

## Using Visual Images to Teach Sound and the Fury

### Objective:

To help introduce William Faulkner's Sound and the Fury, students will study and discuss two contrasting images in order to activate background knowledge to place the novel in historical context.

### Overview:

When teaching William Faulkner's Sound and the Fury to Advanced Placement Language and Composition students, one of the main things students struggle with (aside from the non-traditional time sequence) is putting the novel in context. Faulkner was writing about a family trying to hold on to the traditional values of the South. Almost all of the members of the Compsons refused to embrace the twentieth century and wanted to hold on to some bastardized version of the ante-bellum South. The students have a difficult time grasping the concept of the Southern Gentleman and Southern Belle. Without some background knowledge, my students have trouble unlocking the symbolism of the ending of the novel: The "Confederate soldier (that) gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand in the wind and the weather" (Faulkner 199) or the "clop-clop" of Ben and Luster's horse and carriage (Faulkner 199). These two images alone show the family as rooted in the past, and not willing to look ahead. Students also have trouble grasping the nuances of some of the different characters, especially the quintessential southern belle, the matriarch, Caroline Compson. They can't understand her need to be protected from the harsh realities of the "real world." Students can't see why Uncle Maury would write to Jason, "And knowing your Mother's your mother's delicate health and timorousness which such delicately nurtured Southern ladies would naturally feel regarding matter of business...I would suggest that you do not mention this to her at all" (Faulkner 141). In order to help put Faulkner's South into context, I use a few different visuals.

### What's on Tap?

- First show a few of clips from the classic film *Gone With the Wind*. Although Scarlett O'Hara ultimately turns out to be a strong character, there are a few good scenes in the beginning of the film that show her to be a true southern belle. The barbeque at Twelve Oaks and the few chapters that lead up to it (CH 4-7 *Love of the Land* through *Attention Paid and Unpaid*) nicely illustrate the pre war bucolic setting that the Mr. and Mrs. Compson were so desperately trying to hold on to. After watching this, the students can see how Scarlett and Caroline have very similar dispositions.
- The clips from *Gone With the Wind* which represent the pre-war South can be juxtaposed with **Charles Sheeler's** painting ***American Landscape***. This painting is a good representation of the encroaching **industrialization** of the north.
- When analyzing images, ask the students the same questions I ask when we are analyzing the rhetorical strategies a writer uses to build an argument: *What is the author's purpose? Who is the intended audience? How does the author use language to achieve the purpose?* My philosophy is that all writing is persuasive, and the same school of thought can be applied to most images.
- While reading the novel, students will pull textual support to connect to both the film and the painting.