A Rose For Emily 6 Essay, Research Paper

A Rose, the Universal Symbol of Love

In William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily,” Miss Emily Grierson is a lonely old woman, living a life void of all love and affection; although the rose only directly appears in the title, the rose surfaces throughout the story as a symbol. In contemporary times, the rose also symbolizes emotions like love and friendship. The rose symbolizes dreams of romances and lovers. These dreams belong to women, who like Emily Grierson, have yet to experience true love for themselves.

Throughout the life of Emily Grierson, she remains locked up, never experiencing love from anyone but her father. She lives a life of loneliness, left only to dream of the love missing from her life. The rose from the title symbolizes this absent love. It symbolizes the roses and flowers that Emily never received, the lovers that overlooked her.

The domineering attitude of Emily’s father keeps her to himself, inside the house, and alone until his death. In his own way, Emily’s father shows her how to love. Through a forced obligation to love only him, as he drives off young male callers, he teaches his daughter lessons of love. It is this dysfunctional love that resurfaces later, because it is the only way Emily knows how to love.

When Homer Baron, a construction worker, comes into Emily’s life he sheds hope into her life. He offers Emily a chance to feel love and to receive the affection she has previously only dreamed of. Together they take Sunday carriage rides, and for awhile, the town’s people seem to think that Emily will finally wed. It appears to them that Emily has finally found her rose.

Emily then sets out to fulfill the ultimate form of the rose dream, that of marriage. She purchases “a man’s toilet set in silver, with the letters H.B. on each piece” and “a complete outfit of men’s clothing, including a nightshirt”. However, Homer disappears when his work is through, leaving Emily once again without a rose. Within a couple of

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weeks Homer, is seen entering Emily’s house late at night. Emily realizes that Homer has no plans to stay, so she demonstrates her love the only way she knows how, by killing him. In her own way, she forces Homer to love her and to stay with her. In doing so, Emily’s rose wilts forever.

Following Emily’s death, the townspeople enter her bedroom to find a shocking sight. The room appears “decked and furnished as for a bridal”. A rose color drapes over the room, “upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights”. The wilted image of the rose permeates the room, symbolizing the tarnished love between Emily and Homer. Unfortunately, the love that Emily knew proves impermanent. The rose, and the love it symbolizes, die along with Homer. This love disappears forever as Homer enters the “long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love”.

Today, a rose can symbolize many emotions, from passionate love and true friendship to sympathy and regret. As in “A Rose for Emily,” not all roses are the same. Only roses of true love last forever. The wilted roses of forced and obligated love, like Emily’s, cannot stand the tests of time, and eventually die. In life today, roses of all types exists, and are not always what they first appear to be.

Like Emily, contemporary women also dream of receiving flowers, usually roses. In doing so, they dream of the romances and loves from their past, as well as those yet to come. The meaning of the rose crosses generations, appearing in stories written yesterday, as well as fairy tales from centuries ago. The rose bridges language barriers and spans continents. The rose is the true universal symbol of love.