

# Analysis of dry september essay



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Dry September, a short story by author William Faulkner, is a short look at the typical characters of the Southern States, such as is usually seen in those of Faulkner's works, which involves the fictional county, known as "Yoknapatawpha". The city is a written picture of what might have been a great part of Faulkner's own life, which he spent in Oxford, Mississippi.

Told from the perspective of a semi all-knowing, observing narrator (Only briefly brushing inner thoughts), we are told rumors, descriptions and details throughout the story, letting us understand the story without any prior knowledge to any of the characters, including a central point of the story; a rumor, which involves a black man (Will Mayes) allegedly raping a white woman in her late thirties (Miss Minnie Cooper).

Faulkner uses the story to bring up issues of his time, such as racism and violence – Through the rough, dry conversations and the direct confrontations in ideals; he attempts to put the racial standings of society on show, so that we might better understand the tension between black and white people. We are thrown right into the middle of things, on a dry September evening, as the twilight is setting.

The story immediately sets the scene, the main plot point; the alleged rape, as well as the fact that no one knows exactly what transpired – as can be seen in the intro "None of them knew exactly what had happened" Despite this, though, it is immediately made clear, that accusations are being thrown around. The story mainly centers itself on three characters, the first being a barber by the name of Hawkshaw, "a man of middle age; a thin, sand-colored man with a mild face" who we meet, as he is siding with Will Mayes'

part of the story, stating that “ He’s a good nigger. We follow Hawkshaw as he attempts to warn and afterwards help Will Mayes escape from the gang of white people, led by McLendon, that are out to kill him. In the end he gives up, proving unsuccessful in helping Will Mayes – This happens suddenly, allowing for quite some wondering about the actual reasons of this sudden change of heart; the only actual event is Will Mayes accidentally striking him, as he tries to defend himself during the assault. Hawke is the closest we get to an actual Hero, in terms of characterization, although it can be discussed whether this is true, as he is not actually successful in this role.

Whether this renders him a Bad hero is also hard to say, as he lets the assault continue, but he shows no form of intend to actually hurt anyone. This could possibly hint at the point being, that everything isn’t always as simple as black/white and good/evil – It could also mean that no matter the good intentions and how good you are, sometimes that just isn’t enough (helplessness). Secondly, we follow the alleged victim starring in the rumor, Miss Minnie Cooper, who, up until the second part of the story, is nothing but a part of a rumor.

We officially meet her, as the story starts out its second part by describing her in detail; she’s “ Thirty-eight or thirty-nine” years old, unmarried, and wears a “ bright, haggard look” on her face. It’s also stated that she had a brief relationship with a widowed banker, but that this only ends up hurting her already ridiculed reputation even more; Then the town began to say: “ Poor Minnie and she began to ask her old schoolmates that their children call her “ cousin” instead of “ aunty.

Based on the rumor, Miss Cooper takes on the role of the victim, or The Princess, although this is never actually verified as definitive truth, leaving her also as a possible Villain, as she could very well be the one who originally started the rumor, accusing Will Mayes (This is also never proven). On one hand, Minnie Cooper is a picture of the way society condemns women of this time, by assuming that something is wrong with the woman, if she is not married at a certain time in her life.

On the other hand, we never see any proof that Minnie Cooper isn't slightly mad, nor does anything disprove that she might have made inquiries towards Will, who could have rejected her. The interesting aspect of her character partly lies in the fact that we never hear her speak – All dialogue involving her, seems to be spoken through the rumor and the apparent happenings of her past, or through the friends that flock around her. Lastly, the narrator follows John McLendon, an ex-military, who “ Had commanded troops at the front in France and had been decorated for valor. We meet McLendon early in the story (Part 1) and observe him through Hawkshaw, learning that he is a violent, stubborn character, with a gun and an air of authority about him, due to “(his) Hot, bold glance” as well as his attire and equipment. He quickly rouses the already aggressive customers in the barber shop, starting the hunt on Will Mayes. McLendon seems to be the only character in “ Dry September” who's relatively straight forward; we are giving no incentive to like the guy in any way, nor do we, through almost the entire story, sympathize with the man in any way, proving that McLendon clearly belongs as the story's main Villain.

Whether the rumor is true or not, does not seem to matter to the man, as is proven when Hawke questions whether the rumor is true; “ McLendon whirled on the third speaker. “ Happen? What the hell difference does it make? Are you going to let the black sons get away with it until one really does it?” McLendon also carries a gun and seems methodic and aggressive in the way he handles the situation, leading to the thought that he is generally a violent and dangerous man.

This thought is proven at least partly correct, as the narrator shortly focuses on McLendon, at the very end of the story; here we see that he abuses his wife, as well as threaten her, strengthening the villain picture. McLendon never attains any sort of redemption, but in the very last paragraph, we somewhat see the human side of him, as he seems to be broken and frustrated, feeling erratic and trapped; “ He was sweating again already, and he stooped and hunted furiously for the shirt.

At last he found it and wiped his body again, and, with his body pressed against the dusty screen, he stood panting. ” Dry September seems like a surrealistically calm perspective on a world that is in complete chaos. The narrator in question is obviously aware of everything that happens on this dry September night, but he deliberately chooses to keep us out of the loop, letting us draw continuous conclusions through the story, watching and waiting, hoping for an answer that we won’t get.

We are told only just enough to puzzle us to no end. What the author wants to tell us is in many ways up to ourselves to figure out, although it seems fairly decided, that the vigilantism of McLendon and people who joins up with

him is wrong. But the story doesn't punish the villain, nor does it favor or reward the hero, it is simply being told. We can only speculate that the story is being told by the narrator in this way, in order to make us draw our own conclusion and try to understand why we draw the conclusions that we do.