

# Critical Analysis of Barn Burning by William Faulkner

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The story of "Barn Burning" was "first published in the June of 1939 in the Harper's Magazine and later awarded the O. Henry Memorial Award for the best short story of the year." The author, William Faulkner, "was one of America's most innovative novelists". The way he describes the smells, sites and sounds of the rural late 1800's make you feel as if you are there with the characters in this story. Through the use of symbolism, Faulkner tells the story about a relationship of a father and son. Fire was the most vital symbol used and describes the way, Abner, the main character in the story faces all of his challenges. He lived his life like a flaming inferno destroying everything he touches. In this story of a boy's struggle with his love for his father and doing what is morally right, the Family loyalty comes to flames in "[Barn Burning](#)".

The son, Colonel [Sartoris](#), known as Sarty, had to deal with constant rejection from his father, Abner. The story starts with Sarty feeling the anxiety of whether he should tell the judge the truth or lie for his farther. He is in an emotional dilemma on what to do. Sarty knew if he told the truth, that his father might have to go to jail. As Sarty was called by the judge to come forward, he said to himself, "He aims for me to lie, he thought, again with

that frantic grief and despair. And I will have to do it." In despair, "Enemy! Enemy! he thought; for a moment he could not even see, could not see the judges face was Murphy 2 friendly nor discern that his voice was troubled" (398)

Sarty is at a constant battle with himself, as he seems unable to choose between doing what is right or do what he knows what his father ...

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...eard the gunfire, no longer in terror and fear, "Father. My Father he thought." Sarty tried to think good thoughts about his father thinking, "he was brave!" He served as a soldier under Colonel Sartoris in the war! When the morning sun came up, he was finally on his own to be his own man, free to make his own individual decisions without worrying about what his father would do to him. It was from Sarty's dilemma of family loyalty and the desire to please his father that kept him from doing the right things. Was his father so bitter due to experiences he had during the Civil War ? Was it society's fault for what happened to his father? Was Abner just born with his us against them attitude? These are all questions that Faulkner leaves with us after reading the "Barn Burning." and is part of that fire in the back of our minds that we will never be able to put out..

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