

5

The Happy Prince

Oscar Wilde



Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- apply the use of rhetorical questions for a range of audiences.
- distinguish cause from effect, fact from opinion (e.g., by noting outcomes, personal comments, beliefs and biases), and generalized statements from evidence-based information with specific reference to informational texts.
- apply skimming and scanning strategies for relevant information and main points in texts to identify the writer's purpose, and intended audience. Infer the theme/main idea of the text, distinguishing between fact and opinion where necessary.
- examine how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- demonstrate knowledge and application of parts of speech in oral and written communication in varying degrees of complexity.
- apply knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, sentence structure and other features of grammar and vocabulary to understand how language functions in different contexts and make effective choices for meaning or style while reading, listening and writing.
- identify and use compound prepositions and prepositional phrases in writing.
 - use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.
- develop and strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose.



Pre-reading

- What do you think makes someone truly "happy"? Is it wealth, beauty, kindness, or something else? Why?
- Have you ever given up something important to help someone else? What did it feel like, and would you do it again?

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.

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.

After they had gone, he felt lonely. Then, one day he started to fly. 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.

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 daytime 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 I cannot choose but weep."

Why does the Happy Prince say he cannot help but weep after being placed high above the city?

"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 Queen. 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.

"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. He passed over the river. 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.

"Tonight 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.

"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. 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 goodbye," 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. 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 two 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."

Why does the Happy Prince ask the Swallow to give his other eye to the match-girl?

"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.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything else is the sufferings 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.

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. "Goodbye, dear Prince!"

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince, "You have stayed too long here."

"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, 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.

They both died and reunited within heaven and lived happily together.



Theme

The Happy Prince explores the theme of selfless love and sacrifice. The story shows how true happiness comes not from wealth or beauty, but from helping those in need. Through the bond between the Prince and the Swallow, Wilde highlights the power of compassion and empathy. It criticizes the hypocrisy and superficial values of society, especially its neglect of the poor. Ultimately, the story teaches that acts of kindness and generosity are the most valuable treasures of all, even if they go unrecognized by the world.



Glossary

Words

Meanings

agility

the ability to move quickly and easily

alighted

landed or came down gently from the air

coarse

rough or harsh in texture; not smooth

determined

having made a firm decision and not changing it

drenched

completely wet or soaked

flapping

moving or beating wings quickly

furnace

an enclosed structure used for heating or melting things

gilded

covered with a thin layer of gold

grate

a metal frame in a fireplace that holds burning fuel

hauling

pulling or dragging something with effort or force

For the teacher

- Help the students read a short story with focus and curiosity, paying attention to characters, setting, plot, and the author's message.

melted changed from solid to liquid due to heat

Ornithology the scientific study of birds

pleasure a feeling of happiness or enjoyment

sensible showing good judgment; practical and reasonable

slumber a peaceful or deep sleep

spoiled damaged, ruined, or no longer usable

starving suffering or dying from extreme hunger



Reading and Critical Thinking

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 Why is the statue of the Happy Prince crying, even though he was known as "Happy Prince" during his life?
- 2 What motivates the Swallow to delay his journey to Egypt and help the Happy Prince?
- 3 Describe the first act of kindness that the Happy Prince and the Swallow performed together.
- 4 How does the relationship between the Happy Prince and the Swallow change throughout the story?
- 5 What does the Prince mean when he says, "There is no Mystery so great as Misery"?
- 6 Why does the Prince ask the Swallow to strip off his gold leaf by leaf? What effect does this have on the people of the city?
- 7 What message do you think Oscar Wilde is trying to convey about wealth, beauty, and true value?
- 8 What is the symbolic meaning of the Swallow dying at the Prince's feet and the leaden heart not melting in the furnace?

B Choose the correct option.

- 1 Where did the Happy Prince live before becoming a statue?
 - a. King's Palace
 - b. Sans-Souci Palace
 - c. Royal Garden
 - d. Queen's Castle

- 2 Where did the Swallow want to migrate before meeting the Prince?
- a. South America b. Nile Valley
c. Eastern Asia d. Egypt
- 3 What did the Happy Prince give to the poor seamstress?
- a. golden feather b. silver ring
c. ruby jewel d. crystal bead
- 4 What were the eyes of the Happy Prince made of?
- a. white pearls b. blue diamonds
c. shiny glass d. rare sapphires
- 5 What did the Mayor decide to do with the statue in the end?
- a. paint again b. rebuild it
c. remove statue d. burn it
- 6 What happened to the Happy Prince's heart at the end?
- a. melted completely b. broke apart
c. turned black d. vanished instantly
- 7 What did the Swallow do with the gold leaves?
- a. buried them b. ate them up
c. gave away d. sold them
- 8 What was thrown onto the dust-heap together in the end?
- a. bird bones b. gold dust
c. lead heart d. silver wings



Vocabulary and Grammar

Matter of Understanding Precisely:

Parts of Speech are the categories of the words based on their function in a sentence. The main ones are:

1. **Noun** – names a person, a place, a thing, or an idea (e.g., *Baron, money, kindness*)
2. **Pronoun** – replaces a noun (e.g., *he, she, it, they*)
3. **Verb** – shows action or a state of being (e.g., *gave, is, disguise*)
4. **Adjective** – describes a noun or pronoun (e.g., *kind, poor, generous*)

5. **Adverb** – modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb (e.g., *quickly, kindly*)
6. **Preposition** – shows relationships (e.g., *on, in, by, for*)
7. **Conjunction** – joins words or groups of words (e.g., *and, but, although*)
8. **Interjection** – expresses emotion (e.g., *Oh! Wow!*)

Now, see the examples from the text.

1. **Noun** (Person, Place, Thing, Idea)
 - **Prince** – "The Happy Prince looked beautiful."
 - **Swallow** – "Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince.
 - **Town** – "He is as beautiful as a weathercock," remarked one of the Town Councillors, who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes.
2. **Pronoun** (Replaces a noun)
 - **He** – "He is covered with thin leaves of fine gold."
 - **It** – "It is curious," he thought, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold."
 - **They** – "They pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince."
3. **Verb** (Action or state of being)
 - **Cried** – "Cried the Swallow, 'You are blind now!'"
 - **Shone** – "He shone all over with gold."
4. **Adjective** (Describes a noun)
 - **Happy** – "The Happy Prince never dreamed of crying for anything."
 - **Fine** – "He is gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold."
5. **Adverb** (Describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb)
 - **Far** – "Far away in a little street there is a poor house."
 - **Gently** – "The bird gently picked out the great ruby."
6. **Preposition** (Shows relationship between a noun/pronoun and another word)
 - **On** – "On a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince."
 - **Under** – "The Swallow slept under the Prince's feet."
 - **Through** – "Through the still air he flew past the cathedral tower."

7. **Conjunction** (Joins words or groups of words)
- **And** – "The Happy Prince gave away his gold, and the poor people in the city were able to live a little more comfortably."
 - **But** – "But the Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry."
 - **So** – "So he flew back to the Happy Prince."
8. **Interjection** (Short exclamatory word)
- **Ah!** – "Ah! what a beautiful star!"
 - **Oh!** – "Oh! I am not admired now!"

A

Rewrite the ending of *The Happy Prince* using at least five different parts of speech.

B

Find three examples of interesting or elevated vocabulary in the story.



Oral Communication Skills

Rhetorical Question: A rhetorical question is a question asked not to get an answer, but to make a point, emphasize an idea, or persuade the audience. It makes the reader or listener think and the answer is usually obvious or implied.

"Why are you weeping then?" asked the Swallow.

The Swallow asked the statue of the Happy Prince this question, who is supposed to be always joyful and carefree. The question isn't meant to get an answer, it's meant to emphasize the surprising contrast between the Prince's name ("Happy") and his sorrowful condition (weeping while watching the suffering in the city). It draws the reader's attention to the theme of compassion and hidden sorrow.

A

Prepare 1–2 rhetorical questions that could be used:

- a. in a speech encouraging people to donate to the poor.
- b. in a blog post to describe the kindness of people.

B

Divide the class into two groups, and conduct a discussion by putting the following question:

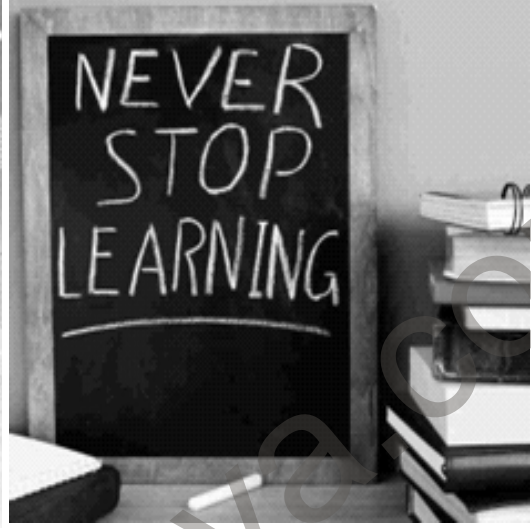
Do rhetorical questions make writing more powerful or just more poetic? Why?



Writing Skills

- A** How does Oscar Wilde use sensory language to show the sadness of the Happy Prince?
- B** Which details help you imagine the setting where the Swallow finds shelter beneath the statue?
- C** Identify a sentence that appeals to your senses (sight, sound, touch, etc.) in the story.
- D** What effect do the author's descriptive words and details have on the reader's understanding of the Prince's character and emotions?

Review 1



Reading and Critical Thinking

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 In what ways did Hazrat Muhammad (رسول الله ﷺ) reform the society of the then Arab?
- 2 What feelings does the poet express towards the flag in these lines?
Your flag of green and star so white,
Shines like a beacon in the night.
We hold it high, both proud and strong,
In every heart, your name belongs.
- 3 What are the two positive and two negative effects of digital globalisation on the English language?
- 4 Why is climate change considered both an environmental and a social justice issue?



Vocabulary and Grammar

A

Find the meanings of the words 'reforms' and 'oppressed' as used in Unit 1.

B

Identify and label the adjectival, prepositional, and adverbial phrases in the following sentence:

"Because English is the default language on most digital platforms, non-native speakers often feel pressured to adopt it in order to access information."

C

Identify the part of speech for each of the underlined words in the following sentence:

"Wow! He was truly popular among the men, for he clearly had every remarkable accomplishment—except, unfortunately, the ability to earn money."

| Interjection | Pronoun | Verb | Adverb |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| | | | |
| Adjective | Preposition | Conjunction | Noun |
| | | | |



Oral Communication Skills

A

How does the poet use imagery to show pride and love for the flag, and how would you describe your own feelings for your country's flag?



Writing Skills

- Describe how Hazrat Muhammad's (رسول الله ﷺ) life serves as a model to make the Arabian society a just one.
- Write a short paragraph explaining how digital globalisation is changing the way the people speak English.
- Write a persuasive paragraph (6–8 sentences) arguing why wealthier nations should take more responsibility in fighting climate change, especially for the sake of poorer and developing countries.
- Write a character sketch of the Happy Prince. Describe his personality, strengths, weaknesses, and lifestyle. Use descriptive language and at least one example from the text to support your points.