Reading Questions

June 2, 1910: pages 76-179

1. The title of the book is taken from the despairing speech in William Shakespeare's *MacBeth*:

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing."

At this point in the play, MacBeth has just learned that his wife has killed herself and their plans for seizing the throne will not work out. How are Benjy and Quentin represented in the *MacBeth* quote? Who do you think is "the idiot"?

2. In this section, Quentin repeats some of the same incidents Benjy already described. Why do you think Faulkner chose to tell the story in this manner? What are the similarities and differences in the way Benjy and Quentin relate to their memories?

3. Why does Quentin refuse to look at watches and clocks? How is time an important theme in the novel so far?

4. Quentin overheard his mother saying that he, Caddy and Benjy are a curse, and that Jason is the only child she is proud of. Why does she feel this way? How does this knowledge affect Quentin?

5. What does Quentin's fixation on his father, Jason, indicate about his feelings about masculinity and honor?

6. Why do you think Quentin reacts violently when he hears of others' sexuality?

7. Why does Quentin lie, telling his father that he was the person who impregnated Caddy? Given Quentin's state of mind at the time, what do you think of Mr. Compson's response to him? Is there something incestuous about Quentin's feelings for his sister?

8. What is Quentin's relationship with black characters, especially the man named Deacon at Harvard? What does this have to do with his being a "Southern gentleman"?

9. What does Quentin's incident with the Italian girl signify?

10. Ultimately, why do you feel Quentin commits suicide? Why does Faulkner choose to have Quentin narrate his own section, even though he has been dead for nearly 18 years?

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