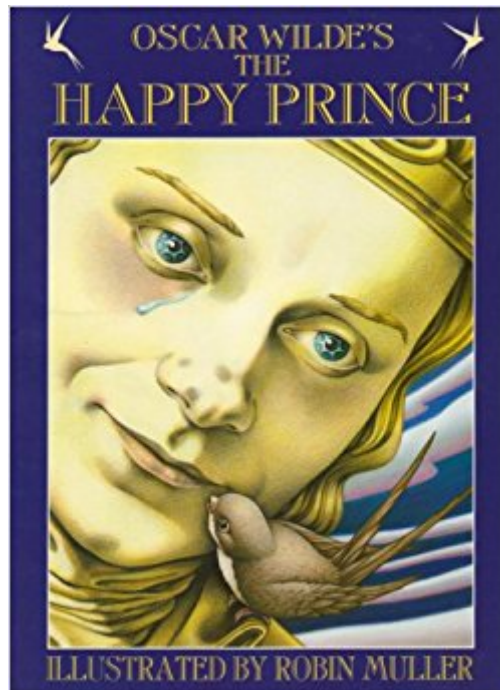




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# The Happy Prince



## Synopsis

"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"

From his high vantage point, the glittering statue of the Happy Prince is the pride of city officials. But the Prince's sapphire eyes are filled with tears because of the suffering he sees below. Stuck fast on his pedestal, there is nothing the gem-encrusted statue can do to help relieve the poor, until a little swallow stops to rest at his feet. The Prince persuades the bird to be his messenger, and to pluck out and carry one precious jewel after another to those in need. In order to survive the winter, the swallow must fly to a warmer place, but his love for the now-shabby Prince compels him to stay despite the consequences. Time after time, the brave little bird does all that is asked, until both he and the Happy Prince have nothing left to give. Oscar Wilde's classic fairy tale of compassion and selflessness is given new life by Robin Muller's exquisite illustrations in this special edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ray's (Magical Tales from Many Lands; The Story of Christmas) folksy, gilt-laden artwork graces this somewhat formal abridgment of Wilde's tale about an enchanted statue. The Happy Prince, who had lived a happy life and died a happy man, is now immortalized high above the city as a golden and bejeweled statue. For the first time the royal sees the suffering, poverty and misery of the common people. Sharing his sympathetic view with a sparrow, the prince persuades the bird to postpone its migration and instead to deliver his gold leafing, his sapphire eyes and ruby belt to

those who need them. Soon the sparrow dies of cold and the prince, now shabby, is removed from its pedestal and melted down. Though young readers may appreciate the lessons of selflessness and sacrifice here, the telling may seem to them stilted and even occasionally disjointed. Ray's characteristically rich palette and her delicate borders and backgrounds provide the visual magic that keeps this sentimental tale afloat. Ages 7-up. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Grade 2-5-A statue of a privileged prince develops a social conscience and a swallow intends to pause just a moment to assist him. Together they conspire to bring a modicum of contentment, financial security, and compassion to the beleaguered poor of a nameless city in northern Europe and both receive their rewards in a heavenly paradise. In this morality tale originally intended for the childlike rather than the child, Wilde addresses issues of social injustice, the loss of innocence, and the redemptive power of love. The otherwise verbatim retelling of the original contains two omissions: reference to Jewish merchants in the ghetto and part of a descriptive passage of life on the Nile that included pygmies and strange religious practices. The watercolor illustrations, varying in size and irregular in shape, are literal extensions of the text. A brief biography of Wilde is appended. Though the winsome swallow and wistful prince have appeal, buy only where literary fairy tales have a ready audience. A more evocative interpretation can be found in Ed Young's version (S & S, 1992). Carol Ann Wilson, Westfield Memorial Library, NJ Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

The Happy Prince and Other Tales is a collection of five children's short stories for ages 7 and up. These stories are: The Happy Prince, The Selfish Giant, The Nightingale and the Rose, The Devoted Friend, The Remarkable Rocket. The stories include a wide variety of characters and settings, but all share a common thread -- love, sacrifice, kindness, and the possible dangers of not having them. On the surface, these may appear as simple fairy tales to a child, but Wilde packed each story with heartfelt meaning. There are tales of true friendship, as seen in The Happy Prince, and false friendship, in The Devoted Friend. The same selfless love and sacrifice that is received with gladness in The Selfish Giant, is sadly spurned in The Nightingale and the Rose. If only the rocket in The Remarkable Rocket had read a few of these tales, his life might have been a great deal happier. Wilde's eloquent and poetic writing makes the stories a joy to read out loud. They are an excellent read for any little dreamers or future romantics you may know. However, a word of warning: expect to shed a few tears.

Many reviewers have written excellent traditional commentary on the stories themselves, but I'd like to review the Kindle formatting.1) The illustrations are as delightful as I remember them. They are best viewed in color with a Kindle Fire, iPad, or equivalent, but even in black and white they sing. Be aware, though, that the full-page color inserts of the original are half-pages in this rendition. They are also crisp, which is not always the case in Kindle editions.2) Original page numbers are embedded in the text. That can be a little distracting, but it's also sometimes quite amusing.3) The Table of Contents links are live, which is not always the case in Kindle editions from Gutenberg.4) Go ahead. Spend the 99 cents for this one. It's well worth it for the illustrations alone.

I had an audio book of *The Happy Prince* when I was a child, which is what made me look for this book now. Mind you, this story is slightly different than the one I listened to in my youth (the one I had didn't end on a religious note, to be sure), but I still enjoyed it. The addition of several other selfless tales of love were a delightful surprise (I suppose I didn't read the description too carefully). These stories are beautiful and bittersweet, descriptions of selfless love given without expectation of reciprocation. Enjoy and share with the young.

This collection - one of thousands of worthwhile 'freebies' available for Kindle - offers a side of Oscar Wilde unknown to those who've only experienced his witty, cynical plays. These 'fairy tales' are gentle, moralistic, and only sometimes sardonic. I downloaded it in order to have my favorite of Wilde's short stories, "*The Selfish Giant*", which blends children's fantasy with Christian iconography in a charming, emotionally affecting way. Now I've read them all and I'm glad I have the set. This also led me to download another freebie, "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*", also recommended.

These stories are beautifully written (of course!) and enchanting for little ones. Some are more accessible than others (for example *The Remarkable Rocket* went a little above my five year old's head, while they could relate very well to *The Happy Prince* and *The Selfish Giant*). The stories do raise some potentially heavy topics for children (for example death, sacrifice, God, poverty...) so I think it's good to be prepared for questions afterwards, as you might end up talking about the stories with your children long after they have finished.

Oscar Wilde's story of the *HAPPY Prince* is a timeless story for both young and old as it defines greatness as one who cares for others more than self - and sacrificing, even unto death for the good

of others. Wilde sums up what inspires one to act in the behalf of others, is one who has a loving, caring, and humble heart whether that heart is the prince of the sparrow. It is the 'heart' of the prince that remains when his battered and eye sore statue is torn down and melted,

Before *The Selfish Giant*, which is a story included in this book, was recommended to me recently, I had forgotten that Wilde had written fairy tales. That story and *The Happy Prince*, which this volume reacquainted me with, are excellent. The other tales in the book are well worth reading, especially *The Remarkable Rocket*, a tale of a self-absorbed firework, which is very good. These fairy tales were published before *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and before Wilde became a flamboyant center of London society. Some are explicitly Christian. Wilde's wit, insight, and word play are on display, particularly in *The Remarkable Rocket*, which can be read as a prescient allegory of Wilde's life.

These are moral tales of selflessness and selfishness. I was very touched by each of them and still feel a little choked up just thinking about most of them. They would be good for everyone to read as older children or adults, but I think might be too sad for young children. It's a very quick read with a big impact - at least on me!

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