

# TOMBSTONES ON THE MOVE

American Literature II, Spring 2023

These tombstones or wall labels were created to accompany our visual representation of a genealogy on the move. The family connections in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* shift as the narrative unfolds, so that a fixed, purportedly objective genealogy seems like a lie.

Our unfolding genealogy echoes the narrative flow of the novel itself, reflecting the perspectives of many different family and community members, who have their own ways of spelling out what it means to be family.

*Later he told me, "I aint got no people. So that wont be no worry to you. I dont reckon you can say the same."*

*"No. I have people. In Jefferson."*

*His face fell a little. "Well, I got a little property. I'm forehanded; I got a good honest name. I know how town folks are, but maybe when they talk to me ..."*

*"They might listen," I said. "But they'll be hard to talk to."*

*He was watching my face. "They're in the cemetery."*

Each tombstone spells out an interpretation of genealogy at a particular point in the novel, from a particular family member's viewpoint, as interpreted by a particular reader. The visual displays, however, show these different perspectives interacting with one another: echoing, belying, and stepping outside of the boundaries the others create. This is an undermining, unruly family tree.

With our images, we honor the characters' perspectives, as each attempts to find a way to say, I belong here. And with entombed words we make a monument to the work of understanding such images and such minds.

