

# Character comparison for the fall of the house of usher and a rose for emily



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Through both “ The Fall of the House of Usher” written by Edgar Allan Poe and “ A Rose for Emily” written by William Faulkner, we see common themes of a gothic genre filled with rhetorical twists and turns. The dynamics in each work are elaborately depicted through the eyes of two narrators who are watching these pieces unfold. Many similar themes experienced in both Poe and Faulkner’s work deal with the ideology of death and preservation in regard to the one’s loved and lovers. Roderick Usher is the main character in “ The Fall of the House of Usher” and Emily Grierson is the main character in “ A Rose for Emily”.

In a thorough examination of both short stories, it is apparent that the similarities that are most embedded in both Roderick and Emily are the ideas of insanity which manifests itself in the forms of their relationships, surroundings, and ideas of reality. Albeit the involvement of lovers versus loved ones can pose distinction, both works uniquely express these ideas through the main characters. In order to set the stage, we attempt to understand both Poe and Faulkner. Each writer expresses their works through a traditional gothic theme which includes a death in each story that produces a sense of internal debacle the main characters endure.

Coincidentally we see the mental challenges provided by each death through the actions of our main characters Roderick and Emily. Let’s first begin by examining Roderick Usher, the main character from “ The Fall of the House of Usher”. Poe specifically addresses the lack of sanity in Roderick when he says “ No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptations of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones” (Poe 1117).

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In this quote, the narrator is speaking about the composition of the House of Usher and how it's an oddity that the House is still standing considering the physical make-up of the pieces that comprise it. This is an allusion also to the psychological state we see in Roderick. As the story progresses, the narrator also questions the unique relationship Roderick and his sister Madeline experience and how they participate in an immoral connection which is modern day incest. Furthermore, the insanity is present in Roderick when he expresses his desire for burying his dead sister in a tomb which is located under the house.

This is also a direct connection for Poe between the title "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Roderick's depleting sense of sanity. As described earlier, the external structure is starting to decay which is a direct link to Roderick's mental capacity and the burial of his sister, who is believed to be dead, is a decaying of the internal structure due to the location of the tomb. "The brother had been led to his resolutions (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men" (Poe 1123).

Here the narrator is commenting on the downward spiral he is observing in Roderick as the story progresses because he believes that the doctors that were unable to cure her sickness would inevitably dig up the body of Madeline and use it for scientific research. As the story comes to a conclusion, the narrator petitions to Roderick that he has been hearing noises. Roderick exclaims that he had been hearing the noises that were being described for "many hours, many days" (Poe 1127). As the noises  
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drew closer, both men gazed in awe to then see sister Madeline walking through the doorway.

In complete dismay and shock the narrator runs out of the house in utter shock. With the question of sanity or lack thereof at hand, we see that Roderick thinks nothing of the situation while the narrator is troubled. Unquestionably, the breach of sanity experienced in Roderick Usher is also universally prevalent in Emily Rose, the main character in "A Rose for Emily". Throughout the story, Emily battles with a life of seclusion and a yearning for love from a companion. Her surrounding counterparts are a controlling father and a Negro servant. Insanity is revealed in many instances of the story.

One of the most profound and apparent signs of insanity begins with the relationship between her and her dad. "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away" (Faulkner 411). This is a brief summation of the unhealthy relationship shared between Emily and her father. She was unable to participate in relationships with other men because the other men were never suitable to his standards. Upon the death of her father, Emily fell into a deep sadness where she quit doing things such as teaching. Years would go by until a Yankee foreman by the name of Homer Barron would come along.

Homer was a charismatic individual who showed Emily attention which she perceived as love. They begin seeing each other for a period of time until Homer work in the town is complete. When Emily begins to sense that he does not love her, she visits a local store in town to purchase arsenic. This she would use to poison and kill Homer. The reader can perceive this as

Emily's inability to be alone again after the death of her father. The story says, " What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay" (Faulkner 415).

Upon reading, you realize that not only did she poison Homer, but she also kept his dead body in the attic where he laid at rest wearing the same nightshirt that she had bought as a gift for him. This shows Emily's level of insanity and her inability to let things go; both theoretically and physically as well. After this discovery, the observers who saw Homer lying in the bed of the attic, they notice an even greater disturbance, " in the second pillow was the indentation of a head...we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair" (Faulkner 415).

Once Homer was poisoned and placed in the bed of the attic, Emily still enjoyed sleeping next to him. In juxtaposition of both the main characters from " The Fall of the House of Usher" and " A Rose for Emily", the reader can see the different actions and understandings that can be attributed to insanity. Whether it's Roderick Usher burying his sister alive or Emily Rose killing a man and continuing to sleep next to his deceased body, both writers clearly express the troubles pressing each main character.