

**Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition**  
**As I Lay Dying Literary Analysis Response Assignment**

Directions: Write a detailed paragraph in response to the quotations you choose for each reading assignment. Begin each response with a topic sentence that focuses the paragraph by stating a main idea that you will defend with specific references. Within each paragraph, make sure to specify the speakers and/or the person(s) to whom the quotation refers and to discuss the **context** of the quotation and to clearly explain the **significance** of the quotation in terms of *allusion, black humor, characterization, comedy, contrast, detail, diction, figurative language, foil, imagery, irony, motif, narrative structure, rhetorical strategies, setting, symbol, syntax, theme, tone, and/or unreliable narrator.*

**As I Lay Dying section 1 (pages 3-84)**

**Choose three of five quotations to which you will respond.**

1. "The quilt is drawn up to her chin, hot as it is, with only her two hands and her face outside. She is propped on the pillow, with her head raised so she can see out the window, and we can hear him every time he takes up the adze or the saw. If we were deaf we could almost watch her face and hear him, see him. Her face is wasted away so that the bones draw just under the skin in white lines. Her eyes are like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets or iron candle-sticks. But the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her." (8)
2. "I always said Darl was different from those others. I always said he was the only one of them that had his mother's nature, had any natural affection. Not that Jewel, the one she labored so to bear and coddled and petted so and him flinging into tantrums or sulking spells, inventing devilment to devil her until I would have frailed him time and time. Not him to come and tell her goodbye. Not him to miss a chance to make that extra three dollars at the price of his mother's goodbye kiss. A Bundren through and through, loving nobody, caring for nothing except how to get something with the least amount of work." (21)
3. "The girl is standing by the bed, fanning her. When we enter she turns her head and looks at us. She has been dead these ten days. I suppose it's having been a part of Anse for so long that she cannot even make the change, if change it be. I can remember how when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind—and that of the minds of the ones who suffer the bereavement. The nihilists say it is the end; the fundamentalists, the beginning; when in reality it is no more than a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or a town." (43-44)
4. "He tries to smoothe it again, clumsily, his hand awkward as a claw, smoothing at the wrinkles which he made and which continue to emerge beneath his hand with perverse ubiquity, so that at last he desists, his hand falling to his side and stroking itself again, palm and back, on his thigh. The sound of the saw snores steadily into the room. Pa breathes with a quiet, rasping sound, mouthing the snuff against his gums. 'God's will be done,' he says. 'Now I can get them teeth.'" (52)
5. "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 and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one. When they taken the lid off they found that two of them had bored on into her face." (73)

***As I Lay Dying* section 2 (pages 85-165)**

**Choose three of six quotations to which you will respond.**

1. "He could cut up a tin can and hide the holes and nobody wouldn't know the difference. Wouldn't mind, anyway. I have seen him spend a hour trimming out a wedge like it was glass he was working, when he could have reached around and picked up a dozen sticks and drove them in the joint and made it do." (87)
2. "'Wait, Jewel,' I say. But he will not wait. He is almost running now and Cash is left behind. It seems to me that the end which I now carry along has no weight, as though it coasts like a rushing straw upon the furious tide of Jewel's despair. I am not even touching it when, turning, he lets it overshoot him, swinging, and stops it and sloughs it into the wagon bed in the same motion and looks back at me, his face suffused with fury and despair.  
'Goddamn you. Goddamn you.'" (98-99)
3. "'I give her my promise. Her mind is set on it.'  
'But seems to me she'd rather have her ma buried close by, so she could—'  
'It's Addie I give the promise to,' he says. 'Her mind is set on it.'" (115)
4. "It was though, so long as the deceit ran along quiet and monotonous, all of us let ourselves be deceived, abetting it unawares or maybe through cowardice, since all people are cowards and naturally prefer any kind of treachery because it has a bland outside. But now it was like we had all—and by a kind of telepathic agreement of admitted fear—flung the whole thing back like covers on the bed and we all sitting bolt upright in our nakedness, staring at one another and saying 'Now is the truth. He hasn't come home. Something has happened to him. We let something happen to him.'" (134)
5. "He came up to see and I hollering catch her Darl catch her and he didn't come back because she was too heavy he had to go on catching at her and I hollering catch her darl catch her darl because in the water she could go faster than a man and Darl had to grabble for her so I knew he could catch her because he is the best grabbler even with the mules in the way again they dived up rolling their feet stiff rolling down again and their backs up now and Darl had to again because in the water she could go faster than a man or a woman and I passed Vernon and he wouldn't get in the water and help Darl he wouldn't grabble for her with Darl he knew but he wouldn't help." (150-151)
6. "'If ever was such a misfortunate man,' pa says. He looms tall above us as we squat; he looks like a figure carved clumsily from tough wood by a drunken caricaturist. 'It's a trial,' he says. 'But I dont begrudge her it. No man can say I begrudge her it.'" (163)

**As I Lay Dying section 3 (pages 166-261)**

**Choose four of eight quotations to which you will respond.**

1. "‘Nothing,’ she said. ‘He is my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life, he will save me.’" (168)
2. "I have sinned, O Lord. Thou knowest the extent of my remorse and the will of my spirit. But He is merciful; He will accept the will for the deed, Who knew that when I framed the words of my confession it was to Anse I spoke them, even though he was not there." (179)
3. "*But Jewel’s mother is a horse. My mother is a fish. Darl says that when we come to the water again I might see her and Dewey Dell said, She’s the box; how could she have got out? She got out through the holes I bored, into the water I said, and when we come to the water again I am going to see her. My mother is not in the box. My mother does not smell like that. My mother is a fish.*" (196)
4. "‘Why, you’ll kill him,’ the marshall said. ‘You’ll cause him to lose his leg. You take him on to a doctor, and you get this thing buried soon as you can. Dont you know you’re liable to jail for endangering the public health?’" (204)
5. "Sometimes I aint so sho who’s got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he aint. Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It’s like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it’s the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it." (233)
6. "‘Better,’ he said. He begun to laugh again. ‘Better,’ he said. He couldn’t hardly say it for laughing. He sat on the ground and us watching him, laughing and laughing. It was bad. It was bad so. I be durn if I could see anything to laugh at. Because there just aint nothing justifies the deliberate destruction of what a man has built with his own sweat and stored the fruit of his sweat into." (238)
7. "Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed. ‘What are you laughing at?’ I said.  
‘Yes yes yes yes yes.’" (253)
8. "‘It’s Cash and Jewel and Vardaman and Dewey Dell,’ pa says, kind of hangdog and proud too, with his teeth and all, even if he wouldn’t look at us. ‘Meet Mrs Bundren,’ he says." (261)