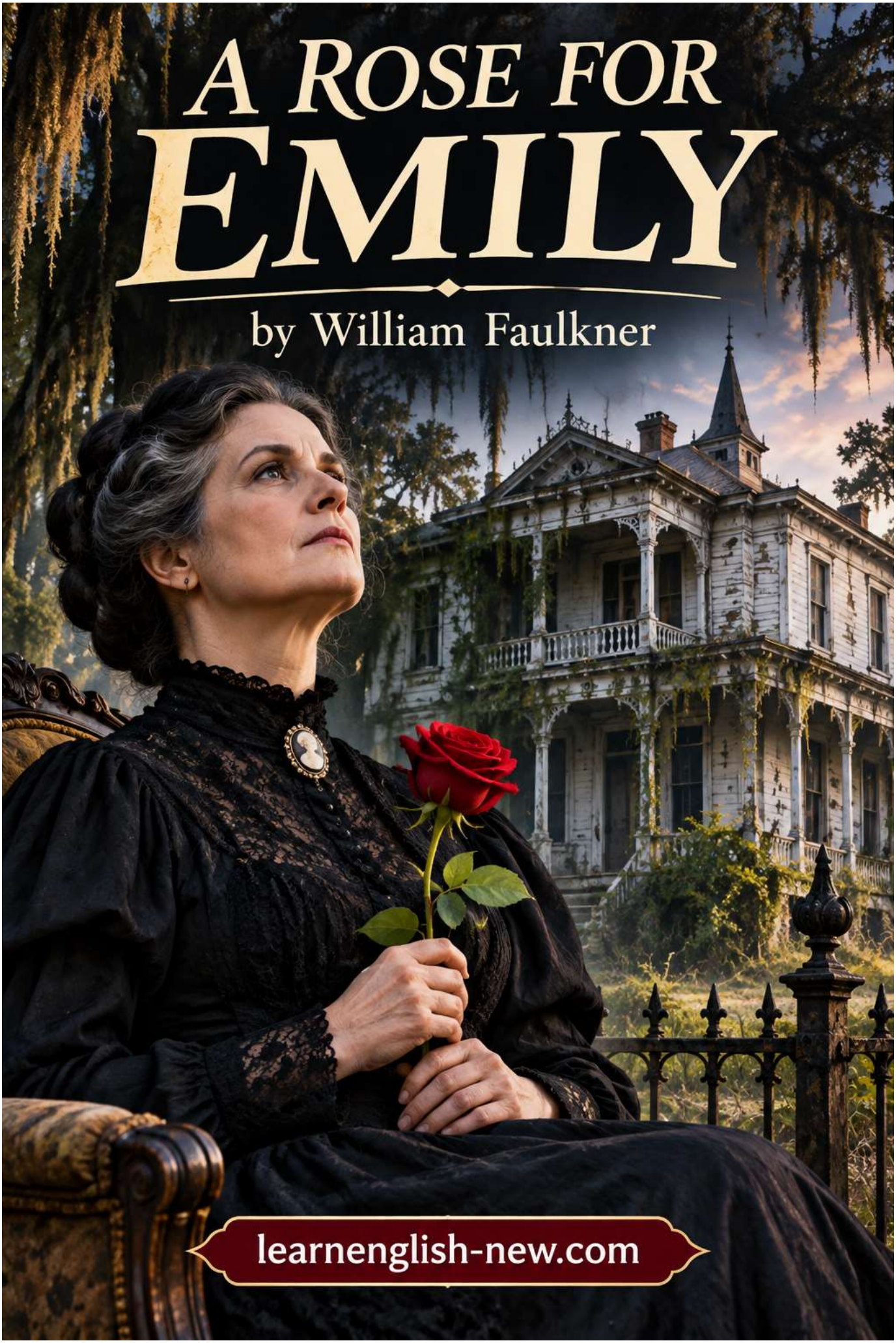

A ROSE FOR
EMILY
by William Faulkner
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# A Rose for Emily

by William Faulkner

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CLASSIC SHORT STORY
ENGLISH READING PRACTICE

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS

LEVEL C1

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# About the Author

## William Faulkner (1897–1962)

William Faulkner (1897–1962) was an influential American novelist, short-story writer, and Nobel Prize laureate, widely regarded as one of the most important literary figures of the twentieth century. He is particularly celebrated for his experimental narrative techniques, complex characterisation, psychological depth, and vivid portrayals of the American South. His works frequently explore themes of memory, family history, social inequality, moral decline, isolation, and the lasting influence of the past on the present.

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi, United States. He grew up primarily in Oxford, Mississippi, a small Southern town that later became an important source of inspiration for his fictional settings. His family background, regional traditions, and exposure to the social and cultural complexities of the American South profoundly influenced his literary imagination. These early experiences helped shape his lifelong interest in Southern history, family relationships, racial tensions, and the gradual transformation of traditional communities.

Although Faulkner showed an early interest in literature and poetry, his formal education was relatively limited. He attended the University of Mississippi but did not graduate. During his early adulthood, he worked in various occupations and briefly served in the British Royal Air Force during the First World War, although he did not see combat. His experiences during this period contributed to his growing interest in literature and the psychological consequences of conflict.

Faulkner began establishing his literary reputation during the 1920s. His early publications included *The Marble Faun* (1924), a collection of poetry, and *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), his first novel. His subsequent works demonstrated an increasingly distinctive literary style, characterised by unconventional chronology, shifting narrative perspectives, stream of consciousness, and intricate explorations of human psychology.

One of the most significant features of Faulkner's fiction is his creation of Yoknapatawpha County, a fictional region in Mississippi modelled on the landscapes and communities of the American South. Many of his novels and short stories are set in this imaginary county, allowing him to examine generations of families and the social changes affecting their communities. Through this fictional world, Faulkner developed a remarkably interconnected literary universe populated by recurring families, historical events, and complex social relationships.

Among his most celebrated novels are *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). These works demonstrate his willingness to experiment with narrative structure and explore difficult questions concerning identity, morality, memory, race, and historical responsibility. His short stories are equally significant, particularly for their concentrated narratives, unsettling atmosphere, and powerful examinations of human behaviour.

In 1949, Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his significant contribution to modern American fiction. The Nobel Committee recognised his powerful and artistically distinctive contribution to the development of the modern novel. He subsequently received other major literary honours, including two Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction, awarded for *A Fable* (1954) and *The Reivers* (1962).

Faulkner's writing is particularly notable for its treatment of time and memory. Rather than presenting events in a straightforward chronological sequence, he frequently moves between different periods, allowing the past to influence and sometimes dominate the present. His characters often struggle with inherited expectations, unresolved family conflicts, personal obsessions, and the consequences of historical events. This approach gives his fiction considerable psychological and philosophical complexity.

His short story *A Rose for Emily*, first published in *The Forum* on April 30, 1930, is one of his most widely studied works. Set in the fictional town of Jefferson, Mississippi, the story examines the life of Emily Grierson, a woman whose existence becomes increasingly isolated from the changing society around her. Through an unconventional narrative structure and a collective town narrator, Faulkner explores the conflict between tradition and modernity, the destructive influence of the past, social judgement, and the psychological consequences of isolation.

During his later years, Faulkner continued writing while also travelling and participating in literary and cultural activities. He died on July 6, 1962, in Byhalia, Mississippi, at the age of sixty-four. His literary legacy remains central to the study of modern American literature.

Today, William Faulkner is remembered for transforming the possibilities of narrative fiction. His experimental style, sophisticated treatment of time, and profound understanding of human psychology continue to influence writers, scholars, and readers throughout the world. His works remain essential reading for those interested in the complexities of human nature, the relationship between individuals and society, and the enduring power of literary storytelling.

# About the Story

## "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner

A Rose for Emily is a remarkable short story by the American writer William Faulkner, first published in *The Forum* magazine on April 30, 1930. Widely regarded as one of the most significant works of twentieth-century American short fiction, the story explores the psychological consequences of isolation, the influence of the past, the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the disturbing relationship between love and obsession. Through an unconventional narrative structure and an atmosphere of mystery, Faulkner presents a haunting portrait of a woman whose life becomes increasingly disconnected from the world around her.

The story takes place in Jefferson, a fictional town in Mississippi, within Faulkner's imaginary Yoknapatawpha County. The setting reflects the changing social and cultural landscape of the American South, where traditional values and established social hierarchies gradually give way to modern developments. At the centre of this environment stands Miss Emily Grierson, a member of a once-respected Southern family whose declining fortunes and social position become closely associated with her personal isolation.

The narrative begins with the death of Miss Emily, an elderly woman whose funeral attracts the attention of the entire town. The men attend out of a mixture of respect and sympathy, regarding her as a symbol of a disappearing historical era, while the women are primarily curious to see the interior of her mysterious house. For many years, the house has remained closed to outsiders, preserving an atmosphere of secrecy and decay. Through the narrator's recollections, readers gradually discover the events that shaped Emily's unusual existence.

Emily's father exercises considerable control over her life, rejecting the young men who attempt to court her because he considers none of them worthy of his daughter. As a result, Emily remains unmarried and increasingly dependent on her father. When he dies, she refuses to accept his death for three days, insisting that he is still alive. This incident provides an early indication of her inability to confront painful changes and her powerful attachment to the past.

Following her father's death, Emily becomes involved with Homer Barron, a Northern construction foreman who arrives in Jefferson to supervise the paving of the town's sidewalks. Their relationship attracts considerable attention and speculation among the townspeople. Some believe that the couple will eventually marry, while others disapprove of their association because Homer is a Northerner and a working-class man. Their relationship also challenges the traditional social expectations associated with the Grierson family's status.

As their relationship develops, Emily purchases a man's silver toilet set bearing Homer's initials and a complete set of men's clothing. These purchases lead the townspeople to believe that the couple are preparing for marriage. However, Emily also visits a druggist and insists on purchasing arsenic without explaining its intended use. Although the townspeople speculate that she may intend to take her own life, the actual purpose of the poison remains concealed until the story's final revelation.

After Homer disappears from public view, Emily withdraws almost completely from society. Her front door remains closed for years, and the townspeople gradually lose contact with her. She continues living in the deteriorating family house with Tobe, her elderly Black servant, who performs the household duties and rarely communicates with anyone outside the property. As generations pass and the town changes, Emily becomes an increasingly isolated figure, seemingly unwilling to accept the disappearance of the social world to which she belongs.

The story reaches its disturbing conclusion after Emily's death, when the townspeople enter a locked upstairs bedroom that has remained unopened for approximately forty years. Inside, they discover a room arranged like a bridal chamber and the decomposed body of Homer Barron lying on the bed. On the pillow beside him, they find the indentation of a head and a long strand of Emily's iron-gray hair. This final discovery reveals the horrifying secret that has remained hidden within the house for decades.

One of the central themes of A Rose for Emily is the destructive influence of the past. Emily's inability to accept death, change, and separation prevents her from developing an independent life. Her attachment to her father and later to Homer illustrates how an attempt to preserve what has disappeared can become psychologically destructive. Through Emily's experiences, Faulkner examines the human tendency to resist change even when the past has become impossible to recover.

Another important theme is isolation. Emily gradually separates herself from the surrounding community, both physically and emotionally. Her house becomes a barrier between her private existence and the changing world outside. The townspeople observe her from a distance, forming opinions about her life without truly understanding her circumstances. This distance highlights the difference between public perception and private reality.

Faulkner also explores the conflict between tradition and modernity. Emily represents the declining Southern aristocracy, with its inherited privileges, rigid social expectations, and attachment to established customs. In contrast, the younger generations of Jefferson embrace new administrative practices, modern conveniences, and changing social attitudes. The tension between these two worlds is reflected in the repeated conflicts between Emily and the town authorities, particularly over her taxes and the installation of a mailbox.

The story's narrative perspective is especially significant. Rather than using a conventional third-person narrator, Faulkner tells the story through a collective first-person narrator representing the townspeople of Jefferson. The repeated use of "we" creates the impression of a shared community perspective. However, this narrator is limited by rumours, assumptions, incomplete information, and personal judgements. Consequently, readers must distinguish between what the townspeople actually know and what they merely believe about Emily.

Faulkner's use of symbolism further deepens the story's meaning. The Grierson house represents the family's declining social position, Emily's isolation, and the persistence of the past. Dust suggests the passage of time, neglect, and the gradual decay of both physical surroundings and human relationships. The arsenic becomes an ominous symbol of the

hidden violence within Emily's private world. The locked upstairs bedroom represents the secrets that remain concealed until the final moments of the narrative.

The title, A Rose for Emily**,** is itself open to interpretation. Although no rose plays a direct role in the plot, the title may be understood as a symbolic gesture of sympathy, remembrance, or compassion towards a deeply troubled woman. It invites readers to consider Emily not merely as a disturbing figure but also as a human being shaped by loneliness, emotional deprivation, and the pressures of her social environment.

One of the most distinctive features of the story is its non-linear narrative structure. Faulkner does not present events in chronological order. Instead, he moves between different periods of Emily's life, gradually revealing information that changes the reader's understanding of earlier events. This technique creates suspense and makes the final discovery particularly powerful. The ending also produces dramatic irony, forcing readers to reconsider the significance of the arsenic, Homer's disappearance, and the long-closed bedroom.

For advanced English learners, A Rose for Emily offers an excellent opportunity to develop sophisticated reading and literary interpretation skills. Its challenging vocabulary, complex sentence structures, shifting chronology, collective narrative voice, symbolism, and psychological ambiguity provide valuable material for C1-level study. Readers are encouraged to examine not only what happens in the story but also how Faulkner uses language, structure, and literary techniques to communicate deeper meanings.

Ultimately, A Rose for Emily is a haunting exploration of loneliness, obsession, social expectations, and the inability to escape the past. By combining psychological complexity with mystery and dark irony, William Faulkner creates a memorable portrait of a woman whose private tragedy remains hidden behind the closed doors of an old Southern house. The story leaves readers reflecting on the destructive consequences of emotional isolation and the complicated relationship between individuals, their memories, and the societies in which they live.

# A Rose for Emily

by William Faulkner

## I

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 cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, 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 coquettish 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-bemused 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. 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 archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy 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. A deputation 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 motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt 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 pallid 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 temerity 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 n----- 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. "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. 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 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: 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 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 pauper, 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 n------s 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 n-----s, and the n-----s 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 oblige--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 craned 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 set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, "They are married." 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, 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, 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, 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, sibilant 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 bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; 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 pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: 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 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.

THE END

## VOCABULARY LIST

1. **Encroached** /ɪnˈkrəʊtʃt/ — gradually spread into or took over an area that previously belonged to someone or something else.
   Example: “But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood.”

2. **Obliterated** /əˈblɪtəreɪtɪd/ — completely destroyed or removed something so that it could no longer be seen or recognized.
   Example: “But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood.”

3. **Hereditary** /həˈredɪtəri/ — passed down from parents to children or belonging to a family through generations.
   Example: “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.”

4. **Remitted** /rɪˈmɪtɪd/ — cancelled or reduced a payment, debt, or official obligation.
   Example: “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. **Perpetuity** /ˌpɜːpəˈtjuːəti/ — the state of continuing forever or for an unlimited period of time.
   Example: “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.”

6. **Archaic** /ɑːˈkeɪɪk/ — very old-fashioned; belonging to an earlier period and no longer commonly used.
   Example: “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 archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all.”

7. **Deputation** /ˌdepjʊˈteɪʃən/ — a group of people appointed or sent to represent others and carry out a particular task.
   Example: “A deputation 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.”

8. **Tarnished** /ˈtɑːnɪʃt/ — having lost its original shine or brightness, especially because of age or exposure to air.
   Example: “On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.”

9. **Vanquished** /ˈvæŋkwɪʃt/ — defeated someone completely, especially in a struggle or conflict.
   Example: “So SHE vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell.”

10. **Temerity** /təˈmerəti/ — excessive confidence or boldness, especially when someone takes a risk or behaves disrespectfully.
    Example: “A few of the ladies had the temerity 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.”

11. **Slunk** /slʌŋk/ — moved quietly and secretly, usually to avoid being noticed.
    Example: “That 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.”

12. **Vindicated** /ˈvɪndɪkeɪtɪd/ — shown to be right or justified after others have doubted or criticized someone.
    Example: “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.”

13. **Condolence** /kənˈdəʊləns/ — an expression of sympathy or sadness offered to someone whose family member or friend has died.
    Example: “The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom.”

**14. Serene** /səˈriːn/ — calm, peaceful, and untroubled in appearance or manner.
Example: “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.”

**15. Haughty** /ˈhɔːti/ — behaving in an unfriendly and proud way that suggests one considers oneself superior to others.
Example: “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.”

**16. Divulge** /daɪˈvʌldʒ/ — to reveal information that is private, secret, or intended to be kept confidential.
Example: “He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again.”

**17. Imperviousness** /ɪmˈpɜːviəsnəs/ — the quality of being unaffected or not influenced by something.
Example: “She carried her head high enough—even when we believed that she was fallen.”

**18. Inextricable** /ˌɪnɪkˈstrɪkəbəl/ — impossible to separate or disentangle from something else.
Example: “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.”

**19. Indentation** /ˌɪndenˈteɪʃən/ — a hollow or mark made when a surface is pressed inward.
Example: “Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head.”

**20. Acrid** /ˈækrɪd/ — having a strong, unpleasant, and irritating smell or taste.
Example: “The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust.”

# READING COMPREHENSION

Instructions: Answer the following questions based on the story.

1. Why did the men and women of Jefferson attend Miss Emily Grierson's funeral for different reasons, and what does their behaviour reveal about the town's attitude towards her?

2. How does the description of Miss Emily's house reflect the decline of the Grierson family and the changing social landscape of Jefferson?

3. Why did Colonel Sartoris arrange for Miss Emily's taxes to be remitted, and how did he justify this arrangement to protect her pride?

4. How did Miss Emily respond to the new generation of town officials when they attempted to collect her taxes, and what does her reaction reveal about her relationship with the past?

5. What details in the description of Miss Emily's house and appearance suggest that she has become isolated from the changing world around her?

6. Why did the townspeople complain about the unpleasant smell coming from Miss Emily's property, and how did the authorities deal with the situation without confronting her directly?

7. How did Miss Emily's father influence her relationships with men, and what effect did his death have on her emotional state?

8. Why did the townspeople initially feel sorry for Miss Emily after her father's death, and how did their attitude reflect their assumptions about social class and status?

9. What attracted the townspeople to Homer Barron, and why did some members of the community disapprove of his relationship with Miss Emily?

10. Why did Miss Emily purchase arsenic, and how did her refusal to explain its intended use contribute to the mystery surrounding her relationship with Homer?

11. How did the townspeople interpret Miss Emily's purchase of the silver toilet set and men's clothing, and what does this reveal about their tendency to make assumptions?

12. Why did the Baptist minister's visit to Miss Emily fail to resolve the concerns surrounding her relationship with Homer Barron?

13. What reasons did the townspeople give for believing that Homer Barron had left Jefferson, and how did his return change the course of events?

14. How did Miss Emily's withdrawal from public life develop over the years, and what details suggest that she increasingly rejected modern changes?

15. In what ways does the narrator's use of the collective pronoun "we" influence the reader's understanding of Miss Emily and the events surrounding her life?

16. How does the story's non-linear structure affect the way readers discover the truth about Miss Emily's relationship with Homer Barron?

17. What is the significance of the locked upstairs room, and how does its description create an atmosphere of mystery and horror?

18. What do the objects arranged in the upstairs bedroom reveal about Miss Emily's intentions and her inability to accept the loss of Homer Barron?

19. What is the significance of the indentation on the second pillow and the strand of iron-gray hair discovered beside Homer's body?

20. How does the ending change the reader's interpretation of earlier events, and what central ideas about death, isolation, obsession, and the past does Faulkner communicate through Miss Emily's story?

## GRAMMAR EXERCISES

Instructions: Choose the one correct answer (A, B, C, or D).

1. By the time the new town officials visited Miss Emily, Colonel Sartoris _____ her taxes years earlier.

   A) has remitted
   B) had remitted
   C) remits
   D) will have remitted

2. Not until the officials received Miss Emily's reply _____ that she intended to ignore their request.

   A) they realized
   B) did they realize
   C) they had realize
   D) had they realize

3. If Colonel Sartoris had not invented the story about the town's debt, Miss Emily _____ the arrangement so readily.

   A) would not have accepted
   B) will not accept
   C) would not accept
   D) had not accepted

4. The house, _____ had once been one of the finest buildings in Jefferson, gradually fell into decay.

   A) who
   B) where
   C) which
   D) whose

5. The town officials expected Miss Emily _____ them into her house.

   A) allowing
   B) to allow
   C) allowed
   D) allow

6. When questioned about her taxes, Miss Emily repeatedly insisted that she _____ no taxes in Jefferson.

   A) has
   B) having

C) had
D) have had

7. After Miss Emily had named the poison she wanted, the druggist _____ the arsenic to her.

A) sells
B) had sell
C) sold
D) selling

8. _____ the arsenic, Miss Emily returned home without revealing her intentions.

A) Having purchased
B) Have purchased
C) To purchasing
D) Being purchase

9. Neither the mayor nor the aldermen _____ able to persuade Miss Emily to pay her taxes.

A) was
B) were
C) has been
D) is

10. It was Homer Barron _____ the townspeople believed Miss Emily would eventually marry.

A) which
B) whose
C) whom
D) where

11. The town officials made several attempts to contact Miss Emily, but she avoided _____ their letters.

A) answer
B) to answer
C) answering
D) answered

12. No sooner _____ the upstairs door than the townspeople discovered the room's terrible secret.

A) they had opened
B) had they opened
C) they opened
D) did they opened

13. If Miss Emily had been able to accept her father's death, she might _____ a very different life.

A) lead
B) have led
C) had led
D) leading

14. The town's regulations required that every official document _____ in the municipal records.

A) was kept
B) is kept
C) be kept
D) has kept

15. The men _____ around Miss Emily's house at night were trying to get rid of the unpleasant smell.

A) moved
B) moving
C) were moved
D) to moving

16. The longer Miss Emily remained isolated, _____ it became for the townspeople to understand her.

A) the difficult
B) more difficult
C) the more difficult
D) most difficult

17. By the time Homer Barron disappeared from public view, Miss Emily _____ increasingly isolated from the townspeople.

A) becomes
B) has become
C) had become
D) will become

18. By the time Miss Emily died, her hair _____ an iron-gray colour.

A) had turned
B) has turned
C) turns
D) will turn

19. When the townspeople finally entered the upstairs room, they discovered that it _____ locked for approximately forty years.

A) has been kept
B) had been kept
C) is keeping
D) will have kept

20. Not only _____ Miss Emily refuse to pay her taxes, but she also rejected the town's attempts to contact her.

A) did
B) had
C) was
D) has

ANSWER KEY

1-B, 2-B, 3-A, 4-C, 5-B, 6-C, 7-C, 8-A, 9-B, 10-C, 11-C, 12-B, 13-B, 14-C, 15-B, 16-C, 17-C, 18-A, 19-B, 20-A