



As I Lay Dying

un film de James Franco

Dossier pédagogique

Zéro de conduite .net

Anglais

Au cinéma le 9 octobre

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CRÉDITS DU DOSSIER

Dossier réalisé par Sarah Bisson, septembre 2013, pour Zérodeconduite.net, en association avec Metropolitan Filmexport et Millenium Films.

<http://www.zerodeconduite.net/asilaydying>

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INTRODUCTION

C'est à une véritable gageure que s'est attaqué le réalisateur et acteur (Le Magicien d'Oz, La Planète des singes : les origines, 127 heures...) James Franco.

Cinquième roman de William Faulkner (publié en 1930 aux Etats-Unis), *As I Lay Dying* (Tandis que j'agonise dans la traduction française) est en effet un des monuments de la littérature américaine, et un des jalons importants de la modernité littéraire. Si l'histoire qui lui sert de prétexte est relativement simple (le parcours douloureux d'une famille du Sud américain pour enterrer la mère défunte à quarante miles de sa maison), le roman se distingue par son utilisation de la technique du stream of consciousness (courant de conscience) et la multiplication des points de vue (pas moins de quinze narrateurs différents se partagent la parole au gré des cinquante-neuf chapitres du livre).

James Franco a pris des partis non moins forts et originaux pour transposer à l'écran le roman, comme le choix de monologues face caméra ou l'utilisation du split-screen pour retranscrire la multiplication des points de vue sur une même action. Mais la grande réussite de la mise en scène et des comédiens est aussi de donner vie de manière convaincante aux personnages et à l'atmosphère si particulière du roman de Faulkner, situé comme la plupart des ses œuvres romanesques dans le comté fictif de Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi.

Le film de James Franco permettra donc d'initier les élèves à l'œuvre tortueuse, complexe et fascinante de celui que l'on considère souvent comme un des pères de la littérature contemporaine américaine. En effet, en étudiant ce film, on évitera le risque de perdre les élèves en les mettant d'emblée face à un texte qui pourrait s'avérer hermétique au premier abord.

La version cinématographique viendra ainsi préparer et éclairer la lecture du texte, puis nourrira par la suite une réflexion sur les différences entre les deux modes d'écriture que sont le cinéma et la littérature. d'un extrait du roman de Faulkner.

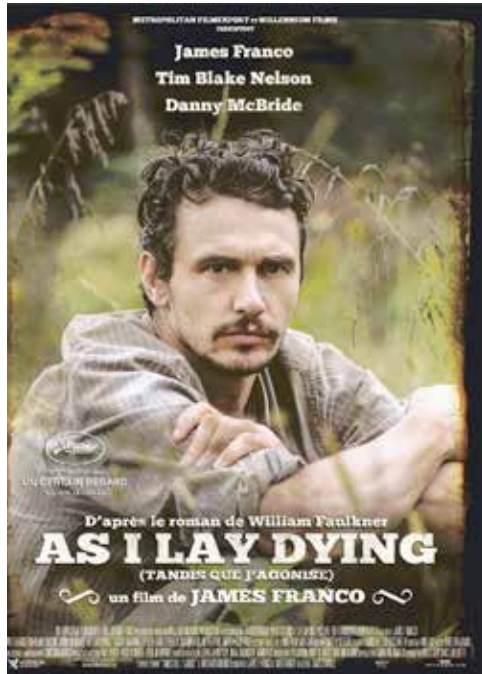
En littérature étrangère en langue étrangère (série L), l'étude de la quête à la fois tragique et burlesque de la famille Bundren à travers l'État du Mississippi sera l'occasion d'aborder les thèmes du déracinement et de l'errance (voyage, parcours initiatique, exil). L'analyse des procédés narratifs élaborés par William Faulkner et ensuite James Franco permettra par ailleurs de traiter le thème de l'expression des sentiments (Je de l'écrivain et jeu de l'écriture).

Les activités de ce dossier d'accompagnement pédagogique auront pour objectif d'étudier les choix opérés dans l'adaptation cinématographique de l'œuvre littéraire majeure qu'est *As I Lay Dying* afin de mener un projet d'écriture de scénario avec la classe, à partir d'un extrait du roman de Faulkner.

DANS LES PROGRAMMES

Enseignement	Niveau	Dans les programmes
■ Anglais	Littérature en langue étrangère Série L	⇒ Voyage, parcours initiatique, exil Piste : le déracinement, l'errance ⇒ Je de l'écrivain et jeu de l'écriture Piste : l'écriture comme jouissance esthétique, l'expression des sentiments

FICHE TECHNIQUE DU FILM



As I Lay Dying

Un film de : James Franco

Année : 2013

Langue : Anglais

Pays : Etats-Unis

Durée : 110 min

Au cinéma le 9 octobre

Avec (les comédiens principaux) : James Franco, Logan Marshall-Green, Danny McBride, Tim Blake Nelson, Ahna O'Reilly.

Synopsis : Après le décès d'Addie Bundren, son mari et ses cinq enfants entament un long périple à travers le Mississippi pour accompagner la dépouille jusqu'à sa dernière demeure.

Anse, le père, et leurs enfants Cash, Darl, Jewel, Dewey Dell et le plus jeune, Vardaman, quittent leur ferme sur une charrette où ils ont placé le cercueil. Chacun d'eux, profondément affecté, vit la mort d'Addie à sa façon. Leur voyage jusqu'à Jefferson, la ville natale de la défunte, sera rempli d'épreuves, imposées par la nature ou le destin. Mais pour ce qu'il reste de cette famille, rien ne sera plus dangereux que les tourments et les blessures secrètes que chacun porte au plus profond de lui...

ACTIVITÉ 1

SUMMING UP THE STORY

As I Lay Dying

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Au cinéma le 9 octobre



1. Focus on the first scenes:

- Listen to the sounds and describe the atmosphere.

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- Explain what everyone - including the spectators - is waiting for.

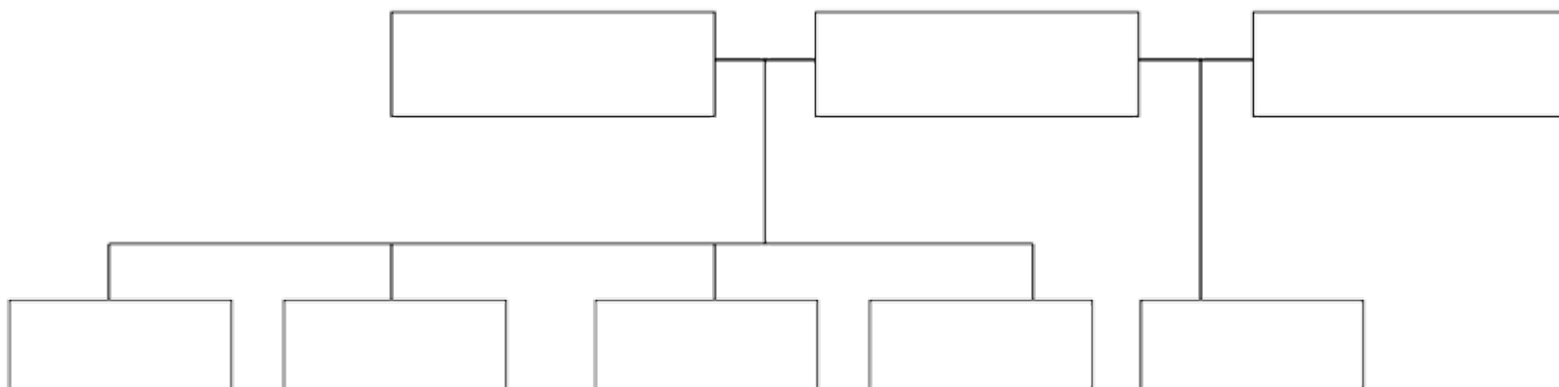
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2. Watch the whole movie and fill in the following family tree with the characters' names:

Darl - Addie - Vardaman - Dewey Dell - Anse - Cash - Jewel

One name in the list above is missing: can you find which? Name this person and explain how you found out about this person's role.



ACTIVITÉ 1

SUMMING UP THE STORY

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3. Why go to Jefferson?

Fill in the following grid with the appropriate characters' names.

Names	Motivation
	to bury Addie
	to get an abortion
	to get new teeth
	to buy a gramophone

4. In your own words, sum up what the Bundrens' project consists in, using some of the expressions given in the toolbox.

TOOLBOX	
so as to	want to
plan to	in order to
aim at + v-ing	intend to

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ACTIVITÉ 1

SUMMING UP THE STORY

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5. Focus on the final scenes and fill in the following grid with the appropriate characters' names.

Names		What they get
	GETS	a broken leg
		committed to a mental hospital
		a new set of teeth
		raped
		a burnt back
		buried

ACTIVITÉ 1

SUMMING UP THE STORY

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6. Assess the result of the Bundrens' quest, using some of the words given below.

TOOLBOX	
eventually	on the one hand... on the other hand
finally	while
after all	whereas
as a result	unlike
in the end	

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ACTIVITÉ 1

SUMMING UP THE STORY

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7. The title *As I Lay Dying* derives from Book XI of Homer's *The Odyssey*, in which Agamemnon speaks to Odysseus: « *As I lay dying, the woman with the dog's eyes would not close my eyes as I descended into Hades.* »

Can you explain the parallel between this quotation and the story?

Say if you consider that the character's trip can be seen as some sort of odyssey and explain why.

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ACTIVITÉ 2

ANALYZING THE FILM

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1. Focus on the scene at the river, when the cart is overturned.

- What sounds do you hear?

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- Read the transcript of the dialogues of the scene. Can you remember what images correspond to the lines below?

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- What is the effect produced by the voice over?

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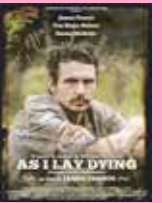
ACTIVITÉ 2

ANALYZING THE FILM

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- Can you make connections between what is said and the images (clue: focus on the lexical field of water)?

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- Explain what these simultaneous discrepancy and correspondence between sound and image reveal about the meaning of words and language.

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ACTIVITÉ 2

ANALYZING THE FILM

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- Describe the way Addie expresses herself: study the rhythm and sounds. Say if you think she is talking to someone / to herself, or if these are just her thoughts as they occur in her mind, or if this is a mix of both. Explain why.

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- Contrast Addie's words with the other dialogues in the scene, then contrast all the film's voice-over words with most dialogues. What do you notice? What does this reveal about language again?

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ACTIVITÉ 2

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Extract from the script :

CASH TO JEWEL/ JEWEL TO CASH:

- Watch yourself! / - I'm on it! Come on!

JEWEL TO CASH:

Come on! Come on then, you can come, all right?

JEWEL TO CASH/ DARL TO CASH:

- Come on! / - Watch it!

DARL TO JEWEL:

Jewel! Let the rope go!

CASH TO HORSE:

Go! Go!

ADDIE V.O.:

I used to hear the dark land talking God's love... His beauty and His sin. Hearing the dark voicelessness in which words are deeds... and the other words that are not deeds... just the gaps in people's lack... coming down like the cries of the geese in the wild darkness... in the old terrible nights.

ADDIE TO CAMERA:

Anse had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that word was like the others.

ADDIE V.O.:

Just a shape to fill a lack. When I knew that I had Cash... I knew that life was terrible... and that this was the answer to it. That was when I learned that words are no good. Words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at. When he was borned, I knew motherhood was invented by someone... who had to have a word for it. Because the ones that had the children... didn't care if there was a word for it or not.

ADDIE TO CAMERA:

Sometimes I would lay by him in the dark... hearing the dark land that was now of my blood and flesh... and I would think, «Anse.»

ACTIVITÉ 2

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ADDIE V.O.:

«Why Anse? Why is he Anse?» And I would think about his name until, after a while...

ADDIE TO CAMERA (cont'd):

I could see the word as a shape... a vessel. I would watch him liquify and flow into it... until the jar stood full and motionless.

ADDIE V.O.:

I told Cora one day... that he was my cross, and he would be my salvation. He would save me from the water and the fire. Even though I had laid down my life... he would save me. She told me it was sinful when she realized how we were talking about God. But sin and love and fear are just sounds... that people who have never sinned nor loved nor feared, have. But what they never had, and cannot have... until they forget the words.

ADDIE TO CAMERA:

She wanted me to pray, ask for forgiveness... because to people to whom sin is just a matter of words... to them, «salvation» is just words, too. I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me... as dressed also in sin. Even more beautiful... because the garment he exchanged for sin was sanctified. I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove. And then it was over.

ADDIE V.O.:

He gave me Jewel. And Jewel was my salvation.

WHITFIELD TO ALL:

His grace be upon this house!

DARL TO CASH:

He got the saw, Cash!

VERNON TO CASH:

I got the rule! Found the rule, Cash!

DARL TO CASH:

He got your saw, Cash! He got your saw!

ACTIVITÉ 2

ANALYZING THE FILM

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2. Compare this scene with the other dramatic incident (or trial in the characters' quest) of the movie: the fire.

- What effect does the use of slow motion produce?

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- Which other device that is used many times in the film creates an impression of dilating time and giving several points of view at the same time?

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ACTIVITÉ 2

ANALYZING THE FILM

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- Read the information given about Faulkner's writing and make connections between the novel and the film director's choices. Say if you agree with these choices or not and explain why, giving examples.

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ACTIVITÉ 3

CREATING YOUR OWN SCREENPLAY

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1. Observe the similarities and differences between the following extract from the script and the extract from the novel.

- in the script, find which elements were probably taken from another chapter.
- in the extract from the novel, find which elements were not taken into the script, then try to find reasons why.
- find the elements that taken from the novel and whose form was changed in the script.

A/ Extract from the script :

VARDAMAN TO FAMILY:

Look, there's Jewel!

ANSE TO JEWEL:

Where that horse?

JEWEL TO ANSE:

Delivered him to Snopes himself.

ANSE TO JEWEL:

You did right.

VARDAMAN TO DARL:

This here sure got me tired. Darl, if Snopes didn't feed them mules on sawdust... would they be able to make the hill without us have to get out and walk?

DARL TO VARDAMAN:

Maybe.

VARDAMAN TO DARL:

When we stop at night in the barn, where do buzzards stay?

VARDAMAN TO CAMERA:

I asked Darl. He doesn't know neither. Tonight I'm gonna see where them buzzards stay while we're in the barn.

ACTIVITÉ 3

CREATING YOUR OWN SCREENPLAY

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B) Extract from the novel

VARDAMAN

DARL AND JEWEL and Dewey Dell and I are walking up the hill behind the wagon. Jewel came back. He came up the road and got into the wagon. He was walking. Jewel hasn't got a horse any more. Jewel is my brother. Cash is my brother. Cash has a broken leg. We fixed Cash's leg so it doesn't hurt. Cash is my brother. Jewel is my brother too, but he hasn't got a broken leg.

Now there are five of them, tall in little tall black circles.

"Where do they stay at night, Darl?" I say. "When we stop at night in the barn, where do they stay?"

The hill goes off into the sky. Then the sun comes up from behind the hill and the mules and the wagon and pa walk on the sun. You cannot watch them, walking slow on the sun. In Jefferson it is red on the track behind the glass. The track goes shining round and round. Dewey Dell says so.

To-night I am going to see where they stay while we are in the barn.

ACTIVITÉ 3

CREATING YOUR OWN SCREENPLAY

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2. Read the following extract from the novel which was not included within the scenario of James Franco's film:

WHITFIELD

WHEN THEY TOLD me she was dying, all that night I wrestled with Satan, and I emerged victorious. I woke to the enormity of my sin; I saw the true light at last, and I fell on my knees and confessed to God and asked his guidance and received it. "Rise," He said; "repair to that home on which you have put a living lie, among those people with whom you have outraged My Word; confess your sin aloud. It is for them, for that deceived husband, to forgive you: not I."

So I went. I heard that Tull's bridge was gone; I said "Thanks, O Lord, O Mighty Ruler of all"; for by those dangers and difficulties which I should have to surmount I saw that He had not abandoned me; that my reception again into His holy peace and love would be the sweeter for it. "Just let me not perish before I have begged the forgiveness of the man whom I betrayed," I prayed; "let me not be too late; let not the tale of mine and her transgression come from her lips instead of mine. She had sworn then that she would never tell it, but eternity is a fearsome thing to face: have I not wrestled thigh to thigh with Satan myself? let me not have also the sin of her broken vow upon my soul. Let not the waters of Thy mighty wrath encompass me until I have cleansed my soul in the presence of them whom I injured."

It was His hand that bore me safely above the flood, that fended from me the dangers of the waters. My horse was frightened, and my own heart failed me as the logs and the uprooted trees bore down upon my littleness. But not my soul: time after time I saw them averted at destruction's final instant, and I lifted my voice above the noise of the flood: "Praise to then O Mighty Lord and King. By this token shall I cleanse my soul and gain again into the fold of Thy undying love."

I knew then that forgiveness was mine. The flood, the danger, behind, and as I rode on across the firm earth again and the scene of my Gethsemane drew closer and closer, I framed the words I should use. I would enter the house; I would stop her before she had spoken; I would say to her husband: "Anse, I have sinned. Do with me as you will."

It was already as though it were done. My soul felt freer, quieter than it had in years; already I seemed to dwell in abiding peace again as I rode on. To either side I saw His hand; in my heart I could hear His voice: "Courage. I am with thee."

Then I reached Tull's house. His youngest girl came out and called to me as I was passing. She told me she was already dead.

I have sinned, O Lord. Thou knowest the extent of my remorse and the will of my spirit. But He is merciful; He will accept the will for the deed, Who knew that when I framed the words of my confession it was to Anse I spoke them, even though he was not there. It was He in His infinite wisdom that restrained the tale from her dying lips as she lay surrounded by those who loved and trusted her; mine the travail by water which I sustained by the strength of His hand. Thee in Thy bounteous and omnipotent love, O praise.

I entered the house of bereavement, the lowly dwelling where another erring mortal lay while her soul faced the awful and irrevocable judgment, peace to her ashes.

"God's grace upon this house," I said.

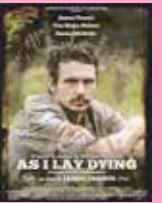
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3. You are going to adapt this chapter into a screenplay.

In your own words, sum up what is going on in this extract.

Cross the passages you think are useless for your scene.

Highlight the passages that can be easily be turn into images (without dialogues).

Pick another colour and highlight the dialogues you would like to keep and the passages you think might be easily turned into dialogues.

Determine which lines you want to be delivered as a voice over.

Determine which devices you are going to use: voice-over, split screen, slow motion...

Write your screenplay, using the guidelines given here: <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scripts/screenplay.pdf>

RÉFÉRENCES COMPLÉMENTAIRES

Bibliographie

- *As I Lay Dying*, FAULKNER William, 1930.

Le roman à l'origine du scénario du film.

- Pour élaborer le dossier pour l'épreuve du bac, on pourra compléter l'étude d'extraits du roman de Faulkner par la lecture d'un extrait d'un roman qui s'est fortement inspiré de *As I Lay Dying* :

Last Orders, SWIFT Graham, 1996.

- On pourra aussi étudier un extrait d'un autre écrivain du sud des Etats-Unis qui raconte également la dislocation de familles écrasées par les secrets, les rancœurs et les non-dits :

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, WILLIAMS Tennessee, 1954.