

Barn burning and rocking horse winner



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In both William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" and D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner", the author's give us a glimpse of two poor families who suffer through similar problems in different ways and situations.

The comparison shows how in "Barn Burning" because of Abner's recklessness and cruelty, his son Sartoris Snopes and family are unable to get into the larger society. In "The Rocking Horse Winner," the mother's greed for money and her behavior with her children and husband forces her son, Paul, to find a way to get more money. It shows how the behavior of Abner in "Barn Burning" and that of Paul's mother in "The Rocking Horse Winner" affects their families. Both the stories, "Barn Burning" and "The Rocking Horse Winner" demonstrates how children are dominated by parents and the way in which their harshness affects them. In "Barn Burning", Faulkner shows how Sarty was asked to get out of the court along with his father; he felt that such a behavior was an insult to him.

He was so hurt that he did not even allow his mother to wipe off the blood on his face, which was the result of boys hitting him. The boys called Sarty's father a Barn Burner, as he always used to burn Barnes and moved from place to place. Upon his father being called a barn burner Sarty got into a fight with those boys. He always thought about his father that "maybe he's done satisfied now", (pg. 160) but Abner instead of standing as a role model for his son Sarty, he was harsh with him. If that was not enough, Sarty was forced to support his father regardless of Abner being wrong or right, he rudely said to Sarty "You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you" (pg, 161).

This way Sarty always was in a dilemma, whether to support his father or not. He forced to support his father, even though, he was aware that his father was wrong most of the time. The cruelty of Abner kept Sarty away from getting into society. In “ The Rocking Horse Winner”, Lawrence paints an image of Paul’s mother, Hester, as a lady who was beautiful but greedy as far as the aspect of money was concerned. This was clear from a situation mentioned by Lawrence where the children could all the time hear a sound never actually spelled out loud that “ There must be more money.

(pg, 382). Because of Hester’s greediness to have more and more money, the atmosphere of the house always seemed gloomy and became haunted with unspoken sounds for the need of money. Her children were a burden upon her. Paul and his siblings never saw true affection for them in their mother’s eyes. But she did show affection towards them in front of everyone, unlike Abner for whom situation or conditions did not really matter; he was always cruel and rude with his son Sarty. Hester’s children always felt a sense of selfishness in their mother.

They had to face the harsh nature of their mother, same way how Sarty had to, with his father. Again resembling Sarty’s situation of agreeing with and supporting his father regardless of whether his father was right or wrong, the behavior of Paul’s mother forced him to bring money in whichever possible way. He desperately wanted to get more and more money into the house. Not only children of the family but their spouses also had to face the rude and dominating nature. In “ Barn Burning”, Abner always dominated his wife. He treated her as a domestic servant and always behaved in a rude manner with her.

Abner posed a stubborn nature, a kind of person who never tries to adjust to the situation or adjust for his own family, whether it is wife or his son Sarty. Abner had spoiled the rug of Major De Spain when he and his son Sarty had been to major's house. As a result, major, one fine day left the rug where Abner lived and asked him to clean it. His wife's sisters had been cleaning the rug, but were lethargic and took it easy. Abner was getting angry and when his wife politely said if she could clean the rug, " You go back and git dinner"(pg 164), this is the kind of reply Abner's wife got from him.

Abner ultimately tore the rug deliberately while scrapping it with a stone, and made the matter worse. In " The Rocking Horse Winner", Lawrence pointed towards the fact that Hester always considered his husband to be unlucky, and thought that he never did things that he should be doing and that " He never would be able to do anything worth doing" (pg 382).

Basically in her eyes her husband was a worthless, unlucky person. The mother's thinking forced Paul to go in search of luck. Moreover, insulting nature and disrespect was another property that played a role in affecting their families.

In " Barn Burning", Abner had an insulting nature. He did never show any respect towards his wife, and besides dominating her he always was rude to her regardless of her being right most of the times. Sarty, too, was always shot by his sarcastic remarks; and yet, had to support his father. Sarty, tired of his father's behavior, ultimately walks away from all insults after his father burns the barn again. In " The Rocking Horse Winner", Hester did not show affection towards her children and love towards her husband.

Instead she explained his son Paul that more money a person has the lucky he is, hence Paul goes in search of luck as he now believed “ If you are lucky you will always get more money” (pg 383), and further he goes in search of money. He starts to bet over horses’ race and predicts the winner of the race by rocking on a wooden horse, by winning bets over those races he earned more and more money accompanied with luck, according to mom’s belief. He then secretly sends his mother the amount earned to through those bets. Betting and winning by rocking on a horse continues.

During the last race, the Derby, Paul gets more and more tensed and aggressive. He starts surging on the rocking horse to predict the winner: Malabar. Ultimately, he crashes on the floor and forever remains unconscious for days together. After gaining consciousness he has in mind the motto to prove himself lucky in his mother’s eyes and asks his mother “ Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Do you think I am lucky, mother? (pg 391), still trying to prove him lucky, Paul died.

Both the families ultimately, though not in same way, lost their son who tried to reach the expectations of their parents to their best. Sarty lost hope and walked away and Paul died and went away, unfortunately was unable to change their parents. Thus, Faulkner through Abner’s behavior in “ Barn Burning” and Lawrence through Hester’s nature in “ The Rocking Horse Winner” showed how their dominating, disrespectful and rude nature had affected their family’s life and resulted in loss of their children.