



# American Legends: The Life of William Faulkner

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures of important people and places.

\*Includes Faulkner's own quotes about his life and career, as well as his famous Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

\*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

\*Includes a Table of Contents.

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

With the notable exception of Mark Twain, whose roots along the Mississippi River factored so thoroughly into his life story and his literature, America's greatest writers have rarely been categorized by or associated with a specific region of the country. And among America's greatest 20th century writers, many have been identified with a specific era, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and the 1920's, or even as part of a community of expatriates, like Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein.

William Faulkner is an exception to that rule, and a prolific and influential one at that. The reclusive Southerner, who died about 40 miles away from his birthplace in New Albany, Mississippi, was associated with the South as a region and Southern literature in particular throughout his career, at least when he was associated with anything at all. Faulkner toiled in relative obscurity for much of his life, and it was only after he earned a Nobel Prize in 1954 that he truly entered the national radar. He later joked about his own neighbors, "Some folks wouldn't even speak when they passed me on the street...it wasn't until the Nobel Prize that they really thawed out." But by the time Faulkner died a little more than a decade later, he had earned multiple Pulitzer Prizes and was widely recognized as the leader of a Southern Renaissance and one of the 20th century's greatest writers.

Faulkner tapped into his heritage and culture to truly capture the Southern way of life both in the present and in past eras, including the antebellum South and the Civil War, bringing the South to life in novels like *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury*. But paradoxically, Faulkner was romanticizing a past way of life by using one of the early 20th century's greatest literary innovations, the "stream of consciousness" writing popularized by the Irish literary icon James Joyce. While critics frequently took note of the stream of consciousness technique and contrasted it with Ernest Hemingway's "iceberg theory" of writing less and letting readers use their imaginations to fill in the blanks, Faulkner dismissed comparisons, saying, "Let the writer take up surgery or bricklaying if he is interested in technique. There is no mechanical way to get the writing done, no shortcut. The young writer would be a fool to follow a theory...The good artist believes that nobody is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity. No matter how much he admires the old writer, he wants to beat him."

American Legends: The Life of William Faulkner profiles the life and career of one of America's most influential novelists. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Faulkner like you never have before, in no time at all.

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