

Emily and phoenix essay

[Life, Relationships](#)



William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and Eudora Welty's "A Worn Path" are stories of a woman's journey through life, her struggles and sacrifices to overcome its obstacles and love and its tragic relationships. Among the many themes that the two stories share, these three subjects prevail the most. The main protagonists, Emily Grierson and Phoenix Jackson, although faced with different circumstances, proved to be strong-willed, determined and relentless women who will overcome any difficulty and will do anything for the person they love at whatever cost. Both are stories of a woman's journey through life.

As critic Susan Donaldson notes, these are classic gothic tales of heroines under siege, bringing attention to the spectacle of a woman. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is the narration of Emily Grierson's life and death, her rise and fall in the society and her eccentricities in between. Welty's "A Worn Path", on the other hand, is literally a story of Phoenix Jackson's journey to the city to obtain medicines for her sick grandson. Though both Emily and Phoenix are black, they do not share the same status in the society.

They are not regarded with the same courtesy as Emily came from an affluent family while Phoenix clearly is just a charity case. Though Emily was "left alone, and a pauper" (Faulkner, paragraph 27) when her father died, she was still considered as one who belongs to the upper class as "she had been a tradition" (Faulkner, paragraph 3) Phoenix's journey is a different one. Literally, she needs to travel from her home to the city for the sole purpose of obtaining her medicines for her ill grandson. It is a journey that is physically taxing, given that "she was very old and small" (Welty, paragraph

1). Along the way, she is met with adversities, both real and imaginary, and hurdles that she must conquer for her to be able to reach the city.

Considering Phoenix's age, this is indeed a very difficult one but one that is overshadowed by the simplicity of the way the story is told. Her journey can also be seen as any person's journey through life. The path that Phoenix treads, the path that she had tread, is the " path of life and the story is an attempt to probe the meaning of life in its simplest terms" (Champion, 41). Both are stories of a woman's struggles and sacrifices to overcome life's obstacles. Emily's life is filled with struggles – to break away from her father's dominance, to fit into an unwelcoming society and to finally find a person to love. She was controlled by her father who felt that no man was good enough for her and drove all the young men away. " Her sweetheart – the one we believed would marry her" (paragraph 16) also left leaving her with no one.

Until, finally, Emily meets Homer Barron, a foreman Yankee. However, because of her so-called social status, her relationship with Homer becomes the talk of the town. " Of course, a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer" (paragraph 32). Emily had to face the condescending townspeople who think that she is not doing the proper thing befitting her status. Add to this is also the fear that Homer will leave her as apparently " he is not the marrying kind".

This leads Emily to poison the person she wants to spend her life with to prevent him from leaving. Phoenix's struggles are of a different kind, though not of lesser meaning. Because of her age and the terrain she must go

through, her struggles are physical albeit on a literal sense. One can imagine what she must have gone through for her to forget what it was that brought to the city in the first place. “ It was my memory had left me. Then I sat and forgot why I made my long trip” (Welty). On a deeper sense, Phoenix’s story can also be interpreted as any woman’s struggle in facing any pain and trouble that life brings.

This is much more so in her case being black. Her journey in life, given that period, can also be construed as more than just a personal journey towards freedom. Both are stories of love and tragic relationships.

Emily, as most interprets the story, killed Homer – the one and only way that they would be together. She must have loved a number of men before him but because of her domineering father, she was left with no choice but to let go. With her father gone, she hang on to the one man she thought was the one for her amidst the sneer of the society.

Phoenix, on the other hand, has been making that journey for some time, given that her grandson has been sick for a number of years already. Hers was an unfailing love of to a family member. However, with the absence of any detail of his grandson in the story, one is led to think whether Phoenix’s efforts are futile. Her grandson could already be dead and her trips to the city are just her way of denying his death. Both women, Emily and Phoenix, shows undeniable determination and courage for them to do what they have done.

For them to stand on their own with no one to support them, for them to surpass the staggering difficulties they are faced with, for them to beat the odds – these are just their characteristics that make them formidable.

Journeys full of struggles, sacrifices and tragic love – this is what William Faulkner’s “ A Rose for Emily” and Eudora Welty’s “ A Worn Path” is all about. Two stories of strong-willed and determined women who endure life’s suffering for the person they value. BibliographyChampion, Laurie. The Critical Response to Eudora Welty’s Fiction. Greenwood Press. Westport, CT.

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