

Deeper insight by use of point of view – summary

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Deeper Insight by Use of Point of View The majority of authors use literary elements to build up their story. However, the author of the short story “Barn Burning” uses one particular element to build up his own story in a very unique format. William Faulkner uses various literary elements in the story, but the most critical one is point of view. Faulkner uses point of view to develop characters, the theme, and the plot of the story.

Faulkner’s use of point of view helps the reader understand who the characters are, how the characters develop, and aids in understanding the characters actions throughout the story. Faulkner uses a nonparticipant narrator as well as Sarty’s thoughts and views for point of view. This unique usage provides readers to infer and interpret the characters. This point of view raises an interesting question. Does the narrator defend Abner throughout the story? The illustration of the fire building passage provides us with proof of the defense. ...that the element of fire spoke to some deep mainspring of his father's being, as the element of steel or of powder spoke to other men, as the one weapon for the preservation of integrity, else breath were not worth the breathing, and hence to be regarded with respect and used with discretion. ” (Yunis 1). The narrator speaks of Abner’s use of fires as how he dealt with being in the lowest of low classes and his feeling of injustice. By the narrator focusing on the barn burnings in this way, it makes the reader feel sympathy for Sarty and the rest of his family without ever having to state it.

Not only does it provide the reader with sympathy for the family, but also a better understanding of Abner. If the narrator did not inform us of the lowness of life Abner lived then the beating of his children, his unlawfulness,

his disrespect, and his barn burning would just imply that he was evil. Abner was indeed a very evil man, but the defense of Abner by the narrator gives the reader a better understanding of Abner's characteristics and actions. When the point of views shifts into Sarty's thoughts, Sarty does not necessarily defend his father's actions, knowing they are wrong, but instead tries to understand them.

From the beginning of the story, when Sarty is asked to testify in the case involving his father and Mr. Harris, Sarty is conflicted. He knows he should be honest and tell the truth, but he knows loyalty is vital to his father. In the end, he chooses to follow his father's commands. However, as Sarty matures he chooses to value honesty over loyalty which ends up costing his father's life. Themes of " Barn Burning" greatly submerge from Faulkner's use of point of view.

One theme in particular is the theme of Sarty's search for peace. Relating back to the courtroom case, Sarty is loyal to his father. His loyalty to his father brings only violence within his family and conflict within himself. Sarty finds no escape from the vicious environment he is surrounded in until they arrive at Major de Spain's house. At this point the point of view shifts in and out between Sarty's thoughts and the narrator. " Hit's big as a courthouse he thought quietly; with a surge of peace and joy...They are safe from him.

People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch...the spell of this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive...Maybe he will feel it too. Maybe it will even change him now from what maybe he couldn't help but be. " (Faulkner 159). Sarty believes at this

point he will find peace at last, he has escaped violence, and that his father will change. He believes his father will see that the house is too magnificent to destroy. However, the size of the house does not faze his father.

Only a few moments later Abner purposely steps in horse manure, walks into the house, and soils an expensive rug. Faulkner's use of point of view is critical to the development of the plot of the story. By entering Sarty's mind the reader understands how he is developing. The narrator aids in the plot build-up by describing the events occurring in the story. The reader learns at the beginning of the story (scene of courtroom) that Sarty is already conflicted between family loyalty and his own morals. At this point the reader understands that Sarty will eventually have to choose between family loyalty and his own morals.

All of this sets up the plot of the story due to the fact that the climax of the story is Sarty's final decision of this confliction. He struggles with this confliction throughout the story which first establishes itself at the beginning in the courtroom. Sarty's decision to tell Major de Spain of his father's plan to burn his barn exposes his ultimate choice of his own morals over family loyalty. Major de Spain shoots and kills his father because of Sarty's warning that Abner was going to burn his barn. It is only after Abner's death when Sarty finds something related to, but not quite peace.

Although there will be no more fires, lies, beatings, and violence, his father is no more as well. The use of point of view is crucial to William Faulkner's short story "Barn Burning". Point of view helps the reader to learn who the characters are and the reasons behind their actions, provides a better insight to the themes of the story, and supports plot development. Without the <https://assignbuster.com/deeper-insight-by-use-of-point-of-view-summary/>

unique use of point of view it would be very difficult to understand the story because " the narrator can do for Sarty what the young Sarty cannot: he understands Abner's anti-social behavior, his anger... an tell the truth about Abner's fires... " (Yunis 6). The use of point of view in this intricate form provides deeper insight to the story as a whole.

Works Cited Faulkner, William. " Barn Burning. " Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 11th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. 155-67. Print. Yunis, Susan S. " The Narrator of Faulkner's " Barn Burning". " The Faulkner Journal 6. 2 (Spring 1991): 23-31. Literary Resource Center. Web. 3 Oct. 2012.