

# Analyzing "a rose for emily"



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## Introduction

Faulkner represents Emily Grierson as a living survival of the times past. The heroine, under discussion, is static, because she in every way resisted changes and innovations. She remained the girl of the previous century. After Homer Barron's death, time stopped for Emily, who kept living in exile and was not interested in innovations of the local surrounding. Such details as a black servant, Confederation uniforms, and china-painting strengthen Emily's statics. She remained the only static personality in the dynamic society of the twentieth century. The given paper will prove that Emily is a living survival of the times past and a victim of contemporary society.

Readers get acquainted with Emily through impressions and memories of the narrator, who attended her funerals and hardly knew her personally. She is a major character of the short story because she is the key element of the resistance-to-change algorithm. Emily became a victim of her father's ambitions, her noble origin and public opinion of Jefferson dwellers, which destroyed her aspiration to making family with Homer Barron. She hid in her father's home from the large world as a snail and lived among old memories and with the dead body of her beloved.

In the centre of "A Rose for Emily", there is a conflict between highly dynamic society and the main character. Using Emily Grierson as an example, William Faulkner shows how public opinion and non-acceptance of social changes by a person may alter one's life.

The story starts from Emily's funeral and thus the author is allowed to judge her actions independently. Emily Grierson belonged to local gentry of

Jefferson, and her future seemed to be prosperous. She was properly educated and moved only in high circle. Her family lived in a big house and was rich according to local standards. At the same time, Faulkner gives few small hints of uncertainty. When the authorities came to Miss Grierson as to paying taxes, they saw that leather, of leather-covered furniture, cracked; everything was covered with the thick layer of dust. " People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were" (Faulkner 81). In conflict with the administration of Jefferson, Emily behaved dryly and formally. She had never considered herself an ordinary member of town community, but an individual. She was proud and preferred to remember of her preliminary social status.

Father's attitude and public opinion about her ambitions ruined Emily's personality. Before she had met Barron, she received a wrong life setting. In spite of high social status, her father left only debts. It was a true reason of his refusals for several local candidates, but Emily was suggested an idea they were not worth of her. " We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the back ground, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip" (Faulkner 81). The girl deeply loved her father, and he remained a part of her limited world for the rest of her life. For instance, she kept his portrait near the fireplace.

The author ironically hinted that when after her father's death she got only house people were pleased. Most of them had previously envied the family and now they could pity the orphan by the word of mouth. Nevertheless,

Colonel Sartoris released her from paying taxes till the end of her life. Emily Grierson met Homer Barron too late because she was entirely disappointed in her future life. She lived on the Old South, where social customs and traditions were much stricter than in the North. Here, it took a long time to accept innovations and changes in all spheres of life. Her choice was silently unaccepted by local publicity. Barron was a Northerner and of lower social position. In this case, principle of noblesse oblige was applied. Old and most respectful citizens started calling her "poor Emily" to underline that she did not justify hopes of the father and kinsfolk.

At the beginning, and at the end of the story, one comes across the description of setting in Emily's house. She lived in stagnant and decadency atmosphere. Her door was always closed for visitors. Most rooms were unoccupied, dusty and dark. She lived on the first floor and kept only two servants. She even refused from mailbox. Emily had never gone to the market herself because she decided to avoid any contacts with the outside world.

In reality, the house kept the largest mystery - one room became a crypt for Homer Barron. "A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table..." (Faulkner 84). There was the male skeleton laying in bed, costume on the chair and silver with monograms H. B. Emily poisoned him with arsenic to create a monument of her ruined family happiness she was never going to have. When her father died she had been denying the fact for three

days and treated him as if he were alive. Hidden condemnation of her relations with Barron devastated her and twisted her mind forever.

### Conclusion

Now it is obvious that Emily Grierson was a victim of contemporary society and disappointed ambitions. Her father kept her under control and spared all her fortune. After his death, she could not become independent and was kept under pressure of public opinion. Homer Barron became her last and largest disappointment, and it resulted in the tragedy.