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## PASSAGE III

## HUMANITIES: William Faulkner: Great Southern Author

Born in Mississippi in 1897, William Faulkner is touted as the master of such revolutionary literary devices as stream of consciousness, multiple narrations, and time-shifts within a narrative. During a career that spanned more than three decades, Faulkner produced literary works filled with emotional turmoil and unflinching honesty. His unique interpretation of history is highlighted in the symbolism and imagery of his writing. It has also been argued that Faulkner's works are some of the best representations of Southern Gothic literature ever written.

It is clear that Faulkner's Deep South roots greatly influenced his writing. He was a prolific writer whose works both parallel and depart from popular myths of southern culture. Faulkner's remarkable understanding of race relations and his clever satire of Southern characters stemmed from his memories of growing up in rural Mississippi. He set many of his short stories and novels in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, based on what Faulkner referred to as "my own little postage stamp of native soil," Lafayette County, Mississippi. It was there, immersed in traditional southern lore, that William Faulkner began to write of the great political, social, and economic transformation taking place in the Deep South, depicting traditional society in timeless human dramas.

Faulkner came from an old and relatively prominent Southern family. He grew up surrounded by traditional folklore, family stories, accounts from the Civil War, and lectures about being a Southern gentleman. In his works, Faulkner examined how traditional values and beliefs affected Southern society after the Civil War. Faulkner particularly abhorred the rampant racism and abuse that African Americans suffered in the South. Although Faulkner's novels do not shy away from describing the brutality and anguish that life can bring, his works are filled with profound compassion and humor. Faulkner refused to avoid painful or controversial issues and he was intrigued with understanding human freedom. His work explores, condemns, and analyzes obstructions to human freedom and happiness by examining racism, shame, fear, false pride, and abstract ideals. Much of Faulkner's exploration is done using brilliant symbolism and exquisite dialogue. For example, his novel *The Sound and the Fury*, published in 1929, dealt with the painful demise of a distinguished southern family and demonstrated a rich variety of literary styles, relying most heavily on stream-of-consciousness writing, in which a character's thoughts are conveyed in a manner roughly akin to the way the human mind actually works.

Faulkner's mastery of unique literary styles was formally recognized when, much to his surprise, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1949. Always his own harshest critic, William Faulkner considered many of his books failures because they did not live up to his high expectations. However, it is clear that Faulkner's experimental literary techniques simultaneously perplexed and challenged his readers, who were more often than not inspired by his insightful analysis

of the human spirit. Faulkner continued to explore the interconnections between his characters and their counterparts in the real world until his death in 1962.

In the months before his death, Faulkner updated his will, leaving the bulk of his manuscripts to the Faulkner Foundation at the University of Virginia, where he had been appointed its first Writer-in-Residence. While the original documents are protected, electronic versions of the collection are freely available to scholars of great Southern literature and others interested in gaining additional insight into the life's work of a truly revolutionary American author.

21. As it is used in line 22, the word *immersed* most nearly means:
- depicted.
  - submerged.
  - related.
  - interpreted.
22. The author describes Faulkner's writing as all of the following EXCEPT:
- symbolic.
  - honest.
  - malicious.
  - tumultuous.
23. One of the main ideas of the passage is that:
- Faulkner was devoted to his southern roots.
  - authors employed revolutionary literary devices.
  - Faulkner was a prominent author with strong convictions.
  - many of Faulkner's books were considered failures.
24. As it is used in line 33, the word *abhorred* most nearly means:
- greatly enjoyed.
  - strongly disliked.
  - firmly believed in.
  - clearly misunderstood.
25. The author suggests which of the following about Faulkner's attitude toward racism in the South?
- He felt that racism was a necessary evil.
  - He hated racism and sought to expose it in his writing.
  - He shied away from any discussion of racism.
  - He was not concerned about racism as a social issue.
26. The main emphasis of the fourth paragraph (lines 52–63) is to:
- provide support for Faulkner's belief that he was a failed author.
  - question the claim that Faulkner was a master of unique literary styles.
  - summarize the value and importance of Faulkner's vision as an author.
  - sharpen the distinction between Faulkner's different techniques.

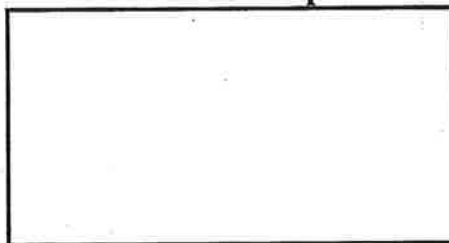
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27. With which of the following statements about Faulkner's literary style would the author most likely agree?
- A. It had never been utilized by authors of southern culture.
  - B. It was generally less effective than more traditional approaches.
  - C. It has often been employed by 20th-century authors.
  - D. It was an innovative approach to discussions of social issues.
28. The passage states that *The Sound and the Fury* depicted:
- F. the tragic downfall of a respected family.
  - G. the profound rise to freedom of Civil War slaves.
  - H. a harsh criticism of William Faulkner.
  - J. an inspirational look at southern life.
29. The author uses the term "counterparts" (line 63) most likely in order to:
- A. disprove the theory that fictional characters can be based on real people.
  - B. reveal the source of Faulkner's literary methods.
  - C. indicate that Faulkner's characters were often based on real people.
  - D. cast doubt on the idea that readers often identify with fictional characters.
30. Which of the following best states the main purpose of the passage?
- F. To suggest that some writers are more deserving of major literary awards.
  - G. To describe one man's desire to write about important social issues.
  - H. To review the use of certain literary devices in best-selling novels.
  - J. To illustrate one author's understanding of and commitment to his craft.

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