

A rose for emily by william faulkner analysis essay

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The short story by William Falkner ' A Rose for Emily' is a tale that tells a story about an old lady. Her name is Emily ad she lives in the town of Jefferson. The story represents the classic Faulkner's technique of a stream of consciousness. It is a story that illustrates the struggle between traditions and radical widespread change. Jefferson is a town that appeared to be at the very crossroads of modern commercial future and the faded glory of the past. This past is represented by the old town cemetery where the soldiers of the Civil War lay anonymous. Emily is a woman who belongs to tradition. The community around her constantly changes, however she remains unchanged for many years. Emily does not want to change and does not want to accept the changing world and the new things that are brought by it with time. She is a living monument to the past. All the traditions she represents are valued, respected and honored by people: ' Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town . . .'

(Faulkner). But at the same time she is a burden for the outside world, because she is completely cut from it. She suffers because she is unable to change her personality, her inner world and her perception of the surrounding reality. Other people do not understand her and she suffers. Emily lives in her own world. She created this world in her imagination and in fact she is a very lonely person. Emily lives in a timeless vacuum being completely isolated from what is known as a normal life. She refuses to associate herself with the reality she lives in. When all the buildings in town are to be numbered with a metallic numbers, she refuses to have them. Reality is much stronger than Emily. Every day her imagined world is threatened with the world's intrusion. For her the past is a bright present,

her idealized world.

This is a story about decay of a person, a town, and a house. It is set in the beginning of the XX century. The story begins with the town finding out about her death: ‘ Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair.’ (Faulkner). The unknown narrator tells us the story of Emily, about her life, about her times, about relations between herself and the town, herself and her father and also her lover. At the very end the disturbing truth that she was hiding all her life becomes well-known. A humble, miserable woman turned out to be insane hysterical murderer who is not even able to realize her own mental disorder.

Emily gets older and the town grows older too. When she was young she used to live on one of the best streets in Jefferson. But after her death that street has aged and now it is considered to be the worst street in town. When she was young Emily was among the most respective citizens of the town. But after her death the town changes its attitude towards her personality. She becomes old and thus represents nothing but the past: ‘ The women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant – a combined gardener and cook – had seen in at least ten years’ (Faulkner). The former respect of her family died with her father and nobody needs her now. Moreover, she does not even try to regain this glory and respect. Emily does not live but exists. However that does not prevent her from considering herself a poor creature who is terrorized by the ugly and terrible surrounding world.

Still she lives in one of the most beautiful homes of the whole town. But that house is also just the shadow of her former gloss and rich life. When she was young the house was kept very well. But as she ages, the house ages with her as well. She is attractive no more, so the house is beautiful and clean no more either. For the whole town it became the eyesore, as well as its owner. It is evident that Emily was connected with her house. Both of them grew old and lost their inner glow and beauty. Both Emily and the house look in the same way. They are monuments of the past.

Portraying Emily as a monument to the past, the author of the short story demonstrated his irony. Once she was a beautiful woman in Jefferson. When her father was alive there was no brave man who dared to ask her for a date: 'None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such' (Faulkner). But having no support from her father any more, she begins to turn grey not only in her hair but in her soul: 'After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all' (Faulkner). She loses her looks. She becomes grey, fat and unattractive. It is also evident that she lost her mind too. Emily strongly believes that she is an abandoned woman because her lover Homer Barron left her. In fact, she poisoned him and left his body in her bed. But the sick mind does not want to remember about it, so Emily considers herself unhappy woman who suffer from the unfair attitude of life. Her state of mind was decayed, as well as her own house and her own life: 'From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting' (Faulkner).

It is evident that the theme of decay and rot became the central one for the story by W. Faulkner 'A Rose For Emily' (Randle). This theme is prevalent throughout the whole story. Emily had a happy life that could be characterized as easy life. But after she remains on her own, she puts no effort to preserve her comfortable life. Everything grew old: the town, Emily's house, her mind, her body and her life. This story is sad and tragic. William Faulkner managed to create a real masterpiece about a miserable woman who lost everything in her entire life and even her own personality.

Works cited:

Faulkner, William. A Rose for Emily. Web. 23 Feb 2011

Randle, Jonathan. The Plausibility of Miss Emily in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'. Docstoc. Web. 19 March 2002. < <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/4980084/a-rose-for-emily-analysis>>