

# Symbolism in as i lay dying



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the novel *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner each chapter is written through a different character's perspective. The book follows the Bundren's family on their journey to fulfill Addie's dying wish. There were many motifs and themes throughout the book but one of the most important ones was the use of symbolism. Cash's tools and Anse's farm equipment symbolizing their stability becomes threatened from the carelessness of the Bundren's journey. The coffin stood the burden of dysfunction the Addie's death put on the family.

There were also a couple instances where Faulkner used animals to symbolize emotions and as a comparison to a couple of the characters. Cash was the eldest sibling in the Bundren's family, he was a carpenter and one that was very fond of his tools. The tools themselves represented Cash's true identity. If the tools were lost or not beside him he felt lost. Cash couldn't live without his tools, they were his solitary means of representation. When he's not safely with his tools he loses himself, his sanity, and consciousness goes out the door.

The tools give Cash his sanity and security. He invests his time putting them to use rather than to mourn over his mother's death. In return of their beneficiary purpose he donates time to "(gather) his tools and (wipe) them on a cloth carefullt and (put) them into a box" (80). The other characters sees the security that his tools bring to him and they repect that. When Cash was injured and the tools were scattered along the river the whole family helps out and collects them. " Vernon got them (tools) and put them into the wagon. Dewey Dell lifted Cash's head so he could see them"(181).

Darl observes the strong correlation between Cash and his tools as he watches Cash as he moves drags his body " where he could reach his hand and touch them when he felt better"(186). Cash's family is also a deep part of him, their happiness and security also keeps him sane, by collecting his tools their showing their appreciation of him. In order to make the journey to the burial site more competent Anse mortgages his most needed farming equipment, Cash's gramophone fund and the sale of Jewel's horse to purchase a team of mules.

The farm equipment guaranteed the family's stability but in an effort to make it through the trip Anse jeopardized the very tools that was required to make it through. This represents the major sacrifices that the characters made to fulfill Addie's dying wish. The coffin stood the burden of dysfunction the Addie's death put on the family, they were mourning and struggling with coming to terms of the death. Cash was a very stable young man and he built his mother's cabin time effort, and put love into it but it became a burden very quickly.

Addie was accidentally placed in the coffin upside down, Vardamen, the youngest sibling couldn't find a way to cope with his mother's death and he was concerned about Addie not being able to breathe from inside the coffin, therefore he drilled holes but unfortunately drilled right into his mother's head. " And the next morning they found him in his shirt tail laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box bored clean full of holes. " (73) The Bundrens's lives were turned upside down and off balance as well as Addie's corpse.

The coffin became the center of the family's dysfunction, the Bundrens' family feels that in order to move on and accept Addie's death they must put the coffin to rest. There were also a couple instances where Faulkner used animals to symbolize emotions and as a comparison to a couple of the characters. After Addie's death the children began to use animals as symbols of their deceased mother. " My mother is a fish. " (84) This statement came from Vardaman who caught a fish the day his mother died, because the fish and also his mother was dead he felt that he mother must be a fish.

Vardaman couldn't comprehend what had happened to his mother but then later understands that his mother is not in the same state that she used to be in, she is in the state of death, just like the fish. Dewey Dell also compares her problems to an animal but instead of her deceased mother, she compares herself because she has a more bigger problem. After Addie's death Dewey Dell goes to the barn hoping to find Vardaman but as she leaves she is confronted by a cow that needed to be milked. " The cow nuzzles at me, moaning. You'll just have to wait. What you got in you aint nothing to what I got in me, even if you are a woman too" (63).

Dewey's pregnancy is being compared to a cow that is needed to be milked.. The milk that the cow has is similar to the child that Dewey Dell is carrying. They're both unwanted burdens that Dewey Dell doesn't want to deal with, the unpleasantness is shown in this comparison. Darl compares Jewel's love for his mother to his love for his horse. On the ride home Darl announces to Jewel that their mother is dead. Darl says to Jewel " But it's not your horse that's dead" and says to himself later, " I cannot love my mother because I have no mother. Jewel's mother is a horse"(95).

Darl comes to a conclusion that since Jewel love his house as much as he loves his own mother, than Jewel's mother must be a horse. This comparison shows that Jewel loves his mother above all else, just like the love Darl had for his mother. William Faulkner used symbolism to show how some of the characters were feelings and how they were coping with the death of Addie. Cash's tools, the coffin, and the animals all represented the emotions and hardships they faced on their journey. It gave us an extra look into the mind of the characters, which was crucial in understanding the novel.