**Content Summary for Teachers**

**Chapter 3**

In 1933, Jack, having been in Willie's employ for several years, goes to visit his mother. An extremely wealthy woman, she thinks it's disgraceful that Jack works for Governor Stark, and suggests that he let her husband, Theodore, find him more suitable employment. Jack responds to her angrily and remembers his childhood: his father, Ellis Burden, left the family when he was young, and his mother went through a series of other husbands whom he remembers by epithet—"the Tycoon," "the Count," and the current "Young Executive." He remembers playing with Anne and Adam Stanton, and his adolescence when his mother insisted he should go to Harvard instead of State College, which he ultimately attended.

Jack accompanies his mother and stepfather to a dinner at Judge Irwin's, where the party is attempting to match him with a young woman named Miss Dumonde, which Jack resents. Most of the guests are hostile to Willie's governance and political reforms, and Jack spars with them. As he departs, he thinks about how his father—whom he refers to as the "Scholarly Attorney"—met his mother when she was a teenager living in rural Arkansas and brought her home to his wealthy family.

When Jack returns to the hotel where Willie and his team are staying, Sadie informs him that they're in the process of a disaster. Jack walks into Willie's office, where he's meeting with the State Auditor, Byram White, who has been caught in shady financial dealings. The legislature is planning to bring impeachment proceedings against White, which Willie wants to avoid, lest the legislators think they can get away with other instances of impeachment. Willie berates White even as he plans to protect him, and demands that he write an undated resignation later, which Willie will deploy at his own convenience. After White departs, Miller, the highly educated and snobbish Attorney General, comes into the room to object to what Willie has just done. Willie claims he's acting for the greater good; though Miller agrees in some ways, he insists that Willie's actions are unethical and resigns.

Willie makes plans to prevent the impeachment proceedings and sends Jack off to do his dirty work. Jack considers as he does Willie's many adulteries: Sadie is now his mistress, but he often has dalliances with still other women, and Sadie behaves more jealously than Lucy. Willie claims that Lucy told him that she would leave him if he protected White, but this turns out not to be the case. Jack finds blackmail material for legislators throughout the state while Willie makes speeches; later, Jack visits Lowdan, the opposition leader, and tells him that enough legislators are choosing to reject the impeachment bill (due, of course, to bribes and blackmail). When the impeachment bill is killed, a huge number of Willie's supporters descend on the state capitol and demands a speech from Willie. He gives the speech and then returns to Lucy. Their son, Tom, is growing up into a charismatic, promiscuous football star.

**Student Guided Questions for Chapter 3**

(5 min)

In what regard is the story of Cass Mastern important to Jack?

(5 min)

How does Jack's relationship with his mother inform his character more generally?

(5 min)

How does Sadie's character development in today's reading complicate how we saw her in the first two chapters?

(5 min)

What does the saga of Byram White and Hugh Miller reveal about Willie's mode of governance?

(5 min)

What does it mean to Jack to be a "student of history"?

(5 min)

How did you react to the depiction of the places where Cass searched for Phebe? How was your reaction alike or different from Cass's, and how does that influence the narrative as a whole?

**Discussion of Thought Questions**

1. **What does Jack Burden's job with Governor Willie Stark seem to be?**

(5 min)

Jack appears to be some kind of "body man" for Willie: someone who helps Willie to make threats and defend him. He's a very trusted confidante, but it's also clear that Willie has a hard time trusting anyone and tends to manipulate the people around him. Students may be uncertain of what Jack's real role in the administration is; suggest that they continue to collect evidence of his role as they continue to read.

1. **2**

**Why do you think Robert Penn Warren chose to use racial slurs in the narrative? Do you think his choice was justified? Why or why not?**

(10 min)

Depending on the demographics, political perspectives, and prior literary experience of your class, emotional responses may vary widely. However, Warren is using a slur completely unacceptable in contemporary parlance, and it may be upsetting to a range of students. Classes should consider that Warren is portraying the Jim Crow South from a white perspective, and the word would, unfortunately, have been in common use at that time. This is a novel of white political insiders, who clearly felt deep contempt for their black constituents. Some students may feel that Warren's choice to use it is simply verisimilitude; others may think that writing and reading the word perpetuates toxic sociocultural attitudes. Make a decision as a class about the way you want to handle the presence of the word and other racist insults in the narrative, acknowledging that there will be more of both as you continue reading.

1. **3**

**Describe Jack's relationship with the Stantons. What experiences do they share?**

(5 min)

The Stantons are his oldest and closest friends—they may, indeed, be Jack's only friends, since we don't see him socialize with anyone else besides Willie and his associates. Jack hints at a past romance with Anne, but he doesn't explain why it went awry, nor how the two of them remained connected after it did so. Adam seems to lead a life as lonely as Jack's, although more professionally successful; however, he doesn't seem as harmed by his loneliness as Jack does. He likes playing music, he likes doing surgery, and he likes seeing his old friend and his sister. The three—Jack, Adam, and Anne—share what seems to be an extremely wealthy background on the coast: they grew up in wealthy, sheltered environments, Adam and Anne the children of the governor, Jack the scion of a family at least successful enough to have a town named after them.

1. **4**

**Why and how does Willie change over the course of Chapter Two?**

(5 min)

Willie begins Chapter Two as an earnest, backwoods-raised, local administrator, deeply sincere, and well-researched in all his choices. He works so hard that when he discovers he's being manipulated and ill-used by Tiny Duffy and his colleagues, he explodes and instead of sharing earnest facts and figures, he shares his true feelings. This gives him a power over his audience, and he becomes very attached to that feeling of power, using it to build his law practice and eventually win the governorship. By the time Jack meets him again, he's confident, relaxed, and smooth-talking.

1. **5**

**Who are the prominent women in this story thus far? How do their roles differ from those of male characters?**

(5 min)

Students are likely to mention Anne, Sadie, and perhaps Lucy. Anne and Lucy are figures of steadiness for Jack and Willie respectively, albeit in different ways. Lucy represents Willie's background and home, but also the control that makes him such an unappealing candidate. She has not thus far been shown to have many interests or ideas of her own except as they affect Willie. Anne represents the best parts of home to Jack; she seems to be making more independent choices than Lucy does, although we don't yet understand why she makes them. She's not centered in work like her brother, nor absorbed by herself like Jack. Sadie is a savvy political operative (though Jack implies that he believes she's developed this skill to compensate for unattractiveness), and much more than the other two women mentioned, she seems to be able to make choices that suit her personality, make her happy, and give her power. In this sense, she has much more in common with Willie.