Questions: The Sound and the Fury

1. What is Benjy's role in the family?

2. Instead of chronological time, how does Benjy order events? In this alternate sense of time, what is revealed about the idea of memory?

3. What are some major changes that occur in Benjy's lifetime and what do those changes reflect about the Compsons and their home in the South?

4. How does William Faulkner portray time in the first chapter of The Sound and the Fury?

5. How does the use of time relate to the novel's form and content?

6. How do Benjy's and Quentin's own sense of time differ?

7. What does Quentin's relationship to and recollection of time suggest about his character throughout the June Second, 1910 chapter and his relationship to and role within the Compson family at large?

8. What are some major differences that Quentin notices in the North, and what do those differences reflect about the Compsons and their home in the South?

9. Describe and explain the function of stream-of-consciousness as a narrative technique.
10. In her essay "'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood': Quentin's recognition of his guilt” Margaret Bauer compares her reading of the cause of Quentin’s suicide with Noel Polk’s in the following passage:

Polk* describes Quentin’s section as "his effort to sort out, analyze, and come to terms with those scenes of pain that he can handle, and to evade, to repress, those he cannot. He is trying to shape his memory into an acceptable version of his life that will both explain his present misery and justify his decision to commit suicide" (150). In contrast, I argue that although Quentin has successfully "evaded and repressed" his most painful memories in the past, on the day of his death, he ultimately relives them, too, and through doing so achieves insight about his own behavior with which Polk does not seem to credit him. Yes, Quentin has planned to commit suicide all along, but I argue that he is looking for a reason not to, examining his memories in hopes that they will not reveal what he is beginning to realize: his true, rather than imagined, role in Caddy’s destruction (77).

Which reading do you find more support for, Polk or Bauer? Explain and support your answer.

Bauer, Margaret D. "'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood': Quentin's recognition of his guilt." Southern Literary Journal. Chapel Hill: Spring 2000. Vol.32, Iss. 2; pg. 70.