

*A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner is a story in which the audience is immersed into the history of a woman who has died, through the eyes of the townspeople. The woman, Emily Grierson, “had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town.” Miss Emily was essentially a specimen that the townspeople observed but due to their perspective, they never truly know what happened in her life. The story is told using voyeuristic narrative by using a structure of loss to lead up to the main character taking her fate into her own hands to prevent another loss. Faulkner uses chronological order, distance of the narrator, and perspective to accentuate the structure.

Faulkner’s story has a sense of chronology although it does not have the traditional beginning to end narrative. The story begins with Miss Emily’s death, rather than at the beginning of her life or even when she came of age. The narrator then gives a flashback to when she was alive and begins to show her mental instability. When her father died, “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.” The loss of her father, the only man in her life who showed her love and loyalty, was a breaking point. The next loss Emily encountered was also a man- “her sweetheart--the one we believed would marry her,” who is said to have abandoned her, with no other detail. With two losses in such short time, Emily took fate into her own hands when the next man came into her life. The townspeople stated, “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." But that was the last they saw or heard of the man. The audience finds out Emily prevented herself from another loss by

killing him, so that he would be with her forever, as well as preserve her reputation as a wedded woman and not a “spinster”. The townspeople find out that Emily had poisoned her new husband years later, when Emily dies, because they were unaware of the warning signs.

The structure of the story is emphasized through the distance between Emily, the narrator, and the audience. Through distance, it is unclear what occurs within Emily’s house, so the townspeople create the story based on their perceptions. It is continuously mentioned that when they would not see Emily for some time, she stayed in her house. Only one person left and entered the house, “the Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed.” The audience is subject to the perspective of the narrator, which is homogenization of the townspeople as one. Due to this, the audience only knows what the narrator discloses, and no one knows Emily’s perspective. However, everyone in the town knew of Miss Emily, “she passed from generation to generation--dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.” Her life is the final loss and she has to die for the story to begin.

Faulkner emphasizes loss throughout *A Rose for Emily*. The most specific losses are people’s deaths. Emily loses every man that she loves which causes a mental instability. Due to this, she creates a fantasy of a marriage with a man, but kills him so that he can never leave.