

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

Spring 2021 – Ten Sessions

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Assignment for Session 8

Reading:

> Chapter 7 of *Absalom, Absalom!*, pp. 176-234

Selection of Passages (a continuing reminder – yada, yada):

Identify at least one passage that strikes you of deserving attention in class:

Note the page, line number, the first few words of the section, and where it ends.

Email your selections to me at sds@mit.edu. I will assemble them into an agenda for the day of the session.

Discussion Questions:

Chapter 7 finally provides the back story on Thomas Sutpen. It reveals, but because of its indirect and remote narrative structure, it also conceals. And this chapter contains vulgar and demeaning language that will make us uncomfortable (“monkey nigger”), but we need to confront it if we are ever to understand Sutpen and his era. Take a deep breath and read on.

My plan is to discuss the topics below, subject to the inherent fluctuations that these classes always create (as always, I ask that you anchor your comments in cited text):

> The narrative structure. There are two major conversations between Sutpen and Quentin’s grandfather. What are their circumstances? How did all this pass down to Quentin?

> How do you react to the description of Sutpen’s early childhood and the trip from West Virginia down to the Tidewater area?

> The events at the Virginia plantation and the concomitant essay on the class structure of the Old South.

> How do you understand Sutpen’s decision to remain a virgin until marriage?

> The turned aside wife and child. What to make of them?

> The chapter ends violently. Are you able to comprehend it, given what we know of the characters?

> Can you, at this point, understand how and why Sutpen and Quentin’s grandfather were friends?