

# Symbolism in a rose for emily

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Did you ever really understand the power of prejudices and gossip in someone's life? The short story *A Rose For Emily* by William Faulkner, reflects the reality of the life of a southern aristocratic woman, Emily Grierson, who is looked upon as a figure of tradition in an old-fashioned changing society that has her as a subject of criticism and gossip throughout all her life. The story transpires a series of interconnected events including death, the decay of the south, isolation and a search for love that can be shown through literary devices and a Marxist lens to reflect that there are running themes throughout the story. Death of freedom Form of control Death of south after civil after Isolation death of Faulkner utilizes foreshadowing to foretell events that will appear later in the story like the theme of death.

The initial use of foreshadowing happens at the beginning of the story introduces the death of Emily Grierson, an event that also is mentioned at the end of the story. The protagonist of a story doesn't usually die at the beginning of the reading, but the author uses this technique to directly make the readers understand the importance of death as it is considered a major theme in the story and almost to prepare them for the multiple deaths later in time. Being death a central theme, it is further symbolized as the powdery dust that coats Miss Emily's house.

For instance, when the men went to Emily's house to attempt to collect her taxes, ... the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray (Faulkner, 55). Everything around her had dust, it symbolizes death, as it is

unmaintained, old, falling apart, reflecting that its useful time is almost done. However, dust is not the only symbol of death in the story. Emily brings a skull and bones into her home when she buys the poison to kill Homer, her lover. This sign on the bottle of arsenic is a bit ironic. The author uses a technique of irony because it is clear to see that Homer will literally be nothing but bones and a skull when the story finishes. The story unfolds in a decaying old Southern house symbolizing a significant theme of the decay of the South which can be related to the major theme of death throughout the whole story. The house hasn't been maintained or preserved. It is in fact, decaying and deteriorating. Emily's house has once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left (Faulkner, 54). (isolation) This house represents a memory from the South considering the new generations are modernizing the town and the old south is becoming the New South. The house is described as being built shortly after the Civil War but has become an eyesore among eyesores (Faulkner, 54).

Another symbol of the decay of the Old South is Emily herself. Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town (Faulkner, 55). She is a monument representing the past for the townspeople, but as time goes by, the town has new generations, and the perspective of Emily in the eyes of the townspeople also decays. People in the town then ...believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were(Faulkner, 57) Emily experiences an unhappy

and tragic life far apart from everyone, which brings the theme of isolation in the story. Her father didn't allow her to have a love life. Her father took her away from everyone who courted her. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such (Faulkner, 57). So when her father died, she was left alone and depressed to the point she was in denial of his death. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all (Faulkner, 56). Her house also symbolizes isolation. Emily's house was where she hid. It represented the past and the place where she was away from the people. She didn't want to belong in any way, even with the mail services. Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to them (IV). She sent Tobe, her negro slave, to do any errands. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed (Faulkner, 59).

As Emily searches for love in Homer and he doesn't marry her, she kills him. Homer's skeleton is a symbol of Emily wanting to hold on to the love she had for Homer. Knowing that Homer didn't want to marry her, she killed him to keep him with her, even dead. He was found at Emily's house coated with dust by the townspeople after she passed away. In a secret room, they discovered that Emily killed him with rat poison and kept his body. "What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust" (Faulkner, 61). This cruel act symbolizes the intense desire she had to have love, regardless of the horrific way she chooses to keep him close to her. She was

searching for love and wanted to keep it one way or another. This brings back the feeling of being alone just like when her father died. Social class and isolation were the cause and effect built in the life of Emily Grierson. The Marxist perspective enables one to understand the social conflict in the story. William Faulkner makes a clear division in the social structure between Emily and the rest of the citizens in the town of Jefferson. Miss Emily held the image of a noble lady whose family roots and fame warranted great honor; therefore it is said that she had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town (Faulkner, 55).

This social difference placed on her and the town's conflicted obsession with Miss Emily was the major causes why she withdraws herself from the community. She is considered an aristocrat woman in society and is treated like one. The Marxist theory presents proof that social class influences people's interactions and assumptions about others. For instance, when Emily was in denial of her father's death, she kept her father's body inside her house. If any other person, not in such upper-social class as Emily, keeps a dead human in their house will be considered to be insane. When the people found out that Emily kept his dead father's skeleton, they said, We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that (Faulkner, 57). This reaction from the townspeople after the incident shows the different attitude they had towards Emily's abnormal act. "...It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons" People considered the Grierson family superior and justified every action they had, whether it was right or wrong. Emily's father even though no men were good enough for his daughter due to this rigid social structure

expressed by the Marxists perspective. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such (Faulkner, 57). The conflict arises as Emily is prevented a romantic relationship.