

# Emily grierson in "a rose for emily" by william faulkner essay

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



The character of Emily Grierson in William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily", leaves the reader in dilemma as to whether Emily is the protagonist or the antagonist. Faulkner uses an unknown narrator reveal to the reader a woman who has mixed character traits. So complex is her character that the reader is left wondering who the real Emily is. Emily is a recluse, out of choice and fate.

Despite her seclusion, Emily is a monumental unmovable figure who can be pitiful yet irritating at times. She also portrays other contrasting characters such as stubborn yet gullible thus attracting the description, the eccentric woman. Thus Emily's character plays an important role in the development of the plot as well as the story.

Emily is a monumental figure imposed upon the town by Col Sartoris. Col Sartoris had withdrawn her obligation towards the town to pay tax and as such making her a dependent of the town therefore making her "a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town...." (Faulkner 47).

Privileges such as being exempted to pay tax are only a reserve of the most honorable citizens of any land. The reader expects Emily to show gratitude to the town's people and as such be more agreeable and open to them.

However, Emily chooses to live in seclusion, irritatingly demanding to live by her own rules and often refusing to obey the societal norms. When she opts to marry Homer's without making proper wedding plans, this anger and irritates the town's people. So much were people irritated by this scandalous affair that they at one time thought that she was crazy (Faulkner 52).

Faulkner also presents Emily as both the protagonist yet and an antagonist. As protagonist Emily is seen as the good person who has attracts the love and honor of the town's people. When she dies every one in the town attend her funeral. Mostly, the men did so out of thoughtful affection for her (Faulkner 47). This means that despite her irritating behavior people still found it appropriate to show love and respect to her.

Despite the affection she attracts from people, Emily is also seen as the antagonist, the character who goes against the grain and general expectation. Despite her reclusive behavior, the town's people do not expect her to be a murderess, let alone to the person she is intimate with. When she orders for poison, people think that she would kills herself but ends up killing Homer her lover (Faulkner 55). This adds to her eccentricism.

Emily is also presented a stubborn yet gullible woman. Her gullibility is seen in the fact that her father is able to totally control her entire life. He refuses all attempts to marry her and treats the men who approach her with a lot of disdain. Her father exerted so much control over her that the reader is tempted to think that this was the possible cause of her reclusiveness.

Yet still Emily was a stubborn woman and no one could convince her easily to do anything. Even in the face of grief and loss she stubbornly refused to show any emotion (Faulkner 52). This further confuses the reader further as to her true identity, and thus support the claim that she very much the eccentric woman.

Emily's behavior leaves no doubt that she is a peculiar character. Most of the things that she does are the opposite of expectation. However, she still attracts pity from the reader as well as the town's people. Thus she still can be seen as a normal human being struggling with common human weaknesses.

Faulkner, William. "A rose for Emily." *Selected Short Stories*. New York: Modern Library, 1993. Print