

约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES ON

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

喧哗与骚动

William Faulkner



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William Faulkner

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

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《约克文学作品辅导丛书》介绍

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》(York Notes)系 Longman 集团有限公司(英国)出版。本丛书覆盖了世界各国历代文学名著,原意是辅导英国中学生准备文学课的高级会考或供英国大学生自学参考。因此,它很适合我国高校英语专业学生研读文学作品时参考。

丛书由 A. N. Jeffares 和 S. Bushrui 两位教授任总编。每册的编写者大都是研究有关作家的专家学者,他们又都有在大学讲授文学的经验,比较了解学生理解上的难点。本丛书自问世以来,始终畅销不衰,被使用者普遍认为是英美出版的同类书中质量较高的一种。

丛书每一册都按统一格式对一部作品进行介绍和分析。每一册都有下列五个部分。

① 导言。主要介绍:作者生平,作品产生的社会、历史背景,有关的文学传统或文艺思潮等。

② 内容提要。一般分为两部分:a. 全书的内容概述;b. 每章的内容提要及难词、难句注释,如方言、典故、圣经或文学作品的引语、有关社会文化习俗等。注释恰到好处,对于读懂原作很有帮助。

③ 评论。结合作品的特点,对结构、人物塑造、叙述角度、语言风格、主题思想等进行分析和评论。论述深入浅出,分析力求客观,意在挖掘作品内涵和展示其艺术性。

④ 学习提示。提出学习要点、重要引语和思考题(附参考答案或答案要点)。

⑤ 进一步研读指导。介绍该作品的最佳版本;版本中是否有重大改动;列出供进一步研读的参考书目(包括作者传记、研究有关作品的专著和评论文章等)。

总之,丛书既提供必要的背景知识,又注意启发学生思考;既重视在吃透作品的基础上进行分析,又对进一步研究提供具体指导;因此是一套理想的英语文学辅导材料。

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Part 1

Introduction

The life of William Faulkner

William Faulkner was born on 25 September 1897 in New Albany, Mississippi, moving in 1901 to Oxford, Mississippi. There his father, Murray Charles Falkner, operated a livery stable and then ran a hardware store before becoming business manager of the University of Mississippi. Falkner did not attend school regularly, and he left, without graduating, to work in his grandfather's bank. In 1918 he served briefly with the Royal Canadian Flying Corps where he was in training when the First World War ended. After the war he returned to Oxford and was enrolled as a special student at the University of Mississippi. He did well in French and Spanish but was awarded the grades of D and F for his studies in English. It was also during these years as a student, between 1919 and 1921, that he began to use the name Faulkner rather than Falkner when he wrote sketches for the campus newspaper *The Mississippian*.

At the invitation of the writer and critic Stark Young, Faulkner made his first trip to New York in 1920, where he worked in a bookshop managed by Elizabeth Sprall, who later married the novelist Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941). He returned to Oxford to become postmaster at the University of Mississippi, a job he held until his resignation in 1924. He had been slipshod as postmaster, spending too much of his time reading and writing. But in the year of his resignation, Faulkner's first book, a collection of poems called *The Marble Faun*, was published. Although these early attempts at poetry were not successful, Faulkner was to persist in his efforts at verse. He published a second and equally unsuccessful volume of poems, *The Green Bough*, in 1933. In later life he liked to refer to himself as a failed poet who had turned to prose fiction as 'the next best thing'.

Early in 1925 Faulkner went to New Orleans, intending to sail from there to Europe. But no place was available on a ship and he stayed in New Orleans for six months. Here he first met Sherwood Anderson, already well known since the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Anderson was to offer him decisive help and encouragement. Faulkner published poems, sketches, and essays in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* and in the literary magazine *The Double Dealer*. He also collaborated with the artist William Sprattling on a book called

Sherwood Anderson and other Creoles (1926) which parodied Anderson's style and so cost Faulkner the friendship of the older writer. During six weeks of his stay in New Orleans, Faulkner wrote his first novel, *Soldier's Pay*, which was eventually published in 1926. In 1925, he sailed off on his long-delayed trip to Europe, working his passage in the engine room and on deck. He roamed around northern Italy by bicycle and on foot before travelling to France to settle for a short time in the Latin Quarter of Paris. Later he said about this part of his trip, 'I knew Joyce, I knew of Joyce, and I would go to some effort to go to the cafe [in Paris] that he inhabited to look at him. But that was the only literary man that I remember seeing in Europe in those days.'*

By the end of 1925 he had returned to the United States and learned within a few months that *Soldier's Pay*, in spite of being fairly well reviewed by the critics, was not selling well. He finished his second novel, *Mosquitoes*, and then returned to Oxford where he made his permanent home, taking various jobs as carpenter, painter, paper-hanger, and coal-heaver in an Oxford power plant. *Mosquitoes* was published in 1927 and also sold poorly. Two more of his novels, *Sartoris* and *The Sound and the Fury*, were published in 1929, the year that Faulkner married Estelle Oldham, whom he had known as a child. He still, however, made very little money out of writing, even when his fifth novel, *As I Lay Dying*, was published in 1930. It was with his sixth novel, *Sanctuary*, published in 1931 and reprinted a year later, that Faulkner achieved financial success. Money began to flow in, and one of his first purchases was a fine old mansion in Oxford. It required many repairs, and to help to pay for this he began to undertake work in which he was frequently to engage himself afterwards, as a script-writer in Hollywood. Faulkner's first child died, but in 1933 a daughter, Jill, was born, who became very close to her father.

Until after 1950 Faulkner avoided publicity, living a relatively quiet life in Oxford with his dogs and horses, and from time to time going on hunting trips. Although he liked to refer to himself as a farmer, he wrote steadily for the rest of his life. In 1946 Malcolm Cowley edited a selection of Faulkner's fiction in one volume called *The Portable Faulkner*, and since then the novelist's reputation has soared, both in America and internationally. In 1950 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and he became something of a spokesman for the South after the decision of the United States Supreme Court requiring the integration of black and white pupils and students in Southern schools and universities.

**Faulkner in the University*, Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-8, edited by Joseph L. Blotner and F.L. Gwynn, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 1959, p.58.

William Faulkner died of a heart attack on 6 July 1962, and was buried in Oxford cemetery, in the town where he had lived for most of his life.

Faulkner and the South

The setting for most of Faulkner's short stories, and all but two of his eighteen novels, was the American South, and especially the state of Mississippi. Moreover, many of those stories and fifteen of the novels concern themselves with people who live in a small region of Northern Mississippi to which Faulkner gave the fictional title of Yoknapatawpha County. He drew a detailed map of this imaginary area, and referred to himself as its 'sole proprietor'. Faulkner wrote mainly about the histories, followed through several generations, of five white families and their black slaves or servants. *The Sound and the Fury* tells the story of the decline and fall into social and moral decay of one of these leading families, the Compsons.

By reading all of Faulkner's fiction, and particularly the short stories, it is possible to piece together the fictional sweep of his history of Yoknapatawpha County. The first stage begins with the white man's exploitation of the native Indians, bullying and cheating them out of their commonly held hunting grounds. Next comes the rape of the land itself, the uncaring destruction of timber and wild life for private gain, and not for need. Following that is the forced introduction of black people to serve in the establishment of a slave economy, and later the building of patterns of social behaviour to keep them in their inferior position after the abolition of slavery. The fourth stage comes after the American Civil War (1861–5), when the Northern States of America defeated the Confederation of Southern States. The Northern invaders exploit both blacks and defeated whites in the South. Those invaders are joined by Southern whites who are as grasping as the Northerners and who adopt their brutal principles. In the final stage of this history, a new breed of poor whites, whom Faulkner depicts through the Snopes clan in his fiction, moves in and completes the destruction of Southern aristocratic honour, now reduced by mismanagement and bankruptcy.

Even such a brief summary shows how closely Faulkner's fiction is involved with the history of the South's decay. Two of Faulkner's major themes are the white man's guilt about slavery, and the rape of the land; but what has come to be called Faulkner's 'legend of the South' is more complicated. He also felt that the destruction of the old South, by the Civil War and by the decades of 'reconstruction' which followed, released forces of corruption and disorder that had always been present in the South. These forces led to the decay of the

old appearance of dignity and honour, and to the onset of a new, grasping commercialism. After the war, further changes came about as industry moved into the South, and political power gradually moved away from the old slaveholders and their social equals to the countless thousands of small tenant farmers who were known as 'rednecks'.

The story of the Compson family in *The Sound and the Fury* shows how they experience many of these social changes. They are forced to sell the last of their land so that Quentin can waste a year at Harvard University. In Mr Compson's high-sounding language we see values which no longer have any sense of purpose or direction. His wife Caroline worries uselessly about her genteel past which she has out-lived and can no longer afford. Their son Quentin owes his exaggerated sense of his sister Candace's duties and responsibilities to an equally out-of-date idea of Compson honour and of female purity. In another of Faulkner's novels, *Absalom, Absalom!*, Mr Compson remembers that 'years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the war came and made the ladies into ghosts.' And when Faulkner was asked what was the trouble with the Compsons he replied: 'They are still living in the attitudes of 1859 or '60.'^{*} But another of the Compson sons, Jason, lives according to the self-interested, commercial mentality which replaces earlier more decent values. Jason's attempt to survive his family's decay shows him to be worse than any of the Snopes who appear in other novels. As Faulkner himself once said: 'there are too many Jasons in the South who can be successful, just as there are too many Quentins in the South who are too sensitive to face its reality.'[†] The noblest character in *The Sound and the Fury*, the servant Dilsey, continues the story of black oppression and suffers from the Compsons' selfishness and pride. The final image of the castrated idiot Benjy holding a broken narcissus shocks us into recognising how a once proud family has been brought down by vanity to the tragic condition of self-regarding impotence.

Faulkner looked at this whole varied history of the South with mixed feelings of intimate affection, contempt, and controlled detachment. As a child he had listened eagerly to stories and legends about the men who had fought in the Civil War, and these memories of a chivalric and romantic past clashed with the circumstances of changed and changing fortunes which he saw around him. Faulkner felt those changes sharply since his own family had played a significant part in the story of the South. Many of the exciting tales he had listened to as a boy concerned the violent and colourful history of his own great-grandfather, Colonel William C. Falkner (1825-89), after whom he was named.

^{*}Faulkner in the University, p.18.

[†]Faulkner in the University, p.17.

In Oxford, Mississippi, Faulkner lived with the physical evidence of an older world, and he gradually found that his own knowledge and memory contained enough material for his novels. He dedicated *Go Down, Moses*, for example, to Caroline Barr, 'who was born in slavery and who gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love'. It seems clear that in some way Caroline Barr helped Faulkner to forge his wonderful portrait of Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner's own comment about the ways in which he used his knowledge and experience of the South is appropriate. 'Beginning with *Sartoris* I discovered that my own little patch of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it . . . It opened up a gold mine of other people, so I created a cosmos of my own.'*

Literary influences

In 1921 the literary magazine *The Double Dealer* was established in New Orleans, and in 1922 the influential poetry magazine *The Fugitive* was founded in Nashville, Tennessee. Around these two publications grew a movement later called the Southern Renaissance, and this development, and some of the ideas associated with it, affected Faulkner to some extent, since he was himself involved. But whenever Faulkner was asked about the influences upon his own work he usually mentioned European writers rather than contemporary Americans, although he did think that Mark Twain was 'the first truly American writer', and that 'we all descended from him'.† Faulkner also tells us that he frequently read and studied the Bible during his childhood, and he also claimed to have re-read every year the classic novel by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), *Don Quixote* (1605). He considered the French novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) to be the greatest of prose writers, and he acknowledged Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) to be a particular master.

It is often said that Faulkner was also considerably influenced by two works published in 1922, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), and *Ulysses* by James Joyce (1882–1941). *The Waste Land* may partly have suggested Faulkner's method, in *The Sound and the Fury*, of placing together several different sorts of narrative to give a broader view of a history. Similar techniques were also used by Joyce in *Ulysses*, a novel which presents the events of one day in a variety of styles and points of view not obviously connected by a story. Faulkner may also have learned from Joyce the 'stream-of-consciousness' (or

*William Faulkner: *Three Decades of Criticism*, edited by Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, Michigan State College Press, East Lansing, 1960, p.82.

†Faulkner at Nagano, edited by Robert A. Jelliffe, Kenkyusha, Tokyo, 1956, p.88.

'interior monologue') technique. Joyce was one of the first novelists to use this method of rendering directly, and as exactly as possible, the continuous flow of associated thoughts, feelings, words, memories, ideas and reflections as they pass through a character's mind. Because these thoughts and impressions are presented without comment or explanation from the author, they seem to be the contents of the character's mind itself. Faulkner uses this sort of technique in the first two sections of *The Sound and the Fury*, and he uses a similar technique in the third.

Both Joyce and Faulkner may have been encouraged in their use of stream of consciousness by the original work in psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud's investigation of dreams and disturbed or unconscious mental states created a good deal of interest in the nature of the human mind and its workings. Faulkner's record of the operation of the mind of an idiot, Benjy, in the first section of *The Sound and the Fury* suggests this sort of interest.

The first two sections of *The Sound and the Fury* (April Seventh, 1928, and June Second, 1910) seem to concern the events of only two days. But Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness method in these sections really presents a broad history of the Compson family through Benjy's and Quentin's habit of continually associating the memories of past events with their present experience. This way of breaking up the normal progress of time and history, and Quentin's destruction of his watch, may perhaps suggest another influence on Faulkner – the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Bergson favoured the idea of time as open and freely flowing rather than counted in an exact, restricting way by clocks. Faulkner once remarked: 'I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment in which I include both the past and the future.'*

Both Bergson's ideas and those of Freud influenced much of the literature written in the 1920s. Critics sometimes use the term 'Modernism' to describe some of the art of this period. The term is applied to poetry, painting, fiction, music, and other art forms, and tries to group together various new and original kinds of presentation which were employed in the arts at this time. Novelists such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) are often called 'Modernist' because of their use of original techniques (like the stream of consciousness) and their rejection of the traditional ways of telling a story. Since William Faulkner, especially in *The Sound and the Fury*, often used similar new and unusual forms of presentation, he, also, has been considered as a 'Modernist'.

*Joseph Blotner. *Faulkner: a Biography*, 2 vols., Chatto and Windus, London, 1974, p.1441.

A note on the text

After being rejected by Harcourt, Brace and Company *The Sound and the Fury* was first published by Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York, in 1929. An English edition soon followed, published by Chatto and Windus, London, in 1931. This edition contained a short introduction by the novelist Richard Hughes (1900–76), excusing some of the apparent difficulties of the novel. Several other editions have been published since.

When Malcolm Cowley edited *The Portable Faulkner* in 1946, Faulkner provided an 'Appendix' which attempts to make *The Sound and the Fury* clearer by setting out character sketches and notes on several members of the Compson household. This interesting appendix appears in several of the later editions of *The Sound and the Fury*. For example, it is included as a foreword to *The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying*, published by Random House, New York, in 1946. If this appendix is included, it is better placed at the end of the novel, and most more recent editions do this.

A standard modern edition was published by Chatto and Windus, London, in 1966, as part of *The Collected Works of William Faulkner*. This volume, and the paperback edition published by Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, in 1946, omit the appendix but include Richard Hughes's introduction. Other American paperback editions are also available.

Part 2

Summaries

of THE SOUND AND THE FURY

Note: Before reading the following summaries, it would be useful to look at the first section of Part 4 of these notes.

A difficulty with *The Sound and the Fury* is that Quentin, son of Mr and Mrs Compson and brother of Benjy, Caddy and Jason, has the same name as Caddy's illegitimate daughter, Quentin. To avoid the confusion which arises from this, Caddy's daughter will be referred to as 'Miss Quentin' throughout the following summaries and the rest of these notes.

A general summary

Although *The Sound and the Fury* seems to present the events of only four days, the story of the Compson family can be put together from the memories of the characters presented in the first three sections of the novel. The following is such a reconstruction of the events in the Compson family from 1898 to 1928.

Jason Compson, a lawyer and the descendant of 'governors and generals', marries Caroline Bascomb, a proud, selfish and genteel woman. They have four children: Quentin (born 1890), Caddy (born 1892), Jason (born 1894) and Maury (born 1895). One day in 1898 the children are playing in the stream when they are called back to the house for supper. Afterwards they come out again into the garden and Caddy, climbing a tree, tries to look through a window to find out what is happening in the house. The children are sure something is wrong, but are put to bed without being told that their grandmother, Damuddy, has died.

When Maury is five, Mrs Compson at last realises that he is growing up an idiot, and decides to change his name to avoid the connection with her brother, Uncle Maury, who also lives in the Compson household. So in 1900, Maury is renamed Benjamin (often shortened to Benjy). Mrs Compson still does not know how to treat him, and often thinks the strain of her 'burdens' makes her ill.

Even at an early age, Caddy and Quentin are very fond of one another. Caddy has to be allowed to go to school the year after Quentin, in order to remain near him, and Quentin fights anyone who offends or insults her.

Uncle Maury has an affair with Mrs Patterson, a woman who lives

nearby, and, one cold day at Christmas time, he uses Caddy and Benjy as messengers to her. Later, he sends Benjy by himself, but this time Mr Patterson takes the letter from Benjy, discovers the affair, and fights Uncle Maury, hurting him. Uncle Maury recovers in bed, to the amusement of Mr Compson.

Mrs Compson thinks mostly of herself and her health, which she considers very poor, leaving the servant, Dilsey, largely in charge of the family. Because Mrs Compson seems unable to look after Benjy, Caddy often takes care of him. Benjy, like Quentin, is completely attached to his sister. As Caddy grows up, both Benjy and Quentin fear losing her love as she begins to be attracted by other men. Caddy first uses perfume in 1906, when she is fourteen, and Benjy is very upset until she washes it off. On one occasion in 1907, Mrs Compson discovers that Caddy has kissed a boy, and takes this as such a shock to her refined nature that she dresses in black, as if in mourning.

Benjy is also growing up. In 1908, when he is thirteen, it is decided that he must no longer share a bed with Caddy, although she still remains with him and comforts him until he falls asleep in his own bed. One moonlit evening about this time he slips out into the garden and finds Caddy sitting in the swing embracing a young man. Benjy howls until Caddy runs back into the house with him, washes out her mouth, and promises it will never happen again. But in 1909 she falls passionately in love with a stranger, Dalton Ames, and loses her virginity. Benjy senses what has happened and is deeply upset.

Caddy's loss of virginity has an even greater effect on Quentin. When they were children, Quentin's strange games with a girl called Natalie seemed to involve his sexual feeling for his sister, especially when he later rubbed mud all over her. He also resented Caddy's kissing the boy. His involvement with his sister remains intense throughout his life. When it is discovered that she has had sexual contact with Dalton Ames, Caddy runs from the house to the stream to wash herself. Quentin follows and urges her to commit suicide along with him. Caddy refuses to help him to kill her. Quentin later meets Dalton Ames, and in the name of the family honour, tells him with various threats that he must leave town. But Dalton is too strong for him, and Quentin faints instead of fighting. As he recovers, Caddy explains to him how much she loves Dalton.

Shortly afterwards, Quentin goes away for a year at Harvard University. His education there is paid for by the sale of the pasture next to the Compson garden where Benjy used to play. The money also helps to pay for Mr Compson's heavy drinking. The pasture is made into a golf course.

After Dalton Ames, Caddy continues to have lovers until she becomes pregnant and has to find a husband. She marries Herbert

Head, a bank manager, who flatters Mrs Compson, buys Caddy a car, and offers Jason a job in his bank. He also tries to make friends with Quentin, who returned home from Harvard at Christmas time and now comes back again for the wedding. But Quentin has learned some unpleasant facts about Head's behaviour at Harvard, and confronts him with them. He also tries to tell Caddy, and prevent her from marrying him, but she becomes angry with him.

On the wedding day, in 1910, the servant T.P. finds champagne in the cellar. He is looking after Benjy, and both get quickly drunk. Benjy disrupts the reception by bellowing outside. Caddy runs out to comfort him, while Quentin deals with T.P.

Disturbed by the 'loss' of his sister, and increasingly obsessed with her sexuality, with time, and with his own ideas of guilt, incest and honour, Quentin returns unhappily to Harvard. We learn in detail about June Second, 1910, the last day of his life there: how he breaks his watch; arranges his affairs; wanders around; meets a little Italian girl; fights her brother, and later a fellow student; continually remembers Caddy and the past; and eventually drowns himself.

Now that she has married and has moved away, Benjy sadly misses Caddy. He likes to go and look for her at the gate, where she used to return home from school each day. One day he frightens some school-girls there. On another occasion, finding the gate has been left open, he goes out and attacks a girl. To prevent any further episodes such as this, Benjy has to be castrated (1910).

Caddy's marriage to Herbert Head does not last long, perhaps because he discovers that he is not the father of her child, whom she names Quentin in memory of her brother. Mr Compson travels north to fetch the child and bring it back to the Compson household. Mrs Compson is so shocked by her daughter's actions that she forbids any further mention of Caddy's name. Jason always bitterly regrets the loss of his chance to work in Herbert Head's bank.

Mr Compson has continued drinking increasingly heavily, against the advice of his doctors. While the household is still recovering from the suicide of Quentin, Mr Compson dies (1912). Mrs Compson and Uncle Maury return by carriage from the burial, leaving Jason behind in the graveyard. There he meets Caddy, who has returned in secret for the funeral. For a price, Jason agrees to let her see Miss Quentin, but cheats her, allowing her only a glimpse of the child. Jason refuses to let Caddy see her again, and forces her to agree to send money to Mrs Compson for Miss Quentin's welfare. With his mother's help, Jason gets a job in a hardware store. He continues to cheat Caddy, his mother and Miss Quentin, by a clever and criminal scheme of cashing Caddy's cheques himself.

After Mr Compson's death, Benjy and Mrs Compson start regular