

## Discussion Questions for *As I Lay Dying*

1. Do you think that the dialogue interfered with the storyline? Why or why not?
2. Did you think that the stream of consciousness technique interfered with the plot? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that the constant shifting among the characters was effective? Why or why not?
4. The notes to my version of the novel (Harper Vintage) indicate that the title comes from Agamemnon's speech to Odysseus in Hades, which is paraphrased: "As I lay dying my wife looked at me. . . "Do you think Faulkner intended to portray Anse as being betrayed by Addie. This raises several questions:
  - a. Is Anse a noble or heroic character, as was Agamemnon?
  - b. Did Anse journey to Jefferson solely to bury Addie, or to get his dentures and come home with Addie's sister?
  - c. Did Anse betray Addie?
  - d. Were Cash and Darl Anse's sons, and did Anse suspect that they were not his sons?
5. It seems that Vardaman and Darl were not mentally competent, yet people seemed to think that they were spiritual or mystical in some way. What do you think, and why?
6. Is the sequence of events in this story believable? Why or why not?
7. Did you (or could you) identify with any of the characters in this novel? Why or why not?
8. There are passages in the novel, especially those narrated by Vardaman, Darl and Addie where Faulkner seems to be attempting to impart some kind of spiritual truth. Do you think these passages are effective? Why or why not?
9. Do any of the characters in this novel grow in any way?
10. Does Faulkner's characterization of rural southern people ring true? Did his characterization annoy or bother you? Why or why not?
11. Rhetorical question 1 – who the hell names their kids Jewell (a man) Darl, Vardaman or Dewey Dell (and what the hell is a dewey dell anyway; a moist valley)?
12. Rhetorical question 2 – can anyone really be as dumb as these people are portrayed in the novel?