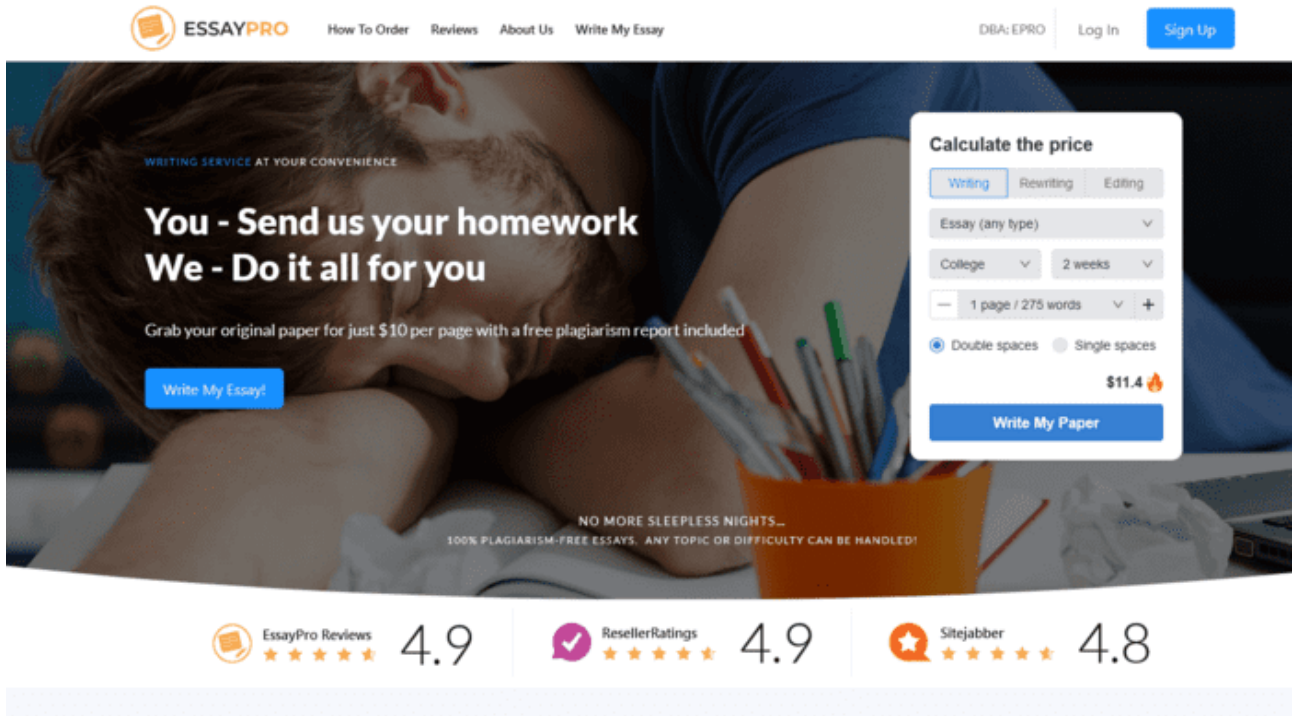


William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!

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William Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!" When asked by his Canadian roommate, Shreve, to "[t]ell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all", Quentin Compson chose to tell the story of Colonel Thomas Sutpen (142). The previous summer, Quentin had been summoned by Miss Rosa Coldfield, the sister of Sutpen's wife, to hear the story of how Sutpen destroyed her family and his own. In Miss Rosa's home, he sat "listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about old ghost-times"(4). Over the course of that summer, before his arrival at Harvard, Quentin was drawn deep into the story of this "fiend blackguard and devil"(10). In *Absalom, Absalom!*, William Faulkner, using Thomas Sutpen as a microcosm for the Old South, wrote of the decline of Sutpen's dynasty in order to comment on the collapse and future of the South. Faulkner's character, Thomas Sutpen, was a man who embodied the essence of the Old South. In the eyes of Miss Rosa, Sutpen, like most Southern men, had valor and strength but neither pity nor compassion. He built his cotton plantation, named Sutpen's Hundred, in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi alongside his slaves and fathered two mulatto children. Later, he married Ellen Coldfield, Rosa's sister, for her respectable name. According to Miss Rosa, he was "a man with a big frame, a short reddish beard which resembled a disguise and above which his pale eyes had a quality at once visionary and

alert, ruthless and reposed"(24). Most importantly, Thomas Sutpen was a deeply prideful patriarch who sought to establish a dynasty and cared more about producing an heir than bei..... middle of paperAbsalom!, William Faulkner wrote of the decline of Sutpen's dynasty in order to comment on the collapse of the Old South and the future of the New South. After the war, Colonel Thomas Sutpen, like the South, was unable to restore his previous greatness and his dynasty succumbed to racial impurity that, Faulkner prophesized, would lead to a further decline. After hearing the story of Thomas Sutpen, Shreve asked, "Now I want you to tell me just one more thing. Why do you hate the south" (303). The young Canadian assumed that Quentin hated the South because Quentin offered this story of tragedy, injustice, and destruction as an explanation for his homeland. Although Quentin responded that he did not hate the South, he appeared to be less certain than he insisted. Quentin loved his home but, like Faulkner, feared for its future and was burdened by its haunting past.

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