

THE HAPPY PRINCE

STATUE OF THE HAPPY PRINCE

There stood the statue of the Happy Prince on a tall column in the city. He was gilded all over. He had thin leaves of fine gold. He had two bright sapphires for eyes. A large ruby glowed on his sword hilt.

A LITTLE SWALLOW SITS ON THE STATUE

A little swallow came and sat on the statue. He decided to spend the night on it. But as he was going to sleep, a large drop of water fell on him. The swallow was amazed. There was no cloud, yet it rained. The second drop of water made the swallow decide to fly off. The third drop of water made him to look at the statue. It was weeping.

THE STATUE SPEAKS OUT

The statue spoke to the swallow. It said that when it was alive it had not known what tears were. His courtiers called him a Happy Prince. Now he sat very high. He saw the miseries of the city.

THE SWALLOW IS SENT TO HELP A WOMAN

The Happy Prince told the swallow that there lived a woman far away. She was a seamstress. She was embroidering flowers on the satin gown of the Queen's maid of honour. The maid was to wear it at the next Court ball. In the bed, there lay ill her little boy. He was suffering from fever. The Happy Prince asked the swallow to pick the ruby from his sword hilt. He should give that to the woman.

THE SWALLOW HELPS THE WOMAN

First the swallow said that his friends had gone to Egypt. He was waited for in Egypt. But the happy Prince requested him to stay one night. The swallow agreed. He picked up the ruby and flew to the woman's house. He put the ruby near the woman's thimble. He also fanned the boy's forehead. The boy felt a bit better. He sank into a deep slumber.

THE SWALLOW IS ASKED AGAIN TO HELP A PLAY-WRIGHT

The swallow flew back to the Happy Prince. He felt warmer though it was cold. The Happy Prince told him that it was because he had done a good act. The swallow wanted to fly to Egypt. But the Happy Prince told him to stay there one more night. He told the swallow that he saw a playwright in a little room. He was trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre. But he was too cold to write. He was hungry also. He asked the swallow to pluck one sapphire from his eye and give that to the playwright.

THE SWALLOW RETURNS TO THE HAPPY PRINCE

The playwright saw the sapphire. He was happy. Now he hoped to finish the play. The swallow went to the Happy Prince. He told him that he had come to bid him goodbye. But the Happy Prince asked him to stay one more night.

THE SWALLOW IS SENT TO HELP THE MATCH- GIRL

The Happy Prince told the swallow that there was a little match-girl in the square below. All her matches had fallen in the gutter. Her father would beat her if she didn't bring home some money. She was crying. He asked the swallow to pluck out the sapphire from his other eye and give that to her. The swallow flew with the sapphire. He put the sapphire into the little girl's hand.

THE SWALLOW DECIDES TO LIVE WITH THE HAPPY PRINCE

The swallow flew back to the Happy Prince. He told the Prince that he would stay with him as he had gone blind. The Happy Prince asked him to fly over the city and tell him what he saw. He also told the swallow that the most marvellous thing was human suffering. And human misery was the greatest mystery.

THE SWALLOW REPORTS WHAT HE SEES

The swallow flew over the city. He saw hungry children. He also saw many poor people. The Happy Prince asked him to take leaf after leaf of the fine gold over his body and give to them. The poor now laughed and the children played.

WINTER SETS IN

Then there came the snow and then frost. Everything looked white. The poor little swallow grew colder and colder. But he didn't leave the Happy Prince. However, he could no longer keep himself alive. He at last knew that he was going to die. The swallow asked the Prince to let him kiss his hand. The Prince told him that he was happy he was going to Egypt. So he told him to kiss him on the lips. But the swallow told him that he was not going to Egypt. He was going to the house of Death. And he fell down dead.

THE STATUE BREAKS AND IS MELTED

At that moment there appeared a crack in-side the statue. The heart of the Happy Prince broke into two. The dead swallow lay at its feet. The next morning the Mayor and the Town Councillors came that way. They looked at the statue. They declared that the Happy Prince was no longer beautiful. So he was no longer useful. Then they melted the statue in a furnace. But the broken heart didn't melt. It was thrown away.

GOD ASKS FOR TWO MOST PRECIOUS THINGS

God asked one of His Angels to bring Him the two most precious things in the city. The Angel brought Him the leaden heart of the Happy Prince and the dead bird. God told that in the garden of Paradise the little bird would sing forever. The Happy Prince would praise Him forever in His city of gold.

NCERT QUESTIONS

Think about it

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Question 1.

Why do the courtiers call the prince 'the Happy Prince'? Is he really happy? What does he see all around him?

Answer:

He was a prince when he was alive. Being a prince he never knew sorrow and suffering. So, the courtiers called him 'the happy prince'. But he was not happy

in real sense as his heart could feel the misery of needy people. He saw the miserable conditions of people around him.

Question 2.

Why does the Happy Prince send a ruby for the seamstress? What does the swallow do in the seamstress' house?

Answer:

The seamstress was tired due to overwork. She was so poor that she could not buy oranges for her little sick son. Her son was thirsty. The Happy Prince saw the poor lady and her son. He felt pity for them. So, he sent a ruby for her. The swallow came to the poor woman's house and laid the ruby on the table beside her. The bird fanned the boy's forehead with wings and flew back to the Happy Prince.

Question 3.

For whom does the prince send the sapphires and why?

Answer:

The playwright was very poor. He was incapable of buying food and firewood. The prince sent the sapphires for the playwright so that he could finish a play for the director of the theatre in time. The prince sent his second sapphire to a poor match girl. Her matches had fallen into the gutter. She was afraid that her father would beat her for this loss. So, she was helped by the prince by sending her the second sapphire.

Question 4.

What does the swallow see when it was flying over the city?

Answer:

The swallow saw all categories of people. He found the rich making merry in their beautiful houses and beggars begging sitting at the gates. He also saw a group of wandering children who were poverty-stricken.

Question 5.

Why did the swallow not leave the prince and go to Egypt?

Answer:

At first, the swallow was willing to go to Egypt just after discharging his duty properly. But when he saw Prince's activities of charity and kindness he got impressed. On the other hand now the Happy Prince had become totally blind due to the deeds of charity. In this condition, he could not leave the Prince helpless. He left the idea of going to Egypt and decided to serve the Prince.

Question 6.

What are the precious things mentioned in the story? Why are they precious?

Answer:

The leaden heart of the Happy Prince and the dead swallow are the two precious things mentioned in the story. They are precious as they did various deeds for the welfare of people and sacrificed their lives for the sake of others.

Talk about it

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Question 1.

The little swallow says, "It is curious, but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold." Have you ever had such a feeling? Share your experience with your friends.

Answer:

Man is a social animal. He is social because he is dependent on others to lead a satisfactory life. In this regard mutual help is required. Whenever we help others, there is a feeling of satisfaction. Whenever we are helped by others, we feel grateful. It is because helping others is the essence of life.

In this chapter the little swallow feels warmth when he helps the needy people. He does his act of selfless service with utmost dedication and sacrifice. Owing to this selfless service he becomes satisfied. Yes, I have experienced such a feeling many a time. I believe in helping others. Others too help me whenever I am in need. I help others considering it my duty. I remember the day when I started helping others. Since the day I feel more confident and have become a successful citizen. I feel the presence of God around me.

THE HAPPY PRINCE EXTRA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHORT ANSWER TYPE

Question 1.

Describe the statue of the Happy Prince.

Answer:

The statue stood high above the city on a tall column. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold with two bright sapphires for eyes. A large red ruby glowed on his sword hilt.

Question 2.

Did the swallow belong to the city? How can you tell? Where was it going?

Answer:

No, the swallow did not belong to the city, as it is written that it flew over the city on its way to Egypt.

Question 3.

Where did the bird decide to stay for the night? Why?

Answer:

The bird decided to stay near the statue of the prince, because it was located on a tall column and the bird felt he would get plenty of fresh air there.

Question 4.

Why did the bird think he had a 'golden bedroom'?

Answer:

The bird alighted near the feet of the statue of the Happy Prince, which was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold. That is why he felt that he had got a 'golden bedroom' to sleep in.

Question 5.

Why was the bird not able to sleep peacefully that first night?

Answer:

Just as the bird was about to sleep, he was disturbed by three tear drops that fell from the eyes of the statue. When he saw the tears running down the cheeks of the statue, he looked so beautiful in the moonlight that the bird was filled with pity and could not sleep.

Question 6.

Why was the statue of the Happy Prince weeping?

Answer:

The statue of the Happy Prince was weeping because when he had been alive, he had not known any sorrow. But after his statue had been erected, he was able to see all the ugliness and misery of the city, and even though he now had a heart of lead, he could still feel the pain, which made him cry.

Question 7.

Who does the Prince ask the swallow to deliver the red ruby to?

Answer:

The Prince asked the swallow to deliver the ruby to a poor seamstress whose son was very ill. The child was asking his mother for oranges, but she had nothing to give him but water. Since the statue's feet were fixed to the pedestal, he could not deliver it himself, so he asked the swallow to do so.

Question 8.

Why did the swallow agree to deliver the ruby even though he wanted to join his friends in Egypt?

Answer:

The Prince looked so sad that the little swallow felt sorry for him and agreed to stay one night and be his messenger.

Question 9.

What were the things that the swallow saw on his journey to deliver the ruby?

Answer:

He saw the cathedral tower, the palace, the river, and the ships before coming to the poor woman's house.

Question 10.

What made the sick boy fall into a deep, restful sleep?

Answer:

When the bird delivered the ruby, he flew gently around the bed of the sick boy, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. This soothed the boy and he fell into a deep, restful sleep.

Question 11.

Though it was cold, the bird felt warm. Why did this happen?

Answer:

This happened because he had done a good deed by delivering the ruby to the seamstress' house, which made him feel warm and happy from inside.

Question 12.

Why did the swallow delay his departure for the second time?

Answer:

He delayed his departure for the second time because the Prince asked him to deliver one of his sapphire eyes to a poor young man in a garret who was

trying to finish a play for the Director of the theatre, but who was too hungry and cold to write anymore.

Question 13.

**What did the Prince expect the young playwright to do with the sapphire?
Did the swallow willingly agree to the Prince's request?**

Answer:

The Prince expected him to sell it to the jeweller and buy firewood so he could complete writing his play. No, the swallow protested at first, as he wanted to continue on his journey. However, he finally agreed to help the Prince again.

Question 14.

Where did the playwright find the sapphire, and where did he think it had come from?

Answer:

He found it lying on the withered violets, and thought it must have been left there by an admirer.

Question 15.

Where did the swallow go after dropping the sapphire at the playwright's?

Answer:

He flew down to the harbour where he sat on the mast of a large ship and watched the sailors working.

Question 16.

Why did the swallow want to fly to Egypt?

Answer:

He wanted to do so because it was a warm country where the sun shone on green palm trees and crocodiles lay in the mud. Moreover, all his friends had already gone there to escape the cold weather

Question 17.

Why was the match girl crying?

Answer:

She was crying because her matches had fallen into the gutter and were all spoilt. Now her father would beat her for not bringing home any money.

Question 18.

How does the Happy Prince help the match girl, and why?

Answer:

He asks the swallow to pluck out his remaining sapphire eye and give it to her. He does this to save her from her father's beating.

Question 19.

After helping the Prince, when he had the freedom to fly to Egypt, why did the swallow change his mind? What does it reveal about his character?

Answer:

He decided to stay with the statue as it had become blind now. This shows that the bird was very loyal and caring.

Question 20.

Why did the Prince ask the swallow to fly over his city?

Answer:

The Prince said that the suffering of men and women was the greatest misery of all, and asked the swallow to fly over the city so that he could come back and tell him about all that he saw there.

Question 21.

What did the swallow see in the city?

Answer:

He saw the rich making merry in their beautiful homes, while the beggars sat at their gates. He saw the starving children and two little boys hugging each other to keep warm. They were hungry as well, and were forced out into the rain by a watchman.

Question 22.

How did the Prince react to the bird's report on all that he had seen in the city?

Answer:

He asked the swallow to remove all the gold covering his body, leaf by leaf, and give it to the poor people.

Question 23.

How did the swallow make the poor starving children happy?

Answer:

He did so by dropping the gold from the statue among the poor, who used it to buy bread and drive away their hunger.

Question 24.

How did the coming of the cold weather affect the swallow?

Answer:

He grew colder by the day, but did not leave the statue of the Happy Prince, which he had come to love dearly. He ate the crumbs he found outside the baker's door and tried to keep warm by flapping his wings.

Question 25.

Why did the heart of the statue snap into two?

Answer:

The moment the swallow died at the feet of the statue, there was a curious crack inside the statue, as if something had broken. It was the leaden heart of the statue, which had broken as soon as its friend died.

THE HAPPY PRINCE EXTRA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS LONG ANSWER TYPE

Question 1.

Why is the frost called a 'dreadfully hard frost'?

Answer:

The frost has been called hard because the snow had hardened due to the cold. Further, it also refers to the swallow had wanted to migrate to a warmer climate in Egypt, he had stayed back, at first unwillingly, to help the poor people by delivering the ruby, sapphire and gold leaf that had covered the statue of the Prince. Later, once the Prince was left without eyes to see, he decided to stay to keep him company. In the process, he succumbed to the cold weather and lost his life. On finding his friend dead, the statue broke, revealing his leaden heart. Thus, the death of these two selfless heroes cast a gloomy atmosphere.

Question 2.

What are the two most precious things that the Angels find in the city?

Answer:

The two most precious things that the Angels pick up from the city are the dead swallow and the lead heart of the Happy Prince. They picked these two because both the bird and the statue had gone beyond their selfish interest and lost their lives serving the poor and down-trodden. The bird had cancelled his plans to migrate to warmer climes for the winter, staying back to help deliver valuables as directed by the statue, to those who were in dire need.

After the statue gave away his sapphire eyes and became blind, he did not have the heart to fly away from his friend. Instead, he died in his attempt to keep him company. Similarly, the statue had selflessly given away all the valuables that covered his body to help the poor and hungry people in the city. It made him extremely sad to see their misery, so he chose to give them everything he had. When at last his friend the swallow died, he was completely

broken, and his heart cracked into two. The angels valued their sacrifice and charitable acts, and chose them as the most precious things.

Question 3.

Why did the courtiers call the prince the 'Happy Prince'? Was he really happy? What does he see all around him?

Answer:

The prince had been called a Happy Prince when he had been alive. At that time, he lived a sheltered and privileged life, with no inkling of the suffering faced by the common people. After his death, when his statue was placed on a high column overlooking the city, he was able to see the misery and unhappiness of the people. The poverty and ugliness all around made him extremely unhappy. Therefore, with the help of the swallow, he tried to compensate for the neglect which he had shown his subjects while he had been alive. Thus, he was not happy looking at the misery of the people, but by giving away all his valuables and helping the poor people, his sadness would have been somewhat abated.

Question 4.

Comment on the title of the story. Was the prince really happy?

Answer:

The title is an ironical one, as it suggests that the story is about a Prince who is happy. However, the readers soon realise that the Prince is not a human, but a statue. The prince had been called a Happy Prince when he had been alive. At that time, he lived a sheltered and privileged life, with no inkling of the suffering faced by the common people. After his death, his statue was placed on a high column overlooking the city. Since the statue was placed at a high point, he could see all the misery and sadness in the city, which made him sad.

Question 5.

How do the councillors and Mayor react on seeing the broken statue?

Answer:

The councillors and Mayor called the statue shabby because all the gold and precious stones no longer decorated it. They felt that without these embellishments, the statue looked like that of a beggar. Moreover, they felt that the dead swallow at its feet added to the shabby condition of the statue. Thus, since the statue was no longer beautiful or useful, it should be pulled down and melted in the furnace. However, its lead heart did not melt, which was finally thrown onto the garbage heap with the dead swallow's body.

Question 6.

Men melt down the statue, yet the Angels proclaim it one of the most precious things in the city. Comment on the divergent viewpoints of the Angels and humans with reference to the story The Happy Prince.

Answer:

Humans are attracted to material things, and tend to appreciate only outer beauty. Thus, the statue was considered beautiful when it was covered with gold leaf and precious stones like rubies and sapphires. However, when it was stripped of the gold and jewels, they declared that it was shabby and should be pulled down. On the other hand, the Angels looked into the mind and heart of all creatures, and valued qualities like charity, selflessness and kindness above any external materials.

In this story, we have two very noble characters—the swallow and the statue—who together help out several poor people in the city quietly, without expecting praise or acclaim. The statue gives every valuable part that can help someone, even though it makes him look shabby and he goes blind. The swallow also risks his life by staying on in the cold weather instead of flying to warmer climes like its friends. Instead, it stays back and helps the prince alleviate the suffering of several people in the city. Thus, their actions make them the most precious things in the city.