's in the blood. Like uncle, like niece. Or mother. I don't know which would be worse. I don't seem to care."

"Whut you keep on talkin that way fur?" Dilsey said. "Whut she want to do anything like that fur?"

"I don't know. What reason did Quentin have? Under God's heaven what reason did he have? It cant be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever God is, He would not permit that. I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am."

Related Characters: Mrs. Compson, Dilsey Gibson (speaker), Quentin Compson, Maury Bascomb, Ms. Quentin Compson, Candace (Caddy) Compson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 299-300

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Compson is once again absorbed in her compulsive reflection on her family and whatever curse might have befallen them, leading them to such a state of ruin. As in many of Faulkner's works, as Mrs. Compson tells it here, misfortune is "in the blood." She lost her son Quentin to suicide, and now loses her granddaughter Quentin to what she fears might be something similar. (And in a cruel aside, she also suggests that Ms. Quentin turning out like her mother would be just as bad as killing herself like her uncle.)

Dilsey is quick to correct her— "Whut she want to do anything like that fur?"— but Mrs. Compson won't be comforted. She laments Quentin's suicide, wondering what reason he could have had to do such a thing. But her sadness is buried once again in self-absorption, class concerns ("I'm a lady"), and abstractions about the final cause of her misfortune ("Whoever God is, He would not permit that"). Once again, Faulkner's doubled usage of the name Quentin allows for potent connections to be made between the two characters, even though the brother Quentin was so disturbed by the child-to-be Quentin.

Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again, her feet began to clop-clop steadily again, and at once Ben hushed. Luster looked quickly back over his shoulder, then he drove on. The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place.

Related Characters: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson, Luster Gibson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 320-321

Explanation and Analysis

In this final passage of the book, Luster drives the Compsons' coach with Benjy aboard and the horse Queenie leading the way. Luster, not the usual driver of the coach, deviates from the usual course, and Benjy immediately grows very upset. Jason then rushes up and strikes both Luster and Benjy, ordering them home. This scene is hectic, with Faulkner's brusque sentences introducing a number of different characters each doing different things, in rapid succession.

In the final few sentences, as Luster corrects his course, Benjy immediately stops crying and seems to derive some comfort from his surroundings. Everything is "in its ordered place," and even if things are falling apart they are familiar.

This seems like a strange ending to the book, as Faulkner's narration zooms out to give a wider view of all the characters at once. In fact, the entire fourth section of the book (most often thought of as Dilsey's section) has this zooming-out effect after the intense internality of the first three sections. As their wagon whips around the Confederate statue, Faulkner situates the Compson family once again in their town, their country, and their collective history. Things go on, the novel seems to say, even if they go on to fall apart.

LUSTER. A man, aged 14. Who was not only capable of the complete care and security of an idiot twice his age and three times his size, but could keep him entertained.

DILSEY.
They endured.

Related Characters: Luster Gibson, Dilsey Gibson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 343

Explanation and Analysis

In this appendix, added by Faulkner before a reprint of his novel was released, Faulkner clarifies some of the connections between different characters and clears away ambiguities. People seem torn on whether or not they like the appendix, and some would say that ambiguities like whether or not Quentin truly committed incest with Caddy are part of what makes Faulkner's novel great.

Nonetheless, the appendix appeared and this is the very end of it. Faulkner has gone through the Compson family's history, and arrives at the servant family, the Gibsons. Their descriptions are much shorter, and we might connect this with their place in the novel: they speak less often and take up less space than the Compsons, but have vital roles in keeping the family alive.

Even if he wasn't committed to racial equality, Faulkner admires his black characters, and this admiration shows up more clearly here than anywhere else in the novel. Luster's role in caring for and entertaining Benjy is noted with some amazement, and he is confidently declared "a man" at the age of 14. And Dilsey is introduced with a simple phrase: "They endured." She is once again presented as the most admirable character in the book (her lack of description perhaps suggesting a kind of awe), and this is what Dilsey enables the Compson family to do, despite all its troubles: endure.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

APRIL SEVENTH, 1928

The narrative opens vaguely and confusingly. The narrator is Benjy, a mentally disabled man whose thirty-third birthday is occurring today, the day before **Easter**. He is with Luster, a teenaged African-American who is a servant to Benjy's family, the white, aristocratic Compsons of Jefferson, Mississippi.

This first section is very difficult to understand, as Benjy is severely mentally disabled and has no sense of time, cause and effect, or morality—his memories therefore travel back and forth in time without notice or explanative narration. Benjy is like the "idiot" in the quote from the play Macbeth that gives this novel its name: Life "is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Through Benjy, Faulkner reveals information about the Compsons in tidbits that must be pieced together.

Luster takes Benjy around the Compson property looking for a quarter Luster has lost. The property is next to a golf course, and Benjy moans and cries whenever golfers call for their "caddie." Luster mentions that Dilsey, his grandmother, baked Benjy a cake for his birthday. Luster decides to earn back his lost quarter by finding golf balls in the rough and selling them back to golfers. He needs a quarter to go to a minstrel show that is in town that weekend.

Luster is one of the Gibsons, the black family who are live-in servants of the Compsons. The power of the word "caddie" seems strange now, but it is Benjy's sister's name, the sister who will be the focal point of the novel. Benjy is thirty-three, and his birthday is Holy Saturday, the day before Easter, which places him as a possible Christ-figure.

Luster and Benjy sneak under a broken part of the fence into the golf course, and Benjy catches his clothes on a nail. This triggers a memory of twenty-six years earlier, two days before Christmas, when Benjy's sister Caddy helped free him from the same nail. In this memory Mrs. Compson – Benjy's mother – is arguing with her brother, Uncle Maury.

The structure of this confusing section is based around Benjy's sensations – he cannot differentiate between past and present, so when an object reminds him of something, he fully experiences the ensuing memory in the present. Faulkner cues these switches with italics, but even then he is inconsistent.

In the memory Uncle Maury asks Versh, one of Dilsey's sons and Benjy's keeper at the time, to take Benjy outside. Mrs. Compson worries that Benjy will get sick from the cold, but she allows it as his presence makes her worry and feel sick. Versh and Benjy go outside and meet Caddy, who Benjy says "smells like trees."

The phrase "Caddy smells like trees" will be another important trigger for Benjy, and seems to suggest Caddy's wildness, natural purity, and ability to give Benjy comfort. Mrs. Compson's character begins to be introduced – she is unable to care for her children properly, and turns everything into an opportunity for self-pity.

The story returns to the present, but the memory of Caddy makes Benjy moan again, annoying Luster. He gives Benjy a flower to calm him down, and then Benjy slips back into the memory, where Caddy brings Benjy back inside by the fire to warm up. Mrs. Compson complains about how weak she is, and how Benjy's disability is a judgment against her. She worries that Benjy will get sick and ruin her Christmas party.

Benjy will often be comforted by a flower, which he may associate with laying on the graves of his dead family members. Benjy's memories of Caddy as a child are warm and comforting, while Mrs. Compson sees Benjy's ailment only in terms of herself. She is preoccupied with fate and superstition.

Back in the present Benjy and Luster walk past the Compsons carriage house, which triggers another memory, this one from about fifteen years before. Benjy and his mother are riding in the Compsons' carriage to go visit the graves of Quentin – Benjy's brother – and Mr. Compson. T.P., another of Dilsey's sons, must drive the carriage because Roskus, T.P.'s father and Dilsey's husband, is paralyzed with rheumatism. Dilsey remarks that Jason should buy a new carriage, as this one is falling apart.

Mr. Compson and Quentin have not even been introduced yet, but we now know they are doomed to die. This scene foreshadows the last scene of the novel, when Luster will take T.P.'s place driving the carriage. The members of the Gibson family are introduced – Dilsey and Roskus have three children – Versh, T.P., and Frony – and Frony's son is Luster. The carriage is decaying just like the Compsons.

Mrs. Compson asks Jason if he wants to come to the cemetery, but Jason coldly declines and then says that Uncle Maury has been asking for money again. Mrs. Compson says she will be dead soon and then not be such a burden anymore, and then Benjy returns to the present, where Luster is chiding him once again.

This is the first glimpse of the adult Jason, who has no respect or sorrow for his dead family members. Uncle Maury is a perpetual freeloader, a Southerner from a once-wealthy family now too proud to work but still expecting to live like an aristocrat.

Luster takes Benjy through the Compsons' barn, and Benjy slips into another memory, twenty-six years earlier. He and Caddy are delivering a letter from Uncle Maury to Mrs. Patterson, the next-door neighbor, as the two are having an affair. Within this memory Benjy has another memory of an earlier time he delivered one of these letters by himself. Mrs. Patterson sees him delivering the letter and runs toward him, scaring him. Mr. Patterson also runs for him and intercepts the letter, thus discovering his wife's affair. Benjy runs down the hill, afraid.

Uncle Maury's promiscuity shows the sexual double standard of old Southern society. Mrs. Compson condones his affair with Mrs. Patterson and keeps lending him money, but when Caddy later has sex outside of marriage, Mrs. Compson disowns her, and Caddy is disgraced by the town. Benjy's convoluted sense of time starts to paint an impressionistic picture of this family, where the past is constantly overlaid onto the present.

Back in the present, Luster leads Benjy down to the "branch," the stream that runs through the Compson property. Luster sees some other servants who are washing clothes in the branch, and he asks them about his quarter and the minstrel show that night. Luster is especially intrigued by the fact that a man will be playing the musical saw. He keeps looking for a stray golf ball, and then one of the golfers says "caddie" again, making Benjy moan.

It now becomes clear that something bad has happened to Caddy, the sibling Benjy was closest to, so that even the sound of her name upsets him. Luster is only fourteen years old – very young to be taking care of a massive thirty-three year old disabled man – so his immaturity comes out in other ways, like his fascination with the musical saw.

Benjy slips back into another memory, this one of the day his grandmother "Damuddy" was buried. Benjy is only three and the family has not discovered his disability yet. Quentin, Caddy, Jason, and Benjy are all playing together in the branch and being watched by Versh. Versh warns Caddy that she will be whipped for getting her dress wet, so Caddy takes the dress off, but then she gets mud on her underclothes too. Benjy repeats that she smells like trees.

Damuddy never actually appears except on the day of her death. In this she symbolizes the Old South, the history and lifestyle the Compsons try to cling to, but which is irrevocably gone. Caddy's muddy underclothes become a symbol for her later promiscuity and "dirtying" the Compson honor. Benjy associates Caddy's smell of trees with her youthful innocence in nature.

Back in the present, Luster mentions that Benjy thinks that the pasture is still owned by the Compsons, though they had sold it years before. Benjy returns to the memory, in which the children head home from the branch. Caddy and Quentin worry that Jason will tattle to their parents about their wet clothes, and they will get whipped. The children pass Roskus milking a cow in the barn, and then Benjy shifts to another memory, the day of Caddy's wedding.

As the narrative grows more confusing, the easiest way to decipher what is taking place in the present is Luster's presence, as he only appears in 1928. Even as a child Jason is portrayed as self-serving and greedy, and Quentin and Caddy are clearly very close with each other.

In this memory, Benjy and T.P. have gotten drunk off some champagne they found in the basement. T.P. thinks it is just "sasparilla," but they are both falling down and watching cows run across the yard. Benjy's narration is even more muddled than normal, and he watches Quentin fighting with T.P. Quentin beats him up, but T.P. can't stop laughing. Benjy starts crying then, afraid of his confusing drunkenness. Versh appears, scolding them, and he carries Benjy up the hill to the wedding.

Drunk Benjy is even more confusing than the usual Benjy, as his sense of perception becomes more muddled. Though he cannot talk or think abstractly, he can sense things that others can't – particularly when they upset his sense of order, which is acute. In hindsight (from the rest of the novel) it is likely that Quentin is attacking T.P. for making fun of Caddy.

Benjy then shifts back to the memory of the day of Damuddy's death, as Versh carried him up the hill then as well. Versh tells the children that the family has company for dinner, because all the lights are on in the house. The children meet Mr. Compson at the house, and Jason immediately tattles to him about Quentin and Caddy's wet clothes. Mr. Compson says that the children have to eat in the kitchen and stay quiet, as there is company over for dinner.

Mr. and Mrs. Compson do not tell the children that their grandmother is dead – the children have to find it out for themselves. This is the kind of detached, unsupportive parenting that contributes to the Compson children's problems. The Compsons are more concerned with appearances than emotional connection.

Mr. Compson warns the children to "mind Dilsey," but Caddy insists that they listen to her as well. Dilsey serves dinner to the children, but then Benjy starts crying again. Quentin asks if Mrs. Compson was crying earlier, but Dilsey deflects the question. Quentin presses on, asking about Damuddy's sickness, and soon Jason is crying too. Caddy teases Jason because he cannot sleep in Damuddy's bed anymore now that she is sick. After dinner the children walk down to Versh's cabin.

Caddy shows herself to be a headstrong child, always trying to be in charge, but she is also the only one who tends to Benjy. The child Jason always seems to be crying about something. Dilsey practically raises the children, as Mrs. Compson is totally incompetent and Mr. Compson is distant, and usually quietly drunk.

The smell of Versh's house brings Benjy into several memories. In 1910, Dilsey sings in the kitchen while Roskus, her husband, says that the Compsons are unlucky. Two years later, Roskus is again talking about the curse of the Compsons, and he says the sign of it is Miss Quentin, Caddy's illegitimate daughter. Roskus says he knew they were unlucky when they changed Benjy's name.

Benjy's sense of smell is associated with his acute perception of order and chaos. The curse of the Compsons will be associated with the theme of history and decline. All of Roskus's references are still unexplained, but will become important later.

Benjy takes a toy from Miss Quentin, who is still very young, and Miss Quentin gets angry and Benjy cries. Frony, Dilsey's daughter, scolds Benjy. Roskus keeps talking about bad luck, and says another sign of it is that Caddy's name is not mentioned around the house anymore because of the disgrace of her illegitimate child. Even Miss Quentin is being raised without knowing her mother's name. Dilsey then puts Luster and Benjy to bed together, side by side.

The power of Caddy's name is reinforced here – it is not only a source of sorrow for Benjy, but it has been forbidden in the Compson house ever since her disgrace. Changing Benjy's name from Maury (as we will see later) and forbidding Caddy's name seem less like signs of bad luck and more like superstitious decisions on the part of the Compsons.

Benjy briefly returns to the present, where Luster has found a golf ball, but he won't let Benjy play with it. Benjy then returns to a memory in 1898, when the children were playing with some lightning bugs T.P. had caught in a jar. Caddy is again concerned with everyone "minding her." Frony mentions a funeral, but Versh says not to let the children hear – Damuddy's funeral is going on in the house, but the Compsons haven't told the children their grandmother is dead yet.

The last flashback shows that Luster and Benjy were basically raised together. Damuddy's funeral – the symbol of the decline of the Old South – is kept a secret from the children. This figuratively means that they will remain under the sway of the old values and traditions, but only the Southern values as corrupted by the Compsons' self-absorption.

Benjy then remembers the death of the Compsons' horse, Nancy, and he thinks about her bones in the ditch and the buzzards circling overhead. The children worry that the buzzards will "undress" Damuddy too, and Caddy and Jason start to fight. Versh points out that Jason will be rich someday because he always has his hands in his pockets, and this makes Jason cry. Caddy tries to convince them that it is not actually a funeral going on, but a party.

Young Jason is crying again, foreshadowing his later sense that the world is against him, and his hands in his pockets foreshadow his later greed and small-mindedness. Benjy is unable to grasp a concept like death, but he can perceive it in associated images like Nancy's bones.

Benjy's memory of Damuddy's funeral day becomes briefly interspersed with his drunken memory of Caddy's wedding in 1910. Back in 1898, Caddy decides to climb a tree to look into the house, as she still thinks there is a party going on instead of a funeral, and that Damuddy is still alive. She makes Versh help her up into the tree, and her three brothers look up and see her dirty underwear from below before she disappears into the branches.

Through Benjy's mind Faulkner is able to connect Damuddy's funeral with Caddy's wedding – both of them gatherings that ultimately symbolize the decline of the Compsons, as Caddy's wedding is an attempt to cover up her sexual dishonor (and resulting pregnancy). Her dirty underwear appears again as more foreshadowing, though she is still associated with trees and innocence here (and there is a sense that Benjy's sense of her as natural and clean may be more accurate than the Compson's shame about her behavior).

Back on Caddy's wedding day, Benjy remembers her wedding veil, and T.P. trying to keep him quiet as he drunkenly moans. Caddy hugs him and he is upset that she doesn't smell like trees anymore. This makes Benjy then think of a memory in 1905, when he was also upset by Caddy's smell.

Smells are a strong signifier for Benjy, and when Caddy no longer smells like trees it upsets his sense of order, as she is not youthful and innocent anymore. But despite her "sins," she still loves and cares for Benjy.

In that memory Jason makes fun of Caddy for her "prissy dress," and says she is trying to be better than everyone else. Benjy is clearly upset by something about Caddy's attire, so she tries taking off her hat. Mrs. Compson appears and complains that Benjy is disturbing her peace. Then Caddy figures out that it is her perfume upsetting Benjy, so she washes it off, but Benjy still keeps moaning. He thinks repeatedly to himself "Caddy smelled like trees."

Jason's conflict with Caddy appears. Mrs. Compson once again makes everything about her. Caddy is growing up and becoming less innocent, and the only thing holding her back is not the Compson honor or old Southern values, but her desire to not upset Benjy. For Benjy, Caddy can wash off her "impurities", but Southern society won't let her off the hook.

In the same memory Mrs. Compson gets upset with her husband for making fun of Uncle Maury, who is in a quarrel with Mr. Patterson. Mrs. Compson argues that her family is just as well born as Mr. Compson's, so he shouldn't mock Maury or begrudge him his money and food. Mr. Compson then fills his decanter of alcohol and leaves. Caddy falls asleep next to Benjy, trying to comfort him.

Mrs. Compson is more concerned with her own family name and pride than with the real moral deficiencies of her brother. This is the first instance of Mr. Compson drinking, but his decanter of whiskey will become a fixture of his presence.

Benjy returns to the memory of Damuddy's funeral, when Caddy is up in the tree. Dilsey then comes out of the house and pulls Caddy down, scolding the children for being outside at night. She sends them back to bed, and Caddy reports that there was no party going on in the house, just people sitting around.

Again Dilsey does the real parenting for the Compson children. She begins to develop as a positive force in the novel, one of the only stable factors in the Compsons' crumbling world.

Back in the present, Luster warns Benjy not to go by the nearby swing, as Miss Quentin is there with her "beau." This makes Benjy remember encountering Caddy on the same swing kissing her first boyfriend, a boy named Charlie. When Charlie approaches him Benjy starts to cry loudly, and Caddy tries to send Charlie away. Charlie gets angry that Benjy interrupted them, and he wants a servant to take Benjy away. This only upsets Benjy more.

Caddy continues to grow and lose her innocence, and is shamed only by Benjy's crying and Charlie's treatment of him. Miss Quentin has clearly inherited her mother's tendencies, as she acts out the same scene, but without shame.

Caddy finally runs away from Charlie with Benjy and they go up to the house. Caddy knows Benjy is upset with her for kissing Charlie, so she apologizes and promises to never kiss anyone again. Then she washes out her mouth with soap.

Caddy continues to try and physically wash herself clean, as with the perfume, but she is unable to stop growing up just because it upsets Benjy.

Back in 1928, Benjy approaches the swing and interrupts Miss Quentin and her boyfriend, who is wearing a red tie. Miss Quentin gets angry at Luster for letting Benjy follow her, and she says she will make sure Luster gets in trouble with Dilsey. The man in the red tie lights a match for Benjy to play with, but Miss Quentin knocks it away, knowing he will burn himself and then start moaning. She runs back up to the house.

Using Benjy's muddled sense of time, Faulkner is able to juxtapose these two scenes to contrast mother and daughter. Miss Quentin no longer subscribes to the old Southern notion that sexuality equals sin – but she also feels no love or affection for Benjy, and so acts more like Charlie than like Caddy.

Luster talks to the man with the red tie about the music show, and the man playing the musical saw. Luster then picks up an unused condom off the ground, thinking at first that it might be his lost quarter. The man with the red tie sees it and starts cursing to himself. He asks Luster about it, and Luster says that men come to visit Miss Quentin every night, and she climbs down the tree outside her window to meet them. The man with the red tie is furious and sends Luster and Benjy away.

With this scene Faulkner totally de-romanticizes Miss Quentin's relationship with the man in the red tie. It is not true love, or him saving her from her unhappy family situation. Miss Quentin climbing down the tree is both foreshadowing and a reflection of Caddy climbing up the tree to look at Damuddy's funeral, and revealing her muddy underwear.

Benjy and Luster then walk further down the fence, still looking for golf balls, and when they reach the gate Benjy sees some schoolgirls walking past. This reminds him of a day years earlier when he looked out the same gate at other schoolgirls. T.P. tried to pull him away, saying that Caddy has gotten married and left Benjy behind.

Because Benjy experiences no difference between past and present, in some part of his mind Caddy is eternally a schoolgirl. Faulkner gives more hints of the nature of the tragedies that strike the Compsons.

Later in the same memory, Benjy slips out the gate and runs after the girls, scaring them. He tries to talk to them about Caddy, but he is unable to speak as always. He catches one of the girls and she screams, and then Mr. Burgess, one of the girls' fathers, attacks Benjy. That night Mr. Compson scolds Jason for leaving the gate open. Jason suggests that they have Benjy castrated, or else send him to a mental asylum in Jackson.

If Benjy is a Christ-figure in the novel, then Faulkner is showing Christ as an impotent and unrecognized character in this world – unable to speak, to articulate the truth of his innocence and love, and responded to with violence. Jason reveals his scorn and dislike of Benjy, as he feels no qualms about mutilating him or sending him away forever.

Back in the present, Luster tries to sell the golf ball he found to a golfer, but the golfer just takes it away from him and refuses to give him a quarter. Then he calls for his caddie, making Benjy moan again. Luster gives Benjy another flower to try and cheer him up. Luster says that when Mrs. Compson dies, Jason will probably send Benjy away to the asylum in Jackson. The frustrated Luster than takes away Benjy's flower, making him cry.

As a black boy, Luster has absolutely no power in this society, and the white golfer can steal from him with impunity. Luster shows his immaturity in his sudden mood swings regarding Benjy, sometimes tormenting him and sometimes cheering him up – but this just serves as a reminder that Luster is too young for his great task.

Luster then takes Benjy back to the house, where Dilsey scolds Luster, thinking he has purposefully made Benjy upset, even though Luster denies it. Benjy sits down in front of the fireplace in the kitchen and calms down. This reminds him of a memory years earlier when he sat by the fire with Caddy, just after his parents changed his name from Maury to Benjamin.

Faulkner will later state it more clearly, but he has now revealed the three things Benjy truly loves: Caddy, his pasture, and the sight of fire. Benjy's name change is very confusing at first, as there is already Uncle Maury, and Faulkner, as usual, avoids any plot explanation.

Back in the present, Dilsey gives Benjy his birthday cake and lights all thirty-three candles. She is still scolding Luster, and Luster is still lamenting his lost quarter. Luster and Benjy eat some of the cake, and Benjy briefly remembers an episode where Caddy cried and said she hates everything. He then returns to the earlier memory by the fire, where Caddy and Dilsey discuss Benjy's new name. Dilsey says it is bad luck to change a name.

Dilsey shows that she truly loves and cares for Benjy, as she makes him a birthday cake despite his inability to understand time. The changing of Benjy's name shows Mrs. Compson's pride and superstition, as she didn't want to waste the family name "Maury" on someone with Benjy's disability. It also points to the theme of language, and words failing to describe truth – no mere name can change Benjy's life.

In the present again Benjy reaches his hand into the fire, burns himself, and starts wailing. Dilsey wraps up his hand and tries to calm him, but then Mrs. Compson appears, complaining about Benjy's crying. She thinks that Luster and Dilsey made Benjy upset on purpose to disturb her, and she starts crying with self-pity. Dilsey calms her down patiently and Luster takes Benjy to the library.

Dilsey is endlessly patient with Benjy and the self-obsessed Mrs. Compson, though the situations Dilsey has to deal with are extremely frustrating. Mrs. Compson is always trying to rest and get better, as she is a hypochondriac who assumes any kind of stress makes her sick.

The library reminds Benjy of another occasion with Caddy, when they were in the library and Benjy was only five. Caddy tries to pick Benjy up, accidentally calling him "Maury" first, but Mrs. Compson says Benjy is big enough to walk alone. Mrs. Compson has been sick all day, and the rest of the family tries not to upset her. Caddy keeps trying to pick up Benjy, and then she gives him a cushion to play with. Mrs. Compson says Caddy (who she calls Candace) spoils Benjy (who she calls Benjamin) too much. She also says that nicknames (like "Caddy") are only for "common people."

Mrs. Compson again shows her shallow pride and incompetence at raising her children. Caddy is already better at calming and entertaining Benjy than her mother is. Mrs. Compson is more concerned with appearing superior to commoners. She experiences more of an idealized version of her children, rather than trying to understand, accept, or support them.

In the same memory Mrs. Compson starts crying at her own impotence, and Caddy sends her off to bed. Then Caddy and Jason start to fight because Jason has cut up Benjy's paper dolls. Jason cries and says it was an accident, though it was clearly malicious, and Caddy threatens him on Benjy's behalf.

Caddy is still very young, but already acting like more of a mother than Mrs. Compson. Jason again shows his malice even as a child, and cries when he is caught. Caddy is extremely protective of Benjy, like the mother he needs.

In the present, Benjy keeps making noise in the library, and the adult Jason comes in, angry with Benjy and Luster. He complains that he works all day and then can't even have peace and quiet at home. Luster asks Jason if he can borrow a quarter to go to the minstrel show, but Jason mockingly refuses him.

Faulkner again uses Benjy's flashbacks to juxtapose scenes interestingly. The malicious young Jason still feels the world is against him, and so he lashes out at it with anger and self-pity.

Miss Quentin comes in and is still angry with Luster, and then Jason threatens her about hanging around with the man in the red tie. Miss Quentin is clearly not ashamed of her actions, and she argues with Jason. Benjy briefly returns to a memory of Quentin telling his father about a fight he got into at school, when another boy threatened to put a frog in a girl's desk. Mr. Compson approves of Quentin, but gets angry at Jason for crying over something else.

Jason and Miss Quentin reveal their mutual hatred. Benjy's memory shows how Mr. Compson favored Quentin over Jason, while later scenes will show Mrs. Compson favoring Jason over the rest. This kind of favoritism among the parents breeds some of the discord in the children's later lives.

Benjy then remembers an evening around 1909, when Caddy comes home from a date where she lost her virginity. Benjy senses something is different and he cries loudly, and Caddy is ashamed. She runs up to her room, trying to avoid Benjy (and the rest of the family), but Benjy follows her and they both go into a bathroom and cry.

Benjy's acute sense of order and chaos allows him to tell that something has changed about Caddy (the implication is that she has had sex for the first time). She is shamed by his wailing, and the new divide between them – she cannot wash away this new stain. This evening will also haunt Quentin later.

In the present again, the family sits down to dinner, and Miss Quentin complains that she doesn't like living here, as Benjy is like "a pig" and Jason is cruel to her. Jason gets angry and Miss Quentin threatens to run away. As their argument escalates, Benjy's mind jumps back to the past with greater frequency, though his memories are constantly being interrupted by the argument and Dilsey's attempts to mediate.

Jason is a cruel, bitter man, but Miss Quentin is not a likeable character either. Her faults are understandable because of her upbringing, but she is also cruel to those who help her, like Dilsey. She shares Caddy's promiscuity, but not her kindness and love for Benjy.

In between the arguing, Benjy remembers Versh saying that Mrs. Compson changed Benjy's name because she was too proud, and Benjy remembers Caddy feeding him, and he remembers Mrs. Compson complaining about being sick. In the present, Miss Quentin curses Jason and leaves the table. Benjy then remembers Mr. Compson getting mad at Jason for chewing paper while Quentin is studying.

The details of Benjy's name-change become more clear, mostly through commentary by the Gibsons (Dilsey's family). Benjy is able to act as a nonobjective narrator simply because he has no sense of morality or pride, but only connects sensations with each other. It is up to the reader to decipher conclusions from these sensations.

Benjy again remembers Caddy smelling like trees, and then back in the present Luster is pleased that Miss Quentin gave him a quarter for the show. Benjy then returns to the past, where the young Jason is wanting to sleep in Damuddy's bed, but she is too sick. Jason starts to cry. In the present Luster undresses Benjy, and when Benjy sees himself in the mirror he starts to cry. Then they look out the window and see Miss Quentin sneak out of her bedroom window, climb down the tree, and run away.

It is not explained until later, but Benjy cries when he sees himself in the mirror because he realizes he has been castrated, even though it happened years ago. Miss Quentin escaping is basically the climax of the novel, though it is only reported in this detached, secondhand way here, and its repercussions and details don't become clear until later.

Benjy then returns to the night Damuddy died and Caddy got her underwear dirty. Jason tattles on her again to Dilsey, and Dilsey undresses the children and puts them to bed. She complains that she doesn't have time to bathe Caddy before bed. Mr. Compson comes in and Caddy asks him if Mrs. Compson is sick, but he says she isn't. Caddy then holds Benjy in their bed, and he slowly falls asleep.

Caddy is unable to wash out her dirty underwear, as she is later unable to cleanse herself of her stained honor. Benjy returns to his sense of order and peace – he is being held by Caddy, and everything is in its right place. It is his sense of order and chaos that allows Faulkner to first hint at the tragedies of the Compson family in a dispassionate, nun-judgmental way, before moving on to more emotional narrators.

JUNE SECOND, 1910

This next chapter is narrated by Quentin, Benjy's brother. Quentin wakes up in his dorm room at Harvard, sees a **shadow** on the wall, and hears his **watch** ticking. The watch belonged to his grandfather, and Quentin remembers his father giving him the watch and saying he hoped the watch would allow Quentin to occasionally forget about time. Quentin then thinks about St. Francis calling Death his "Little Sister," but St. Francis never had a sister.

While Benjy has no sense of past and present, Quentin immediately orients himself within the rigid confines of time. His grandfather's watch will come to symbolize Quentin's obsession with his family's history and honor (and loss of that honor). In these first few sentences he mentions the things that preoccupy him most – time, death, and sisters.

Quentin hears his roommate Shreve get up, and Quentin briefly gets up and then gets back in bed. He thinks of his father talking about time, and his own constant awareness of it. He remembers the wording of his sister Caddy's wedding announcement. Her wedding was just two months before.

Quentin is just finishing his first year at Harvard. His narrative is not as confusing as Benjy's, but it is very abstract and constantly interrupted by his musings and memories, often without warning or explanation.

Shreve then appears in the doorway and interrupts Quentin's musing. Shreve reminds him that the bell for chapel will ring in two minutes, and Quentin says he didn't know it was so late. He tells Shreve to go ahead and not wait for him. After Shreve leaves, Quentin looks out the window and watches the Harvard students all rushing to get to the chapel on time.

Quentin pretends to be unaware of time, when in reality he cannot escape his constant sensation of it. This section takes place on the day of Quentin's suicide, though this is not explained yet. Here he begins to act strangely in skipping chapel, as if following a preconceived plan.

Quentin watches Spoade, a confident, nonchalant senior who is always late to chapel, and remembers how Spoade made fun of Quentin's virginity by calling Shreve Quentin's husband. Quentin angrily thinks that Spoade never had a sister, and he thinks about virginity in the South – men are ashamed to be virgins, but women are ashamed if they are not. He remembers his father saying that virginity is a meaningless concept invented by men.

Virginity is the other concept that obsesses Quentin. As with Uncle Maury, whose promiscuity is condoned, there is a sexual double standard in paternalistic Old South society – men are supposed to be gentlemen, protectors of chastity (but can be unchaste themselves), while women must be pure and virginal ladies.

A sparrow lands on Quentin's windowsill and seems to listen with him as the hour chimes strike. Quentin then remembers lying to his father, telling him that he had committed incest and that he, not Dalton Ames, was the father of Caddy's illegitimate child. Quentin then repeats Dalton Ames's name to himself and remembers his father telling him that Quentin's sorrow over Caddy's lost honor was meaningless. Quentin then thinks of the Christian resurrection day, and imagines a "flat-iron" floating up from a river.

Quentin begins to hint at the nature of his planned suicide—to use the flat-irons (tailor's weights) to weigh him down so he can drown. Both after Caddy lost her virginity and when she admitted she was pregnant, Quentin told his father that he had slept with Caddy. He considered this a "chivalrous" thing to do, somehow protecting her, but there is also an undercurrent of sexual tension between the siblings, so it is implied that part of Quentin wishes his lie were true both so he could save Caddy's honor and possess her sexually.

Quentin suddenly breaks his watch against the corner of his dresser, shattering the glass and then twisting off the hands. The watch keeps ticking, and Quentin notices that he has cut his thumb. He cleans the cut and his watch and then packs a suitcase. He pauses as the chimes for the quarter hour sound, and then he takes a bath, shaves, and puts on his new suit.

This is a symbolic action that perhaps fortifies Quentin in his plan to kill himself – he can break his grandfather's watch to try and escape time and his heritage, but the watch will keep relentlessly ticking on. Quentin takes great care with his appearance, like his idea of a true Southern gentleman.

Quentin puts the key to his trunk and two notes into an envelope, and then seals it and addresses it to his father. He watches a **shadow** move across the door and thinks about the night of Caddy's wedding, when Benjy and T.P. were drunk. Quentin goes outside and sees Shreve, who asks him why he is wearing a suit. Quentin deflects the question and goes to the post office, where he mails the letter to his father and looks for Deacon, a black man he knows. He last saw Deacon in the Decoration Day parade.

These letters are Quentin's suicide notes, though this only becomes clear in hindsight. Quentin's obsession with Caddy and her sexuality as sin makes him constantly return to memories of her wedding, which was basically a cover-up for her pregnancy. Quentin disapproved of Caddy's husband, as later memories will show, but he was perhaps also jealous.

Quentin then goes to a store and has breakfast, and buys a cigar. He goes back outside and imagines the sun as a giant clock, and lets all the sounds of the street fade away except for the ticking of his **watch**. He goes to a clock shop and gives his broken watch to the man behind the corner. The man says he will fix it later, and Quentin asks for it back. Quentin then asks if any of the clocks in the window have the correct time, but he stops the man before he says what time it is. Quentin promises to bring his watch back later and leaves.

Faulkner emphasizes the importance of memory and the past through Quentin's constant noticing of clocks and watches. While Benjy's sense of time is muddled and amorphous, Quentin remains trapped within the rigid demarcations of time: the ticking of watches, the chiming of bells, the movements of shadows.

Quentin then thinks of his father saying that "clocks slay time," that as long as time is being divided into neat little clicks it is dead. Quentin goes to a tailor and buys a pair of flat-irons – tailors' weights for pressing clothes – hoping they will be "heavy enough," and he thinks that what he plans for them may be his only application of his experience at Harvard.

Mr. Compson's musings about time imply that he knew how obsessed Quentin was with the family honor and decline, and Mr. Compson hoped that Quentin would eventually stop worrying so much and be able to forget time for a while.

Quentin goes to the train station and boards a train. He sits down next to a black person, and he thinks about how he only missed Roskus and Dilsey – and thought of them as real people – after he moved away from home. The train stops, and through the window Quentin gives an old black man a quarter. The train starts up again, and while Quentin rides he remembers counting seconds as a child, trying to guess exactly when the bell would ring at school – but he was always interrupted by the teacher asking him a question or some other distraction.

Quentin's preoccupation with time began at an early age. Now that he is out of the South, Quentin is able to step back a little and see the racial injustice at the very foundation of his family, that the Gibsons live alongside the Compsons but are treated as less human and less valuable. Only when he is away can Quentin think of the Gibsons as real people – mostly because he misses them.

In between his other musings and memories, Quentin's inner dialogue keeps returning to the night Caddy lost her virginity, when she came home and Benjy started wailing. Quentin then thinks about the Compsons changing Benjy's name from Maury.

That night was devastating for Quentin, so he relives it just as Benjy did. In a way it upset his sense of order, like it did Benjy's, but for Quentin it was the order of Southern values and the Compson honor.

The train stops by a bridge across the harbor and Quentin gets off. He walks onto the bridge and looks down at the water. He thinks about the fifty-foot drop from the bridge, and watches his **shadow** in the water. He thinks of an old saying that "a drowned man's shadow was watching him in the water all the time." He thinks of the weight of two flat-irons, and of Benjy smelling Damuddy's death.

Quentin's musings on shadows connect to his preoccupation with time (as shadows mark the movement of the sun), the Compson decline (as the family is a shadow of its former self), and death, as his shadow in the water foreshadows his leap from the bridge with the flat-irons to weigh him down and drown him.

Quentin then sees Gerald Bland, a wealthy, swaggering Harvard student, rowing a crew shell across the river. Bland's mother is driving her car alongside him as he rows, and Quentin remembers her constantly boasting about the many girls Gerald has had, and her pickiness in allowing only wealthy Southern friends for her son. Quentin then thinks painfully of Caddy losing her virginity, and Dalton Ames, and Caddy getting married to Herbert Head, who promised Jason a job at a bank and owned one of the first automobiles in town.

Quentin is obsessed with time, virginity, and honor, but ultimately all he can do is think abstractly about such things. Every action he tries to take fails, as he is just as impotent as the other Compson men. Gerald Bland is the anti-Quentin, caring nothing for female honor, but a man of action. Dalton Ames is the man who took Caddy's virginity. Jason's job offer will become important later.

Quentin's memory then shifts through a confusing series of memories about Herbert Head and Mrs. Compson's letters about him, and his invitation to Caddy's wedding. He remembers how his parents sold Benjy's pasture to pay for Quentin's Harvard tuition. Quentin then vaguely muses about his mother's shallowness and vanity, and the fact that neither he nor Caddy ever had a real mother that they could turn to when they needed her. His memories keep returning to the smell of honeysuckle, and Mr. Compson talking about virginity and women's "affinity for evil."

One of the ironies of the novel is that the Compsons sell their land to pay for Quentin's tuition. His attendance at Harvard is an attempt to maintain the family's social status, but they are required to sacrifice their land – another symbol of status, and also something dear to Benjy – to pay for it. This is an attempt by the Compson's to halt their family's downward spiral, but it backfires horribly with Quentin's suicide (Quentin waits until the end of his freshman year to commit suicide so he gets the full "value" of that sold land; another example of misguided "honor").

Quentin finds Deacon, the black man he was looking for earlier. Deacon has lived around Harvard for years, befriending and mentoring many students. Quentin and Deacon talk and Quentin gives him a note he has written to Shreve, asking Deacon not to deliver it until tomorrow. Quentin says farewell to Deacon and then briefly meets Shreve again by the post office.

Since leaving Mississippi and beginning to appreciate African-Americans more, Quentin has befriended Deacon in a more meaningful way than he could with Dilsey and Roskus. The note Quentin gives to Deacon for Shreve is Quentin's final suicide note.

Quentin then remembers his mother saying that Jason was the only child close to her, and the rest of her children had turned against her. He thinks of her long complaints about how Benjy's ailment was a punishment against her, and how only Jason was more Bascomb (her family) than Compson, and how she once argued with Mr. Compson and begged to be allowed to leave and take Jason with her.

Part of Quentin's obsession with virginity and honor – the idealization of the feminine as an "other" – is because of his lack of a strong female presence growing up. Mrs. Compson chose Jason to bestow affection on, and even with him she did very little mothering.

Quentin gets on a trolley, still thinking vaguely about time, and he gets off around lunchtime. He remembers more about Gerald Bland, and Bland's mother boasting about her son's good looks and promiscuity. Quentin then slips into a memory of talking with Herbert Head two days before his marriage to Caddy. Herbert is slick and confident, trying to befriend Quentin, who is clearly angry with both Herbert and Caddy.

Quentin sees Bland as a similar type to Herbert Head or Dalton Ames, a man who doesn't respect women or value virginity. Quentin is unable to take effective action against these men, however, and is always embarrassed or beaten. In a way his hatred of them is jealousy.

In the memory Herbert keeps offering Quentin a cigar, and talks about how he is giving Jason a job at a bank, but Quentin brings up Herbert's past – Herbert was expelled from school for cheating, and thrown out of a club for cheating at cards. The two almost get into a fight, but then Caddy comes in and sends Herbert away.

Quentin is idealistic and abstract, and unable to do anything to change the situation he finds so intolerable. He is preoccupied with honor, even in the husband of his dishonored sister.

Quentin then remembers talking to Caddy before her wedding. Caddy says she is sick, and Quentin says that if she's sick she can't get married, but Caddy says that because of her sickness – her pregnancy – she has "got to marry somebody." Quentin then asks Caddy if she has slept with many men, and if she knows who the father of her child is, but she deflects both questions.

This is the closest thing we get to an explanation of Caddy's situation – she knows she is already pregnant so she decides to get married quickly. Herbert will later divorce her when it becomes clear the child is not his. Quentin puts infinite value on Caddy's virginity, while she seems indifferent to it except as it affects Quentin and Benjy.

Quentin thinks again about virginity, and about Mr. Compson saying that Quentin was only upset with Caddy because he himself was a virgin. Quentin remembers Mr. Compson saying that virginity is a meaningless idea invented by men, not women, and that Quentin shouldn't concern himself so much with Caddy's purity. Quentin thinks again about pretending he had committed incest with Caddy. He wishes that they had somehow purefied themselves by committing this ultimate sin and then running away together, far from the judgment of the world.

Quentin's sense of the family honor is stronger than his father's, though it was Mr. Compson who instilled this pride in Quentin, so Quentin cannot heed his father's philosophy and indeed finds it dishonorable. Quentin makes his false confession of incest as a chivalrous attempt to take Caddy's "sins" onto himself, that he might suffer for them too. Yet there is an element of his own sexual desire for Caddy in this too, as he wishes the lie was true.

Quentin walks onto a bridge again, looking into the water and thinking about drowning, **shadows**, and the Christian resurrection of the dead. Then three boys appear with fishing rods, and they talk about trying to catch a huge, famous trout that hangs around the bridge. Quentin asks them if there are any factories around that whistle on the hour, and shows them his broken **watch**. The boys walk away, arguing about where they will fish or swim next.

Quentin's plan for suicide begins to become more clear. He thinks of it again after remembering his father disparage the idea of virginity, so his suicide may be a means of preserving his ordered ideals and beliefs, even in the face of a world that doesn't care about them and a father that has betrayed them.

Quentin then remembers trying to convince Caddy not to marry Herbert Head, and telling her about Herbert's history of cheating at school and cards and calling him a "blackguard." Quentin tried to convince her to run away with him and live off the money for his Harvard tuition, but Caddy said she couldn't – they sold Benjy's pasture to pay for Quentin's tuition, so he had to finish his schooling or it will have been in vain. She was also worried about Benjy being sent to the asylum in Jackson when Mr. Compson dies.

This offers some more explanation as to why Quentin completed his first year at Harvard before killing himself – Caddy didn't want the loss of Benjy's pasture to be "in vain." Quentin is only able to ineffectually "tattle" on Herbert Head to try and stop the marriage, and Caddy disregards his objections.

Back in the present, Quentin goes into a bakery and meets a little Italian girl there. The girl doesn't speak, but she looks dirty and hungry, and Quentin buys her some bread, despite the baker warning him about "them foreigners." When Quentin leaves the shop the girl follows him, but she still won't speak when he asks her where she lives. Quentin starts to walk through the Italian district, looking for the girl's home and calling the girl "sister."

Quentin is still trying to protect "sisters," but is unable to truly help them or understand them. He can try to follow his Southern code of chivalry, but his actions are ineffective as usual. This is a different kind of racism in the North, dealing with a fear of immigrants.

As he walks, Quentin thinks about the smell of honeysuckle and more about Caddy, particularly one time Quentin slapped her after she kissed some "town squirt," and how she retaliated by calling Natalie, a girl Quentin had kissed in the past, a "dirty girl," and then they got into a fight in the mud and rain. After Quentin makes several fruitless attempts to find the Italian girl's family, the girl's older brother Julio suddenly appears and attacks Quentin, accusing him of kidnapping his sister.

This memory is much more sexually charged in relating to Caddy. The "dirty" Italian girl makes him think of Natalie, whom Caddy called "dirty." This implies that Caddy was jealous of Quentin's love interests just as he was of Caddy's. Julio is another disrespectful man of action defeating the hapless Quentin, though in this case Julio thinks that Quentin has design's on the girl when in fact Quentin is trying to protect her—an echo of Quentin's desire to protect Caddy but that this desire is tinged with sexual longing.

A police marshal catches up with them and arrests Quentin, as Julio has accused him of kidnapping his sister. Quentin is taken to the squire and he passes a big car containing Shreve, Spoade, Gerald Bland, and Bland's mother, along with two girls. Quentin's friends find his situation both hilarious and undignified, and they accompany him to the squire's office. The policemen soon side with Quentin over Julio, but they make Quentin pay seven dollars before he can leave.

This situation is almost comedic if it weren't another example of Quentin's tragic failure to act effectively. He tries to help the Italian girl, but ends up caught in an embarrassing tangle with the law in front of his Harvard friends. Quentin's privilege over the Italian Julio is obvious here, as the policemen side with Quentin immediately.

Mrs. Bland takes Quentin in her car along with the other boys, and she scolds him as they drive. Quentin thinks again about virginity, and he watches the **shadow** of the car move along a wall. Mrs. Bland boasts about her family and Gerald, and in between her dialogue Quentin remembers confronting Caddy after discovering she had sex with Dalton Ames, and the smell of honeysuckle on her, and Benjy wailing when she came home.

Quentin conflates Gerald Bland with Dalton Ames, the man who first slept with Caddy. Quentin keeps returning to that fateful moment when Caddy came home and Benjy sensed her changed state, the moment Quentin's idea of the Compson family honor was irrevocably stained.

Quentin remembers desperately offering to kill himself if Caddy would kill herself too, and talking about Caddy's muddy underwear on the day of Damuddy's death, and offering to run away with Caddy and pretend that it was he, Quentin, who took her virginity. Caddy agrees numbly to Quentin's suggestions, but does not act on them.

Quentin recognizes the foreshadowing of Caddy's muddy underwear. Quentin comes up with ideas that conform to his code – death over dishonor – but he cannot act on them, and Caddy passively rejects them.

Quentin then remembers confronting Dalton Ames and ordering him to leave town. Dalton Ames is totally unafraid and treats the enraged Quentin like a child. Quentin asks if he has a sister, and Dalton Ames says no, "but they're all bitches," and then Quentin hits him and threatens to kill him, but Dalton Ames easily overpowers him and sends him home.

This is another ineffective encounter with a disrespectful but potent man. Quentin tries to be a strong Southern gentleman, but his confrontation with Ames only ends with an embarrassing beating.

The narrative returns to the present, where Shreve and Spoade are tending to a wounded Quentin on the side of the road somewhere – earlier on the car ride Quentin asked Gerald Bland if he had a sister, and when Bland said no, Quentin hit him. Gerald then beat Quentin up and gave him a black eye. Shreve sympathizes, saying he would have liked to hit Bland himself, as Bland was telling such cruel stories about girls he had slept with.

Quentin connects Bland with Dalton Ames so much that he imagines he is fighting Ames as he is fighting Bland. But either way, Quentin's attempt to defend female honor and his idealized sister is a failure, and he is easily beaten.

Quentin tells Shreve and Spoade to go on without him, and they take a trolley back to Cambridge. Quentin walks around aimlessly and then takes the next trolley, thinking about the river as he passes it. He gets off and goes up to his room, which is empty and dark, listening to the chapel clock chiming as he walks. Quentin cleans the bloodstains from his vest and thinks about his mother, again wishing she had been a better support for him.

After this last encounter and his memory of other ineffective confrontations, Quentin seems resolved that the only way to save his pride and honor – to actually act instead of just think – is to go through with his suicide. In terms of positive action, however, suicide is the ultimate act of impotence, negating the Compson family line rather than restoring its honor.

Quentin thinks about his family and his parents' pride in their bloodlines, and he thinks about death, which he imagines as appearing like his grandfather. Quentin thinks again of telling his father that he had committed incest with Caddy, and he remembers how Mr. Compson did not believe him. Mr. Compson told him that Quentin's despair over Caddy would soon disappear, and that he would feel better when he went to school, and that it was always his mother's dream for him to go to Harvard.

Quentin recognizes that his despair over the family honor and Caddy is not going away, so he feels his only way out is suicide. His last thoughts grow more tragic and emotional, thinking of his mother and father and wishing someone could have been a better support or comfort for him. But his parents could only offer corrupted Southern pride in their blood and social status.

A bell sounds again, and Quentin puts on his vest and puts his **watch** into Shreve's desk drawer. Then he brushes his teeth, puts on his hat, and leaves the room.

Presumably Quentin goes to perform his final act, finally going through with his musings. He leaves the watch behind, but it has already left its mark on his soul in driving him to such despair.

APRIL SIXTH, 1928

This chapter is narrated by Jason Compson, and it begins on the morning of Good Friday, the day before Benjy's section takes place. Jason is arguing with his mother about Miss Quentin, Jason's niece. Mrs. Compson is worried that Miss Quentin is skipping school, and Jason says she is being promiscuous just like her mother, Caddy. Jason bitterly says that he never had a chance to go to Harvard like his brother Quentin, but always had to work for a living.

Jason's narrative is much clearer than Benjy's or Quentin's, but it is disturbing in its tone – Jason has become a bitter, cruel, and sarcastic man, and his language reflects this. He repeatedly refers to Caddy and Miss Quentin as "bitches," and rants inwardly about how he has been wronged in the past, which supposedly excuses his cruelty and greed in the present.

Mrs. Compson cannot control Miss Quentin, but she is afraid to let Jason discipline her, as he can be cruel and easily angered. She says that Jason is her only true child, the only one who is more Bascomb – her maiden name – than Compson. She repeats her usual litany of self-pity and complaint, that she will be dead soon and everyone will be better off, and that all her family's problems have been punishments against her. Finally she agrees to let Jason discipline Quentin, and he goes to find her.

Though Jason is the cruelest of the Compson children, he is still the one Mrs. Compson has chosen to bestow her affection on. It is never explained why, but perhaps because Jason shares his mother's tendency to self-pity and purposeful unhappiness, he is "more Bascomb than Compson." He is now the head of the family, which has sunk to a new low.

Miss Quentin is with Dilsey in the dining room, and Jason confronts her about skipping school. Quentin tries to argue but he grows violent and grabs her wrists, asking her about sleeping with boys in town. Dilsey tries to interject and protect Quentin, but Jason pushes her away. He is about to take off his belt and beat Quentin when Mrs. Compson comes down the stairs.

Jason immediately reveals the anger and violence with which he now rules the household. The Compsons have truly fallen from their glory days now. Miss Quentin shares Caddy's tendencies to promiscuity, but Miss Quentin is not ashamed of her actions as Caddy was, and she lacks Caddy's warmth.

Miss Quentin is upset and Dilsey comforts her, promising to protect her, but then Quentin turns her anger on Dilsey and pushes her away too. Jason goes to drive Quentin to school, and as he leaves the house Dilsey is tending to the upset Mrs. Compson. Jason goes around the house to get his car and encounters Luster and Benjy. He sends them away angrily, ranting to himself about his lazy servants and idiot brother.

Though Jason treats her terribly, Miss Quentin is not a likeable character either, as she turns even on Dilsey when she tries to help her. Miss Quentin has been raised in a house completely without love, except for love from Dilsey, whom she does not respect for racist reasons. Mrs. Compson is ineffective and Jason is antagonistic.

Jason drives Miss Quentin to school and the family's situation becomes more clear – Caddy sends money to Quentin for her upbringing and welfare, but Mrs. Compson burns the checks, as she still refuses to have anything to do with Caddy. Jason and Quentin argue in the car, and again Jason grows violent. Quentin leaves for school and taunts Jason that she knows she is bad and going to hell.

Miss Quentin has been raised in such a bad family situation that she is as despairing as any of the Compsons, but she lashes out with anger just like Jason. Mrs. Compson's shallow pride hurts the household. Jason's scheme for stealing from the family is hinted at here but not yet explained.

Jason then goes to his work, which is as a clerk in the farm-supply store in town. He gets a letter from Caddy asking about whether Miss Quentin has been receiving her money. Jason then goes on an inner rant about the laziness of black laborers, and how Jews in New York are making money by swindling Southerners. Jason uses his extra money (which is still mysterious) to play the cotton markets, and he pays an insider in New York to send him information.

The reality of the Compson family becomes more clear – Jason, the new head of the house, works at a farm supply store and steals from his own family. To add to his other negative qualities, Jason is also one of the most viciously racist characters in the novel. The Compsons have indeed fallen from their days of governors and generals.

Jason opens his next letter, which is from Lorraine, a prostitute he visits in Memphis. Jason then rants about women, and how he can control them with money or fear. Sometimes he gives Lorraine money, but he never calls her on the phone or writes her.

Jason also hates women. Most of his bitterness comes from Caddy, who supposedly lost him a job at a bank, but Jason then extends this to all women.

Jason burns Lorraine's letter and is then called up to the front of the store by Earl, his boss. Jason mocks the "redneck" customer who comes in, and follows this exchange with an inner tirade about how much he has had to work all his life, and how Benjy, Miss Quentin, his mother, and the Gibsons (Dilsey and her family) are nothing but burdens to him.

Jason uses the past as a source for bitterness. Because Herbert Head retracted his job offer when he divorced Caddy, and Jason wasn't able to go to Harvard like Quentin, Jason feels justified in ranting about his constant burdens, and feeling like the world is against him.

Jason is still bitter that Mr. Compson never sent him to Harvard like his brother Quentin, and Jason remembers when his father died. In the memory Uncle Maury comforts the mourning Mrs. Compson, but Jason is only thinking about how Maury has borrowed more money from them.

Jason has no affection for his family members. Even with his mother, who favors him above the rest, Jason abuses her affection and trust to steal money from her. He thinks of things only in terms of petty greed.

Jason then remembers Mr. Compson taking in the baby Miss Quentin, even though Mrs. Compson had disowned Caddy. In the memory Dilsey accepts that she will raise the baby, as she has raised all the Compson children. Mrs. Compson is distraught at the situation, and decides then that Miss Quentin will never know Caddy's name. That night Mrs. Compson tells Jason she is glad that Jason is alive and not Quentin, if one of her sons had to die.

Mrs. Compson shows her superstitious nature regarding names again, as she refuses to allow Caddy's name to be spoken. Dilsey takes up another burden without question, assuming that Mrs. Compson will be an ineffective mother. Mr. Compson is a kinder figure than his wife, despite his nihilism and alcoholism.

Back in the present, Jason ignores his letter from Uncle Maury, as it will be asking for money, as always, and turns to the next letter from Caddy. He then shifts into a memory of the day Mr. Compson was buried, when Jason encountered Caddy after their mother had gone home. Caddy offered to pay Jason a hundred dollars just to see Miss Quentin for a minute, and Jason took her money and then gave Caddy only a passing glimpse of her daughter as they drove away.

Jason remembers the past as he thinks angrily of Caddy, but Faulkner also uses these flashbacks to explain, piece by piece, Jason's scheme for stealing money from his family. Caddy clearly has money, possibly paid to her by Herbert Head, and is probably better off than the Compsons still in Jefferson. Jason shows his petty cruelty yet again.

The next morning Caddy found Jason at his store, trying to convince him to let her see Miss Quentin, but he bullied her into leaving, still raging about the job at the bank she "stole" from him. Caddy then convinced Dilsey, but Jason threatened Dilsey if she ever let Caddy see Miss Quentin or Benjy. Dilsey called Jason a "cold man" and thanked God she had more heart than he.

All of Jason's bitterness and cruelty to Caddy and Miss Quentin seems to be based on his lost bank job. Jason ignores the fact that it was Caddy who got him the job offer in the first place. Dilsey again acts as the only pillar of moral stability in the family.

Caddy then met with Jason again, and she relented to an arrangement where she would send money for Miss Quentin's welfare, but she must promise to stay away from the family. Back in the present, Jason complains about Earl, his boss, and then opens Caddy's letter, which contains a money order, not a check. This messes up Jason's scheme – which is still unclear – as it requires Quentin to sign for the money herself.

The pieces start coming together – Caddy sends monthly checks to Miss Quentin, but Jason cashes them and gives a fake check to his mother, who burns them, as she is still too proud to accept anything from the disowned Caddy. Earl is a patient, honorable man, who clearly keeps Jason on only for his family's sake.

Miss Quentin suddenly shows up at the store, asking about the letter. Jason mocks her and says the money order is only for ten dollars. He keeps bullying her and Quentin finally relents to him, signing the money order without looking at the amount. Jason then sends her back to school.

What is so disturbing is that Jason has all the power in the family now. All the people he torments – Miss Quentin, Benjy, Luster, and Dilsey – can do nothing against him, as he is physically stronger and now the "head of the family."

Jason takes his dinner break, goes to the bank, and gets some blank checks that he "fixes" for his mother. His scheme becomes apparent – Jason himself cashes Caddy's monthly checks for Miss Quentin and gives a false check to Mrs. Compson, who tearfully burns them. This is the extra money Jason uses to play the cotton market and pay for his prostitute in Memphis.

Jason feels justified in his bitterness and self-pity, despite the fact that he is the one stealing from others. Because he had been wronged in the past, he feels no shame in taking from others, feeling that the money is rightfully his.

Jason goes to the telegraph office, where he learns that his stock in the cotton market has gone down, which enrages him. He mocks and threatens everyone at the office and then goes home to eat dinner, which Earl had specifically asked him not to do. Jason gives his mother the false check, and she laments what a burden she and Miss Quentin are to Jason, but she still burns the check, as she wants no charity from a "fallen woman."

Mrs. Compson clings to her pride in her family name, though the family has clearly become corrupted beyond all recognition. Jason takes advantage of his mother's affection and trust and feels no guilt about it, in fact believing her complaints that the family is a great burden to him, even though he is stealing from them.

Mrs. Compson continues to complain about how much she suffers for her children, and Jason mostly ignores her. He then listens to Luster feeding Benjy and rants to himself about all the lazy mouths he has to feed. Jason wants to send Benjy to the asylum in Jackson as soon as he can, as he is embarrassed and annoyed by Benjy's presence. Miss Quentin doesn't come home for dinner, which upsets Mrs. Compson and makes Jason feel justified in his cruelty to her.

Mrs. Compson and Jason do perhaps share the most "Bascomb blood," as they both can twist any situation to make themselves the victim. Caddy was the only sibling to truly care for Benjy, and Jason actively dislikes him and is embarrassed by him.

Jason gives his mother the letter from Uncle Maury, which is written in flowery prose and asks for money, as usual. Jason then goes back to work, where he argues with Earl about how long he can take his dinner break. Jason tells Earl he was at the dentist and threatens to quit. Earl is patient with Jason's sarcasm and anger, but he does imply that Jason bought his car with money stolen from Mrs. Compson. This enrages Jason further.

Jason uses his natural cleverness for greedy schemes, but many people apparently see through his thievery, or else just dislike him because of his caustic personality. Uncle Maury has not changed at all, still acting as a well-educated Southern gentleman who will not work but must live off his sister.

Jason goes into the back room of the store and starts mocking and tormenting Earl's old black assistant, but he is interrupted when he sees Miss Quentin pass by the store with a man in a red tie. The red tie is especially infuriating to Jason, and he leaves the store to follow them. He thinks about how people must think the whole Compson family is crazy, now that he – the last sane one – is out chasing a girl in the streets. Quentin and the man know Jason is following them, and they lose him in the back alleys of Jefferson.

Jason feels that he is the only "sane" Compson, and the one keeping any respect the family might have. He shares his parents' pride in their heritage, and part of his hatred of Miss Quentin is because she is "staining" the family name. Jason enjoys ranting about the laziness of black people, despite the fact that they are little better off than slaves in this society, and must work their whole lives away.

Jason is then interrupted in his chase by a telegram boy, who says that his account in the cotton market has fallen even further. Jason rants about the Jews again and vows to get out of the cotton business. He then drives home angrily and gets a splitting headache. He argues with Mrs. Compson some more and then heads back to work.

Jason seems to relish his misfortune, and purposefully drives people to treat him badly just so he can be bitter about it. He has a native, practical cleverness, but he has no ideals or goals beyond money-making schemes. He has pride but no honor.

On his drive back into town Jason is nearly run down by a Ford, and then he sees the man in the red tie driving it and Miss Quentin in the passenger seat. Crazed with anger, Jason chases the Ford five miles out from town and then gets out of his car when he comes to a river. He thinks about how Quentin is sullying the family name, and how he has to argue with people about her, telling them his family used to own slaves while the rest of the town was all poor.

Quentin has learned her antagonism and anger from Jason, so he gets a taste of his own medicine. His arrogance is entirely based in the Compsons' glorious past, as the present family has nothing to be proud of. The people of Jefferson are moving on into a modern age, while the Compsons cling to the past.

Jason's headache gets worse in the bright sun, and he follows the tire tracks of the Ford into some underbrush. He hopes to catch Miss Quentin having sex with the man in a ditch, but then he hears their car start and the Ford drives past him and away, honking its horn. Jason runs back to his own car and finds that Quentin and the man have slashed one of his tires.

Jason also has a physical ailment with his painful headaches, and these could either be caused by or increase his constant anger. He assumes Miss Quentin, like all women, is just a "bitch" who could never outsmart him.

Jason goes to a nearby store and pumps up his tire and then drives back to town. He gets another telegram, saying he has lost more money. Jason goes back to work, argues with Earl some more, and rants to himself about women. He can hear the band playing at the minstrel show nearby, which makes him think more about how lazy all black people are, and how hard he has to work. Finally the store closes and Jason goes home for the night.

Jason has bad luck this day on the cotton market, and he immediately turns that into anger at others. Even though he is stealing from his niece and taking long meal breaks from his job, he still feels totally justified in calling black people lazy.

Jason arrives and finds Luster, who says that Mrs. Compson and Miss Quentin are fighting upstairs and Dilsey is trying to mediate. Luster complains about how he can't go to the minstrel show, as he doesn't have a quarter. Jason takes out two tickets to the show that Earl had given him. He tells Luster he doesn't want them, but Luster can have them for a quarter. Dilsey comes downstairs and tries to shame Jason, but Luster can only watch helplessly as Jason burns the tickets.

Jason lashes out in this petty way, tormenting a fourteen-year-old boy who worked all day at a job far beyond his maturity level. Dilsey understands Jason's small-mindedness and cruelty and tries to shame him, but he feels no guilt for his actions – he has had a bad day, so he feels justified in whatever he might do.

Jason sits down and reads the paper, and he threatens to make Dilsey bring him his food unless Miss Quentin and his mother will come downstairs for dinner. They submit, and the three sit at the table and eat. Jason mockingly alludes to Quentin's exploits with the man in the red tie, but he never explicitly mentions it to Mrs. Compson. Finally Quentin explodes angrily, asking Mrs. Compson why Jason treats her so badly. She says it is Jason who makes her misbehave. Mrs. Compson dithers and Miss Quentin leaves the table, saying she wishes she was dead.

Mrs. Compson cannot stand up to Jason, as she still considers him her closest child, and the rightful head of the family just because that is the way things are traditionally done. Only Dilsey tries to protect the objects of Jason's tormenting, like Benjy and Miss Quentin, and so Jason torments her just the same. Part of Jason fears her at the same time, though, and he never goes too far with Dilsey.

Mrs. Compson then complains about how she doesn't understand Miss Quentin, and how none of her family loved her except for Jason. Mrs. Compson says Quentin is probably studying in her room, but Jason suspects she is up to something. Jason hears Benjy snoring, and he thinks about how Benjy was castrated after he attacked the schoolgirls. Jason finishes by saying he is just trying to get his fair share, and wants a chance to get his money back.

Jason clears up some of the confusing plot with his clear narrative (like explaining that Benjy was indeed castrated), but his section is otherwise disturbing in its constant bitterness and self-pity. The Compson family has fallen into almost a tragic farce at this point, very far from its glorious beginnings.

APRIL EIGHTH, 1928

It is **Easter** Sunday, two days after Jason's section and one day after Benjy's. The narrator is now a third-person voice, which begins by following Dilsey. At dawn Dilsey emerges from her cabin and walks up to the Compton house. Mrs. Compson immediately starts asking her for her hot water bottle, and Dilsey lights the fire and gets the kitchen up and running. Luster has overslept, as he went to the show the night before, so Dilsey has to do all the morning work herself.

Instead of Caddy, the last Compson sibling, Faulkner uses an omniscient narrator to tell this chapter. In this way he can view the Compsons objectively, like Benjy, but with a more traditional narrative style that helps explain the final downfall of the Compsons. It is significant that the chapter begins on Easter morning and follows Dilsey –the only possible hope for the "resurrection" of the family.

Luster comes up from the basement, where he has been trying to play the musical saw, and Dilsey orders him to wake up Benjy and get him dressed. Luster keeps delaying in his work – trying to go back to the basement – and Mrs. Compson keeps interfering, but Dilsey still gets everything started and breakfast made. Luster finally enters with Benjy, and he says that Jason has been accusing him of breaking his window the night before. Luster denies doing it, but Dilsey says he has as much "Compson devilment" in him as any of the white family members.

Dilsey is a hopeful figure because she has retained the Southern values of the original Compsons – charity, family, and religious faith – without the corruption of arrogance and self-absorption. This is ironic because Dilsey is a black servant, the lowest class of Southerner, and she is now the only hope for an aristocratic white family and a Southern heritage built on slave-ownership. As in this scene, the Compsons just get in Dilsey's way.

Dilsey serves Benjy his breakfast and treats him with tenderness and sympathy. Jason comes downstairs, angry and sarcastic about his broken window. He accuses Miss Quentin, who is still asleep – she is always allowed to sleep in on Sundays – and orders Dilsey to go wake her up. Dilsey tries to let her sleep, but Jason is insistent and Mrs. Compson does not help her. As Dilsey goes upstairs Mrs. Compson and Jason complain about having to let the servants go to church today, as it is **Easter**.

The Compsons only remember it is Easter because they complain about the Gibsons leaving and not making them dinner. Mrs. Compson talks about God and Christianity, but the family clearly never goes to church, as Miss Quentin sleeps in Sundays. Dilsey is the only one other than Caddy to treat Benjy as a real human being, rather than a hindrance or embarrassment.

Upstairs Dilsey calls gently for Miss Quentin, but there is no response. Jason suddenly understands what has happened and gets up from the table, violently takes the keys from his mother, and opens the door, despite Dilsey's protests and promises to protect Miss Quentin. They go into Quentin's room and find it empty. Mrs. Compson is immediately distraught, and for some reason thinks Miss Quentin has killed herself because she was named for the other Quentin. Dilsey tries to soothe her and take her away.

Miss Quentin's escape is the true end of the Compson line – all that remains is a severely mentally-disabled man and a bitter, wifeless clerk who is unable to love, and so cannot get married and have legitimate children. The famous Compsons collapse with a whimper. Yet this downfall happens on Easter Sunday, the celebration of Christ rising from the dead, so Faulkner implies that there still might be hope.

Jason immediately rushes to a closet and takes out his strongbox, which has been forced open. His papers are still there, but all his money is gone. He stands in shock for a moment and then calls the police, ordering them to have a deputy ready to leave with him. Jason then leaves without eating breakfast.

Miss Quentin has stolen back the money Jason stole from her. Jason is shown to be just as impotent as the other Compson men, especially as compared to the Compson women.

Meanwhile Benjy is wailing again, and Dilsey and Luster try to calm him down. Dilsey asks Luster about Miss Quentin, and Luster says he sees her sneak out of her room and go down the tree all the time. Dilsey says nothing about this to the Compsons, but instead gets ready for church. She finds Luster trying to play the musical saw again, and she makes him get Benjy and leave for church. Benjy is still upset, and Dilsey comforts him.

Dilsey makes a quiet decision here not to say anything about Miss Quentin. Perhaps she realizes that almost anything Quentin is running away to will be better than the life she has now. Dilsey steps back and accepts that this is the end of the Compsons, and then she gathers her fortitude and goes on to church.

Luster, Benjy, Dilsey, and Frony walk together to the local black church for an **Easter** service. Many other people on the way greet Dilsey with respect, but some white people in town whisper about Benjy. Dilsey calls them "trash white folks" and says they think Benjy isn't good enough for white church, but too good for black church. She says God doesn't care how intelligent Benjy is – he is just as valuable as anyone.

Dilsey continues as a quiet pillar of strength among the madness of the Compsons' world. Only she loves Benjy like Caddy did, and as a Christ-figure herself Dilsey loves Benjy with faithful eyes, seeing him as a valuable child of God. Dilsey recognizes that the "trash white folks" are still living in the past, clinging to their racist worldviews.

At the church there is a visiting preacher called Reverend Shegog. At first he is disappointing to the congregation, as he is tiny and speaks like a white person, but then his voice swells and shifts into black dialect, and he delivers a rousing sermon about the suffering and death of Jesus, and his glorious resurrection on **Easter** Sunday. Dilsey sits perfectly still during the sermon, tears rolling down her face.

This is the spiritual climax of the novel, as Faulkner fully associates Dilsey with Christ, the only hopeful figure who can resurrect the fallen Compsons. This then extends to the South itself, where a role reversal has taken place – the former slaves are the hope for the future, while the fallen aristocrats only get in the way.

As they leave the church Frony asks Dilsey why she is so upset, but Dilsey only says that she has "seen the beginning, and now she sees the ending." The Gibsons and Benjy return to the Compson house to find Jason still gone. Mrs. Compson is in bed, still convinced that Miss Quentin has killed herself, probably to hurt Mrs. Compson herself, and she wants Dilsey to find the suicide note. Dilsey tries to reassure her and then leaves the room, still repeating that she has seen the "first and the last."

Dilsey shows the healthiest relationship with time of any character, as she is able to step back and see this generation of Compsons as a part of history, a cycle that must lead to a new beginning. She does not feel time as a suffocating thing like Quentin, or as an excuse for bitterness and cruelty like Jason. But Faulkner only offers us Dilsey's sparse and simple phrase to encompass the sweep of the Compson tragedy - there is no language to truly capture it, even with four narrators.

The narrative then moves to Jason, who arrives at the sheriff's house, demanding they leave immediately and track down Miss Quentin. The sheriff delays, finally saying that he is suspicious of Jason's accusation. Jason grows furious and says three thousand dollars have been stolen, and the sheriff asks why Jason had so much money hidden in the house, and whether Mrs. Compson knew about it. The sheriff says that Jason probably drove Miss Quentin into running off, and he declines to help Jason in his search without more evidence.

Despite Jason's belief that he is the only one upholding the respectable Compson name, it is clear that he has a reputation in town as a cruel, greedy man. The sheriff even sympathizes with the promiscuous Miss Quentin over the enraged Jason, which shows that times have indeed changed in Jefferson, though the Compsons still cling to their old prejudices.

Jason leaves the sheriff, enraged, and gasses up his car. He thinks with a kind of triumph about how it will probably rain and he will miss dinner, and so he will have more opportunities to feel outraged and victimized. He imagines himself attacking the sheriff, but he does not think specifically of Miss Quentin or his money – for him they only exist as an extension of the bank job he was deprived of by Caddy and Herbert Head.

Jason never admitted this to himself when he was narrating, but Faulkner can objectively explain that Jason enjoys suffering hardships just so he can wallow in self-pity and bitterness. And the greatest source of that self-pity is Caddy and the job she "stole" from him.

Jason drives towards Mottson, which is where the minstrel show will be next week – Jason thinks Miss Quentin will be there with the man in the red tie. Jason starts to get a headache as a drives, and he ties a camphor-soaked rag around his neck. He tries to distract himself with thoughts of Lorraine, his Memphis prostitute, but this only makes him more enraged that he has been outwitted by a woman.

Jason's hatred of women only shows how impotent he is, like all the Compson men. Mr. Compson allowed himself to be controlled by his self-obsessed wife, Benjy is dependent on Caddy for his sense of order, Quentin couldn't live with the jealousy and shame of Caddy's promiscuity, and Jason lets his whole life be ruined by Caddy's divorce and Miss Quentin's escape.

Jason reaches Mottson and finds the minstrel show tent. He wants to ambush Miss Quentin and get his money back quickly, but first he comes across a frail old man. Jason rudely demands information from him, and the man suddenly becomes violent and attacks Jason. Jason strikes him on the head and the old man collapses. Jason runs for his car, but the old man chases him with a hatchet.

Jason is lashing out at the world again, but now the world is striking back. He cannot accept his life being controlled by Miss Quentin as it was by Caddy. Though Caddy never actually did *anything to hurt her brothers, they allowed themselves to be hurt anyway.*

Jason is rescued by the man who runs the minstrel show, who leads him around the corner, explaining that the old man is crazy. Jason asks about Miss Quentin, and the man says that she and the man with the red tie are not there. He had sent them away, as he disapproved of their behavior. Jason believes him, but his headache is now so bad he can't drive home, and no drugstores are open on **Easter** Sunday. He pays a black man four dollars to drive him back to Jefferson.

Jason almost seems to give up here in the face of his painful headache and the knowledge of his failure. He has been outwitted by a woman, and he cannot even properly pursue her because most of the money she stole was rightfully hers in the first place. The man who runs the minstrel show still holds the old values of sexuality as sin – but Faulkner will also reveal that the man with the red tie was already wanted for bigamy.

Back in Jefferson, Dilsey sends Luster and Benjy outside so they can't cause any trouble. Benjy starts watching the nearby golfers and moaning when they say "caddie," and Luster gives him a flower to try and cheer him up. Luster then grows frustrated and purposefully upsets Benjy by whispering Caddy's name to him. Dilsey comes out of the house and comforts Benjy, holding him and wiping his tears and drool.

Like the cycle of the Compson family, the end of the novel returns to its beginning. We are back in Benjy's familiar world of chaos and order, where a flower gives him comfort and a single word causes him misery. Dilsey shows her Christ-like charity and patience again.

T.P. would usually drive Benjy to the cemetery to comfort him, but T.P. isn't around today so Luster offers to drive the carriage instead. Dilsey warns him to stick to T.P.'s usual route and be careful, but she lets him go, calling Benjy "the Lord's child" as they leave. Luster reassures her of his competence, and they ride off to town.

This is a recurrence of Benjy's memory of T.P. driving the carriage to the cemetery because Roskus was ill. The Compsons have clung to their old traditions and routines, despite the world changing around them and their own sharp decline.

At a monument to a Confederate soldier Luster deviates from T.P.'s usual course, and Benjy immediately starts howling at the strange route. At that moment Jason returns, and he runs across the town square to strike Luster. He orders him to never change his route again, but to take Benjy straight home, and then Jason strikes the crying Benjy. Luster immediately starts riding home, chastised. When Benjy again sees the familiar scenery of Jefferson, he feels that everything is in its ordered place again, and he grows quiet, his eyes empty and serene.

This last scene is symbolic of the sad end of the Compsons – they are so self-involved and steeped in their outdated ideas of order that they have not noticed their own decay and corruption. But at the same time there is a note of hopefulness here as well, as the family could be rescued from chaos and returned to order, perhaps with Dilsey's strength and virtue.

APPENDIX: COMPSON: 1699-1945

Faulkner added this appendix years later, but intended it to be part of *The Sound and the Fury*. It is a lyrical history of Jefferson and the Compson family. The section begins with Ikkemotubbe, a Chickasaw chief who gave up the square of land that would later become Jefferson, Mississippi. Next is a description of Andrew Jackson, who sent all the Native Americans on the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma.

Faulkner said that the appendix (which he wrote sixteen years after the novel) held the "key" to the book, and he intended it to be published alongside The Sound and the Fury. *At the same time the appendix stands apart from the novel, and there is critical dispute over whether it should be considered a "Fifth Part" or taken on its own.*

The list then continues with a brief listing of Compsons. Quentin MacLachan Compson, a Scottish soldier who fled to Daniel Boone's Kentucky, and Charles Stuart Compson, a schoolteacher who was part of a plot to secede Mississippi from the Union and join it to Spain. He later fled the country.

Even with a historical appendix "explaining" everything, Faulkner still uses a convoluted structure and confusing (but beautiful) language. Quentin MacLachlan was the first Compson to come to America.

Next came Jason Lycurgus Compson, who raced horses against Ikkemotubbe and so won the land that would become Jefferson from him. He then built the huge plantation that became the "Compson Domain." One of his descendants, another Quentin MacLachan, became governor of Mississippi, and another, Jason Lycurgus II, became a Confederate general in the Civil War.

These are the glorious Compsons that made the family so famous and (later) arrogant. The family names are repeated over and over as the Compsons try to recreate their past, but the last Jason and Quentin are tragically different from their noble ancestors.

After the war the Compson land began to be "nibbled" away by other families and Northerners. The Compson plantation fell into disrepair and began to be mortgaged off. The appendix then moves to Jason III, the father in the novel, who sat all day with his decanter of whiskey and read Greek and Roman literature. He sold the majority of the Compson property to the golf club to pay for Caddy's lavish wedding and Quentin's Harvard tuition.

The appendix now moves into the time period of the novel itself, offering some explanation and clarifying facts that were obscured in the text. The Compson land of the novel is already seriously diminished, and Benjy's pasture is the last piece except for the house and the servants' cabin.

The land became known as the "Old Compson place" then, and Faulkner dispassionately explains what happened after the novel ends – after Mrs. Compson died, Jason IV sent Benjy to the State Asylum in Jackson and then sold the Compson house to someone who used it as a boardinghouse.

Despite the symbolic possibility of resurrection at the end of the novel, in the appendix Faulkner totally crushes any hope for a renewal of the Compson line. Benjy is simply sent away, and Jason gives up his heritage for money.

The list continues with the characters of the novel: Quentin III, who was obsessed with the concept of Compson honor as symbolized by his sister Caddy's virginity, and who drowned himself in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He waited until the academic year was over to commit suicide because the family had sold Benjy's pasture to pay for his tuition.

Faulkner clarifies Quentin's desperate musings and offers a more objective explanation of his suicide than Quentin himself could give. Quentin probably didn't want to waste the sale of the pasture for Caddy's sake, not Benjy's.

Next comes Candace (Caddy), who married Herbert Head and was divorced after a year, then married a man in California for five years, and then disappeared in Paris during World War II. She remained beautiful and youthful-looking, and was never seen again except for one instance – a librarian in Jefferson who had gone to school with Caddy saw a picture of her in a magazine, looking beautiful and elegant in a sportscar with a German staff general.

This is where the appendix moves past the novel and reveals some of the characters' later fates. Though she was disowned and disgraced in Jefferson, Caddy seems to have had a successful (or at least interesting) life outside of Mississippi, though there is a hint of danger in the fact that she ended up with a German officer, as the Germans were clearly the bad guys of World War 2, to put it mildly.

The librarian brought the picture to Jason, who now owned and lived in the supply store where he had worked for Earl. She showed him the picture, saying they had to "save" Caddy. At first Jason admitted it was indeed Caddy, but when he realized the librarian actually cared about Caddy's welfare, he pretended that it wasn't her in the picture.

Jason is still as small-minded and bitter as ever, still begrudging Caddy that lost bank job of years before. Caddy was apparently not wholly disgraced in the town, as the librarian works so hard to help her.

The librarian next went all the way to Memphis, where she found Dilsey's house. Frony met her at the door and brought her inside, where Dilsey sat beside a fire (even though it was summer), very old and mostly blind. The librarian repeated her plea to help save Caddy, but Dilsey only said she couldn't see the picture, and handed the magazine back to the librarian. The librarian took the train back home, crying, but then realized that the reason Dilsey didn't want to "save" Caddy was because there was nothing in Jefferson to save her for, and she was probably better off wherever she was now.

Dilsey also managed to escape the Compsons, though technically she was fired by Jason after Mrs. Compson died. Dilsey again shows her wisdom and comprehensive view of the family through only a few words of dialogue (like "the beginning and the ending"). She knows that there is nothing left in Jefferson for Caddy, and finally even the librarian understands that – the Compsons are truly finished.

Next comes Jason, who remained a childless bachelor and feared only Dilsey among all other things. It was Jason who secretly made himself Benjy's guardian and had him castrated after Benjy attacked the schoolgirl. After Mrs. Compson died in 1933, Jason sold the house and moved to into an office above the farm supply store, where on weekends his lady "friend from Memphis" would visit. Jason would say that in 1933 he "freed the Compsons from the niggers."

Lorraine, the prostitute Jason visited in Memphis, becomes Jason's only companion, so the Compson name ends with him. In typical Jason hypocrisy, he lives in unmarried "sin" while still hating Caddy and Miss Quentin for their promiscuity. Jason "freeing" the Compsons from the Gibsons really means the total end of the Compson family.

Next is Benjamin, who was born as Maury, named after Uncle Maury who borrowed money from everyone – including Dilsey, once, saying she was "a born lady." Mrs. Compson then renamed the child Benjamin after she discovered his disability. Benjy only loved three things in his life – his pasture, Caddy, and the sight of fire. Benjy perceived time in a strange way, and so remembered only Caddy's loss, not Caddy herself, and when he was committed he remembered only the loss of firelight and his pasture.

Maury remains almost a comedic figure in his perpetual freeloading. Faulkner basically summarizes Benjy's long, opaque section with this small biography. Benjy loses all three things that he loves by the end of his life.

The last Compson is Miss Quentin, Caddy's daughter, who was "doomed to be unwed" from the moment she was born. She actually stole almost seven thousand – not three thousand – dollars from Jason, but Jason couldn't admit this to anyone as the extra four thousand didn't actually belong to him. This made Jason live in constant rage, as he couldn't even pursue Miss Quentin in case she revealed his own thievery. Miss Quentin disappeared with the man in the red tie – who was already wanted for bigamy – and never reappeared in any glamorous snapshots.

Even in his own narration Jason would not admit how much money he (and then Miss Quentin) had stolen. Miss Quentin, the last Compson, does not have such a hopeful escape as her mother – the man in the red tie is no romantic savior, but a womanizer who probably cares nothing for Quentin. Even Faulkner himself seems to know nothing of her fate.

Last Faulkner briefly describes the Gibson family: TP and Frony, who moved to Memphis, and Luster, who at only 14 was able to fully care for the mentally disabled Benjy. There is only one line about Dilsey: "They endured."

As in the novel itself, Faulkner ends with Dilsey, but instead of hope for resurrection he emphasizes her long suffering and endurance. He also casts Luster in more admirable terms. The Gibsons do not get such an extensive biography as the Compsons, but theirs is certainly more favorable.

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