

# To be or not to be... miss emily?

Business



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William Faulkner perceives Emily Grierson in many aspects, especially misunderstood by all her peers, in the short story “ A Rose for Emily”.

Her mysterious, stubborn, and anti-social traits make it hard for her peers to understand her. Faulkner’s character, Emily, is stubborn and does not like to let go, mysterious in all her endeavors, and not a social butterfly by any means. Through Miss Emily’s actions one can see that she is a stubborn person, who is firm in what she knows and does not like to let go. When the town alderman comes to speak with Emily about her taxes she stays firm in stating to them that “ I have no taxes in Jefferson” and when he tries to tell her differently she simply shows him to the door (306). When Miss Emily’s father died, going through a great loss, she refused to admit that her father was really dead and did not dispose of him for three days when she finally broke down and accepted the truth (308). When the town received free postal delivery Miss Emily stood alone and would not let them attach “ metal numbers above her door” or “ attach a mailbox to it” (313).

Miss Emily is more of a fan of tradition than change toward the future, so she is not accepting of this free postal delivery rather than the old fashion way of making the trip to town. Emily is stubborn in that she does not approve of change and once she has been told something it might as well be written in stone, because to her it is said and done, no going back or even forward for that matter. Miss Emily is an overall mysterious person to her fellow residents of the town, most likely due to her private behavior and way of living. For instance the time when Miss Emily had a “ rat” problem she went to buy poison from the druggist and requests arsenic but the man is clear in that “ the law requires you to tell what you are going to use [the poison] for”

but Miss Emily being the mysterious woman she is just gives the man a “look” and no more questions were asked (310). Homer and Emily were not the kind to gab about their relationship so when the townspeople did their gossiping the verdict jumped from “She will marry him” to “She will pursue him yet,” with a “Poor Emily” in between and end with a “They are married” (311). Homer and Emily did not speak to the on-lookers to tell them these things so they guessed at these things were going on in their mysterious relationship.

Even in her last years Emily maintained her mysterious nature by being totally cut off from the town and Tobe being the only one to leave the house, but she was seen “in one of the downstairs windows...like a carved torso in a niche, looking or not looking at us, [the townspeople] could never tell which.”(313). When Miss Emily did pass it came as a shock to the townspeople, for they did not even know she was sick. Emily kept her life a mystery from all the on-lookers who wanted to peep into her business; some would even call her anti-social. Faulkner portrays Emily as one who stays to herself and does not enjoy the company of others, anti-social.

Emily’s anti-social tendencies increased after her father died and reached the limit when Homer was not seen any more (307). Some time after her father died the spokesmen came to her house to question why she was not paying her taxes and “She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened” (306). She obviously was not fond of having these men in her house and having to socialize on the subject of her taxes that she thought did not need discussing. A side affect to being anti-social was “when she got to be thirty and was still single” but when her father was alive he did not

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allow Emily to date, therefore her problem did not start when her father passed (308). Miss Emily was not a social butterfly to begin with, but the death of her loved ones, Homer and her father, help dig her deeper in to her shell.

Faulkner gives Emily these traits to confuse the reader and keep them interested throughout the short story “ A Rose for Emily.” The townspeople do not understand Miss Emily and her actions due to her mysterious, stubborn, and anti-social qualities. These traits not only confused the reader but also the townspeople who observed Emily and all the events that happened to poor Miss Emily.