William Faulkner 2 Essay, Research Paper

William Faulkner

William Faulkner is one of America s most talked about writers and his work should be included in any literary canon for several reasons. After reading a few of his short stories, it becomes clear that Faulkner s works have uniqueness to them. One of the qualities that make William Faulkner s writings different is his close connection with the South. Gwendolyn Charbnier states, Besides the sociological factors that influence Faulkner s work, biographical factors are of great importance (20). Faulkner s magnificent imagination led him to create a fictional Mississippi county named Yoknapatawpha, which includes every detail from square mileage of the county to the break down of the county population by race. Faulkner s work also includes stories from the past and present. David Minter says, His works take us into regions and spaces we can never directly know, and also back in the time to worlds lost before we were born (Preface X). Of course, Faulkner s personal life has added a certain amount of excitement to his audiences. Faulkner s stories are known to reflect experiences from his own familiar life. William Faulkner should be mentioned along with any collection of classic authors because of his remarkable use of the past and present, as well as for his meticulous detail and comprehensive knowledge of the South in his writings.

William Faulkner s background is a very important detail that will help his readers understand the psychological implications of what he wrote and to appreciate his work. William Faulkner was born in New Albany, Mississippi, on September 25, 1897. His parents were Murry and Maud Faulkner. He married Estelle Franklin in 1929. They had two children together, both daughters. The first daughter was named Alabama, and she died nine days after her birth. Jill, the second daughter, outlived her father. William Faulkner died July 6, 1962 at the age of 64. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letter in 1948 and won the Nobel Prize for Literature two years later in 1950. Although William Faulkner s life had the same chronological events as the average person, his life was far more complex an interesting than that of the average person. Faulkner tried to keep his personal life a secret, but he was woefully unsuccessful. Among many of Faulkner s personal problems was the fact that he suffered from alcoholism. Gwendoly Chabrier is quoted as saying, The marriage of Estelle and Faulkner was fraught with one problem that seemed to supersede all others Alcoholism (32). To add even more problems, Faulkner had more than extramarital affair. One of the affairs was with his own stepdaughter. Gwendolyn Chabrier states that, Faulkner s generally disharmonious family life surfaces in while families populating his work. Their relationships are generally destructive and bear correspondence to the author s own personal and family life where there was lack of personal comprehension one for the other between spouses (30). In his work, he wrote about subjects that were extremely controversial not only for his time, but even for today. Leslie A. Fiedler admits, His concern with sex at it s most lurid, his monotonously nymphomaniac women, his lovers of beast, his rapists and dreamers of incest, put off the ordinary reader, who tends to prefer his pornography pure (387). Faulkner s controversial writing and personal life make his writing very interesting for people to read. Faulkner did not always follow the rules for his life or characteristics, but in general he wrote about family and the traditions of the South.

It is in the story A Rose for Emily that William Faulkner writes about a Southern aristocratic woman named Miss Emily. The story begins with the death of Miss Emily. The whole town turns out to attend the funeral of the fallen monument (26), as described in the story. At this point, it is unclear who is actually telling the story about Miss Emily. Ray B. West believes that [w]hen, as in A Rose for Emily , the world depicted is a confusion between the past and present, the atmosphere is one o distortion-of unreality (192). The narrator recounts different stories about Miss Emily. The stories about Miss Emily are told out of order, as if more than one person is describing the events that have occurred to Miss Emily. West insists that Foreshadowing is often accomplished through atmosphere, and in this case [ A Rose for Emily ] the atmosphere prepares us for Emily s unnatural act at the end of the story (193). These effects lead the audience to learn about the many bizarre episodes that occur between Miss Emily and the community.

Miss Emily Grierson was a beautiful young woman who had no equal because her family was from the old South. People in our town believed that the Grierson s held themselves a little too high for what they really were (29). Miss Emily s father drives away any suitor because of their standing in the community as the only Southern aristocratic family. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such (29). It is when Miss Emily s father dies that all of the curiosity arises between her and the community. The community is interested to know what will happen next to Miss Emily. Terry Heller proposes that Emily, as impoverished aristocracy, is somewhat like that former slaves: she becomes duty, obligation, and care (305). There is a concern about the taxes and about her northern Yankee lover, Homer Barron. West believes, Here the author seems to be commenting upon the complex relationship between the Southerner and his past and between the Southerner of the present and the Yankee from the North (193). When her cousin comes to visit, her lover disappears. The community and Miss Emily seem annoyed by her cousin s visit. It is only after her cousins leave that a terrible smell around her house comes to the community s attention. Each one of these situations leaves the community in an awkward position because they realize they are not equal to Miss Emily because of her Southern aristocratic standing. In the end, the community is left with many unanswered questions about the way that Miss Emily really lived her life.

There are many reasons why William Faulkner s works are worthy of being included in any collection of great authors. The five differentiating characteristics of literature are creative or visionary, specific forms, culturally and historically based, meant to provide enjoyment, and open to interpretation and intellectual challenge. William Faulkner s writing is a perfect example of what literature is meant to be like because it holds each on of the characteristics to be true. William Faulkner is known for his ability to write about the old South. Leslie A. Fiedler states that Faulkner [is] primarily a historian of Southern culture, or a canny technician whose evocations of terror are secondary to Jamesian experiments with point of view (384). William Faulkner s writings are unique compared to other writers because of the way that Faulkner presents the South in comparison from past to present and his ability to make the reader wonder about the point of view. Faulkner s writings are enjoyable and open the reader up to a world of interpretation and intellectual challenge. All of the qualities make William Faulkner s stories literature. However, it is how these qualities are shown to the reader that make William Faulkner fit to be included within any literary canon.