

**THE NEGRO AND THE RACE  
RELATION IN THE SOUTH**

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BY

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## **Executive Summary of the Minor Research Project**

This Report provides a qualitative examination of the Race and Negro Relation in South pertaining in the works of William Faulkner. Data were collected through books, in-depth interviews, journals, critical books, reviews and internet.

The dissertation focuses on the reflection of The Race and The Negro relation in the South through comparative Analysis, evaluation, and assessment of different socio-ethical groups in the works of William Faulkner. The dissertation discusses thoroughly the problem, theory, aspects, themes, and major issues of Race and Negro relations in south. The dissertation also includes the comparative analysis of the major works of the writer.

Keeping this objective in mind, the first chapter provides the introductory dimensions of this project such as: objective, methodology, biographical note on the writer, and a few other points. The second chapter provides the Negro and the Race relation in the south with major works of William Faulkner. The third chapter throws light on the Idea of Negro and Race Relation in Faulkner's Works with the analytical discussion of the major works of Faulkner. The next chapter reveals Major Themes in Faulkner's Writings: Negro and Race relations with the major works. Chapter V concludes the dissertation and its discussion with the conclusive remarks of the researchers.

William Faulkner is one of the leading & universal novelists of 20th century American Literature. He wrote 19 novels, 75 short stories and a couple of poems. Of 19 novels, 2 novels are set outside of America and the 17 have the south as a setting for his novels. William Faulkner, for his great contribution, was awarded Nobel Prize in 1950. All his novels even the short stories focused on three important things of. South America-- the racial problem, South as a Waste land, and the growing disparity between the parents & children. The South from where Faulkner comes from is completely inhabited by the Negroes.

Another equal important theme in Faulkner is the white Negro relations, the racial injustice and racial prejudice. This is obviously a subject of importance in the Faulkner field; race is a central theme in four of his novels, several of his short stories and many of his non-fiction prose writings. “Unfortunately, says James B. Meriwether, “the study of Faulkner’s fiction of a wide scale has conceded, in his country, with a period of rising racial tension which has produced a number of comments about Faulkner more notable for heat than light.”

In Yoknapatawpha, black being is unacknowledged even to the extent that blacks often learn to deny many of the brutal aspects of their own existence. In many circumstances, blacks are expected to emphasize the ridiculousness of their existence. The racism in this world is a scheme of grand larceny designed to strip the blacks of their soul. And the degree to which this is successful provides for Yoknapatawpha what Faulkner comes to realize is peculiar and tragic festivity.”

But the Negroes in Faulkner's fiction cannot be so summarily categorized and dismissed. Faulkner is no Ellen Glasgow or James Branch Cabell. Nevertheless, the Negroes in Faulkner's fiction undergo a change. They do not begin as much of anything. His early characterizations of black existence fall into the categories set forth by writer Ralph Ellison in his analysis of the presence and absence of blacks in American fiction.

The Negro characters fulfill a number of functions. First, they give verisimilitude to the scenes, illustrate the social thesis establish tone, atmosphere and pace. Secondly, they provide choric comments on the behavior of the white characters. Thirdly, the Negro was useful not only in revealing the love and loyalty the leisured classes elicited, but also in providing occasional humor for the tale. Certainly racial humor, based on condescension to an inferior, is an omnipresent characteristic of Southern local color.

Faulkner has shown various human values which the Negroes possess. He portrays the Negro's ability to adjust to circumstances. Whereas the whites never adjust to circumstances, either they are the victims of circumstances or they are destroyed or defeated by the circumstances. Faulkner also shows the Negro's childlike pleasure in small satisfactions. Faulkner appreciates, too, the Negro's ability to serve with dignity: "After all, only a chosen few can accept service with dignity; it is man's impulse do for himself. It rests with the servant to lend dignity to an unnatural proceeding."

Having seen the portrait of Negro, the function he performs, different views of critics, and human values that the Negro possesses, there are critics who point out a number of shortcomings. The first

shortcoming is noted by Edmond L. Volpe. According to Volpe, “Compared to the cast of country people, there is far less variety in Faulkner’s major Negro characters or his elite-family characters. Most of the Negroes with important roles are variations on members of a single Negro family.

Race in Faulkner’s fiction is not limited to one racial group. He deals with three races in his native state – the red man who was here first, the Whiteman whose three fold guilt obsesses him, and Blackman who is a pawn, a type, a shapeless symbol, a victim or scapegoat, and who only occasionally achieves humanity. One must read a large body of Faulkner’s fiction from the beginning to the end in order to understand even slightly his strange code of honor, his attitude about race and his deeply religious commitment. Yet this morality or moral concern about race is stamped on every major work and is especially thematic in the big body of his fiction. Some smaller pieces are even more perfected forms of this interest. “That Evening Sun” is notable but the entire early collection *Go Down, Moses* deals with Faulkner’s Negroes. Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, Lucas Beauchamp in *Intruder in the Dust*, and Joe Christmas in *Light in August* are important racial characters.

The racial problem in America is as fresh as it was in the times of Faulkner. To quote Alexander: ‘The South is not alone guilty in terms of racism. All America today also suffers from paranoia. White America seems to have the strange sickness of delusions of grandeur and god –complex, while black Americans seem to suffer from delusions of persecution, not without some factual basis.’ To conclude with the remark of Alexander: “surely, William Faulkner has made a great beginning.

Race is perhaps the most burning issue that has been a subject of serious consideration for most of the American authors. This is one of the many issues that America faces even today. Indeed there exist some other problems that seem endemic to the twentieth century societies of the west, particularly those societies that have been industrialized for a considerable time. But race has been much in headlines of late. Racial issue is certainly crucial and it has attracted the special attention of some of our finest literary minds.

Faulkner writes about a young, black man who comes to New Orleans from the kind of rural area that would have been completely cut-off from almost all contact with the outside world in the early part of the twentieth century. The story's plot deteriorates into an absurd scenario in which the man, who has traveled down the Mississippi river, believes he has traveled to the jungles of Africa. At its climax, the young man, believing that he will be caught by savages, takes out his gun and shoots three men. Although the story is less than impressive over-all, Faulkner sets up the story well. His subtle and careful descriptions of the man's first encounter with the streets of New Orleans captures the kind of fear a rural person might have felt coming to the city for the first time: He came part of the way on or in freight cars, but mostly he walked. It took him two days to come from Carrollton Avenue to Canal Street, because he was afraid of the traffic; and on Canal Street at last, carrying his shotgun and his bundle, he stood frightened and dazed.

William Faulkner is the greatest writer the South has produced. In twenty-century American fiction, in capturing the rich variety and

disorder of American life, no one else has come anywhere close to the depths of intensity and comprehensiveness of Faulkner's imagination. William Faulkner pictured the American South in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County with such an artistic force that may be easily viewed as unique in the history of literature. The issues that he touched in art built him a straight, clear and certain way towards winning the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature. Among the important aspects that the author considered in his works, it is relevant to mention those that refer to problems of race, gender and class, which also represent a concern nowadays, thus proving their truthfulness and permanence in time.