

The symbol of the rose in william faulkner's a rose for emily

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A Rose for Emily was written by William Faulkner and is characterized as a Southern Gothic short story. The story takes place in Faulkner's fiction city of Jefferson, Mississippi and we can assume that the plot spans from some time in the 1890's to the 1931 when A Rose for Emily for actually written. The story revolves around the town; specifically, Emily Grierson's house is a main view point and symbol of the story.

The townspeople act as the narrators of the story, their rumors and ridicule of Emily and her ways as well as their sympathy for her as time progresses, helps to tell excel the plot. Also, Faulkner's structure of the story is very telling of some traits of Emily. The story has many examples of symbolism as well, including the main character herself. A Rose for Emily also coveys themes of old Southern aristocracy versus the changing North. A Rose for Emily on the surface is a story of an obviously disturbed woman who murders a man rather than marrying him and manages to keep it hidden for decades. Although, it is also a compelling Southern Gothic short story that relays a message of southern insusceptibility to change with the progression of times and unfelt love through symbolism, theme, and structure.

The main character, Emily, is a southern lady who has lived in this great big house that is a reminder of old-South aristocracy. Emily, as well as the house, coveys the message that the old aristocratic South refuses to change. As the story progresses both Emily and her house become paradigms of decay. In this way, the house and Emily are both symbols of a time long passed. Her father is the only person she has been able to learn from, because of this she seems stuck in time. After Emily's father passes away,

the house is left to her. This is her only possession and she has no husband and no one to love and hold on to. Emily's inability to change has left her and her house as an eyesore to the rest of the neighborhood that has been upgraded to better suit the times. The houses placement in the middle of such a different era is just as out of place as the values of the time the house represents and Miss Emily adheres to. Further making an example of the theme of tradition against change, Mayor Colonel Sartoris gave Emily a pardon on property taxes and had the rest of the town pay it on the premise that her father had loaned a great deal of money to the town. This was when Emily's father died. Mayor Sartoris is credited in the story as the man who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron (168). During this time, in 1894, this was socially acceptable and only fed the idea that Emily was to be held a little too high for what they really were (170-71). As time progresses, Emily still refuses to pay taxes to the town even though Colonel Sartoris dies and a few new Mayors are reinstated. Another symbol in A Rose for Emily is Homer Barron. Homer is a Yankee and it is rumored that he is gay. He is a direct representation of the very differing North. His values are vastly different to Emily's and the townspeople even say that she would never go for someone like him.

Perhaps the most notable symbol in A Rose for Emily is the title. There is no actual materialization of a rose in the story, which is very important. A rose typically represents love and compassion and men give women roses to show these emotions. This never materializes in the story because Emily is

never shown genuine love, compassion, and affection from a lover. And arguably she is never shown love from her father, he runs away any type of suitor Emily may have had which skews any idea of love she could of thought of. So when she starts seeing Homer she clings to him since she has nothing left to cling to. In Hairoglyphics in Faulkner's " A Rose for Emily"/Reading the Primal Trace, it is also inferred that there may have been some sort of incest type relationship between Emily and her father, which would further explain why Emily is psychologically scarred. A first reading suggests that Miss Emily and Homer achieve an ecstatic perfection that she wants to preserve as a single moment for all timeEmily poisons Homer after the sexual embrace in order to enclose the experience in her memoryas fantasy repetition. This would make sense why she would want to keep Homer to herself as the townspeople forcibly took her father to bury him. However, Homer was gay. This would mean that Emily's rage toward his inability to be sexual with her would cause her to poison him so then she could have relations with Homer's dead body (129).