



By Oscar Wilde

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Think About It

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

Answer:

The courtiers called the prince 'the Happy Prince' because he was always happy. When he was alive, he did not know what tears were for he lived in a palace where sorrow was not allowed to enter. However, when he died and was made into a statue, he was not happy and tears flowed down his eyes on seeing the state of his city. He could see all the misery and ugliness of the city around him.

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

Answer:

The Happy Prince sent a ruby for the seamstress as she was extremely poor and could not feed her child who was suffering from fever.

The swallow, on being persuaded by the prince, went to the seamstress's house. She had fallen asleep so the swallow kept the ruby on the table where the woman worked. He then flew round the bed fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. This made the boy feel relaxed and he went to sleep.

3. For whom does the prince send the sapphires and why?

Answer:

The Happy Prince sent the sapphires for two people: the young writer across the city and the matchgirl.

The young writer was trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre. However, he was too cold to write anymore, there was no fire in the grate and hunger had made him faint. He sent the sapphire to the young playwright so that he could sell it to the jeweller, buy firewood, and finish his play. On seeing the sapphire, the young man felt appreciated and believed that he could finish his play.

The Happy Prince then saw a little matchgirl who was standing in the square just below him. She had let her matches fall in the gutter because of which they were all spoiled. The prince knew that her father would beat her if she did not bring home some money. When the swallow slipped the jewel into the palm of the little girl's hand, she ran home happy and laughing.

4. What does the swallow see when it flies over the city?

Answer:

When the swallow flew over the city it saw the stark contrast of plenty and poverty. It saw rich men making merry oblivious to the plight of the poor down the lane. It saw the nadir of condition of poor when they are denied even a sound sleep by police patrolling the street.

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