

# Addie bundren in faulkner's as i lay dying

Literature



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Addie Bundren is the mother of the Bundren family, the main subjects of William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying*. The novel is centered on her death and burial as her family travels to bury her with her family in Jefferson. Throughout the novel, the reader gets an understanding of who Addie Bundren is, but only through other characters' memories and perceptions of her; excluding the chapter where Addie speaks for herself where she gives the reader a true account of her thoughts and feelings about the world and her family.

Reading Addie's section of the novel, the reader discovers several innermost thoughts and secrets the mother is harboring. Addie does not look forward to her life. Stating things such as: "I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time" and "And when I would have to look at them day after day...I would hate my father for having ever planted me" (Faulkner 19-170) tells the reader that Addie is not satisfied with her life.

She has no family as all her relatives are dead; Addie finds comfort in death. As a schoolteacher, she only looks forward to when the children misbehave, so she can discipline them. "Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life..." (Faulkner 170) shows Addie longing to be noticed and important. She wants to leave a lasting memory. This dissatisfaction is not only with her job, but with her husband and children. She never speaks of Anse, her husband, lovingly. She speaks more of obligation.

She never says that she loves him, the word holds no meaning in her life: "That is when I learned that words are no good; that words don't ever fit even

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what they are trying to say at...Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack...Let Anse use it, if he wants to. So that it was Anse or love; love or Anse: it didn't matter" (Faulkner 171-172). Anse expects several children, in which Addie, mentally, says that Anse is dead to her.

He meant nothing. She gives him children because she knows that is her duty as a wife, but she states she never asked for them (Faulkner 174). Addie is also disconnected from her children. They are a part of Anse and they violate her aloneness. When she gives birth to their first son, Cash, she expresses that " living is terrible and this [motherhood] was the answer to it (Faulkner 170). She expresses a desire to kill Anse when she discovers she is pregnant with their second child, Darl (Faulkner 172).

She gives birth to Dewey Dell, to give Anse a legitimate child after having Jewel, her love child from another man and then Vardaman. Giving him children, she says " And then I could get ready to die" (Faulkner 176). The children, just as Anse, she feels obligated too because it is expected. She never expresses a want for her husband or her children. Addie is trapped in her life, simply going through the motions until she reaches her death. The only child she feels emotion for is Jewel. He is not Anse's child, but a love child she has from an affair with Reverend Whitfield.

Jewel is not born out of an obligation to Anse, but from a moment of passion that Addie does not feel with her husband. This is why she treats him better than her other children. She calls Jewel her " salvation" and " her cross" (Faulkner 168), saying he is both her reward and her punishment. Jewel does not belong to Anse, meaning that Jewel was solely Addie's child in their

marriage. She finally had something to call her own in her life. From Addie's own personal insight, the reader realizes the loneliness and frustration she feels with her obligation to her husband and family.

She does not express love or compassion for her family. She nourishes them by taking care of them, but does not nurture them the way that is expected of a mother. Addie does not change or grow throughout the novel. She dies in the first half of the book, but her death gives the plot life. Through her death, she makes her family feel the sense of obligation that she has lived with through the years. Through her death, Addie has gotten her revenge against her family. She serves as an ancillary character, who proves to be minor in action, but detrimental to the plot as it unfolds.