

Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*
Wesley Advocates 1 April 2018

In this novel, we observe a Southern family in decline. What particular elements of plot and character best illuminate this decline and its causes? For both blacks and whites, where is God? What creates order in the universe, supposing order exists?

What do we learn about the human heart? The old verities, the universal truths—honor and love and compassion and pity and joy?

Probably it will help to read the last section first, the appendix describing the Compsons from 1699 to 1945.

Benjy, 7 April 1928

Where is Benjy when the action opens? How old is he? Why is today special?

What holds Benjy's attention? Describe the relationship between Benjy and Luster. What is Luster looking for?

What happens when Benjy hears the word *caddie*? Why do Luster and others complain about Benjy's moaning and slobbering and bawling?

As you read further, what past events enter Benjy's mind? (Does the timeline help you identify those events?) What person matters most to Benjy? Why? How does Caddy express her love for Benjy? How does she disappoint and hurt him? How does she apologize and try to make up with Benjy? (Keep these questions in mind for Quentin and Caddy, too.)

Who are Uncle Maury and Caroline? How do they regard the Compson children? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

What does Benjy mean by "Caddy smelled like trees"? When does she cease to "smell like trees"?

Who are Dilsey, T. P., Luster, Frony, Roskus?

Two Quentins appear in the story—eldest Compson son (narrator for the second part of this novel as well as "That Evening Sun") and Caddy's teenage daughter (born in or near French Lick, Indiana, but reared in the Compson household (see timeline). How do we keep them straight?

How do we learn about Benjy's name change from Maury? About Benjy's castration? What does Caroline fear will happen to Benjy once she dies?

Luster remarks that Benjy "still thinks they own the pasture," Benjy's pasture they call it. What happened to the pasture? Why?

Who is Damuddy? When does she die, and how do the children react to that information? On page 47, we see the image of Caddy which inspired the novel: "He went and pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb. We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the three thrashing." What does this image reveal about Caddy? The children? The Compson decline?

What does Benjy remember of Caddy's wedding to Sydney?

What do we know about the interactions of Quentin¹, Caddy, Jason, Benjy? Of Jason, Benjy, and Quentin²?

What does Benjy focus on? Why does a room "go black" for him? What does he watch, touch, listen to? How do the others in the household manage him?

How does Quentin² resemble her mother, Caddy?

Describe the family's relations with the past—the Revolution, the Civil War. How did they come to Mississippi? How did they secure a huge parcel of land? How much of that land remains? What does the house look like?

Jason Compson III, trained as a man of letters and a lawyer, is a dipsomaniac; Jason Compson IV is a gambler and a bully. What words describe Uncle Maury? Caroline? Quentin¹? Caddy?