

“A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner

I. Contrast the film’s opening with section I of the original Faulkner’s text. What are the major differences?

- What is achieved with the film’s title credits being shown on a black background accompanied with a radio program voice-over, rather than a human voice-narrative voice-over?
- What mood does the film promote by starting the story in a small town morgue rather than at the beginnings of Miss Emily’s funeral? What is achieved starting with Miss Emily as a corpse rather than a living figure of conflict with the town tax collectors?
- Why does the film utilize the characters of an elderly Doc Peabody and Deputy Sherriff Binford in this scene? What do these two figures represent? What do their emotional reactions to Emily’s corpse tell you about the town in general?

II. Contrast the two styles of narrative point of view. What does the film used as opposed to the text?

- Use class discussions on Faulkner’s technique as a guide for further commentary.
- *Find a criticism in the library database discussing Faulkner’s technique of narration in “A Rose for Emily”—* there are many to choose once you start looking. What does the critic propose about the story’s point of view?
- Comment about the necessity for voice over narration. Why did the director utilize an older male voice? Is it effective? What is lost with this decision?
- The film scrambles the chronology of Faulkner’s non-linear chronology even further. Notice the film begins with details told at paragraph 54, at the close of section IV, page 307 and confirms her age immediately. The text reveals this information in paragraph 48, page 306. Is this rearrangement helping the viewing audience? —or does it lessen the suspense?

III. Compare and contrast how the following range of characters are introduced in the plot.

What are notable differences/similarities between the two presentations of these characters?

- Emily Grierson: why is her sanity proposed as a major theme in the film and not in the text?
Find a critical response to her characterization for secondary reference.
- Mr. Grierson, Emily’s father: what is significant about the element of liquor?
- Tobe, the manservant: why is relevant that Mr. Grierson is shown ordering Tobe about the house and not Emily? Likewise, explain what are the major differences between the two presentations.
- Colonel Sartoris: what is significant about the exchange of liquor between the father and the colonel?
- Homer Barron: what is significant about the exchange of the straight razor with Miss Emily in the film? Does the actor match the specific presentation of the character within the text?
Compare and contrast the treatment of Homer’s plausible sexuality. Why does the film in particular show this scene in a public bath house and include liquor? How does it contrast with the text?

IV. Compare and contrast the scenes dealing with Mr. Grierson's death and Emily's refusal to give up his body for three days.

- What is achieved in the film by showing the actual details of her father's death?
- What is achieved in the text with Faulkner not providing such details?
- Both versions state: "We knew with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (304). What does this statement reveal?

V. Review the scene with the sidewalks. Compare and contrast the lack of racial slurs.

- What major theme of Faulkner's was removed from the film?
- Does this lessen the impact of the symbolic nature of Miss Emily?

VI. Review the scene with the sprinkling of lime. In the text, it appears in section II. In the film it appears directly after the disappearance of Homer. Does the film remove any indications of suspense? Compare this placement with the emotional impact you experienced reading the story for the first time.

VII. Review the placement of a rose in the film within the funeral scene. Because Faulkner leaves out any mention of roses, and the fact roses are (for the most part) inappropriate for funerals, was it necessary for the film to include it in the first place? What then is the film proposing it represents? Why is the film placing such an emphasis on it?

VIII. Review the pharmacist scene. Compare and contrast the exchange between the pharmacist and Miss Emily. Both versions place this scene in the middle of events. Why is this placement crucial for understanding Miss Emily's characterization? Does the scene carry the same impact between both film and text?

IX. Review the closing scene when the corpse of Homer is discovered. Compare and contrast with the text.

- How is the Deputy Sheriff's actions shown? How are the two cousin's actions shown? Why are these three essential for closing out the film version rather than a collection of men as it is related in the text?
- Notice the door is simply locked with a key in the film and not "evidently shut up" (306). Although both versions imply a violence is needed to open the door, is the film version as effective in the text version?
- At this point is the scene with Homer's corpse still effective?
- Why does the camera close on the figures of the two cousins and not a strand of Emily's gray-hair?
- Why is it necessary to end the film with the same two characters which opened the film? What is achieved?

X. Compare and contrast the overall message of the film, versus the text. Which is more effective?

- *Find a critic who discusses plot techniques and strategies within the overall story. Use as secondary reference.*
- Is the film successful carrying the Southern Gothic theme promoted by the text?
- Notice the film simplifies or removes any reference to specific scenes of Miss Emily's dealing with men.
- Notice the film leaves the town nameless; any reference to the town of Jefferson is removed.
- Notice the film removes any reference to racial tension, other than obvious visual clues.
- Do these absences hinder Faulkner's original message? Does the film manage to overcome these hurdles?