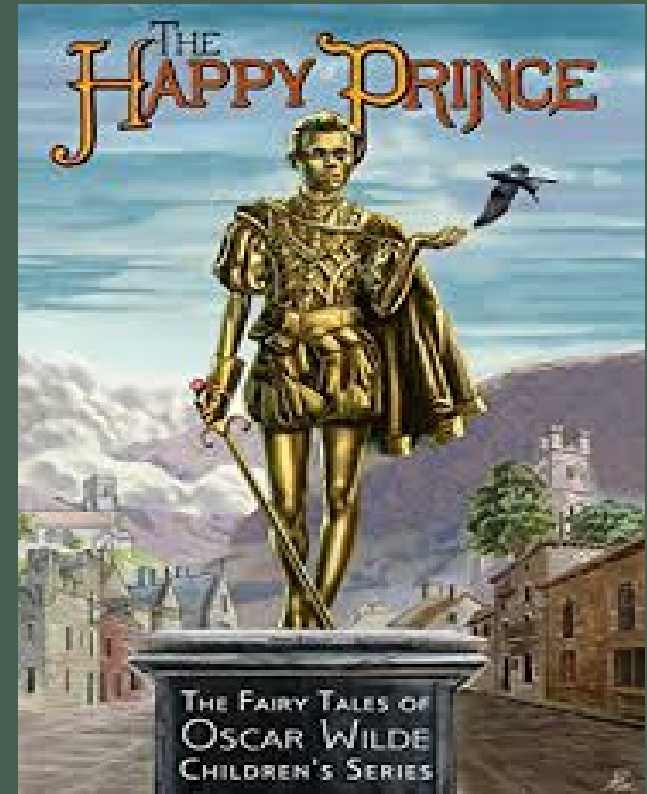




THE HAPPY PRINCE BY OSCAR WILDE

THEME

- The writing is packed with valuable themes such as judging based on outward appearances, the disparity between poverty and wealth, **sacrifice**, and love and compassion. Both the Happy Prince and his newfound friend, the swallow, offer glimpses into how these themes are portrayed in this Oscar Wilde tale.



- Here we have a statue who, at one time, was a real prince. He was happy when alive, because he was kept ignorant of any sadness or suffering outside his palace walls. His life was one of joy and fulfilled desires. And then he died. Upon his death, a statue was made depicting him which was covered in gold, had beautiful sapphires for eyes, and a ruby attached to his sword. Because of the value society places on gold and jewels, he was thought to be quite beautiful. "Useless," remarks a Town Councilman, "but beautiful." He is adored by all who see him. Unfortunately for the statue, his placement atop a high hill allows him to witness, for the first time, the pain and misery experienced by the poor of the city, of whom he had remained ignorant.

- The statue, once happy, now weeps with sadness to learn the plight of so many who have so little. A self-serving swallow arrives to take shelter beneath this statue and eventually becomes touched by the statue's kindness and desire to help others. He becomes the statue's messenger and agrees to remove the jewels and the gold from the Happy Prince in order to bring contentment, badly needed financial security, and compassion to the masses. In an allegory, the characters stand for ideas or for people in history. In this story, the swallow can be seen as Socialism -delivering necessities to all so that all are on equal footing.

- As the statue's gold and jewels are taken and redistributed among the poor, he is no longer able to see the impoverished around him. He knows it is there, and he is not blind to the sufferings of others as he once was. Even without eyes to see, he knows that it exists. Eventually, the little swallow lies at the feet of the statue and dies from exposure and exhaustion. He never made it to Egypt because he exchanged his dream of warm climates and comfort with a bigger dream -to bring help to those who are in need. The sculpture cracks with sadness at the loss of his friend, and his heart is exposed. The most beautiful part of the statue -the kind and giving heart- could not be seen on the outside.

- Upon seeing the statue in such disrepair, the powerful people of the city -the Town Councilors and Mayor - decide that he is no longer useful, because he is no longer beautiful. Much like the poor, who were exploited and tossed away by the rich, the statue is taken down. Arguments are begun to determine whose likeness will replace the superficial shell that they called The Happy Prince.

MESSAGE

- The **moral lesson** of 'The **Happy Prince**' by Oscar Wilde is that the worst aspects of modern society can be overcome by love and charity, which have the unique ability to unite men and make them whole.