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Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

As I Lay Dying

by William Faulkner

written by Elizabeth Osborne

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As I Lay Dying

Objectives

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

1. explain how Faulkner experiments with chronological organization and narrative perspective to tell the story.
2. analyze the use of black humor in the novel.
3. explain the relevance and meaning of allusions to the following works:
 - The Bible
 - Homer's *Odyssey*
 - Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
4. trace the development of ideas of fate, eternity, and being that appear in the book.
5. explain the discrepancy between words and experience in the book.
6. explain the relevance and meaning of the following symbols in the novel:
 - the fish
 - Jewel's horse
 - the wagon
 - Cash's tools
 - wheels and circles
 - the graphophone
 - the toy train
8. analyze the characters' diction, syntax, and figures of speech and explain how the language contributes to characterization.
9. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.

Introductory Lecture

William Faulkner is an author best known to most readers for two things: the difficulty of his works and his invention of the fictional community of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi.

Faulkner started writing fiction in the 1920s, when writers were breaking away from old conventions and experimenting with form, style, diction, and even the chronological organization of their works. Ernest Hemingway, for instance, wrote in flat, short sentences unlike any seen before. James Joyce, another famously difficult writer, wrote a novel (*Ulysses*) that consists solely of the stream-of-consciousness impressions of its protagonist as he travels through Dublin through the course of a single day. These works are now considered part of the first wave of a movement called Modernism.

The development of automated technology, especially in World War I, contributed to the rise of Modernism. Soldiers and journalists who had experienced the war returned home with the sense that the world had changed; men could be killed in huge numbers by efficient weapons, though there was little gain for any of the warring parties. Painters, writers, and other artists also commented on the way the new society valued the anonymous and mechanical over the individual or handmade. They tried to reflect the strangeness of the new world through radical experimentation in their writing.

Like Hemingway, Faulkner applied to serve in the United States military in World War I and was turned down by the branch to which he applied. Hemingway, however, did witness war atrocities as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross. Faulkner served in the British and Canadian Air Forces, but did not see action. While Hemingway would choose to set some of his most famous stories in wartime Europe, Faulkner grounded his characters in the culture of the place where he had grown up. Lafayette County, Mississippi, was the model for Yoknapatawpha, where almost all of Faulkner's characters either live or originate.

In Faulkner's most famous work, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the narrative shifts among members of the Compson family. The Compsons, residents of Yoknapatawpha, are of an old (and thus respected) Southern lineage in the area, but are also tragic figures, unable to deal with the passing of the Old South. The novel gained fame because of its stream-of-consciousness narration, which many readers found difficult to follow. Because one of the narrators is the mentally disabled Benjy, and because the other narrators suffer from varying degrees of mental illness, the time and space in which the action occurs can shift without warning.

Faulkner often dealt with the fate of the Old South in his works, usually without much hope. Mental illness, incest, suicide, and loveless marriages occur repeatedly in his novels. He also considers race and class; during the time he was working, the Civil Rights movement in America was just about to begin.

As I Lay Dying (1930) is the story of another Yoknapatawpha family, the Bundrens. Unlike the Compsons, the Bundrens have always been poor. *As I Lay Dying* is Faulkner's attempt to render the thoughts of people who do not have the education to express themselves eloquently, but who are capable of profound thought and emotion.

The work is almost as controversial as *The Sound and the Fury* because of its narrative shifts and exploration of dense existential topics.

Other works set in Yoknapatawpha County include *Light in August*, published in 1932; *Absalom, Absalom* (1936), which examines one of the Compsons, Quentin, from another point of view; and a group of three works (*The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*) now known as the Snopes Trilogy (1940-1959).

Several of Faulkner's works have been adapted for film. *The Long Hot Summer*, based on *The Hamlet*, was made in 1958 and stars Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Orson Welles, and Angela Lansbury. His late comic work *The Reivers* was adapted as a film in 1969 and stars Steve McQueen.

Faulkner's novel *A Fable* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1955, and *The Reivers* won him the same award in 1963. Faulkner also won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

William Faulkner served as Writer-in-Residence at the University of Virginia from the late 1950s until his death. He died in 1962 in Byhalia, Mississippi.

Major Themes and Ideas

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism, a philosophical movement that started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focuses on the connection between consciousness and existence. Its basic assumption is that reality is recreated for each moment a human being is aware; there is no real connection between the past and the present.

In *As I Lay Dying*, characters like Addie, Darl, and even Vardaman grapple with questions and fears about **being and nothingness**. They try to understand how their physical being can exist over time and space.

At the time of Addie's death, Peabody muses that death is not a beginning or an ending, but like a person or a group of people moving out of a "tenement or a town." The nature of reality is fluid and depends on an individual's perspective; people are always moving in and out. We are reminded of this when Addie speaks from beyond the grave. She has no physical being at the time she speaks; rather, she has a kind of negative existence; she is the negation of the ideas about her held by all the other characters, as well as the words used to describe her.

Darl's main meditation on existence comes as he and Jewel are traveling back to the Bundren farm after picking up a load of wood. Addie has just died—Darl knows this because he has a kind of sixth sense (even this basic trait of Darl's—his ability to move beyond his own physical limits in time and space—calls conventional ideas about reality into question). Darl wonders how the wagon can exist when it is really only an intrusion into the negative space of the wind and the rain; where does one thing end and another begin? He also knows that awareness of things occurs later than the existence of those things; how can something be "was" and "is" at the same time? And what proof, besides his own thought process, does he have that he himself exists?

Vardaman is a child, and he has a child's confusion about death (although the adult characters do not seem to understand it much better than he does). Everything that exists for Vardaman is physically real—he must be able to see it or touch it. When he hears that Addie has "gone away," he can only imagine that she has gone to another physical location. In addition, Vardaman believes that, if he can reverse the physical results that come with the passage of time, he can actually turn back time; this is why he confuses the fish, which was alive and whole before Addie's death, with Addie.

Vardaman is bribed by Dewey Dell with the promise of bananas, but he soon finds that they only offer brief pleasure; once they are eaten, the bananas are gone. The toy train with which Vardaman is obsessed seems to have more permanence for him. Not only does he grasp that it stays in the shop window even when he is not in town to see it, but it goes around and comes back again.

WORDS VS. EXPERIENCE

Both Addie and Darl try to figure out existence using words, but wind up limited by the words themselves. When she was alive, Addie discovered that true being cannot be named; words are only a way of imperfectly symbolizing what we feel and experience. “Anse,” for example, is the name of her husband, but his actual being cannot be completely defined by this word. Addie eventually becomes hopeless that words have any power; she notes that Cora, her pious neighbor, lives a false existence, believing that words are religion. In fact, Addie says, words and experience travel along two different axes; they can never meet.

Darl slowly unravels as he tries to figure out how something can “be, or why we say it is.” He realizes that sleep is the opposite of consciousness; only during times of awareness can a person “be.” However, since Darl is so hyper-aware, he does not know where to stop; he keeps analyzing himself until he experiences a mental breakdown. Consciousness is a tremendous burden to him, and Addie’s death may be the phenomenon that forces him to confront his own existence in a way that destroys him.

Both Darl and Addie also see that other characters (Jewel and Anse respectively) do not suffer existentialist angst because they do not know enough to know they do not know themselves.

SPACE AND TIME

Human memory and awareness of space and time present a problem: a person can move back and forth in space, but never in time. This paradox is explored in *As I Lay Dying* by the characters who try to figure out where a person goes, physically, upon dying, and how memory—especially shared memory—is related to existence.

CLASS

Anxiety over class affects many of the characters in *As I Lay Dying*. This is especially evident when it comes to the difference between country people and town residents. Pay careful attention to the way characters view one another’s social standing. For instance, an early suggestion of class division between townspeople and farmers comes when Peabody, the obese doctor, travels from town to visit the dying Addie. Peabody expresses disdain for “the Anse Bundrens of the world—luckless, clumsy, and ignorant country men whose incompetence causes people like himself inconvenience.” Meanwhile, Anse resents Peabody because he has to pay him. He’s not the only one who dislikes Peabody, though: Dewey Dell calls him a “fat tub of guts,” and the men at the funeral note that Peabody makes his living through other people’s misfortune. The suggestion is that Peabody is a greedy opportunist.

Other instances of class tension occur between Dewey Dell and the men at the two drugstores she visits; although these two men have different aims, they make similar generalizations about country people. She, meanwhile, reveals herself to be less young and ignorant than they believe her to be.

Note the Bundrens' struggle to hold onto tangible assets and to translate the worth of one thing into another. The basic question of what a thing is worth is at the center of the book, because it requires definition of what that something "is." Money is something that represents both work and the potential ownership of a tangible asset. But when it comes to things of spiritual or emotional value, the one-to-one value system breaks down. For instance, Jewel works nights to get the horse, which is really the only thing of value that any of the Bundrens possesses. The horse is the physical symbol of Jewel's labor. Darl often taunts Jewel by saying, "Your mother is a horse," implying that Jewel "traded" Addie for the horse or transferred his affection from her to the horse—as if love, like money, exists only in finite amounts.

Ironically, Anse converts the value of the horse back into something that benefits Addie—a way to get her to Jefferson.

Dewey Dell has ten dollars with which to obtain an abortion, but Anse takes the money and "translates" it into his new teeth.

Addie is "Mrs. Bundren" to Anse, but when she dies, he gets a new "Mrs. Bundren." It is as if "Mrs. Brunden" is an office (like President and Pope). The individual who fills the office may be mortal, but the office continues. The specific qualities of "Mrs. Brunden" are unimportant, as long as someone is holding the title.

RELIGION

Some of the characters themselves are deeply religious and see reality as a reflection of the truth described in the Scriptures. For instance, Cora uses her ideas about religion as a yardstick for everyone's behavior, especially Addie's. Anse has his own peculiar ideas about God and Heaven; he says that although God has seen fit to make him a poor man, in heaven, the class situation will be reversed. In fact, Anse's refusal to work is what has caused his and his family's poverty; he uses religion as a way to avoid confronting his own failures. He often uses rather clichéd lines from religion or the Bible, like "The Lord giveth."

When the neighboring farmers arrive for Addie's funeral, they greet Anse and Tull by saying "The Lord giveth." The expected, but unspoken, reply is "...and the Lord taketh away." Religious views appear to be uniform among the citizens of Yoknapatawpha County: Everything comes from God, so if God takes something away, a person has no right to complain.

When the characters speak alone, though, we see them question the way the world is. Both Anse and Vardaman wonder why God would give some people economic hardship and others beautiful things like automobiles and toy trains. Tull hesitantly questions the strict religious views of his wife, Cora; he wonders why God would see fit to punish a man like Anse. And Addie, at least to herself, disposes with Cora's idea of religion entirely.

Whitfield, the preacher, has a strong verbal commitment to his religion, but his actions are not in accordance with his vows. After the affair with Addie, he goes through a melodramatic period of apparent atonement, which should culminate in his confession of the affair. Arriving after Addie's death, though, he decides that wanting to tell is as good as having told, and that crossing the dangerous river was his atonement. Tull notes innocently at the funeral that it is as if the preacher is two different people; from Addie's and Whitfield's chapter, we learn that this is the case.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The Bundrens live in a community in which everyone knows who is related to whom; the system of trading, debt, and favors is informal and tied up with relationships. For instance, at the beginning of the book, Vernon mentions helping Anse pick cotton, and at the same time hopes Cash will work on his barn. The men at the funeral are able to trace the complex familial relationships in the County going back generations. They even know whose horses are whose by sight.

THE VALUE OF PHYSICAL LABOR

Sweat and physical labor are linked to a character's worth in *As I Lay Dying*. Anse has declared that he will die if he sweats, so he never works; he is happy to let his children and neighbors take care of the farm. Although they resent him for this, they find themselves stepping in to help him.

Darl and Cash note that Vernon is an enterprising and hard-working man. Vernon often helps the Bundrens; Dr. Peabody notes that Vernon gets the most for Anse's money as he would for his own.

BLACK HUMOR

Faulkner creates humor in *As I Lay Dying* by contrasting the low with the high: a sad, serious event (the death of a wife and mother) has just occurred, but people react to it in some very non-dignified ways. As the characters narrate, they give honest, mostly unsentimental accounts of what occurs in the days following the death.

First of all, terrible things happen to Addie's corpse. Vardaman drills holes in the coffin that go into his deceased mother's face. Anse's stubbornness and indecision force the family to drag around a decomposing corpse for more than a week; people begin to comment on the stench, and buzzards start to follow the grotesque procession.

People in town are unaware of the Bundrens' tragedy and view the family simply as stupid country people. The serious problems faced by each individual Bundren are undermined by the absurd picture of them given by Peabody, Moseley, and MacGowan.

The way MacGowan deals with Dewey Dell is awful for her, but his naked cynicism and total self-interest, especially in contrast to the attitude of the severe and pious Moseley, are funny.

Finally, the discrepancy between the way Anse views himself and the way others see him gives rise to humor. Although not as blatant in his self-interest as MacGowan, Anse is fairly transparent to everyone. His first reaction to Addie's death is to praise God; now he has a reason to go to town and get the new set of teeth he has been wanting for fifteen years. The other characters describe his behavior without malice or irony; their straightforward description makes Anse seem even more pathetic.

Style and Form of *As I Lay Dying*

DICTION AND PUNCTUATION

Certain terms are particular to the area of Yoknapatawpha County where the Bundrens live. The farmers also share a stock of common terms for their work and environment. For instance, the term *pussel-gutted* comes up twice—once to describe Jewel's horse, and again to describe Peabody. The residents of the County also use phrases (like "The Lord giveth") that come from their common religious background. The characters diverge in their thoughts, however, and in the language used to record these thoughts.

Vardaman's speaking voice is noticeably different from the language of his thoughts. For instance, right after Addie's death, he flees to the barn. In his distress, he shouts aloud at Peabody's team of mules. His spoken words are in country dialect—he says "kilt" for "killed" and "ain't a-goin'." At the same time, as he tells the story (i.e., details his thoughts), he uses elevated diction and complicated phrasing: the darkness is "resolving [the horse] out of his integrity." One element into which the horse is broken down is "cooling flesh and ammoniac hair."

With this discrepancy, Faulkner is making a point about the complex emotional lives of characters not ordinarily considered complicated—a class of people with little education, and children from this class especially. Even though Vardaman does not have access to books or elaborate vocabulary, he lives a profound emotional life. His attempts to figure out life, death, and existence are universal even though they are based only on his limited experience (rabbits, possums, and the things he has seen in town).

In his next chapter, Vardaman's language also changes to reflect his emotional state. As he becomes more anxious, fearing that Addie will be trapped in the coffin forever, his sentences become short and repetitive ("It was not her." "I saw.").

Darl is another character who uses language unusual for his upbringing. Like Vardaman, when Darl speaks aloud, he uses the local dialect. His grammar is slightly more standard than the other characters' (we learn that he has been a soldier overseas, so perhaps his exposure to the outside world has affected his language). But his internal monologue is very different from his spoken language—he even makes up some words, as a poet would. He refers to the road as a "red scoriation" and calls Dewey Dell's look "repudiant."

Other characters, like Dewey Dell and Anse, have internal monologues that more closely match their speaking voices.

NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Faulkner makes some unconventional decisions regarding narration in *As I Lay Dying*. The result of these decisions is that the reader's confidence in the reliability of the narrators and the narrative as it is presented is undermined.

Some of the first-person narrators in the novel seem able to transcend time and space. Darl, for instance, has extrasensory powers that allow him to describe what is happening even when he is not present. Although he and Jewel are not near the farm at the time of Addie's death, he knows the exact moment when she passes, and he can describe what happens before and afterwards. And Addie seems to be narrating her chapter after her death, so she has no physical being at all.

Some narrators at first seem more reliable than others because their vocabulary or more conventional language suggests that they may be more intelligent or at least more coherent. There is, however, strong evidence to suggest that these narrators are biased or distorted in their thinking. Darl, for example, begins to show a clear bias against Jewel as the book goes on, though he seems to be the most rational Bundren at first. Conversely, Cash, who at first seems unable to express himself, has completely changed by the end of the novel. Thus, the reader is invited to question everything these narrators have said previously.

Another thing that might give a character power to influence the way we perceive reality is the number of chapters he or she narrates. Darl narrates nineteen, but Vardaman also narrates several. Jewel narrates only one but plays a significant role in the story. It is also significant that not only people directly involved in or affected by the events in the plot contribute to the story—at least two people who are complete strangers to the Bundrens have their say, further inviting readers to reassess their initial acceptance of the family's reports.

LENGTH AND ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

Vardaman's five-word chapter is one for which Faulkner is famous. You will notice extreme variation in the length of the chapters in *As I Lay Dying*: the longest, narrated by Darl and Tull, are many pages, while the shortest is only a few words.

Although the chapters may look very dissimilar, they are tied together by recurring phrases and images. For example, a flock of buzzards follows Addie's corpse, growing larger from chapter to chapter. Different characters notice and remark upon the birds.

Darl repeats or mimics phrases that other characters use, even when he has not been physically present to hear the words, or the words have not been spoken aloud. Sometimes the characters' flashbacks even show similarities—Darl remembers lying awake, feeling the cool wind rush over his body, and later Dewey Dell has a similar vision involving herself. This may suggest that Darl, in fact, is the speaker of all the chapters, imagining different personas for his family members.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK AS A WHOLE

Conventional novels are organized chronologically: the plot, starting at the beginning, moves from the distant past to the nearer present. Sometimes a character, in the present of the novel, may tell a story that takes the listener briefly into the past, but for the most part, events logically unfold, build to a climax, and are then resolved.

If the author is going to experiment with chronological order, he or she will usually employ an easily identified flashback—either set in a different typeface or in its own chapter to cue the reader that a disruption to the chronology of the novel is occurring.

As I Lay Dying does move forward chronologically from the time of Addie's death, but the chapters are not organized strictly along a chronological timeline. Instead, the narrative follows the individual characters' concerns and observations, which do sometimes overlap and often conflict with each other, and the reader is left to construct a coherent timeline from the often random pieces provided by the various narrators.

Allusions to Other Works

THE ODYSSEY

The title of the book is an allusion to Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the first classics of Western literature. *The Odyssey* is an epic poem about the trials of a Greek war hero, Odysseus, who is trying to get home from the Trojan War. Poseidon, the god of the sea, has cursed Odysseus, so it takes him ten years to actually reach his home island of Ithaca.

The title itself comes from a line spoken by the spirit of another war hero and friend of Odysseus, Agamemnon. Odysseus has been allowed to visit the underworld, where he encounters the shade of Agamemnon, who explains that his wife, Clytemnestra, conspired with her lover to murder him. He explains that she cruelly refused to close his eyes even as he lay dying (it was important for ancient Greeks to have their eyes closed in death).

At the time Faulkner was writing *As I Lay Dying*, other authors were also experimenting, playing with narrative conventions and allusions to classic works. James Joyce, an Irish novelist and one of the most important writers of this period, wrote his own book based on *The Odyssey*, called *Ulysses*. In Joyce's book, the different stops Odysseus makes on his heroic quest are echoed by the stops an ordinary man, Leopold Bloom, makes on his way through the city of Dublin.

What Faulkner's intention was in naming and patterning his book after the *Odyssey* has been debated. The Bundrens, like Odysseus, undergo a difficult journey; Addie Bundren, though a corpse, is trying to return to her home—both her ancestral town and her “final resting place,” her grave. Like Odysseus, the Bundrens encounter hostile people like the man with the knife, as well as hostile natural forces like the flooded river.

Odysseus also encounters people who help him. They often know the story of the Trojan War and know of the existence of a hero named Odysseus, even if they do not know him personally. The Bundrens, too, are helped by people who know them or know of them (Samson, Armstid, Tull). These characters narrate occasional chapters, and they always seem to marvel at the bad luck of Anse (like Odysseus, he seems to be under some kind of divine curse).

Besides the main goal of getting to Jefferson, each character has a private reason for going on the journey. For instance, Anse insists that the trip to Jefferson is solely to grant Addie's wish. From other characters, though, we learn that Anse wants badly to get a new set of teeth in Jefferson. Similarly, Dewey Dell says she wants to sell Cora's cakes, but she actually needs to get to town so that she can obtain medicine for an abortion. Vardaman wants to see the toy train in the window of the town store.

Each character in *As I Lay Dying* is on a sort of Quest, and for Addie—whose wish to be buried in Jefferson and subsequent death provides the inciting incident for the plot—the quest is, quite literally, to go home, and through the course of her journey, she risks flood and fire to fulfill it.

THE BIBLE

Allusions to the Bible occur on two levels in *As I Lay Dying*:

- Some of the characters themselves are deeply religious and see reality as a reflection of the truth described in the Scriptures. Compare Cora's idea of religion to Anse's, for instance.
- Faulkner also makes allusions to both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible through the setting and characters of *As I Lay Dying*:

THE OLD TESTAMENT

- **Family Relationships:**
The early stories in the Old Testament are based on family and clan relationships, and are often preceded by complex genealogies. The Bundrens also live in a community in which everyone knows who is related to whom; the system of trading, debt, and favors is informal and based on who one's family is. For instance, at the beginning of the book, Vernon mentions helping Anse pick cotton, and at the same time hopes Cash will work on his barn.
- **Patriarchy:**
Old Testament clans are headed by a patriarch, often a superhuman figure like Abraham, who endures great struggle to see his descendants grow rich in land and multiply. Having many descendants, especially sons, is a sign of blessedness and wealth; the fruitfulness of both land and human beings are tied together. Anse has numerous sons, but he does not provide a birthright for them. He refuses to work, which is why Jewel has to go off the farm to earn something of value. Tull, on the other hand, has only daughters; his land will go out of the family when he dies. He expresses his longing for a son in his actions toward Cash and Vardaman.
- **Toil, Sweat, and Physical Labor:**
In the Book of Genesis, when God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, He tells them, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Jacob, the third of the great Hebrew patriarchs, toils for seven years in the fields of his relative Laban before he is allowed to marry Laban's daughter; even then, he is tricked into marrying Laban's older daughter first and must work an *additional* seven years to earn the daughter he really loves.

Cash and Jewel are probably the novel's most prominent laborers, and the fruits of their labors figure prominently in the plot. Cash, of course, builds his mother's coffin and suffers severe injury and the near-loss of his tools as a result of others' indifference and poor judgment. Jewel worked nights for his beloved horse, only to be insulted by his own brother and to see his horse traded for a mule to bear his mother's coffin. Like their Old Testament archetypes, both Cash and Jewel labor and are somehow cheated of enjoying what they have worked to achieve.

- **Hospitality and Community:**

As in the *Odyssey*, hospitality is important in the Old Testament. In the book of Genesis, Abraham is visited by three men who turn out to be angels; he immediately offers the strangers food, water, and rest. Both the old and the New Testaments tell the stories of several acts of hospitality, as well as the consequences of inhospitality.

Tight community bonds and generosity to the less fortunate are essential to the farmers of Yoknapatawpha County. Two separate times, the Bundrens are housed, fed, and assisted by another family. Samson and Armstid both seem to resent having to help Anse because of his own bad judgment, but they also excuse him as a luckless man. In addition, he is part of the community, so they do not think twice about extending hospitality to his family. At Addie's funeral, while the women gather in the kitchen, we see the men of the county retrace stories of the community going back generations.

The Tulls, neighbors of the Bundrens, have an especially close relationship with the family. They step in to help before Addie's death and at the funeral. Sometimes Vernon Tull even takes over as father for the incompetent Anse. Vernon has two daughters but wishes he had a son. For this reason, he treats Cash and especially Vardaman like his own boys. Dewey Dell, Jewel, and Darl express resentment of his involvement in their family affairs.

Tull constantly has to defend Anse against attack by the judgmental Cora. Based on his memory of his own mother, Tull is sympathetic to the plight of women, but he also sees very little that Anse could have done differently.

- **Sibling Rivalry:**

In the story of brothers Jacob and Esau, Jacob steals Esau's blessing by tricking their father, Isaac. And in the story of Cain and Abel, Cain murders Abel out of jealousy; God marks his forehead as punishment and sends him to wander the earth.

The principal sibling rivalry in *As I Lay Dying* is between Darl and Jewel. Several of the Bundren children acknowledge that Jewel is Addie's favorite; we learn that this is because of a particular difference between him and the other children. Towards Darl, Addie feels only indifference, and Darl is keenly aware of this.

As a result of his rejection by Addie, Darl hates Jewel intensely. In fact, he is much more conscious of—and hostile toward—Jewel than Jewel is toward him, at least at the beginning of the book; Jewel is not capable of the kind of focused obsession that Darl is. Darl's actions on the journey to Jefferson awaken Jewel somewhat, and Jewel takes decisive action to eliminate Darl from the family.

All of the other children also want to please Addie—Cash with the coffin, Dewey Dell with caretaking, and Vardaman with the fish. In her chapter, though, Addie disowns all the children except Cash and Jewel. Subconsciously aware of Addie's feelings, Dewey Dell struggles with the idea of motherhood while Vardaman seeks out Dewey Dell as a surrogate mother.

SHAKESPEARE

The title of one of Faulkner's most famous works, *The Sound and the Fury*, comes from Act V, Scene v of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

The tragic import of this soliloquy, the meaninglessness of existence, is also the primary concern of *As I Lay Dying*. The entire novel takes place at the almost indiscernible boundary between life and death.

Darl often muses upon the meaninglessness of life. He compares Cash, after the incident in the river, to a puppet or doll leaking sawdust—just as the “poor players” in the soliloquy “strut and fret their hour upon the stage” of life.

During the night when Cash finishes the coffin, Vardaman and Darl say that Anse's “shadow walks around,” especially in the flickering light of the lantern—an image that recalls the “brief candle.” The shadows made by the Bundren men make the whole scene seem strange and unreal.

Finally, Darl himself, by the end of the book, might very well be the “idiot” telling a tale; as he descends into mental chaos, we begin to question all of his previous narration. Another Shakespeare play that seems very relevant to *As I Lay Dying* is *Hamlet*. Whether or not you have read *Hamlet*, you have probably heard its most famous soliloquy:

To be, or not to be,—that is the question:—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep,—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream:—ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would these fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,—
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Many of the same concerns that Hamlet has in this speech are important to *As I Lay Dying*: does life have any meaning? Is death the same as simply not being? Why do people endure all the indignities of life and keep wanting to live?

Darl shows the same frustration with life that Hamlet does—the people in his family seem to be acting out the same, ultimately meaningless, behaviors over and over. It is difficult to say whether Hamlet is actually insane, but he is definitely suffering mental torment. Darl, who does descend into madness, is undergoing the same agony.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How and why does Faulkner experiment with narrative conventions and chronological structure in *As I Lay Dying*? Explain how this book is like and unlike other works.
2. Compare different narrators (Darl, Vardaman)—who seems reliable at first? Does something change this impression?
3. What role do women play in the novel? Are they limited or empowered by their gender?
4. How do the Bundrens identify themselves socially? How does their class affect their ideas about identity and existence?
5. Identify the rising action, complication, climax, and denouement in the story.
6. Analyze wood imagery in *As I Lay Dying*.

Practice Free Response Questions

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1

Read Vardaman's chapter consisting only of the line "My mother is a fish." In a well-written essay, give a stylistic analysis of this chapter. Include a discussion of its relationship to the chapters that come before and after, its length and diction, and its narrative perspective.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2

Read Darl's chapter beginning, "He comes up the lane fast..." and Dewey Dell's chapter beginning, "The signboard comes in sight." In a well-organized essay, compare these two versions of the same event. Discuss images and words that occur in both chapters and explain how the context of each chapter changes these items.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3

Read Darl's chapter beginning, "He sits the horse..." In a well-organized essay, analyze the way the author uses flashback to tell the story in this chapter.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4

The last seven chapters of *As I Lay Dying* form a single section. In a well-organized essay, explain how these chapters are organized chronologically and how the author achieves a unity of style and image via a variety of narrators.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5

The relationship between the soul and body is an important idea in many religious and philosophical doctrines. Write a well-organized essay about the distinction between body and soul in *As I Lay Dying*. Use at least two characters' views on this distinction.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6

Metafiction is a type of fiction in which characters are aware that they are part of a story, or in which the act of narration itself becomes a part of the story. In a well-written essay, analyze William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*, as metafiction.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 7

Black humor is a type of humor in which ideas, people, or events that would not normally be the subjects of humor are treated comically. It is a device often used to convey ideas that might otherwise make an audience uncomfortable or upset. In a well-organized essay, analyze Faulkner's use of black humor in *As I Lay Dying*.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 8

The turning point of Homer's *Odyssey*, from which *As I Lay Dying* derives its title, occurs during Odysseus' trip into the underworld, where spirits of the dead reside. Odysseus must confront and mourn the dead before he can complete his journey.

In a well-organized essay, analyze the chapter narrated by Addie from beyond the grave as a turning point in William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*.

Practice Multiple Choice Questions

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-5

Read Vardaman's second chapter, beginning "When they get it finished," and ending "He was there and he seen it..."

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

1. The author creates pathos in this scene through
 - A. the image of the rabbits and possums.
 - B. Vardaman's attempts to understand Addie's location in space and time.
 - C. Cash's hesitation to nail up the coffin.
 - D. the tension in the relationship of Anse and Vardaman.
 - E. Vardaman's inability to think about one thing at a time.
2. The tone of this chapter can best be described as
 - A. confused.
 - B. calm.
 - C. relieved.
 - D. frustrated.
 - E. anxious.
3. Taken in conjunction with the other symbols in the chapter, the train primarily symbolizes
 - A. wealth.
 - B. death.
 - C. eternity.
 - D. the soul.
 - E. hope.
4. Vardaman wants to verify his recollection of the fish with Vernon. What theme does this emphasize?
 - A. Adults and children do not experience the same reality.
 - B. No one can fully trust himself or another person.
 - C. Communication between people is what allows life to continue.
 - D. Reality and existence are dependent upon memory.
 - E. All human beings have a duty to love one another.
5. Which of the following is most true about Vardaman's religious beliefs?
 - A. They are called into question by Addie's death.
 - B. They are reinforced by the existence of the train.
 - C. They are tied to the present and the natural world.
 - D. They are transformed when Cash nails up the box.
 - E. They are based upon the existence of the soul.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10

Read Darl's chapter, beginning "On the horse he rode..." and ending "Its head flashes back..."

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

6. Faulkner uses the italics in this chapter to show that
 - A. Darl is unable to distinguish between the present and the future.
 - B. Jewel believes Darl and the other members of the family are against him.
 - C. Darl is now able to cope with the trauma inflicted upon him by Jewel.
 - D. Jewel has supernatural powers and abilities, especially when he is on the horse.
 - E. Darl's obsessive feelings towards Jewel are causing his mental breakdown.
7. In the non-italicized sections, Darl tries to
 - A. reinforce his identity as a member of the Bundren family.
 - B. hide his distaste towards Anse.
 - C. understand the difference between himself and his brothers.
 - D. explain what happened at Armstid's farm.
 - E. understand his own existence.
8. Taken in conjunction with the rest of this chapter, Darl's repetition of Armstid's statement, "You're welcome to the house," foreshadows the
 - A. tragic downfall of Anse.
 - B. joining of the Armstids and Bundrens.
 - C. separation of Darl from his family.
 - D. return of Jewel with the horse.
 - E. death of Cash.
9. The language that Darl uses to describe the horse reveals his
 - A. nervousness about Jewel.
 - B. feelings of envy about the horse.
 - C. sense of Jewel's immorality.
 - D. worry that reality is shallow, deceptive, and insubstantial.
 - E. lack of trust in his own imagination.
10. Judging by this passage, Darl sees his father as
 - A. misguided.
 - B. silly.
 - C. frightening.
 - D. tragic.
 - E. strange.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-15

Read the chapter that Addie Bundren narrates, beginning “In the afternoon...” and ending “She prayed for me...”

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

11. The primary distinction that Addie makes in this chapter is between
 - A. Anse and Cash.
 - B. words and experience.
 - C. the past and the future.
 - D. childhood and adulthood.
 - E. love and marriage.
12. Addie’s definition of death is
 - A. development of an identity dependent upon other people.
 - B. loss of the connection between spiritual laws and reality.
 - C. lack of hope and ability to set goals for oneself.
 - D. acceptance that no person has control of his or her own life.
 - E. desire to forget the past and its lessons.
13. Addie’s attitude towards formal religion can best be described as
 - A. mocking.
 - B. reverent.
 - C. accepting.
 - D. indifferent.
 - E. curious.
14. What is, for Addie, the primary consequence of Jewel’s birth?
 - A. It provides redemption from the sin she committed with the preacher.
 - B. It provides deliverance from the feeling of being caught between life and death.
 - C. It causes the further erosion of her identity.
 - D. It causes an emotional distance from the earlier children.
 - E. It provides a chance to reconcile Anse with her relatives in Jefferson.
15. Given the context, Addie uses the word “house” to mean
 - A. the future of her children.
 - B. her body and soul.
 - C. the physical structure in which she lives.
 - D. the public perception of her marriage.
 - E. her family life with Anse.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-20

Read Dewey Dell's chapter, beginning "The first time..." and ending "I want him to help me..."

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

16. Dewey Dell ends her chapter with Darl's taking Jewel—Addie's favorite—away from her deathbed for trivial reasons. This emphasizes her perception of Darl as
 - A. anxious.
 - B. sadistic.
 - C. efficient.
 - D. oblivious.
 - E. furious.
17. What kind of imagery is most prevalent in this chapter?
 - A. battle
 - B. animal
 - C. death
 - D. fertility
 - E. forest
18. Dewey Dell's speech pattern in this chapter indicates that she is
 - A. poetic and abstract.
 - B. clear and precise.
 - C. intuitive and subjective.
 - D. insightful and mystical.
 - E. unemotional and severe.
19. Judging by her experience with the cotton sack, Dewey Dell seems to believe in
 - A. fate.
 - B. God.
 - C. chance.
 - D. redemption.
 - E. prayer.
20. The metaphor Dewey Dell uses to describe Cash emphasizes that he is
 - A. methodical.
 - B. skilled.
 - C. mature.
 - D. ignorant.
 - E. sad.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 21-25

Read Armstid's chapter, beginning "But time I give him..." and ending "I'll be durn..."

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

21. The climax of this chapter is
 - A. Armstid's discovery of Vardaman and the buzzards.
 - B. Anse's revealing that he traded the horse.
 - C. Darl's refusal to help Jewel move the wagon.
 - D. Armstid's discovery that Jewel did bring the horse to Snopes.
 - E. Jewel's decision to move the wagon.
22. In this chapter, Jewel is shown to be capable of
 - A. sacrifice.
 - B. empathy.
 - C. creativity.
 - D. loyalty.
 - E. violence.
23. Anse could best be described as _____ in his behavior towards Jewel.
 - A. childlike
 - B. strict
 - C. honest
 - D. proud
 - E. businesslike
24. Armstid's attitude towards Anse can best be described as
 - A. resigned.
 - B. relieved.
 - C. angry.
 - D. bemused.
 - E. exasperated.
25. The primary function of this chapter is to
 - A. show Darl's emergence as a leader when Cash is incapacitated.
 - B. portray the development of Jewel's character in the face of great loss.
 - C. allow Armstid to provide his unique analysis of the Bundrens.
 - D. offer an alternate explanation for previous events in the book.
 - E. develop the symbolic significance of the horse.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 26-30

Read Vernon Tull's chapter, starting "When I told Cora..." and ending "We watched it."

Then, select the best answers to the following questions.

26. This chapter follows one that ends in a moment of high confusion. The author begins this chapter with the conversation between Cora and Tull in order to
- A. create suspense leading up to the conclusion of the river disaster.
 - B. show parallels between Jewel and Tull.
 - C. explain what brought Tull to the river.
 - D. add to the image of Cash as the new leader of the family.
 - E. develop Cora's attitude toward Anse.
27. In the context of the chapter, Tull's comment about the log suggests that he believes
- A. bad luck is God's punishment of evil people.
 - B. people have the ability to overcome their circumstances.
 - C. certain aspects of fate are unavoidable.
 - D. wrong actions early in life bring disaster later on.
 - E. nature will take vengeance on anyone who violates her laws.
28. The position of Cash, Darl, and Jewel at the end of the chapter shows the
- A. alienation of Jewel from his brothers.
 - B. triumph of Cash's worldview.
 - C. reconfiguration of the family dynamic.
 - D. absence of Dewey Dell.
 - E. reunification of the family.
29. Tull's description of Cash after the horse drags him onto the bank is in opposition to his description of
- A. the rope.
 - B. the bank.
 - C. Darl.
 - D. Lon Quick's shoat.
 - E. the horse.
30. The primary convention that Faulkner uses to control the pace of the middle and end of this chapter is
- A. word length.
 - B. alliteration.
 - C. time markers.
 - D. sentence length.
 - E. dialogue.

Practice Multiple Choice Questions

Answers with Explanations

1. Vardaman is a child, and he still perceives everything in terms of physical presence or absence. He knows that Addie has gone away, but cannot figure out where she went. He uses the rabbits and possums (A) to try to solve this problem. He does not want Cash to nail up the coffin (C), but there is no mention of Cash's hesitating. Vardaman remembers asking Anse why they could not have all the things town boys have (D), but the tension in this conversation is not what elicits pathos; **rather, the train of thought of which the conversation is a part is pathetic. Vardaman is not unable to think about one thing at a time (E); he is deliberately turning to different memories and ideas to try to understand his mother's death.**
2. Vardaman is confused (A), but more than that, he is grieving. He thinks that if he can understand where Addie went, he can save her or himself, so there is a sense of urgency to the chapter. He definitely is not calm (B) or relieved (C). He seems hopeful that there will be a solution to his problem, not frustrated (D)—if Vernon can back him up, the anxiety might be relieved. (E), **therefore, is the best answer.**
3. The train is in town, and is one of the things that Vardaman cannot have because he is a poor country boy (A). However, its primary symbolism comes from its association with circles and the way it disappears and then reappears. In this chapter, Vardaman is trying to figure out where Addie went, and whether she will come back. The train goes around in circles. Vardaman notes that the track shines again after the train runs on. He has not seen the train recently, but knows it will be in the window when they go back to town. It does not go away permanently, so it does not symbolize death (B). Vardaman is trying to understand life and death using the train as a reference point, but he does not yet have a concept of the soul, so (D) is not correct. (E), hope, is not symbolized in the chapter. **With the train's association with circles and its trait of leaving and returning indefinitely, (C) is the best answer.**
4. Vardaman is struggling to understand how Addie was alive and now is dead. His memory is what allows him to know this is true. **Because Addie now lives only in his memory, it is imperative that he keep the memory sound, thus establishing (D) as the best answer.** He would not seek out his father's validation if he understood the difference between children and adults (A). He may not trust his own memory entirely, but he trusts the combination of his and Vernon's memory, so (B) is not the theme. Vardaman thinks he can keep Addie alive through memory, not communication (C). (E) is not in this chapter.

5. Vardaman uses “rabbits and possums,” as well as the fish, to understand Addie’s death. These are animals he has seen dead, but in their dead forms, they still exist for him. **This establishes (C) as the best answer.** Vardaman cannot be said to have developed religious beliefs, so (A) is not correct. The train (B) is something solid that Vardaman knows exists even when he cannot see it, but its continued existence does not resolve his anxiety about Addie. Cash’s nailing the coffin shut (D) is what prompts Vardaman to really worry, since he knows that he could not survive in such a small, airless space; the act does not, however, transform his beliefs. Vardaman is just figuring out what a soul might be, so (E) is not correct.
6. Both the italicized and non-italicized portions are in the same tense, so (A) is not the right choice. The visions reveal the state of Darl’s mind, since he is the speaker, not Jewel’s, so (B) is incorrect. Instead of being able to withstand his mental agony (C), Darl seems less and less in control of his mind. There is no indication that Jewel has supernatural powers (D). **Darl is experiencing a schism in his personality. In this chapter, he tries to maintain a steady narrative, but his thoughts are interrupted by images of Jewel on the horse, thus establishing (E) as the best answer.**
7. Darl uses the pronoun “we” repeatedly in this chapter. He wants to reassert his place in the family. Darl’s father appears to have a sense of himself as a tragic hero, but Darl does not try to disguise his view of Anse (B). The italicized sections (C) show Darl’s sense of Jewel as separate from the family. Rather than explanation (D), reinforcement of a certain idea is the point of this chapter. (E) is somewhat correct, as Darl is trying to understand his identity within the family, but **(A) is a more accurate summation of what he is trying to do.**
8. Nothing Anse says in this chapter indicates that he will experience a great fall (A). The Bundrens are guests of the Armstids, but there is nothing in the chapter that indicates an upcoming marriage between the families (B). The italicized sections describing Jewel and the horse (D) are part of Darl’s perception of the family dynamic and occur simultaneously with Armstid’s statement. Cash is brought into the house to recuperate, but does not seem likely to die (E). **Darl, however, is trying to convince himself that he belongs in the family. Thus, (C) is the best answer.**
9. (A) is a tempting choice, because Darl clearly feels unsettled by Jewel, but (C) is better because of the language that Darl uses. He is not jealous of Jewel for having the horse (B), though he is obsessed with their interaction. Darl does not use the digressions to ponder what is real (D) or express doubts about his own imagination (E). Darl says that the horse has eyes like marbles. He also uses the word “gaudy” two times in describing the horse. Jewel’s interaction with the horse is “obscene” and violent. The language Darl uses to describe the horse emphasizes the cheap, tawdry, and debased. **Thus, (C) is the best choice.**

10. Darl conveys the way Anse kept repeating the phrase “I thank you” and refusing help when Armstid offered the family food and shelter. In Darl’s story, Anse maintains that all he is doing is for Addie, then finally gives in and accepts the drink that Armstid offers him. At this point, he immediately starts daydreaming about buying some new mules. Clearly, he is proud of his tragic role, but can be distracted from it easily, so (D) is not correct. Darl is not scared of Anse (C). He does not comment one way or another on Anse’s strangeness (E) or correctness (A); he just records things the way they are. In Darl’s view, **Anse is just a silly man (B)**.
11. Addie describes the way she gradually realized that word rules, and conventions are ways of capturing the uncapturable. She says that “doing” travels along the earth, while words float above; the two modes of being are never joined. She also uses the distinction between blood and air to represent this dichotomy. She distinguishes between Anse and Cash (A) only once in the chapter. All time is the same to Addie, especially since she speaks from beyond the grave, so (C) is not right. Childhood and adulthood are immaterial to her (D); love and marriage (E) are just words. Experience cannot be captured by any of these ideas. **Thus (B) is the correct answer.**
12. Addie says that she was dismayed when she became pregnant with Darl; though with Cash, she could have companionship without losing her identity, more children meant that other people, rather than she herself, would decide who she was. The discrepancy between religious rules and what people actually do (B) does not seem to bother her. Although she remembers being tormented by the sound of geese flying away, which suggests that she felt trapped in her existence, she does not mention ever having any hopes or goals to lose sight of (C). She gets back at Anse by having Jewel, an extension of herself rather than him. (D) is partially correct, but **(A) is a better choice because Addie specifically feared losing control of who she was.** She does not care about the lessons of the past (E).
13. Addie deliberately has an affair with a preacher, and is happy to bear his illegitimate child. She is scornful of sanctimonious women like Cora, for whom “salvation is just words.” (B) and (C), therefore, are definitely not correct. (D) is not right because Addie actively hates what she sees as the “sin” of empty vows and prayers. Having already decided that people’s adherence to empty conventions blocks true experience, she is not curious (E) about religion. **(A) is the best answer.**
14. Addie does not consider her actions with Whitfield a sin (A), but an attempt to get under the empty shell of words and conventions to the true part of being—the “terrible blood” of existence. When she has Jewel, “the wild blood [boils] away.” **Jewel is a living resolution of Addie’s existential dilemma (B).** He is her identity; unlike Darl, he does not threaten who she is (C). She does not say he is better than Darl or Cash (D), just that he comes from a different place. She says nothing about reconciling Anse and her relatives (E).

15. A house, like a word, is an empty space, a kind of placeholder that people use to show their existence in the world. In this chapter, Addie describes her struggle to escape or transcend such empty signs. **After the birth of Jewel, however, she is satisfied; she can take the actions she needs to fulfill her marital obligations (E).** The last two children are her way of “cleaning house,” that is, righting the balance between herself and Anse. She expresses no concern about the future of the children (A). She is not cleaning up her spiritual or physical life (B); both are part of experience and cannot be “cleaned up” in the way a house can. The house is symbolic, not real (C). No one except Addie knows that Dewey Dell and Vardaman are her ways of “cleaning up,” so (D) is not right.
16. Dewey Dell hates Darl because he knows about her pregnancy and could reveal it at any time. He has power over her because of his knowledge. When Darl announces that Addie will die soon, Dewey Dell asks why, if he knows this, he is taking Jewel away. This suggests that Dewey Dell knows Jewel is Addie’s favorite. She makes Darl seem calm and matter-of-fact, not anxious (A) or furious (E). He is definitely not oblivious (D), since he has such knowledge of her. Whether or not he is efficient (C) does not matter to Dewey Dell, who is a creature of emotions. **But for Darl to take his mother’s favorite away immediately before her death without apparent reason suggests that she sees Darl as sadistic (B).**
17. Dewey Dell remembers picking cotton with Lafe, a neighboring farmer and the father of her baby. She mentions land, picking cotton, the fullness of the sack, the hotness of the days, and the shade of the woods. All of these suggest summer, ripeness, and fertility (D). There is no suggestion of war or fighting (A) or animals (B). There is mention of death (C); the affair took place while Addie was dying. But the main images are of plants, growth, and fullness. The couple’s going into the forest (E) contributes to, but does not predominate, this imagery. **(D) is the correct answer.**
18. Dewey Dell does not explain a lot of what she says. She also knows that Darl knows she is pregnant even though he does not say so aloud. There is an understanding between the two siblings. Dewey Dell’s language is not abstract (A), **but a direct expression of her feelings (C).** Because it is stream-of-consciousness, it cannot be called clear or precise (B). Dewey Dell does not have special insight or connection to a higher realm (D); she is trapped by her own earthly problems. And she is emotional, expressing romantic thoughts about Lafe and saying she hates Darl, so (E) is not right.
19. Dewey Dell decides to base her actions on whether or not her cotton sack is full by the time she reaches the end of the row. When she sees that it is full, she decides that it is her unavoidable destiny (A) to go into the woods with Lafe. She does not mention God (B) or prayer (E) here. She tries to justify her action by saying that it was not chance (C) that led the sack to be full. She is worried about her pregnancy being revealed, but not about sin or redemption (E), since she has decided she could not have prevented what happened. **(A) is the best answer.**

20. Dewey Dell says that Cash could not be aware of her condition because he is too busy sawing and nailing up days like planks of wood. This implies that he adheres to a strict routine; each day is cut like the one before, and once it has been nailed up, Cash starts on the next one. **Clearly, she sees him as primarily methodical (A), not given to flights of fancy or deep philosophical speculation.** Because Dewey Dell is using figurative language, (B) is not correct. She does not mention whether Cash is mature (C) or not. He is unable to perceive her problem at all, not just temporarily ignorant of it (D). Dewey Dell calls the days, but not Cash, “sad” (E).
21. Anse’s trading of the horse is devastating to Jewel. Faulkner (and Armstid) builds up to it by describing Jewel’s anxiety during the long time that Anse is away, as well as Anse’s hesitation when Darl presses him about the trade. Armstid’s meeting Vardaman in the barn (A) is a detail he uses to convey the craziness of his time with the Bundrens. Jewel’s attempt to move the wagon (E) and Darl’s flouting of Jewel’s wish (C) are both part of the torment Jewel feels waiting for Anse. Armstid’s surprise at Jewel’s faithfulness to his father’s promise (D) is part of the denouement of this small story. **(B) is the point at which the anxiety turns, thus, the climax.**
22. The family can only obtain the mules they need to get to Jefferson and bury Addie if Jewel gives up his horse. By trading the horse, therefore, Jewel is being loyal—not to Anse, but to Addie. He acts against his own desires by giving up the horse. Though Jewel does show loyalty (D), **he shows it by sacrificing the horse (A).** Nowhere in the chapter does he seem to identify with another character (B). Letting go of the horse is not a creative act (C) or a destructive one (E).
23. Armstid is surprised by the reversal of roles in the Bundren family: Anse acts like a guilty child (A), while Jewel is like a questioning parent trying to get the truth. Armstid even says that this reversal is so wrong that Anse should send his sons away or go away himself. In Armstid’s opinion, Anse, as authority figure, should be strict (B), but is not. Anse avoids telling Jewel the truth until he is forced to, so (C) is not correct. He is proud (D) at first, but then starts acting guilty, so this is not the correct answer either. He stretches out the matter until he is directly confronted, so (E) is not the right choice. **Thus (A) is the best answer.**
24. During the time that the Bundrens stay with him, Armstid knows that Anse wants to buy his mules at a too-cheap price. He assumes that the Bundrens will end up taking the mules, since they have nothing with which to trade. He cannot understand how Anse gets his way so often, but at the same time keeps giving him help. He continues to be frustrated, but not angry (C) with Anse. He could be called exasperated (E), but **(A) is a better choice because Armstid acknowledges that Anse will probably always get his way.** He wonders at Anse, but his attitude is not positive enough to be called bemused (D).

25. Jewel makes a pivotal decision in this chapter. He gives up his most precious possession in order to help Addie get to Jefferson. Armstid is surprised by the decision and cannot really understand it, but his analysis (C) is just a vehicle for the crucial information about Jewel. The chapter does not claim to reinterpret anything (D). The horse is a symbol (E), but it is that thing which the horse symbolizes—Jewel's sacrifice—that is important. Armstid thinks Darl is strangely flat, but does not convey that he is the new leader of the family (A). **(B) is the best answer because the chapter's most significant feature is Jewel in the aftermath of his sacrifice.**
26. The conversation between Cora and Tull slows down the chapter, allowing suspense about the outcome of the river crossing to build up (A). No parallels are drawn between Jewel and Tull (B), and Tull is the focus of neither the conversation nor the chapter (C). Although Cora talks about Anse's shortcomings, the purpose of the conversation is not to unfold her ideas (E). Rather, the conversation moves the reader to a different point in time from that of the river crossing—a time when the event is in the past, and the Tulls are discussing it. (D) is eliminated by the fact that it is Jewel, not Cash, who will rise to become the family's new leader.
27. Tull stresses the inevitability (C) of the collision with the log. In the conversation with Cora, Tull says that Anse could not have done anything differently, and that no one can "guard against the hand of God," so (D) is not right. It is Cora who thinks that God is punishing Anse (A) and, contradictorily, that Anse could have done something different (B). Neither Cora nor Tull think that nature is the punisher here (E).
28. At the end of the chapter, Darl has left the water, Cash has washed up on shore, and Jewel is holding Addie's coffin in the middle of the river. **Although Cash was the *de facto* leader of the family, he is now out of the position. Jewel will have to be the new leader. This is a major reconfiguration of the family dynamic (C).** Jewel is not shown to be any more alienated from his brothers (A) than he was before. Cash is defeated, not triumphant (B). Dewey Dell is not absent (D); she was yelling at Vardaman moments before this scene. The family is turned upside down, not brought together (E).
29. Tull compares Cash—slack and unconscious—to "an old bundle of clothes," while the rope (A), which leads to the wagon Jewel is holding, is so tight it is like an iron bar. Cash lands on the bank (B), but the bank is not juxtaposed with Cash. Tull does not describe Darl (C) at all in this section. The shoat (D) is another thing that shows how tight the rope was, but it is not opposed to Cash. The horse (E) carries Cash onto the bank, but is not mentioned further. **Thus, (A) is the correct answer.**
30. After recounting the conversation with Cora, Tull goes back to what happened in the river. When he describes the wagon rolling over, his sentences get longer and longer until the resolution of the moment of uncertainty, at which point they start to shorten. As he gets to the part of the story in which he and the others stood and watched the rope, his sentences are very short and repetitive. The length of his words (A) remains constant in the story. He does not use alliteration (B) or time words (C) to control the speed of the story. There is very little dialogue (E) in this section. **(D) is the correct answer.**

As I Lay Dying

Darl (Pg. 3)

1. What details stand out about this first chapter? What is Darl's language style? Which person is his main focus?

Darl's language is somewhat elevated—he uses phrases like “rigid gravity.” He describes the field, cottonhouse, wagon, and coffin with precise, unemotional language. He says that the coffin is the best his mother, Addie, could want—this is his remark about his own mother's dying.

Darl's main focus is on Jewel, his brother. He notes that Jewel goes straight through the window of the cottonhouse instead of around it; he makes Jewel sound intolerant of hesitation or doubt.

2. What is Darl's narrative perspective? Give some evidence for this.

Darl appears to be a first-person omniscient narrator. While he is himself the narrator, he can see himself and Jewel in the same way that a third person would; he knows how the two of them would appear to such a person. He also knows what Jewel's expression is when he steps through the window even though he (Darl) is going around the house at the time.

3. What signs do we get in this chapter that Darl is a prophet or a seer?

In the Old Testament book of Amos, God shows the prophet Amos a plumb-line (a line used to find the true perpendicular to the earth). He says that he will measure the straightness (i.e., correctness) of Israel by means of the plumb-line. Darl compares the path upon which he and Jewel walk to a plumb-line.

4. Judging by the details in this chapter, what is the occupation of Darl's family?

They are farmers. They have a store of cotton laid by.

5. What can we tell about Darl's view of himself and Jewel?

In Darl's view, the two boys are very different. Darl takes the path around the cottonhouse; he does not portray himself as emotional or dramatic, like Jewel. Jewel wants to keep going in the direction in which he is traveling. Jewel shows, in a dramatic way, that he can do things in whatever way he wants to.

6. What allusion is Darl making by repeating the phrase “a good carpenter” when describing Cash?

Darl may be comparing Cash to Jesus, who was also a carpenter.

7. How does Darl seem to feel about his mother?

Darl does not call his mother “mother” or “mama”: he refers to Addie by her full name, which makes their relationship seem formal and distant or cold and clinical. He notes that the coffin will suit her fine; he does not seem particularly upset by her impending death.

Cora (Pg. 6)

1. What symbols appear in this chapter, and what do they indicate about Cora?

Cora starts by talking about eggs, which are symbols of fertility. We learn in this chapter that she has two daughters, but no sons; according to some social and cultural standards, she has failed her husband by having no boys.

2. What kind of person does Cora Tull seem to be?

Cora is thrifty and straightforward; she takes pride in her ability to make more out of the resources she has. We only find out midway through the chapter that she is sitting with the dying Addie Bundren at the time she is thinking about the eggs and the cakes. She is outwardly polite (she compliments Addie’s baking) and seems to be religious, using phrases like “the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace,” but she is internally judging the state of the house and the Bundren family.

3. How is Cora unlike Darl as a narrator?

Cora lacks Darl’s omniscience; she can see people only when they are in the room with her. Additionally, she is not as self-aware as Darl; she judges everything around her by her own internal standard, which she probably could never imagine being wrong.

4. One of the parables Jesus tells in the New Testament is the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14 – 30; Luke 19: 12 – 28). In the story, a master gives his servants each a different number of talents (coins) and tells them to make a profit. Two of the servants double the number of coins originally given them, but the last, a lazy man, buries his in the ground. The master gets angry at the last servant and casts him away. How does Cora Tull’s chapter recall this parable?

Cora wanted to increase the value of what she had, just like the good servants in the parable. Cora thinks of herself as a good steward, working hard to increase the holdings of the Tull family.

5. Compare Cora and her daughter Kate.

Kate says directly what her mother is thinking: the lady was wrong to go back on her promise. Cora pretends to have forgiven her would-be buyer, but actually hopes that God will judge the lady.

Darl (Pg. 10)

1. What does this chapter begin to suggest about the chronology of the novel? How does it suggest this?

The novel is clearly not following chronological order. Cash is still sawing Addie's coffin, so it must take place soon after Darl's first chapter. Both chapters apparently take place after Cora's chapter.

2. What does the memory involving the water in the cedar bucket reveal about Darl? By what is it prompted?

Anse asks Darl where Jewel is. Darl does not feel any obligation to answer his father immediately. Instead, he departs into his thoughts about drinking water, which leads him to reminisce about the times when, as a boy, he would get up in the middle of the night to drink water. He also notes his father's feet and Vernon's dress. Darl seems to live in a separate time and space from other people.

3. What does Darl suggest through his comparison of Anse and Vernon?

Vernon never goes to town in overalls because his wife will not let him. Anse, on the other hand, has the crude shoes of a farmer. Both Addie and Cora were once schoolteachers, but Cora cares more about the appearance of propriety than either Addie or Anse.

4. What sexual imagery appears in Darl's memory about the water bucket? What might this signify?

Darl remembers lying with his body exposed to the night air. His relationships with his family members are intertwined with his sexual awakening.

5. What kind of language appears in Darl's vision of Jewel and the horse? What can we conclude from this?

Darl seems to see Jewel and the horse in a series of still-frames; first the horse is "glinting for a gaudy instant"; then Jewel and the horse are in a "savage tableau"; next comes "rigid terrific hiatus"; finally, the horse stands still "for another moment...before it bursts into motion." The reader can conclude that Darl sees Jewel as, perhaps, inhuman, not alive and feeling in the way the rest of the family is.

6. To what animals does Darl compare Jewel?

He compares Jewel to a snake and a leech. He also calls Jewel "savage" and "obscene." Darl sees Jewel as a kind of strange, hostile figure.

Jewel (Pg. 14)

1. How does Jewel's narrative voice differ from Darl's? List some rhetorical elements that define Jewel as a character.

Jewel is angrier than Darl, or at least more emotional; he says "goddam" and "Good God." We come to Jewel's thoughts in the middle, without introduction; unlike Darl, he does not make clear immediately whom he is talking about. Jewel uses sentence fragments, like the ones starting with "Where..." and he repeats things in his anger, hammering them home. When Jewel recalls dialogue, Faulkner does not use quotation marks, adding to the stream-of-consciousness effect. Unlike Darl, Jewel is not measured or detached; his thoughts are a running stream of emotions and associative leaps.

2. Describe Jewel's feelings towards Cash and the reason for them.

Jewel scorns Cash because Cash lacks imagination and takes everything literally. For instance, Cash is building the coffin right where Addie can see, oblivious to the stress and pain he must be causing. Like Vardaman, Jewel is worried that Addie cannot breathe. The sound of Cash's adze drives him to fury; he wishes both Cash and Anse were dead. Whereas Darl found "the Chuck. Chuck. Chuck. of the adze" an acceptable sound, Jewel hears it as "One lick less"—he senses that the closer the coffin comes to completion, the less time Addie has to live.

3. What can we infer about Jewel's relationship with Addie in this chapter?

Jewel hates that Addie's dignity is being compromised by the actions of the other family members. Unlike Darl, he seems to be very upset by her impending death. He obviously feels close to her.

Darl (Pg. 16)

1. Describe some features of Darl's language in this chapter.

Darl is dryly ironic, applying eloquent language to describe common things. For instance, he says that Vernon spits "with decorous and deliberate precision."

2. How does Darl portray Anse in this chapter?

Darl draws Anse as a bit pathetic. Anse claims that he will die if he works hard; Darl editorializes, "I suppose he believes it." He compares Anse to an old dog and calls him "awry-haired." Anse is unable to decide whether Jewel and Darl should leave with the wagon, but he holds on to his power of decision, making everyone wait. Finally Jewel just makes the decision for him. Anse also seems self-pitying and self-absorbed.

3. Describe Anse's speech pattern. What effect does it have on the reader?

Anse has a deliberately formal and archaic way of speaking; in combination with his transparent selfishness and inability to make decisions, he seems pompous and self-important.

4. Describe Vernon's relationship to the family, as portrayed in this chapter. Does Darl's account seem to be an accurate or a biased portrayal of Vernon from Darl?

Vernon is a close neighbor. Although he is outside the family structure, he is polite, trying to soothe the family members.

Darl's perspective appears to be neutral or objective and accurate; his language is not hysterical like Jewel's or opinionated-sounding like Cora Tull's.

5. Why does Darl mention the detail about the house at the end of this chapter?

Darl has seemed to have extrasensory powers; he lives in a space between the world of people and spirits. Here he provides a reasonable explanation for the voices he hears.

Cora (Pg. 21)

1. Describe Cora's misunderstanding of the Bundren family dynamic in this chapter. How do we know it is incorrect, and what might be its cause?

Cora believes that Darl is the son who loves Addie most of all, and that Jewel is greedy and cold. In reality, Darl does not experience emotion the way the other family members do, and Jewel does love Addie in his own furious way. We know this because both Darl and Jewel have given their point of view in the previous chapters.

2. Why would Vernon report to Cora that Darl wanted to stay with Addie, but that Jewel did not? Why does Cora like Darl?

Cora obviously dislikes Jewel and sees him as cold and selfish. Possibly, she just invented the detail about Darl's begging on his knees to support her own idea of him. She likes Darl because she thinks she is able to see things that other people cannot, and no one but she thinks that Darl is unusual in a positive way.

3. What detail that Darl mentioned in the previous chapter about Jewel is also mentioned by Cora? Why is the detail repeated?

Both Darl and Cora mention Addie's "petting" Jewel more than the others; Darl says it was because Jewel is taller than the other family members; Cora just mentions it as a way of showing how Jewel was a trial to Addie. Both acknowledge the special relationship between Addie and Jewel.

4. What does Cora think was Addie's reason for watching Cash build the coffin? What was the real reason?

Cora thinks that Addie insisted on watching Cash so that he would not skimp on the wood. In fact, Cash was the one who chose to build the coffin where Addie could see, and he is a perfectionist.

Dewey Dell (Pg. 26)

1. How is Dewey Dell's narrative voice like or unlike those of narrators in previous chapters? What does it tell us about Dewey Dell?

Dewey Dell uses colloquial verb forms ("dassent") and contractions without apostrophes; she is not as verbally coherent as Darl. Jewel also uses these contractions without apostrophes, but Jewel's speech is divided into sentence fragments that emphasize through repetition. Dewey Dell uses run-ons. She sometimes leaves relative clauses unfinished ("...so everybody that comes to help us."). She has impressions about the other characters.

2. How did Dewey Dell decide to go into the woods with Lavee? What does this method of deciding say about her?

Dewey Dell does not acknowledge choosing Lavee; she says that, based on a sign that she picked at random (whether her bag was full at the end of the row or not), she had to. Her refusal to take responsibility is similar to Anse's.

3. To what does Dewey Dell link Darl?

Dewey Dell says that Darl is "full of the land dug out of his skull." Darl is eternal, like the land.

4. How do Darl and Dewey Dell communicate? What does this suggest about Dewey Dell?

Dewey Dell understands Darl's wordless communication; in fact, she believes only what he does not say. Dewey Dell apparently has some of Darl's otherworldly sensitivity.

5. Whose words does Dewey Dell echo with her description of Vernon?

Dewey Dell calls Vernon an "old turkey-buzzard Tull." Earlier, Jewel mentioned the Tulls sitting with Addie like buzzards.

6. Why does Dewey Dell say "I can fool them"?

Perhaps Dewey Dell means that, because she is pregnant, Addie will not really die. The ambiguous word "fool" was often used as a term of endearment for an infant. Thus, Dewey Dell might simply be saying that she will deceive them or that she will deliver a baby and, thus, continue the life of Addie.

Tull (Pg. 29)

1. What details does Vernon use to describe Anse? What is his general attitude towards Anse? How is his picture of Anse like or unlike the one presented in previous chapters?

Vernon starts out by describing the faded patches where Anse rubs his knees. We have already heard from Darl that Vernon, because of Cora, is always neatly dressed; Vernon again stresses the sloppiness of Anse. Like Darl, Vernon sees that Anse is self-deceiving and stubborn.

Unlike Darl and the other Bundrens, Vernon is only marginally affected by Anse's flaws. He is burdened by Anse as a neighbor, since he always has to help the Bundrens with their crops, but he is not required, as the family is, to remain under Anse's power.

2. What does Vernon seem to be like compared to Cora?

Unlike Cora, Vernon does not follow up his observations with overly judgmental comments. He does make an editorial comment about Anse's stubbornness, but it seems to be something he tolerates rather than condemns. From the way he describes Anse "stomping" into his shoes, approaching Addie's room as if things will magically have changed, etc, it is clear that he sees Anse as a little boy in a grown man's body.

3. Vernon is called "Tull" in the title of this chapter. Cora calls him "Mr. Tull." Darl calls him Vernon. Why do we get these different names for him?

As I Lay Dying has many different narrators. It's difficult for the reader to say which narrator has the "right" or "true" perspective; reality seems to be a product of each individual's limited understanding. In addition, each character does not have a fixed existence; rather, he or she has a being that depends on each of the other characters' view of him or her. For instance, Tull is one person when Darl or Dewey Dell thinks about him, and another when Cora thinks about him. The different names that characters call themselves and others show the changeable reality that comes from different viewpoints.

4. Compare Vernon's language and punctuation to that of previous narrators.

The presence and consistency of punctuation seems to be connected to a character's level of self-awareness. Therefore, Dewey Dell, a less objective character, thinks in run-on sentences with little punctuation, while Darl's language is elegant and elevated.

Vernon does not use run-on sentences like Dewey Dell; his thoughts seem to be coherently presented. At the same time, his punctuation is inconsistent. He uses apostrophes sometimes, but not always. For instance, he quotes Anse as saying "It's five oclock," and Cora as saying "dont you get up now," but he himself says "It's fixing to rain . . ." From this, we can gather that Vernon is somewhat detached, able to make generalizations about his society, but also part of it and sympathetic towards it.

Darl, who is very analytical, seems to notice small details about people, like the missing toenail on Anse's little toe. He also uses similes—he compares Anse to an old dog. Vernon is not so analytical; he sprinkles his descriptions with his own observations and memories. Vernon's vocabulary is also not as elevated as Darl's.

5. Why do Anse and Vernon both say "The Lord giveth"?

The second part of the common phrase (from the Old Testament book of Job 1:21) is "... and the Lord taketh away." Anse is offering a platitude instead of actually thinking through the problem or reacting emotionally. Within this chapter, we see Anse's circles of reasoning; he keeps repeating the facts of the problem instead of actually making choices. When Tull repeats the phrase, he means something different; he is speaking from his own understanding and experiences (for instance, the death of his mother, which he has just described).

6. Describe the interaction between Vardaman and Anse in this scene. What does Vernon seem to think about it?

Vardaman gives Anse time to stop him from going into the house, but Anse waits until Vardaman has already started off, believing he is in the clear. Anse does this without looking at Vardaman. It is purely an exercise of his power.

Vernon remarks twice that the fish is as big as Vardaman. Anse, however, never offers to help with it. Instead, the boy has to struggle with the fish on his own, "like a man," while his father sits in a childish posture of power, refusing to help or even look at his son.

On the other hand, Vardaman wants to leave the chore for Dewey Dell, so maybe he is growing up to be no better than Anse.

7. What is the tone of Vernon's description of the fish? What might this foreshadow?

The dead fish flops in the dirt in a ridiculous, undignified way. We know that Addie is dying, so maybe this event will somehow apply to her death.

8. What inference can we draw from Vernon's remark about Anse's shirts?

We can deduce from Vernon's first guess about where Anse's shirts come from that Jewel is as tall as Anse (Vernon calls him "spindling," meaning "tall and skinny"). Anse's arms are shorter than Jewel's, though, so Vernon counts out his first assumption.

Vernon has known Anse a long time—presumably through Jewel's childhood, when Jewel must have been shorter than Anse—but he still guesses that the shirts are Jewel's old ones. This reinforces the idea of sons as fathers and the fathers as sons.

In addition, Vernon, like Darl and Dewey Dell, points out Anse's lack of sweat. Anse is not a hard worker.

9. What does Vernon say about Anse's face? Who else has been described this way?

Vernon says Anse's eyes are like "burnt-out cinder...looking over the land." Dewey Dell also described Darl this way. Although Darl is highly aware and Anse is not, they are linked as father and son in this way.

10. Why does Vernon say he is committed to helping Anse?

Vernon says that he has helped Anse so many times before that he cannot stop now. For some reason, both friends and family allow Anse to demand things of them.

11. What is Vernon's relationship to Cash? What does it tell us about his relationship to the Bundren family as a whole?

Cash is supposed to be working on Vernon's barn, but he clearly will not get to it for a long time. Vernon resignedly accepts Cash's slowness just as he patiently deals with Anse.

12. What do Kate and Eula think about Addie dying?

Neither seems very concerned. Eula was earlier shown primping for Darl, while Kate seems to focus on Jewel.

13. To whom is Cora referring when she says, “The poor little tyke!”? How do we know?

Cora is talking about Darl, the Bundren she thinks is the nicest and most sensitive. She may not actually be saying this at the same time Kate and Eula are talking in the wagon; we are getting Vernon's train of thought, and sometimes one thing will remind him of an earlier occurrence. Perhaps when Eula mentions Darl, he remembers Cora talking at an earlier time about Darl (since her remarks do not seem to fit here).

14. What does the last line of this chapter link to?

We know that Kate was talking to Cora about the cakes when they were sitting with Addie. Either Kate suddenly remembers the issue and brings it up again here, or Vernon heard her saying it earlier and remembers it now. It is one thing that Cora and Vernon both heard.

Anse (Pg. 35)

1. How does Anse's opening statement link him to Darl?

Anse has already been compared to Darl in the way his dark eyes look out over the land. Now he claims to have a kind of second sight, which we know Darl has.

2. Why does Anse say “Durn that road”?

Anse blames the road for washing out (as he believes it will when it rains) and preventing Jewel and Darl from getting back in time to bury Addie. He also blames Jewel and Darl.

3. Explain Anse's reasoning about the danger of roads. What do the contradictions suggest?

Anse says that some things are oriented up-and-down and some side-to-side. Roads are in the second category; people are in the first. As a result, there is conflict. Anse also says that a road has to be in place before people build a house, and yet he also says he had no problems until the road came, suggesting that his house was built before the road.

Anse believes that men, not God, build houses alongside roads. He notes that God does not just put a road down beside a house. It seems to go like this: Roads exist first, providing a reason for people to build houses. But then, because of the road, the people feel tension between settling down and roaming. Anse's logic does not take into account that without the road, there would be no house in the first place.

The illogic and contradictions suggest—as we have suspected—that Anse is a lazy thinker, as he is a lazy worker. His sense of self-importance deludes him into believing he is thinking great thoughts, but his ideas are foolish and contradictory.

4. Name some reasons the road is bad.

Anse has to pay taxes on the road. The road provides opportunities for the Bundren children, who end up costing Anse even more money. The road somehow contributed to Darl's insanity. It also somehow made Addie sick—perhaps by showing her that there was a way out of life.

5. How did the road contribute to Darl's insanity?

Anse says that Darl was fine before the road came. Something in Darl's travels (we learn later that he was in France during the war) changed him irreversibly.

6. How does Anse refer to God? How does this reflect Anse's background and his view of his role in the cosmic scheme of things?

Anse refers to God as "Old Marster," which suggests that he comes from a family of sharecroppers or tenant farmers. When he says that "Old Marster" will take care of him, he reinforces what we have already come to suspect, that Anse accepts no personal responsibility for his life of circumstances. As merely a sharecropper or tenant, he puts his trust in the landowner to take care of him.

7. What does Anse mean by saying he "cannot...get [his] heart into it?"

This is Anse's way of avoiding work and responsibility.

Darl (Pg. 39)

1. How can Darl tell that Jewel has been to town?

Jewel has a haircut. Darl also knew that Tull had been to town because of his haircut. (He also notices the haircuts of the men who come to take him away at the end of the book.)

2. What does Darl urge Dewey Dell to do? Why is this significant?

Darl urges Dewey Dell to face her problem by articulating it in words. This contributes to the theme of words versus experience. That which we can name we have some control over, but there are experiences too deep for words.

3. How does Darl describe Peabody? What might this suggest about Darl?

He used the term "pussel-gutted," which is also the term Jewel used for his horse in a previous chapter that Darl narrated. The repetition of this strange term calls the reliability of Darl's narration into question.

4. What kinds of words does Darl use to describe the approaching thunderstorm? What do they suggest?

Darl describes the thunderstorm with terms like “sulphurous,” “portentous,” “bloody,” — Something terrible is about to happen. The world has turned poisonous, like sulphur gas. Sulphur gas was used as a chemical weapon in World War I, and, as we will learn later, Darl fought in France during the War.

5. Why does Darl call his mother “Addie Bundren” instead of something more familiar?

Names are the things we use to distinguish and identify each other. Perhaps this is Darl’s way of clearly defining Addie as a separate being. If he said “Mother is going to die,” he would be using a relative term—”Mother” means different things to different people. If he had said, “my mother,” the line marking the end of his being and the beginning of hers would be blurred. Darl is struggling to find that boundary, to define himself.

Peabody (Pg. 41)

1. Whose philosophy is Peabody echoing when he compares Anse to a tree?

Peabody says that if people like Anse had roots, there would be no cutting them down. Anse earlier mentioned the difference between things like roads and snakes, which travel from side to side, and people, houses, and trees, which are oriented up-and-down.

2. What does Peabody mean when he says that death is “a function of the mind”?

Perhaps he means that Addie, as a separate person, does not exist; she is the person constructed by the others who know her. Their existence and hers flows into one another. Her physical death just alters the idea of her—as wife, mother, neighbor, etc.

3. What does Peabody mean when he says Addie’s eyes touch him “like the stream from a hose”?

Peabody goes on to say that, once it has left the hose, the water is completely disassociated from its source. Addie’s gaze is empty. There is nothing of her in it, just as there is nothing of the nozzle in the water.

4. Why does Peabody seem to think it will be a good thing for Addie to die?

Peabody does not have a good opinion of Anse, whom he calls “trifling.” He thinks Addie will be relieved of the burden of Anse once she has died.

5. Why does Addie send Peabody away in her final moments?

Peabody attributes the action to some kind of feminine pride that rejects real help and clings to that which has destroyed it. However, he also mentions love. He thinks that, perhaps, Addie wants to die with her husband in the room, not with the doctor.

Darl (Pg. 47)

1. Which two children does Addie seek in her last moments, and why is this important?

Addie wants Jewel, but he is gone. So she calls for Cash, who shows her the coffin he is working on. These are the two children Addie considers hers rather than Anse's (this question will be altered or moved to Addie's chapter).

2. Describe the interaction between Addie and Cash.

Addie says in her chapter that when Cash was born, there was no need for words between them. He was himself, and she was herself. As he holds up the boards, he is being completely himself, trying to please her by building the most excellent thing he can. She, meanwhile, neither approves or disapproves; she simply looks at him, the way she always has.

3. Darl is not actually present at the scene he is describing. Are there any indications that he is making the story up?

Darl could be telling the story based on things he heard from others. Or he could be able to describe what happened because he is clairvoyant. Darl has been described by other characters as having a kind of second sight. He is also able to repeat verbatim what Dewey Dell said in an earlier chapter—words that she did not say aloud. This indicates that Darl is able to see things without being present.

4. What are Anse's first words after Addie's death? Why are they significant?

He says "Durn them boys." He has already blamed the road for Addie's death. Now he blames Darl and Jewel for leaving, though he never told them not to go. (It may be because he wants to hurry up and get Addie buried).

5. What kind of power do we see from Anse in this scene?

Anse gives orders as if he were a respected figure, but his power is clearly symbolic. Cash never hears Anse at all, and Dewey Dell leaves of her own accord. She does not go directly to the kitchen, but to Peabody.

6. Why is Anse's final gesture and words towards the deceased Addie symbolic?

Anse tries to smooth the quilt, but only makes it more wrinkled. Even at the moment of his wife's death, Anse's incompetence prevents him from completing a simple gesture of comfort.

7. How does the author contrast Jewel and Anse at the end of this scene? What does this emphasize?

Anse is warm and dry in the house, paying token respects to Addie, while Jewel, with Darl, is struggling with a heavy load and a stuck wagon in the rain. Again the emphasis is on Anse's laziness and ineffectiveness while those around him struggle with his burdens.

Vardaman (Pg. 53)

1. Explain Vardaman's reasoning in linking Addie with the fish.

When the fish was still whole, Addie was still alive. Now the fish has been cut up and turned into something else, and Addie is dead. Vardaman links two unrelated things through cause and effect.

2. What does Vardaman mean when he says Addie "is getting so far ahead [he] cannot catch her"?

Vardaman is still young, so he tries to identify everything, including time, in terms of physical space. The time since Addie died is increasing, so it is as if the space between the current Vardaman and the living, breathing Addie is also widening. Addie seems to be rushing away from Vardaman.

3. How are Addie and Peabody linked in Vardaman's mind? What other linkages does he believe in?

Vardaman believes that Peabody killed Addie. All of the things that he is aware of from right before Addie's death are judged to be the cause of the death. In addition, Peabody, who comes from town and is obese, seems to be a natural enemy of some of the Bundrens.

Vardaman thinks of Peabody's horses as an extension of Peabody, so he drives them away. He may also think of the cow as an extension of the horses, which is why he refuses to milk her.

4. Why does Vardaman go into the barn?

Vardaman wants to get as quickly as he can into the "warm smelling" of the barn. He believes he can jump over both space and time to get there. Once in the barn, Vardaman is able to breathe again. He wants to get near Jewel's horse for some reason. The horse restores his sense of wholeness and identity.

5. How does Vardaman's language in this chapter reflect his confused, childish reasoning?

Vardaman confuses verbs here. After he thinks about one conditional sentence ("If I...I can... he starts adding "can" to other sentences. If he can do one thing, or if one thing happens, then something else will be possible. If the horse stops kicking, he will be able to cry, etc. It is difficult to tell whether some of his sentences express cause and effect or not.

Dewey Dell (Pg. 58)

1. Explain Dewey Dell's reasoning about size.

Dewey Dell notes that Peabody is a big man, while she is a small girl. He has a great deal of importance to her (because he can help her get rid of her baby). The importance is so large that there is no more room for anything else inside his large body. If he, a big man, has no room left in his body, she wonders how she, a small girl, has room for something like a baby.

2. What is the paradox of solitude that Dewey Dell describes?

Dewey Dell is suffering because she is all alone with her problem. If Dewey Dell could feel the baby, she would not feel alone. But by that point, her pregnancy would be obvious.

3. Why does Dewey Dell say she "cannot worry"?

Dewey Dell is paralyzed by her situation. She is too distracted by it to feel worry. She does "try to" worry, but cannot. "He" must be Lefe (the only other person who knows is Darl, and he does not worry about anything). If Lefe does not know what worry is, why does it lead to Dewey Dell's being unable to worry? Maybe they are not connected. Or maybe the thought stops halfway— "He said...and I said you do not know what worry is so..."

4. What does Dewey Dell mean when she says Addie does not know she is dead yet?

The answer to this depends on the meaning of the word "death." Addie's physical death has occurred, but she is not yet dead to the family or to Dewey Dell. Perhaps she will really die for Dewey Dell when Cash finishes the coffin, or when Jewel comes back.

5. Explain Dewey Dell's circular thoughts about Addie, her baby, and Peabody.

When Addie died, Dewey Dell had to think about something other than her pregnancy (the situation involving herself, Lefe, and Darl). Thinking about the pregnancy forces Dewey Dell into an endless series of thought circles about where one person ends and the next begins. Sometimes she stops and thinks about Addie, which takes her outside these circles of thought, but then she falls back in.

6. How does Dewey Dell's description of Anse echo other such descriptions in the book?

Dewey Dell mentions Anse's "awry" hair, just as Darl did. Darl said Anse looked like a ruffled owl. Dewey Dell says he looks like a stunned cow. She also says he looks like he does not know he is dead, which is what Addie will also say about him.

7. What does Dewey Dell mean by "coming unalone"?

Dewey Dell is coming to terms with her pregnancy; she will literally never be alone again, since there is now another human being within her own body.

Vardaman (Pg. 65)

1. Vardaman speaks of the dark "whirling away." Dewey Dell also mentioned darkness rushing past. And they both mention that it takes a long time to say it. What do they mean by this? Why is Vardaman concerned about Addie being nailed in the casket?

Vardaman remembers a time when he was accidentally shut in the corn crib and was unable to breathe. He is afraid Addie will not be able to breathe when Cash nails up the coffin.

2. Explain Vardaman's idea of God.

Vardaman believes that God made everything, including the train in town, the way Cash is currently making the coffin. Vardaman lives in the here and now; this is the beginning of his investigation into the spiritual world. If God, who is all-powerful, can make rabbits, possums, and trains, He should have caused Vardaman and his family to be born in town (where rich people live) instead of in the country. In this way, his reasoning is not that different from Anse's. Both of them blame external forces for their poverty. Anse, however, is an adult while Vardaman is a child.

3. Explain how Vardaman links Addie to the possums and rabbits.

Vardaman tries to remember what happened when Addie got into her sickbed. He now claims that when she did this, she was replaced by someone else. The woman who was his mother went away at that point. If she went away, she must have gone somewhere in space, and he wants to know how far away she went. The rabbits and possums are other things that Vardaman has seen after they died. They also "went away," and he does not know where. When Cash nails the box up, Addie will go to heaven, unlike the possums and rabbits. If Addie is nailed into the coffin, Vardaman will know she is someone besides his mother.

4. Both Anse and Vernon saw Vardaman's fish when it was whole. Why does Vardaman want to consult Vernon instead of Anse?

Perhaps Vardaman feels that he cannot rely on anyone within the family to give him straight information.

Tull (Pg. 68)

1. What words does Vernon use to set the tone of this chapter?

Vernon says the night was “misdoubtful,” the kind in which anything strange could happen. It is dark and stormy. The riderless horses, a symbol of death, appear at the Tulls’ place, followed by Vardaman, who is babbling incoherently.

2. Describe Vernon’s feelings about Cora. What words and images does he use to describe her?

Vernon vacillates between being glad Cora is so religious and objecting to her dominance. For instance, he imagines Cora trying to get close to God and push everyone else out of the way.

3. How does Vernon describe Vardaman in this passage? What does this indicate about Vernon’s attitude towards Vardaman?

Vernon says Vardaman looked like “a drowned puppy.” It is possible that Vernon is tender towards Vardaman because he has no son of his own. At the end of this chapter, Vernon mentions Cora telling him that it is the Lord’s will that he has no sons.

4. Explain Cora and Vernon’s different views on religion and faith in this chapter.

Cora believes that the events that have befallen the Bundrens reflect God’s judgment upon the family, but Vernon cannot believe that God would punish people in such a way. Cora’s religious ideas do not make sense to Vernon, but he tries to accept them.

5. Explain the humor in this scene.

Humor arises from the contrast between Vernon and Cora. Tull is resigned to Cora’s rigid religious viewpoint. He is tolerant of his wife, even as he imagines her pushing God out of the way and making improvements.

6. How does Vernon seem to feel towards Vardaman? What hints about why he feels this way do we get?

Vernon would like to have a son, but only has two daughters. Cora knows this is a disappointment to him, but says it is God’s will. Because of what she says about his having no son, we can infer that he looks at Vardaman almost like his own son.

Darl (Pg. 75)

1. What is Darl's narrative perspective in this chapter? What does it suggest?

Darl is not present at the scene, but he is able to describe what happens. Either he is imagining the scene, or he is able to go outside the normal boundaries of a limited first-person narrator.

2. Explain the wagon as a symbol in this scene. Why does Darl choose this metaphor? Compare it to Vardaman's discussion of Jewel's horse in the previous chapter.

Vardaman tried to understand the "integrity" of the horse—in which part of the horse can the life be said to exist? And what is its essential being? He was trying to figure out the same thing about Addie. Similarly, Darl uses the wagon as a reference point for his musings on existence and his mother's death. He wonders how the wagon can exist if only he and Jewel perceive it. The wagon will carry Addie to the graveyard in Jefferson, so it is connected to her existence. She, in turn, is kept alive by her children.

3. Explain the connection that Darl makes between Jewel and Addie.

Darl has previously indicated an obsession with Jewel and the connection between Jewel and Addie. He deliberately took Jewel, Addie's favorite, away to load wood so that they would be separated at the time of her death. He also reminded Jewel repeatedly that Addie was going to die. Now he reiterates the connection: if Jewel is alive, then Addie is also alive in some way.

4. Describe some features of Darl's narrative voice in this chapter and explain how the language contributes to his character.

The language starts descriptively. Darl poetically imagines the lantern, the wood chips, the stormy air, and the men moving around in the dark. After he has described Cash picking up his tools and disappearing into the house, he shifts to a meditation about what existence is—who is he? what is the wagon? how does Addie's dying change her existence and his own? In this part of the chapter, the sentences are much shorter and more repetitive.

Cash (Pg. 82)

1. Explain why Faulkner organizes this chapter into thirteen sections.

Cash is a designer, craftsman, and logical thinker who lives by rules and measurements. He likes neatness and tidiness. So his chapter is not a conventional narrative, but an explanation of the coffin's construction. Perhaps, though, to Cash, this is a narrative; it has a conflict (#6-11) and a resolution at #12.

2. What earlier statement by Anse does Cash's language here echo?

Anse said in his chapter that roads are the cause of trouble for all people because they run laterally; men, like trees, grow vertically. Here Cash says that a coffin must be built differently from a house because the person in the coffin is lying down rather than standing up.

3. Explain how Cash responds to Addie's death in this chapter.

Cash mentions "a dead body." His language makes him sound like he is writing an instruction manual on how to build a coffin for anyone, rather than facing his own mother's death.

Vardaman (Pg. 84)

1. How is Vardaman's character further established by this chapter?

Vardaman is trying desperately to avoid thinking that Addie is in the coffin; this statement represents his full effort. The fact that he has to make such an effort indicates a conflict within him.

2. Why might Faulkner have placed Vardaman's chapter after Cash's and before Tull's?

Cash has finished the coffin, as is clear from the previous chapter. The next chapter will describe the funeral.

3. How does Vardaman's language echo what Darl said to Jewel in a previous chapter?

Darl taunts Jewel by saying, "Your mother is a horse." He intimates that Jewel has replaced Addie with the horse. Vardaman means something different, though: he has replaced Addie with the fish in his mind so that he does not have to confront her death.

4. Why does Vardaman say "My mother" instead of "Our mother"?

For now, Vardaman only understands Addie in her relation to him.

Tull (Pg. 85)

1. What evidence of time is given in this chapter?

At the end of the chapter, Vernon notes that Darl and Jewel returned on the third day of Addie's death. We know that Addie died at twilight and the funeral was held the next day, which would have been the first full day of her death. Darl and Jewel returned two days later, and the family set off then.

Most of this chapter takes place the day of the funeral, but the memory that appears in italics is of a conversation two days later, reminding us that the narrator of each chapter might be anywhere in time, although the story as we receive it only comes up to a certain moment in the past.

2. What seems to be Vernon's attitude toward Peabody? Why might he have this attitude?

Vernon portrays Peabody as overly concerned about his team of horses. During the small talk, someone notes that Peabody makes money when people get injured. There is a hint in this chapter that Peabody, who is from the town, makes money in an unsavory way from the sufferings of poor farmers.

3. What words and images does Vernon use to describe the social rituals surrounding the funeral? Why does he do this?

Vernon describes Anse as "tragic" and "dignified," and he speaks of the formal, somewhat awkward funeral ritual. As country people, he and the other farmers are "stiff" in formal clothing; he says they act like they had never worn hats. There are set words and phrases they say to each other, like the greeting "The Lord giveth." Vernon seems to be perceptive about his own society and its rules. He can see how they are limited, but he also feels affection for them.

4. Why does Vernon mention Cash's carving plugs for the holes in the coffin?

This is part of Vernon's characterization of Cash as a perfectionist. Cash does not have to carve plugs for the holes Vardaman drilled, but he insists on doing so. Vernon seems to know both these things. He does not hold the perfectionism against Cash; he even expresses admiration at the craftsmanship of the coffin. At the same time, he knows it is mostly wasted.

5. Why are the men talking at the funeral portrayed through italics in Vernon's chapter?

The men are making the same small talk that they probably always do when they gather for such an occasion, about crops, weather, neighbors, and history. What they actually say does not matter or change very much, and so it is recorded here as one section, without individual speakers.

6. What tense is Vernon's chapter in? Why is this significant?

The chapter alternates between past and present tense. Tull is telling a story; when he gets to the more vivid details, he uses the present tense. Near the end of the chapter, as he narrates a conversation with Cora about Addie, he moves into the memory of telling Anse what he should do to get Addie's body into the ground quickly. This section is in italics and in the past tense. The final section, describing the encounter with Vardaman, is in the past tense again.

7. Describe the comic relief in this chapter. What does it say about Vernon?

Although Vernon is not judgmental, he is able to discern people's character from the details of their actions. For example, he conveys Cash's extremely precise answer to the person who asks how far he fell. He also describes Cora's singing even when they come upon the pathetic Vardaman. Tull seems realistic about people's foibles, but also tolerant of them.

8. What does Vernon's remark about "voices in the air" recall?

In one of his earlier chapters, Darl said that because the Bundren house was built on a hill, sound traveling through it has a strange effect: it makes voices seem to come out of the air.

9. How does Vernon describe Whitfield?

Whitfield seems to be able to move people with his voice. Vernon says he is almost like two people.

10. Describe Vernon's portrayal of Cora at the end of this chapter.

Vernon notes the way Cora continues to sing after the funeral and even when they stop for Vardaman. He seems to know that Cora is overbearing in the way she clings to religion, but he also seems to tolerate it.

11. Describe the relationship between Vernon and Vardaman.

Tull has two daughters, but no sons. Here he speaks to Vardaman as if the boy were his son. He seems to feel pity for Vardaman.

Darl (Pg. 94)

1. Why does Darl say that Jewel's mother is a horse?

Darl's saying this seems to upset Jewel, so he may be implying that Jewel values his horse more than his mother.

2. Why does Darl say that he has no mother? Is it the same as saying that his mother is now dead?

Darl seems to imply by saying "I have no mother" that neither Addie nor any other woman ever gave birth to him. Perhaps he feels that Addie betrayed him in some way, or perhaps he is confused by her death. He may think that because she is no longer alive, it somehow compromises his own existence.

Cash (Pg. 96)

1. Why is this chapter so short? Of what is it mainly composed?

This chapter, which is narrated by Cash, shows only the contrast between Cash and Jewel. Cash tries to tell Jewel directly that the coffin was made a specific way and will not balance the way Jewel wants to carry it. Jewel ignores him, however, so that Cash has to protest to himself.

Unlike Darl, Cash is not able to carefully analyze and describe situations and characters. He has a set of rules and measurements, and if a situation deviates from them, he is lost. This is why Cash's chapter, unlike any of Darl's, is so short and repetitive.

The simple statement that the load is not balanced foreshadows what will happen later.

Darl (Pg. 97)

1. How is this chapter like and unlike the one that directly precedes it?

The preceding chapter was Cash's. It was made up entirely of his worry about whether the coffin would balance. Cash, like Darl, mentioned Jewel's furious shouting, but did not describe Darl the way Jewel does.

2. How long has Addie been dead by this point?

Addie has been dead for three days.

3. How do Jewel's actions in this scene echo his earlier wish?

Jewel carries the coffin almost by himself to the wagon. In the chapter that he narrated, he said that he wished he and Addie could be alone on a high hill; he wanted to throw rocks down the hill at everyone else. As he runs with the coffin, it is almost like he and Addie are alone going down the hill.

4. What does Darl say in this scene that echoes his language describing the wagon in the previous chapter?

Darl talks about the coffin moving through the air that still seems to hold its shape. When he described the wagon, he also described the wind and the rain shaping it. Darl is constantly trying to figure out the boundary between being and nonbeing.

Vardaman (Pg. 100)

1. Describe the conversation between Darl and Vardaman and explain its significance.

Darl involves Vardaman in one of his meditations on being, which Vardaman takes literally. Darl means the phrase "Jewel's mother is a horse" as an insult to Jewel, suggesting that Jewel betrayed Addie; Vardaman has literally confused Addie with the fish he caught. The conversation seems to show that Darl, though an adult, is as mentally upset and confused as Vardaman.

2. Explain how the separation between Jewel and the rest of the family is shown in this chapter.

Anse tries to get Jewel to leave his horse behind, but Jewel just ignores him. Jewel is separate from the rest of the family; all the others ride in the wagon. Darl emphasizes the separation by saying that the horse, not Addie, is Jewel's "mother."

3. Describe the different aims of the Bundren family members in town as presented in this scene.

Vardaman wants to go to town and see the toy train. Dewey Dell says she is taking Cora Tull's cakes to town, though we know this is not true. Anse has started shaving since Addie's death, which gives a hint as to his goal. Cash does not want anything in town, but he wants to fulfill his obligation to Tull on the way back. Jewel does not seem to want anything in town, but he does want to take the horse.

Darl (Pg. 103)

1. Why does Darl see Peabody's back reflected in Dewey Dell's eyes?

Darl is aware of Dewey Dell's desperate hope that Peabody will see her condition and help her terminate the pregnancy. He also knows that she has confused Peabody's ignorance of her condition (and subsequent failure to help her) with a hostile act towards her, so that she hates Peabody.

2. Why does Darl call Dewey Dell's legs a "lever" and a "caliper"?

Darl is referring to the role of women as givers of life; he knows Dewey Dell is pregnant. Darl seems to have been upset by his sexual awakening and by his awareness of his family members as sexual beings.

3. How does Darl describe the buzzards? What does this description suggest?

Darl notes that the buzzards are "motionless." They "diminish and disappear" as the wagon moves on. The description of them suggests an image of eternity in the face of life and death; the buzzards look on from the sky as the wagon crawls along.

4. How does this chapter differ from previous chapters narrated by Darl?

There are no "visionary" sections in this chapter; no part of the chapter is in italics. There are also no digressions into memory.

Anse (Pg. 105)

1. Why is it ironic that Anse talks about Jewel's disrespect for the family?

Jewel is not actually related to Anse, but Anse does not know this. Anse says Addie wants them all to be in the wagon because they "sprang from her own flesh and blood." In fact, Addie herself was disrespectful to Anse in the way she got Jewel, which is probably why Darl is laughing.

Darl (Pg. 107)

1. Describe Darl's language in this chapter. Why does Faulkner give him this vocabulary?

Darl uses long, sometimes invented, words like "uninferant," "scoriation," "repudiant," and "capitulation." He also uses figurative language: Cash's question was in his eyes for "a smoldering while." He coins certain words, like "backflung" for the mud that lands on Addie's coffin.

2. What can we infer Cash wants when they pass the sign to New Hope? What does this indicate about his character?

Cash would accept burying Addie at New Hope before her corpse decomposes and starts to smell. He is not like Anse, who melodramatically insists on following Addie's wish, though she has now died and does not care one way or the other.

3. Darl describes the road as a spoke of a wheel, and the wagon, with Addie on it, as the rim of the wheel. Explain the significance of this metaphor.

Darl describes the road to New Hope as the spoke of a wheel; the wagon and Addie travel in a curve like the rim of the wheel. Circles and wheels are symbols of eternity because they have no beginning and no end. Darl also says that the motion of the wagon is slow and dreamlike; they seem to be moving in time but not in space. As a narrator, Darl is able to transcend some limits in time and space: he can describe scenes where he is not present, and he can predict the future. Here he sees a kind of eternal present, neither life nor death.

Anse (Pg. 110)

1. What do we learn about Anse's motivation for the journey in this chapter?

Anse wants to get a set of teeth in town, and Addie's death allows him to go there.

2. Explain Anse's views on class and wealth. Why, judging by what other characters have said, are his remarks ironic?

Anse never does any work; he claims that if he sweats, he will die. But he still sets up a distinction between people like himself, "the hardworking man," and the storeowners and people in town. He says that in heaven, God will redistribute wealth fairly.

3. Why does Anse consider himself "the chosen of the Lord"?

Anse says "[F]or whom he loveth, so doeth he chastiseth." This is a corruption of Hebrews 12:6. Anse believes that the more he suffers, the more he is proving God loves him. To this end, he may even create suffering for himself.

Samson (Pg. 112)

1. Why does Faulkner repeatedly mention Samson's forgetting MacCallum's name?

This could be an unimportant detail that Samson keeps repeating. The fact that it comes up again at the end of the chapter shows that the Bundrens' journey is not the most important thing to Samson; it is just one more thing he is thinking about.

2. What is the setting of this chapter?

Samson has a store, but the setting is not a town or city. He takes the Bundrens in at his farm. We can assume that he has a small country store where local people gather.

3. How does Samson describe the buzzard? What is the significance of this mention?

Samson knew that the dead body had been there even after the Bundrens left. His proof came when he went to the barn and saw a buzzard, which he describes as watching him like a person. The buzzard is a sign of the physical reality of death.

4. Describe the relationship between Samson and his wife. How is it like or unlike the relationship between other men and women in the book?

Samson seems confused by his wife just like Tull is confused by Cora. Both of them make generalizations about women as a group.

5. Explain Samson's relationship to the Bundrens. How is it like or unlike the relationship between the Tulls and the Bundrens?

Samson seems to see Anse the way Tull does. There is a difference, though: Samson sees the trials the Bundrens are going through as God's judgment upon Anse, while Tull has said that he does not see how God could judge Anse this way.

Dewey Dell (Pg. 120)

1. What does Dewey Dell mean when she says "it is too soon"?

Addie has died, and Dewey Dell is getting ready to have a baby; she has not dealt with the first or prepared for the second in her own mind, and she is unable to figure out what she thinks.

2. Explain Dewey Dell's conflict about existence and observation, especially as it relates to religion.

Dewey Dell says that she does not have time to "let [Addie] die." She has the knowledge of Addie's death, but is not able to slow down enough to experience it.

3. How does the author use italics in this chapter?

Two different characters speak in italics. The first is probably Dewey Dell, talking about how time causes things to happen that human beings cannot stop. The second is Darl, in Dewey Dell's mind, threatening to tell Cash to turn towards New Hope, where there is no pharmacy at which Dewey Dell can get medicine to get rid of her baby.

Dewey Dell then speaks again, describing a nightmare she had. Like Darl in an earlier chapter, she describes the wind blowing over her naked body. In this nightmare, she was not able to access any of the things that normally told her who she was—her name, gender, and so forth. She was unable to know that she was asleep or what “asleep” meant. Finally, she was reawakened to existence; she was again separate from the wind.

When she stops reliving the nightmare, she notices the wind blowing out of the pines as they pass the turn to New Hope. She now has the chance to get what she wants.

4. Explain Dewey Dell's vision involving the fish. What prompts it? Is it like anyone else's vision in this book?

The fish, death, blood, and blindness all appear in Dewey Dell's vision. Vardaman has previously confused Addie with the fish. Dewey Dell brings up swimming when she says that Darl's eyes “swim to pin points.” Darl seems to Dewey Dell to be seeing her naked and to be taunting her, hinting that he can persuade Cash to turn away from town (and her chance for an abortion). If he did this, she would die (and she imagines that she has). So she takes the knife from the fish, where Vardaman put it, and kills Darl.

Tull (Pg. 123)

1. How long has Addie been dead by this point?

Tull says Jewel and Darl passed the house “yesterday, coming back to get her.” The only time Darl and Jewel did this was when they were coming back with the load of wood in the wagon. Addie had been dead for three days by that point (Both Samson's chapter and Tull's earlier chapter make this clear).

2. What choice does Cash make that changes him in this chapter?

Cash, up to now, has been a character who likes to carefully calculate and measure. Now he has come to a situation that does not have a guaranteed outcome.

3. What is the river's symbolic and dramatic function in this chapter? How does it reveal various characters? What is each willing to risk?

The river represents a point of decision; important truths about character are revealed. As the Bundrens prepare to cross the river, Cash is the head of the family, acting to preserve both physical safety and harmony. Anse is not able to lead. Jewel is decisive, but not of the best judgment, and he acts offensively towards Vernon. Darl is clearly not the leader of the group; he seems to be trying to inflame the argument between Jewel and Vernon.

4. What gets repeated at the end of the chapter? Why? Is it the central idea of the chapter?

Vernon refuses to let the Bundrens take his mule into the river. This chapter is based on memory, and memory is changed by later events. After the river crossing, the Bundren mules will be dead. Vernon's holdings, including his mule, are important to him, so maybe his memory highlights the danger to his mule here.

5. How does the author build comic relief into this chapter?

Anse is bewildered by the undeniable fact that the bridge is down. He keeps repeating the obvious: if the bridge were not down, they could cross it, but it is, in fact, down. This repetition sums up his style of leadership and his character. He is unable to change and unable to acknowledge reality.

Darl (Pg. 128)

1. Why does Darl take this moment to tell the story about Jewel's horse?

In an earlier chapter, as Darl and Jewel slept beside the wagon, we saw Darl trying to figure out who he was and how his and Jewel's existence were connected to Addie's. He said that "Jewel is, so Addie Bundren must be." (His own existence was proven because he was able to think.) Now Cash, Darl, and Jewel, on his horse, are about to cross the river with Addie's body. Symbolically, it is an irreversible act; once across the river, Addie will truly "die" to her family. So it makes sense that Darl moves into this meditation about the being of Addie, Jewel, and the horse.

2. How does Darl refer to his mother in this chapter? Why is it different from other chapters?

In other chapters, Darl calls his mother "Addie Bundren." He also says, "I have no mother." But in this chapter, he refers to her as "Ma." Before he knew about Jewel and why she preferred Jewel, Darl had a conventional mother-son relationship with Addie. His discovery in this chapter prompts a separation, in his mind, between them.

3. How is Darl's perspective different in this story than in other chapters he narrates?

At the time these events took place, Darl was not omniscient as he is through most of the book. He had to wait for Cash to explain what was going on with Jewel. At the end of the chapter, he finds Addie crying, and his subconscious knowledge suddenly becomes apparent to him. Presumably, something happened between that time and the present to push Darl into madness and give him the second sight.

4. What language and metaphors does Cash think of for Jewel's possible lover? What do they tell us about Cash?

Cash is displeased by the idea that Jewel, in the first flush of his manhood, would take up with a married woman. Jewel, Cash tries to say (Darl interprets for him), is "new and hard and bright," like a new tool, and should not be wasted on something old and unremarkable.

Cash's world is an extension of his craftsmanship, so all of his thoughts use metaphors from his world.

5. Describe the relationship between Jewel and the other Bundren children as Darl remembers it in this chapter.

Darl remembers the whole family feeling protective towards Jewel. When they were forced to acknowledge his absence, they felt they had "let something happen to him." Even though, as Dewey Dell said, Jewel is not "care-kin" to the Bundrens, they (except Anse) cared for him. Perhaps the protectiveness towards Jewel was an extension of the protectiveness for Addie on the part of Darl and Cash.

6. Cash tells Darl that he is not trailing Jewel. How, may we infer, did Cash find out about what Jewel was doing?

Cash must have asked around to find out what Jewel was doing.

7. Darl has taunted Jewel by saying "Your mother is a horse." Does this chapter show that Jewel's decision to get the horse is a betrayal of Addie?

Addie is emotionally tied to Jewel; when she finds out he has been endangering his own health to get the horse, it takes away her strength. She feels that she has not protected him. In turn, when he realizes the effect his actions have on her, he gets "a little sick looking." So he clearly did not intend to hurt her; Darl's insinuation that "Jewel's mother is a horse" is unfair even in comparison with the truth as he himself tells it.

8. What is ironic about what Anse says about the horse?

Anse says that Jewel took "work from his own flesh and blood," which we know is not actually true.

9. What allowed Darl to understand the truth about Jewel's parentage?

When Darl saw Addie crying, he became aware of what he subconsciously knew about Jewel. Addie hated crying, so her tears were a strong sign of an allegiance to Jewel that she did not have to the other children—something that set him apart.

Tull (Pg. 137)

1. What does Tull imply about Anse's motivations in this chapter?

Tull implies that Anse is enjoying the trials of the journey and the idea of himself as a suffering hero.

2. How does Tull view Vardaman as they cross the bridge? Why does he say children have more sense than adults?

Vernon feels like crossing the bridge is all wrong, but Vardaman seems to have complete confidence in the idea. Tull wants to admit to Vardaman the truth that crossing the bridge is a ridiculous idea, but he says that adults do not like admitting the simple truth that is obvious to children. Perhaps this is an allusion to the Bible verse (Isaiah 11:6), "...and a little child shall lead them."

3. What metaphor does Tull use to describe his house and land as he views them from the other side of the river? Why does he use this metaphor?

Tull sees his house, and by extension, all that he has worked for, as holding in his wife as a spring does a jar of milk. Because he has a lot of land, the pressure might not be strong enough to hold Cora in. So he needs "tight, wellmade jars." This is Tull's version of the distinction between signs of existence and existence itself. The jar is what holds Cora's being in as the body holds the soul. Earlier, Dewey Dell sat in the barn with the cow, who was lowing to be milked. Dewey Dell was baffled by her own pregnancy. Now Vernon's image brings up ideas of fertility again. Cora, as we know, has only produced daughters, and Vernon seems to want a son; this may be why he suggests the milk is sour. All the same, he likes living in the world in which things change, go bad, and die—he would rather have "milk that will sour than milk that will not."

4. Why, according to Tull, are the Bundrens so set on going to town?

Tull says that the Bundrens would risk "the fire and the earth and the water and all" for "a sack of bananas." He understands that not all of the Bundrens' goals are noble and sees the futility of their proud stubbornness.

Darl (Pg. 141)

1. What language does Darl use to describe the river? What allusion is Faulkner making with this language?

In Greek mythology, the River Styx runs through the underworld and must be crossed by souls who have died. The chapters involving the river crossing come before the one in which Addie speaks from beyond the grave. Just as Odysseus, in The Odyssey visited the underworld and spoke to the ghost of his mother, the Bundrens cross the river into another land.

The attempt to cross the river is symbolic; it takes place at the boundary between the country and the town (which contains the graveyard where Addie will finally rest—a combination of her home and the afterlife). It also recalls Odysseus' journey to the underworld in The Odyssey.

2. What is “the old terror and the old foreboding” that unites Darl and Cash?

In an earlier chapter, Darl talked about his sexual awakening; he wondered whether Cash had gone through the same thing. In the chapter about Jewel and the horse, he and Cash seemed to have a special understanding. Now he says that for an instant, they are able to communicate in the old way, “unabashed” and “without shame.” Darl seems to have been thrown off balance by his sexual awakening; his obsession distorts his relationships with everyone. Here, Cash and Darl are able to talk as they did when they were children. “The old terror” could have been the fear of Anse. There are Biblical stories and Greek myths in which fathers try to kill their sons; maybe the time that Cash and Darl were together was when they were closest to Addie.

3. Why does Faulkner include the conversation between Cash and Darl about Vernon cutting down the trees?

Cash and Darl are having the same kind of conversation that the men at the funeral had—about nothing in particular, but expressing familiarity with one another and with their surroundings.

4. What regret does Cash express in this chapter? What does it indicate about his character?

Cash is sorry he did not plan better by coming down and taking a sight on the river. Cash is a perfectionist who tries to plan everything, but here he is confronted with chaos that he could not foresee.

5. Why, according to Darl, did he jump from the wagon? What does this moment foreshadow for Darl?

Darl says that Cash told him to jump from the wagon and that he urged Cash to do the same. Both Cash and Jewel, however, stay in the river. Darl's decision to jump presages his separation from the family.

6. Describe the dynamic between Cash, Darl, and Jewel in this scene.

Cash and Darl, who were born around the same time, seem to share a deep communication similar to what Darl described in his chapter about Jewel's getting the horse.

Jewel is younger than they are and separate by birth (though only Darl knows this), but Cash and Darl seem to feel almost paternal towards him, seeing him as young and strong, like a warrior. Jewel pays them no heed.

7. Explain Darl's simile of time as a "looping string."

Darl stands at the bank of the river that separates life from death. He is able to see eternity: the space between the river banks is like time going both ways, into the present and into the past.

Vardaman (Pg. 150)

1. How does Vardaman view Vernon? Contrast his attitude with what Vernon says as they are crossing the bridge.

Vardaman resents Vernon for not going into the water to help Addie. Vernon, who has no sons, felt a special kinship with Vardaman when they were crossing the bridge, but Vardaman sees Vernon as someone, who, like Darl, would not take a necessary action.

2. Why does Vardaman trust Darl to catch Addie?

Vardaman and Darl have had disjointed conversations about Addie's being. Vardaman understood them literally and assumed that Darl shared his understanding of things.

3. How does Darl disappoint Vardaman?

Vardaman needs to cling to his idea that Addie is in the form of a fish. When Darl comes out of the water empty-handed, Vardaman has to face the idea that Addie is really in the box.

Tull (Pg. 152)

1. What is the significance of the conversation between Cora and Tull at the beginning of the chapter?

Cora and Tull express their different beliefs about the reason for the disaster. Cora seems to believe in both divine omnipotence and human responsibility. Tull seems to believe more in fate than in God; the log was unavoidable, and nothing the Bundrens could have done would have changed the outcome.

2. Why does Tull emphasize the watching of the rope at the end of the chapter?

The end of the chapter serves as a pause, a way for Tull to take a breath after describing the chaos of the river crossing. Jewel is still standing in the middle of the river braced against the wagon. Cash has washed up on shore, and it is not clear yet what happened to him. Tull describes the wagon as “lazing” and “lazy like.” Despite the disaster it has just dealt the Bundrens, the river seems almost friendly.

Tull’s repetition of “We watched” brings back the idea of a tragedy in which the actors helplessly watch their own fates unfold. References to Macbeth and suggestions of Greek tragedy previously brought this to light. Though they are all actors in the spectacle, they are also observers.

Darl (Pg. 156)

1. How does Darl describe the wagon in this chapter? What earlier description does this recall?

He says that violence still lingers around the “inert shape” of the wagon. Before Addie’s death, when Darl and Jewel were bringing the load of wood back, Darl considered the form of the wagon as a point of reference for his own existence. It existed for him then as an empty form shaped by the rain. Now the wagon has taken on the qualities of the violent encounter that killed the mules.

2. What signs of Darl’s psychological disintegration appear in his narration in this chapter?

Darl, sensing alienation, digresses; thinking about tools and calculating, he remembers how Lon Quick could tell the time without a watch. In the final paragraph of the chapter, Darl sees Jewel and Vernon as machines and Dewey Dell as a monstrous figure.

3. How is the reassembling of Cash's tool kit symbolic?

The order of the Bundrens' universe was upset by the death of Addie. As they draw closer to the graveyard, they are forced to confront the reality of her death. Cash, the architect figure, loses his logical understanding of the universe in the same way he loses his tools. He must now depend on others with different ways of thinking (notice the unusual uses Jewel and Vernon devise for Cash's tools).

4. Why is it important to Tull and the Bundrens that Cash get his tools back? What does it indicate about their relationship with him?

All of the people present feel respect for Cash as an architect and planner. Even though, as Dewey Dell says, Jewel is not "care-kin" to the Bundrens, even he has a positive relationship with Cash.

5. How does the family dynamic change when Cash is disabled?

Jewel and Vernon seem to be the head men of the tool-finding expedition. Darl insists on staying and helping them, though there is a hint he does not belong. Anse does not help or have any power. Dewey Dell acts in a maternal way. Vardaman is also pressed into service, though in a limited way. With Cash disabled, all the Bundrens have to move up a role in age.

6. Why might Faulkner include a long chapter that is seemingly only about the retrieval of tools from the river?

This scene serves as a denouement to the climax of the previous three chapters. Faulkner is also able to show the whole family, except perhaps Anse, working together to help find Cash's tools.

7. What is Darl's view of women, judging by the last sentence in this chapter?

Darl describes Dewey Dell's "mammalian ludicrosities." In his mind, she seems to be a grotesque, semi-animal figure. Darl has a negative view of female sexuality as connected to death. The form of Dewey Dell's body, which echoes the "horizons and valleys of the earth," is just an empty shape; further, it is seen by "the dead eyes of three blind men."

Cash (Pg. 165)

1. How has Cash's language changed in this brief chapter? What does this indicate about his state of mind?

Where Cash was speaking in the present tense, now he uses the past tense. Perhaps this indicates that he is coming to terms with his lack of control over events.

Cora (Pg. 166)

1. What does Cora reveal about why she favors Darl in this chapter?

Cora believes that Darl, because of his strangeness, has a special connection to God.

2. What dramatic irony does Faulkner use in this chapter?

Cora calls the preacher “a godly man” and says that Addie must have been an extremely hard case since she resisted his preaching. We learn in the next chapter that Addie and Whitfield actually had an affair.

Addie (Pg. 169)

1. Where in space and time is Addie as she narrates this chapter?

Presumably, Addie is speaking from the afterlife. She is not in any particular place in space or time; she can see everything that has happened and will happen in the novel.

2. Why, according to Addie, did she come to hate her father? Explain the significance of the phrase she uses.

Addie blames her father for bringing about her existence—she calls it “having planted her.” Anse earlier said that people, like trees, should stay rooted. Addie feels trapped by her physical limits.

3. Why does Addie claim to have hated her students?

Given what she says about each being “blood strange to each other and strange to mine,” more than hating her students, Addie lamented or resented humans’ inability to connect, to communicate, to know one another.

4. Explain Addie’s ritual of whipping her students.

According to Addie, whipping her students was a kind of communion. She claims to have identified with her students to the extent that when they bled, it was she who was bleeding, that she felt the strokes upon her own flesh. Earlier, she says she hated her students because they were “other”: “each with his or her secret and selfish thought, and blood strange to each other and strange to mine.” In the act of whipping her students, of communing with them, she was asserting, “Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life...”

5. Why did Addie marry Anse?

On one level, Addie married Anse because he asked her. She was alone and with no family, teaching school and resenting the geese who were able to migrate, to escape. Anse had a house and a farm, and he offered her a way out of her current life, which she thought was intolerable.

6. Why does the sound of the geese torment Addie?

The geese remind Addie that she is trapped in her own existence. She marries Anse thinking it will be a way out.

7. How does Addie respond to the birth of each of her children? What does each represent to her?

The birth of Cash represents the “violat[ion] of [her] aloneness. As her students had been “blood strange” to her, Cash was not. Yet Addie will not say that she “loved” Cash because “love” is merely a word and Addie’s ambivalent feelings had no word. With Cash’s birth, however, when he became a separate entity from Addie, her aloneness was made whole again. Thus, Cash’s birth was Addie’s awareness that people truly are alone, that neither husband nor child can really or fully break through that aloneness.

Darl’s birth, then, is like a betrayal to Addie. She feels as though she has somehow been tricked by Anse, tricked by generations of false notions of love and union. It is with Darl’s birth that Addie begins to contemplate the notion that a person cannot be defined by his or her name, that Anse, Cash, and Darl were not only separate entities with whom she could never fully commune, she could never even really know them. The result is her large indifference to Darl.

Jewel, conceived during Addie’s affair, represents both the liberation of Addie’s “being” from “Anse,” and her loss of another with whom she could not fully commune.

Dewey Dell is Addie’s penance for her affair, and Vardaman is her “repayment” for the fact that Jewel should have been Anse’s son and was not.

Addie claims none of Anse’s children as hers; they were conceived and born out of her duty to Anse. Jewel, however, is her son because he is not from Anse, born of her own intentional act, not her duty.

8. Addie says Anse’s nature does not allow him to perceive the difference between his name and his experience. Whose earlier statement does this echo?

When Darl was musing about existence as he and Jewel slept near the wagon, he said Jewel did not know that he did not know whether he was or not. Both Anse and Jewel are not tormented by the same questions Addie and Darl are.

9. What distinction does Addie make between words and experience? What ideas from previous chapters does this distinction echo?

Addie says that words and experience are falsely linked—they actually travel two separate paths. People are tricked by things like words, conventions, laws, and rules, which are really only empty forms.

Both Darl and Vardaman have expressed similar concerns about existence. Darl pondered the form of the wagon being shaped by the rain, and Vardaman the being of Jewel's horse as, in his mind, it came apart into separate components.

10. Why is it significant that Darl's birth made Addie ask Anse to take her back to Jefferson when she died?

Darl and Addie are alike in their painful self-awareness. Both try to understand existence through and beyond words. Darl was also the reinforcement of Addie's ultimate aloneness. Perhaps she is seeking an ultimate connectedness by being buried among her blood relations.

11. Explain the comparison Addie makes between Anse and the jar. Who else has used a description like this?

Addie says that Anse's identity—his name and all the things that mark him within society—is like a “vessel” into which his being flows.

Vernon, when looking at his farm from the far side of the river, said that he needed “a tight house [...] to hold Cora like a jar of milk.” His focus was on keeping the contents of the jar safe.

12. What does Addie, in the context of her own language, mean by “died”?

To “die,” to Addie, is to become only a meaningless word to someone else. Anse dies to her when his identity becomes the same as his name, while his nameless self, which she identifies with “the dark land,” goes on separately.

13. Most of the time, sin is thought of as being something separate from God. Addie speaks of “God's sin.” Why does she do this?

Addie says at one point that she “hated [her] father for ever having planted [her].” Her feelings towards God seem to be similar; God created human beings, whose consciousness is torture to them.

14. How does what Addie says about Whitfield echo the way Vernon described him at the funeral?

Vernon said that Whitfield seemed like two people when he gave the eulogy: his voice was somehow larger than he was and untouched by the world. Addie also describes him as having both a public side and a more basic, experiential being.

15. What does blood symbolize to Addie? What does milk symbolize?

On one level, blood and milk are both aspects of life or the life force. It is Addie's duty to "the terrible blood" that drives her to have the affair—perhaps she feels that what she has with Anse is not "life," and "the terrible blood" is driving her to find life elsewhere. The affair, of course, leads to the birth of her favorite child, Jewel, and "the wild blood boil[s] away." Whatever led Addie into her affair has been consumed. Now it is the milk, the nurturing aspect of the life force, with which Addie nurses her favorite child that replaces the blood, the passion, of the life force.

16. What does Addie mean by "clean my house"? Whose phrasing from an earlier chapter does this echo? How did Jewel's birth allow Addie to clean her house?

Addie has spoken of "Anse," the name, as a vessel into which the being of her husband flows, the empty placeholder that signifies him. A house, too, is a structure that marks off empty space. "Cleaning the house" is a mundane task. Addie, in giving birth to Dewey Dell and Vardaman, is acknowledging her "duty" as defined by conventions and obligations that she considers fairly meaningless. Because she has Jewel, a living embodiment of her escape from meaningless vows and conventions, she is free from the existential tension that once tormented her. Now she can attend to her obligations to Anse, although she does not care about them one way or the other. She now has a word/visual image, the house, that serves a purpose, even if it still has nothing to do with her experience.

When Peabody came to visit Addie, he said that death was "like a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or town." Addie speaks of preparing to die in similar terms.

17. Compare Addie's and Cora's definitions of sin.

Cora believes that Addie's greatest sin is putting Jewel ahead of God in her life. Cora says that human beings do not know enough to judge or to forgive themselves; they have to allow God to make these decisions. Addie, meanwhile, has a more complicated definition of "sin": to her, the most basic sin is the lie on which all of human society is based, and which encourages people to keep having children even though procreation is merely a perpetuation of death and illusion. She says that the preacher is "ordained by God...to sanctify that sin He had created."

Addie's understanding of sin extends to all conventions of human society, which she says have little to do with any human experience. Cora's idea of sin is "just words" to Addie; the primal experience that she considers the only reality has nothing to do with any value system.

Whitfield (Pg. 177)

1. How did Whitfield get across the river?

As was repeated in previous chapters, the bridge was still up, so he crossed it on his horse. Unlike the Bundens, he did not have to ford the river.

2. In the previous chapter, Addie despaired of words ever being able to match experience. How does this chapter follow up on that idea?

Addie believed that experience was powerful and true, while words were inadequate and mostly pointless. In this chapter, however, we see an example of a situation in which words could be powerful. If Whitfield put the truth about his affair into words and confessed to Anse, the course of events would probably be altered. The preacher, of course, does not use words to give name and shape to his experience.

3. How does Whitfield's description of crossing the river compare to the way Tull described him in the chapter beginning "It was ten oclock when I got back..."

Tull said that during the preacher's eulogy, Whitfield and his voice seemed to be two different people; though the preacher had clearly been through water and mud to reach the house, his voice seemed untouched by the struggle. Here Whitfield is clearly missing some crucial understanding of himself; his words do not match his reality.

4. Why is it important to Whitfield that he tell Anse about the affair before Addie does? What does this show about his level of remorse?

Whitfield wants to control the way Anse gets the information. He may be acting more out of fear than true remorse, although he does not acknowledge it, even to himself. As soon as he learns Addie has died, he abandons the idea of telling Anse, thus reinforcing the notion that his motive for confessing his sin died with Addie.

5. Explain Whitfield's definition of sin.

Whitfield does not really define sin; he simply borrows the language surrounding it from the Bible. If anything, sin, to him, seems to be something for which he is in danger of immediate punishment.

6. From his language, what is Whitfield like? How does this characterization of him relate to the themes of the novel?

Whitfield is pompous, melodramatic, and self-deceiving. His character stands in direct contrast to Addie's. Her tone was flat and somewhat indifferent. Whitfield has constructed a salvation narrative for himself, and he twists it to fit events.

7. Compare Addie's and Whitfield's ideas about the significance of getting across the river.

Whitfield says that his surviving the river crossing was at the hands of God: he was spared so that he, not Addie, would be the one to confess the affair to Anse.

Addie said that Jewel would save her from the water and the fire. When the Bundrens were crossing the river, Jewel was the one who saved Addie's coffin. Jewel became Addie's savior, in her mind.

8. How does Faulkner use hyperbole in this chapter?

Whitfield takes details we have seen as mundane in other chapters and magnifies them until they are part of his personal spiritual epic. The place where the Bundrens will cross the river, which we know is an ordinary ford in unusually high waters, becomes the point at which Whitfield, in his "littleness," deals with all of God's wrath. Anse, who is a foolish, lazy man, is the person to whom Tull wants to say "Do with me as you will." As Addie stated, Whitfield's verbalization of sin shows that he does not really understand it at all.

Darl (Pg. 180)

1. Why does Darl rephrase what Vernon says about Cash getting kicked in the stomach?

Throughout this chapter, Darl uses "We" instead of "I." He wants to reaffirm his place in the family. As part of this, he excludes all "non-family," including Tull. Instead of acknowledging Tull's comment, he simply appropriates it and rephrases it.

2. Why are certain parts of this chapter in italics?

Darl is growing more anxious about the distinction between himself and Jewel, who was Addie's favorite because he was from a different father. All the sections of this chapter involving Jewel and the horse are in italics to show the "otherness" of Jewel.

3. Darl says that as Vernon turned back towards the bridge, he started to "flap his sleeves." Whose words does this image recall?

Dewey Dell called the Tulls "turkey buzzards."

4. How does Darl describe Jewel's interaction with the horse at the end of this chapter? Why does Faulkner include this description?

Darl uses the word "gaudy" several times. He also mentions Jewel's "obscene caress." All of his language is similar to that of his description of Jewel with the horse in the first chapter.

Armstid (Pg. 184)

1. Armstid mentions that when he and Anse discuss his team of mules, each knows the other is not being entirely sincere. What does he mean?

Anse does not want to borrow a team of mules; he wants to buy them at a low cost. Armstid does not want to sell his mules for less than they are worth, but he says he will lend Anse the mules because he is a Christian. In reality, he is feeling pressured by Anse, but not enough that he will sell the mules. Anse is a cheap man who tries to get things through others' pity.

2. How does Faulkner build suspense in the retelling of Anse's trading the horse?

Armstid, a limited narrator, is telling the story from his own memory. He interjects his opinions about Anse and the family. He also knows less than the reader about Jewel's special connection to the horse, relationship to Anse, and feelings about Addie. This is clearly a kind of dramatic irony.

3. What does Anse's selling of the horse symbolize in terms of Jewel and Addie? Why does Jewel accept the sale?

Jewel takes the horse to the Snopes place because he wants to see Addie buried properly. Darl has taunted Jewel by saying, "Your mother is a horse," implying that Jewel's original decision to sneak out and work for the horse was a betrayal of Addie. Now Jewel has given up the horse for Addie's sake. Also recall that Anse originally wanted Jewel to leave the horse at home; only Jewel's rebellion allows the Bundrens to go forward with Addie's burial.

4. Explain Armstid's view of what a father should be like and what actions are acceptable on the part of his sons.

Armstid sees a natural condition of war between a father and his sons. He sees the father ruling the household through force until his sons can overthrow him, at which point he should either get rid of them or leave himself. This sounds like very early Greek myths—Zeus, for instance, overthrew his father, Cronos, to become king. In some Old Testament stories, like the one about Noah and his sons, the father and sons are also natural rivals.

Vardaman (Pg. 194)

1. Which sections are in italics in this chapter, and why?

In the italicized sections, Vardaman is trying to make sense of the connection between Jewel's horse and Addie. Darl has said, "Jewel's mother is a horse," and now Jewel and the horse are gone.

2. What does Vardaman's noticing the buzzards in this chapter show?

Vardaman tries to convince himself that Addie is not in the coffin, but his confrontations with the buzzards show that he is beginning to accept the truth about her death.

Moseley (Pg. 198)

1. What are Moseley's opinions of country people? Do the other chapters in the book back him up?

Moseley accepts definite stereotypes about country people; he refers to Dewey Dell's type as "they." He seems to think of country women as living a hard life and not entirely to blame, but also as completely separate from himself and people like him; to him, they are almost like animals.

2. Is Moseley a sympathetic character? Give evidence to support your answer.

Moseley expresses some sympathy for Dewey Dell, saying, "...it's a hard life they have." He knows to blame Lave as much as Dewey Dell, and urges her to make him take responsibility.

3. One feature of epic poems like Homer's *Odyssey* is a section in which the hero tells the story of his recent adventures to a listening crowd at a banquet. How does Faulkner play on this convention?

Anse is telling the story to a group of people gathered to gawk at the strange spectacle and the reeking coffin. He does not appear heroic in this scene.

4. Describe the conversation between Moseley and the marshal at the end of the chapter. How does it influence our impression of the Bundrens' journey?

Moseley and the marshal are simply glad the rotting corpse is no longer nearby. With this sentiment, they dismiss the Bundrens' entire journey, emphasizing the futility of the trip and, by extension, all human endeavors.

Darl (Pg. 206)

1. What does Darl mean when he says Cash is "bleeding to death"?

Darl makes the statement about people being like dolls leaking sawdust, then says Cash is bleeding to death. Cash is the one who built the coffin, and he is associated with carpentry and wood.

2. Darl uses the word “ascetic” to describe Cash. Why is this word significant?

“Ascetic” means “self-denying,” and it is often used to describe people who give up very basic things (like food and shelter) in order to be closer to God. Cash is something of a Christ figure, suffering without complaint for the family.

3. What does Darl say human lives “ravel out” into? What physical object prompts him to use this language? What does he wish life would ravel into instead?

Darl, while talking about the bindings on Cash’s splint, says that people spend their lives engaging in old, meaningless patterns that they cannot stop playing out. He wishes he were able to escape the trap of consciousness.

Both Darl and Addie express pain at being trapped between thought and experience.

Addie said that in her affair with Whitfield, she wanted to “shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air.”

4. What does Anse say when Jewel comes back? What does this show about Anse and his relationship with Jewel?

Anse tells Jewel to get out of the wagon and walk up the hill. Anse took for granted that Jewel would come back, and he feels no remorse for giving away the horse, which emphasizes his indifference to the man who is not his son.

Vardaman (Pg. 210)

1. Explain how Vardaman’s thoughts move through different kinds of circles in this chapter. Why are circles significant?

The buzzards fly in a circle. The sun is also round, and it leads Vardaman to think about the train going around on the track. Circles are symbols of eternity. Life also moves in a circle in the book; Addie dies, but a new baby will be born. The buzzards symbolize the “recycling” of Addie.

2. What does Vardaman mean when he says “my brother”? How does he distinguish between Jewel and Cash?

Vardaman notes that Cash has a broken leg, but Jewel does not. Vardaman is trying to understand what a “brother” is just as Addie tried to understand what “Anse” and “sin” meant.

Darl (Pg. 212)

1. Why does Darl interrupt his taunting of Jewel to describe the rotting corpse in the coffin? What does this indicate about Darl's state of mind?

Darl is clearly experiencing psychic dislocation because of Addie's death.

2. Why does Darl become upset when Jewel calls him a "lying son of a bitch"?

Whether or not any of Addie's children know the truth of Jewel's paternity is left ambiguous, but there has certainly been evidence that some of them, especially Darl, suspect that Jewel is not Anse's son. Thus, when Jewel calls Darl a "lying son of a bitch" for suggesting that Anse is not his father, Darl becomes upset because he knows that he is not lying.

3. What is the purpose of the italicized lines at the end of this chapter?

During the part of the narrative in which Darl recounts taking care of Cash, he uses "we," suggesting community action, the family caring for one of its own. The only time he uses the singular first person (I) is when he is taunting Jewel about his paternity, establishing a separateness between himself and Jewel, between Jewel and all of the other siblings. The italics with which Darl leaves the care of Cash and resumes his taunting of Jewel reinforces this.

Vardaman (Pg. 214)

1. What is the significance of Darl and Vardaman's conversation at the beginning of this chapter?

Darl claims to be able to hear their mother talking, talking to God, asking to be hidden "from the sight of man." Darl is aware of the ludicrousness of the family's journey, his mother's several-days-old corpse, rotting and stinking, attracting the attention of buzzards. He is projecting his desire to see his mother's body laid to rest rather than desecrated by having it dragged across the country.

2. What is the significance of Vardaman's italicized statement, "And I saw something Dewey Dell told me not to tell nobody"?

First, this adds suspense to the story at this point—what is it that Vardaman saw? Second, coming right after Darl's telling Vardaman that their mother wanted to be hidden "from the sight of man," might indicate that what Vardaman saw has something to do with what Darl believes to be his mother's wish.

3. Earlier, in Cora's chapter, Addie predicted that Jewel would save her "even though [she had] laid down [her] life." Why does Darl echo those words when talking to Vardaman?

Darl and Addie are connected in this book. As characters, both are cerebral to the point of tormenting themselves; they try to understand the puzzle of existence. Both Addie and Darl are clairvoyant; Addie can predict what will happen to her after she dies, while Darl can see things that are happening when he is not present. Darl's language here reinforces the parallels between himself and Addie. "Life," which for both Addie and Darl means the endless loops of thought about what does or does not exist, is what they both want to be released from. This is why Darl says, "We must let her be quiet."

4. What confusion about space and time does Vardaman show when asking Dewey Dell about the train?

Vardaman associates the train with Santa Claus and Christmas. He wonders where the train will be since it is not Christmas, just as he wonders where the buzzards stay at night. What he really wants to know is where things are when he is not conscious of them, in the same way that Darl puzzled over where he was when he was asleep.

5. What do the changing tenses in this chapter show about Vardaman?

Vardaman is confused. His mind cannot process being and not-being or concepts of time any better than the adults in the novel.

Darl (Pg. 218)

1. What is the focus of Jewel's attention when he and Darl first enter the burning barn? Who suggests saving the animals—the horses—first?

Jewel's attention is first on his mother's coffin, and it is Darl who says they should save the horses.

2. What does Jewel's decision to save the animals before the coffin suggest about his character?

All along, Darl has tormented Jewel, saying that Jewel's mother was a horse. In this ironic scene, Jewel pauses at his mother's coffin while Darl tells him to save the horses first. Jewel's decision to first help the animals probably indicates an awareness that that which is in the coffin is no longer really his mother. That he makes the effort to rescue the coffin at the end, however, reminds the reader that Addie predicted Jewel would save her from the water and the fire.

3. What language does Darl use that makes Jewel sound like a hero? Why is it significant that this description comes from Darl's narrative voice?

Jewel's first appearance in this chapter is otherworldly and superhuman: "he seems to materialise out of darkness ... in the beginning of the glare." Later, when Jewel wrestles with Gillespie, Darl describes them as "two figures in a Greek frieze." Later still, as he is rescuing Addie's coffin, Jewel is "enclosed in a thin nimbus of fire," an image of a deity surrounded by a glowing halo. Throughout the entire scene, Jewel is described as "furious" and glaring. The chapter closes with the image of the heroic Jewel "riding" his mother's flaming coffin. These language choices are significant—even ironic—because it has been clear that Darl does not like Jewel, yet he is the one to describe him in these heroic terms.

4. What is grotesquely ironic about the last image of Jewel in this chapter?

Throughout the novel, Darl has taunted Jewel that his mother is a horse. The last image of Jewel in this chapter is of him "riding" his mother's coffin out of the burning barn, "clinging to it," until the careening coffin "flings him forward," just like a wild horse Jewel might be taming.

5. Why is Dewey Dell so frantic about Jewel?

Addie always favored Jewel. Dewey Dell has taken over Addie's place in the family, and one of her roles will now be to worry about Jewel.

Vardaman (Pg. 223)

1. What is suggested by Vardaman's italicized statement at the beginning of this chapter? How does its placement suggest what Vardaman saw?

The italicized statement echoes Vardaman's earlier statement that he saw "something," and Dewey Dell told him not to tell anyone. First, this continues the suspense that started two chapters ago. Second, the placement of that earlier comment—immediately after Darl's insistence that their mother wanted to be hidden from men's eyes—and this reiteration—immediately after the fire in which the coffin was nearly destroyed and immediately before a search for Darl suggests that perhaps Darl had something to do with the fire and that, perhaps, he was trying to hide his mother from men's eyes as he believed she wished.

2. What does the business with Cash's leg have to do with the narrative at this point? What is this episode an example of?

The business with Cash's leg is a grotesque bit of comic relief following the tension of the fire and the suspense of what Vardaman saw. Cash's suffering because of Anse's ineptitude and Anse's willingness to pass responsibility on to Darl are all examples of black comedy—treating what would normally not be comic in a humorous manner.

3. Why is Darl crying in this chapter?

Considering both Darl's earlier comment to Vardaman, that Addie was asking God to hide her from men's sight, and the fact that it was he who told Jewel to save the horses from the burning barn when Jewel was apparently contemplating saving the coffin, it seems most likely that Darl is crying—over his mother's still-smoldering coffin—because he had hoped for her coffin and body to be consumed in the fire, and thus hidden “from the sight of man.”

4. What is suggested by the sequence of ideas and images at the end of this chapter?

As this chapter closes, we are first shown Darl, lying on his mother's coffin, crying. Vardaman then notes that the barn is still burning. Finally, he reiterates that he saw something that Dewey Dell told him not to talk about. This maintains the suspense and connects Darl, the fire, and Vardaman's secret in the reader's mind.

Darl (Pg. 226)

1. Darl earlier spoke of Dewey Dell's body as “the horizons and valleys of the earth.” How does he elaborate on that description here?

Darl says life started in the valleys and traveled up to the hills. The Bundrens, we learned earlier, live on a mountain; the town, with its “smoke low and flat,” is in a lower-lying area. Here Darl makes a distinction between the two kinds of terrain and between the country and city. He also echoes the sexual language that he used to describe Dewey Dell by saying “Life was created in the valleys.”

2. What is Darl's tone as he describes the nearing town?

Darl seems to be bored by the town and by their final approach. He lists the different signs that the family passes; there seem to be multiple versions of everything, and he makes them all sound the same. For Darl, the ultimate destination of the journey does not matter very much.

3. Describe the overall impression given by the family as it approaches the town. What details does Darl mention to give this impression?

He mentions the “shabby” mules, Cash lying on the pallet with the smashed cast, Dewey Dell in her finest clothes, and Jewel standing on the hub of the wagon instead of riding inside it. Addie's corpse smells so bad that it provokes horrified reactions from everyone who passes. The family seems both absurd and fiercely dignified.

4. What is ironic about Anse rebuking Jewel for speaking disrespectfully, telling him that it shows he did not love Addie?

Addie herself said that words are just words and have nothing to do with real love. We also know from Jewel's chapter that the only person he loves in the family is Addie.

5. Explain the confrontation between Jewel and the white man with a knife. What social rules does it reflect?

Jewel is allowed to insult the black men with the "sons of bitches" comment, but not the white man, who takes immediate offense. Both the man and the Bundrens seem to know what will follow the comment: the white man pulls out a knife and seems likely to attack Jewel. Only Darl's insistence that Jewel take the comment back stops the man from using the knife.

6. Why is Jewel depicted as part of the wagon at the end of this chapter?

Darl has repeatedly referred to Jewel as being made of wood or wooden. His visions involving Jewel all have a timeless quality; Jewel seems to be frozen, like a grotesque carving, in the middle of whatever he is doing.

Darl also mentioned the wagon in an earlier chapter when he was trying to understand distinctions between being, thinking, and knowing. The wagon was something Darl could not really know, and now Jewel is in the same category.

Cash (Pg. 232)

1. What do we learn was the incident that Vardaman saw and Dewey Dell told him not to report?

According to Cash, Vardaman saw Darl set the fire in Gillespie's barn.

2. Explain the black comedy in the family's conversation about locking Darl up.

When Jewel suggests tying him up immediately, Cash reflects that a person in Darl's situation should be allowed to have some "pleasure" before being locked up for life. The "pleasure" in this context is their mother's burial.

3. What is Cash's explanation for Darl's setting the fire? What is his opinion of Darl's action?

Cash suspects that Darl set the fire only to dispose of Addie's corpse in a more dignified manner than the journey has turned out to be. He says that he almost believes Darl did the right thing—except for the risk to the livestock and the destruction of Gillespie's property.

4. What point is Cash trying to express in his digression about smooth and rough boards and courthouses and chicken coops?

Cash is simply commenting that not everyone is born with the same advantages, but whatever one is born with, one should make the most of it.

5. How does Cash feel about Darl? Why?

Cash suggests that, because he and Darl were born fairly close together, and the next child—Jewel—was not born until almost ten years later, he feels a closer kinship to Darl. He admits that he was contemplating some way to spare Addie's corpse the desecration of the journey, just as Darl set fire to the barn to put an end to it.

6. What prompts Cash's reflection on his relationship to Darl?

It is Darl who insists that they tend to Cash—the living—before tending to Addie—the dead.

7. What final bit of ludicrousness does Faulkner add to Addie's burial procession?

The family has made this long journey to bury her, and no one thought to bring a shovel.

8. What is surprising about Darl's capture? Why does this surprise Cash?

Cash always thought that Darl and Dewey Dell had a special connection in which they shared thoughts and communicated without words, but when the men come to apprehend Darl, it is Dewey Dell who fights the hardest to restrain him.

9. Describe Cash's view of the individual and society, insanity and sanity.

Cash says that insanity is relative; a society makes rules and decides what violation of these rules is too great to let stand.

10. According to Cash, what was a worse crime than going against God? What does this reflection emphasize about Cash's character?

Darl's destruction of property—the product of his labor—Cash says, is worse than Jewel's violation of the natural order. Cash is the builder, the laborer, so it is natural that he would be most troubled by the destruction of something a man had built.

11. How does what Cash says about Jewel's going against God recall the conversation between Addie and Cora? How is Cash's understanding of God like or unlike that of other characters?

Addie told Cora that "he" would save her from the water and the fire. Cora, realizing Addie meant Jewel and not God, found this blasphemous. Here Cash says that Jewel's saving of Addie seemed to go against God because Addie's body was so decomposed and had suffered so many indignities. Cash likes for things to be clean and neat; the things that happened to Addie's body violated his sense of order and completion. He does not object because he mixes up the live and dead Addie, as Vardaman seems to.

Nor does he think like Cora; he does not think Jewel is trying to be godlike, just that he is violating nature through his actions. Addie believed that sin was just a word and that people were living under an illusion, but Cash sees sin as an act against the balance of the natural order.

12. What does Anse reveal about his feelings for Addie in this chapter? How does what he says corroborate or disprove things other characters said about the relationship?

Anse says that he and Addie had a special relationship that the children cannot understand: Anse and Addie were young and grew old together. The important thing, to Anse, seems to be that Addie was present at all, not that she was Addie. This recalls Addie's trouble over who, exactly, she was, both to herself and to other people. Other characters in the book seem to think that Anse did not care about Addie at all, but this is not true. Anse loves the outer form—the wife who was with him and grew old with him—and because Addie happened to be the one who filled this role, he loves her.

13. What draws Anse to the house of the future Mrs. Bundren? To what episode from *The Odyssey* might this allude?

*Anse hears the music playing on the graphophone. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men have to sail past the sirens, beautiful women who lure sailors onto the rocks by singing to them.*

14. What is significant about the fact that Cash calls the owner of the house Anse visits "Mrs. Bundren"?

The family does not meet the woman until after she and Anse are married. This is how Anse introduces her to them. The significance is that they do not know her as an individual person, a being in her own right, only as the person currently playing the role of "Mrs. Bundren."

15. Explain Cash's comparison of Darl to a mud puddle.

Cash reasons that, being insane, Darl is no more personally responsible for the destruction of the barn than a mud puddle is for getting someone's clothes wet and dirty.

16. How, according to Cash, did Gillespie learn that Darl was the one who set fire to the barn?

Cash believes that Dewey Dell told Gillespie.

17. Why are Jewel and Dewey Dell so eager to see Darl taken away?

We know that there has always been an enmity between Darl and Jewel, and Darl has continually taunted Jewel about his questionable paternity. While Darl and Dewey Dell seemed to share an affinity, however, he also seemed aware of her shameful secret. Thus, their eagerness to be rid of him could lie in their desire to have the one person who could disclose their personal shames removed.

18. Why does Darl keep saying that he thought Cash would have told him?

Just as Cash admitted that he felt a closer kinship to Darl than to the other siblings, Darl also seems to have felt closer to Cash. For Cash to be a part of his capture seems to be a more painful betrayal.

19. Why does Cash refrain from condemning Darl at the end of the chapter?

Cash says that insanity exists in every person; society must judge what is sane and what is insane. He hints that part of his mind, like Darl's, is beyond the rules of society and is simply looking at what is happening as if it is observing a play.

Peabody (Pg. 239)

1. Describe the style of Peabody's chapter.

Peabody rants to Cash about the suffering the family has to go through because of Anse. He seems bewildered by the Bundrens; he believes, or says he believes, that they would be better off if Anse were dead. Cash defends his family, but does not react with anger towards Peabody or Anse.

2. Does Peabody's opinion of Anse seem to agree with others' in the novel?

Tull, like Peabody, finds Anse exasperating, but says that he compels people to help him. Darl shows Anse as rather foolish, but does not evaluate him one way or another. Addie simply says that Anse is not self-aware enough to see the difference between words and experience. The common thread in all of these accounts is Anse's stubbornness and obtuseness. Peabody objects to Anse more than the other characters.

3. Does the portrayal of Peabody in this chapter agree with the portrayal of him in other chapters?

None of the country people seemed to trust Peabody. Dewey Dell hated him because he was unable to discern that she was pregnant and help her get rid of the baby; Vardaman became confused and thought Peabody's arrival killed Addie. Even Vernon seemed not to trust Peabody because he came from town. But in this chapter, although he is sarcastic, Peabody does seem to feel sorry for Cash.

MacGowan (Pg. 241)

1. Describe the tone of MacGowan's chapter.

MacGowan tells the story in a casual way, starting with "It happened that..." and putting the dialogue of the story in the present tense. The casualness is in contrast to the terrible thing we know is happening to Dewey Dell.

2. How does Faulkner create humor in this scene? What kind of humor is it?

In this scene, we see Dewey Dell through someone else's eyes—someone who sees her as a stereotype. Although we know from her chapters how desperate she is, MacGowan has little sympathy for her. He is purely opportunistic. The humor in this scene comes from the contrast between MacGowan's opportunism and the act he puts on for Dewey Dell. But the humor is edged with horror and sadness because Dewey Dell is being taken advantage of and is lonely and helpless.

3. How is this chapter like and unlike the one narrated by Moseley?

Neither Moseley nor MacGowan think much of the intelligence of country people. They talk about Dewey Dell's black eyes and treat her as one of a group whose movements are predictable. Moseley lectures her about the abortion being immoral but admits to feeling sorry for her. MacGowan only wants to use her for his own pleasure.

4. What evidence is there in MacGowan's chapter to show that he knows Dewey Dell is not a fool?

When Dewey Dell comes back, MacGowan notes, she does not look at him. She asks him for assurance that the medicine will work.

Vardaman (Pg. 249)

1. What do Vardaman's thoughts about Darl reveal about Vardaman's developing awareness?

While Vardaman clearly has no real notion of what it means to go "crazy," comparing it in his mind to a physical journey like going to Jackson, he is becoming more aware of himself in relationship to other people. He repeats that Darl is his brother. He distinguishes Darl from all of the people he knows who did not go crazy and did not go to Jackson.

2. What contrasts occupy Vardaman's mind in this chapter? What do they signify?

While Vardaman walks with Dewey Dell to the pharmacy and then sits outside, he is preoccupied with light and darkness—it is night so it has grown dark, but there are lights, the moon is shining, and the four-faced town clock is lighted. He contemplates empty and not-empty—the square was not empty before the cow entered it, but somehow the cow's lowing made it empty; and he contemplates crazy and not-crazy as well as going-to-Jackson and not-going-to-Jackson. The significance is that Vardaman seems to be at the beginning of the same being-not-being dilemma that has preoccupied both Dewey Dell and Darl throughout the novel. He does not yet, however, have the words to articulate it.

Darl (Pg. 253)

1. Who is narrating this chapter? Why is this important?

Darl has split into two personalities. The narrator of this chapter, called "I," observes Darl, while "Darl" laughs madly.

2. What does the mention of the different coins suggest about Darl's sickness?

Darl seems to be tormented about something sexual. Earlier, Dewey Dell mentioned that she felt he could see her unclothed, and he seemed preoccupied with her as a sexual being. Here he mentions incest. Perhaps Dewey Dell's pregnancy is part of what caused his mental break; maybe he is even the actual father of the baby.

3. What, according to Darl, now sets the Bundren wagon apart from the other wagons in town?

Darl says that the wagon has the air of departure that trains have. He is the one leaving on the train, yet he ascribes the qualities of the train to the wagon.

4. Why does the sentence at the end of this chapter say “Darl is our brother”?

In the previous chapter, Vardaman kept repeating, “Darl is my brother...” as if he was just beginning to process the meaning and significance of this relationship. Darl may be repeating what he heard someone—perhaps Vardaman—say as he was taken from the wagon and carried away by the men from Jackson. Perhaps Vardaman’s “my” in the previous chapter is Vardaman’s way of determining that, since the others allowed Darl to be taken away, Darl is no longer their brother, but his.

Dewey Dell (Pg. 255)

1. How is this chapter’s narrative voice different from any other’s?

Except for the first and last sentences, this chapter is entirely dialogue.

2. What is ironic about Anse’s reaction to being called a thief.

As a parent, Anse has been none of the things he takes credit for when he laments the lack of love and respect he is receiving from his daughter.

Cash (Pg. 258)

1. How is each character’s quest resolved or not resolved by the end of the book?

Dewey Dell has not gotten her abortion. Addie’s wish has been fulfilled; Anse gets more than he wanted. Darl has something he did not want, while Jewel has lost the one thing he worked for and loved.

2. How has Cash’s narrative voice changed from earlier chapters? How has his character changed?

Cash’s earlier chapters were either numbered lists of rules or repeated protests about the way things should be. Now Cash speaks as a full character, considering both sides of the situation. He feels sorry that Darl is in the asylum, but decides that it is the best place for him.

3. How has the family been rearranged by the end of the book?

Darl and Addie are both gone. A new member of the family will presumably be born in the near future, and there is a new “Mrs. Bundren,” so the number of family members has not changed.

4. What does Cash say about Anse's expression as Anse comes back with Mrs. Bundren and the graphophone?

Cash says Anse looks like he has done something "he knows Ma aint going to like." Clearly, Addie still exists for him in some way, even if there is a new "Mrs. Bundren."

5. How do Anse's final words in the book recall the ideas of identity and words vs. experience that were dealt with earlier in the book?

Anse says "Meet Mrs. Bundren." At one point, Addie was Mrs. Bundren; this was her identity. In her chapter, Addie talked about feeling like a stranger to Anse and her children; now a stranger has her title.

As I Lay Dying

Darl (Pg. 3)

1. What details stand out about this first chapter? What is Darl's language style? Which person is his main focus?

2. What is Darl's narrative perspective? Give some evidence for this.

3. What signs do we get in this chapter that Darl is a prophet or a seer?

4. Judging by the details in this chapter, what is the occupation of Darl's family?

5. What can we tell about Darl's view of himself and Jewel?

6. What allusion is Darl making by repeating the phrase "a good carpenter" when describing Cash?

7. How does Darl seem to feel about his mother?

Cora (Pg. 6)

1. What symbols appear in this chapter, and what do they indicate about Cora?

2. What kind of person does Cora Tull seem to be?

3. How is Cora unlike Darl as a narrator?

4. One of the parables Jesus tells in the New Testament is the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14 – 30; Luke 19: 12 – 28). In the story, a master gives his servants each a different number of talents (coins) and tells them to make a profit. Two of the servants double the number of coins originally given them, but the last, a lazy man, buries his in the ground. The master gets angry at the last servant and casts him away. How does Cora Tull's chapter recall this parable?

5. Compare Cora and her daughter Kate.

Darl (Pg. 10)

1. What does this chapter begin to suggest about the chronology of the novel? How does it suggest this?

2. What does the memory involving the water in the cedar bucket reveal about Darl? By what is it prompted?

3. What does Darl suggest through his comparison of Anse and Vernon?

4. What sexual imagery appears in Darl's memory about the water bucket? What might this signify?

5. What kind of language appears in Darl's vision of Jewel and the horse? What can we conclude from this?

6. To what animals does Darl compare Jewel?

Jewel (Pg. 14)

1. How does Jewel's narrative voice differ from Darl's? List some rhetorical elements that define Jewel as a character.

2. Describe Jewel's feelings towards Cash and the reason for them.

3. What can we infer about Jewel's relationship with Addie in this chapter?

Darl (Pg. 16)

1. Describe some features of Darl's language in this chapter.

2. How does Darl portray Anse in this chapter?

3. Describe Anse's speech pattern. What effect does it have on the reader?

4. Describe Vernon's relationship to the family, as portrayed in this chapter. Does Darl's account seem to be an accurate or a biased portrayal of Vernon from Darl?

5. Why does Darl mention the detail about the house at the end of this chapter?

Cora (Pg. 21)

1. Describe Cora's misunderstanding of the Bundren family dynamic in this chapter. How do we know it is incorrect, and what might be its cause?

2. Why would Vernon report to Cora that Darl wanted to stay with Addie, but that Jewel did not? Why does Cora like Darl?

3. What detail that Darl mentioned in the previous chapter about Jewel is also mentioned by Cora? Why is the detail repeated?

4. What does Cora think was Addie's reason for watching Cash build the coffin? What was the real reason?

Dewey Dell (Pg. 26)

1. How is Dewey Dell's narrative voice like or unlike those of narrators in previous chapters? What does it tell us about Dewey Dell?

2. How did Dewey Dell decide to go into the woods with Lave? What does this method of deciding say about her?

3. To what does Dewey Dell link Darl?

4. How do Darl and Dewey Dell communicate? What does this suggest about Dewey Dell?

5. Whose words does Dewey Dell echo with her description of Vernon?

6. Why does Dewey Dell say "I can fool them"?

Tull (Pg. 29)

1. What details does Vernon use to describe Anse? What is his general attitude towards Anse? How is his picture of Anse like or unlike the one presented in previous chapters?

2. What does Vernon seem to be like compared to Cora?

3. Vernon is called “Tull” in the title of this chapter. Cora calls him “Mr. Tull.” Darl calls him *Vernon*. *Why do we get these different names for him?*

4. Compare Vernon’s language and punctuation to that of previous narrators.

5. Why do Anse and Vernon both say “The Lord giveth”?

6. Describe the interaction between Vardaman and Anse in this scene. What does Vernon seem to think about it?

7. What is the tone of Vernon’s description of the fish? What might this foreshadow?

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8. What inference can we draw from Vernon's remark about Anse's shirts?
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9. What does Vernon say about Anse's face? Who else has been described this way?
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10. Why does Vernon say he is committed to helping Anse?
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11. What is Vernon's relationship to Cash? What does it tell us about his relationship to the Bundren family as a whole?
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12. What do Kate and Eula think about Addie dying?
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13. To whom is Cora referring when she says, "The poor little tyke!"? How do we know?
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14. What does the last line of this chapter link to?
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Anse (Pg. 35)

1. How does Anse's opening statement link him to Darl?

2. Why does Anse say "Durn that road"?

3. Explain Anse's reasoning about the danger of roads. What do the contradictions suggest?

4. Name some reasons the road is bad.

5. How did the road contribute to Darl's insanity?

6. How does Anse refer to God? How does this reflect Anse's background and his view of his role in the cosmic scheme of things?

7. What does Anse mean by saying he "cannot...get [his] heart into it?"

Darl (Pg. 39)

1. How can Darl tell that Jewel has been to town?

2. What does Darl urge Dewey Dell to do? Why is this significant?

3. How does Darl describe Peabody? What might this suggest about Darl?

4. What kinds of words does Darl use to describe the approaching thunderstorm? What do they suggest?

5. Why does Darl call his mother “Addie Bundren” instead of something more familiar?

Peabody (Pg. 41)

1. Whose philosophy is Peabody echoing when he compares Anse to a tree?

2. What does Peabody mean when he says that death is “a function of the mind”?

3. What does Peabody mean when he says Addie’s eyes touch him “like the stream from a hose”?

4. Why does Peabody seem to think it will be a good thing for Addie to die?

5. Why does Addie send Peabody away in her final moments?

Darl (Pg. 47)

1. Which two children does Addie seek in her last moments, and why is this important?

2. Describe the interaction between Addie and Cash.

3. Darl is not actually present at the scene he is describing. Are there any indications that he is making the story up?

4. What are Anse's first words after Addie's death? Why are they significant?

5. What kind of power do we see from Anse in this scene?

6. Why is Anse's final gesture and words towards the deceased Addie symbolic?

7. How does the author contrast Jewel and Anse at the end of this scene? What does this emphasize?

Vardaman (Pg. 53)

1. Explain Vardaman's reasoning in linking Addie with the fish.

2. What does Vardaman mean when he says Addie "is getting so far ahead [he] cannot catch her"?

3. How are Addie and Peabody linked in Vardaman's mind? What other linkages does he believe in?

4. Why does Vardaman go into the barn?

5. How does Vardaman's language in this chapter reflect his confused, childish reasoning?

Dewey Dell (Pg. 58)

1. Explain Dewey Dell's reasoning about size.

2. What is the paradox of solitude that Dewey Dell describes?

3. Why does Dewey Dell say she "cannot worry"?

4. What does Dewey Dell mean when she says Addie does not know she is dead yet?

5. Explain Dewey Dell's circular thoughts about Addie, her baby, and Peabody.

6. How does Dewey Dell's description of Anse echo other such descriptions in the book?

7. What does Dewey Dell mean by "coming unalone"?

Vardaman (Pg. 65)

1. Vardaman speaks of the dark “whirling away.” Dewey Dell also mentioned darkness rushing past. And they both mention that it takes a long time to say it. What do they mean by this? Why is Vardaman concerned about Addie being nailed in the casket?

2. Explain Vardaman’s idea of God.

3. Explain how Vardaman links Addie to the possums and rabbits.

4. Both Anse and Vernon saw Vardaman’s fish when it was whole. Why does Vardaman want to consult Vernon instead of Anse?

Tull (Pg. 68)

1. What words does Vernon use to set the tone of this chapter?

2. Describe Vernon's feelings about Cora. What words and images does he use to describe her?

3. How does Vernon describe Vardaman in this passage? What does this indicate about Vernon's attitude towards Vardaman?

4. Explain Cora and Vernon's different views on religion and faith in this chapter.

5. Explain the humor in this scene.

6. How does Vernon seem to feel towards Vardaman? What hints about why he feels this way do we get?

Darl (Pg. 75)

1. What is Darl's narrative perspective in this chapter? What does it suggest?

2. Explain the wagon as a symbol in this scene. Why does Darl choose this metaphor? Compare it to Vardaman's discussion of Jewel's horse in the previous chapter.

3. Explain the connection that Darl makes between Jewel and Addie.

4. Describe some features of Darl's narrative voice in this chapter and explain how the language contributes to his character.

Cash (Pg. 82)

1. Explain why Faulkner organizes this chapter into thirteen sections.

2. What earlier statement by Anse does Cash's language here echo?

3. Explain how Cash responds to Addie's death in this chapter.

Vardaman (Pg. 84)

1. How is Vardaman's character further established by this chapter?

2. Why might Faulkner have placed Vardaman's chapter after Cash's and before Tull's?

3. How does Vardaman's language echo what Darl said to Jewel in a previous chapter?

4. Why does Vardaman say "My mother" instead of "Our mother"?

Tull (Pg. 85)

1. What evidence of time is given in this chapter?

2. What seems to be Vernon's attitude toward Peabody? Why might he have this attitude?

3. What words and images does Vernon use to describe the social rituals surrounding the funeral? Why does he do this?

4. Why does Vernon mention Cash's carving plugs for the holes in the coffin?

5. Why are the men talking at the funeral portrayed through italics in Vernon's chapter?

6. What tense is Vernon's chapter in? Why is this significant?

7. Describe the comic relief in this chapter. What does it say about Vernon?

8. What does Vernon's remark about "voices in the air" recall?

9. How does Vernon describe Whitfield?

10. Describe Vernon's portrayal of Cora at the end of this chapter.

11. Describe the relationship between Vernon and Vardaman.

Darl (Pg. 94)

1. Why does Darl say that Jewel's mother is a horse?

2. Why does Darl say that he has no mother? Is it the same as saying that his mother is now dead?

Cash (Pg. 96)

1. Why is this chapter so short? Of what is it mainly composed?

Darl (Pg. 97)

1. How is this chapter like and unlike the one that directly precedes it?

2. How long has Addie been dead by this point?

3. How do Jewel's actions in this scene echo his earlier wish?

4. What does Darl say in this scene that echoes his language describing the wagon in the previous chapter?

Vardaman (Pg. 100)

1. Describe the conversation between Darl and Vardaman and explain its significance.

2. Explain how the separation between Jewel and the rest of the family is shown in this chapter.

3. Describe the different aims of the Bundren family members in town as presented in this scene.

Darl (Pg. 103)

1. Why does Darl see Peabody's back reflected in Dewey Dell's eyes?

2. Why does Darl call Dewey Dell's legs a "lever" and a "caliper"?

3. How does Darl describe the buzzards? What does this description suggest?

4. How does this chapter differ from previous chapters narrated by Darl?

Anse (Pg. 105)

1. Why is it ironic that Anse talks about Jewel's disrespect for the family?

Darl (Pg. 107)

1. Describe Darl's language in this chapter. Why does Faulkner give him this vocabulary?

2. What can we infer Cash wants when they pass the sign to New Hope? What does this indicate about his character?

3. Darl describes the road as a spoke of a wheel, and the wagon, with Addie on it, as the rim of the wheel. Explain the significance of this metaphor.

Anse (Pg. 110)

1. What do we learn about Anse's motivation for the journey in this chapter?

2. Explain Anse's views on class and wealth. Why, judging by what other characters have said, are his remarks ironic?

3. Why does Anse consider himself "the chosen of the Lord"?

Samson (Pg. 112)

1. Why does Faulkner repeatedly mention Samson's forgetting MacCallum's name?

2. What is the setting of this chapter?

3. How does Samson describe the buzzard? What is the significance of this mention?

4. Describe the relationship between Samson and his wife. How is it like or unlike the relationship between other men and women in the book?

5. Explain Samson's relationship to the Bundrens. How is it like or unlike the relationship between the Tulls and the Bundrens?

Dewey Dell (Pg. 120)

1. What does Dewey Dell mean when she says “it is too soon”?

2. Explain Dewey Dell’s conflict about existence and observation, especially as it relates to religion.

3. How does the author use italics in this chapter?

4. Explain Dewey Dell’s vision involving the fish. What prompts it? Is it like anyone else’s vision in this book?

Tull (Pg. 123)

1. How long has Addie been dead by this point?

2. What choice does Cash make that changes him in this chapter?

3. What is the river's symbolic and dramatic function in this chapter? How does it reveal various characters? What is each willing to risk?

4. What gets repeated at the end of the chapter? Why? Is it the central idea of the chapter?

5. How does the author build comic relief into this chapter?

Darl (Pg. 128)

1. Why does Darl take this moment to tell the story about Jewel's horse?

2. How does Darl refer to his mother in this chapter? Why is it different from other chapters?

3. How is Darl's perspective different in this story than in other chapters he narrates?

4. What language and metaphors does Cash think of for Jewel's possible lover? What do they tell us about Cash?

5. Describe the relationship between Jewel and the other Bundren children as Darl remembers it in this chapter.

6. Cash tells Darl that he is not trailing Jewel. How, may we infer, did Cash find out about what Jewel was doing?

7. Darl has taunted Jewel by saying “Your mother is a horse.” Does this chapter show that Jewel’s decision to get the horse is a betrayal of Addie?

8. What is ironic about what Anse says about the horse?

9. What allowed Darl to understand the truth about Jewel’s parentage?

Tull (Pg. 137)

1. What does Tull imply about Anse's motivations in this chapter?

2. How does Tull view Vardaman as they cross the bridge? Why does he say children have more sense than adults?

3. What metaphor does Tull use to describe his house and land as he views them from the other side of the river? Why does he use this metaphor?

4. Why, according to Tull, are the Bundrens so set on going to town?

Darl (Pg. 141)

1. What language does Darl use to describe the river? What allusion is Faulkner making with this language?

2. What is “the old terror and the old foreboding” that unites Darl and Cash?

3. Why does Faulkner include the conversation between Cash and Darl about Vernon cutting down the trees?

4. What regret does Cash express in this chapter? What does it indicate about his character?

5. Why, according to Darl, did he jump from the wagon? What does this moment foreshadow for Darl?

6. Describe the dynamic between Cash, Darl, and Jewel in this scene.

7. Explain Darl’s simile of time as a “looping string.”

Vardaman (Pg. 150)

1. How does Vardaman view Vernon? Contrast his attitude with what Vernon says as they are crossing the bridge.

2. Why does Vardaman trust Darl to catch Addie?

3. How does Darl disappoint Vardaman?

Tull (Pg. 152)

1. What is the significance of the conversation between Cora and Tull at the beginning of the chapter?

2. Why does Tull emphasize the watching of the rope at the end of the chapter?

Darl (Pg. 156)

1. How does Darl describe the wagon in this chapter? What earlier description does this recall?

2. What signs of Darl's psychological disintegration appear in his narration in this chapter?

3. How is the reassembling of Cash's tool kit symbolic?

4. Why is it important to Tull and the Bundrens that Cash get his tools back? What does it indicate about their relationship with him?

5. How does the family dynamic change when Cash is disabled?

6. Why might Faulkner include a long chapter that is seemingly only about the retrieval of tools from the river?

7. What is Darl's view of women, judging by the last sentence in this chapter?

Cash (Pg. 165)

1. How has Cash's language changed in this brief chapter? What does this indicate about his state of mind?

Cora (Pg. 166)

1. What does Cora reveal about why she favors Darl in this chapter?

2. What dramatic irony does Faulkner use in this chapter?

Addie (Pg. 169)

1. Where in space and time is Addie as she narrates this chapter?

2. Why, according to Addie, did she come to hate her father? Explain the significance of the phrase she uses.

3. Why does Addie claim to have hated her students?

4. Explain Addie's ritual of whipping her students.

5. Why did Addie marry Anse?

6. Why does the sound of the geese torment Addie?

7. How does Addie respond to the birth of each of her children? What does each represent to her?

8. Addie says Anse's nature does not allow him to perceive the difference between his name and his experience. Whose earlier statement does this echo?

9. What distinction does Addie make between words and experience? What ideas from previous chapters does this distinction echo?

10. Why is it significant that Darl's birth made Addie ask Anse to take her back to Jefferson when she died?

11. Explain the comparison Addie makes between Anse and the jar. Who else has used a description like this?

12. What does Addie, in the context of her own language, mean by "died"?

13. Most of the time, sin is thought of as being something separate from God. Addie speaks of “God’s sin.” Why does she do this?

14. How does what Addie says about Whitfield echo the way Vernon described him at the funeral?

15. What does blood symbolize to Addie? What does milk symbolize?

16. What does Addie mean by “clean my house”? Whose phrasing from an earlier chapter does this echo? How did Jewel’s birth allow Addie to clean her house?

17. Compare Addie’s and Cora’s definitions of sin.

Whitfield (Pg. 177)

1. How did Whitfield get across the river?

2. In the previous chapter, Addie despaired of words ever being able to match experience. How does this chapter follow up on that idea?

3. How does Whitfield's description of crossing the river compare to the way Tull described him in the chapter beginning "It was ten oclock when I got back..."

4. Why is it important to Whitfield that he tell Anse about the affair before Addie does? What does this show about his level of remorse?

5. Explain Whitfield's definition of sin.

6. From his language, what is Whitfield like? How does this characterization of him relate to the themes of the novel?

7. Compare Addie's and Whitfield's ideas about the significance of getting across the river.

8. How does Faulkner use hyperbole in this chapter?

Darl (Pg. 180)

1. Why does Darl rephrase what Vernon says about Cash getting kicked in the stomach?

2. Why are certain parts of this chapter in italics?

3. Darl says that as Vernon turned back towards the bridge, he started to “flap his sleeves.” Whose words does this image recall?

4. How does Darl describe Jewel’s interaction with the horse at the end of this chapter? Why does Faulkner include this description?

Armstid (Pg. 184)

1. Armstid mentions that when he and Anse discuss his team of mules, each knows the other is not being entirely sincere. What does he mean?

2. How does Faulkner build suspense in the retelling of Anse's trading the horse?

3. What does Anse's selling of the horse symbolize in terms of Jewel and Addie? Why does Jewel accept the sale?

4. Explain Armstid's view of what a father should be like and what actions are acceptable on the part of his sons.

Vardaman (Pg. 194)

1. Which sections are in italics in this chapter, and why?

2. What does Vardaman's noticing the buzzards in this chapter show?

Moseley (Pg. 198)

1. What are Moseley's opinions of country people? Do the other chapters in the book back him up?

2. Is Moseley a sympathetic character? Give evidence to support your answer.

3. One feature of epic poems like Homer's *Odyssey* is a section in which the hero tells the story of his recent adventures to a listening crowd at a banquet. How does Faulkner play on this convention?

4. Describe the conversation between Moseley and the marshal at the end of the chapter. How does it influence our impression of the Bundrens' journey?

Darl (Pg. 206)

1. What does Darl mean when he says Cash is “bleeding to death”?

2. Darl uses the word “ascetic” to describe Cash. Why is this word significant?

3. What does Darl say human lives “ravel out” into? What physical object prompts him to use this language? What does he wish life would ravel into instead?

4. What does Anse say when Jewel comes back? What does this show about Anse and his relationship with Jewel?

Vardaman (Pg. 210)

1. Explain how Vardaman's thoughts move through different kinds of circles in this chapter. Why are circles significant?

2. What does Vardaman mean when he says "my brother"? How does he distinguish between Jewel and Cash?

Darl (Pg. 212)

1. Why does Darl interrupt his taunting of Jewel to describe the rotting corpse in the coffin? What does this indicate about Darl's state of mind?

2. Why does Darl become upset when Jewel calls him a "lying son of a bitch"?

3. What is the purpose of the italicized lines at the end of this chapter?

Vardaman (Pg. 214)

1. What is the significance of Darl and Vardaman's conversation at the beginning of this chapter?

2. What is the significance of Vardaman's italicized statement, "And I saw something Dewey Dell told me not to tell nobody"?

3. Earlier, in Cora's chapter, Addie predicted that Jewel would save her "even though [she had] laid down [her] life." Why does Darl echo those words when talking to Vardaman?

4. What confusion about space and time does Vardaman show when asking Dewey Dell about the train?

5. What do the changing tenses in this chapter show about Vardaman?

Darl (Pg. 218)

1. What is the focus of Jewel's attention when he and Darl first enter the burning barn? Who suggests saving the animals—the horses—first?

2. What does Jewel's decision to save the animals before the coffin suggest about his character?

3. What language does Darl use that makes Jewel sound like a hero? Why is it significant that this description comes from Darl's narrative voice?

4. What is grotesquely ironic about the last image of Jewel in this chapter?

5. Why is Dewey Dell so frantic about Jewel?

Vardaman (Pg. 223)

1. What is suggested by Vardaman's italicized statement at the beginning of this chapter? How does its placement suggest what Vardaman saw?

2. What does the business with Cash's leg have to do with the narrative at this point? What is this episode an example of?

3. Why is Darl crying in this chapter?

4. What is suggested by the sequence of ideas and images at the end of this chapter?

Darl (Pg. 226)

1. Darl earlier spoke of Dewey Dell's body as "the horizons and valleys of the earth." How does he elaborate on that description here?

2. What is Darl's tone as he describes the nearing town?

3. Describe the overall impression given by the family as it approaches the town. What details does Darl mention to give this impression?

4. What is ironic about Anse rebuking Jewel for speaking disrespectfully, telling him that it shows he did not love Addie?

5. Explain the confrontation between Jewel and the white man with a knife. What social rules does it reflect?

6. Why is Jewel depicted as part of the wagon at the end of this chapter?

Cash (Pg. 232)

1. What do we learn was the incident that Vardaman saw and Dewey Dell told him not to report?

2. Explain the black comedy in the family's conversation about locking Darl up.

3. What is Cash's explanation for Darl's setting the fire? What is his opinion of Darl's action?

4. What point is Cash trying to express in his digression about smooth and rough boards and courthouses and chicken coops?

5. How does Cash feel about Darl? Why?

6. What prompts Cash's reflection on his relationship to Darl?

7. What final bit of ludicrousness does Faulkner add to Addie's burial procession?

8. What is surprising about Darl's capture? Why does this surprise Cash?

9. Describe Cash's view of the individual and society, insanity and sanity.

10. According to Cash, what was a worse crime than going against God? What does this reflection emphasize about Cash's character?

11. How does what Cash says about Jewel's going against God recall the conversation between Addie and Cora? How is Cash's understanding of God like or unlike that of other characters?

12. What does Anse reveal about his feelings for Addie in this chapter? How does what he says corroborate or disprove things other characters said about the relationship?

13. What draws Anse to the house of the future Mrs. Bundren? To what episode from *The Odyssey* might this allude?

14. What is significant about the fact that Cash calls the owner of the house Anse visits “Mrs. Bundren”?
- _____
- _____
- _____
15. Explain Cash’s comparison of Darl to a mud puddle.
- _____
- _____
- _____
16. How, according to Cash, did Gillespie learn that Darl was the one who set fire to the barn?
- _____
- _____
- _____
17. Why are Jewel and Dewey Dell so eager to see Darl taken away?
- _____
- _____
- _____
18. Why does Darl keep saying that he thought Cash would have told him?
- _____
- _____
- _____
19. Why does Cash refrain from condemning Darl at the end of the chapter?
- _____
- _____
- _____

Peabody (Pg. 239)

1. Describe the style of Peabody's chapter.

2. Does Peabody's opinion of Anse seem to agree with others' in the novel?

3. Does the portrayal of Peabody in this chapter agree with the portrayal of him in other chapters?

MacGowan (Pg. 241)

1. Describe the tone of MacGowan's chapter.

2. How does Faulkner create humor in this scene? What kind of humor is it?

3. How is this chapter like and unlike the one narrated by Moseley?

4. What evidence is there in MacGowan's chapter to show that he knows Dewey Dell is not a fool?

Vardaman (Pg. 249)

1. What do Vardaman's thoughts about Darl reveal about Vardaman's developing awareness?

2. What contrasts occupy Vardaman's mind in this chapter? What do they signify?

Darl (Pg. 253)

1. Who is narrating this chapter? Why is this important?

2. What does the mention of the different coins suggest about Darl's sickness?

3. What, according to Darl, now sets the Bundren wagon apart from the other wagons in town?

4. Why does the sentence at the end of this chapter say "Darl is our brother"?

Dewey Dell (Pg. 255)

1. How is this chapter's narrative voice different from any other's?

2. What is ironic about Anse's reaction to being called a thief.

Cash (Pg. 258)

1. How is each character's quest resolved or not resolved by the end of the book?

2. How has Cash's narrative voice changed from earlier chapters? How has his character changed?

3. How has the family been rearranged by the end of the book?

4. What does Cash say about Anse's expression as Anse comes back with Mrs. Bundren and the graphophone?

5. How do Anse's final words in the book recall the ideas of identity and words vs. experience that were dealt with earlier in the book?

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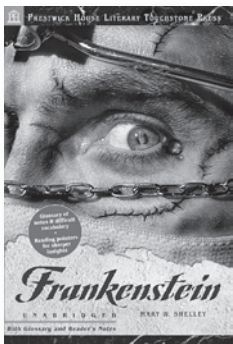
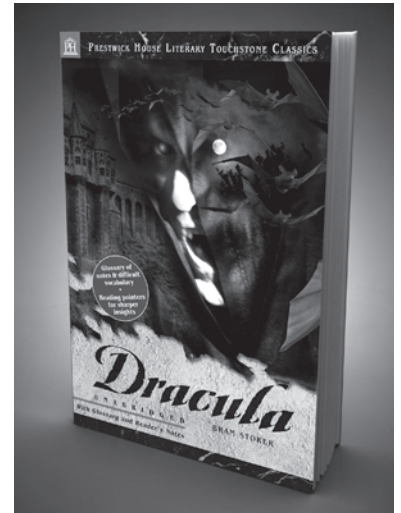
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Because charges for air delivery are based on weight and distance, heavy packages can be expensive to ship air freight. Typographic and photographic errors are subject to revision. Prestwick House is the sole source of all proprietary materials listed in this catalogue. Please be sure to include a street address. FedEx ground/UPS will not deliver to a P.O. Box.

Subtotal \$

Shipping \$
12% S&H (\$6.00 minimum)

Total \$

Shipping & Handling

For orders of \$50.00 or less, please add \$6.00 for shipping and handling charges. For orders from \$50.01 to \$799.99 add 12%. For orders of \$800.00 and more, add 10%.

Delivery Service

Most orders are shipped FedEx and you can expect delivery within 7-10 working days. Items in stock are usually shipped within one working day of receiving your order.

Expedited Delivery

for expedited delivery ask about the following options:

- Overnight Air
- 2nd day air
- 3 Day Select