

Cash bundren essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is about a poor family's struggle to cope with the death of their mother Addie and transport her body to the Jefferson Cemetery. Their father Anse is a low life, he is only traveling with them to Jefferson so he can get himself a set of false teeth. The children never really had a loving relationship with their mother or father, Addie never wanted children, and Anse is too wrapped up in himself to care. "Anse of course is the real monster, refusing to work lest he sweat himself to death..." (Wagner 94).

Cash Bundren the oldest son of Anse and Addie Bundren is characterized as the diligent, kind, and dedicated leader of the family. Not only do Cash's actions prove these qualities but also the descriptions of him by other narrators prove Cash to be a hardworking, loyal man. As his mother lies dying in bed he builds her a coffin. Cash is a perfectionist; he has each board approved by Addie. He wants her to be happy with the job he is doing. Darl the second to eldest son of the Bundrens treats Cash with respect and acknowledges his talents in the beginning of the book, "A good carpenter Cash is... Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in; it will give her confidence and comfort" (4-5).

While Anse wallows in self-pity, Cash steps up to fill his fatherly void. All of the Bundren children look up to Cash. Cash finds Vardaman missing right after seeing Peabody's team run away; he goes out to find him. He also knows that Vardaman drilled holes into Addie's coffin because he still believes Addie is alive, even boring holes into Addie's face but cash still doesn't yell at him, he simply mends the holes back. Anse of course, does not care much about Cash's work or helpfulness. Even though Jewel shows

little respect to Cash, Cash is still kind to Jewel and looks after him. When Darl and Cash become suspicious of Jewel sneaking out at night, Cash tells Darl not to confront Jewel because it would do no good; Instead, Cash follows Jewel out one night and finds he has been working on clearing a field to raise enough money to buy a horse. When Jewel arrives with the horse Anse gets angry, Cash defends Jewel and calms Anse's nerves by saying " Jewel worked hard for his horse and only spent his hard earned money on it" (135). Cash also consoles Addie who begins to cry after seeing her son defy his father. Later in the story Darl catches a barn on fire, trying to cremate his mother's corpse to end their journey.

He faces jail time, Cash knows it is best for Darl to be sent to Jefferson, " It will be better for you...down there it will be quiet with none of the bothering and stuff, it'll be better for you, Darl" (238). Cash's leadership is seen during the beginning of the family's trip to Jefferson. The Bridge that is the fastest route to Jefferson is destroyed by a flood. Anse, being the father, should be the one to guide the family across the river, but because he is so lazy and dependent, he leaves the others to figure out how to cross. Cash takes charge and gives orders for the rest of the family to cross, while he, Darl, and Jewel try to get the wagon across. Cash puts everything into his hands and maneuvers the team through the river as he tells Jewel to support him with his horse. Cash ends up losing the team and nearly dying himself, Cash blames himself for the loss and his broken leg. When Cash was working on Addie's coffin, Anse comes out to observe, Cash tells him to go back into the house and out of the rain. It took a few times telling him but even Anse

listens to Cash. Cash obviously knows what is best, and all of the Bundrens trust his decisions.

Throughout the entire story Cash demonstrated his courage and strength. For example when crossing the river and the wagon becomes unsteady, Darl jumps to safety. Cash on the other hand tries to hold on to the coffin in place and save to wagon. He holds on until the wagon goes almost completely under. Cash never screams or curses or acted scared in any way. Rather he keeps his calm in the face of the disaster. A second example of Cash's courage is when he finally emerges from the river with a re-broken leg. He never frets the break or even acts as if he is in pain, instead he reassures the family, " I can last it, it ain't but one more day. It ain't no bother to speak of" (207) he doesn't want to slow their journey in anyway. When Anse wants to put cement on Cash's leg, Cash doesn't object to the terrible idea, he allows it. Seemingly knowing it would do more bad than good, he only wants to get his mother to her resting place.

Cash is extremely dedicated, to his work and to his family. When Cash was building Addie's coffin he worked nonstop through the night and through rain. He puts a lot of hard work, precision, and time into her coffin. " I made it on a bevel" (82). Even though it would take longer to bevel the coffin, and take much more work, he was dedicated to giving Addie a proper box to lie in. " it is better to build a tight chicken coop, than a shoddy courthouse" (234).

All of the younger siblings respect Cash. The most valuable thing Cash owns is his tools throughout the entire book, Cash has his tools by his side and

makes sure that their always with him. Darl describes briefly Cash's love for his tools when he quickly returns to them after bringing in Addie's coffin: "He has returned to the trestles, stooped again in the lantern's feeble glare as he gathers up his tools and wiped them on a cloth carefully and puts them into the box with its leather sling to go over his shoulder" (50). When Cash breaks his leg trying to cross the river, his brothers find all his tools and place them by his side for the rest of the trip because they know how much his tools mean to him. Dewey Dell has much respect for Cash; she spends most of her time on the journey to Jefferson tending to Cash. Caring for her injured brother is one example. She wipes vomit from his face with the hem of her skirt. She understands Cash when he is asking about his tools. She is there for him. Vardaman, the youngest of the Bundrens, views Cash respectfully, but as respectfully as a seven year old can. He merely says a few things about Cash; mostly that he is his brother and so is Darl.

Since Cash narrates so little of the first half of the book, he emerges in the second half as the most rational narrator. He definitely seems to have the most sense of any of the Bundren Children, and Even Anse. Cash usually doesn't say much, except for their last two chapters but he reveals many things. Cash is very logical, which is seen when he talks about the reason why he built his mother's coffin the way he did (82). Cash approaches issues with caution and reasoning, like when he tells Jewel to be patient because their father "ain't as spry as him" (259).

Throughout the description of Cash and his actions, he can be seen as the hero of his family. Maybe the only one with the true essence of kindness and faithfulness. Even as the corruptness of the Bundren family is revealed, Cash

remains the only one pure heart as he supports his family through its expedition. Cash ' s dedication to his family can be seen not only in the beginning when he is healthy, working and leading, but also when he is injured, encouraging the others to press on and ignore his problems.

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