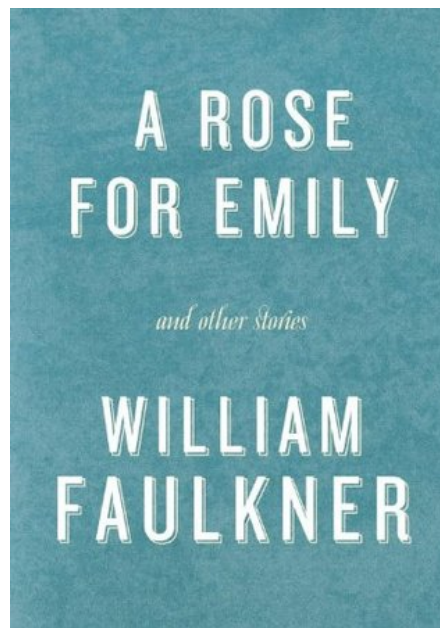




A Rose for Emily and Other Stories

William Faulkner

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Emily is a member of a family in the antebellum Southern aristocracy; after the Civil War, the family has fallen on hard times.

A Rose for Emily and Other Stories Details

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[illegible]

A classic, literary short story that will give you the ultimate creeps. A Rose for Emily is a dark, disturbing but strongly evocatively written tale rich in symbols, ironies and vivid imagery and remarkably depicts the consequences of living in and wanting to preserve one's glorious past. You can read the short story [here](#).

William Faulkner's A Rose for Emily: The Town as Narrator and Accomplice

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, 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.

I KNOW it's not the April issue. I couldn't find one! "A Rose for Emily" is in it!"

These Thirteen, First ed., Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York, 1931

PDF File: A Rose for Emily and Other Stories...

Yes sir. You can be more careless, you can put more trash in [a novel] and be excused for it. In a short story that's next to the poem, almost every word has got to be almost exactly right. In the novel you can be careless but in the short story you can't. I mean by that the good short stories like Chekhov wrote. That's why I rate that second – it's because it demands a nearer absolute exactitude. You have less room to be slovenly and careless. There's less room in it for trash. Faulkner in the University, Introduction by Douglas Day, Frederick Landis Gwynn, Joseph Blotner, University Press of Virginia, 1995

I ascribe to that statement by Faulkner where "A Rose for Emily" is concerned. For this story is a remarkable construction of plot, characterization, theme, and the use of a unique narrative technique. It is only through close reading, repeated reading, that the perfection of this story reveals why this story has become the most anthologized American short story.

Alas, Andalusia, aka Martha Jo, aka "The Queen" has decreed that I, who has decreed himself Jeeves around this abode WILL squire her to Kentuck, the local festival of Arts. And here, Dear Reader, I will leave you until I have returned, covered in the dust of the trodden paths, bearing objects of art, smelling of funnel cake, deafened by strains of music played too loudly through poor public address systems. Goodbye Faulkner. I will think of your story while I am gone.

poof

Actually in route, I have in mind the ideal photograph for Miss Emily's house. Paint peeling, the grey cypress revealed underneath. And our town's oldest cemetery along the way. Perhaps time well spent. Happy reading.

The afternoon has passed as I told you, reader, it would. I have shaken the dust of well trodden paths from my shoes, my beloved is content with purchases made. I am content with photographs taken, downloaded, edited, and shortly to be uploaded and shared.

Ah, Mr. Faulkner. There you are. Well, you weren't whoring with this one. Nor were you telling a straight forward ghost story, although you have said so more than once. Your favorite themes are there, rising from the page. The changing South is there. Miss Emily's house itself is a symbol of it. The past is never past. That's there.

Once the Grierson mansion was a brilliant white on the finest street in town. Now it is falling into disrepair. No longer on one of the finer streets, it is surrounded by businesses, within the sound of the passing trains, near the cemetery where the rows of Union and Confederate dead lie. Miss Emily herself, dead, is a monument.

And we begin the story in the present with Miss Emily taking her place among the eternally peaceful. It is all fairly straight forward. Those first few paragraphs.

All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.-Edgar Lee Masters, The Hill, Spoonriver Anthology, 1915

However, Mr. Faulkner tells his story in anything but a conventional manner after the seemingly innocent beginning narrative. Time becomes non-linear. The initial narrator who might have been an omniscient third

person observer, a single first person voice, becomes the curiously effective first person *plural* narrator. The narrator is not I but We. Should you be patient and count, you will find "we" used forty-eight times. It is not a mere whim. Faulkner did nothing by whim.

Through multiple sets of eyes, through multiple generations, we learn the story of Emily Grierson's life and her place in the community.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor--he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron--remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

Read carefully. It's like asking Salvador Dali for the time.

Emily's father found no suitor acceptable for his daughter. He stood in the doorway, chasing them away with a horse whip. He left her nothing but the house. So the good Old Colonel Sartoris fabricated the scheme to save her the taxes. Notice the narrator(s) observed her to have an angelic appearance.

The Griersons always had that superior attitude. The town resented that. However, Emily was to be pitied. Left a spinster at her father's death. No wonder she denied he was dead and the preachers had to talk her into surrendering his body after he had been dead for three days.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

Faulkner continues to play with time. He plays with the reader. Unless particularly wary, the reader does not realize he is being played by a master but merciless mouser.

That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart--the one we believed would marry her --had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the

temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man--a young man then--going in and out with a market basket.

Then there's that peculiar odor that emanates from Miss Emily's house shortly after the missing sweetheart was believed to have married Emily.

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.

An idol is feared as much as it is worshiped. Or did they not want to know the truth?

Faulkner spins the hands on the clock again. The sweetheart was Homer Barron, a common laborer and a Yankee at that. A drinker who enjoyed the company of young men whom he told he was not the marrying kind. The Town decided reinforcements were necessary, summoning two Grierson cousins from Alabama.

Barron leaves town, but returns when the Grierson cousins leave. The Town decides it's just as well. Those Alabama Griersons were more superior than Mississippi Griersons.

Emily buys a man's dressing set with the initials "HB" on each piece. A man's nightshirt completes the ensemble. After Homer enters Emily's home he's never seen again.

Emily offers china painting lessons to a generation of Jefferson's children. Until the children stop coming.

The hands on the clock spin wildly.

She carried her head high enough--even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to reaffirm her imperviousness. Like when she bought the rat poison, the arsenic. That was over a year after they had begun to say "Poor Emily," and while the two female cousins were visiting her.

"I want some poison," she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eyesockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper's face ought to look. "I want some poison," she said.

"Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom--"

"I want the best you have. I don't care what kind."

The druggist named several. "They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is--"

"Arsenic," Miss Emily said. "Is that a good one?"

"Is . . . arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want--"

"I want arsenic."...

So THE NEXT day we all said, "She will kill herself"; and we said it would be the best thing.

Time passes inexorably. Miss Emily is thirty when she abandons noblesse oblige and takes up with Homer Barron. She dies at the age of seventy-four. At last in death she can be openly acknowledged as one of the community's own. Her air of superiority is gone. Her peculiarity is gone. There is no trace of madness. She is no longer a burden or a duty. Two generations have passed. It is a new generation that rules Jefferson now. Only a few remain of Emily's own age. And they remember her as they wish to.

...and the very old men --some in their brushed Confederate uniforms--on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years.

There is but one thing more for Faulkner to do, the final pronouncement of the omniscient "we" that gives "A Rose for Emily" its indelible shudder up the spine of generations of readers.

Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it.

Just who knew about that closed room? How many knew?

(view spoiler)

It is this knowledge that not only establishes the town as narrator but also accomplice. We act not only affirmatively but also by failure to act, by passivity, indifference, and our own self interest. Rest well Emily, Homer, for all, will sleep, sleep, sleep on the hill.

Mr. Chekhov, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Faulkner.

EXTRAS! EXTRAS!

Watch A Rose for Emily, with Anjelica Huston, 1983

Laura says

Revisited after 20 years because I wanted to compare to a short story written by William Gay, The Paperhanger. I definitely like shock factor in literature. Faulkner perfected this story.

Rachel Maniacup says

This is some kind of a gothic story that tells you about a woman(EMILY), from a wealthy and respectable family,and the last of her father's descendant.

The story started when Emily's father died,and the only thing he left for her was the house.Being left alone,she became the "talk" of her neighbors,"at last,the once envied was now the pitied".

This is the shortest horrifying story I've ever read so far,and I must say it was well-written.Others may say the story was pointless but for me,it was a good and smart read because it will make you think(particularly the questions)at the last part of the book.^^

??? ??? says

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We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

The story starts off with a slow narration, recounting the life of Emily Grierson until Faulkner's final revelation will step around the corner and confront you totally unexpectedly. It is impossible to talk about this story without spoiling its most important turn of events, so I will leave this review at a whole-hearted recommendation for you to read it. Even though (or rather because) it does include some creepy parts, the story will also probably burn into your mind unlike anything else you have read so far. You can read it for free [here](#).

I came to know about this book through the song 'In The End' by My Chemical Romance, which is inspired on this book. And I must say, this is the greatest story ever written. While the story is most macabre, for me it also shows the ultimate end of Romance and Love.

I don't want to spoil the story or the amazing plot, so please just read it!

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[illegible]

Karen says

A big reason why I read writers like Faulkner is because of beautiful metaphors like this;

"and the very old men--some in their brushed Confederate uniforms--on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years."

Well of course after a metaphor like that I was perfectly satisfied, and all was right with the world at that moment. To take that metaphor out of the story I would have known immediately who wrote it. Who else can do this?? Who thinks like this? The story of Miss Emily was true Faulkner- a story of her heartbreak and it's tragic result, and small town southern gossip.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

If you've never read anything by William Faulkner, read this story.

I first read Faulkner's classic "A Rose for Emily" in college years ago. Initially I just dropped a 4 star rating on it and left it at that. But then something happened. A few friends liked my rating, and this story kept stealing back into my mind like Homer Barron sneaking in through Emily's back door, and making itself at home in my head, an uninvited and a little bit uncomfortable guest.

So I starting doing a little research on the background of this 1930 story, and found it available to read online at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_r... (seriously, go read this today if you've never read it before). I read it again, and I'm bumping my rating up to 5 stars.

The story begins and ends on the day of the funeral of Miss Emily Grierson, an institution in her southern town. In between, we find out more about Miss Emily's life and the traditions and expectations that bind both her and the town.

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. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door.

Time becomes fluid as stories and events from Emily's life are shared with the reader. The narrator always speaks as "we," as if the entire town--and we ourselves--are complicit in the events of the story. It's a disturbing feeling, and the images of decay that permeate the story further this unrest: the cracked leather furniture, moldy pillows, the dust covering everything in her home, and of course the appearance of the older Emily herself:

When I was a college student, it was the ending of the story that was etched indelibly in my brain. It's still a shocker; I can only imagine the sensation it caused when it was published in 1930. But now I have a better appreciation for how skillfully Faulkner wrote this entire story, and the strange but pitiful character he created in Emily, dying alone in "a house filled with dust and shadows."

[illegible]

? DON'T BE DECEIVED BY THE TITLE. NO ONE'S GETTING ANY ROSES.

I had to read this story twice to grasp it fully. But after a reading count of two, I still am not able to decipher who the hell the speaker is. And yes, this bothers me slightly. But I'll say it, this was one beautiful - short - piece of gothic literature. The fascinating thing about the mysterious identity of the narrator is it didn't take away from the story, if anything, it yielded more intrigue and allure, causing me to be more attuned to the foreboding sense of darkness and doom throughout the story. More keen to it's richly intoxicating, yet subtle quality. It's like Caroline from *The Vampire Diaries* would call it, *an allure to darkness*. You just can't walk away from it sometimes. You just can't help but be pulled into it. You know something stinks about the story, but what? That's something you absolutely can't tell.

This story is about Miss Emily from the prestigious Grierson family, who lived in a prestigious eyesore of an house. An house which later on became a symbol of bondage and self inflicted torture.

Miss Emily, as the narrator describes is something of a monument. An eccentric, anomalous, queer character who lacks a balanced, appeasing relation with society, she's the embodiment of infringement. A monument who lived her life in opposition to the dictates of society. She sounds lovely, inspiring. Doesn't she? But no, Miss Emily is not your average **heroine**, you'll just have to read it to find out why.

I think Faulkner's use of symbolism and imagery is simply adhering. Exquisitely brilliant. I think the topics he explores are perversely sound and resonating.

PDF File: A Rose for Emily and Other Stories...

Thus she passed from generation to generation--dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.

The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps--an eyesore among eyesores

Jess ✨Harbinger of Blood-Soaked Rainbows✨ says

Thank you Tadiana for providing this link to this little shorty that I haven't read in 14 years.

I first read this in high school, and it is the first, and still only, Faulkner I have ever read. Faulkner has always been this kind of presence in my life. Like a long-lost uncle who is always kind of looking out for me, and remains a lingering presence, but who is intimidating, and just a little bit scary. And for those reasons, I've just never been able to warm up to Faulkner, but appreciate his lingering essence. This little short is like my inviting him out to lunch for the first time. In a very public and non-threatening place where I can get to know him a bit. But I am not making plans to move in with him anytime soon, a situation that my reading *As I Lay Dying* would inevitably throw me into.

This short story is beautiful, and I can definitely understand the appeal of Faulkner's prose. It centers around a young woman named Emily who has this kind of "untouchable" mysterious air about her. She lives with her father who has deemed all available suitors "unsuitable" for Emily, which leads to her mystery. When her father has died, she still has this upper crust snootiness about her, but as she is well past marrying age by then, people of the town who used to admire her, now kind of pity her. We find out that Emily did have a lover who ran out on her, and afterwards, she became a recluse, and that air of mystery about her from her younger years, only gets reinforced with age. As an old woman, Emily no longer has her beauty, but people still remember her in her prime, and long to discover her secrets. Plus, the threat of madness, which tends to follow reclusive and secretive women, has further stimulated the townspeople's lust for gossip.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

The opening paragraph explains that it is the day of Emily's funeral and that every single person in town has attended.

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort

of respectful affection for a fallen monument, 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.

The story slowly and beautifully unravels the mysteries and secrets surrounding Emily, and finally results in a climax which has haunted me for fourteen years since I first read this story as a high school junior. It is a bit disturbing, and a bit surprising, but it is glorious. Beautifully macabre, hauntingly sweet, and amazingly gorgeous writing. Maybe it is about time Faulkner and I had another meeting.

Donita Luz says

This wasn't really recommended to me by Aj. My curiosity just got the best of me after reading Aj's short but informative review here and Rachel's review.

I honestly have to read this short story twice for the story to actually sink in. I didn't know where the story was about or where it will lead to at first everything started to make sense the more you delve into the story, but I just have to read it again - to know if there were some clues and hints out there I missed before the genius Faulkner dropped the horrifying and disturbing bomb.

The writing and narration of the story was somewhat inviting the readers to ride and live with the town to reminisce the pitiful life of Emily, alone on the big house, left to carry the legacy of being the last Grierson, and it was one of the best ride! Only it was horrifying and creepy too.

Thank you Aj for including a link to where I could read this story! ;)

Tom Mathews says

This is an extremely atmospheric and downright creepy short story. It makes me believe that I can learn to love Faulkner.

A Rose for Emily
