

Trapped in the Web □□ □□ □ In the novel, *All the Kings Men* by Robert Penn Warren, the characters live out the consequences of decisions made in their pasts. Each character deals with the past in a different way. It costs some relationships. It costs some their careers. It even costs some their lives. I believe that Cass Mastern says it best when he says "the world is like an enormous spider web and if you touch it, however lightly, at any point the vibration ripples to the remotest perimeter and the drowsy spider feels the tingle and is drowsy no more but springs out to fling the gossamer coils about you who have touched the web and then injects the black, numbing poison under your hide" (188-189). I feel that this quote does an excellent job of capturing the theme of this novel. □□ □ Jack Burden and Judge Montague Irwin defiantly feel the effects of the spider. Jack Burden, at the request of Governor Willie Stark, dug up dirt on Judge Irwin.

Jack gets in over his head when he finds more than he wanted to know about Judge Irwin. That's when everything does upside-down, and the spider gets them. The Judge kills himself, which affected many people. One of the people that it affected was Jack. Jack found out that the Judge was his biological father and never had the chance to have his first true father-son talk. Even though Jack's goals from the beginning were to discover truth and Knowledge, he found that the truth is not always a good and noble thing. In this case the truth led to what destroyed the Judge Irwin and a part of Jack. □□ □ The story provided by Cass Mastern gives an interesting comparison to the current tale of Jack Burden and Willie Stark. Cass is tormented, as Jack is, by the truth and this drives them both to the edge. Only Cass falls over and cannot recover. Cass had a run in with the spider when he committed adultery with his friend's wife. After this, the spider did not let him go. He could not stop tormenting himself. Cass could not correct what he had been done and that destroyed him. □□ Willie Stark is also a character that brushes against the spider's web. His experiences are different than those of Jack, Adam and Cass. Only at the end of the novel, after the closing stages of everyone else, does Willie's actions come back to bite him. Up until his death, Willie got away with this analogy, "Goodness; You got to make it Doc; and you got to make it out of badness; because there isn't anything else to make it out of" (257). With this analogy said, everything he does is justified as long as the end product is good. Inevitably, Willie's actions had to come to a crashing end. The spider got a hold of him and brought him to his death. □□ Adam Stanton, son of ex-governor Stanton, also found himself caught in the web. At one point in the novel, Adam felt as if a ton of bricks had fallen on him. He found that his father, whom he had the utmost respect for, had made some unjust political moves as governor. He found that his sister, Anne Stanton, was the mistress of present governor Willie Stark. Because of this, he felt that he was given the job to build the new hospital as a favor to his sister. At this point, he was completely entangled in the spider's web. As a result of this, Adam takes the life of Willie Stark and his own. □□ □ In this novel, the spider's web controls the characters' lives. It has been shown in a number of characters. There is no escape after hitting the spider's web with any kind of wrong. Trapped in the novel, Robert Penn Warren's characters live out the consequences of decisions made in their pasts. Each character deals with the past in a different way. It costs some relationships. It costs some their careers. It even costs some their lives. 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