

William Faulkner: Novels 1926-1929: Soldiers' Pay / Mosquitoes / Flags in the Dust / The Sound and the Fury (Library of America)

By William Faulkner

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William Faulkner: Novels 1926-1929: Soldiers' Pay / Mosquitoes / Flags in the Dust / The Sound and the Fury (Library of America) By William Faulkner

The Library of America edition of the novels of William Faulkner culminates with this volume presenting his first four, each newly edited, and, in many cases, restored with passages that were altered or (in the case of Mosquitoes) expurgated by the original publishers. This is Faulkner as he was meant to be read.

In these four novels we can track Faulkner's extraordinary evolution as, over the course of a few years, he discovers and masters the mode and matter of his greatest works. *Soldiers' Pay* (1926) expresses the disillusionment provoked by World War I through its account of the postwar experiences of homecoming soldiers, including a severely wounded R.A.F. pilot, in a style of restless experimentation. In *Mosquitoes* (1927), a raucous satire of artistic poseurs, many of them modeled after acquaintances of Faulkner in New Orleans, he continues to try out a range of stylistic approaches as he chronicles an ill-fated cruise on Lake Pontchartrain.

With the sprawling *Flags in the Dust* (published in truncated form in 1929 as *Sartoris*), Faulkner began his exploration of the mythical region of Mississippi that was to provide the setting for most of his subsequent fiction. Drawing on family history from the Civil War and after, and establishing many characters who recur in his later books, Flags in the Dust marks the crucial turning point in Faulkner's evolution as a novelist.

The volume concludes with Faulkner's masterpiece, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). This multilayered telling of the decline of the Compson clan over three generations, with its complex mix of narrative voices and its poignant sense of isolation and suffering within a family, is one of the most stunningly original American novels.

The editors of this volume are Joseph Blotner and Noel Polk. Joseph Blotner, who wrote the notes, is professor of English emeritus at the University of

Michigan. Biographer of William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren, he is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and the French Legion of Honor. Noel Polk is professor of English at Mississippi State University and editor of *The Mississippi Quarterly*. He has edited the texts in all five volumes of William Faulkner's novels for The Library of America.

In his first four novels, William Faulkner moved beyond early experiments to discover the themes and style of his maturity. With *Soldiers' Pay*, a sardonic distillation of postwar disillusionment, and *Mosquitoes*, a freewheeling roman à clef satirizing the writers and artists of his New Orleans milieu, Faulkner served his restless apprenticeship as a writer of fiction before settling in *Flags in the Dust* (first published in truncated form as *Sartoris*) on the material that would chiefly engage him: a mythic Mississippi region dense with ancestral memories and echoes of the Civil War. The volume concludes with what many consider Faulkner's greatest work, *The Sound and the Fury*, a novel of family torment whose audacities of form and fearless explorations of the inner life continue to astonish. The newly edited texts in this volume include passages altered or in some cases expurgated by the original publishers.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
William Faulkner (1897–1962) was born in Mississippi and was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Pulitzer Prize.

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