

The druggist in "a rose for emily" by william faulkner essay sample



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The druggist is a nameless character in the sentimental short story “ A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner but this character functions to move the plot forward in two significant ways. The story spans a period of more than forty years with references to a time before that when the main character Emily Grierson was a member of a family who held high status in the town and their grand house was in one of the best streets in town. However, in the forty years that the narrator leads us along the life of Emily Grierson, the street was no longer the home to high society families but rather to garages and cotton gins, with only the Grierson house remaining. Emily’s wealth was also gone, described by the decision of the mayor of the town at the time of her father’s death, who convinced Emily that her father had paid the town a large sum of money in the past and as such she no longer would be responsible for paying taxes.

The role that the druggist plays firstly leaves us in no doubt that the pride and heir of superiority that was accepted as a part of Emily’s entitlement in the period of time of her youth but was no longer accepted nor perhaps deserved by her in the time period of the story was still very much a part of her character. The druggist appears in only three central paragraphs in the story however; he shows us that people of the town, such as him, know Emily as he addresses her by name. He shows us that despite his expert knowledge of the product that Emily has asked him to recommend, she dismisses his continued talking mid sentence once she has decided that she wanted the arsenic, the poison “.... that can kill an elephant” (Faulkner 1).

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Finally the arrogance and superior attitude of Emily is displayed when she simply ignores the druggist's request that the law requires him to ask her what is her intended use for the arsenic, " Emily just stared at him until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up." (Faulkner 1).

The second function that the character of the druggist plays is to allow the narrator to tell the reader in a relatable way how the knowledge of how Emily may have achieved the murder of her love interest, Homer Barron. At first the narrator tells us that the towns people believed that Emily was going to kill herself with the arsenic; then when the door to the room that had been shut for forty years was forced open by the people attending her funeral, the use of the arsenic while not verbalized was made clear by the gruesome discovery.

In summary, the character of the druggist plays two vital roles. Firstly, in pushing ahead the main plot of showing that the main character Emily obtained poison that would allow her to commit the crime of murder.

Secondly, the druggist character brings depth to the story as it relates to the rich history not only of the Grierson family's but of the inter-relationships that make up the dynamic community.

Works Cited

Faulkner, W. " A Rose for Emily". Available:

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