

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	OLHS English	School:	Liberty High School
Book Title:	The Sound and the Fury	Genre:	Fiction novel
Author:	William Faulkner	Pages:	321
Publisher:	Vintage	Copyright:	1929

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

The ostensible subject of *The Sound and the Fury* is the dissolution of the Compsons, one of those august old Mississippi families that fell on hard times and wild eccentricity after the Civil War. But in fact what William Faulkner is really after in his legendary novel is the kaleidoscope of consciousness--the overwrought mind caught in the act of thought. His rich, dark, scandal-ridden story of squandered fortune, incest (in thought if not in deed), madness, congenital brain damage, theft, illegitimacy, and stoic endurance is told in the interior voices of three Compson brothers: first Benjy, the "idiot" man-child who blurs together three decades of inchoate sensations as he stalks the fringes of the family's former pasture; next Quentin, torturing himself brilliantly, obsessively over Caddy's lost virginity and his own failure to recover the family's honor as he wanders around the seedy fringes of Boston; and finally Jason, heartless, shrewd, sneaking, nursing a perpetual sense of injury and outrage against his outrageous family...

Notoriously "difficult," *The Sound and the Fury* is actually one of Faulkner's more accessible works once [beyond] the abrupt, unannounced time shifts--and certainly the most powerful emotionally. Everything is here: the complex equilibrium of pre-civil rights race relations; the conflict between Yankee capitalism and Southern agrarian values; a meditation on time, consciousness, and Western philosophy. And all of it is rendered in prose so gorgeous it can take your breath away.

What Faulkner has created is a modernist epic in which characters assume the stature of gods and the primal family events resonate like myths. It is *The Sound and the Fury* that secures his place in what Edmund Wilson called "the full-dressed post-Flaubert group of Conrad, Joyce, and Proust." -- by David Laskin (taken from amazon.com product description page)

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

After working with mostly non-fiction texts throughout the year, students will apply their study of style and rhetoric to a fictional text. While reading the novel, which is told from four distinct points of view, students will annotate for how Faulkner uses elements of style to create each point of view and how specific rhetorical choices create tone and persona in each section. They will also analyze and evaluate the effects of Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness narration and consider how the style and points-of-view affect the development of the novel's theme. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of these concepts in a Socratic Seminar that includes both technical discussion of

stylistic elements as well as broader theme-based questions. The unit seeks to integrate rhetorical study with more traditional literary study, showing how authors make specific rhetorical and stylistic choices to create meaning, purpose, and effect in fictional texts. This text is an excellent example for this activity due to its rich themes and symbolism, as well as the diversity of Faulkner's language use among the four sections of the book. Olentangy curriculum standards met include all reading process standards (demonstrate comprehension of text by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative, and synthesizing questions; develop reading comprehension and critical analysis of a variety of texts), all reading applications literary standards (analyze/interpret samples of good writing, identifying and explaining an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques; analyze characteristics and writing styles of various authors; analyze a work's structure, style, and themes as well as the use of other literary elements). Furthermore, the Socratic Seminar meets the course's Communication standards (create and sustain arguments based on readings, research, and/or personal experience; use class discussion to reinforce understanding of various texts and effective writing skills).

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

"In *The Sound and the Fury* he told the story of the tragic Compson family from four different points of view, employing complex patterns of image and symbol and exploiting the stream of consciousness technique quite as much as Joyce had done. This novel, showing him suddenly at the height of his powers, would later be studied and explicated almost as much as Joyce's *Ulysses*."

-- Blotner, Joseph, in *Reference Guide to American Literature*, edited by Jim Kamp, St. James Press, 1994. DIScovering Authors. Online Edition. Gale, 2003. Student Resource Center. Thomson Gale. 04 May 2007 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/SRC>>

Review #2

The Impact of the Civil War on the South

The loss of the Civil War in the nineteenth century had a profound impact on the psyche of the south. The region not only lost the war, but their whole way of life as well. The aristocratic structure of slavery was destroyed when the South lost the war, but many of the social values remained. Whites still controlled the economic and social structure of the region. Blacks, while no longer slaves, were generally under the rule of white society. What evolved over the next hundred years in the South was a society where blacks were legally free, but socially disenfranchised from an equal education and equal economic opportunities. The relationship of the blacks to whites depicted by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* reflects that social and economic divide. The blacks in the novel are servants of the Compsons. Their role as servant is expanded by Faulkner to that of spiritual caretaker, especially as he portrays the character of Dilsey.

In conjunction with the South's defeat in the Civil War was the area's lessening economic influence. During the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, industrial and manufacturing businesses came to dominate the U.S. economy. Agriculture, the mainstay of the Southern economy, was less profitable, especially for relatively small family farms. The economic problems of the South can be seen in the way Faulkner portrays the Compsons. Their economic decline spans several generations, each one experiencing a greater decline. By 1910, Jason's father is forced to sell the last of the family's land to pay for Caddy's wedding and Quentin's tuition. Jason, the central character of section three, is left to work in a local store to support the family. He reflects the attitude expressed by President Calvin Coolidge during the prosperity of the 1920s that "the business of America is business." Even during the boom period of the 1920s, the textile industry suffered a depression. As a cotton-producing region, the South was hurt economically. The stock

market crash of 1929 came just as *The Sound and the Fury* hit the book market. The Great Depression that followed in the 1930s made it difficult for Faulkner to succeed economically with his writing.

The "Lost" Generation

A counterpoint to the bleakness that followed the 1929 stock market crash and the depression of the 1930s was the proliferation of artistic accomplishments. No other period in American history had a generation that produced so many important works in literature, music, and the arts. Beginning after World War I and up until World War II, America saw writers like Faulkner, Eugene O'Neill, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, Sinclair Lewis, Dashiell Hammett, and Dorothy Parker emerge on the literary scene. Georgia O'Keeffe and Thomas Hart Benton were a few of the American artists who were productive during this period. Theaters on Broadway and other places were alive with new productions and Hollywood was grinding out new dramas and musicals every week. In December 1928 George Gershwin debuted his famous symphonic piece "An American in Paris." The Chicago Civic Opera building opened in 1929 with a 3500-seat auditorium. In popular music, 1929 was the year Guy Lombardo began his New Year's Eve radio broadcast. Songwriter Hoagy Carmichael wrote his famous "Stardust" in 1927, and "Georgia on My Mind" in 1930. America was alive with creativity. It was as if the economic downturn unleashed a volcano of creative energy that had not been seen in this country before--or since. This generation of young creative people has been called "The Lost Generation," for many of their contemporaries were killed during the Great War (World War I), which lasted from 1914 to 1918. The disillusionment inspired by the war led many creative artists to explore what it meant to be American in the modern world, and what it meant to be human.

When Faulkner accepted the Nobel Prize in 1950, he made a speech that became a famous statement of the modern world and the artist's place in it. He spoke of the threat of physical destruction to the human spirit. What he expressed was the prevalent feeling of the Lost Generation that human beings had lost a sense of the meaning of life. In his speech, he expressed his belief that "man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of the past." Old values had been shattered by the events of the first half of the twentieth century. It was not yet apparent what the new values would be.

-*"Historical Context: The Sound and the Fury."* EXPLORING Novels, Online Edition. Gale, 2003. Student Resource Center. Thomson Gale. 04 May 2007

<<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/SRC>>-.

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

<u>Title:</u> Light in August	<u>Author:</u> William Faulkner
<u>Title:</u> As I Lay Dying	<u>Author:</u> William Faulkner
<u>Title:</u> A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man	<u>Author:</u> James Joyce
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

Since the book is set in early twentieth century Mississippi, it contains 57 uses of the word "nigger," uttered by both white and black characters, to illustrate the context accurately. Some characters display racist attitudes, but Faulkner does not portray these positively; rather the novel is about the

"Old South" in a state of transition, and such attitudes are a necessary part of the novel's setting and context. Jason Compson displays especially racist and sexist attitudes, and he also curses (mild words like 15 uses of "bitch" and 22 uses of "damn"), which helps characterize him as the selfish, bitter, and heartless Compson sibling with whom few can sympathize. Additionally, sister Caddy's promiscuity is hinted at, but never graphically described, while brother Quentin's neurotic and suicidal tendencies lead him to wish to commit incest with his sister (which never happens and again is only hinted at). The purpose of this is to illustrate the mind of a suicidal individual and to illustrate the decay of a once prominent aristocratic Southern family.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable): 12

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 5/4/07

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults