**The Sound and the Fury**

**Summary of April Seventh, 1928:**

This section of the book is commonly referred to as "Benjy's section" because it is narrated by the retarded youngest son of the Compson family, Benjamin Compson. At this point in the story, Benjy is 33 years old - in fact, today is his birthday - but the story skips back and forth in time as various events trigger memories. When the reader first plunges into this narrative, the jumps in time are difficult to navigate or understand, although many scenes are marked by recurring images, sounds, or words. In addition, a sort of chronology can be established depending on who is Benjy's caretaker: first Versh when Benjy is a child, then T. P. when he is an adolescent, then Luster when he is an adult. One other fact that may confuse first-time readers is the repetition of names. There are, for example, two Jasons (father and son), two Quentins (Benjy's brother and Caddy's daughter), and two Mauries (Benjy himself before 1900 and Benjy's uncle). Benjy recalls three important events: the evening of his grandmother "Damuddy's" death in 1898, his name change in 1900, and Caddy's sexual promiscuity and wedding in 1910, although these events are punctuated by other memories, including the delivery of a letter to his uncle's mistress in 1902 or 1903, Caddy's wearing perfume in 1906, a sequence of events at the gate of the house in 1910 and 1911 that culminates in his castration, Quentin's death in 1910, his father's death and funeral in 1912, and Roskus's death some time after this. I will summarize each event briefly.

The events of the present day (4/7/28) center around Luster's search for a quarter he has lost somewhere on the property. He received this quarter from his grandmother Dilsey in order to go to the circus that evening. Luster takes Benjy with him as he searches by the golf course that used to be the Compson's pasture, by the carriage house, down by the branch of the Yoknapatawpha River, and finally near Benjy's "graveyard" of jimson flowers in a bottle.

As the story opens, Benjy and Luster are by the golf course, where the golfers' cries of "caddie" cause Benjy to "beller" because he mistakes their cries for his missing sister Caddy's name. In the branch, Luster finds a golfer's ball, which he later tries to sell to the golfers; they accuse him of stealing it and take it from him. Luster tries to steer Benjy away from the swing, where Miss Quentin and her "beau" (one of the musicians from the circus) are sitting, but is unsuccessful. Quentin is furious and runs into the house, while her friend jokes with Luster and asks him who visits Quentin. Luster replies that there are too many male visitors to distinguish.

Luster takes Benjy past the fence, where Benjy sees schoolgirls passing with their satchels. Benjy moans whenever Luster tries to break from the routine path Benjy is used to. At Benjy's "graveyard," Luster disturbs the arrangement of flowers in the blue bottle, causing Benjy to cry. At this Luster becomes frustrated and says "beller. You want something to beller about. All right, then. Caddy. . . . Caddy. Beller now. Caddy" (55). Benjy's crying summons Dilsey, Luster's grandmother, who scolds him for making Benjy cry and for disturbing Quentin. They go in the kitchen, where Dilsey opens the oven door so Benjy can watch the fire. Dilsey has bought Benjy a birthday cake, and Luster blows out the candles, making Benjy cry again. Luster teases him by closing the oven door so that the fire "goes away." Dilsey scolds Luster again. Benjy is burned when he tries to touch the fire. His cries disturb his mother, who comes to the kitchen and reprimands Dilsey. Dilsey gives him an old slipper to hold, an object that he loves.

Luster takes Benjy to the library, where his cries disturb Jason, who comes to the door and yells at Luster. Luster asks Jason for a quarter. At dinner, Jason interrogates Quentin about the man she was with that afternoon and threatens to send Benjy to an asylum in Jackson. Quentin threatens to run away, and she and Jason fight. She runs out of the room. Benjy goes to the library, where Luster finds him and shows him that Quentin has given him a quarter. Luster dresses Benjy for bed; when Benjy's pants are off he looks down and cries when he is reminded of his castration. Luster puts on his nightgown and the two of them watch as Quentin climbs out her window and down a tree. Luster puts Benjy to bed.

**Benjy's memories, in chronological order:**

Damuddy's death, 1898: Benjy is three years old and his name at this point is still Maury. Caddy is seven, Quentin is older (nine?) and Jason is between seven and three.

The four children are playing in the branch of the river. Roskus calls them to supper, but Caddy refuses to come. She squats down in the river and gets her dress wet; Versh tells her that her mother will whip her for that. Caddy asks Versh to help her take her dress off, and Quentin warns him not to. Caddy takes off her dress and Quentin hits her. The two of them fight in the branch and get muddy. Caddy says that she will run away, which makes Maury/Benjy cry; she immediately takes it back. Roskus asks Versh to bring the children to the house, and Versh puts Caddy's dress back on her.

They head up to the house, but Quentin stays behind, throwing rocks into the river. The children notice that all the lights are on in the house and assume that their parents are having a party. Father tells the children to be quiet and to eat dinner in the kitchen; he won't tell them why they have to be quiet. Caddy asks him to tell the other children to mind her for the evening, and he does. The children hear their mother crying, which makes Maury/Benjy cry. Quentin is also agitated by her crying, but Caddy reassures him that she is just singing. Jason too begins to cry.

The children go outside and down to the servants' quarters, where Frony and T. P. (who are children at this point) have a jar of lightning bugs. Frony asks about the funeral, and Versh scolds her for mentioning it. The children discuss the only death they know - when their mare Nancy died and the buzzards "undressed her" in a ditch. Caddy asks T. P. to give Maury/Benjy his jar of lightning bugs to hold. The children go back up to the house and stop outside the parlor window. Caddy climbs up a tree to see in the window, and the children watch her muddy drawers as she climbs.

Dilsey comes out of the house and yells at them. Caddy tells the others that their parents were not doing anything inside, although she may be trying to protect them from the truth. The children go inside and upstairs. Father comes to help tuck them into bed in a strange room. Dilsey dresses them and tucks them in, and they go to sleep.

Benjy's name change, 1900: Benjy is five years old, Caddy is nine, etc.

Benjy is sitting by the library fire and watching it. Dilsey and Caddy discuss Benjy's new name; Dilsey wants to know why his parents have changed it, and Caddy replies that mother said Benjamin was a better name for him than Maury was. Dilsey says that "folks don't have no luck, changing names" (58). Caddy brings Benjy to where her mother is lying in the bedroom with a cloth on her head, to say good night. Benjy can hear the clock ticking and the rain falling on the roof. Mother chides Caddy not to carry him because he is too heavy and will ruin her posture. She holds Benjy's face in her hands and repeats "Benjamin" over and over. Benjy cries until Caddy holds his favorite cushion over his mother's head.

 She leads him to the fire so that he can watch it. Father picks him up, and he watches the reflection of Caddy and Jason fighting in the library mirror. Father puts him down and breaks up Caddy and Jason, who are fighting because Jason cut up all of Benjy's paper dolls. Father takes Jason to the room next door and spanks him. They all sit by the fire, and Benjy holds his cushion. Quentin comes and sits next to them. He has been in a fight at school and has a bruise. Father asks him about it. Versh sits next to them and tells them a story about a "bluegum" he knows who changed his name too. Father tells him to be quiet. Caddy and Versh feed Benjy his dinner, and the four children sit in father's lap. Benjy says that Caddy and Quentin smell like trees and rain.

Versh, Caddy and Benjy go outside, December 23, 1902: Benjy is seven years old and Caddy is eleven.

Benjy is crying because he wants to go outside. Mother says it is too cold for him and he will freeze his hands. She says that if he won't be quiet he will have to go to the kitchen. Versh replies that Dilsey wants him out of the kitchen because she has a lot of cooking to do, and Uncle Maury tells her to let him go outside. Versh puts on his coat and they go outside; Versh tells him to keep his hands in his pockets. Caddy comes through the gate, home from school. She takes his hands and they run through the fallen leaves into the house. Caddy puts him by the fire, and Versh starts to take his coat off, but Caddy asks if she can take him outside again. Versh puts on his overshoes again, and mother takes his face in her hands and calls him "my poor baby," but Caddy kneels by him and tells him that he is not a poor baby at all because he has her. Benjy notices that she smells like trees.

Caddy and Benjy deliver Uncle Maury's letter to Mrs. Patterson, December 25, 1902.

Caddy and Benjy cross the yard by the barn, where the servants are killing a pig for dinner. Caddy tells Benjy to keep his hands in his pockets and lets him hold the letter. She wonders why Uncle Maury did not send Versh with the letter. They cross the frozen branch and come to the Patterson's fence. Caddy takes the letter and climbs the fence to deliver it. Mrs. Patterson comes out of the house.

Benjy delivers a letter to Mrs. Patterson alone, spring 1903: Benjy is eight years old.

Benjy is at the Patterson's fence. Mr. Patterson is in the garden cutting flowers. Mrs. Patterson runs from the house to the fence, and Benjy cries when he sees her angry eyes. She says that she told Maury not to send Benjy alone again, and asks Benjy to give her the letter. Mr. Patterson comes running, climbs the fence and takes the letter. Benjy runs away.

Caddy wears perfume, 1906: Benjy is ten years old and Caddy is fourteen.

Caddy tries to hug Benjy but he cries and pushes her away. Jason says that he must not like her "prissy dress," and says that she thinks she is all grown up just because she is fourteen. Caddy tries to hush Benjy, but he disturbs their mother, who calls them to her room. Mother tells Caddy to give Benjy his box full of cut-out stars. Caddy walks to the bathroom and washes the perfume off. Benjy goes to the door. Caddy opens the door and hugs him; she smells like trees again. They go into Caddy's room and she sits at her mirror. Benjy starts to cry again. She gives him the bottle of perfume to smell and he runs away, crying. She realizes what made him cry and tells him she will never wear it again. They go to the kitchen, and Caddy tells Dilsey that the perfume is a present from Benjy to her. Dilsey takes the bottle, and Caddy says that "we don't like perfume ourselves" (43).

Caddy in the swing, 1907?: Benjy is eleven or twelve and Caddy is fifteen or sixteen.

Benjy is out in the yard at night. T. P. calls for him through the window. He watches the swing, where there are "two now, then one in the swing" (47). Caddy comes running to him, asking how he got out. She calls for T. P. Benjy cries and pulls at her dress. Charlie, the boy she is with on the swing, comes over and asks where T. P. is. Benjy cries and she tells Charlie to go away. He goes, and she calls for T. P. again. Charlie comes back and puts his hands on Caddy. She tells him to stop, because Benjy can see, but he doesn't. She says she has to take Benjy to the house. She takes his hand and they run to the house and up the porch steps. She hugs him, and they go inside. Charlie is calling her, but she goes to the kitchen sink and scrubs her mouth with soap. Benjy sees that she smells like trees again.

Benjy sleeps alone for the first time, 1908: Benjy is thirteen years old.

Dilsey tells Benjy that he is too old to sleep with anyone else, and that he will sleep in Uncle Maury's room. Uncle Maury has a black eye and a swollen mouth, and Father says that he is going to shoot Mr. Patterson. Mother scolds him and father apologizes. He is drunk.

Dilsey puts Benjy to bed alone, but he cries, and Dilsey comes back. Then Caddy comes in and lies in the bed with him. She smells like trees. Dilsey says she will leave the light on in Caddy's room so she can go back there after Benjy has fallen asleep.

Caddy loses her virginity, 1909: Benjy is fourteen years old and Caddy is eighteen.

Caddy walks quickly past the door where mother, father, and Benjy are. Mother calls her in, and she comes to the door. She glances at Benjy, then glances away. He begins to cry. He goes to her and pulls at her dress, crying. She is against the wall, and she starts to cry. He chases her up the stairs, crying. She stops with her back against the wall, crying, and looks at him with her hand on her mouth. Benjy pushes her into the bathroom.

Caddy's wedding, 1910: Benjy is fifteen years old and Caddy is nineteen.

Benjy, Quentin, and T. P. are outside the barn, and T. P. has given Benjy some sarsaparilla to drink; they are both drunk. Quentin pushes T. P. into the pig trough. They fight, and T. P. pushes Benjy into the trough. Quentin beats T. P., who can't stop laughing. He keeps saying "whooey!". Versh comes and yells at T. P. Quentin gives Benjy some more sarsaparilla to drink, and he cries. T. P. takes him to the cellar, and then goes to a tree outside the parlor. T. P. drinks some more. He gets a box for Benjy to stand on so he can see into the parlor. Through the window, Benjy can see Caddy in her wedding veil, and he cries out, trying to call to her. T. P. tries to quiet him. Benjy falls down and hits his head on the box. T. P. drags him to the cellar to get more sarsaparilla, and they fall down the stairs into the cellar. They climb up the stairs and fall against the fence and the box. Benjy is crying loudly, and Caddy comes running. Quentin also comes and begins kicking T. P. Caddy hugs Benjy, but she doesn't smell like trees any more, and Benjy begins to cry.

Benjy at the gate crying, 1910.

Benjy is in the house looking at the gate and crying, and T. P. tells him that no matter how hard he cries, Caddy is not coming back.

Later, Benjy stands at the gate crying, and watches some schoolgirls pass by with their satchels. Benjy howls at them, trying to speak, and they run by. Benjy runs along the inside of the fence next to them to the end of his yard. T. P. comes to get him and scolds him for scaring the girls.

Quentin's death, 1910.

Benjy is lying in T. P.'s bed at the servants' quarters, where T. P. is throwing sticks into a fire. Dilsey and Roskus discuss Quentin's death without mentioning his name or Caddy's name. Roskus talks about the curse on the family, saying "aint the sign of it laying right there on that bed. Aint the sign of it been here for folks to see fifteen years now" (29). Dilsey tells him to be quiet, but he continues, saying that there have been two signs now (Benjy's retardation and Quentin's death), and that there would be one more. Dilsey warns him not to mention Caddy's name. He replies that "they aint no luck on this place" (29). Dilsey tucks Benjy into T. P.'s bed and pulls the covers up.

Benjy attacks a girl outside the gate and is castrated, 1911: Benjy is sixteen years old.

Benjy is standing at the gate crying, and the schoolgirls come by. They tell each other that he just runs along the inside of the fence and can't catch them. He unlatches the gate and chases them, trying to talk to them. They scream and run away. He catches one girl and tries to talk to her, perhaps tries to rape her.

Later, father talks about how angry Mr. Burgess (her father) is, and wants to know how Benjy got outside the gate. Jason says that he bets father will have to send Benjy to the asylum in Jackson now, and father tells him to hush.

Mr. Compson's death, 1912: Benjy is seventeen.

Benjy wakes up and T. P. brings him into the kitchen where Dilsey is singing. She stops singing when Benjy begins to cry. She tells T. P. to take him outside, and they go to the branch and down by the barn. Roskus is in the barn milking a cow, and he tells T. P. to finish milking for him because he can't use his right hand any more. He says again that there is no luck on this place.

Later that day, Dilsey tells T. P. to take Benjy and the baby girl Quentin down to the servants' quarters to play with Luster, who is still a child. Frony scolds Benjy for taking a toy away from Quentin, and brings them up to the barn. Roskus is watching T. P. milk a cow.

Later, T. P. and Benjy are down by the ditch where Nancy's bones are. Benjy can smell father's death. T. P. takes Benjy and Quentin to his house, where Roskus is sitting next to the fire. He says "that's three, thank the Lawd . . . I told you two years ago. They aint no luck on this place" (31). He comments on the bad luck of never mentioning a child's mother's name and bringing up a child never to know its mother. Dilsey shushes him, asking him if he wants to make Benjy cry again. Dilsey puts him to bed in Luster's bed, laying a piece of wood between him and Luster.

Mr. Compson's funeral, 1912.

Benjy and T. P. wait at the corner of the house and watch Mr. Compson's casket carried by. Benjy can see his father lying there through the glass in the casket.

Trip to the cemetery, 1912.

Benjy waits for his mother to get into the carriage. She comes out and asks where Roskus is. Dilsey says that he can't move his arms today, so T. P. will drive them. Mother says she is afraid to let T. P. drive, but she gets in the carriage anyway. Mother says that maybe it would be for the best if she and Benjy were killed in an accident, and Dilsey tells her not to talk that way. Benjy begins to cry and Dilsey gives him a flower to hold. They begin to drive, and mother says she is afraid to leave the baby Quentin at home. She asks T. P. to turn the carriage around. He does, and it tips precariously but doesn't topple. They return to the house, where Jason is standing outside with a pencil behind his ear. Mother tells him that they are going to the cemetery, and he asks her if that was all she came back to tell him. She says she would feel safer if he came, and he tells her that Father and Quentin won't hurt her. This makes her cry, and Jason tells her to stop. Jason tells T. P. to drive, and they take off again.

Roskus's death, later 1920s: Luster is old enough to take care of Benjy by now.

Dilsey is "moaning" at the servants' quarters. Benjy begins to cry and the dog begins to howl, and Dilsey stops moaning. Frony tells Luster to take them down to the barn, but Luster says he won't go down there for fear he will see Roskus's ghost like he did last night, waving his arms.

**Analysis of April 7, 1928:**

The title of this novel comes from Shakespeare's Macbeth, Act five, scene five, in Macbeth's famous speech about the meaninglessness of life. He states that it is "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing." One could argue that Benjy is the "idiot" referred to in this speech, for indeed his section seems, at first reading, to "signify nothing." No one vignette in his narrative seems to be particularly important, much of it detailing the minutiae of his daily routine. His speech itself, the "bellering" with which me makes himself heard, does, in fact, "signify nothing," since he is unable to express himself even when he wants to in a way other than howling. However, Benjy Compson is not merely an idiot, and his section is much more meaningful than it first seems.

When discussing Mr. Compson's death, Roskus states that Benjy "know a lot more than folks thinks" (31), and in fact, for all his idiocy, Benjy does sense when things are wrong with his self-contained world, especially when they concern his sister Caddy. Like an animal, Benjy can "smell" when Caddy has changed; when she wears perfume, he states that she no longer smells "like trees," and the servants claim that he can smell death. He can also sense somehow when Caddy has lost her virginity; she has changed to him. From the time she loses her virginity on, she no longer smells like trees to him. Although his section at first presents itself as an objective snapshot of a retarded boy's perceptions of the world, it is more ordered and more intelligent than that.

Most of the memories Benjy relates in his section have to do with Caddy, and specifically with moments of loss related to Caddy. The first memory of Damuddy's death, for example, marks a change in his family structure and a change in his brother Jason, who was the closest to Damuddy and slept in her room. His many memories of Caddy are mostly concerned with her sexuality, a fact that changes her relationship with him and eventually removes her from his life. His later memories are also associated with some sort of loss: the loss of his pasture, of his father, and the loss associated with his castration. Critics have pointed out that Benjy's narrative is "timeless," that he cannot distinguish between present and past and therefore relives his memories as they occur to him. If this is the case, he is caught in a process of constantly regenerating his sister in memory and losing her simultaneously, of creating and losing at the same time. His life is a constant cycle of loss and degenerative change.

If Benjy is trapped in a constantly replaying succession of losses, the objects that he fixates on seem to echo this state. He loves fire, for instance, and often stares into the "bright shapes" of the fire while the world revolves around him. The word "fire" is mentioned numerous times in the memory of his name change. Caddy and the servants know that he stops crying when he looks at the fire, which is the reason in the present day that Luster makes a fire in the library even though one is not needed.

The fire is a symbolic object; it is conventionally associated with the contrast between light and dark, heat and cold. It is a comfort, not merely to Benjy because of the pleasure he receives in watching it, but because it is associated with the hearth, the center of the home. As critics have pointed out, it is often Caddy who places Benjy in front of the fire: "she led me to the fire and I looked at the bright, smooth shapes" (64). The fire is therefore tied in Benjy's mind with the idea of Caddy; both are warm and comforting forces within a cold family. But unlike Caddy, the fire is unchanging; there will always be a fire, even after she leaves him. The fact that Benjy burns himself on the kitchen stove after Luster closes the oven door reveals the pain - both physical and mental - that Benjy associates with Caddy's absence.

Another object that provides comfort to Benjy is the library mirror. Like the fire, the mirror plays a large part in the memory of his name change, as Benjy watches the various members of his family move in and out of the mirror: "Caddy and Jason were fighting in the mirror . we could see Caddy fighting in the mirror and Father put me down and went into the mirror and fought too . He rolled into the corner, out of the mirror. Father brought Caddy to the fire. They were all out of the mirror" (64-65). The mirror is a frame of reference through which Benjy sees the world; people are either in or out of the mirror, and he does not understand the concept of reflection. Like the mirror, Benjy's section of the book provides readers with a similar exact reflection of the world that Benjy sees, framed by his memories. Characters slide in and out of the mirror of his perception, their conversations and actions accurately reported but somewhat distorted in the process.

As the "tale told by an idiot," Benjy's section makes up the center kernel of the story of the Compson family tragedy. And the scene of Damuddy's death in many ways makes up the center around which this section and the entire story revolve. Faulkner has said that the story grew out of the image of a little girl's muddy drawers as she climbs a tree to look into the parlor windows at the funeral taking place. From this image a story evolved, a story "without plot, of some children being sent away from the house during the grandmother's funeral. There were too young to be told what was going on and they saw things only incidentally to the childish games they were playing" (Millgate, 96). This original story was entitled "Twilight," and the story grew into a novel because Faulkner fell in love with the character of this little girl to such an extent that he strove to tell her story from four different viewpoints.

If this one scene is the center of the story, it is also a microcosm of the events to follow. The interactions of the children in this scene prefigure their relations in the future and in fact the entire future of the Compson family. Thus Caddy's soaking her dress in the water of the branch is a metaphor for the sexual fall that will torment Quentin and ruin the family:

She was wet. We were playing in the branch and Caddy squatted down and got her dress wet and Versh said, "Your mommer going to whip you for getting your dress wet."

"It's not wet." Caddy said. She stood up in the water and looked at her dress. "I'll take it off." she said. "Then it'll be dry."

"I bet you won't." Quentin said.

"I bet I will." Caddy said.

"I bet you better not." Quentin said.

"You just take your dress off," Quentin said. Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank. Then she didn't have on anything but her bodice and drawers, and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water (17-18).

Caddy sullies her garments in an act that prefigures her later sexuality. She then takes off her dress, a further sexual metaphor, causing Quentin to become enraged and slap her. Just as the loss of her virginity upsets Quentin to the point of suicide, his angry and embarrassed reaction to taking off her dress here reveals the jealous protectiveness he feels for her sexuality. Benjy, too, is traumatized by the muddying of Caddy's dress: "Caddy was all wet and muddy behind, and I started to cry and she came and squatted in the water" (19). Just as her sexuality will cause his world to crack later on, her muddy dress here causes him to cry.

Jason, too, is a miniature version of what he will become in this scene. While Caddy and Quentin fight in the branch, Jason stands "by himself further down the branch," prefiguring the isolation from the rest of his family that will characterize his later existence (19). Although the other children ask him not to tell their father that they have been playing in the branch, the first thing he does when he sees father is tattle. He is as perverse and mean here as he is sadistic in the third section of the book. His reaction to Damuddy's death, too, is a miniature for the way he will deal with the loss that he sees in Caddy's betrayal of the family later on:

"Do you think the buzzards are going to undress Damuddy." Caddy said. "You're crazy."

"You're a skizzard." Jason said. He began to cry.

"You're a knobnot." Caddy said. Jason cried. His hands were in his pockets.

"Jason going to be rich man." Versh said. "He holding his money all the time" (35-36).

Here Jason cries over the loss of Damuddy with his hands in his pockets, "holding his money," just as later he will sublimate his anger at Caddy's absence by becoming a miserly workaholic and embezzling thousands of dollars from Quentin and his mother.

The scene ends with the image of Caddy's muddy drawers as she climbs the tree: "We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the tree thrashing . . . . the tree quit thrashing. We looked up into the still branches" (39). This image of Caddy's muddy undergarments disappearing into the branches of the tree, the scene that prompted Faulkner to write the entire novel, is, as critic John T. Matthews points out, an image of Caddy disappearing, just as she will disappear from the lives of her three brothers:

What the novel has made, it has also lost . . . . [Caddy] is memorable precisely because she inhabits the memories of her brothers and the novel, and memory for Faulkner never transcends the sense of loss . . . . Caught in Faulkner's mind as she climbs out of the book, Caddy is the figure that the novel is written to lose (Matthews, 2-3). Thus the seminal scene in this section of the story is that of the sullied Caddy, "climbing out of" Benjy's life.

The scene of Damuddy's death is not the only part of this section that forecasts the future. Like a Greek tragedy, this section is imbued with a sense of impending disaster, and in fact the events of the present day chronicle a family that has fallen into decay. For Benjy, the dissolution of the life he knows is wrapped up in Caddy and her sexuality, which eventually leads her to desert him. For his mother and the servants, the family's demise is a fate that cannot be avoided, of which Benjy's idiocy and Quentin's death are signs. This is what prompts Roskus to repeatedly vow that "they aint no luck on this place," and what causes mother to perform the almost ritualistic ablution of changing Benjy's name. It is as if changing his name from Maury, the name of a Bascomb, will somehow avert the disastrous fate that the Compson blood seems to bring. This overwhelming sense of an inescapable family curse will resurface many times throughout the book.

Summary of June Second, 1910:

This section of the book details the events of the day of Quentin's suicide, from the moment he wakes in the morning until he leaves his room that night, headed to the river to drown himself. Like Benjy's section, this section is narrated in stream of consciousness, sliding constantly between modern-day events and memories; however, Quentin's section is not as disjointed at Benjy's, regardless of his agitated mental state. As with Benjy, most of the memories he relates are centered on Caddy and her precocious sexuality.

The present day:

Quentin wakes in his Harvard dorm room to the sound of his watch ticking: "when the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtain it was between seven and eight oclock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch" (76). This is the watch his father gave him when he came to Harvard. He tries to ignore the sound, but the more he tries, the louder it seems. He turns the watch over and returns to bed, but the ticking goes on. His roommate Shreve appears in the doorway and asks him if he is going to chapel, then runs out the door to avoid being late himself. Quentin watches his friends running to chapel out the window of his dorm room, then listens to the school's bell chiming the hour (8:00 a.m.).

He goes to the dresser and picks up his watch, tapping it against the side of the dresser to break the glass. He twists the hands of the watch off, but the watch keeps ticking. He notices that he cut himself in the process and meticulously cleans his wound with iodine. He painstakingly packs up all his clothes except two suits, two pairs of shoes, and two hats, then locks his trunk and piles his schoolbooks on the sitting-room table, as the quarter-hour bell chimes.

He bathes and puts on a new suit and his (now broken) watch, puts his trunk key into an envelope addressed to his father, then writes two noes and seals them. He goes out the door, bumping into his returning roommate on the way, who asks him why he is all dressed up. The half-hour chimes and Quentin walks into Harvard Square, to the post office. He buys stamps and mails one letter to his father and keeps one for Shreve in his coat pocket. He is looking for his friend "the Deacon," an eccentric black man who befriends all the Southern students at Harvard. He goes out to breakfast; while he is eating he hears the clock strike the hour (10:00 a.m.).

Quentin continues to walk around the square, trying to avoid looking at clocks, but finds it impossible to escape time like that. He eventually walks into a jeweler's and asks him about fixing his watch. He asks if any of the watches in the window is right, and stops the jeweler before he can tell him what time it is. The jeweler says that he will fix his watch this afternoon, but Quentin takes it back and says he will get it fixed later. Walking back out into the street, he buys two six-pound flat-irons; he chooses them because they are "heavy enough" but will look like a pair of shoes when they are wrapped up and he is carrying them around the Square (85).

He takes a fruitless cable car ride, then gets off the car on a bridge, where he watches one of his friends rowing on the river. He walks back to the Square as the bell chimes the quarter hour (11:15), and he meets up with the Deacon and gives him the letter he has written to Shreve, asking him to deliver it tomorrow. He tells the Deacon that when he delivers the letter tomorrow Shreve will have a present for him. As the bell chimes the half-hour, he runs into Shreve, who tells him a letter arrived for him this morning. Then he gets on another car as the bells chime 11:45.

When he gets off the car he is near a run-down town on the Charles River, and he walks along the river until he comes across three boys fishing on a bridge over the river; he hides the flat irons under the edge of the bridge before striking up a conversation with the boys. They notice that he has a strange accent and ask if he is from Canada; he asks them if there are any factories in town (factories would have hourly whistles). He walks on toward the town, although he is anxious to keep far enough away from the church steeple's clock to render its face unreadable. Finally he arrives in town and walks into a bakery; there is nobody behind the counter, but there is a little Italian immigrant girl standing before it. A woman enters behind the counter and Quentin buys two buns. He tells the proprietress that the little girl would like something too; the proprietress eyes the girl suspiciously and accuses her of stealing something.

Quentin defends her and she extends her hand to reveal a nickel. The woman wraps up a five-cent loaf of bread for the girl, and Quentin puts some money on the counter and buys another bun as well. The woman asks him if he is going to give the bun to the girl, and he says he is. Still acting exasperated, she goes into a back room and comes out with a misshapen cake; she gives it to the girl, telling her it won't taste any different than a good cake. The girl follows Quentin out of the store, and he takes her to a drugstore and buys her some ice cream. They leave the drugstore and he gives her one of the buns and says goodbye, but she continues to follow him. Not knowing exactly what to do, he walks with her toward the immigrant neighborhood across the train tracks where he assumes she lives. She will not talk to him or indicate where she lives. He asks some men in front of a store if they know her, and they do, but they don't know where she lives either. They tell him to take her to the town marshal's office, but when he does the marshal isn't there.

Quentin decides to take her down to her neighborhood and hopefully someone will claim her. At one point she seems to tell him that a certain house is hers, but the woman inside doesn't know her. They continue to walk through the neighborhood until they come out on the other side, by the river. Quentin gives a coin to the girl, then runs away from her along the river. He walks along the river for a while, then suddenly meets up with the little girl again. They walk along together for a while, still looking for her house; eventually they turn back and walk toward town again. They come across some boys swimming, and the boys throw water at them. The hurry toward town, but the girl still won't tell him where she lives.

 Suddenly a man flies at them and attacks Quentin; he is the little girl's brother. He has the town marshal with him, and they take him into town to talk to the police because they think he was trying to kidnap the girl. In town they meet up with Shreve, Spoade and Gerald, Quentin's friends, who have come into town in Gerald's mother's car. Eventually after discussing everything at length, the marshal lets Quentin go, and he gets into the car with his friends and drives away.

As they drive Quentin slides into a kind of trance wherein he remembers various events from his past, mostly to do with her precocious sexuality (to be discussed later). While his is lost in this reverie the boys and Gerald's mother have gotten out of the car and set up a picnic. Suddenly he comes to, bleeding, and the boys tell him that he just suddenly began punching Gerald and Gerald beat him up. They tell him that he began shouting "did you ever have a sister? Did you?" then attacked Gerald out of the blue. Quentin is more concerned about the state of his clothes than anything else. His friends want to take the cable car back to Boston without Gerald, but Quentin tells them he doesn't want to go back. They ask him what he plans to do (perhaps they suspect something about his suicidal plans). They go back to the party, and Quentin walks slowly toward the city as the twilight descends.

Eventually Quentin gets on a cable car. Although it is dark by now, he can smell the water of the river as they pass by it. As they pass the Harvard Square post office again, he hears the clock chiming but has no idea what time it is. He plans to return to the bridge where he left his flatirons, but he has to wash his clothes first in order to carry out his plans correctly. He returns to his dorm room and takes off his clothes, meticulously washing the blood off his vest with gasoline. The bell chimes the half-hour as he does so. Back in his darkened room, he looks out the window for a while, then as the last chime of the three-quarters hour sounds, he puts his clothes and vest back on. He walks into Shreve's room and puts a letter and his watch in the desk drawer. He remembers that he hasn't brushed his teeth, so he goes back into his room and takes the toothbrush out of his bag. He brushes his teeth and returns the brush to the bag, then goes to the door. He returns for his hat, then leaves the room.

Quentin's memories:

Quentin's memories are not as clearly defined or as chronologically discernible as Benjy's. There are three important memories that obsess him.

Benjy's name change, 1900: Dilsey claims that Benjy can "smell what you tell him;" Roskus asks if he can smell bad luck, sure that the only reason they changed his name is to try to help his luck.

Quentin kisses Natalie, undated: Natalie, a neighbor girl, and Quentin are in the barn and it is raining outside. Natalie is hurt; Caddy pushed her down the ladder and ran off. Quentin asks her where it hurts and says that he bets he can lift her up. [a skip in time] Natalie tells him that something [probably kissing] is "like dancing sitting down" (135); Quentin asks her how he should hold her to dance, placing his arms around her, and she moans. Quentin looks up to see Caddy in the door watching them. Quentin tells her that he and Natalie were just dancing sitting down; she ignores him.

She and Natalie fight about the events that led to Natalie being pushed off the ladder and whose fault it was; Caddy claims that she was "just brushing the trash off the back of your dress" (136). Natalie leaves and Quentin jumps into the mud of the pigpen, muddying himself up to his waist. Caddy ignores him and stands with her back to him. He comes around in front of her and tells her that he was just hugging Natalie. She turns her back and continues to ignore him, saying she doesn't give a damn what he was doing. Shouting "I'll make you give a damn," he smears mud on her dress as she slaps him. They tumble, fighting, on the grass, then sit up and realize how dirty they are. They head to the branch to wash the mud off themselves.

Caddy kisses a boy (1906): Quentin slaps Caddy and demands to know why she let the boy kiss her. With the red print of his hand rising on her cheek, she replies that she didn't let him, she made him. Quentin tells her that it is not for kissing that he slapped her, but for kissing a "darn town squirt" (134). He rubs her face in the grass until she says "calf rope." She shouts that at least she didn't kiss a "dirty girl like Natalie anyway" (134).

Caddy has sex with Dalton Ames, 1909: Caddy stands in the doorway, and someone [Quentin?] asks her why she won't bring Dalton Ames into the house. Mother replies that she "must do things for women's reasons" (92). Caddy will not look at Quentin. Benjy bellows and pulls at her dress and she shrinks against the wall, and he pushes her out of the room. Sitting on the porch, Quentin hears her door slamming and Benjy still howling. She runs out of the house and Quentin follows her; he finds her lying in the branch. He threatens to tell Father that he committed incest with her; she replies with pity. He tells her that he is stronger than she is, he will make her tell him. He adds that he fooled her; all the time she thought it was her boyfriends and it was Quentin instead. The smell of honeysuckle is all around them.

She asks him if Benjy is still crying. He asks her if she loves Dalton Ames; she places his hand on her chest and he feels her heart beating there. He asks her if he made her do it, saying "Ill kill him I swear I will father neednt know until afterward and then you and I nobody need ever know we can take my school money we can cancel my matriculation Caddy you hate him dont you" (151). She moves his hand to her throat, where the blood is "hammering," and says "poor Quentin" (151). A moment later she says "yes I hate him I would die for him Ive already died for him I die for him over and over again" (151). She looks at him and then says "you've never done that have you," to which Quentin responds "yes yes lots of times with lots of girls," but he is lying, and Caddy knows it; he cries on her shirt and they lie together in the branch (151). He holds a knife to her throat, telling her that he can kill her quickly and painlessly and then kill himself. She agrees and he asks her to close her eyes, but she doesn't, looking past his head at the sky.

He begins to cry; he cannot do it. She holds his head to her breast and he drops the knife. She stands up and tells him that she has to go, and Quentin searches in the water for his knife. The two walk together past the ditch where Nancy's bones were, then she turns and tells him to stop [she is headed to meet Dalton Ames]. He replies that he is stronger than she is; she tells him to go back to the house. But he continues to follow her. Just past the fence, Dalton Ames is waiting for her, and she introduces them and kisses Dalton.

Quentin tells them that he is going to take a walk in the woods, and she asks him to wait for her at the branch, that she will be there soon. He walks aimlessly, trying to escape the smell of honeysuckle that chokes him, and lies on the bank of the branch. Presently Caddy appears and tells him to go home. He shakes her; she is limp in his hands and does not look at him. They walk together to the house, and at the steps he asks her again if she loves Dalton Ames. She tells him that she doesn't know. She tells him that she is "bad anyway you cant help it" (158).

Quentin fights with Dalton Ames, 1909: Quentin sees Dalton Ames go into a barbershop in town and waits for him to come out. He tells him "Ive been looking for you two or three days" and Dalton replies that he can't talk to him there on the street; the two arrange to meet at the bridge over the creek at one o'clock (158). Dalton is very polite to Quentin. Later, Caddy overhears Quentin telling T. P. to saddle his horse and asks him where he is going. He will not tell her and calls her a whore. He tells T. P. that he won't need his horse after all and walks to the bridge. Dalton is waiting for him there. Quentin tells him to leave town.

 Dalton stares at him and asks if Caddy sent him. Quentin tells him that he, and only he, is asking Dalton to leave town. Dalton dismisses this, just wishing to know if Caddy is all right. Quentin continues to order him to leave, and Dalton counters with "what will you do if I dont leave" (160). In response Dalton slowly and deliberately smokes a cigarette, leaning on the bridge railing. He tells Quentin to stop taking it so hard, that if he hadn't gotten Caddy pregnant some other guy would have. Shaking, Quentin asks him if he ever had a sister, and he replies "no but theyre all bitches" (160). Quentin hits him, but Dalton catches him by both wrists and reaches under his coat for a gun, then turns him loose.

 Dropping a piece of bark into the creek, Dalton shoots at it and hands the gun to Quentin. Quentin punches at him and he holds his wrists again, and Quentin passes out. He asks Quentin how he feels and if he can make it home all right. He tells him that he'd better not walk and offers him his horse. Quentin brushes him off and eventually he rides off. Quentin slumps against a tree. He hears hoofbeats and Caddy comes running. She thought that Dalton shot him. She holds his face with her hands and Quentin grabs her wrists. She begs him to let her go so she can run after Dalton, then suddenly stops struggling. Quentin asks her if she loves him. Again she places his hand on her throat, and tells him to say his name. Quentin says "Dalton Ames," and each time he does he can feel the blood surging in her throat.

Quentin meets Herbert Head before Caddy's wedding, 1910: Herbert finds Quentin alone in the parlor and attempts to get to know him better. He is smoking a cigar and offers one to Quentin. Herbert tells him that Caddy talked so much about him when they met that he thought she was talking about a husband or boyfriend, not a brother. He asks Quentin about Harvard, reminiscing about his own college days, and Quentin accuses him of cheating [he has heard rumors about Herbert's cheating at cards]. Herbert jokingly banters back that Quentin is "better than a play you must have made the Dramat" (108).

He tells Quentin that he likes him and that he is glad they are going to be friends. He offers to give him a hand and get him started in business, but Quentin rejects his offer and challenges him. They begin to fight but stop when Herbert sees that his cigar butt has almost burned a spot into the mantel. He backs off and again offers Quentin his friendship and offers him some money, which Quentin rejects. They are just beginning to fight again when Caddy enters and asks Herbert to leave so she can talk to Quentin alone. Alone, she asks Quentin what he is doing and warns him not to get involved in her life again. He notices that she is feverish, and she tells him that she is sick. He asks her what she means and she tells him she is just sick and begs him not to tell anyone. Again he asks her what she means and tells her that if she is sick she shouldn't go through with the ceremony. She replies that she can and must and that "after that it'll be all right it wont matter" and begs him to look after Benjy and make sure that they don't send him to an asylum (112). Quentin promises.

Caddy's wedding, 1910: Benjy is howling outside, and Caddy runs out the door to him, "right out of the mirror" (77).

Mother speaks, undated: Mother tells Father that she wants to go away and take only Jason, because he is the only child who loves her, the only child who is truly a Bascomb, not a Compson. She says that the other three children are her "punishment for putting aside [her] pride and marrying a man who held himself above [her]" (104). These three are "not [her] flesh and blood" and she is actually afraid of them, that they are the symbols of a curse upon her and the family. She views Caddy not merely as damaging the family name with her promiscuity but actually "corrupting" the other children (104).

Quentin's conversations with Father, undated (a string of separate conversations on the same theme): Quentin tells his father that he committed incest with Caddy; his father does not believe him. Father takes a practical, logical, if unemotional view of Caddy's sexuality, telling Quentin that women have "a practical fertility of suspicion . . . [and] an affinity for evil," that he should not take her promiscuity to heart because it was inevitable (96). When Quentin tells him that he would like to have been born a eunuch so that he never had to think about sex, he responds "it's because you are a virgin: dont you see? Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting you not Caddy."

Quentin replies "that's just words" and father counters "so is virginity" (116). Quentin insists that he has committed incest with Caddy and that he wants to die, but still Father won't believe him. Father tells him that he is merely "blind to what is in yourself to that part of general truth the sequence of natural events and their causes which shadows every mans brow even benjys . . . you cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this" (177). He claims that not even Caddy was really "quite worth despair," that Quentin will grow out of the pain he feels at her betrayal of his ideal (178).

Analysis of June Second, 1910:

From the very first sentence of the section, Quentin is obsessed with time; words associated with time like "watch," "clock," "chime," and "hour" occur on almost every page. When Quentin wakes he is "in time again, hearing the watch," and the rest of the day represents an attempt to escape time, to get "out of time" (76). His first action when he wakes is to break the hands off his watch in an attempt to stop time, to escape the "reducto absurdum of all human experience" which is the gradual progression toward death (76). Perversely taking literally his father's statement that "time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life," he tears the hands off his watch, only to find that it continues to tick even without the hands (85). Throughout this section, Quentin tries to escape time in similar ways; he tries to avoid looking at clocks, he tries to travel away from the sound of school chimes or factory whistles. By the end of the section he has succeeded in escaping knowledge of the time (when he returns to school he hears the bell ringing and has no idea what hour it is chiming off), but he still has not taken himself out of time. In the end, as he knows throughout this section, the only way to escape time is to die.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in his analysis of this novel, sees Quentin's suicide as not merely a way of escaping time but of exploding time. His suicide is present in all the actions of the day, not so much a fate he could dream of escaping as "an immobile wall, a thing which he approaches backward, and which he neither wants to nor can conceive" (Sartre, 91). It is not a future but a part of the present, the point from which the story is told. Quentin narrates the day's events in the past tense, as if they have already happened; the "present" from which he looks back at the day's events must be the moment of his death. As Sartre puts it:

Since the hero's last thoughts coincide approximately with the bursting of his memory and its annihilation, who is remembering? . . . . [Faulkner] has chosen the infinitesimal instant of death. Thus when Quentin's memory begins to unravel its recollections ("Through the wall I heard Shreve's bed-springs and then his slippers on the floor hishing. I got up . . . ") he is already dead (92).

In other words, time explodes at the instant of Quentin's suicide, and the events of this "infinitesimal instant" are recorded in this section. By killing himself, Quentin has found the only way to access time that is "alive" in the sense that his father details, time that has escaped the clicking of little wheels.

But why does Quentin want to escape time? The answer lies in one of the conversations with his father that are recorded in this section. When Quentin claims that he committed incest with Caddy, his father refuses to believe him and says:

You cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this . . . it is hard believing to think that a love or a sorrow is a bond purchased without design and which matures willynilly and is recalled without warning . . . no you will not do that until you come to believe that even she was not quite worth despair perhaps (177-178).

Quentin's response to this statement is "i will never do that nobody knows what i know." His attempt to stop the progression of time is an attempt to preserve the rawness of the pain Caddy's promiscuity and marriage have caused him; he never wants to think of her as "not quite worth despair."

Like Benjy, Quentin is obsessed with an absent Caddy, and both brothers' sections are ordered around memories of her, specifically of her promiscuity. For both brothers, her absence is linked to her promiscuity, but for Quentin her promiscuity signals not merely her loss from his life but also the loss of the romantically idealized idea of life he has built for himself. This ideal life has at its center a valuation of purity and cleanness and a rejection of sexuality; Quentin sees his own developing sexuality as well as his sister's as sinful. The loss of her virginity is the painful center of a spiral of loss as his illusions are shattered.

Critics have read Quentin's obsession with Caddy's virginity as an antebellum-style preoccupation with family honor, but in fact family honor is hardly ever mentioned in this section. The pain that Caddy's promiscuity causes Quentin seems too raw, too intense, too visceral to be merely a disappointment at the staining family honor. And perhaps most importantly, Quentin's response to her promiscuity, namely telling his father that he and she committed incest, is not the act of a person concerned with family honor. Rather it is the act of a boy so in love with his sister and so obsessed with maintaining the closeness of their relationship that he would rather be condemned by the town and suffer in hell than let her go. He is, in fact, obsessed with her purity and virginity, but not to maintain appearances in the town; he wants her forever to remain the unstained, saintly mother/sister he imagines her to be.

Quentin did not, of course, commit incest with Caddy. And yet the encounters he remembers are fraught with sexual overtones. When Caddy walks in on Quentin and Natalie kissing in the barn, for instance, Quentin throws himself into the "stinking" mud of the pigpen. When this fails to get a response from Caddy, he wipes mud on her:

You dont you dont I'll make you I'll make you give a damn. She hit my hands away I smeared mud on her with the other hand I couldnt feel the wet smacking of her hand I wiped mud from my legs smeared it on her wet hard turning body hearing her fingers going into my face but I couldnt feel it even when the rain began to taste sweet on my lips (137).

Echoing the mud-stained drawers that symbolize her later sexuality, Quentin smears mud on Caddy's body in a heated exchange, feeling as he does so her "wet hard turning body." The mud is both Quentin's penance for his sexual experimentation with Natalie and the sign of sexuality between Quentin and Caddy.

The scene in the branch of the river is similarly sexual in nature. Quentin finds Caddy at the branch trying to wash away the guilt she finds; amid the "suck[ing] and gurgl[ing]" waves of the water. When he asks her if she loves Dalton Ames, she places his hand on her chest and he feels her heart "thudding" (150). He smells honeysuckle "on her face and throat like paint her blood pounded against my hand I was leaning on my other arm it began to jerk and jump and I had to pant to get any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle;" and he lies "crying against her damp blouse" (150).

 Taking out a knife, he holds it against her throat and tells her "it wont take but a second Ill try not to hurt." She replies "no like this you have to push it harder," and he says "touch your hand to it" (151). In this scene we have the repetitive surging both of the water and of Caddy's blood beneath Quentin's hand. We have the two siblings lying on top of one another at the edge of this surging water, the pungent smell of honeysuckle (which Quentin associates with sex throughout the section) so thick around them that Quentin has trouble breathing. We have a knife (a common phallic symbol) which Quentin proposes to push into Caddy's blood-flushed neck, promising he will "try not to hurt." Overall, the scene overflows with sexual metaphors; if the two do not actually commit incest, they certainly do share a number of emotionally powerful, sexually loaded moments.

Quentin's wish to have committed incest is not a desire to have sex with Caddy; that would shatter his ideals of purity even more than her encounters with Dalton Ames. Nor is it, as we have determined, a way to preserve the family honor. Instead, it seems to be a way to keep Caddy to himself forever: "if it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame" (116). Separated from the rest of the world by the "clean" purifying flames of hell, Quentin and Caddy could be alone together, forever burning away the sin of her sexuality. He would rather implicate himself in something as horrible as incest than leave Caddy to her promiscuity or lose her through her marriage to Herbert Head.

If time-words are the most frequently occurring words in this section, the second most frequent is the word "shadow." Throughout his journeys, Quentin is just as obsessed with his shadow as he is with time. For example, he walks on his shadow as he wanders through Cambridge: "trampling my shadow's bones . . . . I walked upon the belly of my shadow" (96). When asked what the significance of shadows was in this section, Faulkner replied "that shadow that stayed on his mind so much was foreknowledge of his own death, that he was - Death is here, shall I step into it or shall I step away from it a little longer? I won't escape it, but shall I accept it now or shall I put it off until next Friday" (Minter, qtd. in Martin, 6). This explanation certainly seems to fit some of Quentin's thoughts; for example, at one point, he imagines drowning his shadow in the water of the river, just as he will later drown himself: "my shadow leaning flat upon the water, so easily had I tricked it . . . . if I only had something to blot it into the water, holding it until it was drowned, the shadow of the package like two shoes wrapped up lying on the water.

Niggers say a drowned man's shadow was watching for him in the water all the time" (90). Here Quentin imagines his drowned shadow beckoning him from the river, drowned before him and waiting for him to follow suit.

Like his shadow mirroring his motions and emotions, certain aspects of his day's travels mirror his life and the troubled state of his mind. Most obvious among these is his encounter with the Italian girl he calls "sister" and the reaction of her brother Julio. Calling this little girl "little sister" or "sister" ironically recalls Caddy, whom Quentin at one point calls "Little Sister Death." But whereas his suicidal mission is caused by the fact that he cannot hold on to Caddy, here he cannot get rid of this "little sister," who follows him around the town and will not leave him. Then when Julio finds them, he accuses Quentin stealing her, just as Quentin feels Dalton Ames and Herbert Head have stolen Caddy from him.

Julio is not the only character to mirror Quentin, though. As Edmond Volpe points out, Dalton Ames himself is a foil for Quentin, the embodiment of the romantic ideal he has cast for himself:

Quentin's meeting with Dalton is a disaster. His conception of himself in the traditional role of protector of women collapses, not only because he fails to accomplish his purpose [of beating Dalton up] but because he is forced to recognize his own weakness. Dalton is actually a reflection of Quentin's vision of himself: calm, courageous, strong, kind. The real Quentin does not measure up to the ideal Quentin, just as reality does not measure up to Quentin's romantic vision of what life should be (113).

Quentin is in actuality the "obverse reflection" of himself, a man who does not live up to his own ideals, who fails to protect his sister from a villain who turns out to be as chivalrous and Quentin is weak.

Thus at the "infinitesimal instant" of his death, Quentin is a man whose disillusionment with his shattered ideals consumes him. His death, one of the "signs" Roskus sees of the bad luck of the Compson family, is one step in the gradual dissolution of the family, a degeneration that will pick up speed in the sections to come.

Summary of April Sixth, 1928:

Beginning with the statement "once a bitch always a bitch," this section reads as if Jason is telling the reader the story of his day; it is more chronological and less choppy than Quentin's or Benjy's sections, but still unconventional in tone. Jason and his mother in her room waiting for Quentin to finish putting on her makeup and go down to breakfast. Mother is concerned that Quentin often skips school and asks Jason to take care of it. Both Jason and his mother are manipulative and passive-aggressive, mother complaining about the ailments she suffers and the way her children betrayed her, Jason countering with statements like "I never had time to go to Harvard or drink myself into the ground. I had to work. But of course if you want me to follow her around and see what she does, I can quit the store and get a job where I can work at night" (181). Jason goes down to the kitchen, where Quentin is begging Dilsey for another cup of coffee. Dilsey tells her she will be late for school, and Jason says he will fix that, grabbing her by the arm.

Her bathrobe comes unfastened and she pulls it closed around her. He begins to take off his belt, but Dilsey stops him from hitting her. Mother comes in, and Jason puts down the belt. Quentin runs out of the house. In the car on the way to town, Quentin and Jason fight about who paid for her schoolbooks - Caddy or Jason. Jason claims that Mother has been burning all of the checks Caddy sends. Quentin tells Jason that she would tear off any dress that he paid for and grabs the neck of her dress as if she will tear it. Jason has to stop the car and grab her wrists to stop her. He tells her that she is a slut and a bad girl, and she replies that she would rather be in hell than in his house. He drops her off at school and drives on to his job at the farm goods store.

At the store, old Job, a black worker, is unloading cultivators, and Jason accuses of him of doing it as slowly as he possibly can. He has mail; he opens a letter with a check from Caddy. The letter asks if Quentin is sick and states that she knows that Jason reads all her letters. He goes out to the front of the store and engages in a conversation with a farmer about the cotton crop. He tells him that cotton is a "speculator's crop" that "a bunch of damn eastern jews" get farmers to grow so that they can control the stock market (191). He goes to the telegraph office, where a stock report has just come in (Jason has invested in the cotton crop) - the cotton stock is up four points. He tells the telegraph operator to send a collect message to Caddy saying "Q writing today" (193).

He goes back to the store and sits at his desk, reading a letter from his girlfriend Lorraine, who is basically a prostitute he keeps in Memphis. She calls Jason her "daddy." He burns her letter, commenting "I make it a rule never to keep a scrap of paper bearing a woman's hand, and I never write them at all" (193). Then he takes out Caddy's letter to Quentin, but before he can open it some business interrupts him. He recalls the day of his father's funeral; he remembers saying that Quentin wasted his chance at Harvard, learning only "how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim," Benjy is nothing but a "gelding" that should be rented out as a circus sideshow, Father was a drunk who should have had a "one-armed strait jacket," and Caddy is a whore (196-197).

Uncle Maury patted Mother's arm with expensive black gloves at the funeral, and Jason noted that the flowers on the grave must have cost fifty dollars. He also remembers the day that Father brought baby Quentin home; Mother would not let her sleep in Caddy's old room, afraid she will be contaminated by the atmosphere in there. She also declares that nobody in the house must ever say Caddy's name again. On the day of the funeral, Caddy appeared in the cemetery and begged Jason to let her see the baby for just one minute, and she would pay him fifty dollars; later she changes this to one hundred dollars. Jason smugly remembers how he took the baby in a carriage and held her up to the window as he drove past Caddy; this fulfilled his agreement to the letter. Later she showed up in the kitchen, accusing him of backing out of their agreement. He threatened her and told her to leave town immediately. She made him promise to treat Quentin well and to give her the money that she sends for her.

Jason's boss, Earl, comes up to the front of the store and tells Jason he is going out for a snack because they won't have time to go home for lunch; a show is in town and there will be too much business. Jason finally opens Caddy's letter to Quentin, and inside is a money order for fifty dollars, not a check. He looks around in the office for a blank check; every month he takes a fake check home to mother to burn and cashes the real check. But the blank checks are all gone. Quentin comes in and asks if a letter has come for her. He taunts her, then finally gives her the letter, without the money in it. She reaches out for the money order, but he will not give it to her. He tells her she has to sign it without looking at it. She asks how much it is for, and he tells her it is for ten dollars. She says he is lying, but he will not give it to her until she agrees to take ten dollars for it. She takes the money and leaves, upset.

Earl returns and again tells Jason not to go home to lunch; Jason agrees and leaves. First he goes to a print shop to get a blank check. The print shop doesn't have any, and finally Jason finds a checkbook that was a prop at an old theater. He goes back to the store and puts the check in the letter, gluing the envelope back to look unopened. As he leaves again, Earl tells him not to take too much time. He goes to the telegraph office and checks up on the stock market, then goes home for lunch. He goes up to Mother's room and gives her the doctored letter. Instead of burning it right away she looks at it for a while. She notices that it is drawn on a different bank than the others have been, but then burns it. Dilsey is not ready with lunch yet because she is waiting for Quentin to come home; finally she puts it on the table and they eat. Jason hands Mother a letter from Uncle Maury; it is a letter asking her to lend him some money for an investment he would like to make.

Jason takes Mother's bankbook with him and returns to town. He goes to the bank and deposits the money from Caddy and his paycheck, then returns to the telegraph office for an update; the stock is down thirteen points. He goes back to the store, where Earl asks him if he went home to dinner. Jason tells him that he had to go to the dentist's. A while later he hears the band from the show start playing. He argues with Job about spending money to go to a show like that. Suddenly he sees Quentin in an alley with a stranger with a red bow tie. It is still 45 minutes before school should let out. He follows them up the street, but they disappear. A boy comes up and gives Jason a telegram: the market day closed with cotton stocks down. He goes back to the store and tells Earl that he has to go out for a while.

He gets in his car and goes home. Gasoline gives him headaches, and he thinks about having to bring some camphor with him when he goes back to the store. He goes into his room and hides the money from Caddy in a strongbox in his room. Mother tells him to take some aspirin, but he doesn't. He gets back in his car and is almost to town when he passes a Ford driven by a man with a red bow tie. He looks closer and sees Quentin inside. He chases the Ford through the countryside, his headache growing by the second. Finally he sees the Ford parked near a field and gets out to look for them; he is sure they are hiding in the bushes somewhere having sex. The sun slants directly into his eyes, and his headache is pounding so hard he can't think straight. He reaches the place where he thinks they are, then hears a car start up behind him and drive off, the horn honking. He returns to his own car and sees that they have let the air out of one of his tires. He has to walk to the nearest farm to borrow a pump to blow it back up.

He returns to town, stopping in a drugstore to get a shot for his headache and the telegraph office; he has lost $200 on the stock market. Then he goes back to the store. A telegram has arrived from his stockbroker, advising him to sell. Instead he writes back to the broker, telling him he will buy. The store closes, and he drives home to the sounds of the band playing. At home, Quentin and Mother are fighting upstairs, and Luster asks him for a quarter to go to the show. Jason replies that he has two tickets already that he won't be using. Luster begs him for one, but he tells him he will only sell it to him for a nickel. Luster replies that he has no money, and Jason burns the tickets in the fireplace. Dilsey puts supper on the table for him and tells him that Quentin and Mother won't be coming to dinner.

 Jason insists that they come unless they are actually sick. They come down. At dinner, he offers Quentin an extra piece of meat and tells her and Mother that he lent his car to a stranger who needed to chase around one of his relatives who was running around with a town woman. Quentin looks guilty. Finally she stands up and says that if she is bad, it is only because Jason made her bad. She runs off and slams the door. Mother comments that she got all of Caddy's bad traits and all of Quentin's too; Jason takes this to mean that Mother thinks Quentin is the child of Caddy and her brother's incestuous relationship. They finish dinner, and Mother locks Quentin into her room for the night. Jason retires to his room for the night, still ruminating on the "dam New York jew" that is taking all of his money (263).

Analysis of April Sixth, 1928:

Jason's section appears more readable and more conventional; its style, while still stream-of-consciousness, is more chronological in progression, with very few jumps in time. It reads more like a monologue than a string of loosely connected events, like Benjy's and Quentin's sections were. Critics have claimed that the book progresses from chaos to order, from timelessness to chronology, from pure sensation to logical order, and from interiority to exteriority as it travels from Benjy's world of bright shapes and confused time through Jason's rigorously ordered universe to the third-person narrative of the fourth section. This third section represents a shift into the public world from the anguished interiority of Benjy and Quentin, and a shift into "normal" novelistic narrative as Jason recounts the story of the events of the day.

The first sentence of each section reveals a lot about the tone and themes of that particular part; this is especially true with Quentin's and Jason's section. In Quentin's section, the first sentence draws the reader into his obsession with being caught "in time" and includes two of the most common symbols in the section: time and shadows. Jason's section begins "once a bitch always a bitch, what I say," introducing both Jason's irrational anger not only toward his sister and her daughter, but toward the world in general, and also the rigorous logic that runs through this section (180). Jason's world is dominated by logic. Once a bitch, always a bitch; like mother, like daughter. Caddy was a whore, so is her daughter. He is furious at Caddy for ruining his chances at getting a job, and the way she ruined his chances was to bear an illegitimate daughter; therefore the way he will get revenge on her and simultaneously recoup the money he lost is through this same daughter. Caddy should have gotten him a job, but instead she had Quentin; therefore it is his right to embezzle the money she sends to Quentin in order to make up for the money he lost when he lost the job.

Jason's logic takes the form of literalism. Caddy is responsible for getting him money, no matter where it comes from. She sends money each month for Quentin's upkeep; he keeps Quentin clothed, housed and fed, so the money should go to him. He himself claims that he "make[s] it a rule never to keep a scrap of paper bearing a woman's hand," and yet he keeps the money from the checks Caddy sends him; this act fits into his system of logic because he cashes the checks, literally getting rid of her handwriting while keeping the money. He allows his mother to literally burn the checks she sends, but only after he has cashed them in secret. When Caddy gives him 100 dollars to "see [Quentin] a minute" he grants her request to the letter, holding the baby up to the carriage window as he drives by, literally allowing Caddy only a minute's glimpse (203-205). When Luster can't pay him a nickel for tickets to the show, he burns the tickets rather than give then to him (255). All of these acts fit into a rigid and literally defined logical order with which Jason structures his life.

Some readers see Jason's logic as a sign that he is more "sane" than the rest of his family. He is not retarded like Benjy or irrationally distraught like Quentin. He is able to live his life in a relatively normal way, with a logical order to both his narrative and his daily activities. However, Jason is just as blind, just as divorced from reality as his brothers. Like them, he tries to control his life through a strictly defined order, and when this is disrupted he collapses into irrationality. Benjy's system of order is the routine of everyday life, disrupted on a grand scale when Caddy leaves and on a small scale when Luster turns the horses the wrong way or changes the arrangement of his "graveyard."

 Quentin's system of order is the honor and purity he saw in himself and Caddy when they were young, disrupted when Caddy loses her virginity and leaves him. Jason's system of order is the rigidity of his logic, most of which has to do with money, and with this he tries to control the world around him. This system is disrupted when he loses his job opportunity (Quentin gets a career boost in going to Harvard, so should Jason get a career boost from Herbert Head), and again when Quentin refuses to come to dinner, skips school, or runs away with his money. For each brother, the systems he has established help to control everyday life, and the way they do so is by controlling Caddy. As long as she is motherly to Benjy, virginal to Quentin, and profftable to Jason, their worlds are in order. But these controlling mechanisms are inflexible, breaking down entirely as soon as Caddy or her daughter defies them.

Each brother remains irrationally connected with the past, particularly with memories of Caddy. Benjy relives his memories of Caddy all the time, making no distinction between the present and the past. Quentin goes through the routines of life washed in a sea of memories of Caddy. And Jason, for all he seems to have cut himself off from her entirely by refusing to mention her name, is perhaps the closest of all to her. Not only is he surrounded by reminders of her in the shape of her daughter and her money, but he is also constantly reminded of her in his anger. It has been eighteen years since she lost him his job opportunity, and yet he remains as angry with her as he ever was. Certainly this is no way to forget her, nor is it any more "sane" than his brothers.

Nor is Jason even a particularly good businessman, for all he obsesses about money. In the course of this one day he loses $200 in the stock market, for example; he has been warned that the market is in a state of flux and yet he leaves town on a wild goose chase when he should be watching the market and deliberately defies his broker's advice by buying when he should sell. He is rude and spiteful to his boss, which is certainly not the best way to succeed in business. He buys a car even though he knows that gasoline gives him headaches. And perhaps the clearest indication of his bad business sense is the fact that when Quentin steals his savings in the fourth section, she steals $7000. This is the money that he has been embezzling from Caddy and Quentin, and Caddy has been sending him $200 a month for fifteen years. By this point he should have amassed upwards of $30,000; where did it all go? Even though he thinks of little else besides money, he is not capable of handling it properly.

Mrs. Compson spends much of the novel telling Jason that he is different from Quentin and Benjy, that he is a Bascomb at heart. And yet, underneath the sadism, money-grubbing and isolation, Jason is surprisingly similar to his brothers. He is just as obsessed with Caddy as they are, and her sexuality shatters his world just as much as theirs.

Summary of April Eighth, 1928:

The section opens with Dilsey standing on the stoop of her house in her church clothes, then going back inside to change into her work clothes. It is raining and gray outside. Dilsey goes into the kitchen and brings some firewood with her; she can barely walk. She begins to make breakfast and Mrs. Compson calls her from upstairs; she wants her to fill her hot water bottle. Dilsey struggles up the stairs to get the hot water bottle, saying that Luster has overslept after the night's reveries. She goes outside and calls Luster; he appears from the cellar looking guilty and she tells him to get some firewood and take care of Benjy. He brings in a huge armful of firewood and leaves. A while later, Mrs. Compson calls her again, and she goes out to the stairs. Mrs. Compson wants to know when Luster will be up to take care of Benjy.

 Dilsey begins to slowly climb the stairs again, while Mrs. Compson inquires whether she had better go down and make breakfast herself. When Dilsey is halfway up the stairs, Mrs. Compson reveals that Benjy is not even awake yet, and Dilsey clambers back down. Luster emerges from the cellar again. She makes him get another armful of wood and go up to tend Benjy. The clock strikes five times, and Dilsey says "eight o'clock" (274). Luster appears with Benjy, who is described as big and pale, with white-blonde hair cut in a child's haircut and pale blue eyes. She sends Luster up to see if Jason is awake yet; Luster reports that he is up and angry already because one of the windows in his room is broken. He accuses Luster of breaking it, but Luster swears he didn't.

Jason and Mrs. Compson come to the table for breakfast. Although Mrs. Compson usually allows Quentin to sleep in on Sundays, Jason insists that she come and eat with them now. Dilsey goes upstairs to wake her. Mrs. Compson tells him that the black servants are all taking the afternoon off to go to church; the family will have to have a cold lunch. Upstairs Dilsey calls to Quentin, but receives no answer. Suddenly, Jason springs up and mounts the stairs, shouting for Quentin. There is still no response and he comes back down to snatch the key to her room from his mother. He fumbles at the lock and then finally opens the door. The room is empty. Jason runs to his own room and begins throwing things out of the closet. Mrs. Compson looks around Quentin's note for a suicide note, convinced that history is repeating itself. In his room, Jason finds that his strongbox has been broken into. He runs to the phone and calls the sheriff, telling him that he has been robbed, and that he expects the sheriff to get together a posse of men to help him search for Quentin. He storms out.

Luster comments that he bets Jason beat Quentin and now he is going for the doctor. Dilsey tells him to take Benjy outside. Luster tells her that he and Benjy saw Quentin climb out her window and down the pear tree last night. Dilsey goes back to her cabin and changes into her church clothes again. She calls for Luster and finds him trying to play a saw like one of the players did at the show last night. She tells him to get his cap and to come with her; they meet up with Frony and head to church, Benjy in tow. Dilsey carries herself with pride among the other blacks, and some of the children dare each other to touch Benjy. They take their seats as the mass starts.

The sermon will be delivered by a visiting preacher, Reverend Shegog. The preachers process in, and Reverend Shegog is so slight and nondescript as to attract no attention. But when he speaks, he holds their attention. First he speaks without accent "like a white man," describing the "recollection and the blood of the Lamb," then when this doesn't have much of an effect, he modulates into black dialect and delivers the same sermon again, describing the major events of Jesus' life and his resurrection. When he finishes, Benjy is rapt with attention and Dilsey is quietly weeping. As the leave the church, she states "I've seed de first en de last . . . . I seed de beginning, en now I sees de endin" (297).

They return to the house. Dilsey goes up to Mrs. Compson's room and checks on her; Mrs. Compson, still convinced that Quentin has killed herself, asks Dilsey to pick up the Bible that has fallen off the bed. Dilsey goes back downstairs and prepares lunch for the family, commenting that Jason will not be joining them.

Meanwhile, Jason is in his car driving to the sheriff's. When he gets there, nobody is prepared to leave as Jason requested. He enters the station, and the sheriff tells him that he will not help him find Quentin, because it was her own money she stole and because Jason drove her away. Jason drives away toward Mottson, the town where the traveling show will be next. He begins to get a headache and remembers that he has forgotten to bring any camphor with him. By the time he gets to Mottson he cannot see very well; he finds two Pullman cars that belong to the show and he enters one. Inside is an old man, and he asks him where Quentin and her boyfriend are. The man becomes angry and threatens him with a knife.

 Jason hits him on the head and he slumps to the floor. He runs from the car, and the old man comes out of the car with a hatchet in his hand. They struggle, and Jason falls to the ground. Some show people haul him to his feet and push him away. One of the men tells him that Quentin and her boyfriend aren't there, that they have left town. Jason goes back to his car and sits down, but he can't see to drive. He calls to some passing boys, asking if they will drive him back to Jackson for two dollars; they refuse. He sits a while longer in the car. A black man in overalls comes up to him and says that he will drive him for four dollars, but Jason refuses, then eventually acquiesces.

Back at the house, Luster takes Benjy out to his "graveyard," which consists of two blue glass bottles with jimson weeds sticking out of them. Luster hides one of the bottles behind his back, and Benjy starts to howl; Luster puts it back. He takes Benjy by the golf course and they watch the men playing. When one of them yells "caddie," Benjy begins to cry again. Frustrated, Luster repeats Caddy's name over and over, making him cry even louder. Dilsey calls them and they go to her cabin. Dilsey rocks Benjy and strokes his hair, telling Luster to go get his favorite slipper. When he begins to cry again, Dilsey asks Luster where T. P. is (T. P. is supposed to take Benjy to the graveyard as he does every Sunday). Luster tells her that he can drive the surrey instead of T. P., and she makes him promise to be good. They put Benjy into the surrey and hand him a flower to hold, and Luster climbs into the driver's seat.

 Dilsey takes the switch away from him and tells him that the horse knows the way. As soon as they are out of sight of the house, Luster stops the horse and picks a switch from the bushes along the road, then climbs back into the driver's seat, carrying himself like royalty. They approach the square and pass Jason in his car by the side of the road. Luster, carried away in his pride, turns the horse to the left of the statue in the square instead of to the right, breaking the pattern that Benjy is used to. Benjy begins to howl. As his voice gets louder and louder, Jason comes running and turns the horse around. When the objects they pass begin to go in the right direction again, Benjy hushes.

Analysis of April Eighth, 1928:

Readers commonly refer to this section of the novel as "Dilsey's section," although it is narrated in the third person. Dilsey plays a prominent role in this section, and even if she does not narrate this section, she serves a sort of moral lens through which to view the other characters in the section and, in fact, in the novel as a whole. The section contrasts Dilsey's slow, patient progress through the day with Jason's irrational pursuit of Quentin and Mrs. Compson's self-centered flightiness. As we watch Dilsey slowly climb up the stairs as Mrs. Compson watches to tend to Benjy, only to discover halfway up that he isn't even awake yet, we begin to sympathize with this wizened old woman. As we see her tenderly wiping Benjy's mouth as he eats, we come to see her as the only truly good person in the book. Even Caddy, the object of Benjy and Quentin's obsessions, was not as selflessly kind or as reliable as Dilsey. Throughout the course of the section, she is witness to any number of the Compson family's flaws, yet she never judges them.

The only statement she makes that resembles a judgement is her concern that Luster has inherited the "Compson devilment." Instead she stands calmly in the midst of the chaos of the disintegrating household, patiently bearing what she is dealt "like cows do in the rain" (272). Unlike any of the Compson family, Dilsey is capable of extending outside herself and her own needs. Each of the brothers is selfish in his own way; Benjy because he cannot take care of himself and relies on her to, Quentin because he is too wrapped up in his ideals, Jason because of his greed and anger. Mrs. Compson is even worse, passive-aggressively manipulating the members of the family as she lies in her sickbed. And Miss Quentin is too troubled and lonely to sympathize with anyone else. Dilsey, however, in her kindness, ungrudgingly takes care of each family member with tenderness and respect.

In her selflessness, Dilsey conforms to the Christian ideal of goodness in self-sacrifice; therefore it is not surprising that the section takes place on Easter Sunday. This section of the novel resounds with biblical allusions and symbols and revolves around the sermon delivered by Reverend Shegog at Dilsey's church. The sermon profoundly affects Dilsey, who leaves the church in tears. Perhaps this is because the sermon seems to describe perfectly the disintegrating Compson family. Benjamin is the youngest son described as being "sold into Egypt" in the Appendix to the novel; here Shegog lectures on the Israelites who "passed away in Egypt" (295). Matthews notes that Jason is a "wealthy pauper" (11), fitting Shegog's description: "wus a rich man: whar he now, O breddren? Wus a po man: whar he now, O sistuhn?" (295). He has embezzled thousands of dollars from his sister, yet he lives like a poor man. Even Mrs. Compson, Matthews claims, is described in Shegog's sermon: "I hears de weepin en de lamentation of de po mammy widout de salvation en de word of God" (296). Matthews even suggests that Quentin is implied in the voice of one congregation member that rises "like bubbles rising in water" (11).

Much has been made of the religious symbolism in this chapter. Aside from Shegog's sermon there is Benjy's age: he is 33 years old, the age Christ was when he died. Like Christ, or like a priest, he is celibate. And he seems to be one of the only "pure" members of the family, incapable of doing anything evil merely because of his handicaps. But he is not the only Christlike member of the family. Quentin, the daughter of the woman whose brother wanted to remember her as both virginal and motherly, has an unknown father, just as Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary, had no earthly father.

 Like Christ, Quentin suffers a misunderstood and mistreated existence. But most compelling is the fact of her disappearance on Easter Sunday. Just as the disciples found Christ's tomb empty, the wrappings from his body discarded on the floor, Jason opens Quentin's room to find it empty: "the bed had not been disturbed. On the floor lay a soiled undergarment of cheap silk a little too pink, from a half open bureau drawer dangled a silk stocking" (282). If Quentin is a Christ figure, however, she seems to have a very un-Christlike effect on her family. Whereas the pure and virginal Christ's disappearance signaled the end of death and the beginning of new life in heaven, the promiscuous Quentin's disappearance signals the destruction of her family.

Other elements of the section seem more apocalyptic: there is Shegog's name, for instance, which sounds much like the Gog and Magog mentioned in the Book of Revelation. There is the story's preoccupation with the end of the Compson family: Jason is the last of the Compsons, and he is childless, his house literally rotting away. And finally there is Dilsey's comment that she has seen the first and the last, the beginning and the end: although the meaning of this statement is unclear, she seems to be discussing the end of the Compson family as well as her life, and perhaps the end of the world. Dilsey has borne witness to the alpha and the omega of the Compson family.

Nevertheless, none of this religious symbolism is particularly well-developed. It is impossible to tell who, if anyone, is the Christ figure in this Easter story. It is impossible to know what will happen to Quentin, or if the family will really dissolve as Dilsey seems to think it will. Nor is it particularly clear why Reverend Shegog's sermon has such an effect on Dilsey or what his actual message is; he has seen the recollection and the blood of the Lamb, but why is this important? What should the congregation do about it? What can they do in order to see this themselves?

The problem with this last section is that it doesn't satisfactorily bring the story of the Compson family to a close. The reader is left with a glimpse of the family's psychology and slow demise, but no real answers, no redemption. We don't know what will happen to the family or its servants: will Jason send Benjy to Jackson? Will Dilsey die? Will Quentin get away? John Matthews has pointed out that the story doesn't really end but keeps repeating itself.

This is partially due to its nature as a stream-of-consciousness narrative; none of the three brothers' sections is purely chronological, therefore when the story ends their memories continue on. Matthews claims that the fourth section does not "[complete] the shape of the fiction's form" or "retrospectively order" the rest of the book; in fact it does not have much to do with the first two sections at all (9). The Compson clock ticks away toward the family's imminent demise, but it chimes the wrong hours, mangling the metaphor. Reverend Shegog's sermon does not have the intended effect, so he modifies it and tells it again: it "succeeds because it is willing to say, and then say again" (12). The story doesn't end; its loose ends are not tied together. Instead it constantly repeats. Faulkner himself said that the novel grew because he wrote the story of Caddy once (Benjy's section), and that didn't work, so he wrote it again (Quentin's section), but that wasn't enough either, so he wrote it again (Jason's section), and finally wrote it again (Dilsey's section), and even this wasn't good enough. The story of Caddy and the Compsons does not end, but repeats itself eternally in its characters' memories.