

The role of servant of color in william faulkner's "a rose for emily" essays exam...

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," concerns the life and death of an upper class white woman in a small Southern town. Emily Grierson is a woman who has lived her life in defiance of the world around her. She refuses to pay her taxes. She says arrogantly, "I have no taxes in Jefferson." However, alongside Grierson's fierce independence is the role that people of color play in the story. This essay argues that race provides the main, dominant white character to negotiate power and this power is always mediated through people of color. In the story, this is primarily represented through the relationship between Emily Grierson, the story protagonist, and her servant Tobe.

In fact, the story of "A Rose for Emily" is solely Emily Grierson's story. It is also the story of Tobe, Grierson's servant, who is a person of color. The reader sees the life of Grierson always alongside the life of Tobe. Tobe appears as an old man in scenes where time has passed, and as a younger man when Faulkner talks about events in the past. Notice, however that Tobe is always represented in the story as the servant of Grierson. Faulkner only mentions him by name once. It is in a quote when Grierson is very upset and she cries out the name of the servant: "Tobe!"

Tobe is a strong presence in the story and his presence is not just equivalent to a narrative device. Faulkner is telling us another story alongside the story of Emily Grierson. He is telling the story of how Blacks in the Southern United States were treated and how their lives were universally subjugated under the whims and desires of the powerful white elite.

Grierson, in the story, always attempts to control her public and private spaces. In fact, when the board of aldermen attempt to visit her, they are

gained admittance “ into a dim hall” In this story, Grierson’s father, Colonel Sartoris, approved a town lawn that “ no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron.” However, one punchline of the story is that “ Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.” Grierson still lives her life according to a dead social order, where people of color are subjugated by the white man.

In conclusion, the story of a “ Rose for Emily” is not only about how one woman remains stuck in the past, but it shows how people of color are entrapped by the white character’s resistance to social change. In this paper, this was shown by the subtle relationship between Grierson and her servant Tobe.

Works Cited

Faulkner, William. “ A Rose For Emily.” A Rose for Emily. University of Virginia. Web. 21 Jun. 2015.