

Importance of point of view in "a rose for emily" essay

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



In analyzing and understanding works of literature, one of the critical factors is the concept of point of view. It shapes the readers' perception of the story, basing on the attitude the narrator assumes towards the themes and events described.

There are several varieties of the p. o. v. concept. On the one hand, it depends on the person who is telling the story (first, second, or third-person view); on the other hand, it is determined by the level of the narrator's awareness (omniscient or limited omniscient point of view).

This essay addresses the concept of point of view in "A Rose for Emily" – William Faulkner's short story. It is a curious example of first-person limited omniscient perspective, as it will be demonstrated below in the analysis. Narrator's point of view in "A Rose for Emily" brings the readers closer to the related events on the one hand, and demonstrates his own mysterious nature on the other side.

Throughout the whole plot, the narration occurs from first person plural: 'we' is the pronoun Faulkner uses to emphasize that the events are related by an eye-witness or a whole group of eye-witnesses (28–34).

This 'we' represents a composite image of the town society and provides an account of not only Miss Grierson's story but the history of several epochs. The collective character of the narrator reveals itself in such phrases as "our whole town went to her funeral", "we were not pleased exactly", "as is our custom", "we believed", "we remembered", "we knew", etc. (Faulkner 28, 30, 31).

The outward authority of such statements, together with the confident predictions of this composite image concerning Miss Grierson's private life, creates an impression of a know-all (or omniscient) narrator who is farseeing enough to provide for the future course of events.

The tone of this collective reaction to every little occurrence in Miss Grierson's life suggests that the pronoun ' we' may stand for the community of town gossips who want everything done their way and are outraged if things go out of their control.

The outward authority of the collective narrator, which should generally look reliable and inspire the readers' trust, is therefore shaken by the idea that this narrator is a mere town gossip, spreading the rumors only for the fun of it. Thus, the ' omniscient' narrator's opinion of Miss Grierson's actions as weird and noncomplying is questioned by the suspicious character of the narrator as a gossip.

Moreover, several small details in the short story further complicate the mystery of the narrator's personality. In the majority of ' we'-statements, Faulkner introduces such phrases as " people " people in our town ... believed", " people were glad" (30). And here emerges a question: why should Faulkner use the word ' people' instead of the normal ' we'? Why is he using a literary device that makes the message somewhat inconsistent? The obvious answer is that this is done to contrast the narrator with the rest of the crowd.

Adding to this contrast is the final scene of breaking into the secret room in Miss Grierson's house. For one thing, the narrator provides a foreshadowing by saying, " Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years" (Faulkner 34) — how on earth did they know about it? In such light, the narrator appears to be someone initiated into Miss Grierson's mystery.

For another thing, in the scene of breaking in, the narrator suddenly switches to the pronoun ' they': " They held the funeral on the second day," " They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground" (Faulkner 34). Although the normal ' we' reappears soon afterward, this sudden change of the narrator's relationship to the town crowd cannot go unnoticed.

This research paper addressed the issue of narrator's point of view in " A Rose for Emily". Analysis shows that the mysterious first-person narrator, who outwardly seems to represent the town society, intrigues by the knowledge of intimate details and casual opposition to the rest of the people. In summary, that has a crucial impact on the readers' opinion of Miss Grierson since it suggests that she should not be taken the way gossips judge her and requires a more in-depth understanding as a unique personality.

Faulkner, William. " A Rose for Emily." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*, 5th ed. Eds. Arthur X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. White Plains, NY: Longman, 2007. 28-34. Print.