



## **Social Problems In The Story “Dry September” By William Faulkner**

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**Abstract:** William Faulkner, as one of the leading representatives of modern American literature of the 20th century, made an incomparable contribution to the development of prose work. Not only in the author’s novels and short novels, but also in small prose samples, a large place is devoted to the description of the social problems of that time, racism and interracial relations. The work “Dry September” is included in the collection of stories “These 13” and shows the originality of the writer’s modernist style. The analysis of the relationships of the characters described in the story clearly expresses the problems that exist between XX century US society and individuals, and ideas are explained using excerpts from the work.

**Key words:** William Faulkner, “Dry September”, “These 13”, short story, society, individual, description.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

William Faulkner is widely regarded by literary critics as one of the foremost representatives of 20th-century American literature. His contributions to the literary world extend beyond novels and short stories; his mastery of storytelling is unparalleled. Faulkner once acknowledged, “The immortality of a person’s life lies in their unyielding determination to persevere, even in the face of insurmountable tragedies” [Kholbekov, 2011]. Indeed, Faulkner skillfully captures the relentless struggle between individuals and society through his unique style, evident in his iconic works such as “The Sound and the Fury”, “Absalom, Absalom”, and “As I Lay Dying”. William Faulkner’s novels and short stories often delved into the intricate social and psychological dynamics of the American South, particularly the fictional region of Yoknapatawpha County, which served as the backdrop for many of his works. Through his writing,



Faulkner offered a deep and introspective examination of themes such as race, class, family, memory, and the decay of traditional Southern values. The following paper discusses social issues depicted in the story “Dry September” by the author.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

William Faulkner’s literary works have received significant recognition in the realm of global literary studies, especially in the works by B. Harold, F. Karl, J. Pikoulis, E. Welty, where they have been extensively evaluated for their vitality, truthfulness, and remarkable ability to create vivid and compelling images. The author’s writing possesses a unique power to capture the essence of the human experience and to convey a profound sense of truth in his storytelling. His ability to craft rich and evocative imagery allows readers to immerse themselves in the worlds he creates, vividly bringing his narratives to life on the page.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

William Faulkner’s literary contributions extend beyond his novels, encompassing the realm of short stories as well. His works featured in collections such as “These 13” (1931), “Go Down, Moses” (1942), and “Knight’s Gambit” (1949) delve into the intricacies of human nature, the social landscape of North America, and the profound impact of historical events on both individuals and societal structures. The author devoted attention to exploring clandestine subjects, and one notable collection. “These 13” is dedicated to his wife Estelle and their first daughter Alabama, who tragically passed away just nine days after birth.

“This 13” includes a range of remarkable stories such as “Victory”, “Ad Astra”, “All the Dead Pilots”, “Crevasse”, “Red Leaves”, “A Rose for Emily”, “A Justice”, “Hair”, “That Evening Sun”, “Dry September”, “Mistral”, “Divorce in Naples”, and “Carcassonne”. Each story offers a unique exploration of its subject matter delving into the depths of human emotions, unveiling hidden truths, and shedding light on the complexities of the human condition. Notably, “A Rose for Emily” has become one of William Faulkner’s most celebrated and frequently studied short stories, captivating readers with its haunting narrative and exploration of the Southern Gothic genre.





William Faulkner's short stories, much like his novels, showcase his mastery of language and his ability to craft vivid imagery that transports readers into the worlds he creates. With his keen observations of society and his profound understanding of human nature, the author's short stories continue to resonate with readers, captivating them with their depth, complexity, and lasting impact.

The story "Dry September" was originally published in the January issue of Scribner's Magazine in 1931. It presents a poignant exploration of the image of Southern women, their place in society, the relentless struggles between individuals in the community, and the underlying racial tensions of the time. The narrative revolves around several characters, including Will Mayes, Miss Minnie Cooper, McLendon, Henry Hawkshaw, and the patrons of the barbershop, with the focus primarily on the female protagonist.

Like many of William Faulkner's works, "Dry September" skillfully captures the intense conflicts that arise within society and its members. The story reveals the profound suffering experienced by its characters, set against the backdrop of Jefferson, the writer's fictional town and a reflection of his own upbringing. From the very beginning of the story, the author establishes a sense of tension within the environment, emphasizing that it is an atmosphere in which individuals struggle to breathe freely. He writes, "*Through the bloody September twilight, aftermath of sixty-two rainless days, it had gone like a fire in dry grass--the rumor, the story, whatever it was. Something about Miss Minnie Cooper and*

*a*

*Negro*"

[[https://old.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/aj/doc/sukdolova/William\\_Faulkner.pdf](https://old.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/aj/doc/sukdolova/William_Faulkner.pdf)].

Through the use of metaphorical phrases such as "bloody September twilight" and "like a fire in dry grass", William Faulkner vividly portrays the chaotic and complex situation that permeates the community. The intense and potentially explosive nature of the tension among the townspeople is effectively conveyed through his choice of words.

In "Dry September" William Faulkner delves into the themes of prejudice, rumor, mob mentality, and the destructive consequences of societal turmoil. The story serves as a powerful commentary on the deeply ingrained racial problems and social dynamics of the American South during that time period. Through his masterful storytelling, the writer sheds light on the complexities and challenges faced by individuals within a society torn apart by prejudice and fear.





Another significant aspect of the story “Dry September” is the portrayal of the intense conflict between two members of the community. The narrative highlights the breathless darkness that engulfs the scene as the tension reaches its peak. William Faulkner writes, “*The breathless dark rushed down. There was no sound in it save their lungs as they sought air in the parched dust in which for two months they had lived; then the diminishing crunch of McLendon's and Butch's feet, and a moment later McLendon's voice: "Will! . . . Will!"*” [[https://old.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/aj/doc/sukdolova/William\\_Faulkner.pdf](https://old.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/aj/doc/sukdolova/William_Faulkner.pdf)]. This passage captures the palpable atmosphere of oppression and the stifling weight of the situation.

Will Mayes, who is wrongly accused of a violent act, becomes the subject of rumors within the community. He serves as a prominent figure in Jefferson and becomes the target of revenge by a mob led by McLendon, a white man who manipulates racial tensions for his own purposes. McLendon is depicted as a cruel and manipulative individual who takes advantage of the racial divide in the community. “*The breathless dark rushed down*” highlights how the society is under pressure and is challenging for the residents to survive.

William Faulkner expertly portrays the destructive consequences of prejudice, rumor, and mob mentality in “Dry September”. The story serves as a critique of the societal dynamics that fuel such conflicts and the devastating impact they have on individuals and communities. By highlighting the actions of characters like McLendon, the writer exposes the dangers of unchecked hatred, manipulation, and the erosion of empathy within society.

Through his powerful storytelling, William Faulkner confronts the racial complexities and social divisions of the American South, shedding light on the destructive forces that can emerge when prejudice and fear are allowed to dictate human interactions. “Dry September” stands as a testament to the author’s ability to tackle sensitive and challenging topics, offering profound insights into the human condition and the consequences of societal injustice.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, William Faulkner adeptly depicted the unbridgeable conflict between the individual and society through his concise yet powerful prose. In the story “Dry September”, he masterfully captured the struggle between good and evil, as well as the plight of individuals who face discrimination and oppression due to their race. William Faulkner’s storytelling prowess allowed



him to illuminate the profound challenges faced by marginalized individuals within a society that perpetuates prejudice and injustice. Through his work, he shed light on the complexities of the human experience and the enduring battle for justice and equality.

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