

# The effect social expectations of the nineteenth century had on women living in t...

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



The behaviors and desires of women the nineteenth century were impacted strongly by the social expectations of their time. Kate Chopin's character, Louise Mallard, from "The Story of an Hour", Emily Grierson from "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner, and the character Roselily from Alice Walker's Roselily are all examples of women restricted by the time they live in. Women in the nineteenth century were expected to get married and to take care of their husband as well as cooking, cleaning, and looking after their children. Women were expected to put aside their dreams and desires and, in a sense, be shadows of their husbands.

"The Story of an Hour" is about a young woman, Mrs. Mallard, who is trapped in a marriage with a man that she is not in love with because it is what is expected of her. Back then women could not divorce their husbands and were married for life.

When Mrs. Mallard was told of the death of her husband she immediately mourned his death, but quickly began to feel happy at the thought of her new life. Mrs. Mallard dreaded that she would be living her entire life for her husband. Women in the nineteenth century put all their time and energy into pleasing their husbands, therefore their dreams and ambitions were pushed aside in order to take care of their families. Women also could not get remarried if their husbands passed away. In Mrs.

Mallard's case, this was a wonderful thing because she could finally live her life the way she wanted because she no longer had to dote on her husband. Mrs. Mallard loved her husband, but only as a friend. Many marriages in the

nineteenth century were arranged for convenience or social status and not for love.

“ A Rose for Emily” has many great examples of how women should behave in the nineteenth century, even though Emily Grierson did not do what was expected of her as a woman. The main expectation of women back then was to get married but Emily was never given the chance to be courted. Her father thought that she should be a housekeeper and never let her leave the house. Emily wanted a family and a husband but back then marriages were more for convenience and not for love. Emily wanted love and this kept from marrying someone she did not have feelings for. After Emily’s father died she no longer had to live up to his expectations but because he never let her leave the house she was unfamiliar with the new, modern ideas and did not embrace them because she was so used to the ideals her father had instilled her. Another expectation of women was that they were not to handle money. A group of men came to Emily for taxes and she denied, saying “ I have no taxes in Jefferson.

It was a man’s job to take care of all money transactions because they worked for the money and because women could not buy land in the nineteenth century, taxes were left to the men. Emily kept saying she had no taxes because she still lived up to the social expectation that women could not handle money. In the story the ladies were gossiping about Miss Emily and one of them said “ Just as if a man- any man- could keep a kitchen properly. ” It was a woman’s job to keep the kitchen and the ladies disapproved that Emily was not running her kitchen. Men and women in the

nineteenth century were raised up to get married and never take a lover. Women, and their families, were expected to go to church, so they knew that killing was wrong. Emily broke social expectations by taking a lover but not marrying him and she also broke the Law of God by killing her lover when he tried to leave her. The story "Roselily" is a little more modern than "The Story of an Hour" and "A Rose for Emily" but the expectations that Louise and Emily had to fulfill are still much the same for the character Roselily.

Roselily had her children with different men and broke the social expectation that women are not supposed to take lovers. As a southern woman, she was expected to have her wedding in the south even though her new husband disapproved of it. Women were also expected to marry within their religion, but Roselily married a Muslim man, and she would have to sit apart from him in church.

Roselily does not go into the marriage blind and knows what is expected of her as a wife. She is afraid of the confinements that will be placed on her as a wife but she is sacrificing the freedom she has for the well-being of her children. During the ceremony, Roselily's mind starts to wander and she begins to think about whether or not she really loves this man. She knows that her husband will conform her into the wife he wants her to be, and she will allow this so that her children can have a better life.

Many women in the nineteenth century had to marry men they didn't love and allow their husbands to mold them into a different person. She will have to leave the simple, southern ways she has known her entire life when she

moves to Chicago with her husband and will have to begin acting more like a northern woman. In these three stories, the women are faced with their own problems brought on by the social expectations of their time. Louise Mallard finds a way out of her unhappy marriage when she thinks her husband has died, elated about her new life of freedom. Emily Grierson has been sheltered her entire by her father and his expectation of her being a housekeeper, never having been courted by a man. Emily just wants a marriage with a man that loves her and a family with him.

When Miss Emily's lover tries to leave her she kills him so he will stay with her. Roselily willingly goes into a marriage with a man she does not love so that her children will have a better life. These women sacrificed alot for the well-being of themselves and their family, because that was what society expected of them. Their dreams and ambitions had to be put on hold to take care of their family, and they had to live their entire life to please their husband.