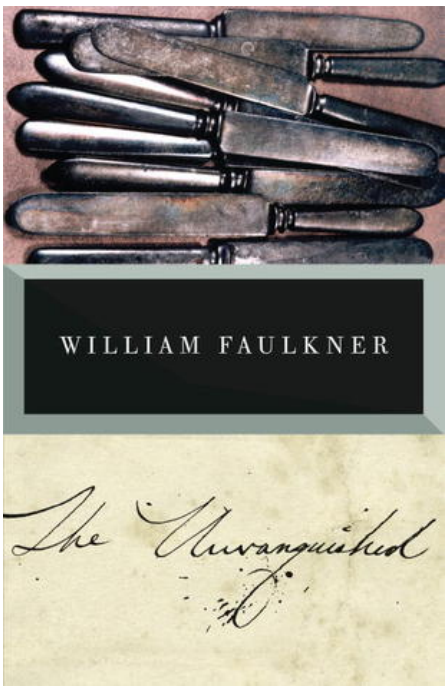

The Unvanquished

William Faulkner

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The Unvanquished William Faulkner
Set in Mississippi during the Civil War and Reconstruction, THE UNVANQUISHED focuses on the Sartoris family, who, with their code of personal responsibility and courage, stand for the best of the Old South's traditions.

The Unvanquished Details

Date	:	Published October 29th 1991 by Vintage (first published 1938)
ISBN	:	9780679736523
Author	:	William Faulkner
Format	:	Paperback 254 pages
Genre	:	Fiction, Classics, Historical, Historical Fiction, Literature, American, Southern, Novels, War, Military History, Civil War, Short Stories

From Reader Review The Unvanquished for online ebook

William1.2 says

Ringo is black and Bayard is white in this novel set during the American Civil War (1861-65). We meet the friends when they are both 12. They are busy recreating the Battle of Vicksburg with a heap of wood chips behind the smokehouse of the Sartoris manse. This is near Jefferson, Mississippi, part of Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County.

The boys view each other as friends. Though they know they were born into a system of master and slave, they have absolutely nothing between themselves other than the knowledge that they are equals, if only to each other. Their friendship becomes the lens through which we observe a horrendous war of brothers against brothers, which is fought in the wings.

The boys were nursed at the same breast, have been together all their lives, share the same bedroom, and are one another's best wartime consiglieres. Colonel Sartoris, Bayard's father, the ostensible Master, treats them both like sons and considers Ringo the smarter of the two. Ringo is always the talker while Bayard narrates at some unspecified temporal remove. It's only when they grow older, though they're still dedicated to each other, that the grow apart emotionally. By this time they're 24.

Faulkner's touch—all but one chapter here was published by Saturday Evening Post in the 1930s—is as light as air. It is all but completely without the mannered highflown vocabulary and rambling, dissociative digressions that marked his bourbon-soaked late writing.

General William Tecumseh Sherman has swept through Jefferson on his March to the Sea, and the Satoris manse is burned. Granny, the widower Colonel's mother-in-law, then begins a scam of requisitioning mules from the Union Army, using forged army letterhead, which she sells back to other Union army regiments for $50 a head. This as a means of keeping locals, both black and white, with food on the table.

Diverting scenes include Drusilla's forced marriage to Colonel Satoris, since she had spent a year dressed as a man fighting with his regiment and, naturally, must in that period have surrendered many times to his amorous advances—must in fact be pregnant; any deviation from this presumed narrative being for the many prattling ladies of post-Civil War Jefferson not just hard to believe, but inconceivable.

I had always grouped *The Unvanquished* in my mind with Faulkner's later novels, which are not my favorites. But this is really a mid-career work. It was written before The Wild Palms and The Hamlet, which in my view is a masterwork. The prose wobbles once or twice in the last chapter—a foreshadowing of future turgidities—but then the ship rights itself, comes smoothly to its conclusion. It's a light novel, relatively speaking. A rare item in the Faulkner bibliography.

Be advised: Some may be offended by the racist language here. Faulkner is writing of a time when, with Lincoln just elected, the U.S. was all but torn apart by the slavery issue. Most of the time the n-word is used solely as a descriptor, but sometimes in the pejorative sense. (For the facts see David Herbert Donald's Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies.) Highly recommended.

Jeanette says

So intrinsic to a time, place, core feeling that my words can't do it justice. Thinking of Granny for awhile before my meager descriptive reaction.

Later.

This work is perfection. The mix of dialect and formal word beauty phenomenal. There is not a nuance unvisited, nor a gut clench obscured.

These, IMHO, are the best bloomed characters in all his masterful and effusive publishing. The boys, John, Granny, Drusila and every character in every full flower of their identity and force. There are at least 3 quotable paragraphs a page in this novel. Depth of instinct coupled with profound cognition tested. Stuff to remember.

It's far more than a coming-of-age story. It's embedded in the end of surrender that is never a surrender. At the end of a trial that is only the beginning of yet another. And also still at the same time and forward, a constant, consistent, continual hurricane of secure self-identity for "us". They being the Yankees and the disingenuous to loyalty.

This was read from a classics collection of Faulkner books and stories that are grouped by years. This being in the 1936-40 volume. The pages fine and nearly transparent, the whole with a red ribbon for a gentle page saver. What a treat to read this now for the first time. I would never have appreciated it as much when I was young. But in such a finely detailed form, the read was a flashback to reading in all its pleasures.

Over time, because they make you work at it, I will read other Faulkner that I had not visited. Coupling this with some other dialect and Southern works(and his niece's memoir)just recently absolutely doubled the pleasure, if that's possible. 6 stars for enjoyment!

Billy O'Callaghan says

It's been a few years since I read Faulkner, but I picked this one up last week and it was just a complete joy. When I wasn't reading it, I was thinking about it.
This, basically, is the story of the coming-of-age of Bayard Sartoris, over a period of about a decade, from the age of eleven or twelve through into manhood. Told in seven chapters, each written originally as a short story and all but the final part published in magazines prior to being reworked into a novel form, it stands as a depiction of life lived through and in the aftermath of Civil War. The Sartoris family run a plantation in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, but Bayard's father, John, is off fighting on the Confederate side, and the household is run by the elegant and ferocious Granny Millard. Bayard gets to run wild, accompanied by a slave boy, Ringo, and their adventures include shooting at a Yankee cavalryman, helping to run a long and very lucrative con on the entire northern army, and hunting down a monstrous killer.
All that's glorious about Faulkner is here: the rich descriptions (you feel the heat and the dust; you smell the grass, the fires and the stench of the horses); the sweeping, magnificently balanced sentences; the understanding of human nature in all its joys and horrors; the sense of place, and history; the musicality and authenticity of the dialogue; and the characters – everyone from Ringo and Granny, through to the likes of

Ab Snopes, cousin Drusilla and Uncle Buck McCaslin – so subtly drawn that it's impossible to believe that they might not actually have existed.
But this is a short novel, too, with a relatively clean and cohesive plot, and having been stitched together from seven short stories (and in no way the worse for that) it is eminently readable, and accessible. What's more, the ending is sublime.
This is the book that's often cited as the ideal entry point into his work for the uninitiated, and I can only second that. While it probably ranks as a lesser work, in that it doesn't display quite the daring or the virtuosity of novels like 'The Sound and the Fury', 'As I Lay Dying' or 'Light in August', it still stands as a beautiful temptation, because it makes thoughts of his other books shine, and puts you firmly on the hook for what is still to come.

Samir Rawas Sarayji says

Faulkner at his most accessible. A collection of 7 inter-related stories about the Satoris family in The South during the Civil War. Slavery, racism, Yankees and all. The stories started out strong and exciting but gradually dwindled as the book progressed and finally picked up towards the end. I enjoyed the adventure and seeing how Bayard Satoris and slave friend Ringo grew up to be very different men. Yet the commonness and reality of the south are never lost on them. That aspect I consider wonderful character development, in tune with the circumstances. I also really liked the dialect.

J.M. Hushour says

If ever there was a novel that could tidily serve as the alien's guide to America right now, this would serve nicely. It's also one of those books that corners you and forces you into liking and loathing most of its characters all at once.
Originally a collection of mildly interlocking short stories about the teenage son of a rogue Confederate officer, Faulkner threw these together into one of his best, most accessible stories. There is so much ambiguity here, moral, political and otherwise that, though it's tempting to dip into it by way of review, I think that any of it would spoil what is an often surprising, funny, and disturbing novel.
This one often gets short thrift by Faulknerians or whatever, but I found it one of my faves.

Mevsim Yenice says

Yenilmeyenler'de asl?nda yenilenleri anlat?yor Faulkner. Sava?? o kadar büyük bir ustal?kla arka plana al?yor ki, cephenin gerisindeki bir çocuk, bir köle çocuk ve ya?l? bir kad?n?n mücadelesine yani esas "yenilmeyenler"e kitliyor okuyucuyu. Güneyli bir yazar olman?n verdi?i etkiyle iç sava??n güney taraf?n? daha net çiziyor haliyle. Ama bana kal?rsa bu kitap, Amerikan iç sava??n? anlatmaktan ziyade, bütün sava?lar? ve sava??n götürülerini anlatmas?yla övgüyü hak ediyor.
Bir de köle- efendi ili?kisi, aile yap?s?n?n kol k?r?l?r yen içinde kal?r yap?da olmas? (ki bunu Ses ve Öfke'de de net bir ?ekilde görmü?tük) bence Faulkner'?n tak?nt?l? oldu?u konulardan. Yine harika bir üslupla anlatm??. Kitap boyunca sanki ben de kendime yer seçtim, ya?l? kad?nlar çocuklar?n aras?ndayd?m, onlarla birlikte y?k?mdan arda kalan topraklarda hayatta kalmaya çal??t?m. Bindikleri at arabalar?n?n toprak yolda b?rakt??? iz bile zihnimde hala capcanl?. Kitap bitti?inde tarifsiz bir duygu durumu içindeydim.

Yenilmi? olmama ra?men hayatta kalm?? gibi. Tavsiye ederim.

Diane Barnes says

"Ringo said, "And don't yawl worry about Granny. She cide what she want and then she kneel down about ten seconds and tell God what she aim to do and then she git up and do hit. And them that don't like it can git outer the way or git trompled."

There you have two of my favorite characters in Faulkner: Granny, brave, indomitable, pious, stubborn, a strong southern woman to the core. And Ringo, smarter than his master, conniving, loyal, always thinking, always there with what was needed. This tale is told by Bayard Sartoris, but it's not really his story. It's a tale of the end of the Civil War and beyond, told with Faulkner's sly humor and knowledge of the hearts and minds of the people who survived and lived with the aftermath. This is a good book to start with for those new to William Faulkner, and may be my favorite one yet.

Camie says

This is a group of stories told by Bayard Sartoris a 14-15 year old boy in Mississippi about his family's plight during the Civil war. An interesting cast of characters; his Father Colonel John Sartoris, Granny Rosa , who steals and resells mules to the Calvary , his cousin Drusilla, who rides in disguise with the soldiers, and his best friend , the recently freed slave Ringo (who has the books best lines) That these chapters were submitted by Faulkner to the Saturday Evening Post as serial reads made sense as they never truly came together as one story for me. I also found Bayard and Ringo's thoughts a little jovial for the situation and subject matter . I guess I'll just chalk that up to their youth. This is my second W.F. , the first being The Sound and The Fury which I didn't care for much. (Just try reading a page of it out loud) Since that was 2 stars, I'll give this one 3 .

Connie says

The Unvanquished is a coming-of-age novel set during the American Civil War and Reconstruction. Six of the seven stories were individually published in the Saturday Evening Post and Scribners before Faulkner finished it as a novel. The book is narrated by Bayard Sartoris as he looks back on his life on a Mississippi plantation from age 12 to 24.

The young Bayard thinks of war as a great adventure, and he has a "hero worshiping" attitude toward his father, Colonel John Sartoris, who leads a Confederate regiment. Bayard and Ringo, a 12-year-old slave boy, have been raised together. The first stories involve adventures where Bayard and Ringo seem largely unaware of the politics and racial tensions that exist.

As the war progresses there are many instances of heroism exhibited by ordinary people--including the young boys and my favorite character, Granny. She uses a forgery scheme to fool the Union soldiers so that the community does not go hungry. Waves of freed slaves move North to find the River Jordan, but things are not that easy. Racial and class distinctions still exist.

During the difficult Reconstruction period, John Sartoris is shown to be domineering and hot-tempered, letting nothing stand in his way to success. He sent Bayard to law school because he wanted his son to be able to take the law into his own hands. But the mature Bayard has different ideas about honor and manhood. Bayard wants an end to violence in their community, and a new code of honor based on law and justice.

Although the book has many moral themes throughout, the story also has many humorous and touching episodes that temper the tragic moments. Slavery on the Sartoris plantation is described in much more benign terms than what frequently existed. The book ended with the feeling that change was brewing, and it wouldn't come easily.

This book is a May group read for the "On the Southern Literary Trail" group.

Morgan says

Kind of a good book if you want a chill afternoon in the summer. I found this a quick read, but I didn't have much to do today. This book is set in the Civil War and is about the Sartoris in his famous Yoknapatawpha County. Although, this isn't my favorite Faulkner book, I liked the characters like Granny. I liked having read a few Faulkner books now I can see he reuses names from other books. I like how most of his books connect with other books he wrote.

Mmars says

Even if I struggled with streams of thought or with following the action or with unfamiliarity of Faulkner’s style, there was the ending. Oh, the ending. How important it is to a book and how seldom it can redeem the faults one has had with the book up to that point. But here we follow a boy of twelve from childhood to manhood, true manhood. Until the end we do not know what truly lies in his heart.

This book begs to be read again to gather those clues of Bayard’s coming into his own. To see him become a symbol of the post-Civil War south in which enmities must be put aside and retribution must stop. In which the south must rise again and shed the bonds of the past.

Though I went straight from finishing the book to writing this review, it’s clear that this is one of those books whose genius becomes apparent upon reflection. I recently had the same experience with The Remains of the Day. Which, though being a three star reading experience, received 5 stars for its genius of execution.

Highly recommended for group reads and discussion.

Steve says

This is a great one. I thought I had read this book years back, but I must have only read a few stories in the collection. *The Unvanquished* is a collection of closely connected short stories that focus on the Sartoris family during and immediately following the Civil War. But calling this "a collection" is a bit misleading. You should not approach this book without first reading it from beginning to end. I don't know what

Faulkner was thinking when he wrote these stories without later providing some sort of connective work to transform the stories into an actual novel. Maybe it was just money, as each story would originally appear separately in the Saturday Evening Post. Or maybe it was Faulkner (a Modernist at heart) experimenting with the form of the novel. If so, it's a mild experiment, since as you read on you will think of these stories as part of a whole. It is interesting to note that the much more radical experiment in novel writing, *The Wild Palms*, would immediately follow *The Unvanquished*. Anyway, getting back to this book, I've read several of these stories here and there (mostly in the essential The Portable Faulkner). Great stories, no doubt, but to remove them from their original *Unvanquished* setting seems something of a crime since they have so much more power in the original collection. The final story, "An Odor of Verbena," will now forever be etched in my mind as one of Faulkner's greatest short stories. I liked it before, but it haunts me now. Highly recommended.

Mohamad Yoosofi says

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Hana says

A boy, twelve years old, is growing up the middle of the Civil War--the American one, though in many ways it could be *any* civil war. Bayard and his best friend Ringo make maps of the battle fields in the rich soil and play soldier on the family plantation. War is an adventure, a Romantic dream of valor and anything other than glorious victory seems impossible.

Bayard’s awakening is at first a thing happening at the animal level, a consciousness that is ancient—the way a dog detects something new, alien, and ultimately threatening. When his father comes home from the battlefields Bayard *smells* something, something that at first he mis-names….

“Then I began to smell it again, like each time he returned, like the day back in the spring when I rode up on the drive standing in one of his stirrups - that odor in his clothes and beard and flesh too which I believed was the smell of powder and glory, the elected victorious but know better now: know now to have been only the will to endure, a sardonic and even humorous declining of self-delusion which is not even kin to that optimism which believes that that which is about to happen to us can possibly be the worst which we can suffer.”

The sentence structure is often as tortured as the war-ravaged land; the dialect is thick, at times impenetrable. I was totally lost more than once. Everything happens in impressionistic flashes--sharp, quick, intensely felt, not fully understood—it is quite wonderful though difficult to follow.

"…all of a sudden he was just kind of hanging there against the lighted doorway like he had been cut out of tin in the act of running and was inside the cabin and the door shut black again almost before we knew what we had seen."

Still, it is worth persevering for moments like this one—where Ringo and Bayard encounter the vast, onward-rushing masses of slaves, taking to the roads, heading for the Union lines and the hope of freedom:

"It was as if Ringo felt it too and that the railroad, the rushing locomotive which he hoped to see symbolised it — the motion, the impulse to move which had already seethed to a head among his people, darker than themselves, reasonless, following and seeking a delusion, a dream, a bright shape which they could not know since there was nothing in their heritage, nothing in the memory even of the old men to tell the others, 'This is what we will find'; he nor they could not have known what it was yet it was there - one of those impulses inexplicable yet invincible which appear among races of people at intervals and drive them to pick up and leave all security and familiarity of earth and home and start out, they dont know where, empty handed, blind to everything but a hope and a doom."

In the book’s final chapters Bayard faces his father, the man he once hero-worshiped, and sees the "spurious forensic air of lawyers and the intolerant eyes which in the last two years had acquired that transparent film ...which the eyes of carnivorous animals have…which I have seen before on the eyes of men who have killed too much, who have killed so much that never again as long as they live will they ever be alone."

At the close, Bayard must choose between old codes of honor and manliness and a very different kind of courage.

Content rating PG: The scenes of war were not particularly graphic, but the incessant use of the word ‘nigger’ grated on my nerves and others might have a similar reaction. It’s part of the background of the times, though, and probably gives an accurate sense of the way people spoke and thought.

Lee Thompson says

A fun and strangely dark novel from Faulkner. I like when he allowed himself do some deadpan comedy.

Sue says

Having read Flags in the Dust last year made this a special read along with the OTSLT group now. To see the very early years of Bayard Sartoris with his father and Grandmother, the skirmishes with Yankee troops, as well as Granny's clever hoodwinking of same to support those dependent on her during those very hard times has been exciting. Faulkner's vision of these people and their land is so consistent as to be amazing. To see the forebears of the Snopes and others adds to enjoyment of other books read (and yet to come)

There are many moments in the book that I want to hold on to but I will read it again for certain. Granny was such a figure of courage, pride and certainty in an uncertain time. This is my favorite of her moments.

She just said "Come"and turned and went on, not toward the cabin, but across the pasture toward the road. We didn't know where we were going until we reached the church. She went straight up the aisle to the chancel and stood there until we came up. "Kneel down," she said.
We knelt in the empty church.She was small between us, little; she talked quiet, not loud, not fast, not slow;..."I have sinned. I have stolen and I have borne false witness against my neighbor, though that neighbor was an enemy of my country. And more than that. I have caused these children to sin. I hereby take their sin upon my conscience....But I did not sin for gain or for greed," Granny said. "I did not sin for revenge. I defy You or anyone to say I did. I sinned first for justice..." (p 147)

There are many forms of justice in The Unvanquished and Faulkner seems to be very much concerned with the evolution of that concept in his characters' lives.

I am looking forward to my next Faulkner book.

Kirk Smith says

Easily my favorite Faulkner! There are many more to be read, so I have much learn. This may have been his novel for novices and easy to follow. The violent death of Grumby was "(he didn't scream, he never made a sound) and the pistol both at the same time was level and steady as a rock." I don't know if that sounds like revenge and the death of a scoundrel to you, but I had to go back and search for the violence just to be sure a death transpired. Subtle violence with little or no blood! Compared with everything else I read that was refreshing.

Matt says

All the stories are good, mostly previously published in The Saturday Evening Post in the late thirties when he was "stirring the pot" making some quick cash while he worked on Absalom.

Each of the intertwined tales concerns two boys, one white and one black, growing up after the trauma of the Civil War. Colonel Sartoris, the fading patriarch, presides over the desiccated landscape and the ruins of Southern gentility. They work well together, complementing each other and keeping the narrative intact. You can see why the stories sold- they're suspenseful, dramatic, accessible (not so many of Faulkner's infamous ultra-long sentences) and vivid.

And then it all leads up to the final story, the one Faulkner never sold to the magazines: *An Odor of Verbena*. It's a Masterpiece. I read it with my heart in my throat. When it was finished, I was that good kind of exhausted you get when you read something particularly powerful. It grabbed me by the guts and wouldn't let go until I finished the last sentence. You could have knocked me over with a sneeze.

It's sinister, kinda sexy in a subtly kinky way, hypnotic, tragic, all-too-human but humane, weaving the thematic concerns (I mean the aforementioned "Southern codes of gentility", though it should be remarked that I am not Southern and so just kind of assume I can begin to understand the essential values in this cultural tradition from what I gather out of hearsay and various fictions) of *Sound* and *Absalom* (a relatively distilled version of its labyrinthine plot appears as marginal gloss here) as well as elements of *Macbeth* and *Great Expectations*.

But never mind all that. Just crack open the tome, enjoy each story on its own worthy merits, and prepare to savor the final tale's sweet, intoxicating, doom-laden aroma for yourself.

Jim says

I first read **The Unvanquished** half a century ago, because I had been told that it was the best Faulkner novel to start with. (Actually, it's not a novel at all, but a linked series of short stories with the same characters.) Seeing the Civil War through the eyes of Bayard Sartoris, son of a Southern war hero, and Ringo (short for Marengo), a former family slave who is Bayard's age, was nothing short of brilliant. I loved the book even more the second time around, and I definitely understood it more.

In the six stories (and the seventh, "An Odor of Verbena," which serves as a coda), Faulkner memorializes the culture of the Deep South through the horrors of the war and the Reconstruction that followed. That culture included some amazing characters, such as Uncle Buck McCaslin:

> There was more to Uncle Buck and [his brother] Buddy than just that. Father said they were ahead of their time; he said they not only possessed, but put into practice, ideas about social relationship that maybe fifty years after they were both dead people would have a name for. These ideas were about land. They believed that land did not belong to people but that ***people belonged to land and that the earth would permit them to live on and out of it and use it only so long as they behaved and that if they did not behave right, it would shake them off just like a dog getting rid of fleas***. [Italics mine]

This would be a major theme in Faulkner's stories and novels in the years to come. (I think particularly of the Snopes family that was to move in on Yoknapatawpha County.) In this book, the example of Grumby's Independents exemplified the McCaslin code. Grumby is a guerrilla who is more into theft, rapine, and murder than he is for the Confederate cause. In the interstices between the withdrawal of the Southern forces and the return of the Yankees after Appomattox, he fattens like a tick until Bayard and Ringo catch up with him.

What draws the boys' revenge is the murder of Bayard's grandmother, Miss Rosa Millard, who is one of Faulkner's most memorable characters. After the Sartoris house has been burned down by the Yankees, she goes after the Yanks for stealing her mules. As a result of a misunderstanding, the Union soldiers give her over a hundred mules. She then sets herself up in business re-selling these mules to the North, and then -- using a clever forgery -- getting the mules back, eliminating the U.S. brand on their haunches, and selling them back yet again. In the process, she partners with the wildly unreliable Ab Snopes; and this is what draws Grumby to her.

After Bayard's father has been gunned down by a former business partner, the father's friends solemnly gather around Bayard

> with the unctuous formality which the Southern man shows in the presence of death -- that Roman holiday engendered by mist-born Protestantism grafted onto this land of violent sun, of violent alteration from snow to heat-stroke which has produced a race impervious to both.

How that man can write! I am no Southerner myself, though my heart skips a beat when I see in this and his other books a clarity and a love for the land of his birth.

Lawyer says

The Unvanquished: Faulkner's Civil War

The Unvanquished was chosen as a group read by . Special thanks to Co-Moderator Co-Moderator Diane Barnes, "Miss Scarlette," for nominating this novel. "The Trail" continues to explore the works of William Faulkner. It is my hope that we will one day complete all of them.

> ***He was besotted with history, his own and those of people around him. He lived within this history, and the history became him.--Robert Penn Warren, speaking of William Faulknerto Jay Parini, August, 1987, source material for One Matchless Time: A Life of William Faulkner***

Darn it. This review will be temporarily interrupted as a result of my having failed to do something I should have accomplished earlier in the day. Another facet of the aging process. However, with age comes the patience to read Faulkner. For a third time. That is, the same novel. Younger readers should not consider the above commentary derogatory in any sense. However, studies have shown that internet learning *have made students less patient in seeking/analyzing informations. That is all. I'm outta here. Later...*