

William Faulkner his life and stories

Life



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A renowned novelist, William Cuthbert Faulkner was born in New Albany, Mississippi in 1897 (The Columbia Encyclopedia). Eight years prior to his birth, his grandfather was killed by an ex-partner in business. William Faulkner was the eldest of the siblings. During his school life, William loved sports and was a quarterback in the football team and his passion for writing poetry existed since he was only 13 years old. However he lost interest in school and before he could graduate, he dropped out.

Faulkner tried to get enlisted in the army but due to his short height, he was refused and thus enlisted himself with the Canadian Air Force after lying about facts and figures and convincing them that he was British. Although Faulkner did serve with the Canadian Air Force in World War I, the war was over before he could experience any action. However he still related tales of his action in war and injuries to people when he came back after the war. At the University of Mississippi, Faulkner studied literature for a brief period of time and wrote poems as well as drew cartoons for "The Scream" which was the university magazine.

Again Faulkner lost interest in studies and soon left the university before he could graduate. Phil Stone, Faulkner's friend had helped with the publication of his poetry "The Marble Faun" in 1924. In 1925, Faulkner moved to New Orleans and published many sketches and essays in a magazine by the name of "The Double Dealer". His stories which he related to people about how he fought in World War I were seen to be reflected in his first ever novel called "Soldiers' Pay".

Later on he traveled to Europe where he visited Italy, France and England and soon returned back to the United States. "Soldier's Pay" was published in 1926 and Faulkner began writing another novel by the name of "Mosquitoes" which is taken today to be one of the worse works presented by Faulkner. "Sartoris", which was later republished as "Flags in the Dust" in 1973, was written in 1929 and it was set in a fictional made up part of Mississippi. In the same year, Faulkner married Estelle Oldham. Estelle had divorced Franklin, her first husband who was a lawyer. The following year, after marriage, Faulkner purchased a new house in Oxford. Many of his works were named after buildings which showed the importance of architecture in the eyes of Faulkner.

Faulkner completed his work on "As I Lay Dying" in six weeks and relates in it the life of Addie Bundren till death (Anonymous). 1931 brought good news to the Faulkner household with the birth of a daughter who was named Alabama. However happiness was not to stay with the Faulkners for long and the child who was a case of premature birth, died after a couple of days. Faulkner also worked for 20th Century Fox, in Hollywood as an on-screen writer. In 1939 his mistress left him and went to Germany with her newly wedded husband. "Bailey's Woods" was purchased by Faulkner which a wooded land and he gave it to one of his brothers for management.

Faulkner also related the death of his grandfather in one of the later books where we find a character called Bayard Sartoris who was murdered in the exact same way. Much of Faulkner's life was spent writing various novels which proved to be a remarkable piece of literature. In November 1949, Faulkner was voted to receive the Nobel Prize but due to the votes not being

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unanimous, the award was delayed to be delivered the following year.

Faulkner died from a coronary occlusion in 1962. Barn Burning is one of the short stories written by William Faulkner.

It was written in 1939 which was the mid point in the career life of William Faulkner. Faulkner is known to have related real life incidences in his stories and they closely relate to him and his life. Similarly Barn Burning has this association prevalent throughout it. It is a sad story and shows the struggle which the unprivileged had to undergo with the privileged people of the society. The two main characters of this story are Colonel Sartoris Snopes and his father Abner Snopes. In the feudal system shown in the story, Abner Snopes is a sharecropper and has to share the majority of his produce with the landlord.

This left Abner and his family in a state of hard work and major profits going to the landlord while they received the meager share fit only for survival. The elements of love and respect are missing in the relationship between Colonel Sartoris and his father. The story begins with a scene in the courtroom where a case is under hearing against Abner Snopes. Mr. Harris has accused him of burning his barn and due to lack of evidence Abner is released. However the judge asks him to leave the country. For the first time Abner replies and the reader comes to find out the Abner has a voice " cold and harsh".

He states that he wishes to leave the country himself. Abner is seen to be referred by people as the " Barn Burner". Privilege to education was not for Colonel Sartoris or his siblings to enjoy and nutrition was another factor missing from their lives. They " could smell the coffee from the room where

they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal. "

William Faulkner stresses on these two missing factors to show the low morale of the people in the book. This is closely related to the low morale of the people of his time that belonged to the middle class. In "Barn Burning" Abner Snopes is also depicted as a man who is loyal to no one other than himself or his family (which is a mere extension of himself)" (Max L. Loges, p. 44). The family is forced to shift from one farm to another as Abner's behavior is considered unacceptable by all the landlords. Eventually Abner ends up burning his landlord's farm. Colonel Sartoris feared that he might end up becoming like his father and he detested this thought.

He disliked his father but did not want to be disloyal to his family and thought "our Enemy he though in that despair; our! ine and hisn both! He's my Father!" Sartoris wanted to become a better man and a man of truth, something which his father was not. Although Sartoris felt that his father had faced enough hardships during war and now he was just taking what was rightfully his. Sartoris did not know that Abner ran away from the war and deserted the troops. After burning the farm of Major de Spain, Sartoris had to decide now whether he was going to tell everyone the truth or lie to protect his father. It was time for Sartoris to make himself the better person he wanted to.

The economic conditions presented in the story relates to the economic conditions of William Faulkner at that time. Therefore William Faulkner wrote against the economic injustice which he himself went through. The mansion

and woods are what attracted Faulkner a lot and in his life he does purchase these after marriage. In all the story does not closely relate to the life of Faulkner but one can see its reflection in it. "A Rose for Emily" has a very long opening sentence that is of 56 words and the setting is at the funeral of Emily Grierson.

This story was originally published in 1930. The circumstances of Emily's life are narrated by Faulkner and her relationship with her lover, father and the townspeople. "'Rose for Emily' has been 'read variously as a Gothic horror tale, a study in abnormal psychology, an allegory of the relations between North and South, a meditation on the nature of time, and a tragedy with Emily as a sort of tragic heroine'" (Anonymous). The narrator informs the reader that the men of the town attended the funeral of Emily due to an obligation which they felt.

The women go inside her house because no one has seen the inside of Emily's house for a long period of time measurable by years. "The men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant--a combined gardener and cook--had seen in at least ten years". Emily was more like a mystery to the town and people were inquisitive about her house and herself. In this take we once again come across the character called Colonel Sartoris who was shown to be a former mayor of the town.

Emily was a beautiful young girl whose father had to force away everyone who fell in love with her. This behavior was partially in effect due to the high

praises that her family would receive by the town and this affected her life a lot. After the death of her father, when Emily was free to choose and do what she willed, she came in contact with a man who Faulkner has named Homer Barron. Mentally immature, Emily clung onto him and fell deeply in love with him. The whole town was aware of their affair and wondered if they were already married to each other. Soon Homer disappeared and it was assumed that he and Emily were married.

When the women went to explore Emily's house they came across a room which was not opened and the townspeople went to open that room. The room was full of dust and was "decked and furnished as for a bridal." Male clothing was found there which included shoes, collar, suit and a tie. "Then shockingly, laying right there in the bed was the man". The townspeople were in state of astonishment and they remained motionless for a while. Homer was killed by Emily so that he would never leave her again and be with her till eternity. Faulkner presents a psychological condition in Emily and the effects imprisonment can cause once a person is free.

The bisexual possibilities housed in the narrator of "A Rose for Emily" reflect just such capabilities in Faulkner and attest to his attempts to interrogate the gender control inherent in authorship" (Renee R. Curry, p. 391). He describes Emily's house as an intimate space. Faulkner portrays in this story his personal stance regarding the patriarchal societies. "A Rose for Emily" shows that in a male dominating society, man controls the women but they do not realize the negative effects which this forceful control can bring about and indeed such actions soon gave rise to feminism.

Dry September is another one of the great works in English literature in the field of short stories. William Faulkner knew how to write and exhibited a classic style of writing. The story is about Will Mayes, a black man falsely accused of sexually assaulting an old white maid known in this story as Minnie Cooper. The story relates to the different classes and social standards practiced by the then southern society. Minnie Cooper is a victim of such elements in the society. The bulk of the story is about the black man, Will Mayes, being wrongly sentenced to death.

The story however also outlines the social and moral plummeting of a woman. Although in this story a woman is the cause of the death of an innocent man, Faulkner with his amazing style of writing makes it seem like an understandable event. This short story was first published in 1931 and Faulkner was paid \$200 for this remarkable piece of writing (Anonymous). The story starts with the words " through the bloody September night". These words are carefully chosen by Faulkner and not only do they describe the sunset but also the murder of the innocent black man.

A rumor had spread " like a fire in dry grass" and the aftermath would be the death of a man who was innocent. So the story starts off with the image of murder, injustice and violence and this is the main theme of the story. " Stale pomade" and " stale breath and odors" are the expressive words used by Faulkner to present to the readers the barbaric unjust ambiance. Faulkner further states that no one really knew what happened and thus he takes a step further in portraying the extent of injustice that was about to take place. No one knew yet a man was about to be sentenced to death.

The story has been divided into sections where the first section is in the barbershop and the following one deals with Minnie and her life. The part where Faulkner deals with Minnie and her life, the reader comes to learn that Minnie herself is a victim of the society and she lives in a place where she is constantly ignored. The last section shows the male dominated society and the helplessness of women when McLendon physically abuses his wife. Faulkner is seen to bring out the wrongness in a male dominated society and thus expresses the ugliness of it in many of his stories including "Dry September".

In that male dominated society, a woman was noticed and given importance only if she was sexually appealing and good looking. Minnie was no longer attractive and "the sitting and lounging men did not even follow her with their eyes any more". This made Minnie feel not important and nonexistent. She probably even doubted her being a female. The town felt sorry for Minnie and a mob killed Willie assuming that Willie had raped the old maid. Faulkner expresses in the story the prejudices that existed in his own surroundings.

He censored the description of the killing of Willie so that the reader does not wander off the actual point that Faulkner is trying to convey. He wanted his audience to know the reasons for such injustices and to cure them. "Faulkner's views are revealed to the reader with the help of numerous details: the society where people commit a crime is cruel" (T. Fedorova). While Willie is a victim to people like Millie, Millie herself is a victim to the male dominated society where the importance of a woman is only till the

time she is young and beautiful. Faulkner wishes such elements to be eradicated from the society in which he lives.