

As I Lay Dying

Literary Terminology

Absurd

A term applied to the sense that human beings, cut off from their roots, live in meaningless isolation in an alien universe. Its philosophical base is a form of existentialism that views human beings as moving from the nothingness from which they came to the nothingness in which they will end through an existence marked by anguish and absurdity. They live in a world in which there is no way to establish a significant relationship between themselves and their environment.

Black Humor

Using the morbid and the absurd for darkly comic purposes in modern literature, this term refers as much to the tone of anger and bitterness as it does to the grotesque and morbid situations, which often deal with suffering, anxiety, and death.

Comedy

Dealing with people in their human state, restrained and often made ridiculous by their limitations, faults, bodily functions, and animal nature, comedy draws its laughter from the spectacle of individual or collective human weakness or failure, hence its tendency to contrast appearance and reality, to deflate pretense, and to mock excess.

Harmon, William, and C. Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. 8th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.