

Marshall Barrack
Structuralism Sandbox Essay

“A Rose for Emily” By Faulkner
“The Oval Portrait” By Poe

These two famous stories have more in common than one may think. From the view of the modern structuralist, it may pay dividends to break these stories down from the ground floor. When comparing the structure, themes, and many different complex functions of these stories, it is important to know that structuralism deals with the culture and dissection of the stories by using methods, techniques, and approaches of linguistics. Many different literary devices play an imperative role in structuralism that complicates how the story is perceived, read, and analyzed.

One example of structuralism in both of these stories is how the point of view comes across. They were both very well written and I like the non-linear scheme in “A Rose for Emily” because it throws the reader off and makes you ask questions. And I feel like that is what structuralism is supposed to do in a way. The point of view tells us a lot of the underlying structures and interrelated systems that work throughout the story. A close reading of this story suggests that the point of view is from the outsiders looking in that clashes with the townspeople adaptation of the word “we.” Being on the outside looking in helps us connect with this structural system that complies a particular sequence that portrays the reality of Emily and the community. For example, they say it is “our town” and it is like the town itself is telling the story. And this small town takes on sort of collective consciousness that narrates the story to help gage the theme and underlying persona of the story. This narrative creates a sense of suspense that again, shoes how impactful structuralism can be toward just a small aspect of a story.

Based on structuralism this story conveys the messages isolation vs. community and freedom vs. oppression. This in other words, is kind of like the first binary opposition that the whole story builds upon. These themes, characters, tone, and other literary devices all collectively serve one goal to the story. And that is to fulfill the desired system of structuralism.

I believe after close reading that there are 3 main binary oppositions in “A Rose for Emily.” These are all connected into a system that is deployed within the text to keep the reader guessing and to make them create assumptions. Emily struggles with keeping up with modern day changes and is stuck in the old-time society. She falls captive of this new movement and becomes dehumanized because of self—doubt and pity. Like I already stated, all of these systems and linear oppositions have correlate off the other and the more systems you have the more complex a story you have because it just goes deeper and deeper. Another thing I want to talk about is the theme of love vs. hate within “A Rose for Emily.” My group talked about this is in class and we mentioned that in both stories there is love and hate for the primary father figures. Emily’s husband was abusive and in “The Oval Portrait” the husband physically and mentally drained her to the point of no return. Emily was a victim of her father, the old system, and was stripped of her freedom.

This is what I jotted down in class for notes on structuralism.

Transformation, time sequence, compare/contrast, binary oppositions, wholeness, transformation