

A rose for emily, reader response critique

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“ Only Miss Emily’s house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps - an eyesore among eyesores” ([http://www. shmoop. com](http://www.shmoop.com)). This fits one of William Faulkner’s main themes in most of his stories, the decay of the old south.

William Faulkner, the author of A Rose for Emily, is from the south and likes to have his stories take place in the south. Emily is the last member of her family, which is one of those older upper class ones, after her father died. She normally acts dignified and arrogant but she refused to let go of her father’s body, trying to ignore reality, which is similar to what she did with her lover, Homer. Each characters mood, appearance and style will give away what they are likely to do and if you can relate to them. The actions the characters in the story confirm who they are and the type of person they really are.

Feelings, thoughts and other aspect s of characters can be seen through the secrets or hidden meanings in the things the characters do and people who really connect to the character can see these secrets. Using reader response criticism, the reader can analyze William Faulkner’s A Rose for Emily through Characters, Action, and Secrets or Hidden meanings. The reader can analyze a lot about A Rose for Emily through the characters and make many connections to them and the story. For example, for a period of the story William Faulkner described Emilie’s appearance as “ bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water and of that pallid hue” (Faulkner). This appearance made it seem like Emily was already dead so it can be said that she was extremely depressed. There are many readers who can relate to a time when they were feeling down and let their appearance resemble that.

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Another character that some people can relate to is Homer. In the story he could be considered the opposite of Emily. Emily being quite and dignified, “Homer himself had remarked – he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks’ club – that he was not a marrying man”(Faulkner). This meant that Homer liked to party he went out drinking instead of looking for someone to marry. He is the complete opposite of Emily who is a refined lady.

Some people could see this and know it wouldn’t work out because of the type of person Homer is. What is additionally needed for the reader to analyze A Rose for Emily is the action. A decent grasp of the type of person Emily is can be gained based on how she reacted when her father died. Instead of going into depression or getting angry like some people, she denied it. “ She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days,...., trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body” (Faulkner).

Even though she didn’t react how most people would expect, a lot of people can relate to this. A large quantity of people when faced with something bad want to ignore it and hope it goes away. The towns peoples personality can also be seen through their action. During the story a weird smell started to emanate from Emily’s house and the people did what you least would expect of them. The first thing someone did was “ A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old” (Faulkner).

This woman went behind Emily’s back by complaining to the city instead of telling her. A few other people complained to the mayor and the Board of

Aldermen did the most unprofessional thing, which was to sneak around her house and cover the smell. It's not like they were trying to be mean though, even most people would go to certain lengths to try and avoid confrontation with a person. The final aspect used to analyze A Rose for Emily is the secrets and hidden meanings in things. Emily keeps things from everyone in the town.

During one of the rare times she went out, she went to the drug store, " I want poison, she said to the druggist" (Faulkner) without saying anything more. The druggist requested to know what it was going to be used for but Emily didn't say anything more and just said I want poison. This is an obvious secret that Emily had and didn't want anyone to know what she was going to use the poison for because she even requested the strongest poison, which means everyone knows it wasn't to kill rats. To some sense it's understandable, everyone has some days where they don't feel like explaining themselves or talking to people. The reader can make some connection to that, when they just don't feel like talking to people but this was obvious that the secret Miss Emily had wasn't going to be good and the hidden meaning behind the poison would only mean that something is going to die. One of the other secrets Emily had was about her house.

" Just as if a man - any man - could keep a kitchen properly, the ladies said, so they were not surprised when the smell developed" (Faulkner). This secret is the smell that emanated from Emily's house for a certain period of time. The people complained without even thinking about what's happening with Emily. I don't think many people have had a problem where a rotting smell coming from their house was so bad the neighbors complained but people
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can relate to this to some degree. It would be like a time when you're doing something and the neighbors complaining and getting in our way when you just want to tell them to mind their own business.

Using reader response criticism, the reader can analyze William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily* through Characters, Action, and Secrets or Hidden meanings. From reading *A Rose for Emily*, people will better understand how to analyze people and judge someone based on their actions and what caused them to do that action. If the reader seriously analyses and connects to the story they will also get a better understanding of how people think and understand secrets and hidden meanings behind things in life. *A Rose for Emily* helps people understand that there are many different people in the world and you must change how you deal with each of these people. It's even more significant that readers can learn from this story and hopefully do better and use what they learned in real life. <http://www.shmoop.com/a-rose-for-emily/visions-of-america-quotes.html> http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1949/faulkner-bio.html