

# The foreman

Business



Since the beginning of time, humanity has been fascinated with new arrivals. The more different they are, the more society is enthralled with their presence. In his story "A Rose for Emily", William Faulkner creates a social, yet non-conforming character named Homer Barron to be the temporary subject of the town's gossip. Homer Barron is the foreman for the out of town construction company hired to oversee the sidewalk paving in the town. As a Yankee, he would normally be considered an outsider in the South, however, he "...soon [knows] everybody in town" (161).

Faulkner writes, "Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group" (161-63).

Faulkner uses this to demonstrate how quickly Homer becomes the most prominent visitor in the town. He is a well-liked man, one that the town is eager to be around. He is also a "man's man", because "it [is] known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club" (216-17). The townspeople loved Homer's presence, so much so that "[they] were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off" (240-41) when he left the town.

Faulkner uses the actions of Homer Barron to prove he is a gregarious man, but he is not one to conform to the guidelines of society. In the time period of this story, even the men had a certain standard they held themselves up against. Homer Barron is the type of man to take those standards and throw them out the window. He is spotted with Miss Emily Grierson, the town's very own reclusive spirit of inquiry, "...on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable" (163-65). The notion that a Northerner would think to court a lady of the South is

scandalous alone, but the idea that he has no intention of marrying her is outrageous.

Faulkner writes, "...because Homer himself had remarked...that he was not a marrying man" (215-18). The reader never really knows why Homer is not the type of man to walk down the aisle, but it is obvious that he is not going to abide by normal social customs. His unwillingness to conform mixed with his sociable personality is gossip fodder for the townspeople. The citizens of the unnamed town thrive off of hearsay, almost like it is life sustaining. Now, they have something new to whisper about: the relationship between Homer Barron and Emily Grierson.

After her father dies, the townspeople write off Emily's association with Homer as a way to cope with her grief. However, doubtful whispers begin to circulate as well (176-77). Faulkner wrote that they spoke "...behind their hands..." (178-79) simply because this was not a time of bold confrontation. Because Homer is not a native of the town, and Emily herself is a regular subject of gossip, the townspeople are consumed with the idea of their courtship. William Faulkner created Homer Barron to be a sociable character that refused to bow down to society's standards, and pay the price for it. Although his presence was brief, Homer Barron left the reader with an important lesson: no matter how much people say they like you, they like to talk about you even more.