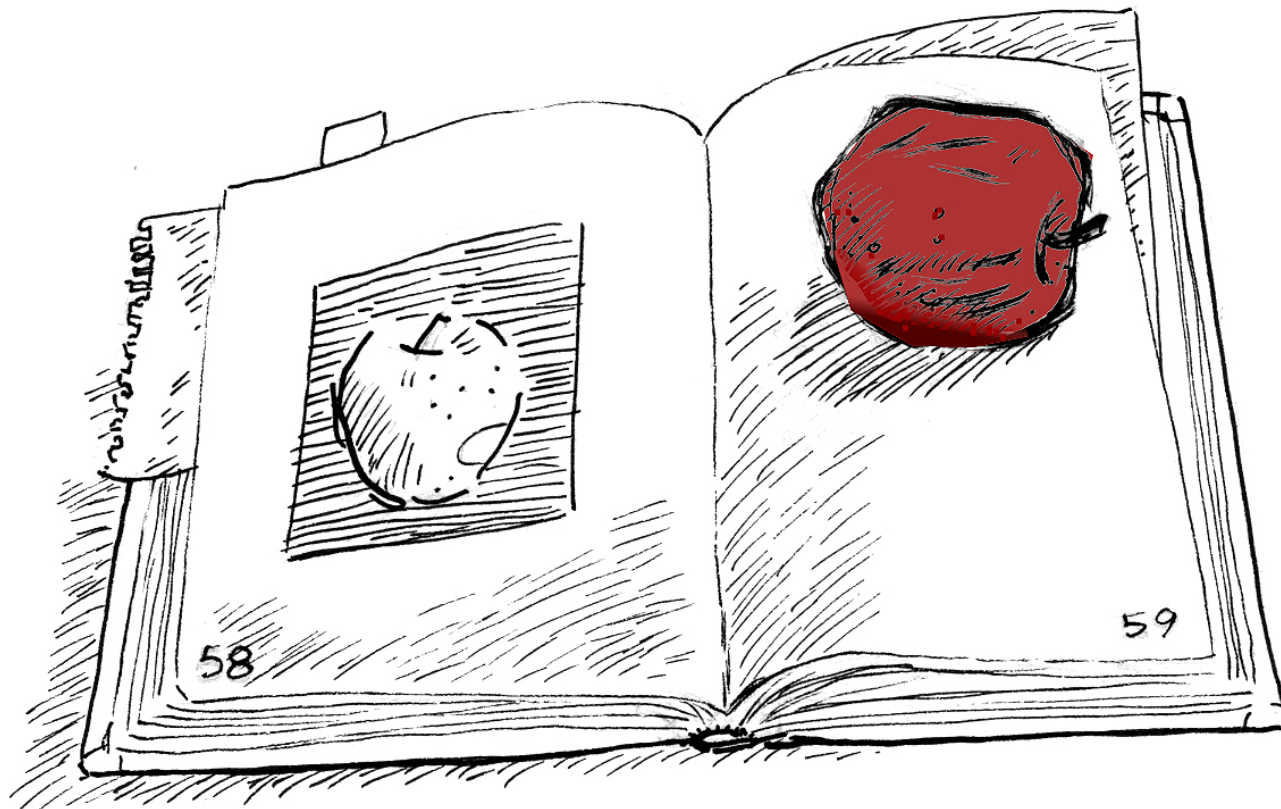


Tragic Hero



Common Traits of Tragic Hero

Great. Good. Flaw. Downfall.

- Heroes are neither 100% good nor 100% evil.
- They are fated to cause grief to individuals or to the community.
- Driven and obsessed with past deeds or by fate.
- The hero is often a king or leader in the community, head of family.
- They symbolize the community or the family unit.
- The heroes' downfall is caused by their flaws (for example excessive pride).
- The heroes fight to the death due to flawed belief system.
- Tragic heroes understand they are doomed.
- The heroes' downfall should arouse pity and/or terror in the reader.
- They learn from their mistakes, but this fact cannot save them from their fate.
- There may be supernatural involvement.

Emily as a Tragic Hero

Cleanton Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (New Criticism)

suggest Emily is a tragic hero.

- she is a protagonist in self-exile from the modern world, locked away in her decaying mansion
- in the end she transforms from a virginal bride to a sub-human creature, living in the dark with a dead gentleman caller, isolating herself from the community
- the closure of the story leaves the reader with a sense of gruesome horror

Emily as a Tragic Hero

What is crucial to their argument, they use E. A. Poe as a contrasting element.

We have discussed how Poe's stories utilize an anti-hero figure. He uses Gothic horror as a literary genre. Although Poe reveals psychological workings of humanity, his main intent is to scare you, not reveal a deeper understanding of a character's mentality in relation to your own.

Another author, Charlotte Gilman on the other hand, wants to scare female readers in her audience and reveal to them the oppression of women through the Gothic genre. She uses the horror story as a technique to deliver a message.

However, they argue Faulkner goes beyond a "simple" local-color ghost story and delves deeper into the workings of his protagonist's mind, through the eyes of the town. The story is more than a gruesome, sensationalized moment.

Emily as a Tragic Hero

Miss Emily is a character to whom reality and illusion blur:

1. she refuses to pay taxes due to the actions of a father figure (Colonel Satoris)
2. she (possibly) believes the Colonel is still alive and still mayor
3. —and likewise at one point refuses to acknowledge her domineering biological father's death. She told them he wasn't dead... brainwashed perhaps?
4. despite the obvious, her lover is still alive to her—time is at a standstill in the room; symbolically/physically, he is in a tomb, an enclosed wall of a catacomb.

The reader should pity or feel terrified at Emily's actions. Despite the presumed madness of her actions, in general appearance however, she is described as a creature of firm will, determination, controlled, strong pride. Near the end of the story she appears pale, withdrawn, yet still a dominant character in action with the other town people when they come to call on her. *She is a leader in the town.*

Emily as a Tragic Hero

Her will is so strong, she rejects the notion of death. And likewise, despite the fact the town paints her as a symbol of the Old Ways, she acts against the traditional view of a “proper southern lady” courting a man out of her class despite public opinion. Through her sense of pride, she refuses to admit to an external set of codes or the established set of Southern rules that the community says she represents. This strengthens as she grows older, the town calls her an icon, even though she fights against it; she represents their history. This in turn prevents her to adjust to modern life. Or in other words, this strengthens her avoidance of modern life. No one tries to save her from her reclusive ways. In contrast they act in passive manners to her aggressive ways. All of which serves as a form of disconnect from the community.

Her tragic flaw would be her pride. Her disconnect strengthens her pride.

She represents the town of Jefferson, as well as the Old South.

Emily as a Tragic Hero

Brooks and Warren find her to be a tragic hero because she:

- insists on meeting the world on her own terms, even when it refuses her
- never asks for help
- remains fiercely independent despite modern concepts and despite the dependency on Tobe, the housekeeper
- triumphs over the town's pity and ideals, which is proven by their reserved action of breaking into her upstairs room *after* her funeral; they are in a sense abiding by her old traditional ways
- is not broken down, like Jane in the Gilman story, rather, Emily acts according to her own set of rules, even though she knows her views are flawed, and dies defiant and in control, despite the town's and reader's views
- understands she is doomed to die a spinster, but will fight it all the way in a metaphoric fight