

# [A secure work they had to reserve](https://assignbuster.com/a-secure-work-they-had-to-reserve/)

A Critical Approach To “ Barn Burning” (by William Faulkner)” Barn Burning” is a sad story because it very clearly shows theclassical struggle between the privileged and the underprivileged classes.

Time after time emotions of despair surface from both the protagonist and theantagonist involved in the story. This story outlines two distinct protagonists and two distinctantagonists. The first two are Colonel Sartoris Snopes (Sarty) and his fatherAbner Snopes (Ab). Sarty is the protagonist surrounded by his fatherantagonism whereas Ab is the protagonist antagonized by the social structure andthe struggle that is imposed on him and his family. The economic status of the main characters is poor, without hope ofimproving their condition, and at the mercy of a quasi-feudal system in NorthAmerica during the late 1800’s. Being a sharecropper, Ab and his family had toshare half or two-thirds of the harvest with the landowner and out of theirshare pay for the necessities of life.

As a result of this status, Ab and hisfamily know from the start what the future will hold — hard work for theirlandlord and mere survival for them. No hope for advancement prevails throughout the story. Sarty, hisbrother and the twin sisters have no access to education, as they must spendtheir time working in the fields or at home performing familial duties. Nutrition is lacking He could smell the coffee from the room where they wouldpresently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal (PARA.

55). As a consequence, poor health combined with inadequate opportunity results inlow morale. A morale which the writer is identifying with the middle class ofhis times that same quality which in later years would cause his descendants toover-run the engine before putting a motor car into motion (PARA.

20)The Snope family manages to survive and find work. However, the workoffers little other than a chance for survival I reckon I’ll have a word withthe man that aims to begin tomorrow owning me body and soul for the next eightmonths (PARA 40). Like nomads they were forced to move constantly. Due toseasons and crop rotation, in order to secure work they had to reserve land withdifferent landowners. Ab’s emotional instability is a predominant factor contributing to hiserratic behavior throughout the story. The family has moved a dozen times fromfarm to farm, and at times forced to forfeit their agreement with the landlorddue to Ab’s unacceptable behavior. A behavior which throughout the story istransformed into a rebellion, by Ab smearing the landowner’s carpet with horsemanure and then suing him for charging him too much for the damage.

These actssymbolize frustration with the system and a radical approach to rebel against it. Knowing that punishment could not be avoided when committing such acts, Ab’sactions take on a more dramatic meaning as if he is trying to convey a message. He is aware of the economic injustice and he must respond even at the risk ofhim and his family being prosecuted or ostracized. Ab’s constant rebellion is displayed by a rough, sour character andexemplified when he burns his landlord’s barn down.

He feels despair and loss, and inflicts damage to whomever he happens to be working for. Although the story centers on the feelings and thoughts of Ab’s youngestson Sarty, the economic implications of his entire family play a vital role injustifying (not condoning) his father’s behavior, which is the pivotal reasonfor Sarty’s controversial feelings on which the whole story is based. Sarty’s main dilemma is his loyalty to his family which collides withhis disappointment and suppressed dislike of his own father. He tends to hidehis feelings by denying the facts, our Enemy he though in that despair; ourn! mine and hisn both! He’s my Father! (PARA. 1) and The boy said nothing.

Enemy! Enemy! he thought; for a moment he could not even see, could not see that theJustice’s face was kindly. (PARA. 10). The story’s emotional turns are clearly defined by Sarty’s thoughts andAb’s actions. Sarty’s dilemma and Ab’s frustrations continually grab the reader, serving up a series of emotionally laden dilemmas: Given the circumstances ofthe story, is Ab’s barn burning justified? Should Sarty tell the landlord thatAb was responsible for burning down the barn? Is the outdated sociological Blaming the Victim theory valid? Is the lose-win arrangement betweensharecropper and landowner a morally acceptable one? Burning a barn or any act