

THE HAPPY PRINCE by Oscar Wilde

Author Biography

Oscar WILDE, (1854-1900), born in Dublin, was the son of Sir William Wilde, Irish surgeon, and Jane Francesca Elgee, well known as writer and literary hostess under the pen-name 'Speranza'. A brilliant classical scholar, Wilde studied at Trinity College, Dublin, then at Magdalen College, Oxford, where in 1878 he won the Newdigate Prize for his poem 'Ravenna'. His flamboyant aestheticism attracted attention, much of it hostile; he scorned sport, collected blue china and peacock's feathers, and proclaimed himself a disciple of Pater and the cult of 'art for art's sake' mocked in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* (1881). Wilde successfully lived up to the image of the satire, and its impetus took him on a lecture tour of the United States in 1882, after the publication of his first volume of Poems (1881). In 1883 he attended the first night of his play *Vera* in New York but it was not a success. In 1884 he married, and in 1888 published a volume of fairy stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. In 1891 followed *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, and Other Stories* and his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a Gothic melodrama which had aroused scandalized protest when it appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* (1890). Wilde claimed in his preface, 'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.' In 1891 he published more fairy stories, *A House of Pomegranates*. His second play, *The Duchess of Padua* (1891), is a dull verse tragedy, but epigrammatic brilliance and shrewd social observation brought theatrical success with *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). His masterpiece was *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). *Salomé* (now known chiefly by R. Strauss's opera), written in French, was refused a license, but performed in Paris in 1896 and published in 1894 in an English translation by Lord Alfred Douglas with illustrations by Beardsley. Lord Alfred's father, the marquess of Queensberry, disapproved of his son's friendship with Wilde and publicly insulted the playwright. This started a chain of events which led to Wilde's imprisonment for homosexual offences in 1895. He was declared bankrupt while in prison and wrote a letter of bitter reproach to Lord Alfred, published in part in 1905 as *De Profundis*: in it he provided an apologia for his own conduct, claiming to have stood 'in symbolic relations to the art and culture' of his age. He was released in 1897 and went to France where he wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), inspired by his prison experience. In exile he adopted the name

Sebastian Melmoth, after the romance by Maturin. He died in Paris (Drabble, 2000: 1098).

Summary of the story

The Happy Prince is not a living Prince. He is the statue of a prince, mounted on a tall column in the center of the city. It is the statue of a dead prince with the soul of the prince in it. One night, a little Swallow flew over the city. He stopped his trip to Egypt for the winter because he fell in love with Reed. One night, while flying over the city, the swallow saw the statue of The Happy Prince. He landed just between the feet of the Happy Prince. As he was going to sleep a huge drop of water fell on him. He gazed upwards and saw the eyes of the Happy Prince filling with tears.

The Happy Prince told the Swallow that when he was alive he lived in the royal palace where sorrow was not allowed to enter. People called him the Happy Prince. After he died, his statue was set up so high that could see all the misery of the city. The prince asked the swallow to help the poor mother with ruby from the top of his sword. Then he helped the young fellow complete his play for the theatre with the valuable sapphire which was the Happy Prince's eye. After that, he gave the little match girl another sapphire from the prince's second eye. After the Happy Prince turned absolutely blind, the swallow decided to stay in the city with him. Little Swallow did persistently whatever the Happy Prince directed and helped many hungry and poor people. The little Swallow removed the gold leaf by leaf, until the prince became very dull and grey.

Time passed by and winter came. The swallow said goodbye to the Happy Prince and died at his feet. The lead heart of the Prince broke. The greedy Mayor ordered people to pull the statue down and melt it because it was no longer beautiful or useful. The prince's heart did not melt. God asked his angel to find the two most precious things in the city. The Angel carried the swallow and the prince's heart to Heaven.

THE HAPPY PRINCE (Text)

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold; for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. "He is as beautiful as a weathercock," remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; "only not quite so useful," he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

"Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?" asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. "The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything." "I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy," muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

"He looks just like an angel," said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks, and their clean white pinafores.

"How do you know?" said the Mathematical Master, "you have never seen one."

"Ah! but we have, in our dreams," answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water

with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

“It is a ridiculous attachment,” twittered the other Swallows, “she has no money, and far too many relations”; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away. After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his ladylove.

“She has no conversation,” he said, “and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.” And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies. “I admit that she is domestic,” he continued, “but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also.”

“Will you come away with me?” he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

“You have been trifling with me,” he cried. “I am off to the Pyramids. Goodbye!” and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. “Where shall I put up?” he said; “I hope the town has made preparations.” Then he saw the statue on the tall column. “I will put up there,” he cried; “it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air.” So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

“I have a golden bedroom he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. “What a curious thing!” he cried. “there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness.” Then another drop fell. “What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?” he said; “I must look for a good chimney-pot,” and he determined to fly away. But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw- Ah! what did he see? The eyes of the Happy Prince were

filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

“Who are you?” he said.

“I am the Happy Prince.” “Why are you weeping then?” asked the Swallow; “you have quite drenched me.” “When I was alive and had a human heart,” answered the statue, “I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the day time I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall.

Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep.” “What, is he not solid gold?” said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

“Far away,” continued the statue in a low musical voice, “far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen’s maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.”

“I am waited for in Egypt,” said the Swallow. “My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. Soon they will be going to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.” “Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad.” “I don’t think I like boys,” answered the Swallow.

“Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller’s sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect.”

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. “It is very cold here,” he said; “but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger.” “Thank you, little Swallow,” said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince’s sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town. He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. “How wonderful the stars are,” he said to her, “and how wonderful is the power of love!” “I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball,” she answered; “I have ordered passionflowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy.” He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman’s thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy’s forehead with his wings. “How cool I feel,” said the boy, “I must be getting better”; and he sank into a delicious slumber. Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done.

“It is curious,” he remarked, “but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.” “That is because you have done a good action,” said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy. When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. “What a remarkable phenomenon,” said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. “A swallow in winter!” And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

“To-night I go to Egypt,” said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, “What a distinguished stranger!” so he enjoyed himself very much. When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. “Have you any commissions for Egypt?” he cried. “I am just starting.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “will you not stay with me one night longer?” “I am waited for in Egypt,” answered the Swallow. “To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water’s edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.” “I will wait with you one night longer,” said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. “Shall I take him another ruby?” “Alas! I have no ruby now,” said the Prince; “my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play.” “Dear Prince,” said the Swallow, “I cannot do that”; and he began to weep.

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “do as I command you.” So the Swallow plucked out the Prince’s eye, and flew away to the student’s garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and

came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets. "I am beginning to be appreciated," he cried; "this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play," and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. "Heave a-hoy!" they shouted as each chest came up.

"I am going to Egypt!" cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. "I am come to bid you good-bye," he cried. "Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?" "It is winter," answered the Swallow, "and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea."

"In the square below," said the Happy Prince, "there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her." "I will stay with you one night longer," said the Swallow, "but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then." "Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you." So he plucked out the Prince's other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand.

"What a lovely bit of glass," cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "so I will stay with you always." "No, little Swallow," said the poor Prince, "you must go away to Egypt." "I will stay with you always," said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet. All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me of marvelous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there." So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm. "How hungry we are!" they said. "You must not lie here," shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen. "I am covered with fine gold," said the Prince, "you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy." Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. "We have bread now!" they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and

the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice. The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking, and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings. But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more.

"Good-bye, dear Prince!" he murmured, "will you let me kiss your hand?" "I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince, "you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you." "It is not to Egypt that I am going," said the Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?" And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue: "Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!" he said. "How shabby indeed!" cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor, and they went up to look at it. "The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer," said the Mayor. "in fact, he is little better than a beggar!" "Little better than a beggar," said the Town Councillors. "And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!" continued the Mayor. "We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here." And the town Clerk made a note of the suggestion. So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. "As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful," said the Art Professor at the University. Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. "We must have another statue, of course," he said, "and it shall be a statue of myself." "Of myself," said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarrelled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

“What a strange thing,” said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. “This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away.” So they threw it on a dust heap where the dead Swallow was also lying. “Bring me the two most precious things in the city,” said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird. “You have rightly chosen,” said God, “for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.”

THE END

Elements of the story

1. The plot structure of The Happy Prince

1. Introduction: In an unnamed city in northern Europe, there is a statue known as the Happy Prince which stands on top of a tall pedestal. The statue appears to be made of gold, there are two sapphires on the statue which represent the prince's eyes and a ruby on the hilt of his sword. The statue is greatly admired by all of the people in the city for its beauty. At the start of the winter, one swallow remains in the area. The Swallow had fallen in love with a reed and spent all summer with her. When the other swallows left for Egypt at the start of the autumn, the Swallow remained behind. However, he eventually decides that there is no future in his relationship with the reed and decides to catch up with the other birds.

2. Complications: One evening, the Swallow takes shelter under the statue of the Happy Prince. He is splashed by what he thinks at first is a raindrop but which is really a tear falling from the Happy Prince's eye. The Swallow is surprised that somebody known as the Happy Prince is crying. The Happy Prince explains that he appeared to be happy when he was alive because he knew nothing of life outside of the Palace of Sans-Souci. Only after having died did the Happy Prince learn of the realities of life for the poor. As a statue on top of a pedestal, the Happy Prince can see all over the city and, although his heart is now only made of lead, he feels greatly for those who are living in poverty. He tells the Swallow of a poor seamstress whose son is suffering from a fever. He tells the bird to pluck the ruby out of the hilt of his sword and take it to the woman. The Swallow agrees to do this one good deed for the Happy Prince but insists that he will fly to Egypt the following day. The next evening, the Swallow comes to say good-bye to the Happy Prince. The statue tells the bird about a young playwright who is weak from hunger, insisting that the Swallow take one of his sapphire eyes to the young man. The Swallow reluctantly does so, again insisting that he will leave for Egypt the next day. When the Swallow returns again to say good-bye to the statue, the Happy Prince tells him to give his other sapphire eye to a little match-girl in the square below.

3. Climax: After having done so, the Swallow promises to stay with the Happy Prince, who is now blind, forever.

4. Resolution: The Swallow flies around the city, observing the poor and reporting what he sees back to the Happy Prince. The statue tells the bird to peel off pieces of his gold leaf and to give it to those who are in need, until all of the gold is gone. At the

same time, the Swallow is suffering as the weather gets steadily colder and knows that he will soon die. The Swallow bids farewell to the Happy Prince one more time just before he dies, at which point the Happy Prince's lead heart breaks. The Mayor notices that the gold, ruby and sapphires are gone from the statue of the Happy Prince and is even more shocked to find a dead bird at the statue's feet. The statue no longer being beautiful, the Mayor orders that it be removed and melted down. However, it proves impossible to melt the Happy Prince's lead heart, which is thrown onto a garbage heap with the dead Swallow.

5. Conclusion: God asks an angel to bring Him the two most precious things in the city. The angel brings Him the dead Swallow and the Happy Prince's lead heart. God is pleased with the angel's choice and says that both the Swallow and the Happy Prince will be happy forever in Paradise.

2. Character Analysis

The Happy Prince

This character is a golden statue that can see what is going on around him, but cannot move. He was happy prince, but he weeps for all the hardship that are faced by the people of this city. He asks the swallow to take pieces of him (the golden leaves of the statue, the sapphires that are his eyes, and the ruby that is the hilt of his sword) and give them to the poor in the city. In the end, he is melted and the statue is not beautiful without its decorations.

The Swallow

A bird stayed behind when the rest of his flock migrated to Egypt in order to court a reed plant that he had fallen in love with. His friends disapproved and thought that this was a foolish decision. The reed eventually decides that she will not accompany him. The swallow is infuriated and he decides to migrate to Egypt by himself. However, before he leaves, he tries to sleep one night under the statue of the happy prince the statue begins crying because he is saddened by everything that he sees going on in the city, the swallow is the agent of the happy prince's generosity, bringing the gems and gold to the poor as instructed, and the two become fast friends. Eventually, the swallow dies because he chooses to remain with blind prince rather than abandon fly to Egypt, and winter gets too cold. He dies at the feet of statue.

The Reed

The reed decides not to accompany the swallow, who has been courting her, breaking his heart. She is too close to her home and cannot bear the thought of leaving thus the swallows courtship was in vain. The ill-fated love between Reed and Sparrow also introduces the theme of judging falsely by appearances and the negativity of gossip and peer judgment.

The Town Councilors

They are greedy and obsessed with their public images they cannot understand the humanity of the dead prince and of a little bird for they are too busy with their daily pursuits to increase their money, rank and power.

The Poor Woman

Her son is ill. She struggles as a seamstress to make enough money to take care of her son. She receives that ruby from the hilt of the prince's sword.

The Young Playwright

He is starving and struggling to complete a play, but he is unable to concentrate because he is so hungry. He receives the frost sapphire eye from the prince .

Little Girl

She drops the matches that she is supposed to sell, and is crying because she knows that she will be beaten by her father when she returns to home without the matches or any money. She receives a sapphire eye from the prince.

The Mayor

He orders that the statue must be turned down. He wants the metal to be made into a statue of himself. The story ends with God asking his angels to take the two most valuable things from the city, and carry the leaden heart of the prince which was thrown out when the statue was melted down and the body of the dead swallow was also there. "You have rightly chosen, said God for in my garden of paradise this little bird shall sing forevermore in my city.

3. How do the townspeople judge the statue?

All those who pass by the statue are affected by and attracted to the external properties of the prince. One of the town councilors describe the prince as weathercock who really has no artistic taste, but trying to be practical in his description. A sensible mother is talking to her son who is crying for the moon. She is trying to appease her son by referring to the statue. A disappointed man feels glad when looking at the statue. The prince is a source of inspiration for him. The charity children describe him as an angel under the influence of the church.

4. Poverty description in the story of The Happy Prince

The writer has brought out poverty in a very beautiful manner. The seamstress's son is suffering from fever. He is thirsty and asking for oranges. She is poor. She cannot buy oranges for him. She is embroidering passion flowers for the queen's maid- of –honour. Her poverty is very touching. The young writer is cold and hungry. Hunger has made him faint. The little weeping match girl has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. The beggars are sitting at the gates of the houses of the rich people. In dark lanes, there are children who have white starving faces. They are looking out listlessly at the black streets. People do not have their own houses to go. Two little boys are lying under the archway of a bridge. It is cold so they are lying in one another's arm to keep themselves warm. They are very hungry.

5. Major themes in The Happy Prince

1. Appearances and Reality:

The prince is adorned in finery and he is judged to be a symbol of prosperity in the town. Yet his finery disappears and he no longer looks as attractive as he had previously been. But though at the level of appearance the prince looks very attractive, he is so sad in reality. In the end, he is shabby but happy. The city looks from the outside and above very beautiful and fabulous, but from the inside poverty is dominant.

2. Sacrifice

The Happy Prince throughout the story is the only one who thinks logically

and practically. He knows that his ruby, sapphire and gold is worth more to those in need than it is to him. In reality the Happy Prince sacrifices everything that he has, including his eyesight, in order to help others. Yet the Mayor and the Councillors do nothing to help others. Being too preoccupied with their own sense of self-importance. For the Mayor and the Councillors their roles in the town mean more to them than actually helping the people of the town. They are driven by their egos and the self-belief that they know best. Yet many in the town live in poverty. Though it is clear that the Happy Prince has made a sacrifice, so too has the Swallow, He has left it too late to fly to Egypt and as such the cold of winter kills him. This is important as it highlights just how dedicated the Swallow is to the Happy Prince. On several occasions he could have abandoned the Happy Prince but choose to stay with him as the Happy Prince helped others. If anything the Swallow has served the Happy Prince well even though he did pay the ultimate price for his actions. How powerful the Happy Prince's feelings for the citizens in the town is also noticed by the sadness he feels when he sees them struggle. It is this sadness that triggers the generosity and practicality of the Happy Prince. Though the Happy Prince knows that he is being stripped of everything he possesses he continues to help those in need. He can see that there are others who are more in need than himself. At all stages in the story the Happy Prince is concerned more about others than he is about himself. He is selfless. While the prince gives away his ruby, eyes and gold leaves, the little swallow sacrifices his life to serve humanity. The bird did not reach Egypt to meet its companions, instead stayed with the prince in harsh cold weather and at last died at the feet of the statue.

3. Selfishness

The happy prince is very selfish. He is concerned only with his needs. When the Swallow, in several times, explains to the prince the dangerous situation of being late in this place and how wonderful Egypt is there, the prince pays no attention to the bird's needs and condition. The reed is also described as being selfish when the birds mentions that she prefers to be domestic.

4. Love

The compassion of the statue for other people and for the swallow depicts great sensitive feelings. The prince gives away everything to help people, and the swallow and prince share a fantastic love bond.

5. True Friendship

The prince in the story shares a great bond of friendship and respect with the little swallow. Whatever the prince commands, the swallow follows the orders faithfully. The friendship they had was so true and loyal that they were put in heaven together.

6. Beauty and Morality

The protagonist of “The Happy Prince” is himself a statue meant to decorate the city, and through him, the story explores the relationship between art and usefulness. The initial description of the Happy Prince focuses on his aesthetic beauty: he is “gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold,”. He has eyes of “two bright sapphires,” and on his sword-hilt “a large red ruby glowed”. Importantly, Oscar Wilde’s story doesn’t disavow beauty altogether. Instead, it critiques the fixation on outer beauty at the expense of compassion and also rejects the equation of such beauty with innate value, when the Prince readily gives up his beauty.

6. How does Oscar Wilde use symbols in 'the Happy Prince'?

Symbolism is a literary form that is favored by Wilde and it is widely implied in the Happy Prince. So much so, that some of the characters are symbols such as the swallow.

The swallow, as seen in the story, has a meeting with its colony in Egypt but it chooses to remain with the prince and to help him fulfill his wishes until the Prince is satisfied. This depicts that the swallow is a symbol for loyalty and friendship.

The prince’s lead heart is a form of symbol as well. As learned in the story when all the body parts of the happy prince melt, his heart remains attached. The heart cannot

be melted because it is made out of lead. In the symbolic context this is to subtly send the message of immortality to the readers which in one way can be viewed as when one sacrifices their own wealth and happiness for others, they become immortal and this is the symbolism behind the lead heart of the prince that does not melt. In conclusion, the lead heart can never be melted because the Prince is forever immortal.

the townspeople are a symbol of repression. Repression is the psychological act of excluding desires and impulses from one's consciousness. This symbol is used to show the misuse of power and also to represent a form of oppression of people.

In this story the writer used symbolic tones and all the character of this story has symbolic significance. Statue of happy prince is a charity figure like Christ crucified himself for humanity like that happy prince sacrifice his beauty for the humanity. Swallow also sacrifices his life for the humanity. Woman, girl, writer and poor boys, all of them symbolize the poverty of the Victorian age.

Egypt

Oscar Wilde has used the word "Egypt" which is a symbol of surpassing and speechless beauty and swallow appreciates that place as in Egypt the sun is warm the green palm trees and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them it seems that swallow is in reach of paradise in the whole story. Wilde also shows his love for beauty and esthetic sense.

Title "the Happy Prince"

This story also has symbolic title; the title of the story is "The Happy Prince", but inwardly he is not happy. He feels grieved, pity for the common people so, he is not happy as the title suggests.

7. Setting

The setting of the short story "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde is an unnamed city in the north of Europe, where the statue of a prince stands on a tall column. The statue is an important landmark in the city, as the Swallow notices it right on arrival. When the Prince was alive, he lived in "the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter". The name of the palace could also be allegorical. It is meant to suggest that the Happy Prince lived in a place without concerns, or worries, carefree, isolated from the suffering in the outside world. apart from the symbolic name of the palace.

8. Figurative Language

Personification

The writer personified the statue of the happy prince and swallow, as living human beings. They talk with each other like human beings because they feel the misery of the living people which human being is ignoring (e.g. The mayor and the councilors).

Simile:

In simile, one object is likened to the other to enrich an image, the comparison is explicit as:

- ☐ His hands are like withered leaves.
- ☐ Lips are red as pomegranate.
- ☐ As blue as the great sea.
- ☐ Who is as black as abony.
- ☐ They have eyes like green beryl

9. Satire

Oscar wild's story reflects various instances of satire in this story. Satire on educational system and satire on social injustices in "the happy prince" Wilde mentions the professor who was surprised by seeing a swallow in the writer and he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Everyone quoted it that it was full of so many words that they could not understand". Though this fairy tale was written on the demand of his son yet it is full of satiric characters, situations and issues. In this wilde satirized the writers who produce literature for the sake of production without any kind of necessity and compulsion always exaggerating without any particular aims just hankering after earning name and fame. Even absurdity is there; long insufficiently written articles that nobody is also to understand. In fact, the writers liked these do not know themselves what they are imparting in their writings.

Analysis

Oscar Wilde shows the double standard of society: the rich people of the society are in the enjoyment of all luxuries but people are devoid of basic necessities. This social injustice is best satirized in the happy prince. The first victim of this injustice is poor seamstress who is in poor conditions and is not able to do something for her child. She is helpless waiting for the time to take its turn. With her hands, she can stitch the gown of queen. Yet with these hands, she cannot cure her child.

The writer's state of depression makes our hearts rebel against this unfair distinction and the pleasures of the rich are more valuable than the life of individuals. The second victim we see is the young man in the garret, who had large and dreamy eyes". But the cruel society had snatched the dreams from eyes and stuffed them with gloominess of poverty. He had to complete the play, but his empty belly had molded his creativity towards ideas of poverty. As it is said that "The empty stomach is the grave of great ideas".

In The Happy Prince, we have the theme of dedication, compassion, generosity, struggle, appearance, sacrifice, selflessness and corruption. By telling the Swallow to take parts of his body, the Prince is using his body and the precious stones and gold that adorn his body in a constructive and practical manner. He is helping those in the town who are less fortunate than him and who need a helping hand. This may be important as the reader would expect the Mayor and the local Councillors in the town to be responsible for the well-being of the citizens of the town, but this is not the case. Something that is clear to the reader when the Mayor suggests that the Happy Prince should be replaced with a statue of himself. If anything Oscar Wilde may be highlighting the selfishness of those in authority. Rather than looking after others they are looking and thinking only of themselves. They do not see the poverty that exists in the town nor do they see the struggle that has overcome so many of the citizens in the town.

The fact that the Happy Prince's leaden heart can't be broken or melted down at the end of the story is also interesting as symbolically suggesting a degree of strength and goodness. Something that becomes clearer to the reader when Wilde introduces a biblical ending to the

story and the Angels take the Swallow and the Happy Prince's heart to heaven. It may also be a case that Wilde is suggesting that both the Happy Prince and the Swallow have lived their lives as God would like others to live their life, hence their ascension to heaven. Whereas it becomes clear to the reader that those in authority in the town are thinking only of themselves and not of the poor and needy. The Happy Prince and the Swallow gave theirs all in order to help others yet no other character in authority has done likewise. There is an element of corruption in the town among those in authority and the reader feels as though there is no one left in the town to match the spirit and generosity of the Happy Prince and the Swallow. Who are no longer deemed to be appropriate symbols of the town yet God sees it fit that they should live by his side. Having lived their lives helping others and sacrificing all they have in order that others can survive and prosper. The story is an allegory. It brings out the importance of charity. We learn that love and sacrifice can endear us to God.

Commentary

The Happy Prince is a tale with multiple lessons. From one side it is the critic of the society that can be cruel and heartless and on the other side, it is about the compassion towards human's troubles. The happy prince is a contemporary fairytale whose plot is surreal and it is placed into a modern society with real problems. Oscar Wilde tried to state in a simple way the virtues and flaws of a person in all of his fairy tales and tried to criticize the society which is insensible. The main character knew only about nice things and after that, he decided to open his lead heart to everyone in need. When he helped them he didn't regret about the decorations taken down from him and he keeps on doing noble things with the help of a swallow. The swallow was the proof that everyone can do selfless things even though they would maybe be risking their lives. His love and devotion were rewarded with an eternal life. In the fairytale, we can see the prince and the swallow who try to help the ones in need and make them happy while on the other side we can see the powerful people in important positions who do not want to see what is going on in the world. They only see themselves and their goal in life. Oscar Wild set up a principle of selfishness and selflessness and he took the story to its top when God helped the main heroes of the story. The language in which the fairytale was written is simple even though every single word is wisely picked. Oscar Wild is the one leading the storytelling and introducing the readers into the plot. The whole fairytale is filled with hidden

messages and because of that, "The happy Prince" is a book you should read with a lot of attention.

Further Questions

Q1/ Classify the types of characters in the story of The Happy Prince (dynamic, static, round, flat)

Q2/ Comment on the type of narrative viewpoint in the story.

Q3/ Are there instances of irony? If yes, state the type with supportive example(s).