Partial Annotation of The Sound and the Fury

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"Annotation Project: The Sound and the Fury"

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A partial annotation of William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury, this project focuses on the Quentin section, specifically, pages 125-145 of the First Vintage International Edition, October 1990. Annotations define and explain selected words and phrases from the text that are likely to be unknown, unfamiliar, or misunderstood by the average reader. This project examines linguistics, archaic words, and colloquialisms in some depth, while still including aspects of rural life (i.e. facts, folklore, customs, songs, and sayings); references to local history, laws, and customs; analogues; and various allusions and references. Further, it reflects extensive research drawn from literary criticism, numerous dictionaries and other reference materials, and linguistic text books. All entries are organized by page and line number.

Abbreviations

Reference Works
DAE1 A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles Vol. 1
DAE2 A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles Vol. 2
DAE3 A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles Vol. 3
DAE4 A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles Vol. 4
DAI A Dictionary of American Idioms
DAS Dictionary of American Slang
DWPO Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins
EWD Encarta World English Dictionary
HDA Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang
NDAS New Dictionary of American Slang
OED The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary
OTCE The Oxford Thesaurus of Current English
SOED Supplement to The Oxford English Dictionary

Critical Works
FP Faulkner’s People
FSW Faulkner and Southern Womanhood
WW Who’s Who in Faulkner
RR Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed
QSE Quentin Compson’s Scouting Expedition on June 2, 1910
ARE A Rose for Emily
HEL A History of the English Language

Annotations


125.25 land of the kike home of the wop: A reference to the Northeastern United States, probably the Boston and New York areas. It is noted that in the early 20th century ethnic minorities in the US were composed of immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Poland, and other European countries who emigrated into America during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of these were of Catholic and Jewish faiths. They were concentrated in the urban areas with low-status jobs such as the Northeast (Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman. The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America, 5th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997, p. 157). See Word List 145.22 wops and 125.12 kike.

126.3 wretch: There are many definitions of this word. Three seem to be applicable to this use (1) a person driven out of or away from his native country, (2) one who is sunk in deep distress, sorrow,
misfortune, or poverty; a miserable, unhappy, or unfortunate person; a poor hapless being, and (3) a vile, sorry, or despicable person; a mean or contemptible creature (OED, p. 3837).

126.9 switches: A thin rods or cane, thin flexible sticks, especially used for punishment (Encarta World English Dictionary, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 1804).

126.31 parcel: A quantity of anything or a number of things, especially goods, put together or wrapped up in a single package that is usually moderate or small in size. More recently, it was frequently used in reference to packages wrapped in brown paper (OED, p. 2076).

127.1 coppers: Copper money; a copper coin; a penny or half penny; a cent of the United states. The term is still used in reference to the bronze which has superseded the copper coinage (OED, p. 554).

127.29 stay clear of them: stay away from them -- colloquial or archaic speech.

128.16 buggy: a light one-horse, sometimes two-horse, vehicle for the transportation of one or two people. In American they have four wheels and in England and India have two. The term was used especially in the US (OED, p. 290).

128.16 Doc Peabody: According to Kirk, Doc Peabody is “a 300-pound doctor who used to let the Compson children hang onto his buggy and ride” (Robert W. Kirk. Faulkner’s People, Berkley: University of California Press, 1963, p. 36). His full name is Dr. Lucius Quintus Peabody and he is a regular in Jefferson as he has roles in several of Faulkner’s other works including: Sartoris, As I Lay Dying, The Hamlet, The Town, The Reivers, and “Beyond” (FP, p. 343).

128.24 delicate . . . up: This entire passage reflects the feminine nature of women; that is, what makes them female and possibly what makes the men fear or misunderstand them. Roberts coins this “the badge of women’s Otherness” (Diane Roberts. Faulkner and Southern Womanhood, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994, p. 113). Literally it describes women’s menstrual cycle as Faulknerian men view it. To Faulkner’s male characters menstruation is traditionally seen as fundamentally dirty, or unclean, as shown through the phrases “periodic filth between two moons balanced” and “Liquid putrefaction” (FSW, p. 113).

128.32 honeysuckle: Roberts writes that “Honeysuckle is a disorderly plant, spreading smothering vines bearing flowers with overwhelming scent” (FSW, p. 117). It is used by Quentin throughout his section in relation to female sexuality; in fact, it appears in connection with Quentin’s definition of menstruation (see 128.24 Delicate . . . up), further the connection immobilizes him as the smell threatens to suffocate him (FSW, p. 117).

129.9 about: Synonymous with: around, here and there, to and fro, from place to place, and hither and thither (Christine A. Lindberg, ed. The Oxford Thesaurus of Current English, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 3).

129.22 station: A stop or stopping place, also a terminus, terminal or depot (OTCE, p. 714). Mostly in the US a place on a coach route where a stop is made for change of horses and for meals. It more explicitly relates to a railway station, especially the building or group of buildings in such a place (OED, p. 3028).

129.32 frock coat: A double-breasted coat with skirts extending almost to the knees, which are not cut away but of the same length in front as behind (OED, p. 1084).

130.11 the college: Harvard. It is the largest and most well know college in the Boston area at the time, and Quentin answers him affirmatively in the following line.

130.13 Anse: Kirk lists Anse as the “Marshal of a Cambridge suburb, who takes Quentin Compson in custody on the charge of abducting a little Italian girl” (FP, p. 28). Anse is a recurring character name. Faulkner created three other characters named Anse who were all separate characters including: Anselm Holland (Old man Anse), Anselm Holland (Young Man Anse), and Anse Bundren (Margaret Patricia Ford and Suzanne Kincaid, Who’s Who in Faulkner, Louisiana State University Press, 1963, p. 18, 57). Interestingly, Anse Bundren from As I Lay Dying, seems also to hold a position of powerful authority as a father figure; however, it is only an illusion that everyone contrives for him in order to conceal his true lack (Carolyn Porter. “A Feminist Approach to Faulkner.” Faulkner and Psychology: Faulkner and Yaknapatawpha, 1991, Eds. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1994, p. 97).

130.14 livery stable: A stable where horses are kept as livery, or rented out, with or without carriages (OED, p. 1644).

130.14 marshal: A person who tends horses, especially one who treats their diseases. It can also be the title of a person charged with certain police duties or the office of inflicting punishment (OED, p. 1731).

130.16 much obliged: To oblige is to cause someone to feel indebted by doing something for that person (EWD, p. 1247). According to the OED obliged means to be bound by law, duty, or any moral tie,
especially one of gratitude, or to be under obligation. It is also commonly used in phrase (OED, p. 1964). In this instance it may be used as, or related, to the modern idiom ‘thank you.’

130.18 **facade**: The front of a building towards a street or other open place, especially the principle front (OED, p. 945).

130.21 **ammonia**: A solution of ammonia in water, commonly used as a household cleaner and in the manufacture of a wide range of products including fertilizer and textiles (EWD, p. 55)

130.22 **ranked stalls**: Foul smelling horse stalls. Ranked means rancid or foul smelling (OED, p. 2414). While a stall is a standing place for a horse or cattle (OED, p. 3009).


130.31 **the river**: Most likely the river Quentin refers to is the Charles River. It is the river that runs through the Boston area, and the one he follows throughout the day in search of the proper bridge for his suicide (Charles Chappell. “Quentin Compson’s Scouting Expedition on June 2, 1910.” Essays in Literature. Macomb. 22.1 Spring (1995): 11pp. ProQuest Direct. Online. 22 November 2000, p. 3).

131.9 **frame house**: A house constructed with a wooden framework or skeleton covered with boards (OED, p. 1072).

131.12 **surrey**: An American four-wheeled two-seated pleasure carriage, the seats being of similar design and facing forwards; also, a motor carriage of similar structure (OED, p. 3177).

131.18 **acquiescent**: Acquiescing; disposed to acquiesce; quietly agree or assent (OED, p. 22).

131.24 **flags**: According to the OED these are one of various endogenous plants, with a bladed or ensiform leaf, mostly growing in moist places. Now regarded as properly denoting a member of the genus Iris but sometimes applied to any reed or rush (OED, p. 1013).

131.25 **stoop**: An uncovered platform in front of the entrance of a house, raised, and approached by means of steps. Sometimes it is used incorrectly for a porch or veranda (OED, p. 3068).

131.27 **bell pull**: A handle or cord by which a bell is rung (DAEl, p. 192).

132.27 **not a soul in sight**: A common phrase frequently used with enumeration. Soul refers to a person, individual, or living thing (OED, p. 2928).

132.33 **played out**: A phrase similar to tired out or worn out, also meaning finished or exhausted (DAI, p. 275).

133.11 **back premise**: A premise is a house or a building with its grounds or other appurtenances, while back refers to position behind, in the rear, or away from as well as the inferred sense of remoteness as in back settlement or country (OED, p. 2280, 153).

133.19 **barred gate**: Also a bargate. A barrier gate (OED, p. 166).

133.21 **woodlot**: From the US a plot of land containing or consisting of wood land (OED, p. 3812).

133.23 **creepers**: A plant that creeps along the ground, and / or, one that ascends a supporting surface, such as ivy and Virginian Creeper. Also a climber (OED, p. 600).

133.29 **red print**: Any indentation in a surface, preserving the form left by the pressure of some body; a mark, spot, or stain produced on any surface by another substance (OED, p. 2304). Here the red print probably refers to the red mark, or imprint, left as blood returns to the area where pressure was applied, probably by a slap.

133.33 **squirt**: According to Lighter, a short or small person, especially an insignificant, contemptible little male. Also a young man especially a presumptuous or foppish youth (NDAS, p. 412).


134.30 **patent leather**: According to Morris this product was named by the US patent office. The process by which this brilliantly polished black finish is applied to leather used in shoes and handbags was once protected by patent (William and Mary Morris. Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins. Vol. 1. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. 2 vols., p. 262).

134.31 **wear . . . out**: To suffer gradual destruction, loss or decay from attrition or use (OED, p. 3719).

135.7 **thin dust**: This reference could just be a reminder of the area, as Quentin and the ‘little girl’ walk through the homes of the Foreigners who Quentin sees as dirty from the industry (see 142.28 coal dust and 125.25 Land of the kike home of the wop). However, Faulkner consistently used the symbol of dust throughout his writing career. For him it was a symbol of decay, disuse, and death. Dust appears in several of his works, including the titles of two Flags in the Dust and Intruder in the Dust. It is, however, very
prominent in “A Rose for Emily.” Emily’s house “smelled of dust and disuse” and of course is ultimately in a state of decay until her death when the town finds it all (William Faulkner. “A Rose for Emily.” Literature and the Writing Process, 4th ed. Ed. Elizabeth McMahan, Susan X. Day, and Robert Funk. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996. 336-342, p. 336). Section V of the story has the most dust imagery because it is the section in which Miss Emily’s grotesqueness and decay are revealed through the opening of her chamber: “The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere . . . left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust . . . What was left of him, rotted beneath. . . and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust.” (ARE. p. 341-342).

135.12 dancing sitting down: Considering that this phrase is used near the “sex play” scene with Natalie and before the erotic hogwallow scene, it is likely that it refers to some sexual act, or at least has sexual overtones (Fowler, Doreen. Faulkner The Return of the Repressed. Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1997, p. 40).

135.14 crib: A barred receptacle for fodder used in cow sheds and foldyards; also for beasts lying out in winter (OED, p. 603).

135.24 pig tails: A plait or queue of hair hanging down from the back of the head. It is applied specifically to that worn by soldiers and sailors in the latter part of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, and is still frequently worn by young girls. It is so named for it resemblance to the tail of a pig (OED, p. 2172).

This may also be a phallic symbol “stiff little pig tails” since it is used in reference to the ‘little Italian girl’ who is often associated with phallic symbols such as “her worm like fingers” and “the naked ‘nose of the loaf’” (RR, p. 42).

136.4 whipping: A US colloquialism for the, or an, infliction of corporal punishment by sticks, whips or rods. Also scouraging, flogging, flagellation, loosely beating with the hand or otherwise slapping or spanking. A form of chastisement or disciplinary correction. A beating (OED, p. 3760).

136.4 straight: Means in a straight course or line, or immediately or without delay (OED, p. 3077).

136.8 blow of a knife: A blow is a firm stroke or a violent application of the fist or any instrument to an object (OED, p. 235). So, here the strike is with a knife.


136.22 trash: Probably remnants of straw, dust and dirt. By definition trash is anything which is broken, snapped, or lopped off; anything such as broken or torn pieces of twigs, splinters, hedge cuttings, straw, rags or refuse (OED, p. 3387).

136.31 cowface: Presumably a childish name given to Natalie by Quentin since she leaves him unsatisfied after they are interrupted by Caddy.

136.32 hogwallow: A hollow or ditch in which pigs wallow. Especially in the US it is also a natural depression having this appearance (OED, p. 1315).

Because of the erotic scene that takes place in the hogwallow, it becomes sexually symbolic. In keeping with the theme of sexual intercourse that Quentin sets by his actions, the hogwallow may become, or symbolize, the vagina, birth canal, and/or the womb (RR, p. 40).

136.32 yellowed: To make or render yellow; to impart a yellow color to (OED, p. 3855).

137.31 Harvard: Quentin. This is a form of metonymy, where Harvard is substituted for a noun or pronoun in reference to Quentin since he can be closely identified with Harvard as he is a student there.

137.33 fellows: A person associated with another in habitual or temporary companionship; a companion, associate, or comrade (OED, p. 980).

138.14 shot: Projectiles, especially balls or bullets differing from explosive shells, designed to be discharged from a fire arm or cannon by the force of an explosive (OED, p. 2800).

138.21 the branch: As used specifically in the US, a small stream or brook (OED, p. 263).

138.32 pocking: To pock is to mark with pocks, or disfiguring spots (OED, p. 2218). It is presumable that this use might look like rain drops on the surface of a pond or puddle.

139.6 stick: A short piece of wood, especially a piece cut and shaped for a special purpose, usually with a defining word indicating its use (OED, p. 3047). Although not identified here, it could likely refer to a night stick, or a club carried by a police officer, since Anse is the marshal see 130.14 (EWD, p. 1224)

139.9 sprang upon me: A physical attack on Quentin by Julio. Spring (sprang) in reference to humans or animals means to bound or leap (OED, p. 2985).
139.12 **hauled:** To pull or draw with force or violence, or to drag or tug ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 1264).

139.14 **howling:** In human beings, it is uttering a similar sound to that of animals. Those are loud, doleful, inarticulate cries. It may also be wailing or lamenting, especially with pain ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 1342).

139.22 **whoa, now:** Whoa is a command to stop or desist originally used for horses or other draft animals to stop or stand still. It now may be applied to people sometimes jocularly ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 3768).

139.33 **Squire:** In the US a Justice of the Peace. It may also be a judge or lawyer ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2999).

140.7 **peaceable:** Having a peaceful nature. Inclined to avoid strife; not quarrelsome ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2105).

140.13 **meditated criminal assault:** Legal terminology. Roughly translated it insinuates that Quentin planned the action of kidnapping, or abducting, and assaulting the little girl.

140.26 **ran out:** From run out, to become expanded or exhausted; to come to an end ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2605). Synonymous with to be finished, give out, dry up, fail, be exhausted, or exhaust ([OTCE](https://www.oed.com), p. 655).

140.27 **retching:** Vomiting or making efforts to unsuccessfully ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2520).

140.29 **get a grip on yourself:** An American idiom meaning to regain one’s composure.

141.6 ** procession:** A body of persons marching in an orderly succession ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2312).


141.13 **raising my hat:** It was customary for men to raise, or tip, their hats to ladies.

142.2 **constable:** An officer of the peace ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 528).

142.5 **cognizance:** Knowledge, understanding, or acquaintance ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 459).


142.21 **dingy plat of a township:** A plat is a plan or diagram of anything, especially a ground-plan of a building or any part of the earth’s surface; it can be a draught, design, map, or chart ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2200).

142.27 **foul pen:** It is possible that this is an error and should read ‘fowl pen’ given its context and the original definition and composition of pens. According to Encarta, a pen is a long thin instrument used for writing or drawing with ink, and early examples were made from sharpened quill feathers ([EWD](https://www.eudic.org), p. 1332). Given that this use immediately precedes a reference to an inkwell (see 142.27) it is likely that Faulkner meant ‘fowl pen’ in reference to a pen made from a fowl’s, or bird’s, feather.

142.28 **coal dust:** Here a reference to the color and texture of the ink. According to Encarta coal is a hard black or dark brown sedimentary rock formed by the decomposition of plant material, widely used as fuel ([EWD](https://www.eudic.org), p. 348).

This may also be a reference to the industrial nature of the Boston area in contrast to the rural, or agrarian nature of Quentin’s home in the South. Godden notes that it is this ‘coal dust’ which makes the ‘little girl’ dirty whereas Caddy are dirty through sexual actions (Godden, Richard. “Quentin Compson: Tyrrenian Vase or Crucible of Race?” New Essays on the Sound and the Fury, Ed. Noel Polk. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 120)


143.22 **country boy:** Somebody from the country. One who lives in the country, especially someone brought up there and familiar with rural life and pursuits ([EWD](https://www.eudic.org), p. 414).

143.24 **congregational minister:** A minister or leader of a Congregational church, which practiced Congregationalism, a Protestant denomination with a system of government in which each local church governs itself ([EWD](https://www.eudic.org), p. 383).

144.29 **crest:** In phrase this term is used as a symbol of pride, self-confidence, or high spirits ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 602).

144.31 **dust motes:** Motes are particles of dust, especially the innumerable minute specks seen floating in the sunbeam. They may also be irritating particles in the eyes or throat ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 1857).

145.31 **scrapes:** An embarrassing or awkward predicament or situation, usually one into which a person is brought by his own imprudence and thoughtlessness ([OED](https://www.oed.com), p. 2678).

145.32 **country policeman:** see country boy
146.8 fiddle-sticks: Non-sense; foolishness. Often used as a dismissive response to a contemptible comment (NDAS, p. 132).

**Word List**

127.20 calculate: In the US colloquial speech expressing to think, opine, suppose, ‘reckon’ to intend, or purpose (OED, p. 317). Also synonymous with estimate gauge, judge, measure, weigh, reckon, and rate (OTCE, p. 86).

144.11 gal aint took any hurt: ‘girl hasn’t been hurt.’ This is characteristic of rural language or possibly dialect. Interestingly, it would seem to be less New England dialect and more Southern. According to Baugh and Cable the Eastern New England dialect, which includes states that lie east of the Connecticut River in Massachusetts and Connecticut and east of the Green Mountains in Vermont with a focal point in the Boston area, is characterized by: “the retention of a rounded vowel in words like hot and top, which the rest of the country has rounded to a shortened form of the a in father; the use of the broad a in fast, path, grass, etc.; and . . . the loss of the r in car, hard, and the like except before vowels (carry, Tory)” (Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable. A History of the English Language. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993, p. 373). Additionally, the Lower Southern dialect, which covers a large area including Mississippi and especially those states of the old plantation tradition, is characterized by it’s agreement with eastern New England dialect in “the loss of the r finally and before consonants . . . but tends to go even farther and omit the r before a word beginning with a vowel . . . But it does not have the rounded vowel in words like top and hot, or the broad a in grass and dance . . . Equally characteristic is the so-called Southern drawl . . . Final consonant groups are likely to suffer from weakened articulation: las’, kep’, fin’ for last, kept, find, especially in nonstandard use” (HEL, p.374). This difference in dialect could stem form Faulkner’s lack of experience in the New England dialect. Chappell notes that “Faulkner presumably created this rural location out of his vivid imagination and did not draw it from any experiences gained in Massachusetts, since apparently he never visited the Boston-Cambridge area before he wrote The Sound and the Fury (4)” (QSE, p. 2). Chappell further notes in his end notes that “None of Faulkner’s principal biographers -- Joseph Blotner, David Minter, Stephen Oates, or Frederick Karl -- mentions any visit by Faulkner to Boston or Cambridge before February of 1928, when Faulkner began writing The Sound and the Fury. Patrick Samway speculates that Faulkner visited Boston in the spring of 1918 (136), but Samway presents no evidence to support this theory” (QSE, p. 7).

139.29 I killa heem: I’ll kill him (roughly). The first of Julio’s broken English Italian tainted phrases that Julio speaks. It is characterized by the European vowel system which differs greatly from that of English. European languages (especially Latin based languages like Spanish, French, and Italian) use five vowels a, e, i, o, u, which make the sounds a as in father, e as in the vowel sound in play or the English long a sound, i as in the vowel sound in bee or the English long e, o which is the same as the o sound in low and is identical to the English long o, and u which sounds like the double oo in English as in loose.


132.6 “No spika”: Literally ‘No speak.’ The woman means she doesn’t speak English. see 139.29 I killa heem.

136.4 reckon: To be of the opinion, think, believe, suppose, assume, surmise, conjecture, imagine, fancy, or guess (OTCE, p. 622).

139.33 Shut up: ‘Shut up.’ Dialectical. see 144.11 gal aint took any hurt.

132.16 “Si, si”: ‘Yes, yes.’ An affirmative reply. ‘Si’ in Italian, as in Spanish, means yes. see 139.29 I killa heem.

125.9 sister: Woman or girl. It is used in direct address (NDAS, p. 391).

125.14 spectacles: A device for assisting defective eyesight, or for protecting the eyes from dust, light, etc. consisting of two glass lenses set in a frame which is supported on the nose, and kept in place by wires passing over the ears. It is usually used in plural form. In modern terms they are a pair of glasses (OED, p. 2951).

144.6 taking up with: To begin to go around with (someone) or to see a lot of someone (DAI, p. 351).

126.14 them foreigners: A foreigner is a person born in a foreign country or someone from abroad, or another country, and essentially and alien or outsider (OED, p. 1053). This expression which is repeated
may express the dislike or distrust of foreigners by the locals since it seems to be spoken with frustration or
disgust.

130.24 them furriners: them foreigners. Dialectical. See 126.14 them foreigners and 144.11 gal aint took
any hurt

129.28 took up with: past tense of ‘take up with’ see 144.6

143.19 turn ‘em out: ‘em is dialect for him. see 144.11 gal aint took any hurt.

145.22 wops: An Italian or other Southern European, especially as an immigrant or foreign visitor. It is
now considered offensive. The OED lists it as a slang term originating in the US (SOED, p. 1382).

143.18 you fellers shut up: ‘you fellows shut up.’ see 137.33 fellows and 139.33 shut up.

139.31 You . . . meesters: Literally ‘you steal my sister . . . let go misters.’ Julio confuses the English verb
system, meaning ‘you stole my sister . . . let her go misters’.

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