

"a rose for emily" rhetorical analysis

Business



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From a rhetorical standpoint, William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" screams of the reverberating psychological effects that a shielded childhood can have on a person. Miss Emily takes on the role of the child, shielded by her father from the world around her. She is not taught to adapt to the world around her, nor is she instilled with the proper morals of a functioning member of society.

Her viewpoints are most obviously expressed through her language and actions, though they are also apparent through the structure of the story itself. These three modes of communication express the mindset of Miss Emily, making clear the effects that her shielded past has had on her. Miss Emily's inability to adjust to the world around her most obviously presents itself through her language. For example, on the subject of her taxes; many years after her taxes were remitted by the past mayor, Colonel Sartoris, she was told that she would have to begin paying them again. Unable to adjust to the new world around her, she persistently states: "See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson" (Faulkner 2).

Though Colonel Sartoris had been dead for almost ten years at that point, she was unable to accept that he was no longer in charge. In her mind, this was still the world of some twenty or thirty years in the past; not even the death of Colonel Sartoris could push that idea from her head. Furthermore, she refused to acknowledge the authority of those in charge, sometimes overlooking their very existence. This happens on two specific occasions, first when she denies the status of the present sheriff, and later when she buys the arsenic. Her refusal to acknowledge the sheriff's status is very

straightforward; she openly states: “ perhaps he considers himself the sheriff” (2), showing her inability to cope with the new authority.

Furthermore, when she goes to buy the poison, her silence is a hidden indicator of her disregard for the new authority. When asked by the druggist what the arsenic was for, “ Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up” (4). Despite the druggist’s best efforts to make her aware of the new law, she was still unable to accept it. Her mindset is also expressed through her actions, specifically her reaction to death and the beliefs expressed therein. This is first seen with the death of her father; she is unable to accept that the person who shielded her since birth has passed out of this world.

When her neighbors showed up to offer her condolences: “ she told them her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body” (3). Unable to accept that her shield has been broken, and never taught how to live in the real world, she clings to his body with the hope that the others will allow her to live on with her fantasies. Her misconception of death would cause her socialization skills to further depreciate, making it completely impossible for her to have normal relationships. Homer Barron was the victim of this misconception; though not explicitly stated, it is clear that he was poisoned by Miss Emily, before curling up in the security of sleep. “ The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him” (7).

With no one left to shield her, Miss Emily needed a replacement for her father; she needed to find a new shield. Because of her misconception of death, it did not matter whether or not that person was alive. In her mind, the living Homer Barron would not always be there for her; he would get out of bed every morning and leave her alone at the house while he did his business in town. Ignorant of the difference between life and death, she poisoned him so he would always be there for her; not a person, but a shield from the real world. Finally, the structure of the story itself is meant to give the reader a view of the world from Miss Emily's perspective. The narrator skips randomly between time periods, creating a confusion of chronological order.

Like Miss Emily, it is very difficult for the reader to understand time in this context. Time is not sequential, but “ a huge meadow which no winter ever touches” (6). Like Miss Emily, the reader is not taught to understand the world, but to contemplate it in confusion. It is appropriate then that the story begins: “ When Miss Emily Grierson died...” (1). With her death at the beginning, the rest of the story is essentially a series of flashbacks, allowing the story to end where it began; at the death of Miss Emily. From Miss Emily's perspective, the beginning and the end are the same; because she has no idea of time or death herself, she would not know whether her life was beginning or ending, whether she was alive or dead.

Miss Emily, shielded since youth from the real world, grew up in a world of her own making. This world was one that time and age could not touch, where others were not her peers, but merely tools to fuel her fantasies. Her speech and actions clearly portray this perspective of the world, with the <https://assignbuster.com/a-rose-for-emily-rhetorical-analysis/>

structure of the story aiding her thought process. The story is written to show the reader the world from Miss Emily's perspective; through both content and structure, the reader is made to feel confused and unaware of the chronological progression of Miss Emily's world. Works Cited Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Emily."