

## Anse, the Ideal Image of Balance

Anse, the father in *As I Lay Dying*, is a man who has perfected the art of balance. Throughout the novel he balances his own needs of loneliness and need of new teeth with the needs of his family. He makes his family take the journey to Jefferson and he pushes them on towards their destination. Anse grants his wife her dying wish by helping the Bundren family bury Addie in Jefferson. Anse knows how to survive the modern world using balance.

Many people have argued Anse as being a selfish man, and the enemy of the Bundren family. As Jan Bakker says in his article “‘*As I Lay Dying*’ Reconsidered” Anse is “the consummate manipulator of men, who knows how to exploit what is good in them, although he is devoid of any himself”. Bakker says this because Anse does not bring spades to bury his wife and expects other people to lend spades to him, and because Anse also wants to go to town to get new teeth. In some aspects it seems as though Anse is very selfish.

On the other hand, he had a reason for everything he did. It may have been lucky, but the woman who Anse borrows spades from ends up becoming his wife. The new woman Anse marries is a consolidation to Anse because he is obviously lonely after loving his only love, Addie. Even though he wants to get new teeth in Jefferson, he doesn't get them until his old wife is buried. Anse has reasons for his actions that seem selfish but are justified.

He also manages to accomplish things that have nothing to do with him. He grants his wife her dying wish when he buries her in Jefferson. If it had not been for Anse, the family might have given up at anytime along the journey, but he is there to push them

onward. He also gets his eldest son a gramophone because that is what Cash desires most, but cannot get one himself because he has no money and a broken leg. Anse does everything he can for his family.

Anse finds a way throughout the novel to balance his needs and the needs of his family. He uses the opportunity of traveling to Jefferson to get new teeth and a gramophone. He also grants his wife her dying wish and strives to be the best father for his children by setting an example of perseverance. Anse finds a balance that helps him survive the modern world.