

Reading William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

Carl Rollyson

Five sessions on Zoom: April 27, May 11, May 25, June 15, June 29, 6:30-8:30 EST

Reading *The Sound and the Fury* in the context of Faulkner's time and place is a concrete way of understanding a novel that has often been deemed difficult and experimental. An introductory session will be devoted to Faulkner's family background and its place within Southern history, with specific attention to the events and people that inspired the creation of his first great novel. A brief summary of the novel's four sections will also help to orient the reading experience of the novel. The next four sessions will be devoted to the four sections of the novel titled, April Seventh 1928, June 2, 1910, April 6, 1928, April 8, 1928.

Each session will begin with a basic discussion of what happens in the section and then of how the section is arranged so as to fit into the totality of the whole work. It is recommended that you read the entire novel after the first session, not worrying too much about what you do not understand, and then re-reading each section in preparation for each class session. Certain Faulkner biographies will be helpful in situating your reading of the novel, but none are required for the course.

Required Reading: If possible, use the Library of America text, *William Faulkner: Novels 1926-1929*. I will sometimes refer to page numbers in that text, but other editions are acceptable. However, the Library of America edition includes an appendix on the Compson family that Faulkner wrote several years after publication of the novel as an historical overview of the characters and events. The Library of America edition also includes a very detailed Chronology.

Recommended Reading: Carl Rollyson, *The Life of William Faulkner*, volume 1. My biography will provide a detailed approach to the novel, section by section. It would be helpful, but not necessary, to read parts of other biographies that deal with *The Sound and the Fury*, such as Jay Parini, *One Matchless Time: A Life of William Faulkner*; Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, one volume edition; Robert Hamblin, *Myself and the World: A Biography of William Faulkner*; Philip Weinstein, *Becoming Faulkner: The Art and Life of William Faulkner*; Frederick Karl, *William Faulkner: American Writer*. If you would like a short biographical/critical introduction to Faulkner I would recommend Hamblin's book listed above, or Philip Weinstein's incisive *Simply Faulkner*.

April 27: Introduction

May 11: Section 1: April 7, 1928

May 25: Section 2: June 2, 1910

June 8: Section 3: April 6, 1928

June 22: Section 4: June 8, 1928

### **About the instructor**

Carl Rollyson, Professor Emeritus at Baruch College, The City University of New York, is the author of the two volume *The Life of William Faulkner* for University of Virginia Press. He has also published numerous biographies of literary figures such as Sylvia Plath, Susan Sontag,

Lillian Hellman, Amy Lowell, Rebecca West, and Norman Mailer. His writing has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Criterion*, and the *Washington Post*.