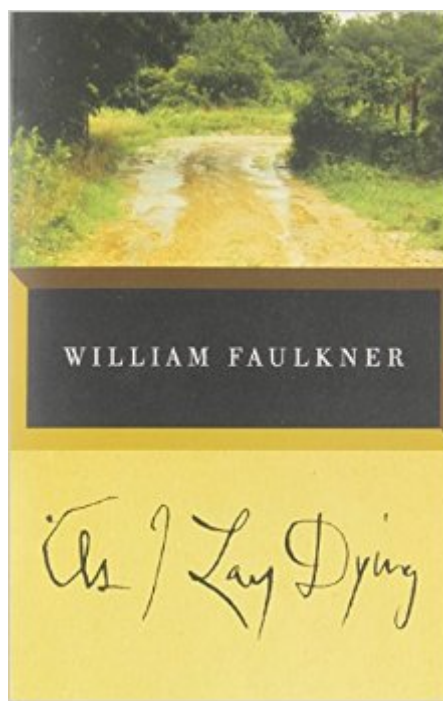


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# As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text



## Synopsis

â œl set out deliberately to write a tour-de-force. Before I ever put pen to paper and set down the first word I knew what the last word would be and almost where the last period would fall.â •

â "William Faulkner on *As I Lay Dying*â *As I Lay Dying* is Faulknerâ™s harrowing account of the Bundren familyâ™s odyssey across the Mississippi countryside to bury Addie, their wife and mother. Narrated in turn Â by each of the family membersâ "including Addie herselfâ "as well as others the novel ranges in mood, from dark comedy to the deepest pathos. Considered one of the most influential novels in American fiction in structure, style, and drama, *As I Lay Dying* is a true 20th-century classic. This edition reproduces the corrected text of *As I Lay Dying* as established in 1985 by Noel Polk.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

To quote the briefest chapter, the one that would surely catch your eye if you picked it off a shelf and skimmed through it: "My mother is a fish."As with his stunning *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom Absalom*, this book makes use of the author's masterful use of stream-of-conscious writing to render an entire reality with internal monologues. The story unfolds as you construct it from the observations and responses of the characters. Though briefer and less challenging than these other two books, it's as absorbing a read as they have been for decades. When you reach the end, you can imagine that you'll pick up the book again someday, sure there's more to explore.The structure is simple once you get the hang of it. Each chapter is the name of a particular character in the story of the family of Addie Bundren, dead in the first few pages, and

being transported by her clan to the land of her birth for burial-by wagon, in the heat and dust, over rivers, for weeks, before the vacuum seal... There is no "Once upon a time." Instead, whatever that character is thinking at the instant the chapter begins is what you're reading. Soon, you know who everyone is and what she thinks of everyone else. The effect of this structure is that you can inhabit the narrative as each of the players, can see how events are interpreted differently. It's also like a mystery-someone will have troubled thoughts about something you can't quite distinguish; then, twenty pages later, you figure out what they've been talking about and you flip backward in a frenzy to see how the early references to the issue flesh out the story. This is a terribly rewarding way of reading. This is a great first Faulkner for everyone.

Faulkner's great accomplishment in this novel is to use the most modern fiction techniques to create a timeless allegory that we would probably not accept in a different style. His other great achievement is to leave so much space in the story for us to participate in adding meaning. You have to pay attention to even notice what is going on, and then you can provide a variety of interpretations. This novel will never be the same for any two readers. It is a stunning accomplishment, as a result. The story begins as Addie Bundren lays dying, fanned by her daughter, while her son makes her coffin. With her husband and five children, we make her acquaintance by learning about their actions and characters. Only once does she have a role as a narrator, and then, quite late in the story. Her husband, Anse, has promised her that he will bury her with her family. Because of tremendous rains, the river has risen, knocking out bridges and making passage difficult. Despite this, the family perseveres in taking her unembalmed body to the intended burial site. Along the way, there are many mishaps and the family is burdened in many ways by keeping this promise. As the burial comes closer, new elements of the story are exposed and develop that totally recast what you have thought was going on. On the very last page (don't read it first!) is such a plot reversal as only a short story writer would normally have dared. The story is a difficult one to read. So read this book when you have time to pay close attention and study the text word by word. Let me explain the difficulties you will encounter. First, the voices in the book use a Southern patois that will be unfamiliar to most. This is the language of the rural poor in the 1930s, which few have heard.

I was re-reading this book last week, pen and highlighter in hand, when my husband walked into the living room and said, "What are you reading?" I lifted the cover. "Is it any good?" To which I replied, "No," and he responded, "Why are you reading it?" And, slightly irritated, I said, "For the same

reason you are watching the American Idol Audition show. It's DEFINITELY not good, but you can't look away."And so it is with most of Faulkner's work. As a reader, you should not go into his work expecting anything "good." You won't find an easy or clear plotline, clear language, or (and this is USUALLY a major gripe of mine) likeable characters. But even though you don't really like what you are reading, you just have to know how it ends. You have to know what makes these reprehensible people tick. And, surprisingly enough, you are usually unsatisfied in the end, but not so much that you don't want to double back and have one more look at the car-wreck that is the work of Faulkner.And so it is with \*As I Lay Dying\*. It's a fascinating piece of work, masterfully crafted, ultimately depressing, and darkly funny all at once. Having been to Rowan Oak a few times, I can see Faulkner sitting in his front garden chuckling over the idea of Vardaman's infamous "My Mother is a fish," chapter and how it captivated the world with it's "brilliance."I also have no doubt, having grown up in Mississippi, that he was writing about real people, warts and all. I'm probably related to some of them. Maybe for that reason, Faulkner reads a little differently to locals. While I certainly appreciate his literary genius, the truth and realism of what he wrote also shines through.

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