

Death vs. life

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



“ A Rose for Emily,” written by Faulkner in 1931, looks back at the life of Emily Grierson once she passes away and as some acquaintances and family members of hers go through her house and belongings. Faulkner uses a very detailed plot of Emily’s life and uses the deaths of both her father and Homer, her lover, to highlight Emily’s fear of abandonment and how one’s life events create such psychological issues.

The story is given from a third-person narrator, which allows for the reader to get an unbiased perspective since seeing it from Emily’s point of view might not show how strange her reactions were, and begins with Emily’s funeral, only to go back in time and talk about Emily’s life from her childhood up to her death. By going back and explaining essential details of Emily’s life, the narrator brings up possible reasons as to why Emily had such a fear of abandonment, which led her to keep Homer’s body and sleep next to him until she died. First, it seems that her mother died when she was at a young age since her mother is never mentioned and it is said that it was always just her and her dad. Growing up without a mother can be a plausible reason for a fear of abandonment, meaning that that is the first event of causation for her psychological issue showed in the text. Secondly, her father always isolated her from the town and from young men who could have been suitors, since “ None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such.” (Faulkner 4). This isolation and lack of finding a suitor, which is made evident that it is something she would have wanted by the way she acted towards Homer, must have felt as if she was being abandoned by the town since they never reached out to her. Lastly, her father dying and leaving her alone in the house was the final event in leading her to the

extreme in her fear of abandonment and was the leading event to her actions with Homer.

“ After her father’s death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all” (Faulkner 3) compares the two men and how their abandonment affected Emily deeply. After her father died, she spent three days refusing to admit that he had died and refusing to give the body to anyone. Years after her father had passed, she had “ a crayon portrait of Miss Emily’s father” (Faulkner 2), which shows that she was still not ready to let go and had a deep fear of being alone. Not only does this show how hard of a time she had letting him go and realizing that he had abandoned her by dying, but this also foreshadows that she would keep Homer’s body; with nobody forcing her to give up the body and nobody asking questions about whether he was dead, no one broke her down, and she kept his body until her death. However, it is also interesting to focus on the fact that she murdered Homer in order to make sure he would not leave her. The narrator makes it clear that Homer “ liked men” (Faulkner 6) and that he had already left her before. Her going to such great lengths as getting arsenic to poison him, only to keep his body in a room upstairs and to sleep with him every night, shows a deep mental and psychological disturbance based on a fear of abandonment. Although it is not told clearly that she killed him and laid with him, the reader is shown a scene where she bought arsenic and is later showed a room within her house where “ the man himself lay in the bed” (Faulkner 9) and “ that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head...[and] a long strand of iron-gray hair” (Faulkner 9), which automatically tells the reader that it is Emily’s hair since it is

previously mentioned that she had gray hair. Faulkner uses her actions after her father's death and similar, but escalated and aggravated, actions after her lover tries to leave her, to show how one with deep fear of abandonment might react to the idea of being left and to the thought of being alone.

Faulkner's writing style allows for the reader to see how Emily acted from a third-person perspective and to understand what had happened in her past that created her fear of abandonment and her fear of loneliness. By showing both the death of her father and her killing her lover, the reader can see the progression of her actions towards insanity, all of which derived from her fear. By doing so, Faulkner highlights the ideas behind the fear of abandonment and focuses the reader in on a psychological issue, or flaw, in the main character.