

# Barn burning' by william faulkner discussion essay

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



In this essay I'm going to discuss the short story ' Barn Burning' by William Faulkner. This short story is very interesting because it makes the reader think about important moral and ethical issues. Many readers conclude that the boy betrayed his family, and it was the right thing to do. However, I'm going to disagree with this statement and provide three arguments to support my position. First of all, I'm going to start with a short summary of the story. Abner Snopes burns his neighbor's barn, but no one knew whether he is guilty of that deed or not.

So the family decides to start a new life and moves to another place. But Abner Snopes is very unhappy about his low social status and decides to take it out on rich aristocrat and landlord Major de Spain. His son Sartoris Snopes learns about his plan to burn Major de Spain's barn.

He decides to tell Major de Spain about his father's intentions. Although the reader doesn't know exactly what happens then, Sartoris Snopes sees that the landlord taking a gun, and then the boys hears several shots. Perhaps his father and his older brother who was helping Abner Snopes are dead.

The boy is frustrated but opts for leading a life of his own rather than returning and living together with his family. While some readers think that it was a right thing to do for Sartoris Snopes, I dare disagree with this statement. My first argument against this opinion is that family is the greatest value in the life of every person. Sometimes it seems that betraying your family may lead to greater social good, but this is almost always an illusion.

Society consists of small basic elements — families — and caring well for your own family means taking care of the whole society. God family relations are important for the psychological well-being of every individual. The reader sees how frustrated Sartoris Snopes is after hearing the shots and concludes that the boy would have been better off with his family. Caring for the whole society of defending social justice may seem to be a more noble cause than protecting your own family. It comes with experience that all people should care about their families in the first place. If everybody cared for social justice no one would have sustained family as a basic social institute.

There are very little cases when betraying your family could be justified, and Sartoris Snopes's case is definitely not among them. It's also possible to analyze the boy's actions from the position of class solidarity. The boy should have understood that his father's intention was the result of lack of social power and mistreatment from the side of richer and more powerful classes. That's why making hasty judgment about his father's plan was wrong. The boy should have spent more time analyzing the root causes of the problem. Sure, it doesn't justify such violent means as arson, but lower classes also wanted to be heard and attract attention to their burning problems. Probably his father saw no other means to express his dissatisfaction with his life and economic oppression by the rich. Second reason why it wasn't the right way to act has to do with practical analysis of the whole situation.

Ignoring some moral or societal restrictions may be justified if it guarantees good outcome for all people involved in the situation. However, this was not the case, too. The actions of Major de Spain were hard to predict. If he

indeed killed the boy's father and brother, then Sartoris Snopes's behavior brought about more harm than good.

If the boy didn't tell on his father, the outcome of the situation would have been property loss. Yet if the murder actually happened, then the outcome of the situation was the loss of human life — the most precious thing on Earth. The third argument against the opinion that the boy's actions were correct is that there are always some alternative ways of solving problems.

The boy's options were not limited as he could talk to his father and persuade him not to burn the barn. There were also another ways of influencing his father. For instance, he could have talked to his older brother as he was Abner Snopes's accomplice and probably had more influence on his father. Telling on Abner Snopes was not the most effective solution. For all these reasons, I believe that Sartoris Snopes actions were wrong. First of all, he betrayed his family, and family is a very important value as it's a basic element of society.

Secondly, his actions brought about more harms than benefits as human life was endangered. Finally, there were alternative ways of resolving this conflict, and there were good chances that they could have worked. Therefore, it is hard to justify the deeds of Sartoris Snopes in this situation.