

Faulkner's the sound  
and the fury: new  
ideas or common  
belief



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Written in 1929 by William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* is a work of art. The story is about the Compson's, a family deeply rooted in the South. The novel is told through four different points of view; Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and Dilsey.

Dilsey Gibson and her family are the black servants to the Compson's. Many who read this believe Faulkner represents Dilsey as the strongest character throughout the book. Just as he makes Dilsey into the most moral character in the book, despite her being black, he makes just as many disparaging comments at her and her family's offense. In this novel, it can be disputed whether or not Faulkner is just submitting to the common beliefs of black people, rather than trying to raise the opinions of them." She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose..."", when Faulkner describes Dilsey on this page he is representing all of what Dilsey has lost becoming a servant to the Compsons (Faulkner 265).

Most may believe that this quote signifies a negative aspect, when actually it could be a symbol for hope. Although almost everything from Dilsey's life has been taken away from her she is still alive-not beaten. This is compared to Mrs. Compson. While Dilsey is a black woman, in a time where blacks were not considered real human beings, Mrs. Compson is from a once great Southern family. Despite Dilsey being in these conditions she continues to fight and live her life, caring for the Compson home and being a mother-like figure to the children. Mrs.

Compson on the other hand must stay in bed because of her " headaches" and her constant " illnesses". In addition, Mrs. Compson does not care for

Benjy, both physically and emotionally. She continuously refers to Benjy as “a judgment on me” (5). This is in contrast with Dilsey and Benjy's relationship. She doesn't feel ashamed of him, and even brings him to church with her. This all represents what was previously known, Dilsey is always thought of to be the wisest, strongest, and practical character in the novel. As well as Dilsey being a main example of Faulkner representing the increase of black structure, other people from Dilsey's family show models of this.

For instance, in the very first page of the book Luster, a boy probably half the age of Benjy, is taking care of him. One must wonder where Benjy's “real” family is. In continuation, we see in flashbacks that Versh and T. P. also take care of Benjy on multiple occasions. These situations can also relate to an event from the previous paragraph. Mrs. Compson is too embarrassed to take Benjy to church with her, yet Dilsey gladly takes him with her.

A final example, could be when Benjy flashes back to a scene from 1910, Roskus says “Taint no luck on this place...” (29). From this conversation between Dilsey and her husband Roskus, one can deduce that Faulkner is using this as a way to allude to the fact that the servants are more aware of the Compsons' downfall than they themselves are. Contrary to the preceding paragraphs, Faulkner also uses just as many degrading comments to the Gibsons. In the book the words “nigger” and “negro” are used in more than 50 separate occasions, both by adults and children. Another occurrence in the book comes from the Quentin section.

When Quentin finds Deacon, a black man, and starts to talk to him he thinks, “he was looking at me...and suddenly I saw Roskus” (99). He relates Roskus

to Deacon because they are blacks, and all blacks are equal only to each other. Jason also thinks very low of anything relating to black people in the novel. In Jason's mind, people is synonymous with only white people, and "niggers" are how he refers to blacks. For instance, he says, "six niggers that can't even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan of bread and meat to balance them"(180).

In these examples it can be seen that Faulkner may be illustrating what he has grown up around not trying to change it. Finally, there is the case of the Dilsey section. There are two arguments concerning this, the first one being that it is a sign of hope. With Dilsey being the strongest character, ending the novel with the focus on her could be a symbol for a new beginning. The opposing argument to this is based on the fact that the first three sections are narrated by the character they focus on. While the Dilsey section focuses mainly on Dilsey, Faulkner is actually the narrator in this section. This decision of his could be viewed as Faulkner's idea that a black person's thoughts aren't worth reading/writing about. In retrospect, Faulkner's writing of this novel can have different interpretations.

One being that of optimism for the south, the other solely on the negative aspects. Whatever Faulkner's motifs behind *The Sound and the Fury*, it can't be argued that this novel is one of the best written in literature.