

Beginner

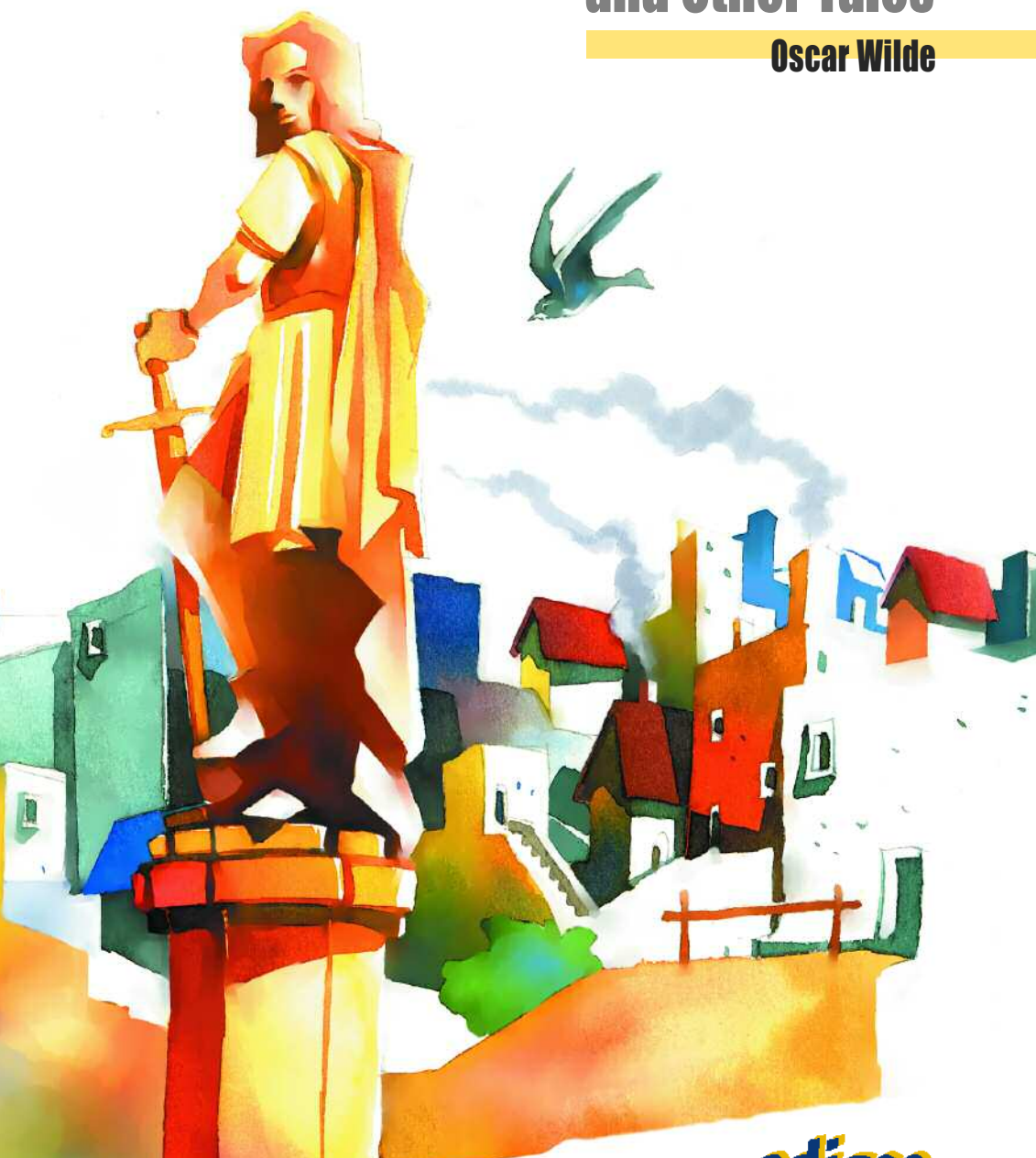


A1 (Breakthrough)

R A I N B O W S

# The Happy Prince and Other Tales

Oscar Wilde



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R A I N B O W S

Oscar Wilde

# The Happy Prince and Other Tales

Adaptation, dossiers and activities  
by Maria Carla Piccinini



**edisco**

# The Happy Prince and Other Tales

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# The Author

## Oscar Wilde



**Oscar Wilde** (1854-1900) is born in Dublin, Ireland. He is a famous poet, writer and dramatist<sup>1</sup>. He studies in Ireland and at Oxford University in England. He travels in Europe and in 1882 he goes to the United States. When he enters the US, he says: “I have nothing to declare, except my genius.”

When he leaves, he says: “I have civilised America.”

Oscar Wilde lives in the Victorian Age, the age of Queen Victoria; she rules<sup>2</sup> Great Britain for over sixty years, from 1837 to 1901. Victorians believe that patriotism, marriage<sup>3</sup> and going to church are very important. So those years are difficult for people like Oscar Wilde: he has unusual<sup>4</sup> ideas about religion and life.

In 1884, he marries Constance Lloyd and they have two sons. In 1888, he writes *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. It is a collection of stories for children that he writes for his sons. The stories in this collection are: ‘The Happy Prince’, ‘The Selfish Giant’, ‘The Devoted Friend’, ‘The Remarkable Rocket’ and ‘The Nightingale and the Rose’. In this book you will find the first four stories.

1. *dramatist*: a person who writes plays.  
2. *rules*: has the power over a country.

3. *marriage*: the relationship between a husband and a wife.  
4. *unusual*: not common.

Other famous works are: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *A Woman of No Importance* (1893).

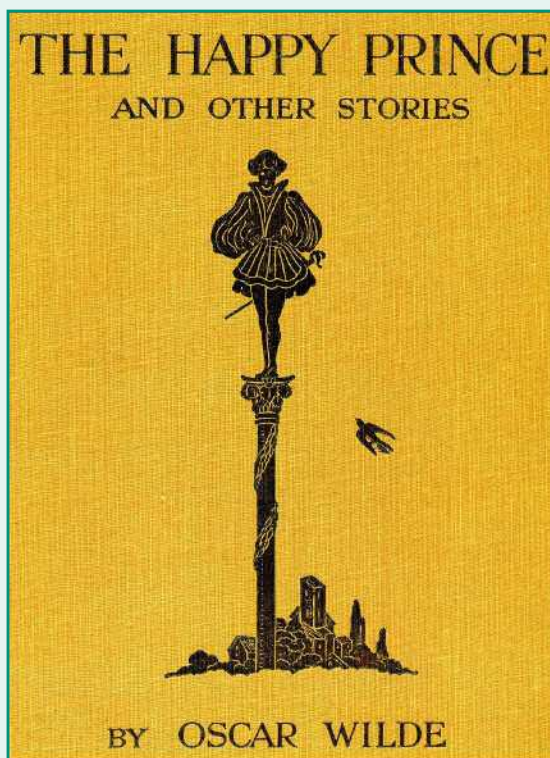
Wilde spends two years in prison for immoral behaviour<sup>5</sup>. When he leaves prison, he goes to Paris. Now he is alone and without any money. In 1900, he dies, only forty-six years old.

Oscar Wilde is famous for his aphorisms<sup>6</sup>. Here are some of them:

“All art is quite useless<sup>7</sup>”;

“Illusion is the first of all pleasures”;

“The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible”.



The first edition (1888).

5. *behaviour*: the way a person acts.

7. *useless*: not useful.

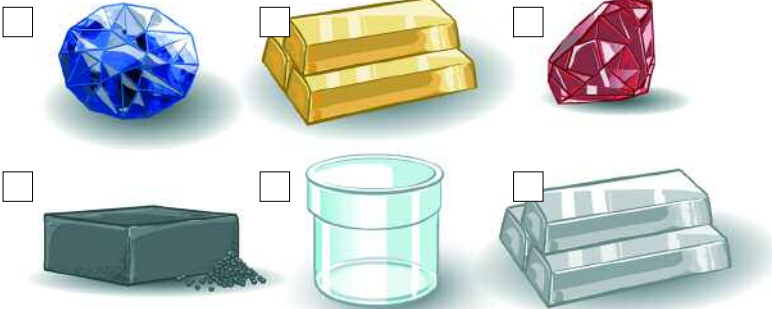
6. *aphorism*: a short and clever sentence.



## BEFORE READING

1 Match the words in the box with the right picture.

a. gold – b. ruby – c. sapphire – d. lead – e. silver – f. glass



2 Write each adjective from the box in the correct sentence.

asleep – clean – pale – poor – rude – tall – young

1. People with very little money are \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A boy with no respect for other people is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The opposite of dirty is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The opposite of short is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Your face is white! You are \_\_\_\_\_.
6. She is 12 years old. She is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The baby is not awake. It is \_\_\_\_\_.

3 What do you think? Write true or false and then check your answers while reading the story.

- |   | T                        | F                        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. The Happy Prince is a young boy.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. The Happy Prince is a statue.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. The Happy Prince has a lot of precious stones in his palace. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. He is very selfish.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. A bird is his friend.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. The bird flies to Egypt.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# The Happy Prince

## Tale 1

The statue of the Happy Prince stands on a tall column. He is covered with gold, his eyes are two nice sapphires and a large red ruby is on his sword.

People admire him. “He’s very beautiful!” the Mayor<sup>1</sup> says.

“You must be like<sup>2</sup> the Happy Prince,” a mother says to her little boy. “The Happy Prince never cries<sup>3</sup>.”

“He’s like an angel,” some people say.

One night a little Swallow<sup>4</sup> flies over the city. His friends are flying to Egypt, but he decides to stop to relax.

“Where can I stay?” he asks himself.

Then he sees a statue on a tall column.

“I can stay there,” he thinks. “It’s a fine position with a lot of fresh air.”

So he goes between the feet of the Happy Prince.

“I have a golden bedroom,” he says to himself.

He prepares to sleep but a drop<sup>5</sup> of water falls<sup>6</sup> on him.

“What a curious thing!” he says. “There isn’t a single cloud in the sky, but it’s raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really terrible!”

Then a second drop falls.

“I must look for another place. I’m getting wet!” he thinks and he decides to leave. But a third drop falls and he looks up. And what does he see? He sees the eyes of the Happy Prince, full of tears. Tears are running down his golden cheeks<sup>7</sup>. His face is so beautiful in the moonlight.

1. *Mayor*: the head of the government of a town/city.

2. *be like*: be similar to.

3. *cries*: produces tears.

4. *swallow*:



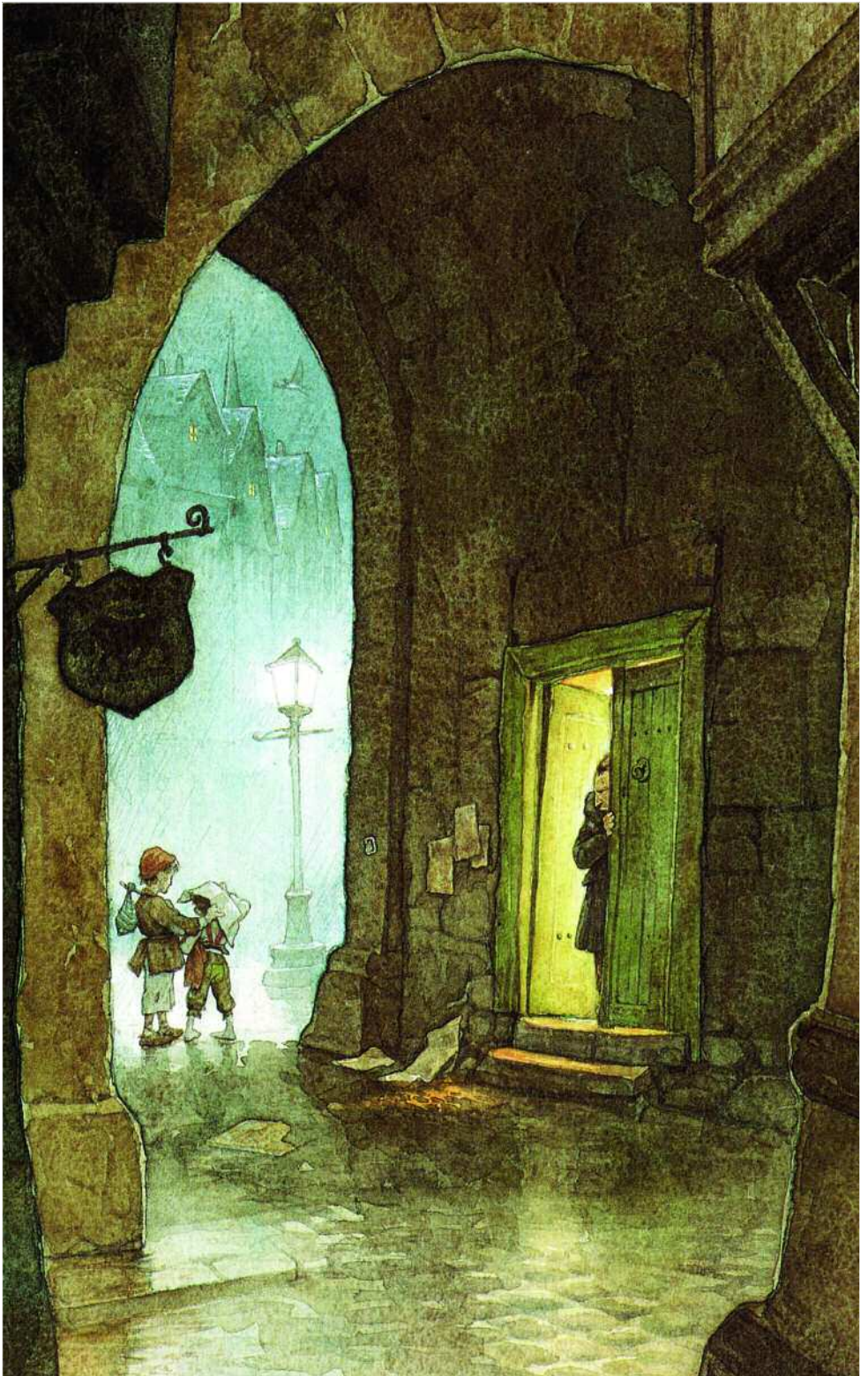
5. *drop*:



6. *falls*: goes down.

7. *cheek*: side of the face below the eyes.





(Illustration by P. J. Lynch, 2000)

## The Happy Prince

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“Who are you?” the Swallow asks.

“I’m the Happy Prince.”

“Happy? Why are you crying, then?” asks the bird. “Look, I’m completely wet!”

“I’m crying because from up here I can see all the misery of the city. In a little street there’s a poor house, one of the windows is open, and I can see a woman at a table. Her face is thin, and she has red hands. She’s working on a dress for the Court ball<sup>8</sup>. Her little boy is sick<sup>9</sup> in a bed. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has only river water. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, can you take her the ruby in my sword? My feet are fixed and I can’t move.”

“I must go to Egypt,” the Swallow says. “My friends are waiting for me.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” the Prince says, “can you stay with me for one night? The boy’s thirsty and the mother’s sad.”

“I don’t like boys,” answers the Swallow. “They’re rude and sometimes they throw stones at me.”

But the Happy Prince looks sad and the little Swallow is sorry.

“It’s very cold here,” he says; “but I’ll stay with you for one night.”

“Thank you, little Swallow,” the Prince says.

So the Swallow takes the great ruby from the Prince’s sword, and flies with it in his beak<sup>10</sup> over the town. At last the bird comes to the poor house. The boy is sick in his bed and his mother is asleep<sup>11</sup>, she is so tired. The Swallow puts the great ruby on the table. Then he flies back to the Happy Prince.

8. *Court ball*: dance where a queen/king lives.

9. *sick*: ill, not well.

10. *beak*:



11. *asleep*: sleeping.



(Illustration by B. Montresor; 1982)

“It’s curious,” he says, “the temperature is cold but I feel warm.”

“This is the effect of your good action,” the Prince says. The little Swallow falls asleep.



In the morning he flies down to the river and has a bath. “Tonight I’m going to Egypt,” the Swallow thinks, and he is very happy with the idea. He visits all the public monuments. He enjoys himself very much. When the moon comes, he goes to the Happy Prince.

“I’m leaving for Egypt tonight,” he says.

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” the Prince says, “can you stay with me one more night?”