

Digital Yoknapatawpha Worksheet

The Unvanquished

Go to faulkner.iath.virginia.edu and click on the cover of *The Unvanquished* at the bottom

1. William Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* expresses many of its themes, like racism, through the use of travel and journey. In the chapter "Raid," Granny, Ringo, and Bayard travel to recover their lost slaves, mules, and silver, and along the way, they witness groups of displaced black and white people. What has caused their displacement?

With the help of the *The Unvanquished* map on Digital Yoknapatawpha, compare the journeys of the displaced white people with those of the displaced black people from "Raid." How are Granny, Ringo, and Bayard also displaced? How does their journey compare to the journey of the other displaced white people?

2. In the novel, a train is used in several moments to represent the mass migration of runaway slaves during the Civil War. In "Raid," Faulkner writes, "it was as if...the railroad, the rushing locomotive which [Ringo] hoped to see symbolized it—the motion, the impulse to move which had already seethed to a head among his people, darker than themselves, reasonless, following and seeking a delusion, a dream, a bright shape which they could not know since there was nothing in their heritage, nothing in the memory even of the old men to tell the others, 'This is what we will find'" (81).

Using the DY map and the events of "Raid," draw a map below showing the path of the slaves' migration and explain how this is similar to the movement of trains. What possible meanings can you get from this comparison?

3. The Digital Yoknapatawpha site hosts a number of audio clips that feature a Q&A interview with Faulkner, several of which include discussion on *The Unvanquished*. Listen to the clip “What does the ruined train signify? (28 April 1958; 4:00)” and summarize, in your own words, what you think Faulkner intended with the train metaphor (if you think he intended anything at all). Do you agree or disagree? Why? Consider the quote from “Raid” in the previous question--does this support or oppose your answer?

4. One of the defining features of *The Unvanquished* is how geographically close together many of the Confederate and Union soldiers are in the story. The story brings forth, obviously, intense emotions from people on both sides, but of course shows the chaos, even sometimes the feeling of absurdity, that war can bring as well. If one clicks on “Retreat” and sees the “Pasture Outside Town” and “Sartoris Plantation,” one can see how the North was very close to the South in the action of this story, as the Sartoris Plantation house was burned, but Confederate troops were bivouacked in the Jefferson Pasture. And, then, just to the West was the Road to Jefferson, which Colonel Sartoris thought may have been relatively safe, but they were warned by a Confederate soldier it may not be safe.

How does this chaos play out in the novel in the lives of the characters? Do the Southern characters seem ready to accept the defeat of the South? How, especially, do the black characters react to their “freedom”?

5. Click on “Vendee.” This map is especially interesting because it shows just how far and wide Bayard, Ringo, and Uncle Buck were willing to travel to find Granny’s killers. Click on “Countryside Around Jefferson” and you can read that the troop actually were travelling for over fifty days. And though this window cites Bayard’s line, “you could have put a silver dollar down on the geography page with the center of it at Jefferson and we would have never ridden out from under it,” and states that much of the action took place within Yoknapatawpha, one can also look over at the region and see how far South Grenada was and how far east the burned house in Alabama was.

Next, click on the ‘Play’ button to follow Bayard’s path in the search. This map helps to show just how important it was at this time, perhaps even more so in the South, to defend one’s family, or uphold their honor or exact revenge and seek “justice.” In what other ways, or in what other instances in the novel, did this idea of honor also play itself out?

6. If you go to the story “Skirmish at Sartoris” and click on the character icon “Unnamed Northern White Men,” there is an explanation of carpetbaggers that points out how they were certainly not necessarily in the South to “help” black people (of course, in this story to help them vote) and often had their own motives for being there. In addition, if one clicks on the icon “Unnamed Negro Porter,” it reads that one could interpret Bayard’s statement that the man be “too old even to be free” to mean that he may not even want to vote.

How do these facts possibly complicate the notion that black people may have made a large step forward with their “emancipation”? What situation do they actually find themselves in now? Is there any evidence in the text that anyone’s attitudes towards black people have really changed at all since black people were “freed”?