**COLLEGE: CSS**

**DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH**

**COURSE: THTE SHORT STORY**

**AUTHOR: TILAHUN B**

**STUDENTS: 2ND YEAR, 2ND SEM**

DEBARK UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

*A* HANDOUT FOR THE COURSE

***The short story*** ***(EnLa2062)***

*Compiled by: T.B.*

April. 2020

**Table of Contents pages**

**Unit One:** The concept, Origin, Development and Characteristics of the Short Story……….. 3

**Unit Two**: Elements and Techniques of the Short Story............................................................ 8

2.1. Character and Characterization ………………………….…………………………8

2.2. Plot ……………………………………………………………………………..….9

* 1. Setting........................................................................................................................11
  2. Theme …………………………………………………………………..…………12
  3. Point of view ………………………………………………………………………12

**Unit Three: Practical Aspects: Analyzing Short Stories**…………………………...….……..17

*A Rose for Emily* (William Faulkner) ………………………….……………………....17

*The Story of an Hour* (Kate Chopin) ………………………………--.….………….…33

**References**

**UNIT ONE: The Concept, Origin, Development and Characteristics of the Short Story**

* ***Concept/Definition***

A short story is *a brief work of prose fiction*, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the *novel* are applicable to the short story as well — like the novel, it organizes the action, thought, and dialogue of its characters into the artful pattern of a plot.

And as in the novel, the plot form may be comic, tragic, romantic, or satiric; the story is presented to us from one of many available *points of view;* and it may be written in the mode of fantasy, realism, or naturalism.

Some short stories (**stories of incident**) focus on the course and outcome of the events, as in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Gold Bug* (1843) and in other tales of detection, in many of the stories of O. Henry (1862-1910), and in the stock but sometimes well-contrived western and adventure stories in popular magazines. "**Stories of character**" focus instead on the state of mind and motivation, or on the psychological and moral qualities, of the protagonists.

In some of the stories of character by Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), the Russian master of the form, nothing more happens than an encounter and conversation between two people. And Ernest Hemingway's classic "*A Clean, Well- Lighted Place*" consists only of a brief conversation between two waiters about an old man who each day gets drunk and stays on in the café until it closes, followed by a brief meditation on the part of one of the waiters. In some stories there is a balance of interest between external action and character. Hemingway's "*The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"* is as violent in its packed events as any sensational adventure tales, but every particular of the action and dialogue is contrived to test and reveal, with a surprising set of *reversals,* the moral quality of the characters.

* ***The novel and the short story***

Though they have some similarities as mentioned above, the short story differs from the novel in its "magnitude," and this limitation of length imposes differences both in the effects that the story can achieve and in the choice, elaboration, and management of the elements to achieve those effects. *A crucial feature commonly identified with the short story is, therefore, its impression of unity since it can be read—in contrast to the novel—in one sitting without interruption. Due to restrictions of length, the plot of the short story has to be highly selective, entailing an* *idiosyncratic(individual, characteristic, personal, distinctive) temporal dimension that usually focuses on one central moment of action*. The slow and gradual build-up of suspense in the novel must be accelerated in the short story by means of specific techniques. *The action of the short story therefore often commences close to the climax (in medias res—“the middle of the matter”),* reconstructing the preceding context and plot development through flashbacks. Focusing on one main figure or location, the setting and the characters generally receive less detailed and careful depiction than in the novel. In contrast to the novel’s generally descriptive style, the short story, for the simple reason of limited length, has to be more suggestive**.**

While the novel experiments with various narrative perspectives, the short story usually chooses one particular point of view, relating the action through the eyes of one particular figure or narrator (klare: 12-13). *Generally, the short story, because of its magnitude, usually deals with only a few characters. It is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. The form encourages economy of setting, concise narrative, and the omission of a complex plot; character is disclosed in action and dramatic encounter but is seldom fully developed. Despite its relatively limited scope, though, a short story is often judged by its ability to provide a “complete” or satisfying treatment of its characters and subject.*

Edgar Allan Poe, who is sometimes called the originator of the short story as an established genre, was at any rate its first critical theorist. He defined what he called "the prose tale" as *a narrative which can be read at one sitting of from half an hour to two hours*, *and is limited to "a certain unique or single effect" to which every detail is subordinate* .

Poe's comment applies to many short stories, and points to the economy of management which the tightness of the form always imposes in some degree.

We can say that, by and large, the short story writer introduces a very limited number of persons, cannot afford the space for the leisurely analysis and sustained development of character, and cannot undertake to develop as dense and detailed a social milieu as does the novelist. The author often begins the story close to, or even on the verge of, the climax, minimizes both prior exposition and the details of the setting*,* keeps the complications down, and clears up the denouement quickly—sometimes in a few sentences. The central incident is often selected to manifest as much as possible of the protagonist's life and character, and the details are devised to carry maximum import for the development of the plot. This spareness in the narrative often gives the artistry in a good short story higher visibility than the artistry in the more capacious and loosely structured novel.

Many distinguished short stories depart from this paradigm in various ways, however. It must be remembered that the name covers a great diversity of prose fiction, all the way from the **short short story,** which is a slightly elaborated anecdote of perhaps five hundred words, to such long and complex forms as Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* (c. 1890), Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and Thomas Mann's *Mano and the Magician* (1930). In such works, the status of middle length betweenthe tautness of the short story and the expansiveness of the novel is sometimesindicated by the name **novelette,** or *novella.* This form has been especiallyexploited in Germany (where it is called the **Novelle)** after it wasintroduced by Goethe in 1795 and carried on by Heinrich von Kleist andmany other writers; the genre has also been the subject of special critical attentionby German theorists. The short narrative, in both verse and prose, is one of the oldest and mostwidespread of literary forms. Some of the narrative types which precededthe modern short storyare the *fable,* the *exemplum,* the *folktale,* the *fabliau,* and the *parable.* Early in its history, theredeveloped the device of the **frame-story:** a preliminary narrative withinwhich one or more of the characters proceeds to tell a series of short narratives. This device was widespread in the oral and written literature of the East and Middle East, as in the collection of stories called *The Arabian Nights,* and was used by a number of other writers, including Boccaccio for his prose *Decameron* (1353) and by Chaucer for his versified *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387). In the latter instance, Chaucer developed the frame-story of the journey, dialogue, and interactions of the Canterbury pilgrims to such a degree that the frame itself approximated the form of an organized plot. Within Chaucer's frame-plot, each story constitutes a complete and rounded narrative, yet functions also both as a means of characterizing the teller and as a vehicle for the quarrels and topics of argument en route. In its more recent forms, the frame-story may enclose either a single narrative or a sequence of narratives.

The form of prose narrative which approximates the present concept of the short story was developed, beginning in the early nineteenth century, in order to satisfy the need for short fiction by the many **magazines** (periodical collections of diverse materials, including essays, reviews, verses, and prose stories) that were inaugurated at that time. Among the early practitioners of the short story were Washington Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe in America; Sir Walter Scott and Mary Shelley in England; E. T. A. Hoffmann in Germany; Balzac in France; and Gogol, Pushkin, and Turgenev in Russia. Since then, almost all the major novelists in all the European languages have also written notable short stories. The form has flourished especially in America; Frank O'Connor has called it "the national art form," and its American masters include (in addition to the writers mentioned above) Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, John O'Hara, J. F. Powers, John Cheever, and J. D. Salinger. (Abrams: 287).

* ***Origin and background***

As with the novel, the roots of the short story lie in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Story, myth, and fairy tales relate to the oldest types of textual manifestations- “texts” which were primarily orally transmitted. The term “tale” (from “to tell”), like the German “Sage” (from “sagen” “to speak”), reflects this oral dimension inherent in short fiction. Even the Bible includes stories whose structures and narrative patterns resemble modern short stories.

Indirect precursors of the short story are medieval and early modern narrative cycles. The Arabian *Thousand and One Nights,* compiled in the fourteenth and subsequent centuries, Giovanni Boccaccio’s (1313–75) Italian *Decameron* (1349–51), and Geoffrey Chaucer’s (*c.* 1343–1400) *Canterbury Tales* (*c.* 1387) anticipate important features of modern short fiction. These cycles of tales are characterized by a frame narrative (as mentioned somewhere above).

*The short story emerged as a more or less independent text type at the end of the eighteenth* *century*, parallel to the development of the novel and the newspaper…While the novel has always attracted the interest of literary theorists, the short story has never actually achieved the status held by book-length fiction. The short story, however, surfaces in comparative definitions of other prose genres such as the novel or its shorter variants, the novella and novelette.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the earliest recorded reference to the term ‘short story’ to 1877….. During the last years of the nineteenth century, there was much debate and confusion surrounding the nature of the short story….. For many writers of the period, ‘tale’ and ‘story’ were used interchangeably, and no clear distinctions were made except by the editors of periodicals that encouraged, and thrived upon, the late nineteenth century boom in short stories. Even though the term ‘short story’ implies a plotted narrative, written as opposed to recited, writers tended to regard themselves as producing the modern-day equivalent of the folktale……. To understand the artistic appeal of the short story, it is important to trace, first of all, the prehistory of the form, for that was the tradition in which many early short story writers felt they were working. The tale can be traced back to the earliest surviving narrative, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written in the third millennium BCE. The tale, along with its five sub-genres (parable andfable, the Creation myth, novella, fairy tale and art-tale) is considered to be one of the major ancestors (precursors) of the modern short story(Paul March Russell: 1-3).

* ***The short story as a genre***

Before the 19th century, the short story was not generally regarded as a distinct literary form. But although in this sense it may seem to be a uniquely modern genre, the fact is that short prose fiction is nearly as old as language itself. Throughout history humankind has enjoyed various types of brief narratives like jests, anecdotes, studied digressions, short allegorical romances, moralizing fairy tales, short myths, and abbreviated historical legends. None of these constitutes a short story as the 19th and 20th centuries have defined the term, but they do make up a large part of the milieu from which the modern short story emerged.

As a genre, the short story has received relatively little critical attention, and the most valuable studies of the form that exist are often limited by region or era. One recent attempt to account for the genre has been offered by the Irish short story writer Frank O'Connor, who suggests that stories are a means for “submerged population groups” to address a dominating community. Most other theoretical discussions, however, are predicated in one way or another on Edgar Allan Poe's thesis that stories must have a compact, unified effect.

The prevalence in the 19th century of two words, “sketch” and “tale”, affords one way of looking at the genre. These two terms establish the polarities of the milieu out of which the modern short story grew. The tale is much older than the sketch. Basically, the tale is a manifestation of a culture's unaging desire to name and conceptualize its place in the cosmos. It provides a culture's narrative framework for such things as its vision of itself and its homeland or for expressing its conception of its ancestors and its gods. Usually filled with cryptic and uniquely deployed motifs, personages, and symbols, tales are frequently fully understood only by members of the particular culture to which they belong. Simply, tales are intracultural. Seldom created to address an outside culture, a tale is a medium through which a culture speaks to itself and thus perpetuates its own values and stabilizes its own identity. The sketch, by contrast, is intercultural, depicting some phenomenon of one culture for the benefit or pleasure of a second culture. Factual and journalistic, in essence the sketch is generally more analytic or descriptive and less narrative or dramatic than the tale. Moreover, the sketch by nature is *suggestive*, incomplete; the tale is often *hyperbolic*, overstated.

Whether or not one sees the modern short story as a fusion of sketch and tale, it is hardly disputable that today the short story is a distinct and autonomous, though still developing, genre.

The evolution of the short story first began before man could write. To aid himself in constructing and memorizing tales, the early storyteller often relied on stock phrases, fixed rhythms, and rhyme. Consequently, many of the oldest narratives in the world, such as the famous Babylonian tale, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. 2000 BC), are in verse.

The modern short story emerged almost simultaneously in Germany, the United States, France, and Russia. In Germany there had been relatively little difference between the stories of the late 18th century and those in the older tradition of Boccaccio. In 1795 Goethe contributed a set of stories to Schiller's journal, *Die Horen*, that were obviously created with the *Decameron* in mind.

Significantly, Goethe did not call them “short stories” (*Novellen*) although the term was available to him. Rather, he thought of them as “entertainments” for German travellers.

But a new type of short fiction was near at hand—a type that accepted some of the realistic properties of popular journalism. In 1827, 32 years after publishing his own “entertainments”, Goethe commented on the difference between the newly emergent story and the older kind. “What is a short story?” he asked, “but an event which, though unheard of, has occurred?” (Masoud Abadi: 122-127).

**UNIT TWO: ELEMENTS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE SHORT STORY**

* 1. **Character(s)**

Characters are human beings, and/or animals acting as human beings in a fictional story and being so they are given the natures, qualities, feelings, etc the real human beings possess, and like the real people in the real world, the people in a fictional work (the short story in our case) are different in their temperament, act, world view, etc. Based on these and other parameters, characters can be divided into two categories- *Flat* and *Round*. Flat characters are characters with shallow, easily identifiable, unchanging, stubborn, etc nature or behavior, but round characters are characters with dynamic, complex, unpredictable, etc temperament.

**Characters**, as said above, are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the **dialogu**e, and from what they do—the **action.** The grounds in the characters' temperament, desires, and moral nature for their speech and actions are called their **motivation.** A character may remain essentially "stable," or unchanged in outlook and disposition, from beginning to end of a work) or may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual process (in case of novels) of development or as the result of a crisis.

E. M. Forster, British novelist and critic, introduced popular new terms for an old distinction by discriminating between flat and round characters. A **flat character** (also called a **type,** or "two-dimensional"), Forster says, is built around "a single idea or quality" and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be fairly adequately described in a single phrase or sentence. A **round character,** on the other hand**,** is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us (Abrams: 32-34).

In another dimension, characters can be divided as major and minor, protagonist and antagonist, etc. I. e., the chief character in a plot, on whom our interest centers, is called the **protagonist** (or alternatively, the **hero** or **heroine),** and if the plot is such that he or she is pitted against an important opponent, that character is called the **antagonist** (Abrams: 225).

* 1. **Plot**

Plotis the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative. An ideal traditional plot line encompasses the following four sequential levels:

*Exposition—complication—climax or turning point— resolution*

In the *exposition* the reader or audience meets the characters, and any past events which help us to understand the situation are explained. In this opening section the author also brings out dominant ideas or aspects of character, announcing the themes of the text. Usually the opening section is bare of action: the reader is getting to know the characters and the situation, so the text often opens during a stable pause before much action can begin. Here you will often find long speeches (but in the case of the short story long speech and gradual development are uncommon) which explain what happened before the story started, or the characters discussing important themes before the action begins.

As soon as we know enough about the situation and characters, the writer introduces the *complication*: problems or mysteries which will have to be solved, tests for the characters, action and movement. In this section the writer makes the plot happen. The complications of the plot explore the complex nature of the characters and the big issues of the text, and put themes and characters under pressure to force them to an outcome.

In the *resolution*, something drastic finally happens, something which solves problems and mysteries, and either happily or disastrously clears up the complications of the plot. In this last section you can expect the characters to die, marry, or come to terms with their fate (Nicholas Marsh, *How to Begin Studying English Literature*: 42-43)). *Generally, the* ***exposition*** *or presentation of the initial situation is disturbed by a* ***complication*** *or* ***conflict*** *which produces suspense and eventually leads to a climax, crisis, or turning point. The* ***climax*** *is followed by a resolution of the complication (French* ***denouement)****, with which the text usually ends. Most traditional fiction, drama, and film employ this basic plot structure, which is also called linear plot since its different elements follow a chronological order* (Mario Klarer: 15).

The plot (which Aristotle termed the **mythos**) in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects. This description is deceptively simple, because the actions (including verbal discourse as well as physical actions) are performed by particular characters in a work, and are the means by which they exhibit their moral and dispositional qualities. Plot and character are therefore interdependent critical concepts—as Henry James has said, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" Notice also that a plot is distinguishable from the story—that is, a bare synopsis (outline, summary, précis, abridgment) of the temporal order of what happens. When we summarize the story in a literary work, we say that first this happens, then that, then that. . . . It is only when we specify how this is related to that, by causes and motivations, and in what ways all these matters are rendered, ordered, and organized so as to achieve their particular effects, that a synopsis begins to be adequate to the plot.

There are a great variety of plot forms. For example, some plots are designed to achieve tragic effects, and others to achieve the effects of comedy, romance, satire, or of some other *genre.* Each of these types in turn exhibits diverse plot-patterns, and may be represented in the mode either of drama or of narrative, and either in verse or in prose.

Many, but far from all, plots deal with a conflict. In addition to the conflict between individuals, there may be the conflict of a protagonist against fate, or against the circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself; and in some works the chief conflict is between opposing desires or values in the protagonist's own temperament.

As a plot evolves (progresses, develops, changes) it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events and actions and how characters will respond to them. A lack of certainty, on the part of a concerned reader, about what is going to happen, especially to characters with whom the reader has established a bond of sympathy, is known as *suspense*.If what in fact happens violates any expectations we have formed, it is known as *surpris*e.The interplay of suspense and surprise is a prime source of vitality in a traditional plot.

A plot is commonly said to have **unity of action** (or to be "an artistic whole") if it is apprehended by the reader or auditor as a complete and ordered structure of actions, directed toward the intended effect, in which none of the prominent component parts, or **incidents,** is nonfunctional; as Aristotle put this concept, all the parts are "so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoint and dislocate the whole." Aristotle claimed that it does not constitute a unified plot to present a series of episodes which are strung together simply because they happen to a single character (Abrams: 224-227).

* 1. **Setting**

The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs;the setting of a single episode or scene within such a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place (Abrams: 284).

The makeup and behavior of fictional characters depend on their environment quite as much as on the personal dynamic with which their author endows them: indeed, for naturalist writers like Emile Zola, environment is of overriding (dominant, prime, paramount) importance, because they believed it determined character. (Kathleen Kuiper: 8).

Setting being the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative (novel, drama, short story, and poems) takes place, *has four elements*: (1) the actual *geographical location*, its topography, scenery, and such physical arrangements as the location of the windows and doors in a room; (2) the *occupations and daily manner of living* of the characters; (3) the *time or period in which the action takes place*, e.g., epoch in history or season of the year; (4) the *general environment* of the characters, e.g., *religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions through which the people in the* Narrative move (Holman: 423). In short stories, while these elements are partly or wholly available, there may not be detail description of each of them mainly because of its magnitude.

* 1. **Theme**

Theme is the central or dominating idea in a literary work. In nonfiction prose it may be thought of as the general topic of discussion, the subject of the discourse, the thesis. In poetry, fiction and drama, it is the abstract concept which is *made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image* in the work (C. Hugh Holman: 453). And according to Berhanu Mathews, “theme refers to the central idea of a story. Theme can also be regarded as an *author’s insight or general observation about human nature or the human condition that is conveyed through characters, plot and imagery*. We can also talk about the particularity and universality of theme. ***Particularity*** refers to the uniqueness or singularity of a work of fiction. ***Universality,*** on the other hand, refers to the relevance or applicability of a fictional work to large groups of people *across time and place*” (Berhanu Mathews, *Fundamentals of Literature*: 37). Note that theme is not a single word nor is it a proverb; it is the author’s view about human life and human condition and must be written in sentence.

**2.5. Point of view**

If there is a story, it is highly likely that there is a story teller, and the teller (narrator) may be part of the story or he may be an outsider (observer). I.e. ***Point of view*** *is the perspective from which the action in a story is viewed.* Based on the way they see or based on the amount of knowledge they have about the story or the characters in general, and based on whether they are part of the story or not, narrators can be categorized as first person or third person, omniscient or limited (semi-omniscient), internal or external, etc.

***In first person*** narrative the **“I**” of the story is a *participant or observer- the* narrator addresses the reader as I, me, my*…*. ***Second person*** (rarely used) is designed to draw the reader in more closely; it is in effect a novel way of presenting a first-person narration- the narrator addresses the reader as *you*.

***Third person:*** the most traditional form of third-person narrative is that of the omniscient narrator, in which the narrative voice (usually identified with that of the author) is *presumed to know everything* there is to know about the characters and action. This is the technique employed in most traditional prose fiction.

A more limited third-person perspective is that viewed through the consciousness of a particular character in which the story is told from the point of view of one of the characters. Another technique is the *multiple points of view*, which relates the story from the perspective of a number of characters – which is rare in short story, however (Quinn: 325).

In a **third-person narrative,** the **narrator** is someone outside the story proper who refers to all the characters in the story by name, or as "he," "she," "they."

In a **first-person narrative,** the narrator speaks as "I," and is to a greater or lesser degree a participantin the story.

**I. Third-person points of view**

*(1)* The **omniscient point of view.** This is a common term for the many and varied works of fiction written in accord with the *convention* that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents, actions, and events, and has privileged access to the characters' thoughts, feelings, and motives; also that the narrator is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character, and to report (or conceal) their speech, doings, and states of consciousness. Within this mode, the **intrusive narrator** *is one who not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters, and sometimes expresses personal views about human life in general*. Most works are written according to the convention that the omniscient narrator's reports and judgments are to be taken as **authoritative** by the reader, and so serve to establish what counts as the true facts and values within the fictional world. On the other hand, the omniscient narrator may choose to be **unintrusive (non-intrusive)** (alternative terms are **impersonal** or **objective).** More radical instances of the unintrusive narrator, who gives up even the privilege of access to inner feelings and motives, are to be found in a number of Ernest Hemingway's short stories; for example, "The Killers," and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place."

***(2****)* The **limited point of view.** The narrator tells the story in the third person, but stays inside the confines of what is perceived, thought, remembered and felt by a single character (or at most by very few characters) within the story.

**II. First-person points of view**

This mode, insofar as it is consistently carried out, limits the matter of the narrative to what the first-person narrator knows, experiences, infers, or can find out by talking to other characters. We distinguish between the narrative "I" who is only a fortuitous witness and auditor of the matters he relates; or who is a participant, but only a minor or peripheral one, in the story*;* or who is himself or herself the central character in the story

**Ill. Second-person points of view**

In this mode the story gets told solely, or at least primarily, as an address by the narrator to someone he calls by the second-person pronoun "you." This form of narration occurred in occasional passages of traditional fiction, but has been exploited in a sustained way only during the latter part of the twentieth century and then only rarely; the effect is of a virtuoso performance. (Abrams: 231-234).

***Summary***

*A Short Story is a brief, imaginative narrative containing few characters, simple plot, conflict, and suspense which leads to a climax and a swift conclusion. It can be read in one sitting. The common elements of a short story are the following: Plot, Setting, Character, Theme, and Point Of View.*

1. **PLOT**

*It is the chain of events in a story. It consists of 6 main ingredients:*

*Introduction/Exposition, Inciting incident, Rising action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution.*

**INTRODUCTION*:*** *Introduces the reader to the Setting, Basic situation, Characters involved and Narrative Hook (question or statement that grabs the reader’s attention).*

**INCITING INCIDENT:** *it is the first major action in the story that sets the story in motion.*

**RISING ACTION*:*** *Incidents which carry the plot along. It often includes the following: Foreshadowing, Flashback, Conflict, and Suspense*

**FORESHADOWING:** *A technique for hinting at events that may occur later in the plot.*

**FLASHBACK:** *The insertion of an earlier event into the time order of a narrative.*

**CONFLICT:** *It is what prevents the main character from getting what he or she wants.**There are two types of conflicts: Internal and External. INTERNAL CONFLICT is a conflict of a character with him/herself- Person vs. Self. The second type is EXTERNAL CONFLICT which involves Person vs. Person, person vs. Society, person vs. the Environment, person vs. Fate, person vs. Technology, and Person vs. the Supernatural.*

**SUSPENSE:** *The feeling of excitement and curiosity that keeps the reader turning the pages; created by making the readers wonder how the conflict will be resolved.*

**CLIMAX:** *The highest point of interest in the story when the character(s) solves his/her struggles. It is usually the point of highest emotion****.***

**FALLING ACTION:** *The character completes the action of his/her decision*

**THE RESOLUTION:** *The final workings of a story’s conflict. All of the loose ends are tied up (usually), and some stories have a narrative twist- a surprise ending*

1. **SETTING**

*The time (time of day, season, present, past, future) and the location (country, town, buildings, PLUS a description of the surroundings) where the action occurs. Helps to create the mood (The author’s (NOT the mood of the characters) emotional attitude toward the subject matter (i.e. excitement, nostalgia)) and atmosphere (the feeling that the setting evokes (i.e. mysterious, happy, eerie)) of the text.*

1. **CHARACTERs**

*Any personalities who are involved in the plot of the story (people, animals, fantasy characters). Characters are usually less than 6 in a short story. The following are characters categorized as the following:*

**PROTAGONIST**

* *Usually the “good guy” or hero in the story*
* *The main character that we follow in the story*
* *The character that strives to solve the conflict*

**ANTAGONIST**

* *The “bad guy” or villain in the story*
* *Usually creates conflict for the main character*

**SECONDARY CHARACTERS**

* *Other characters who are necessary to moving the plot along, but may not be involved with the central conflict.*

**CHARACTER TRAITS**

*Physical and personality characteristics that are revealed through:*

1. *What the character does 2. What the character says 3. What other characters say or do about the character 4. What the author states directly and 5. What the author infers.*

***4.* THEME**

*The central idea about life that the story highlights; THE MAIN IDEA (universal truths); it is the message the author is conveying.*

**UNIT THREE: PRACTICAL ASPECTS: ANALYZING SHORT STORIES**

Selected short stories for analysis/practice

Read the following short stories and analyze their elements (the first one is done for you)

1. ***A Rose for Emily***

**William Faulkner**

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 man-servant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years. It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with **cupolas1** and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, 2 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 **coquettish3** 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-bemused4** cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

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**.**5** 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 **archaic6** shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy**7** in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment. They called a special meeting of the Board of **Aldermen**.**8** A **deputation9** 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 **motes10** in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished **gilt11** 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 **pallid12** 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.

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?”

“I received a paper, yes,” Miss Emily said.

“Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

“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 **temerity13** to 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.”

The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident **deprecation**.**14** “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?”

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**.**15** 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**16** that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.

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 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**, **17** Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a s**praddled18** 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.

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 alone, and a **paupe**r, **19** 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 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.

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, 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* oblige20**—without calling it *noblesse oblige.* They just said, “Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her.” She had some kin 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 **craned21** silk and satin behind jalousies 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 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.

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

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

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 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.”

**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 jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat 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 **toilet set22** 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**, **23** 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**, **24** and we were all Miss Emily’s allies to help circumvent the cousins.) Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along, 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 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. 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 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**, **25** looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation— dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.

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.

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.

**V**

The Negro met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, **sibilan**t**26** 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 **bie**r**27** and the ladies sibilant and **macabre;28** 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 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 **pall29** as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a **bridal**: **30** upon the valance curtains of faded 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**31** him. 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 biding 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. ((Source: Glencoe Literature, Course 6, p.834 (~~808~~))

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| **1**. *Cupolas* are small, domed structures rising above a roof.  **2**. *Lightsome* means “light and graceful.” *Seventies* refers to the 1870s. **3**. *Coquettish* “flirtatious.”  **4.** *Cedar-bemused* means “lost among the cedar trees” (literally, “confused by cedars”).  **5**. *[remitted . . . perpetuity]* This phrase means that Miss Emily was excused from paying taxes forever after her father’s death. **6.** Here, *archaic* means “old-fashioned.” **7**. *Calligraphy* is an elegant type of handwriting.  **august** well respected; distinguished; prominent **8**. The *Board of Aldermen* is the group formed by members of a city or town council. **9**. A *deputation* is a “a small group that represents a larger one.” 10. *Motes* are particles or specks, as of dust. **11**. *Gilt* means “covered with gold.”  **sluggishly***.* slowly; without strength or energy **12**. *Pallid* means “lacking healthy color” or “pale.”  13. *Temerity* is excessive boldness. **14**. *Diffident deprecation* means “timid disapproval.”  **Obesity** the condition of being extremely fat **15**. *Outbuildings* are separate buildings, such as a woodshed or barn, associated with a main building. **16**. *Locusts* are deciduous trees. Several varieties have thorns and fragrant flowers that hang down in clusters. **17**. A *tableau* is a striking or artistic grouping of people or objects. 18. *Spraddled* means “sprawled” or “spread wide apart.” 19. A *pauper* is a very poor person.  **vindicate** to justify; to prove correct in light of later circumstances  20. The French expression *noblesse oblige* suggests that those of high birth or rank have a responsibility to act kindly and honorably toward others. 21. *Craned* means “stretched.”  *Jalousies* are overlapping, adjustable slats that cover a door or window.  **Imperviousness**the state of being unaffected or undisturbed.  **haughty** *conceited*; arrogant 23. A *blowing-off* is a celebration. 24. A *cabal* is a group united in a secret plot.  25. A *niche* is a recessed area in a wall, sometimes used for displaying a statue.  **circumvent** to get around or to avoid by clever maneuvering . **virulent***.* extremely poisonous or harmful  26. *Sibilant* means “making a hissing sound.” 27. A *bier* is a stand for a coffin.  28. *Macabre* means “gruesome” or “suggesting the horror of death.” 29. An *acrid pall* is a bitter-smelling covering.  30. Here, *bridal* means “wedding.” 31. *Cuckolded* means “betrayed,” in the sense of a husband deceived by an unfaithful wife. |

1. **Plot Summary**

Plot Summary

The story, told in five sections, opens in section one with an unnamed narrator describing the funeral of Miss Emily Grierson. (The narrator always refers to himself in collective pronouns; he is perceived as being the voice of the average citizen of the town of Jefferson.) He notes that while the men attend the funeral out of obligation, the women go primarily because no one has been inside Emily's house for years. The narrator describes what was once a grand house "set on what had once been our most select street." Emily's origins are aristocratic, but both her house and the neighborhood it is in have deteriorated.

The narrator notes that, prior to her death, Emily had been "a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town." This is because Colonel Sartoris, the former mayor of the town, remitted Emily's taxes dating from the death of her father ' 'on into perpetuity." Apparently, Emily's father left her with nothing when he died. Colonel Sartoris invented a story explaining the remittance of Emily's taxes (it is the town's method of paying back a loan to her father) to save her from the embarrassment of accepting charity……………

1. **Characters**

***Homer Barron***

Homer Barron is the Yankee construction foreman who becomes Emily Grierson's first real beau (lover/friend). His relationship with Emily is considered scandalous because he is a Northerner and because it doesn't appear as if they will ever be married. In fact, it is known that he drinks with younger men in the Elks' Club and he has remarked that he is not a marrying man. The lovers ignore the gossip of the town until Emily's two female cousins from Alabama arrive. Homer leaves town for several days until the cousins go back to Alabama. Meanwhile, Emily purchases arsenic, a monogrammed toilet set with the initials H.B., and men's clothing. Homer returns to Jefferson three days after Emily's cousins leave and he is seen entering her home. He is never seen (alive) again. However, what is presumably his corpse is discovered in a ghastly bridal suite on the top floor of the Grierson house after Emily's funeral.

***Druggist***

The druggist sells Emily arsenic while her two female cousins from Alabama are visiting her. Emily just stares at him when he tells her that the law requires her to tell him why she is buying it. He backs down without an answer and writes "for rats" on the box.

***Miss Emily (****See* Emily Grierson)

***Emily's cousins***

Emily's cousins arrive after receiving a letter from the Baptist minister's wife. Apparently, they visit to discourage Emily's relationship with Homer Barron. Homer leaves while they are in town, and then returns after they have been gone for three days. The narrator, speaking for many in the town, hopes that Emily can rid herself of the cousins because they are "... even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been."

***Emily's father***

Although there is only a brief description of Emily's father in section two of the story, he plays an important role in the development of her character.

Certainly Emily learns her genteel ways from him. It is his influence that deprives her of a husband when she is young; the narrator says that the town pictured Emily and her father 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 backflung front door." Emily at first refuses to acknowledge his death. She doesn't allow anyone to remove her father's body; finally, after three days she breaks down and lets someone remove the cadaver. This foreshadows the town's discovery of Homer Barron's decomposed corpse on the top floor in Emily's house after her death.

***Emily Grierson***

Emily Grierson, referred to as Miss Emily throughout the story, is the main character of ' 'A Rose for Emily." An unnamed narrator tells her strange story through a series of flashbacks. She is essentially the town eccentric. The narrator compares her to "an idol in a niche . . . dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse." Emily is born to a proud, aristocratic family sometime during the Civil War; her life in many ways reflects the disintegration of the Old South during the Reconstruction and the early twentieth century. Although her mother is never mentioned, her father plays an important part in shaping her character. He chases away Emily's potential suitors because none of them are "good enough" for his daughter. His death leaves Emily a tragic, penniless spinster. She may even be mad—she denies that her father is dead at first and she won't allow anyone to remove his corpse until she breaks down after three days.

However, she later causes a scandal when she falls in love with Homer Barren, a Yankee construction foreman who is paving the streets in Jefferson. The narrator's various clues (Emily's purchase of arsenic; the awful smell coming from her home after Homer disappears) and the town's grotesque discovery at the end of the story suggest that Emily is driven to murder when she begins to fear that Homer may leave her.

***Minister***

The Baptist minister, under pressure from the ladies of the town, goes to Emily (although she is Episcopal) to discuss her relationship with Homer Barron. He never tells anyone what happens and he refuses to go back to her. The following Sunday, Emily and Homer are seen riding through the town in the buggy again.

***Minister's wife***

The minister's wife sends a letter to Emily's relations in Alabama after her husband calls upon Emily. The letter prompts a visit from two of Emily's female cousins.

***Narrator***

The unnamed narrator refers to himself in collective pronouns throughout the story. As Isaac Rodman points out in *The Faulkner Journal, '* The critical consensus remains that the narrator of 'A Rose for Emily' speaks for his community." Although there are a few sub-groups to which the narrator refers to as separate (for example, the "ladies" and the "older people" of the town), readers assume that he speaks for the majority of the average people of Jefferson. He tells Emily's story in a series of flashbacks which culminates in the dreadful discovery of a decomposed corpse on the top floor of the Grierson home after her death. The narrator never directly claims that Emily murders her lover, Homer Barron, and keeps his corpse in a bed for more than forty years. However, the events he chooses to detail, including Emily's purchase of arsenic and the stench that comes from her house after Homer Barron's disappearance, lead readers to that perception.

***The Negro (****See* Tobe)

***Colonel Sartoris***

Colonel Sartoris is the mayor of Jefferson whenEmily's father dies. He remits Emily's taxes "intoperpetuity" because he knows that her fatherwas unable to leave her with anything but thehouse. Sartoris, being a prototypical southern gentleman,invents a story involving a loan that Emily'sfather had made to the town in order to spareEmily the embarrassment of accepting charity. Thenarrator contrasts this chivalrous act with anotheredict made by Sartoris stating that "... no Negrowoman should appear on the streets without anapron." Colonel Sartoris appears in other works byFaulkner; he is a pivotal character in the history ofYoknapatawpha County.

***Judge Stevens***

Judge Stevens is the mayor of Jefferson when the townspeople begin to complain of the awful odor coming from the Grierson house. Like Colonel Sartoris, he is from a generation that believes an honorable man does not publicly confront a woman with an embarrassing situation. He refuses to allow anyone to discuss the smell with her. Instead, four men sneak onto the Grierson property after midnight and sprinkle lime around the house to rid the town of the disgusting stench.

***Tobe***

Tobe is Emily's black manservant and, for mostof the story, her only companion. He is often theonly sign of life about the Grierson house. Theladies find it shocking that Emily allows him tomaintain her kitchen, and they blame his poorhousekeeping for the development of the smell afterEmily is "deserted" by Homer Barron. He rarelyspeaks to anyone. He is the only person presentwhen Emily dies. He lets the townspeople into theGrierson house after her death, after which hepromptly leaves, never to be seen again.

***Old Lady Wyatt***

Old lady Wyatt is Emily Grierson's great-aunt. The narrator makes reference to her as having gone "... completely crazy at last," suggesting perhaps that madness runs in the Grierson family. The narrator also mentions that Emily's father had a falling out with their kin in Alabama over old lady Wyatt's estate.

**3. Theme**hemthetheeemes

***Death***

Death is prevalent, both literally and figuratively, in "A Rose for Emily." Five actual deaths are discussed or mentioned in passing, and there are obvious references to death throughout the story. The story begins in section one with the narrator's recollections of Emily's funeral. He reminisces that it is Emily's father's death that prompts Colonel Sartoris to remit her taxes "into perpetuity." This leads to the story of the aldermen attempting to collect taxes from Emily. The narrator's description of Emily is that of a drowned woman: ' 'She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue." One of the reasons the aldermen are bold enough to try to collect Emily's taxes is that Colonel Sartoris has been dead for a decade. Of course, this doesn't discourage Emily—she expects the men to discuss the matter with him anyway. When the narrator returns to the subject of the death of Emily's father, he reveals that Emily at first denies that he is dead. She keeps his body for three days before she finally breaks down and allows her father to be buried. This scene foreshadows the grisly discovery at the end of the story. The narrator also mentions the madness and death of old lady Wyatt, Emily's great-aunt. Finally, the discovery of a long strand of iron-gray hair lying on a pillow next to the moldy corpse entombed in Emily's boudoir suggests that Emily is a necrophiliac (literally, "one who loves the dead").

***The Decline of the Old South***

One of the major themes in Faulkner's fiction is the decline of the Old South after the Civil War.

There are many examples of this theme in ' 'A Rose for Emily." Before the Civil War, Southern society was composed of landed gentry, merchants, tenant fanners, and slaves. The aristocratic men of this period had an unspoken code of chivalry, and women were the innocent, pure guardians of morality. For example, Colonel Sartoris concocts an elaborate story to spare Emily's feelings when he remits her taxes; the narrator states, "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris's generation and thought could have invented [the story], and only a woman could have believed it." When the smell develops around the Grierson house, a younger man suggests that Emily should be confronted with it. Judge Stevens, who is from the same generation as the Colonel, asks him,' 'Dammit, sir . . . will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" It is also noted that Emily's father is from this same generation, an arrogant Southern aristocrat who believes that no man is good enough for his daughter.……………………………….

***Community vs. Isolation***

The odd relationship between the town of Jefferson and Emily is a recurrent theme in "A Rose for Emily." At her funeral, the narrator notes that Emily has been ".. .a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town." However, Emily has very little to do with the townspeople during her life. Her father prevents her from dating anyone because he doesn't believe any of the men in Jefferson are good enough for her and, after his death, Emily continues to isolate herself from the rest of the community for the better part of her life. The only notable exceptions to her isolation are her Sunday rides with Homer Barren, her shopping trips for arsenic and men's clothing, and the china painting lessons she gives to the young women of the town for a few years. These exceptions only serve to show how alienated Emily is from the rest of Jefferson………………

**4. Style**

***Flashback and Foreshadowing***

Flashback and foreshadowing are two often used literary devices that utilize time in order to produce a desired effect. Flashbacks are used to present action that occurs before the beginning of a story; foreshadowing creates expectation for action that has not yet happened. Faulkner uses both devices in "A Rose for Emily." The story is told by the narrator through a series of non-sequential flashbacks.

The narrator begins the story by describing the scene of Emily's funeral; this description, however, is actually a flashback because the story ends with the narrator's memory of the town's discovery of the corpse in the Grierson home after Emily's funeral. Throughout the story, the narrator flashes back and forth through various events in the life and times of Emily Grierson and the town of Jefferson………..

1. ***Point of View***

The point of view in ' 'A Rose for Emily'' is unique. The story is told by an unnamed narrator in the ***first-person collective.*** One might even argue that the narrator is the main character. There are hints as to the age, race, gender, and class of the narrator, but an identity is never actually revealed. Isaac Rodman notes in *The Faulkner Journal* that the critical consensus remains that *the narrator speaks for his community*. (Rodman, however, goes on to present a convincing argument that the narrator may be a loner or eccentric of some kind speaking from "ironic detachment.") Regardless of identity, the narrator proves to be a clever, humorous, and sympathetic storyteller. He is clever because of the way he pieces the story together to build to a shocking climax. His humor is evident in his almost whimsical tone throughout what most would consider to be a morbid tale. Finally, the narrator is sympathetic to both Emily and the town of Jefferson. This is demonstrated in his pity for Emily and in his understanding that the town's reactions are driven by circumstances beyond its control ("... Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town").

1. ***Setting***

''A Rose for Emily'' is set in Faulkner's mythical county, ***Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi.*** The town of Jefferson is the county seat of Yoknapatawpha. In *William Faulkner: His Life and Work,* David Minter writes, "More than any major American writer of our time, including Robert Frost, Faulkner is associated with a region. He is our great provincial."

Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County are based upon the real city of Oxford and Lafayette County in Mississippi, where Faulkner spent most of his life. Once he established this fictional, yet familiar, setting, he was able to tap his creativity to invent a history for Yoknapatawpha and populate the county with colorful characters like Emily Grierson and Colonel Sartoris. The land and its history exert a great influence over many of Faulkner's characters. Emily is no exception; she is trapped in Jefferson's past.

Read the following story and analyze the major elements

1. **The Story of an Hour**

**Kate Chopin**

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband’s death. It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; **veiled1** hints that revealed in half concealing.

Her husband’s friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard’s name leading the list of “killed.” He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to **forestall2** any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms.

When the storm of grief had **spent3** itself she went to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will— as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the **coursing4** blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save**5** with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself.

There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life**6** through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long.

It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities.7 There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom. Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his **grip-sack8** and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late. When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills. (Source: Glencoe Literature, Course 6, p.~~557~~ (524))

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| 1. *Veiled* means “disguised” or “obscure.”  2. *Forestall* means “to hinder or prevent by action taken in advance.”  3. Here, *spent* means “exhausted.”  4. *Coursing* means “swiftly moving.”  5. Here, *save* means “except.”  **Repression**:the state of being held back or kept under control  **Elusive**: difficult to explain or grasp  T**umultuously:** in an agitated manner; violently  6. An *elixir of life* is a substance thought to prolong life indefinitely.  7. *Importunities* are persistent requests or demands.  8. A *grip-sack* is a small traveling bag.  **Exalted**: elevated  **Perception**:an awareness; an insight  **Persistence:** stubborn or determined continuance  **Impose**: to inflict, as by authority; to dictate  **illumination***:* intellectual enlightenment |

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