

## Jefferson: A Social Grave for Emily

In the story *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner, the main character Emily Grierson is the laughingstock of her town. Her father, Mr. Grierson, is the main reason why Emily Grierson committed the acts that she has out of fear of abandonment from others around her. Her town and father played a role in how she acted as they were both very cold to her.

Emily Grierson lived in a white dominant town and growing up she never experienced having anybody in her life. Her father was extremely strict with her and whom she could have around, which led to serious abandonment issues that caused Emily to commit wild acts on her boyfriend, Homer. Emily's father was an extraordinarily rich white man in this town and many of the boys feared to get with her because of how intimidating he was to the town.

“Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they were. None of the young men were quite good enough for

Miss Emily and such” (123). This quote in the story shows the reader that Emily's father thought extremely highly of his daughter and the town boys avoided Miss Emily. What this piece of text also shows is that not only did Mr. Grierson think highly of his daughter but the town thought that they held themselves up to a standard that the rest of the town was not at. This could show the town that the Griersons were stuck up and be another reason on why none of the young men wanted to engage with Miss Emily. Quickly after the death of Mr. Grierson, the town felt for Miss Emily as they watched her gain a new boyfriend, Homer. Homer was a middle-class construction worker whom Miss Emily fell in love with. But shortly after falling in love, she went to the local store to buy poison to then poison Homer. In the text, it says, “I want



Figure 1: Pink dot is Miss Emily's House

poison...Arsenic, is that a good one” (Faulkner, 125). Once she kills Homer, she then keeps his body in her bed to rot and to keep forever to ensure that he never leaves her physically. The root of Miss Emily killing her boyfriend Homer was all the sheltered behavior from her father. Her father hid Emily too much and was too overprotective of Miss Emily so she could not experience any other male presence other than her father, so when she finally got the attention she wanted she did not want to get rid of it. Another reason is Mr. Grierson was a very rich man in this town and that intimidated a lot of the men that were ever interested in Miss Emily because they were never good enough. Emily found freedom once her father died and grasped the idea of someone staying in her life and loving her. With this attachment, she thought that the only way she could hold on to him forever was physically having his body forever and keeping it in her house.

Although Emily had an interesting life, she was not the only one to experience it as her town was invested in her life and what she did. On the first page of the book, it says, “Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation of the town” (Faulkner, 119). This quote shows that the town was always intrigued by who Miss Emily was and that her existence was always acknowledged but not in the best way.

The coldness of her town made Miss Emily not as accepted as she wanted to be. As this story was made from a citizen's point of view, there were many signs that Jefferson was not nice to her and judged her for the things she did. For example, when Miss Emily died the townspeople went to her funeral some out of respect and some just off curiosity of what inside her house looked like. The text says, “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” (119). This shows that the town truly did

not care for Miss Emily and if Emily had people in her life that truly cared about her, then maybe she would not have the abandonment issues that she did that caused her murder Homer.

A major piece of evidence of Miss Emily being rejected by her town is when she bought the rat poison to kill Homer, the town does not know why she bought it and thought that she was going to kill herself. On page 126 it says, "So the next day we all said, 'She will kill herself'; and we said it would be the best thing" (126). This is a major piece of evidence as it is extremely cold for people to agree that someone ending their own life is better than the life that she is living in Jefferson. The townspeople saw Emily as an outcast and felt pity for her instead of befriending her and maybe helping her with the issues that she was experiencing. Emily would try to hold her head high even when people knew the things that were going on in her life were bringing her down. The text says, "She carried her head high enough-even when we believed that she was fallen" (125). Emily had awful things in her life that made her the way she was, the town recognized that yet did not do anything about it but gossip.

In conclusion, the story *A Rose for Emily* was based on the abandonment issues of Emily Grierson that caused her to commit extreme acts of murder on her boyfriend Homer. These abandonment issues stemmed from the overbearing protection of her father Mr. Grierson who hid Emily from experiencing normal life. Also, Emily's selfish and cold acts of her town played a role in why Miss Emily did not have normal relationships in her life as they saw her as someone to observe, rather than befriend.

### Works Cited

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Faulkner, W. (2000). *A Rose for Emily: William Faulkner*. Harcourt College Publishers.