
CBSE Class 09 English Language and Literature

NCERT Solutions

Moments Chapter 5

The Happy Prince

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

Ans: The courtiers called the prince ‘the Happy Prince’ because he was always happy. When he was alive, he did not know what tears were. After all, he lived in a palace where sorrow was not allowed to enter. However, things changed when he died. He was made into a statue and he was no more happy. He could now see the misery and ugliness of the city around him. This caused tears to flow down his eyes. He was sad on seeing the state of his city.

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

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

The swallow, persuaded by the prince, went to the seamstress’s house. But the seamstress had fallen asleep as she was tired. The swallow kept the ruby on the table where the woman worked. It then flew round the bed fanning the boy’s forehead with its wings. This relaxed the boy and he was able to go to sleep.

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

Ans: The Happy Prince sent the sapphires to two people: the young writer who lived across the city and the matchgirl.

The young writer was trying hard to finish a play for the Director of the Theater. As there was no fire in the grate and hunger had made him feel faint, he was too cold to write anymore, The young playwright could sell the sapphire to the jeweler, He could then 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.

All her matches had fallen into the gutter and were all spoiled. The prince knew that the matchgirl's 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?

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

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

Ans: The prince having given away the two sapphires of his eyes had become blind. Therefore, the swallow decided to be with the prince all the time. Probably the swallow was so touched by prince's kindness that instead of flying to Egypt and be with his friend, he decided to stay back. This clearly suggests that kind hearted people always attract friends who will stay with them forever.

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

Ans: The precious things mentioned in the story are the leaden heart of the happy prince and the dead bird. They are precious because both the happy prince and the swallow were very kind, generous and selfless. The prince could not bear to see the ugliness, misery and suffering in his city and so gave away all his precious stones and gold to make his people happy.

This inspired the swallow to sacrifice his trip to Egypt. He stayed back and acted as the prince's messenger carrying the precious stones and gold to the needy spreading happiness around. As the kind prince was blinded, having given away the sapphires of his eyes, the swallow, out of love chose to not leave him. By now it was getting colder and colder with winter approaching rapidly. Finally he could no longer bear the cold and died at the feet of the very statue that loved him so much. This broke its leaden heart into two.

When God asked one of the angels to bring him two precious things in the garden of paradise, the angel brought the leaden heart of the prince and the dead bird. God proclaimed that in his garden of Paradise the little bird shall sing for ever more and in the city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise God.
