

The Nightingale and the Rose Summary & Analysis: Oscar Wilde

The Nightingale and the Rose Introduction:

The story "The Nightingale and the Rose" is written by Oscar Wilde. It was published in 1888 in a collection of children's story named as The Happy Prince and the Other Tales.

Although, it is a children's story but it deals with philosophical and emotional issues that are beyond the understanding of children. It is also enriched with the wealth of deep meaning. It is full of indirect comments on life, personifications, similes and symbolism.

Moreover, in this story Oscar Wilde raises the most common issues of materialism and idealism present in the conventional society he lived in

The Nightingale and the Rose Summary:

The story begins with a young student who is lamenting in his garden because the love of his life will dance with him in the ball only if he brings her a red rose but there is no red rose in his garden. The Nightingale, living in the oak-tree of his garden, hears the young man crying over his helplessness and lamenting the fact that all his learning is useless since it cannot win him a girl's love. The nightingale comes to know that the young man is weeping for a red rose. She feels the pain of that boy and wants to help him.

The bird flies and goes to the various bushes but cannot find a red rose. Finally she comes to know about a way of getting a red rose by a tree. She performs a suicidal act while singing with his heart on the thorn, giving her heart's blood to a white rose which turns it in to a beautiful red rose. In this process the Nightingale dies.

When the student wakes up, he sees the red rose under his window, plucks it joyously and brings it to his love. The girl rejects the rose by saying that it will not match her blue dress and someone else has brought her jewels that are worth more than a rose. The boy throws the rose in the gutter and a cart runs over it. At the end he decides that logic is better than love and love is unrealistic. He goes back to his home and starts reading a book.

Themes

Theme of Sacrifice:

The theme of sacrifice is explored through Nightingale's self sacrifice in the name of true love and for the sake of helping others.

When the Nightingale sees the student crying for his sweetheart, her whole hearted believe in love compels her to help the boy. So she decides to help him and goes out of her house in search of a red rose. After searching for it everywhere she comes to know about a way of getting the rose. She has to give her heart's blood to a white flower and make it red. She believes that it is worth giving her life for the sake of true love.

As we know that Nightingale has an unshakeable believe in love because of which she sacrifices her life but at the end of the story nobody appreciates her sacrifice and it is wasted when the student throws the red rose in the gutter where it is destroyed.

Theme of Love:

In the story "The Nightingale and the rose" is about the nature of love. In the beginning of the story, the student claims to be in love with his professor's daughter and is crying for a red rose because he will dance with her in the balls if he will give her a red rose.

Moreover, the Nightingale sacrifices her life for the sake of love. She thinks that it is worth sacrificing her life for true love. This sacrifice shows that true love does exist but at the end no one appreciates it.

Wilde is trying to convey that true love does exist but people make it shallow and selfish. The student who thinks that he is in love does not truly know the meaning of love. When the girl rejects him and his red rose, he calls her ungrateful and says that love is silly and impractical which shows him more as a materialistic person rather than a true lover.

Materialism:

The theme of materialism is explored by the human characters. The young student, Professor's daughter and Chamberlain's nephew are materialistic in some sense.

The student who claims to be in love is not really in love rather he evokes rational side of materialism. For him a red rose is worth more than Nightingale's life and true love. When the Nightingale sings a song, he says that her voice is beautiful but shallow and lacks any emotion which shows that he is a materialistic person who is unable to feel deep emotions.

On the other hand, his love, the professor's daughter also shows materialism by rejecting the red rose. She thinks that precious jewels are more worthy than a red rose. In the end of the story the sacrifice of Nightingale goes wasted when the girl rejects the rose and the boy destroys it.

Furthermore, Chamberlain's nephew is also materialistic because he brings precious jewels for the girl to show his love for her. Love is shown as a material pursuit rather than a true emotion by these characters.

The Nightingale and the Rose Characters:

The Nightingale:

The Nightingale is the protagonist of the story. She is romantic by nature and is inspired by student's love. She sings about love all the time and waits to see it. When she sees the student crying for a red rose, she decides to sacrifice her life to help him out. She gives her heart's blood to a white flower to color its petals and fulfill the need of student and in this process she dies. The whole story revolves around her sacrifice and selfless nature which is not appreciated throughout the story.

At the end of the story, her sacrifice is ignored and wasted by everyone when the red rose, stained by her heart's blood, is rejected and destroyed. Her selfless nature and unshakeable belief in true love shows that true love does exist but people make it selfish.

The Student:

He is a young boy with beautiful eyes and red lips who claims to be in love with a girl. In the very beginning of the story the student appears as a true lover who laments in his garden for the love of his life. He inspires the bird to sacrifice her life to help him out but as the story goes we come to know about his true nature. He is pre-occupied by practicality and lacks the ability to feel true emotions.

When the girls reject the red rose given by him, he calls her ungrateful and suddenly all his love fades away. He decides that love is impractical and unrealistic. It shows him as a materialistic person rather than a person who believes in love and selflessness.

He does not appreciate Nightingale's sacrifice and does not fulfill her last wish that was to be true to his love.

The Rose Tree:

There are three rose trees in the story but only one plays a major role in it. This is the tree under student's window that helps the Nightingale in creating a red rose.

When Nightingale asks him for a way of getting a red rose, he refuses to tell her because he does not want her to lose her life. But the Nightingale performs this suicidal act by pressing her heart against one of his thorns, giving her heart's blood to the rose to dye it red.

The rose-tree is the only one in the story who recognizes her sacrifice and remains sympathetic her.

The Girl:

The girl is briefly introduced in the story. She expresses an important theme. She is the student's sweetheart and professor's daughter. She tells the student to bring a red rose for her if he wants to dance with her in the party. When the student brings her a bright red-rose she rejects it because she is provided with jewels by another rich suitor.

This act of selfishness shows her as a materialistic and shallow person who values wealth more than true love.

The Lizard:

This character appears in the beginning of the story. When the student cries, he overhears him and laughs at him because he finds it useless to cry for a red rose.

It shows the lizard as a pessimist who believes that the people are motivated by self-interest rather than acting for selfless reasons.

This belief of lizard can be seen in the end of the story when the rose, a symbol of sacrificial love, is rejected by the girl and destroyed by the student for their self interests.

The Nightingale and the Rose Analysis:

The story begins with a young boy who is lamenting in his garden for a red rose. The boy is physically very attractive and utters about love and pain tearfully which shows him as a hero. The Nightingale who sings the songs about love and has an unshakeable believe on true love overhears him crying and desires to help the student. She gets inspired by the true love of the student and thinks that at last she has witnessed the love about which she sung all her life.

She, after searching for a red rose everywhere, comes to a red rose-tree where she comes to know about a method of creating a red rose but for that, she has to sacrifice her life. She thinks that it is worth dying for the sake of true love and pierces her heart against a thorn to transfer her heart's blood to stain a rose with red color.

The red rose is a symbol of true love. The Nightingale stains the rose with her own blood which shows the value of true love and self sacrifice. When the student sees the rose under his window, he becomes thrilled and plucks it for the girl without thinking for its life once. It shows the materialistic and selfish nature of people and how shallow they are from inside.

When the student brings the rose to the girl she rejects it and values the expensive jewels over it. On the other hand, the boy's love fades away in an instance and he starts calling love unrealistic. It also shows the materialism side of the society and how people value money over selfless acts and true feelings.

The sacrifice of the Nightingale goes wasted and is not appreciated by anyone except the red rose-tree who knew about the seriousness of her intended sacrifice. It also shows that the sacrifices made for others are not given importance rather material pursuits are more important for people.