

Grade 10 & 11 (*New Syllabus*)

Appreciation of English Literary Texts



(Prose)

The Nightingale and
the Rose

The author

Trivia on the author

Born

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde
16 October 1854
Dublin, Ireland

Died

30 November 1900 (aged 46)
Paris, France

Occupation

Author, poet, playwright

Language

English, French

Nationality

Irish

Period

Victorian era

Children

Cyril Holland, Vyvyan Holland

Spouse

Constance Lloyd (1884–98)

A note on the author

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October 1854 – 30 November 1900) was an Irish author, playwright and poet. After writing in different forms throughout the 1880s, he became one of London's most popular playwrights in the early 1890s. Today he is remembered for his epigrams, his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, his plays, as well as the circumstances of his imprisonment and early death.

Wilde's parents were successful Anglo-Irish Dublin intellectuals. Their son became fluent in French and German early in life. At university, Wilde read Greats; he proved himself to be an outstanding classicist, first at Dublin, then at Oxford. He became known for his involvement in the rising philosophy of aestheticism, led by two of his tutors, Walter Pater and John Ruskin. After university, Wilde moved to London into fashionable cultural and social circles. As a spokesman for aestheticism, he tried his hand at various literary activities: he published a book of poems, lectured in the United States and Canada on the new "English Renaissance in Art", and then returned to London where he worked prolifically as a journalist. Known for his biting wit, flamboyant dress and glittering conversation, Wilde became one of the best-known personalities of his day.

An overview of literary facts

Plot :

Student in love with his professor's daughter. The girl demands a red rose. No roses. A nightingale hears this and demands a rose from rose trees. The rose trees ask for a sacrifice. The nightingale representing a romantic love offers her lifeblood. A rose blooms and the student takes it to his lover. But she rejects it and him on the grounds that she loves the Chamberlin's son. She is vain and unfeeling. The rose which is born out sacrifice is discarded and crushed under a cart wheel.

Characters :

The Nightingale-genuine and intense. Symbol of romantic love, sacrifices her life for love.

Student- immature, mixed up,theatrical,has no depth.

The girl- superficial, flirtish.



An overview of literary facts. cont....

Themes....

1. Love-romantic and unselfish, selfish and self seeking.
2. Hypocrisy and pretension
3. Vanity
4. Knowledge(as derived from books) vs. experience

Techniques....

1. Symbols
2. Irony
3. Personification
4. metaphors

Salient features of short story writing found in The nightingale and the Rose

Initial conflict

A young boy is in trouble in not having a red rose to be given to his fiancée. Because she has demanded a red rose only if the boy wants to dance with her. He wants to take her a red rose as a token of love. The boy is desperate at the loss of the red rose.

Development of the action

A nightingale in a nearby tree hears the wailing of the desperate young lad and the plight of the kid touches the heart of the birdie. Further the appeal of the boy fuels the long standing will of the bird in meeting a true lover and it is more than pleased for the bird to help him. He flies around in finding a red rose and meets three rose bushes which demand it to make a sacrifice.

Salient features of short story writing found in The nightingale and the Rose

Climax

the red rose bloomed in the garden of the boy which in fact of the result of a great sacrifice made by the bird surprises the boy. He gives it away to the girl with full of hopes but it is flatly rejected.

Falling action/Conclusion

discarding of the flower into the gutter and the withdrawal of the boy back to his usual academic works

Note on the poem

The story literary bears all the features of a fairy tale yet it subtly touches on some issues associated with ubiquitous human ignorance, desires, and raw adolescent emotions in a form of a satirical tone which could probably be unnoticed at first glance. As accepted in general, Oscar Wilde's witty writing style finds the target and pierces through several layers in the social fabric which could well be seen in this story as well.

The grieving young lad over the inability of taking a red rose to his prospective lover and his burning desire in securing a chance on the dance floor with her leads to a series of unlikely scenarios with the cynosure of a nightingale. The bird which is well known for its mellifluous voice desperately wants to fulfill the boy's desire.

The bird gets instantly impressed by the words of the young lad " Ah what a little things does happiness depend"....."yet want of a red rose is my life made wretched". The student seems to be well read and studious " I have read all that the wise men have written, all the secrets of philosophy are mine". This clearly shows how shallow and irrational his logic is.

On the other hand the bird also seems myopic in making a hasty decision in sacrificing his life for a unworthy cause. The bird seems to have been on the look out for true love and the words spoken by the boy immediately galvanizes him into action.



Ironically both are ignorant of two different aspects of the issues that they are dealing with. The boy is infatuated with a girl where as the birdie gets overenthusiastic over some weightless statement he overheard. The bird pays with his life and the boy gets rude rejection in the hands of the girl. Both lead to these disastrous consequences due to their irrational and parochial conclusions made in haste.

The writer's intention is as explicit as it can be that he ridicules the teenage love and shows how fickle, shallow and superficial their love is. Though the writer wants to have a good laugh at the adolescent crush ,the fate of the nightingale pulls at our heart strings over it's genuine effort in making it possible for the boy to get a red rose. The interesting facet of the story is that a third party ; a bird pays a supreme price for true love which actually doesn't exist between two teen age lovers. The painful sacrifice made by the bird and how it has become in vain at the end seem to be in two different worlds. In the face of the rude rejection the boy simply discards the rose away into a gutter and the writer squares up the story with the rose being crushed by a cart wheel.

The gruesome fate of the bird and the callous nature of treatment mated out to the red rose which actually bloomed out of the life of the nightingale highlight the central thematic motifs of vanity, hypocrisy and sheer selfishness associated with humanity.

Some useful vocab.....

Wretched	cursed, utterly degraded
Pale	look unhealthy, turned white due to lack of vitality
Ball	formal dance organized to mark an occasion
Passion	desire, craving, intense feeling
Murmured	whispered, spoke in low voice
Company	being in the association, being with others
Lean	tilt against, rest against
Clasped	grasped tightly with your hands
Courtiers	sovereign's companions or advisers
Ridiculous	very silly or unreasonable
Cynic	one who believes that people's motives are always selfish
Mystery	something that remains unexplained
Soared	flew high in the sky
Grove	trees or bushes that grow together
Spray (of a tree)	a stem or a branch with flowers and leaves
Sun dial	a device showing the time by the pointer



Scythe	an agricultural tool
Chilled	became cold
Veins	vessels that circulate blood in the body
Thorn	sharply pointed projections on the stems of some plants
Pierce	make a hole with something pointed
Chariot	carts drawn by horses
Heather	a shrub with small purple flowers
Frankincense	a scented gum burnt as incense
Pallet-bed	straw mattress or makeshift bed
Ebbed	gone down or decreased
Pang	sudden sharp pain
Girdle	a belt or corset, (v) circle
Film(over eye)	blurring or visibility become weaker
Ecstasy	extreme happiness
Cavern	a large cave
Choking	difficulty in breathing
Gutter	drainage on the sides of the roads

Some text based questions suggested in T.I.M.

1. How many characters are introduced first?
2. Find the following details related to the story.
 - The place described at the beginning of the story and the time of the day.
 - Time of the year(season) and the atmosphere/mood suggested by it.
 - What are the social back grounds of the characters and are they the same?
3. What are the three things the student wishes to do if he gets what he wants?
4. Describe the steps the nightingale takes to help the boy solve his problem.
5. How does the nightingale attempt to produce a rose?



Probable answers to the questions overleaf

1. The young boy who is desperate in finding a red rose, the nightingale and an alluding reference to the girl
2.
 - It must be the garden of the boy's home and the time must be the mid day.
 - It could be the Winter since the flowers are not in full bloom. The despair of the boy is signified by the gloomy and bleak environment.
 - The ball at the professor's home and the boy's availability at the dance are all suggestive that both are from the same social background.
3. He shall hold her in his arms
He will dance with her till dawn.
He will clasp his hands with hers.



Probable answers to the questions overleaf

- 4 . The nightingale first flies to the rose tree standing in the center of the grass plot and requests to give him a red rose with the promise of singing the most beautiful song but when failed he flies to the rose tree around the old sun-dial. But when his request is turned down he flies to the rose tree that grows beneath the student's window. The rose tree beneath the boy's window promises to give him a red rose on the condition of taking the life of the bird which he accepts.
5. The nightingale is determined to sacrifice his life in fulfilling the boy's wish. He presses his chest hard to the thorn while singing until his life slowly drains out. The blood seeped out makes the rose red to please the boy.