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Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



As I Lay Dying

by William Faulkner

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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As I Lay Dying

Objectives

Note: All page references are from the Vintage International edition of *As I Lay Dying*, copyright 1990.

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. state why and in what way this book is a good example of Modernist literature.
2. identify and comment on the following types of imagery in the novel: animals used as omens, and human physical conditions used as comments on emotional and spiritual conditions.
3. state Faulkner's view of the role and importance of Christianity in the life of man as an individual and in the life of society in general.
4. identify and discuss the ways in which the ethics and ideals of parents are transmitted to their children.
5. discuss the psychological aspects of this novel, particularly the following:
 - Cash as the stoic
 - Jewel as an example of the unrepentant prodigal son
 - Darl as the emotionally unnourished, sensitive child
 - Dewey Dell as the abandoned, unloved, pregnant adolescent
 - Vardaman as the ignored youngest child
 - the emotional differences between men and women.
6. understand, define, and give examples of the following literary terms:
 - simile
 - personification
 - stream of consciousness
 - metaphor
 - foreshadowing
 - irony
 - alliteration
 - interior monologue
 - onomatopoeia
 - juxtaposition
 - repetition
 - maxim
 - point of view

As I Lay Dying

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Modernist fiction sought to stretch the boundaries of form that had governed the construction of the story and the novel. What are some ways that Faulkner tests the limits of the “proper” forms of fiction?
2. The physical description and condition of characters can often be used to portray their inner condition. How is this done with Jewel throughout the novel?
3. During the story, Darl becomes less passive and more assertive. Trace this progression throughout the novel, and demonstrate why and how this progression leads to his insanity.
4. What does the ending of the novel tell us about Anse? Is this information consistent with what we see, and what other characters see of him in the novel? Why or why not?
5. The Bundrens clearly have a higher view of themselves than do the people who see them. Give details from their visit to Mottson, Peabody’s visit to their farm, and their interactions with the Tulls to support this statement.
6. All of the children have difficulty dealing with the loss of their mother. Discuss how Darl, Cash, Vardaman, and Dewey Dell emotionally medicate themselves against the pain of grief.
7. Compare and contrast Addie’s and Cora’s views of the nature of sin.
8. Is Cora more of a Christian than Vernon, based on her definitions? Why or why not?
9. What is the symbolism of Vardaman’s fish in the novel?
10. Is Darl actually insane? Why or why not?
11. How does Anse manipulate his children and neighbors to get what he wants?
12. Moseley tells Dewey Dell to find “the first real man on the road” and use him to get Lefe to marry her. By saying this, he implies that her family has no real men in it. Is he right? Why or why not?

As I Lay Dying

Darl (Pg. 3)

Vocabulary

adze – a tool similar to an axe

dilapidation – disrepair through neglect

endued – endured

plumb-line – a string with a weight on the end, used as a standard for vertical straightness

1. What details about Jewel foreshadow his personality?

2. What is the significance of the comparison of the wooden boards to gold?

3. Explain the spacing of the words “Chuck. Chuck. Chuck”.

Darl (Pg. 39)

1. What image does Darl notice that evokes the Fates?

2. Earlier, Dewey Dell's sexual encounter with Lefe was presented with imagery of fate and death. How does that continue in this chapter?

Peabody (Pg. 41)

1. How is Peabody's reaction to Anse similar to Tull's reaction?

2. According to Peabody, whom does death affect the most?

3. What image foreshadows the fact that Addie's death will happen very soon?

4. How is alliteration used in the last paragraph of the passage to express the emotional effect of the sound of Cash's saw?

Tull (Pg. 85)

Vocabulary

commence – begin

1. What is ironic about Addie's funeral attire?

2. When Whitfield enters, does he focus matters on God, or on himself? How do you know?

3. What is the function of the italicized passage on pages 90-91? On page 92?

4. Where has Vardaman been during the service?

Darl (Pg. 107)

Vocabulary

capitulation – surrender
scoriation – carving or cutting mark
soporific – inducing sleep
uninferant – not indicative

1. Describe and explain the significance of the New Hope church sign.

Anse (Pg. 110)

1. What is ironic about Anse's monologue about society?

2. What is Anse's source of comfort as he tries to get to Jefferson?

Samson (Pg. 112)

1. What observation does Samson make about Anse? How accurate is he?

2. What does Samson say is a key difference between men and women?
