

Sample AP Lang Rhetorical Analysis Essay:

Essay Prompt:

Read the following passage from William Faulkner's novel "The Sound and the Fury" (1929). In a well-organized essay, analyze how Faulkner uses language and rhetorical strategies to convey the complex emotions of the character Quentin Compson.

Passage:

[Excerpt from "The Sound and the Fury"]

In the sultry, stagnant air of a Mississippi afternoon, Quentin Compson stood at the edge of the river. He gazed at the muddy water, which seemed to flow with a slow and mournful rhythm. The memories of his family's tragic past weighed heavy on his shoulders, like a burden he could never escape. He felt the weight of history, of a Southern legacy tainted by decay and decline.

Sample Essay:

In William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury," the character Quentin Compson is portrayed as a tormented and introspective individual, grappling with the weight of his family's history and the decline of the Southern legacy. Faulkner employs a range of rhetorical strategies and language choices to convey the complex emotions of Quentin.

One of the prominent rhetorical strategies Faulkner employs is the use of vivid and sensory language. The "sultry, stagnant air" and the "muddy water" create an atmosphere of oppressive heat and stagnation, reflecting Quentin's internal turmoil. The slow and mournful rhythm of the river's flow mirrors Quentin's sense of being trapped in the past, unable to move forward. This sensory imagery allows the reader to feel the same heaviness and despair that Quentin experiences.

Furthermore, Faulkner uses parallelism in his description of Quentin's emotions. The repetition of phrases such as "the weight of history" and "a Southern legacy tainted by decay and decline" emphasizes Quentin's obsession with the past and his feelings of guilt and responsibility. This rhetorical device

underscores the idea that Quentin's identity is intrinsically tied to the history of the South, which is crumbling before his eyes.

Additionally, Faulkner employs the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique to delve into Quentin's inner thoughts and emotions. This technique allows the reader to access the chaotic and fragmented nature of Quentin's mind as he grapples with the conflicting emotions of love, guilt, and despair. It also enables the reader to empathize with Quentin's inner turmoil, making his character more relatable and sympathetic.

In conclusion, William Faulkner's use of sensory language, parallelism, and the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique effectively conveys the complex emotions of Quentin Compson in "The Sound and the Fury." Through these rhetorical strategies, Faulkner immerses the reader in Quentin's world of despair, guilt, and a longing for a bygone era of the South.