

# Loss of innocence in burn my heart by beverly naidoo

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Burn My Heart a novel by Beverly Naidoo portrays two boys of different races in a racist country. Mathew is friends with both Mugo and Lance. The biggest difference between Lance and Mugo is that Mugo is poor and has no friends while Lance is rich and very popular. Mathew needs Lance to be his friend so he gains some popularity whilst Mugo has always been his loyal friend. Mugo is always there for Mathew and he always listen to what Mathew wants sometimes giving his own perspective.

Mathew loses his innocence after he heard about Kamau being sent to a detention camp, Lance pointing a gun at Mugo, and lastly him treating Mugo like they were not friends, he begins to feel bad because of his part in how Lance and the other white people treat the locals. Loss of Innocence is when a person feels guilty for an event where he thinks that he did not make a mistake and he thinks that everything is perfect but he later realizes that he had made a mistake and therefore starts to feel bad about it later.

What it means is that he/she begins to feel bad and regretful about a past event. It is mainly regret which is felt by the person after they lose their innocence. Mathew experiences a loss of innocence when he is exposed to the harsh realities of the Kenya. He sees how the car that his family and him were using got sabotaged and they spent a night in the gorge. His family also hears how many white families are brutally killed in other parts of Kenya. His life is not as perfect as he perceived it to be, and he has realized that it is actually very problematic.

This happens to Mathew towards the climax and falling action when Lance treats Mugo like a piece of garbage. He points a gun at him, and says

offensive words to him (130). Mathew and his family always respected Mugo, Kamau, Mercy, Josiah, and their other laborers, but other white families did not share the same opinion as them. The Smithers family (Mr. and Mrs. Smithers, and Lance) did not trust their laborers because one knows who is and who not part of the Mau Mau. Mathew's parents have always believed that their good relationship with their laborers Mau.

They think that anyone can be against them and that would keep them safe. Lances parents decided that no one laborer is trustful because they are all capable of being Mau they should not trust anyone who is not white. This is shown when the Smithers and the Graysons quarrel about whether the laborers can be trusted. Mr. Smithers suggests that the laborers will kill any white person whilst the Grayson's say that their relationship with their laborers means that they are all trustworthy. This shows how the Graysons are very trustful of the locals.

The Smithers are distrustful and do not like being in their presence. Mathew starts feeling bad because the Smithers do not like the locals and he grew up with Mugo and Kamau so he knows how they are like and how trustful they are. Eventually Mathew gets to know that all the locals are Mau Mau and he felt confused he did not understand what was going on (164). The Smithers family is completely distrustful of the locals, as they are not even allowed into the Smithers' actual household. Mr. Smithers also keeps many locals in a camp so that they are monitored.

He would actually take any Kikuyu and put him in a detention camp without so much as even a trial, Mr. Smithers claims he can tell if someone is Mau

Mau by looking at their eyes (120). He would take hundreds of them straight to prison or government camps. Such is the brutality of Mr. Smithers. He does this because he works for the government as an Inspector and it is his job to monitor Mau Mau suspects. He wants to be very secure and not take any risks so he picks all of them to go to prison. Mr. Smithers is very protective with his wife and child.

Moreover, Mr. Smithers is often very insincere as he takes the stereotypical side that black people are not human (66). He, unlike Mr. Grayson, would take the blacks as animals without even trying to see if they really were. He never saw the good side of the blacks because he had no friends among them. Mr. Grayson, on the other hand, has Kamau who has been his life-long friend, he grew up with him, and they can also converse in Kamau's tribal language (66). This helps him become very close to his laborers and he knows that Kamau and his family can always be trusted.

This is why he lets Mugo be his 'kitchen toto' who helps in cooking and other household jobs. They have been, after all great friends throughout their childhood. From this Mathew realizes that it is not right for people who are not Mau Mau to be sent to jail just because they are Kikuyu. It just is not right for them to be treated in such an inhumane way. Mathew feels like everything is his fault when Mugo and Kamau and all the other workers are sent away due to the fact that they all took the Mau Mau oath.

Kamau especially did not tell Mr. Grayson that his older son, Gitau, was not attending school anymore and was instead part of the Mau Mau. Mathew played no part in that, but he feels like they were only sent away because he

started the fire that burnt part of the house. Although Mathew was told by his father that whatever happened Kamau would still be in trouble. The laborers were sent away because of his own carelessness. In reality it is Lance and his own fault. This makes him lose his innocence because he needs Mugo and Kamau because they are his only true friends and he betrayed them.

He realizes that he needs them more than he needs Lance, they will teach him a lot more and they will treat him with a lot more respect than Lance will. He misses the laborers more than anything and he admits that towards the end. The fire is what contributed the most to the loss of innocence; it is where Mathew realized that he could not continue with all this disrespect towards the locals. Mathew loses his innocence after he hears about Kamau being sent to a detention camp. Lance pointed a gun at Mugo, and lastly he treated Mugo like they were not friends, he begins to feel bad for how Lance and the other white people treat the locals.