

William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily": The Importance of Order Essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is the life story of Miss Emily Grierson. A woman whose life is fraught with tragedy and grief. Strategically told out of order, Miss Emily's life draws us in, beginning with the end of her life and the opening of her house to the curious townspeople. The "scrambled" telling of this story serves several purposes in enhancing the story's interest and depth. When we first hear of Miss Emily, it is the time of her death and funeral, attended by the whole town of curious men and women. Their attitude and reverence towards Emily sparks our interest, a sort of "respectful affection for a fallen monument" (30). We begin to ask why was she such an important woman and what has caused such an intrigue in her fellow townspeople.

The inquisitiveness of the town becomes our own, and we want to know the whole, complete story of Emily's life. Beginning the story of Emily's life with her death gives us an opportunity to wonder what made her such an iconic part of this town and the lives of her neighbors there. Another aspect of this story's order is the creation of suspense caused by the flashbacks and foreshadowing. Occurrences such as the appearance of the awful smell emanating from her house, and the later mentioning of Homer Barron's disappearance compose a question in our minds of what exactly happened? What makes this occurrence all the more interesting is that we are told of it after the smell's appearance, and we are unsure if its significance is great or a minor. We can only infer as to its consequence in the story's chain of events. In addition to these happenings we also see Miss Emily making a purchase of arsenic, a deadly poison. We see her simply ignore the druggist's questions as to what it may be for.

She states, "I want arsenic" and "I want the best you have. I don't care what kind" (33). Her bluntness and refusal to give any information sparks another question as to what, or whom the poison may be for.

When we read this story we can immediately see that it is not told in chronological order. If Faulkner had just simply given us Emily's life from beginning to end we would have been able to figure the ending long before its time. The way the sequence of events are told briefly give you enough information to understand that time in Emily's life and moves forwards or backwards with the next scene. This creates continuing question of "what time in her life will we see next?" and "is this the turning point in her life for the better or worse?". The way Faulkner tells us of Miss Emily's life provides a tale that makes you question what is being told. The events in her life are strategically told out of order so just enough is given to understand the plot. You have to use what facts have been presented and piece them together to create the story as a whole. If Faulkner had decided to tell the story in order with no sort of foreshadowing or flashback it would not have been successful in capturing attention as it did.

Readers could easily have seen the next event and known that Homer was dead, or Emily had in fact poisoned him. This story is a prime example of well-constructed order and perfectly presents Miss Emily's life in a manner of mystery and shadow, leaving us with still unanswered questions. New Page: Center all below Works Cited Poetry, Drama, and Writing Eds. E. X. Kennedy And Dana Goia 11th Edition New York: Longman, 2009(30-35).

Faulkner, William "A Rose for Emily", *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing* Eds. E. X. Kennedy and Dana Goia 11th Edition New York: Longman, 2009 (30-35). Print.