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## Sarty Changes In Barn Burning

In William Faulkner's story, 'Barn Burning', we find Sarty, a young man who struggles with the relationship he has with his father and himself. We see Sarty, the young man, develop into an adult while dealing with the many crude actions and ways of Abner, his father. We see Sarty as a puzzled youth that faces the questions of faithfulness to his father or faithfulness to himself and the society he lives in. His struggle dealing with the reactions that are caused by his father's action result in him thinking more for himself as the story progresses.

Faulkner's 'Barn Burning' is a character-driven story, as what moves it forward is Sarty's internal growth as a character. We see him begin as a young child with strong trust in his beloved father and end as a young boy beginning to think for himself and develop a sense of independence and grow into a stronger character.

Sarty's father is a challenging character to like. He is rude, violent, and argumentative, traits revealed in his behavior throughout the story. He rudely and intentionally wipes his dirty shoes on the rug, argues over the fee he must pay for the damage he's caused, then attempts to burn the rug in a fit of spite. Throughout this progression of events, Sarty is faced with a difficult choice: remain loyal to his father and come to the man's defense or speak out. Initially, the boy remains silent. He insists in court that his father is innocent of burning Mr. Harris's barn (an earlier offense we don't witness but nonetheless are led to believe Mr. Snopes is guilty of by the end of the story), despite being bullied by his peers over the matter and the increasing evidence that his father is a criminal.

At the beginning of the story he spoke as a child watching and looking at the things around him. Sarty's lack of language signifies his vulnerability there, the physical handicap of being young (Ford). He said that an enemy of his father's was 'our enemy' and spoke with the loyalty of a lamb, never knowing that it could stray from the flock (Faulkner 156). Near the middle of the story, we can see the tone of his speech change. Sarty shows change when he asks his father if he 'wants to ride now?' when they are leaving the house (Faulkner 159). He seems to have the courage to ask his dad certain things, not fearing the consequences. At the end of the story, the language Sarty uses becomes clearer and more independent. Sarty struggles with a sense of guilt for betraying his father; amidst his grief, the young boy refines their relationship by replacing the pleading cry of 'Pap, Pap!' with the formal cry of 'Father, Father!' (Ford). He shows his development through these examples of his speech.

In William Faulkner's 'Barn Burning,' the character Sarty experiences great growth throughout the story. He begins as a child who is fearful of his father--both disappointing him and incurring his wrath and violence. He is willing to lie to a judge to protect his father and remain loyal to his family. As the story progresses, and particularly when Sarty sees his father deliberately, maliciously soil the rug, he realizes that his father will never change and if he's not careful, he will turn into his father one day. It is at this moment, that Sarty realizes that he must make a choice between his own integrity and loyalty to his father.

He chooses integrity--at the cost of losing his family. When he alerts the rug burner that his father has sent fire to the barn, he irrevocably changes the course of his life. Shots are fired and

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his father and brother are probably killed; now that he has betrayed his family, Sarty has no choice but to run away. The final scene of this coming of age story shows Sarty walking away, with the sense that he will be better off and has made the right decision.

Abner is a tenant farmer responsible of the wealthy landowners for whom he works. He expresses this resentment by striking back at them in ways that range from petty larceny and bad work habits to setting fires. He rebels not only against the social conventions and inequalities of the Old South, but also the sense of community and loyalty that were part of the southern ethos.

When the family begins to work for Major de Spain, Sarty gets a sense of a life, that of the Old South and its traditions, which is more gracious and peaceful than that on his father's, and also begins to slowly work out his own sense of ethics. When his father prepares to set Major de Spain's barn on fire, he runs away from his mother to alert the Major, solidifying his allegiance to the values of the Old South.

By the end of the story, Sarty finally breaks away from his childish defenses of his father. The last straw is when his father attempts to burn de Spain's barn down out of spite. The boy runs to de Spain, confesses his father is a barn-burner, and escapes to the woods just as he hears gunshots that presumably signal his father's death, though the story never makes this certain. We are left with the image of poor Sarty waking up peacefully in the woods, alone, away from the chaos of his father, and remarkably calm. By this point, the boy has made a tremendous leap in his development as a free thinker and a brave, bold individual. He no longer blindly clings to his father like a child but instead is able to see his father's true character and bravely break away from a toxic relationship. Sarty's character growth is thus not just in maturity but also in grit. Informing de Spain of his father's barn-burning plans is a brave act that the Sarty in the beginning of the story would have been incapable of.

## Works cited

1. Nicollet, William P. 'Faulkner's Barn Burning.' *Explicator* 34.3 (1975).