



The Sound and the Fury (Vintage International)

By William Faulkner

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“I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire. . . . I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all of your breath trying to conquer it. Because no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools.” —from *The Sound and the Fury*

The Sound and the Fury is the tragedy of the Compson family, featuring some of the most memorable characters in literature: beautiful, rebellious Caddy; the manchild Benjy; haunted, neurotic Quentin; Jason, the brutal cynic; and Dilsey, their black servant. Their lives fragmented and harrowed by history and legacy, the character's voices and actions mesh to create what is arguably Faulkner's masterpiece and one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The ostensible subject of *The Sound and the Fury* is the dissolution of the Compsons, one of those august old Mississippi families that fell on hard times and wild eccentricity after the Civil War. But in fact what William Faulkner is really after in his legendary novel is the kaleidoscope of consciousness--the overwrought mind caught in the act of thought. His rich, dark, scandal-ridden story of squandered fortune, incest (in thought if not in deed), madness, congenital brain damage, theft, illegitimacy, and stoic endurance is told in the interior voices of three Compson brothers: first Benjy, the "idiot" man-child who blurs together three decades of inchoate sensations as he stalks the fringes of the family's former pasture; next Quentin, torturing himself brilliantly, obsessively over Caddy's lost virginity and his own failure to recover the family's honor as he wanders around the seedy fringes of Boston; and finally Jason, heartless, shrewd, sneaking, nursing a perpetual sense of injury and outrage against his outrageous family.

If Benjy's section is the most daringly experimental, Jason's is the most harrowing. "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say," he begins, lacing into Caddy's illegitimate daughter, and then proceeds to hurl mud at blacks, Jews, his sacred Compson ancestors, his glamorous, promiscuous sister, his doomed brother Quentin, his ailing mother, and the long-suffering black servant Dilsey who holds the family together by sheer force of character.

Notoriously "difficult," *The Sound and the Fury* is actually one of Faulkner's more accessible works once you get past the abrupt, unannounced time shifts--and certainly the most powerful emotionally. Everything is here: the complex equilibrium of pre-civil rights race relations; the conflict between Yankee capitalism and Southern agrarian values; a meditation on time, consciousness, and Western philosophy. And all of it is rendered in prose so gorgeous it can take your breath away. Here, for instance, Quentin recalls an autumnal encounter back home with the old black possum hunter Uncle Louis:

And we'd sit in the dry leaves that whispered a little with the slow respiration of our waiting and with the slow breathing of the earth and the windless October, the rank smell of the lantern fouling the brittle air, listening to the dogs and to the echo of Louis' voice dying away. He never raised it, yet on a still night we have heard it from our front porch. When he called the dogs in he sounded just like the horn he carried slung on his shoulder and never used, but clearer, mellower, as though his voice were a part of darkness and silence, coiling out of it, coiling into it again. WhoOoooo. WhoOoooo. WhoOoooooooooooooooooooo.

What Faulkner has created is a modernist epic in which characters assume the stature of gods and the primal family events resonate like myths. It is *The Sound and the Fury* that secures his place in what Edmund Wilson called "the full-dressed post-Flaubert group of Conrad, Joyce, and Proust." --*David Laskin*

Review

"I am in awe of Faulkner's Benjy, James's Maisie, Flaubert's Emma, Melville's Pip, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein--each of us can extend the list. . . . I am interested in what prompts and makes possible this process of entering what one is estranged from." --Toni Morrison

"No man ever put more of his heart and soul into the written word than did William Faulkner. If you want to know all you can about that heart and soul, the fiction where he put it is still right there." --Eudora Welty

From the Trade Paperback edition.

From the Publisher

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Roland Collins:

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Alice Concannon:

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