

Approved for use in English IV: Advanced Placement

Summary of the Work:

As I Lay Dying chronicles the death of Addie Bundren and her family's forty-mile journey in a wagon to bury her in the family plot in Jefferson, Mississippi. Several family members have their own motives for getting to Jefferson: daughter Dewey Dell needs an abortion; husband Anse wants new teeth; son Cash wants to buy a radio; son Vardaman hopes to see a train set and eat bananas. Together they cross a flooding river where they lose their mules, Cash breaks his leg, and son Jewel saves the coffin. Addie's body begins to decay in the heat, drawing a following of buzzards. Another son Darl burns a barn in order to cremate Addie's body; again son Jewel saves the coffin. After nine difficult days, they reach Jefferson where Addie is buried and Cash finally sees a doctor. Dewey Dell is seduced in return for a placebo abortion, and Anse takes Cash's radio money. Anse allows Darl to be sent to an insane asylum to avoid paying for the barn; then he returns to the wagon to begin the journey home with a new set of teeth and a new wife—a local woman who had lent him the tools to bury his wife.

Rationale:

As I Lay Dying is an excellent book for senior English, especially for Advanced Placement or college-bound students. It is challenging due to the ambiguities and complexities in the characters.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Wilson's Fiction 03/16/06

Wagner, Linda W. "William Faulkner." *DISCOVERING Authors*. Gale, 2003. *Discovering Collection*. Gale. Helena High School Library

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

William Faulkner won several writing awards:

- Nobel Prize for Literature, 1949
- 2 Pulitzer Prizes for Literature
- 2 National Book Awards

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 870
- Readability Level: 8.1

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: *(link)*

Approval:

Submitted to Committee: 1995

Approved for Adoption: 1995

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

As I Lay Dying is a deceptively simple book. Because of the dark tragicomedy, the macabre details, and the deep psychological character issues, the book is appropriate for senior English, especially Advanced Placement English.

This narration is told by fifteen different characters—some members of the family and some outside observers. Characters describe story events, dialogues, and flashbacks, using a stream-of-consciousness form. Readings provoke an interesting study of style, local color, figurative language, allusion, point of view, and conflict.

Connection to the Curriculum:

As I Lay Dying is generally taught in English IV: Advanced Placement although other senior-level English classes have chosen to read the book as well.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

As I Lay Dying is currently taught in English IV: Advanced Placement. It is an excellent work for students taking the Advanced Placement exam.

As I Lay Dying

by William Faulkner

(Published in 1930)
