

Faulkner, Narration, and the New South
Digital Yoknapatawpha
“A Rose for Emily”

Objective: To lead students to new discoveries of textual meaning and introduce students to twenty-first-century job market skills. Students should develop their critical thinking skills, increase their computer skills, gain a better historical knowledge of the story’s context, and arrive at a new (or solid) understanding of the story.

Directions:

- Go to the Digital Yoknapatawpha website: <http://faulkner.iath.virginia.edu/>
 - Scroll through the squares at the bottom of the page and click on “A Rose for Emily.”
 - Explore the map to answer the following questions.
1. Under “Map Controls: Show Characters,” select “All.” Run your cursor over the character representations on the map. Click on the names and read the biographies.
 - What character description most surprises you or helps you better understand the story? (Explain)
 2. Under “Map Controls: Show Characters,” select “Major.” Find the icon representing the narrator. Click on the narrator and read the biography.
 - Google “Participant Narrator” and “Observer Narrator.” What is the difference between the two?
 - Using Google search, define “omniscient narrator” and “limited omniscience narrator.” What is the difference between the two?
 - How would you characterize the narrator of “A Rose for Emily”? Why?
 - Use a few details from the story and the site’s biographical description to speculate on the race, class, and gender of the unnamed narrator.
 3. At the bottom of the screen, find the “Play” option that activate the timeline. Play the map in page order (narrative order):
 - Would you describe this narrative as linear (chronological) or recursive (goes back and forth from present to past)?
 - What impact does narrative order on you as the reader?

4. Now play the map in chronological order:
 - How does this ordering of events change your experience with the story?

5. Under “Map Controls: Show Characters,” select “All.” View the town’s population. Read the biographies of the unnamed neighbor, Homer, and a character of your choice.
 - The story seems pieced together from several tidbits of hearsay. Does this discredit the narrator? Explain.

6. Under “Map Controls: Show Characters,” select “Major.” View Miss Emily’s biography.
 - What did you learn about Emily that you didn’t realize when you read the story?

7. Google “New South” (make sure you use quotation marks around the term). Write a definition of the “New South.”

8. Historian James C. Cobb claims the “New South propaganda had danced around the delicate issue of slavery, paying tribute to the grace and gentility of the slaveholding class without addressing the devastating human and economic impact of the institution that supported them” (*Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*).
 - How does Miss Emily, as an aging (grotesque) southern belle, subvert the New South’s tribute to the “grace and gentility of the slaveholding class”? In other words, how does she illustrate the devastating human impact of the past (slavery and racism)?

9. Under “Map Controls: Show Characters,” select “Major and Secondary.” View Tobe’s biography.
 - What do you realize about Tobe?

10. Find the Grierson house on the map; click on it so you can read the location description.
 - Judging from the description of the 1870 house, what can we know about Miss Emily?
 - Does the house seem to stop the progression of modernism, and if so, what would the house and Miss Emily have in common?

11. “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” – William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1950)

- Now that you’ve read “A Rose for Emily” and explored this map, what does the above quote mean to you?
- How does focusing on the difference between the chronological order and the narrative order of “A Rose for Emily” bring the above quote into question?

12. Thadious Davis states, “Historically the South has been painfully aware of the critical flux of things, especially time and fortune; however, the specific South to which Faulkner addresses himself was beset by more immediate strife – that of a culture at once dying and regenerating. Consciousness of change was one dominant characteristic of the times. This characteristic was part of the aesthetic problem pointed out by Faulkner, in that the relinquishing of forms and concepts no longer valid and the struggle to create or rediscover appropriate replacements made the writer’s task especially challenging. The problems of race relations, caste privilege, and agrarian reform in a region becoming industrialized and urbanized were compounded by resistance to change” (*Faulkner’s “Negro”: Art and the Southern Context*).

- What does she mean by that statement, and how does “A Rose for Emily” illustrate the veracity of it?