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Essay #4 Literary Analysis

A Rose is a Rose is a Rosy Symbol

As love wanders into young hearts, there are various signs that one may take to show that love. One-way of showing that love for someone is to give a red rose to him or her. I believe this is a delightful gesture to show someone how much you care about him or her, however is there a deeper meaning behind that single stemmed rose. In the original tale of *Beauty and the Beast*, there is a different meaning for this telltale symbol and love is only a part of it. The rose symbolizes not only love and affection that many do believe, but the rose in the story can represent promise, death, or a symbol of secret.

The rose in the story *Beauty and the Beast* represents promise because the father promised her third daughter, Beauty, a rose in his return. In this line, the merchant father is informing the Beast that he has made a promise. "I promised to bring her back a rose from my journey" (Pilhofer). In response, the Beast frees the father under one condition that he must bring Beauty to the castle, and the father "...promised that he would do so" (Pilhofer). This impression of promise is being represented again, but because the father went to pick one of the Beast's favorite roses.

This concept of promise has a larger meaning at hand, and can be connected to the religious figure, Jesus Christ. It is known that Jesus Christ dies on the cross for humanity's sins therefore offering salvation. This idea of salvation is viewed as a promise from Jesus Christ and is depicted in the story as well when Beauty is willing to go to the castle in order for her father to keep his promise with the Beast because of the attempt at picking a rose from the garden. Brother John M. Samaha author of "The Rose: A Marian Symbol" claims that roses in windows of gothic cathedrals "...symbolize the world of salvation offered and revealed by God..." Therefore, it is noted in Christianity that the rose can symbolize salvation, but more so as the promise, that Jesus Christ makes with his followers.

The rose may also represent the concept of death. Throughout the story, the color of the rose is unknown, which is usually a direct indicator for a meaning because white roses are believed to be a symbol of death in dreams. According to Mario Reading, the author of *The Watkins Dictionary of Dreams* indicates, "For many centuries European folklore had it that...white ones [roses] was ill-omened" (Reading 336). I cannot think of a worse omen than death. On the other hand, in relation to the story, there are reoccurring lines that state some condition of death. For example, the first indication of death is used when the Beast finds the father picking at one if his

roses. "'I shall put you to death for this slight'" (Pilhofer). This line supports the idea that roses symbolize death because the Beast was seriously going to kill the father. Another line that suggests the concept of death is illustrated when Beauty returns to the Beast and finds him in the garden after an alarming dream. "...Beauty ran into the garden and there crouched the Beast, its eyes shut, as though dead" (Pilhofer).

The rose symbolizes death rather indirectly, but I would suggest it is to be expected overall since roses have thorns. Brother Samaha would also agree as he points out this idea by stating "In another emblem the rose of our life blossoms among thorns --pain, hard work, wickedness, disappointment." The thorns of life or the rose do have a negative connotation to them merely because harm is brought when someone pricks his or her finger because of a thorn. Looking on the bright side of life, Brother Samaha continues with "But God brings good out of misery."

The good displayed in this tale is revealed after the Beast is no longer a beast but a prince and this is emblematic in terms of the last symbol that the rose signifies. The last symbolic representation that the rose harbors is the idea of being secret or acting in secrecy. The secret that is exposed in this tale is the Beast's true image. In a confession, the Beast gives Beauty the story of his identity and explains that

I was suffering in silence, and couldn't tell my frightful secret. An evil witch turned me into a monster and only the love of a maiden willing to accept me as I was, could transform me back into my real self. (Pilhofer)

The rose symbolizes this idea because it brought these two characters together based on the simple events that Beauty wanted a rose from her father, in addition to roses being the Beast's favorite flower and following with the secret being revealed in the setting of the garden with roses. The rose is throughout the story continually and represents secrecy because of the prince's transformation as well as the rose being a secret symbol of connection between Beauty and the prince.

In addition to the tale, in relation to dreams Reading confirms this idea of concealment in claiming, "Roses are also an emblem of silence, as in the expression *sub rosa*." The Latin phrase *sub rosa* means under the rose and is used in English to denote secrecy or in Reading's perspective silence.

Concisely, it is well supported that the rose in the original tale of *Beauty and the Beast* does not only represent love that many believe at first sight, but also this favorite Valentine's Day flower symbolizes promise, death, and secrecy.

Promise, death, and secrecy are meanings that can be understood when reviewing the story more than once as well as

looking beyond the surface representation of love. Therefore, when you decide to pick out a flower for your romantic, please consider that it may just be an act of promises leading up to a sudden death, or simply a gesture of silence. In any case, the rose for me is just a flower with amazing meanings behind its petals and its fragrance of symbolism that took a journey in the telltale of Beauty and the Beast.

Works Cited

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