

# A story of colonel sartoris in barn burning novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



A young boy torn between obeying his father and doing what he knows to be right presents the internal conflict of the story “Barn Burning” by William Faulkner. In the story, Abner Snopes, a violent and wayward man with an affinity for burning down buildings, repeatedly commits crimes and evades conviction in court. In the face of his obvious wrongdoings, he demands absolute loyalty from his son, Colonel Sartoris, who complies with his father’s wishes—for a time. Eventually, however, Sartoris can no longer find the will to support Abner; he ultimately chooses to follow his own moral compass rather than remain loyal to his criminal father, disappearing into the woods without looking back. The conflict Sartoris feels throughout the story and his final decision to do what is right illustrate the fundamental supremacy of morality over loyalty.

The evolution of Sartoris’s feelings about his father demonstrate the natural and necessary development from the blind faith of childhood to the self-sufficiency of adolescence and adulthood. Sartoris initially retains almost complete loyalty to Abner. When called to the witness stand, Sartoris, though reluctant to lie, is willing to spurn his principles for the sake of his father. Despite this filial loyalty, he secretly hopes his father’s need for destruction has been met: “Maybe he’s done satisfied now, now that he has... stopping himself, not to say it aloud even to himself” (Faulkner). Sartoris struggles to come to terms with the depravity of his father’s actions, especially because of Abner’s fervent beliefs that one must be loyal to one’s “blood.” This causes Sartoris to feel shame at his doubts, but he still cannot fully look past the wrong his father has committed. Later on in the story, Sartoris is again directly confronted with Abner’s true nature, and the boy’s qualms about him

become more prominent. Upon his father's request, Sartoris sprints off obediently to retrieve kerosene, but his thoughts are less than dutiful: " I could run on and on and never look back, never need to see his face again" (Faulkner). As Sartoris is faced once again with the evil of his father's actions, his mind proposes running away, an indication of his growing awareness that he cannot follow his father any more. He would rather flee the situation and live on his own, according to his own values and principles, than abide by his father's immoral deeds any longer.

The time comes, however, when Sartoris must make a definitive choice between loyalty to his father—his blood—and his sense of morality, a choice that defines the message of the story. Before Abner has the chance to execute his plans, Sartoris races to warn the potential victim about his father's intentions, taking a clear stand for his own beliefs. The boy's resolve is tested when his actions lead directly to his father's death. Sartoris, after weeping for his father, walks off into the woods with determination: " He went on down the hill, toward the dark woods within which the liquid silver voices of the birds called unceasing—the rapid and urgent beating of the urgent and quiring heart of the late spring night. He did not look back" (Faulkner). Sartoris mourns his father's death, but not his own choices that caused it. He is able to walk away steadfastly without so much as a glance because he is firm in his beliefs and can now follow his own path.

Sartoris's progression from near-complete submission to his father to firm independence highlights Faulkner's message that one must, above all else, heed his own moral compass. Blind loyalty, even to family, is unwise, and

one's sense of what is right must take precedence. At the end of the day, one cannot rely on others for state of his conscience; he alone is responsible. Therefore, it is essential for one to make his own decisions based on what he believes to be right.