i) "Love is not half as useful as logic".
Do you agree? Discuss in relation to
The Nightingale and the Rose. (2016 O/L)

The short story The Nightingale and the
Rose by Oscar Wilde deals with the
topic of love of a young student.
The words "Love is not half as useful as
logic" are uttered by this character
after facing rejection by ~~the girl~~
~~he was~~ ~~in~~ his love interest. Let us
explore the credibility of this statement
further.

Point 1   The setting of the story is that
of a student who is part of a
conventional education system of book
learning. He is said to be persuing subjects
like Philosophy and Metaphysics. Such
subjects are usually theoretical and
his analysis of love, which is an
emotion, based on these subjects appears
to be slightly absurd. Love is not found
on reasoning. It is rather involving passion
and mutual understanding. This is but
the first reason I cite as & I disagree
with this statement by the student.
I see this as an opportunity Wilde
has used to critisize the theoretical
knowledge book learning can bring as
opposed to what one learns with
experiences in life.

"I have read all that wise men have written
and all the secrets of philosophy are mine,
yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

Further, the student draws a contrast between aesthetics and philosophy. As aesthetics deal with emotions, feelings and expressions, philosophy deals with the mind and intellect. Although it is important to strike a good balance of the two, love is more 'useful' than all the sciences as one cannot live without love. We are presented with a rather mechanical individual who copes with rejection with thoughts such as

"I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics". This personality trait of the student is a subtle criticism of the system by the writer.

Point 2

The contrasting characteristics of the Nightingale are employed by Wilde to solidify this effectively. With the character of the bird, we are given a sensitive, self-sacrificing individual who believes that love is superior to everything else.

"But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Students sorrow and she sat silently in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of love."

We see her set out in a mission to find a red rose while we are told how the lizard laughs saying "how very ridiculous" at the thought of the student weeping. The Nightingale's willingness to "stain it with her own hearts blood" for which she asks that he "will be a true lover" where she declares "love is wiser than Philosophy" gives us an insight into her sentiments. Further, we are also told how "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." Again, Wilde seemingly juxtaposes the sensitive Nightingale with the clueless student.

Points

Lastly, we are given a very superficial character who is shallow and vain in the form of the love interest, the professor's daughter. Her initial demand of him getting her a red rose, her concern about how the rose does not match 'go with' her dress and her desire for 'real jewels' are all instances deployed to portray this. How a so called intellectual man of intellect can seek the hands of such a girl itself is a harsh critisism of his superior educational background. Here again, I am compelled to disagree with his statement of love not being half as useful as logic.

In conclusion, I strongly feel like Oscar Wilde employs the three characters described by me, namely the student, the Nightingale and the Professor's daughter to bring out the superiority of love over logic. He has masterfully done this using the storyline where we, the readers are made to lament at the unfortunate ending of the Nightingale for the sake of a love that isn't worth the sacrifice.