

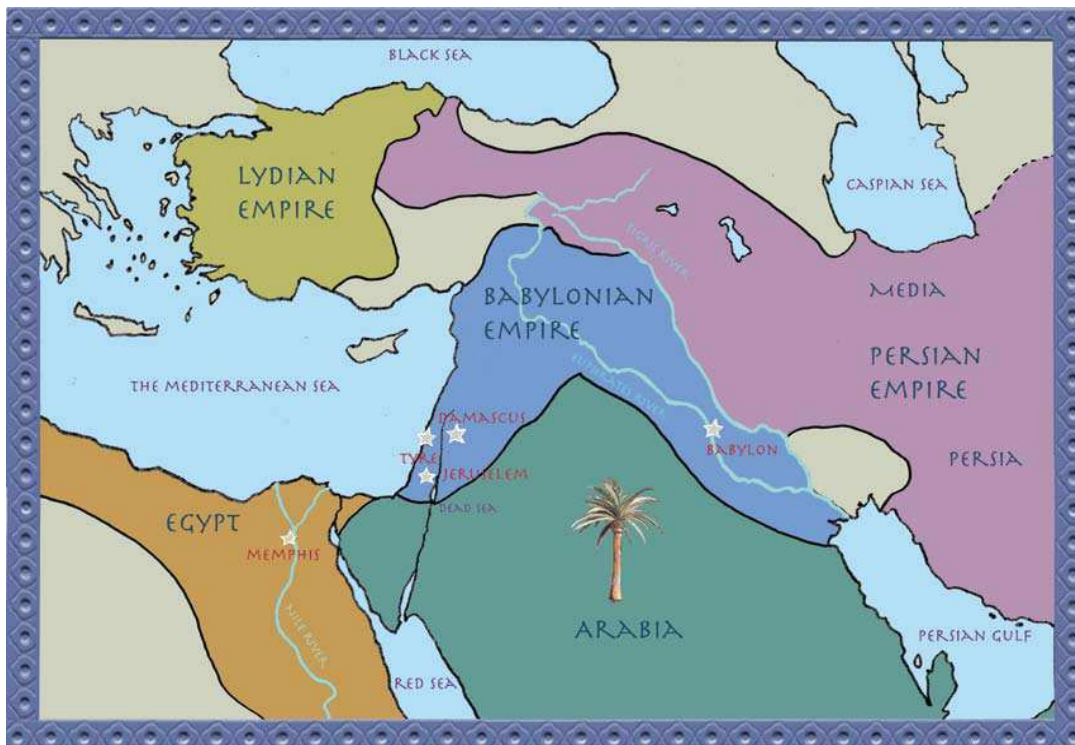
**TEACHERS' NOTES**  
**FOR**  
***ZAHARA'S ROSE***  
**A PICTURE**  
**STORYBOOK BY**  
**LIBBY HATHORN**  
**ILLUSTRATED BY**  
**DORIS UNGER**

Teachers' notes written by Anna Bartlett  
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## SECTION ONE: WHERE IN THE WORLD?

*Zahara's Rose* is set in ancient Babylon, around 2,600 years ago. Babylon was a city in Babylonia, about 90 kilometres south of what is now Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq. Babylon was built on the Euphrates River, and may have been the largest city in the world at the time this story was set: it had a seven-storey ziggurat (or temple), eight gates around the city, and was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Today, all that is left of the ancient city of Babylon is a mound of broken buildings made of mud-bricks.

Here are two maps. One is of Babylon and the nearby countries in *Zahara's* time, and the other is of the same area today.



1. Compare the two maps. The borders of many of the countries have changed since 600 BC. Why do you think this might be so?
2. Some of the countries' names have also changed since 600 BC. Fill in the table by writing the modern name of each country next to its ancient name.

Ancient Name	Modern Name
Arabia	
Egypt	
Babylonia (Babylonian Empire)	
Media and Persia (Persian Empire)	
Lydia (Lydian Empire)	

On the map of the ancient world you can see the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire and the Lydian Empire. Another ancient empire you may have heard of is the Roman Empire. An empire was formed when a powerful country took control of other countries (often the countries nearby).

3. There have been empires in more recent times as well. Australia was once part of an empire – do you know which one?

## SECTION TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Think about the story you have just read and try to answer these questions.

### Chapter 1

1. The main character's name is Zahara, which means 'plant' in Arabic. Do you think this name suits her? Why or why not?
2. Which of Zahara's family members are mentioned?
3. What is her father's job?
4. How does Zahara's grandmother feel about the plant? How do you know?
5. Zahara's father tells them that the plant will smell beautiful when it blooms. Why do you think Zahara's grandmother doesn't believe him?
6. Zahara's mother and grandmother are preparing the oxcart for a journey. Where are they going? Why?
7. The author uses the words 'honey', 'musk' and 'cinnamon' to describe the perfume of paradise. What words would you use to describe paradise?
8. The artist has used a sand imprint border. Why do you think she has done this?

### Chapter 2

1. Why does the Queen want to see the plants and herbs Zahara's family is bringing?
2. Are the lions and dragons that Zahara sees real? What are they made of?
3. Why do you think Zahara is so excited about seeing the city?
4. How does Zahara feel about war? How has war affected her?
5. What does Zahara's father have to do during wars? Do you think this would be dangerous? Why or why not?
6. What is Zahara's grandmother searching for as they drive into the city?
7. After looking at the pictures of the cart arriving at the city gates, describe how you would feel driving up to gates like these.
8. Look at the picture again. How has the artist made the gates seem grand and imposing?

### Chapter 3

1. What country does the Queen come from?
2. Why did King Nebuchadnezzar build the gardens for her? Do you think this would help with her homesickness? Would this help you if you were homesick?
3. Why do you think there are so many guards at the palace? What does this tell you about the importance of the King and Queen? Why else might royalty surround themselves with guards?
4. Why isn't Zahara allowed into the palace gardens?

5. Why do you think she needs a walking stick?
6. Even though Zahara's grandmother tries to convince the guard, he still won't let Zahara go through. Is this fair? Why or why not?
7. How does the guard react when Zahara calls the plant 'the Flower of Heaven'?
8. In the scene where Zahara is locked out, the artist has used a border of guards. Why do you think she has done this? What feeling does it add to the illustration?

## **Chapter 4**

1. How do you think Zahara feels as she sits alone under the palm trees? What would you have done?
2. What sorts of plants can Zahara see from under the palms? What flowers is Tahmina wearing?
3. How does Zahara work out that the veiled woman is her grandmother?
4. Do you think Zahara's grandmother is telling the truth when she says she is good friends with the Queen? Why or why not?
5. The author has described plants and insects that Zahara sees when she is in the gardens with her grandmother. In your opinion, does this description add to the story?
6. Why did Zahara's grandmother hide the Flower of Heaven? Do you think she should have done this? Why or why not?
7. What happened to the plant in the garden? What caused it to do this?
8. Do you think the plant ended up being worthy of its name? Give two reasons why you think this.

## **Chapter 5**

1. Even though Zahara has never seen the Queen before, she can tell who she is. How?
2. Did the Queen like Zahara? How do you know?
3. Why doesn't Zahara want to become the Official Petal Counter? Would you have wanted to stay? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Zahara is scared of disobeying the Queen?
5. The Queen sets a task for Zahara. What is it?
6. How does Zahara feel about this task?
7. The artist shows a doll not mentioned in the text. Look closely at the pictures. Who received the doll as a gift? Can we 'read' pictures as well as text?

## **Chapter 6**

1. How does the guard react to the flower Zahara is carrying? Do you think he realises that it is the same one he laughed at before?
2. How important does Zahara's grandmother think Zahara's job will be?

3. What type of plant is the Flower of Heaven?
4. Which rose will Zahara keep for the Queen?
5. Do Zahara and her family keep their promise to the Queen? How has the artist shown you the answer?
6. Do you think the author brought the story to a satisfying conclusion? Why or why not?
7. Do you think the author, Libby Hathorn, and the artist, Doris Unger, work well as a team in telling this story in words and pictures? Write down reasons for your opinion.

### **SECTION THREE: RESPONDING TO THE TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Imagine that Zahara's father brings home another plant that is quite strange. Draw the unusual plant, and describe what it looks like, smells like and feels like. It doesn't have to be a real plant – use your imagination! In speech captions show how Zahara and her grandmother might react to the plant you have created.
2. Zahara's grandmother is sometimes spirited and disrespectful, and lets Zahara into the gardens even though the guard said she wasn't allowed. Retell the story as a comic strip from the grandmother's perspective, describing how she feels and what she thinks during the day. Remember that she isn't very impressed by the rose at first.
3. Once Zahara has helped her family grow the roses, she is going to take the best one to the Queen. Imagine you are Zahara and write a diary entry about what happens the day she takes the rose to the Queen. How might the Queen respond to the rose? What reward or payment might she give Zahara?
4. Imagine the Hanging Gardens of Babylon are a popular tourist destination. Design a poster advertising them. What would interest or amaze people about the gardens? Make sure you mention those points on your poster.
5. Look at each chapter heading carefully to see what is happening to the rose. Write a new story using these as a guide for each paragraph of your story.
6. Build your own model of what you imagine the Hanging Gardens of Babylon would have looked like. Don't forget they are several storeys tall and have lots of plants that hang over the edges of each terrace.

## SECTION FOUR: WHY GARDENS?

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. King Nebuchadnezzar II built them for his wife Amyrithis around 600 BC. But gardens have been around for a lot longer than that. The earliest evidence of ornamental gardens is in some Egyptian tomb paintings from around 1500 BC. They show lotus ponds surrounded by rows of acacias and palm trees. As well as growing vegetables, the Egyptians grew flowers to wear at festivals, and also for making medicines. Sometimes rich people had decorative gardens with pools, shady trees and fish in them.

1. Think of some reasons why people grow plants they can't eat. Is this an efficient use of time and resources? Why or why not?
2. What other things can be done with plants apart from eating them? Do some research to find out.
3. Look up information on great gardens of the world. Choose one and make a presentation as a poster, a slide show, a TV show or a diorama.

Flowers reproduce by pollination, and most flowers are pollinated by bees or other insects. If a certain type of flower dies out, then the insects or wild animals that feed from that flower will die as well. It works the other way, too: if the insects or animals that pollinate a certain type of flower are endangered, then that species of flower will also become endangered.

4. How important do you think flowers are to their ecosystems? What would the world be like without them?
5. Identify an ecosystem in a garden or park near you. Make a diagram of it that would help you explain it to someone else.

In Zahara's time, just like today, gardeners would spend time planting, weeding and watering flowers, as well as pruning trees. Gardening then was hard work, because Babylonia had quite a dry climate.

6. The Hanging Gardens were watered by the Euphrates River. Find out how the Gardens were irrigated with water from the Euphrates.
7. Research another clever irrigation system from the past and present it as a slide show.
8. What are some of the problems of irrigating crops and gardens in Australia? What similarities can you see between gardening in ancient Babylon and gardening or farming in Australia?

## SECTION FIVE: MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE

### The Origin and Symbolism of the Rose

There are over 100 different species of roses, and most of them are native to Asia. People first began growing rose gardens 5,000 years ago, probably in China. Later, during the Roman Empire, roses were very popular, and were grown throughout the Middle East. They were used as confetti at celebrations, to make medicines, and as a source of perfume. In Europe, in the seventeenth century, roses were so precious that you could use them instead of money.

1. Find out the meaning of the word 'barter'.
2. In seventeenth century Europe, roses were bartered for goods. What else could be used for barter in the seventeenth century?
3. Do people barter today? If so, when and where? Think of different things you could barter.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, roses in Europe were all pink or white. The first red rose in Europe came from China around 1800. Green roses came a few decades later, and yellow and orange roses were discovered around 1900. By now people have managed to breed or genetically engineer roses of almost all colours – except black!

4. Why do you think people want to experiment with so many different colours of roses? Do you think black roses would be popular if they existed? Why or why not?

Plants or flowers often have symbolism – for example, daisies can stand for innocence, and poppies are worn to commemorate people who have died in war.

5. Investigate three flowers or plants (apart from roses) and what they symbolise. Draw and label them.

Roses are symbolic of many different things. They are often symbols of love, passion and beauty. They can also stand for silence or secrets; the Romans used to decorate rooms with roses when something secret was going to be discussed there. Roses can also refer to war and politics. During the fifteenth century, roses were used as symbols of the two groups fighting to control England. The white rose stood for the group called York, while the red rose stood for the group called Lancaster. Because of this, the battles between the two groups became known as 'The Wars of the Roses'.

6. What else could roses symbolise? Make a list and convince a partner of your answers, explaining why you made the choices you did.

## Roses in Paintings

Artists have been inspired by roses and their beauty for centuries. The first known painting of a rose is from a fresco (or wall painting) in Crete, around 1500 BC. In Persia roses were common in paintings and on carpets, and a rose appears in a famous painting on the wall of an old cathedral in Belgium. Later, during the sixteenth century, roses were made popular by the Dutch artists who created oil paintings of them.

1. Make a slide show for the white board of six artworks that feature roses.
2. Why do you think artists like to paint roses and other flowers?

One of the most famous rose painters ever is Pierre-Joseph Redoute, who lived in France during the nineteenth century. He painted over 170 of the Empress Josephine's roses for her!

3. Compare Redoute's painting (*Rosa centifolia foliacea*) with this painting (*White Roses*) by another famous rose painter, Henri Fantin-Latour. Which painter do you think has paid more attention to the details of the rose as a plant? Which do you think is more interested in the scene as a whole? Why do you think that?



*Rosa centifolia foliacea*



*White Roses*

4. Imagine you are a famous artist who is going to paint a picture of a rose. Would you use acrylic paints, oil paints or water paints? What colour rose would you paint? What else would you put in the painting? Now sketch, colour or paint a picture that features a rose or roses.

## Roses in Songs and Poems

There are also many songs and poems that talk about roses. Some are traditional or folk songs, and some are more modern. Look up the lyrics of the following three songs: 'The Rose of Tralee' (an Irish ballad), 'Ramblin' Rose' (a song performed by Nat King Cole), and 'Fable of the Rose' (performed by Frank Sinatra).

1. When they talk about a rose, some of these songs are actually referring to a woman. Why do you think they compare a woman with a rose?
2. What common theme can you find in the lyrics of all three songs? Why do you think this is so?

Many famous poets have written about roses. William Shakespeare, whose plays were in poetry, wrote a very famous line about roses:

What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
*Romeo and Juliet, act III, scene ii*

Just like in the songs we looked at, poems about roses sometimes compare women with roses, and are often about love and beauty.

3. Look at a copy of the poem 'A Red, Red Rose', by Robert Burns. Find a copy in modern English, if you can. What is the poet comparing his love (or girlfriend) to?
4. Do you think the poet is being realistic, or romantic? Will he still be alive and in love with his girlfriend when all the seas have dried up and the rocks have melted?
5. Now look at the poem 'One Perfect Rose', by Dorothy Parker. The first two stanzas seem serious and romantic, just like Robert Burns's poem. How is the last stanza different?
6. Which would you prefer – a limousine or a rose? Why? What point do you think the poet is trying to make about roses?
7. Write a short song or poem about a rose. It could be serious and romantic, or it could be funny. Before you start, think about what you're going to write. How will you describe roses? What point do you want your poem or song to make?

## Roses in Stories

There are also several fairy tales or folk stories with roses in them. One that you may have heard of is ‘Snow-White and Rose-Red’, by the Grimm brothers. In this story the sisters are given their names because they are like two rose trees – one white, and the other red. The Grimm brothers’ version of ‘Sleeping Beauty’ is called ‘Little Briar-Rose’. Here is a tale about a rose that was written by Oscar Wilde in 1888.

# THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

“She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses,” cried the young Student; “but in all my garden there is no red rose.”

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

“No red rose in all my garden!” he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. “Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched.”

“Here at last is a true lover,” said the Nightingale. “Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.”

“The Prince gives a ball tomorrow night,” murmured the young Student, “and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.”

“Here indeed is the true lover,” said the Nightingale. “What I sing of, he suffers—what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.”

“The musicians will sit in their gallery,” said the young Student, “and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the

harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her"; and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose?" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are red,” it answered, “as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year.”

“One red rose is all I want,” cried the Nightingale, “only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?”

“There is a way,” answered the Tree; “but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you.”

“Tell it to me,” said the Nightingale, “I am not afraid.”

“If you want a red rose,” said the Tree, “you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart’s-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine.”

“Death is a great price to pay for a red rose,” cried the Nightingale, “and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?”

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

“Be happy,” cried the Nightingale, “be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart’s-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense.”

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

“Sing me one last song,” he whispered; “I shall feel very lonely when you are gone.”

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up, and pulled a notebook and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

“She has form,” he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove—“that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good.” And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the top-most spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. “Press closer, little Nightingale,” cried the Tree, “or the Day will come before the rose is finished.”

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose’s heart remained white, for only a Nightingale’s heart’s-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now"; but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name"; and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

“Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful,” said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

“Ungrateful!” said the girl. “I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don’t believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain’s nephew has”; and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

“What a silly thing Love is,” said the Student as he walked away. “It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics.”

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

1. Did you find this story sad? Re-write the ending, so there is a different outcome.
2. Just like the other songs and poems we looked at, this tale links roses with love. What does the nightingale think of love? (There are two places where she talks about love: one is near the start, and the other is in the middle, when she is talking to the student.)
3. What does the student think of love by the end of the story?
4. Who do you agree with – the nightingale or the student? Why?
5. Write a fairy story about a rose. It doesn’t have to be like this one – use your imagination! Where is it set? What characters will you include in your story? Who will be the main character? What part will the rose play in the story? Will it have a happy ending or a sad ending? Once you have written your fairy story, read it out to your friends. Make sure you use all of your five senses – sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell – to describe things effectively in your story.

**‘A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE’  
WHO SAID THIS AND WHY?**