

A Rose for Emily

Short Story by William Faulkner

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML11-1064A



READING 2B Relate the text structures of mythic literature to 20th and 21st century American novels, plays, or films. **5A** Evaluate how different literary elements shape the author's portrayal of the plot and setting in works of fiction. **5C** Analyze the impact of narration when the narrator's point of view shifts from one character to another.

DID YOU KNOW?

William Faulkner ...

- dropped out of high school and took only a few college classes as a special student.
- worked almost three years at the post office, where he was considered lazy and inattentive, before he resigned.

Meet the Author

William Faulkner 1897–1962

Today, William Faulkner is considered one of the literary giants of the 20th century. This distinction didn't come easily, however. Faulkner took a while to find himself and his subject. Only after he decided to focus on his home state of Mississippi and his colorful family history was the full force of his creativity unleashed. Over an astonishing 13-year span, Faulkner churned out one masterpiece after another—among them, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and *Go Down, Moses* (1942). Of these artistic achievements, only *Sanctuary* was a bestseller—partly due to its scandalous subject matter—and none of the books earned Faulkner enough money to support his growing family. Although some critics raved about him, many others agreed with the *New York Times* that his South was “too often vicious, depraved, decadent, corrupt.” By 1945, most of his books were out of print.

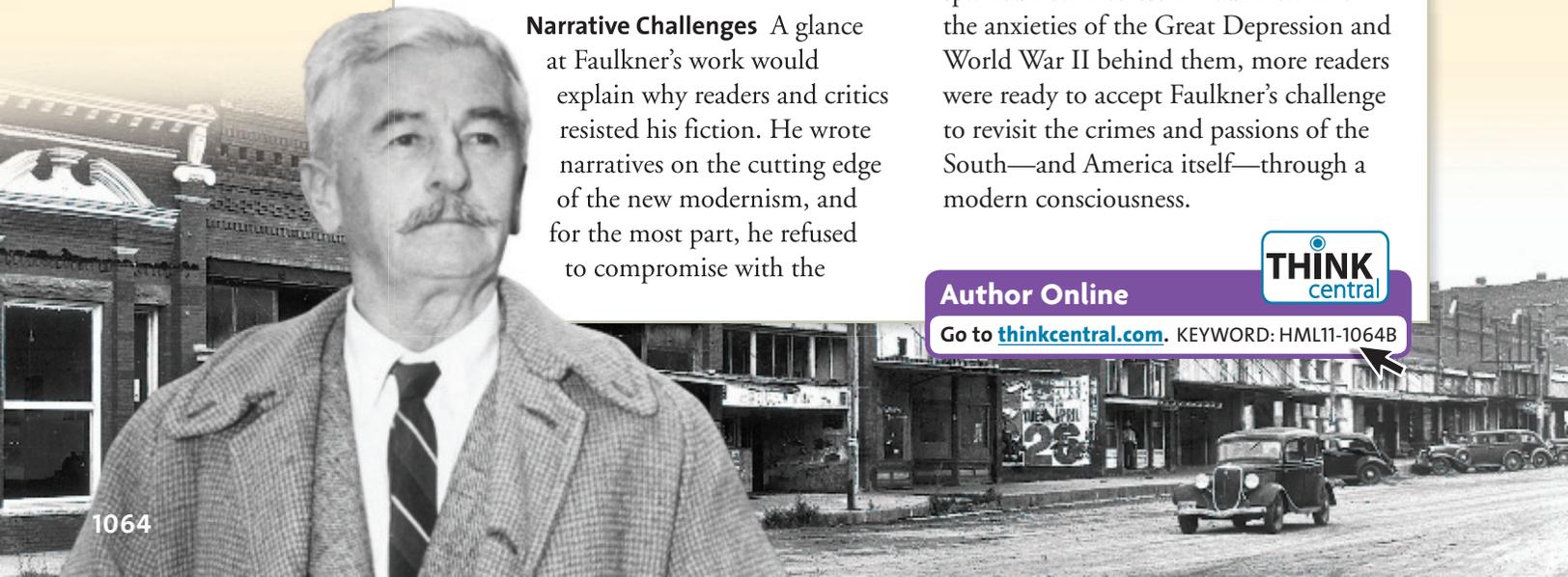
Narrative Challenges A glance at Faulkner's work would explain why readers and critics resisted his fiction. He wrote narratives on the cutting edge of the new modernism, and for the most part, he refused to compromise with the

typical reader's desire for a coherent, chronological story. His novels weave numerous flashbacks into multiple story lines. They push sentence length to new limits, and two of his best-known modernist works increase the reader's challenge by using several highly unreliable narrators to tell the story. *The Sound and the Fury* has three first-person narrators (see pages 934-935). *As I Lay Dying* has fifteen. The story of a mother's dying wish, Faulkner's fifth novel switches narrators with each chapter, supplying readers with the perspective of various family members and others involved in the story. It is anything but an easy read.

Resurgence In 1946, an enterprising editor named Malcolm Cowley published *The Portable Faulkner*, a collection of stories and novel excerpts that untangled Faulkner's elaborate saga. Cowley's blueprint plus a helpful introduction sparked new interest in Faulkner. With the anxieties of the Great Depression and World War II behind them, more readers were ready to accept Faulkner's challenge to revisit the crimes and passions of the South—and America itself—through a modern consciousness.

Author Online

Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML11-1064B



LITERARY ANALYSIS: POINT OF VIEW

As you've already learned, Faulkner is a pioneer of modernist fiction (see pages 934-935 and page 1064). He uses **stream of consciousness**, mimicking the flow of a character's thoughts and sensations to convey the subjective nature of experience. He uses **multiple narrators**, taking the point of view of several characters in a single novel. With each work of fiction, he crafts a point of view uniquely suited to the story being told. "A Rose for Emily," is the story of a small town's struggle to understand one of its residents. Using multiple narrators would be difficult in a short story. Using stream of consciousness would not convey what is most important here—the public perception of Miss Emily. Faulkner's choice for point of view, then, is **first-person-plural**—an unnamed *we*, the voice of the townspeople themselves.

As you read, notice the narrator's use of first-person pronouns such as *we* and *our*. What role does this point of view play in your understanding of Miss Emily and her story? How might other points of view change the narrative?

Review: Mood

READING SKILL: ANALYZE SEQUENCE

Faulkner often rearranges the **sequence** of events in his fiction, using **flashbacks** to offer a window into a character's past or dropping hints that **foreshadow** what is yet to come. As you read, keep a chart like the one shown. In the left column, record the story's events as you read about them. When you finish the story, number the events in chronological order.

Order in Which Narrator Reveals Events	Order in Which Events Occur
1. Miss Emily dies.	8
2. The aldermen visit about taxes.	7

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Faulkner uses these words to create a story rich with atmosphere. Try to define each, based on its context.

1. The **cabal** executed their shady plans in secret.
2. The swaggering boy approached him with **temerity**.
3. Moonlight made the rickety house into a terrifying **tableau**.
4. Her **imperviousness** made her impossible to frighten.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What makes your SKIN CRAWL?

As the girl steps outside into the alley, the overpowering smell of rotting garbage assaults her nostrils. Her stomach turns as she tries not to stare at a mass of maggots eating a discarded hamburger, and she shies away from the dumpster, with its squeaking and squirming inhabitants. Certain scenes from books or movies are so evocative that they leave you shaky and nauseated. Part of what you're responding to is the creepy atmosphere the writers or directors have created to mesmerize and repulse you.

DISCUSS In a small group, talk about the one thing that really gives you the creeps. Spiders, rats, the sight of blood—do any of these make your skin crawl? What movies or books have used these things to create an atmosphere that makes you shudder? Which works top your "creepiness scale"? Record the responses of your group to share with others.



A Rose for Emily

William Faulkner

BACKGROUND “A Rose for Emily,” like the majority of Faulkner’s stories, takes place in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. Published in 1930, the story portrays social customs of the small-town South at the turn of the 20th century. Be warned that the narrator refers to African Americans with a term that is offensive to contemporary readers.

I

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 manservant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years. **A**

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,¹ 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
10 coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused² cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

A POINT OF VIEW
Identify the first-person-plural pronoun that establishes Faulkner’s point of view in the opening paragraph. For whom does the narrator speak?

1. **the seventies:** the 1870s.

2. **cedar-bemused:** almost lost in cedar trees.



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.³ 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. **B**

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a stairway mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse—a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlor. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

They rose when she entered—a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand. **C**

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves."

"But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?"

B ANALYZE SEQUENCE

Explain when the events of the story's first paragraph happen in relation to those described in lines 15–31. Why might Faulkner have chosen to immediately announce Emily's death before revealing more about her life? Explain.

C MOOD

What is your initial reaction to Emily? Cite two examples of **figurative language** in lines 42–49 and explain what feeling they create.

3. **remitted . . . perpetuity:** released her from paying taxes forever from the time of her father's death.

“I received a paper, yes,” Miss Emily said. “Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

60 “But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see. We must go by the—”

“See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

“But, Miss Emily—”

“See Colonel Sartoris.” (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) “I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!” The Negro appeared. “Show these gentlemen out.”

II

So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell. 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
70 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.

“Just as if a man—any man—could keep a kitchen properly,” the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons.

A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.

“But what will you have me do about it, madam?” he said.

“Why, send her word to stop it,” the woman said. “Isn’t there a law?”

“I’m sure that won’t be necessary,” Judge Stevens said. “It’s probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I’ll speak to him about it.”

80 The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation.⁴ “We really must do something about it, Judge. I’d be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we’ve got to do something.” That night the Board of Aldermen met—three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.

“It’s simple enough,” he said. “Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don’t . . .”

“Dammit, sir,” Judge Stevens said, “will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?” **D**

90 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.

temerity (tə-mĕr’ĭ-tē) *n.*
foolish boldness



TEKS 5C

D POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 65–88.

Notice that the opening paragraph summarizes events in Miss Emily’s life. Faulkner’s unique **point of view** here—first person plural—makes it possible for this narrative summary to include the townspeople’s perceptions of his main character. Then, in the dialogue, Faulkner captures both gossip and the conflict among small-town perspectives. Think about how the point of view might change if Faulkner had the length of a novel to tell Miss Emily’s story. He could, for example, write entire passages from the points of view of a neighbor woman, one of the complaining citizens, and the judge. How would the use of **multiple narrators** affect this story?

4. **diffident deprecation**: timid disapproval.

That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely
100 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. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized. **E**

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left
110 alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less.

The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We
120 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.

III

She was sick for a long time. When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows—sort of tragic and serene. **F**

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with niggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee—a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the niggers,
130 and the niggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town. Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group. Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable.

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer." But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget *noblesse oblige*⁵—without calling it *noblesse oblige*.

tableau (täb'lä') *n.* a dramatic scene or picture

E GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 98–107. The pronouns *we* and *our* indicate that this story is told from the **first-person-plural point of view**. The narrator is not a single character, but the collective voice of the townspeople.

F POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 119–124. What is Faulkner's point of view in these paragraphs, and which personal pronoun signals the point of view? Explain what makes this point of view unique in fiction. Cite evidence from the story to support your answer.

5. *noblesse oblige* (nō-blēs' ō-blēzh'): the responsibility of people in a high social position to behave in a noble fashion.

They just said, “Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her.” She had some kin
140 in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of
old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the
two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral.

And as soon as the old people said, “Poor Emily,” the whispering began. “Do
you suppose it’s really so?” they said to one another. “Of course it is. What else
could . . .” This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind
jalousies⁶ closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-
clop of the matched team passed: “Poor Emily.”

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
150 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 eye-sockets as you
imagine a lighthouse-keeper’s face ought to look. “I want some poison,” she said.

imperviousness
(ɪm-pûr'vê-əs-nəs) *n.* an
inability to be affected
or disturbed

6. **jalousies** (jäl'ə-sēz): blinds or shutters containing overlapping slats that can be opened or closed.



“Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I’d recom—”

“I want the best you have. I don’t care what kind.”

160 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.”

The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. “Why, of course,” the druggist said. “If that’s what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for.”

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The
170 Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn’t come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: “For rats.” **G**

IV

So the next day we all said, “She will kill herself”; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, “She will marry him.” Then we said, “She will persuade him yet,” because Homer himself had remarked—he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks’ Club—that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, “Poor Emily” behind the jealousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat
180 cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove.

Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people. The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister—Miss Emily’s people were Episcopal—to call upon her. He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again. The next Sunday they again drove about the streets, and the following day the minister’s wife wrote to Miss Emily’s relations in Alabama.

So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler’s and ordered a man’s
190 toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men’s clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, “They are married.” We were really glad. We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been.

So we were not surprised when Homer Barron—the streets had been finished some time since—was gone. We were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off,⁷ but we believed that he had gone on to prepare for Miss Emily’s coming, or to give her a chance to get rid of the cousins. (By that time it was a **cabal**, and we were all Miss Emily’s allies to help circumvent the cousins.)

G ANALYZE SEQUENCE

Reread lines 154–172.

What does this exchange indicate about Emily’s character? What

foreshadowing do you sense in her refusal to comply with the law?

cabal (kə-bäl’) *n.* a group united in a secret plot

7. **blowing-off:** here, a celebration.

Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along,
200 within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro
man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening.

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some
time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door
remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as
the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months
she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too;
as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times
had been too virulent and too furious to die.

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning
210 gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it attained an even
pepper-and-salt iron-gray, when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at
seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man.

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or
seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-
painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms, where the
daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to
her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church
on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate. Meanwhile her
taxes had been remitted.

220 Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town,
and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children
to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies'
magazines. The front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good.
When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let them
fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would
not listen to them.

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped,
going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice,
which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and
230 then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows—she had evidently shut
up the top floor of the house—like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking
or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation
to generation—dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse. **H**

And so she died. Fell ill in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a
doddering Negro man to wait on her. We did not even know she was sick; we had
long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro. He talked to
no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if
from disuse.

240 She died in one of the downstairs rooms, in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain,
her gray head propped on a pillow yellow and moldy with age and lack of sunlight.

H POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 227–233.

When the narrator says that “we sent her a tax notice” and “we would see her in one of the downstairs windows,” whom does “we” indicate? And how does this pronoun help to convey the story's point of view? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

V

The Negro met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again.

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier⁸ and the ladies sibilant and macabre; 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
250 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.

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.

The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall⁹ as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded
260 rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks.

The man himself lay in the bed.

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. 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
270 him.¹⁰ 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 bidding dust.

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair. 🌀 1



TEKS 2B

1 MOOD

This story ends with a grotesque discovery, but from page one the author's dark, gothic **mood** has prepared us for a creepy revelation in the end. With "A Rose for Emily" and other stories and novels, Faulkner invented a unique vision of the South—a **mythic narrative** weighed down by gloom and peopled by deeply flawed characters. Faulkner's mythic South has influenced Southern fiction ever since—from the short stories of Flannery O'Connor to more recent fiction by writers such as Alan Gurganus and Edward P. Jones. What makes a story like "A Rose for Emily" so compelling? Explain your answer.

8. **bier**: coffin along with its stand.

9. **acrid pall**: bitter-smelling gloom.

10. **cuckolded him**: made his wife or lover unfaithful to him.



READING 5A Evaluate how different literary elements shape the author's portrayal of the plot and setting in works of fiction. **5C** Analyze the impact of narration when the narrator's point of view shifts from one character to another.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why was it difficult for Emily to meet suitable men in her youth?
2. **Clarify** What happened to Homer Barron?
3. **Clarify** What does the condition of the upstairs room in the Grierson house and the iron-gray hair on the pillow indicate?

Literary Analysis

4. **Make Inferences** Use clues in the story to infer Emily's **motivation** for murdering Homer. Why was the relationship considered a "disgrace" and a "bad example to the young people"? What were Homer's intentions?
5. **Examine Methods of Characterization** Explain how Faulkner uses physical descriptions of Miss Emily, stories of her conflicts with the townspeople, and the revelation of the story's final paragraph to characterize his protagonist. Support your answer with evidence from the story.
6. **Analyze Mood** How would you describe the overall mood of "A Rose for Emily"? Skim the story, identifying at least three passages that create an especially strong **atmosphere** for the reader. Explain which literary elements contribute to each passage's mood.
7. **Analyze Point of View** What point of view does Faulkner use to narrate "A Rose for Emily"? Explain how this point of view contributes to the characterization of Miss Emily's town and how it compares to Faulkner's modernist experiments with point of view.
8. **Evaluate Sequence** Examine the chart you filled in as you read. How does the order in which the story's major events occur differ from the order in which the narrator presents them? Consider the effect created by Faulkner's manipulation of the story's sequence. What would the story lose if it were told in strict chronological order?

Literary Criticism

9. **Historical Context** Faulkner lived, as one critic put it, "with one foot deep in the traditions of the Old South and the other poised for the possibilities of a modern era." What are some of the indications that this story was written in another time? Citing evidence, describe how Faulkner's story reflects an American society different from our own.

What makes your **SKIN CRAWL?**

How does the last sentence of "A Rose for Emily" confirm the story's creepy atmosphere? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Chose the word that is not related in meaning to the other words.

1. (a) overconfidence, (b) temerity, (c) dismay, (d) brashness
2. (a) contempt, (b) cabal, (c) disdain, (d) scorn
3. (a) endurance, (b) imperviousness, (c) decency, (d) resistance
4. (a) tableau, (b) mesa, (c) plateau, (d) upland

WORD LIST

cabal
imperviousness
tableau
temerity

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• conclude • criteria • despite • justify • maintain

Faulkner **concludes** “A Rose for Emily” by solving the mystery of his main character. What are your **criteria** for a successful ending? Develop your answer in a short paragraph. Use at least three Academic Vocabulary words in your response.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ETYMOLOGIES

Many English words have intriguing histories, or **etymologies**. The vocabulary word *cabal*, for instance, can be traced back to *kabbala*, the name of an ancient Jewish mystical belief system. We can often develop a better understanding of the current meaning of a word by learning about its history. Standard dictionaries, we all as etymological dictionaries, are excellent sources of word histories. A typical word history may show the history of the word in the English language (its form in Middle English, for example) as well as its relationship to words from other Germanic languages or to the Romance languages.

PRACTICE Using a standard dictionary, an etymological dictionary, or the Internet, research the histories of the following words. Look for the history of the word in the English language as well as its relationship to words in other contemporary languages (German, Dutch, Italian, French, etc.) and in Latin.

1. trivial
2. decimate
3. abacus
4. aardvark
5. quarantine
6. malaria
7. ketchup
8. dexterity



READING 1E Use general and specialized dictionaries and histories of language (printed or electronic) as needed.

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Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Choose Effective Point of View

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 1070. Part of what makes “A Rose for Emily” so interesting is the first-person-plural point of view—using *we* and related **pronouns** to tell the story. Usually, the first-person point of view is singular, an *I* who acts as both narrator and character. Faulkner’s use of the plural creates a curious mixture of intimacy and anonymity. That is, the voice behind the *we* sounds personal, but readers don’t know exactly who the voice is:

We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler’s and ordered a man’s toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men’s clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, “They are married.” We were really glad. (lines 189–192)

This kind of narrator has the effect of making the town appear as a complete entity with a personality and opinions all its own.

PRACTICE Try using the first-person-plural point of view to create a narrative of your own. Choose a group—a family, for example, or a sports team—and describe, in a paragraph, an event or experience from their point of view. Be sure to use the correct pronouns—*we, us, our, ours*—in your narrative.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of “A Rose for Emily” by responding to the prompt below. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your essay.

WRITING PROMPT

CONSTRUCT A PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT Do you think the townspeople in “A Rose for Emily” bear any responsibility for what becomes of Emily? Why did they initially think she would use the arsenic to kill herself—and what did they seemingly think of this decision? What if they had stopped the minister’s wife from writing to her cousins? Why didn’t they think to investigate Homer Barron’s disappearance?

Review the story, especially sections III and IV, to clarify your opinion and gather evidence. Then write a **three-to-five-paragraph argument** to try to convince someone else.

REVISING TIPS

- Share your essay with a peer who has supported a contrasting position.
- Ask your peer to identify unconvincing ideas and passages in your essay.
- Strengthen your reasoning and find additional evidence to support your position.



WRITING 16 Write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes of a specific audience on specific issues. **ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 17** Understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when writing.

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