

Teach the novel through four modes

Use one activity, build a multi-week sequence, or ask students to design a fifth experiment. Every option keeps interpretation with the student rather than outsourcing it to AI.



Start with the why

Tell students why this difficult novel belongs in the course and why the digital experiences exist. The goal is not to make Faulkner effortless. It is to give students more ways to notice what the difficulty is doing.

AUDIENCE Upper-level secondary, undergraduate, and interdisciplinary digital media courses

FORMAT Individual, small-group, synchronous, or asynchronous

TECHNOLOGY A browser is sufficient; analog alternatives accompany every project

AI EXPECTATION No student-facing generative AI is required

Learning goals

Students make evidence-based claims about voice and form; interpret visual and spatial choices; distinguish useful difficulty from avoidable barriers; compare what media reveal and conceal; and explain which creative decisions should remain human decisions.

Immersive Reader

Voice, syntax, annotation, reading friction

20 MIN | INDIVIDUAL

Friction Log

Tag three passages: one that slows, one that disorients, and one that rewards rereading. Explain whether each friction is productive, avoidable, or unresolved.

DELIVERABLE

Exported annotations plus a 150-word pattern statement.

35 MIN | GROUPS

Narrator Relay

Assign each group a narrator. Identify what the narrator notices, avoids, and controls. Re-form mixed groups and reconstruct one event without declaring one account correct.

DELIVERABLE

A notices / omits / distorts chart.

50 MIN | DESIGN

Interface Audit

Choose one reader feature and argue how it changes attention. Redesign the feature on paper without simplifying the prose.

DELIVERABLE

Annotated wireframe and design rationale.

Instructor move

Model the built-in annotation workflow: select a passage, name the kind of friction, leave a note to your future self, and add the entry to the field log. Assess the pattern across entries, not the number of tags.

Illustrated Reader

Visual rhetoric, sequence, interpretation

25 MIN | PAIRS

Observe / Interpret / Question

Select one plate and make three lists: visible facts, interpretive claims, and questions the image cannot answer. Check claims against the prose.

DELIVERABLE

One visual-analysis sheet.

45 MIN | ANALOG

Three-Frame Storyboard

Storyboard a section as three images. Require one framing choice, one recurring motif, and one deliberate omission.

DELIVERABLE

Three frames with a 200-word curatorial note.

60 MIN | TLDRAW

Remix the Plate

Create a frame for each image in tldraw offline. Add the prose as a note, arrange three visuals, and connect each choice to a motif with arrows.

DELIVERABLE

Digital triptych plus rationale.

Instructor move

Require students to separate description from interpretation. Ask which visual choice produces each claim and what an alternative frame might make possible.

Journey Map

Geography, delay, narrative structure

30 MIN | ANALOG

String-and-Card Route

Place location cards across a table and connect them with string. Add notes for delay, danger, decision, and loss. Let emotional distance alter spacing.

DELIVERABLE

Photograph plus a claim about the most consequential location.

45 MIN | TLDRAW

Collaborative Reading Map

Use shapes as locations, arrows as travel, and sticky notes for evidence. Color-code physical obstacles, changes in loyalty, and shifts in narration.

DELIVERABLE

Exported map with six evidence-linked stops.

40 MIN | ANALYSIS

Distance Is Not Miles

Compare the route with the pages or sections devoted to each stop. Visualize the mismatch between geographic and narrative distance.

DELIVERABLE

A proportional map or chart plus one paragraph.

Instructor move

Let emotional and narrative distance change the map's proportions. The useful question is not only where the family travels, but where the novel slows, fractures, or redistributes attention.

My Mother Is a Fish

Metaphor, discussion, multimodal interpretation

20 MIN | DISCUSSION

Four Words, Four Claims

Generate literal, psychological, formal, and relational readings of the sentence. Identify the evidence and assumptions behind each.

DELIVERABLE

Four-claim matrix with a strongest-reading vote.

35 MIN | ANALOG

Image / Silence / Response

Study one activity card without commentary. Record what the image invites, withholds, and changes after the sentence appears.

DELIVERABLE

Before-and-after response with one revised claim.

50 MIN | CREATION

Design a Fifth Card

Pair another compressed moment with an original, public-domain, or hand-drawn image. Write a prompt that cannot be answered by summary.

DELIVERABLE

Card, attribution, prompt, and accessibility description.

Instructor move

Give students a period of looking before discussion. Preserve the sentence's strangeness long enough for multiple readings to remain available.

A simple tldraw offline workflow

Use a local desktop canvas when students need spatial freedom. Work can remain local and be exported as a stable submission.

1 OPEN	Create a new local document and name the page for the section, narrator, or group.
2 FRAME	Create frames before adding evidence. Use them for chapters, locations, or observe / interpret / question.
3 BUILD	Use shapes for locations or claims, sticky notes for evidence, and bound arrows for relationships and travel.
4 EXPLAIN	Color-code categories, label connections, add source locations, and include alt-text notes for imported images.
5 EXPORT	Submit PNG or PDF with a short rationale so instructors can assess the artifact and the choices behind it.

Suggested five-meeting sequence

MEETING 1	Why reading matters + immersive friction log
MEETING 2	Narrator relay + annotation comparison
MEETING 3	Illustrated-reader plate audit + storyboard
MEETING 4	Analog or tldraw journey map
MEETING 5	Fish activity + four-mode synthesis

Assessment and access

Grade the quality of the decisions, not polish alone.

30% EVIDENCE	Specific, accurately situated details from the novel or project.
30% INTERPRETATION	An arguable explanation of why those details matter.
20% DESIGN RATIONALE	A clear account of what the chosen medium reveals and conceals.
20% REVISION	Visible response to another reader, alternative, or complication.

Access and adaptation

Offer image descriptions and text-only visual prompts. Allow analog, keyboard-first, or digital submissions without penalizing the medium. Provide transcripts or equivalent visual prompts for media. Break long sections into purposeful intervals without reducing interpretive demand. Let students explain when friction blocks access rather than producing learning.

Links

Immersive Reader: <https://mwatkins03-netizen.github.io/As-I-Lay-Dying-Immersive-Reader-Fable-5/>

Illustrated Reader: <https://6a5ce3d728d4a4f0c324b23d--as-i-lay-dying-illustrated.netlify.app/#/>

Journey Map: <https://mwatkins03-netizen.github.io/As-I-Lay-Dying-Map-GPT-5.6/>

My Mother Is a Fish: <https://6a52f2d6f2ffea74e464b9e5--my-mother-is-a-fish.netlify.app/>

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AI disclosure: Marc Watkins conceived, directed, selected, revised, and takes responsibility for this resource and the linked projects. Generative AI systems assisted with interface prototyping, code generation and debugging, visual asset development, and editorial scaffolding. OpenAI Codex assisted with the gallery and PDF production. Watkins reviewed and shaped all outputs. Student-facing activities do not require generative AI, and students should cite any AI use required by their course or institution.