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Fables,

Both stories in this book are from a collection by **Oscar Wilde** which contains other **fables**, or **fairy tales**, or **children's stories**. These three story types come from different traditions but they have many common elements.

- ◆ They most often have very similar **plots** and feature **supernatural elements**: strange creatures, giants, fairies, wicked witches, talking animals, impossible tasks and magic.
- ◆ The types of **characters** are similar. There are good characters, who are usually **humble**, simple and innocent, and there are evil characters, who use power and magic to do bad things.
- ◆ In most of these stories there is a '**friend**', usually a mysterious creature or character who gives the hero '**gifts**' or magical powers.
- ◆ Other common elements can include **royal characters**, such as kings, queens, princes and princesses.

Choose a fairy tale that you like and find the common elements mentioned above!

*Strange but true, the list of things that fairy tales have in common does not necessarily include fairies! Last but not least, these stories most often have a **happy ending** and their importance is always in the moral message or **lesson** for the reader.*

fairy tales and children's stories

When you are reading the stories find the things that are the same as fairy tales and the things that are different.



Oscar Wilde's children stories, however, are different. The five stories in the collection

look like children's stories, and there are some of the elements above, including talking insects, plants, and objects (the statue of the Happy Prince). But they have bigger meanings, and are not just for children. They often talk about problems that are not appropriate for young children. The language that Wilde uses is very simple and very close to poetry. But he is also critical of a society that gives value to appearances and is indifferent to suffering and sacrifice. Plus, Wilde's stories **do not** have a happy ending. In the fight between Good and Evil, Good does not always win.

GLOSSARY

- **appropriate:** right; good
- **critical of:** (here) doesn't like
- **gifts:** presents
- **humble:** when you don't think you are important
- **plots:** what happens in a story
- **tasks:** things you have to do
- **wicked:** very bad

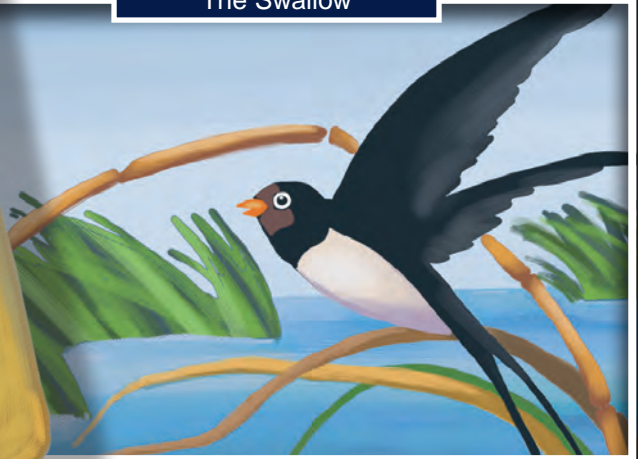


THE HAPPY PRINCE



The Happy Prince

The Swallow



The Match girl



The Seamstress



The Mayor



The Student



The Angel

2 High above the city, on a tall column, stands the statue of the Happy Prince. He is covered all over with thin leaves of gold, for eyes he has two bright sapphires, and there is a large red ruby on his sword.

The people of the town admire him very much. 'He is as beautiful as a weathercock,' says one of the Town Councillors. 'But he is not as useful,' he adds.

'Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?' a mother asks her little boy when he cries for the moon. 'The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for the moon.'

'I am glad there is someone in the world who is very happy,' says a sad man as he looks at the wonderful statue.

'He looks like an angel,' say the schoolchildren as they come out of the cathedral in their bright red cloaks and their clean white pinafores.

'How do you know?' asks the Mathematical Master, 'you don't know what angels look like.'

'Ah! We see them in our dreams,' answer the children. The Mathematical Master looks very serious and severe. He does not want the children to dream.

GLOSSARY

- **cloaks:** coats without sleeves
- **column:** tall thin support for statues, etc.
- **leaves:** (here) thin pieces
- **pinafores:** dresses that cover clothes
- **ruby:** red stone
- **sapphires:** blue stones
- **weathercock:** metal object (in the shape of a male hen) that turns to show the direction of the wind

One night a little Swallow• flies over the city. His friends are in Egypt. He stays behind, for he is in love with the most beautiful Reed•. He meets her in Spring. She is very beautiful and he stops and talks to her.

‘Can I love you?’ the Swallow asks. The Reed bows•. He flies round and round her. He touches the water with his wings. This is his courtship•, and it lasts all through the summer.

‘He is silly,’ the other swallows laugh. ‘She has no money, and too many relations•,’ and indeed the river is full of reeds. Then, in Autumn, they all fly away.

The little Swallow is alone, and he is beginning to be tired of his love.



- **bows:** bends (in agreement)
- **courtship:** period when a man tries to get a woman’s romantic attention
- **reed:** tall thin plant that grows beside rivers (see above)
- **relations:** family members
- **swallow:** type of bird (see above)

‘She has no conversation,’ he says, ‘and she is always flirting• with the wind.’ And certainly, when it is windy the Reed always bows gracefully•. ‘She loves her home,’ he continues, ‘but I love travelling.’

‘Come away with me!’ he asks her; but the Reed shakes• her head. She is very attached to her home.

‘You are playing with me,’ he shouts. ‘I am going to the Pyramids. Goodbye!’

THE SWALLOW AND THE REED

Why does the Swallow think the Reed loves him?

Why does he change his mind?



- **flirting:** trying to get the attention of the opposite sex
- **gracefully:** in an elegant way
- **shakes:** moves from left to right to say ‘no’

All day long he flies, and at night-time he arrives at the city. 'Where can I stay?' he asks.

Then he sees the statue on the tall column.

'I can stay there,' he says. 'It is in a good position, with lots of fresh air.' And he sits between the feet of the Happy Prince.

'I have a golden bedroom,' he says as he looks around. He prepares to go to sleep. He puts his head under his wing when a large drop[•] of water falls on him. 'What a strange thing! There is not a cloud in the sky, the stars are shiny and bright, but it is raining. The weather in the north of Europe is really bad.'

Then another drop falls.

'This statue is not useful. It does not keep the rain off,' he says. And he decides to fly away.

But before he flies away a third drop falls. He looks up. What does he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince are full of tears[•], and tears are running down his golden cheeks. His face is so beautiful in the moonlight[•] that the little Swallow feels sad.

'Who are you?' he asks.

'I am the Happy Prince.'

GLOSSARY

- **drop:** large round piece of liquid (like water) that is falling
- **tears:** water in someone's eyes when they are sad
- **moonlight:** light of the moon



‘Why are you crying?’ asks the Swallow

‘Far away,’ says the statue in a low• musical voice. ‘Far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and I can see a woman sitting at a table. Her face is thin and tired, and she has sore•, red hands. She is a seamstress• and she is sewing• flowers on a beautiful gown• for the most beautiful of the Queen’s maids• to wear at the next Ball•. Her little boy is lying in a bed in the corner of the room. He has a fever, and he is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him and he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, bring her the ruby out of my sword! I am a statue and I cannot move.’

‘My friends are waiting for me in Egypt,’ says the Swallow. ‘They are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus flowers•.’



GLOSSARY

- **Ball:** dance
- **gown:** (old) dress
- **lotus flowers:** exotic flowers
- **low:** soft; not loud; that you cannot hear well
- **maids:** female servants
- **seamstress:** woman who makes clothes
- **sewing:** fastening with thread and needle
- **sore:** that are hurting

‘Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,’ says the Prince. ‘Stay with me for one night and be my messenger•! The boy is very thirsty, and the mother is very sad.’

THE HAPPY PRINCE’S WISH

What does the Happy Prince ask the Swallow to do?

What does the Swallow reply?

Do you think the Swallow helps the Happy Prince?



- **messenger:** someone who does things for another person

‘I don’t think I like boys,’ answers the Swallow. ‘There are two rude• boys living by the river. They always throw stones at me. They don’t hit me, of course. I can fly far• too well.’

But the Happy Prince looks very sad and the little Swallow feels sorry for him. ‘It is very cold here,’ he says. ‘But I can stay with you for one night, and be your messenger.’

‘Thank you, little Swallow,’ says the Prince.

The Swallow takes the big red ruby from the Prince’s sword and flies away with it in his beak over the roofs• of the town.



GLOSSARY

- **far:** (here) much
- **rude:** not nice
- **roofs:** tops of houses

He passes by the palace and hears the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl comes outside with her lover. 'The stars are wonderful•,' he says to her. 'And love is wonderful, too!'

'I hope my dress is ready for the Ball,' says the girl. 'I want a dress with lots of flowers on it. But the seamstresses are very lazy•.'

He passes over the river, and sees the ships. He passes over the Ghetto•, and sees the old Jews• weighing out• money in copper scales. Then he comes to the poor house and looks in. The boy is tossing and turning on his bed. The mother is very tired. He goes in and leaves the ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble.

Then he flies gently around the bed, fanning• the boy's forehead with his wings. 'How cool I feel,' says the boy, 'I'm getting better.' And he falls asleep at last.



- **fanning:** making cool by moving the air
- **Ghetto:** place where Jews live
- **Jews:** people of the Jewish religion, usually from Israel
- **lazy:** don't want to work hard
- **weighing out:** seeing how heavy a thing is
- **wonderful:** great; beautiful



Then the Swallow flies back to the Happy Prince, and tells him everything. 'It is strange,' he says, 'but I feel warm now, although it is very cold.'

'That is because of your good action,' says the Prince. And the little Swallow begins to think, and then he falls asleep. Thinking always makes him sleepy.

GOOD ACTIONS

What good actions do you do?

How do you feel after you do them?

GLOSSARY

- **although:** even if



In the morning he flies down to the river and has a bath. ‘What a remarkable• sight,’ says the Professor of Ornithology• as he is walking over the bridge. ‘A swallow in Winter!’ And he writes a long letter about it to the local newspaper.

‘Tonight I go to Egypt,’ says the Swallow, and he is happy at the thought.

He visits all the public monuments, and sits for a long time on top of the church steeple. When the other birds see him they chirrup•, and say to each other: ‘What a distinguished• stranger!’

-
- **chirrup:** sound a bird makes
 - **distinguished:** important

- **ornithology:** study of birds
- **remarkable:** amazing; strange

When the moon rises he flies back to the Happy Prince. ‘Have you any requests from Egypt?’ he asks. ‘I am going away now.’ ‘Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,’ says the Prince. ‘Stay with me one night longer!’

‘My friends are waiting for me in Egypt,’ answers the Swallow. ‘They are flying up to the Second Cataract. The God Memnon sits there on a great stone throne. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he gives one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water’s edge to drink. They have eyes like green emeralds, and their roar is louder than the roar of the water.’



GLOSSARY

- **emeralds:** green stones
- **noon:** 12 o'clock midday
- **requests:** things you want
- **roar:** sound of a lion or wild animal
- **Second Cataract:** there are seven cataracts on the Nile river, they are places where people meet, etc.
- **throne:** a king's chair
- **water's edge:** bank; side of the river



‘Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,’ says the Prince. ‘Far away across the city I see a young man in an attic•. He is leaning• over a desk• covered with papers. There is a bunch• of dead violets• in a vase. His hair is brown and his lips are red and he has large dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write. There is no wood for the fire and he is hungry.’

-
- **attic:** room at the top of a house
 - **bunch:** group of flowers
 - **desk:** table where you write

- **leaning:** bending
- **violets:** purple flowers

'I can stay with you one night longer,' says the Swallow. He really has a good heart. 'Have you got another ruby?'

'Alas•! I have no ruby now,' says the Prince. 'But I have my eyes. They are made of rare• sapphires. They are from India and they are a thousand years old. Take one of them and give it to him. He can sell it to the jeweller and buy food and wood for the fire. Then he can finish his play.'

'Dear Prince,' says the Swallow. 'I cannot do that.' And he begins to cry.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' says the Prince. 'Do as I ask you.'

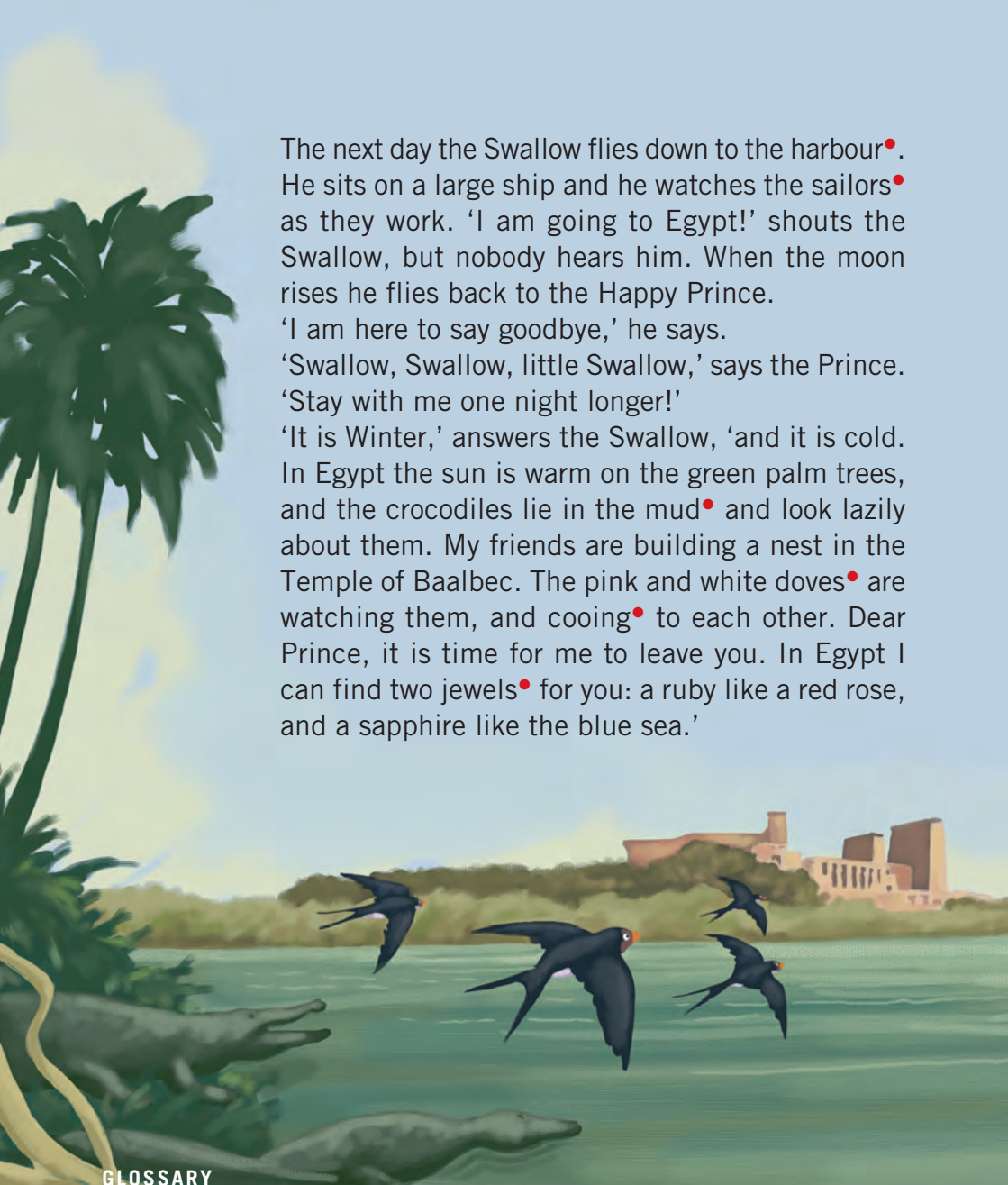
So the Swallow takes the Prince's eye, and flies away to the student's attic. It is easy to get in because there is a hole in the roof. He flies through the hole and goes into the room. The young man has his head buried• in his hands, so he does not hear the sound of the bird's wings. When he looks up he sees the beautiful sapphire lying• on the dead violets.

'I am going to be famous,' he says. 'This is from a great admirer•. Now I can finish my play.' And he looks very happy.

GLOSSARY

- **admirer:** someone who likes him
- **Alas!:** Unfortunately!; Oh dear!
- **buried:** deep inside; covered
- **lying:** (here) sitting
- **rare:** not common; not usual





The next day the Swallow flies down to the harbour. He sits on a large ship and he watches the sailors as they work. 'I am going to Egypt!' shouts the Swallow, but nobody hears him. When the moon rises he flies back to the Happy Prince.

'I am here to say goodbye,' he says.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' says the Prince. 'Stay with me one night longer!'

'It is Winter,' answers the Swallow, 'and it is cold. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My friends are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec. The pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, it is time for me to leave you. In Egypt I can find two jewels for you: a ruby like a red rose, and a sapphire like the blue sea.'

GLOSSARY

- **cooing:** sounds that doves make
- **doves:** type of birds
- **harbour:** port; where the boats are
- **jewels:** precious stones (like diamonds)
- **mud:** brown wet earth by a river
- **sailors:** men who work on boats

'In the square below,' says the Happy Prince, 'there is a little match girl•. Her matches• are on the ground and they are all spoiled•.

She is crying because she can't sell them and her father beats• her when she does not sell her matches. She has no shoes or socks, and her little head is bare•. Take my other eye and give it to her.'

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

What is the little match girl thinking?



- **bare:** with no hat
- **beats:** hits
- **match girl:** girl who sells matches

- **matches:** small sticks that make fire for cigarettes,
- **spoiled:** destroyed; ruined; don't work



GLOSSARY

- **blind:** when you cannot see

‘I can stay with you one night longer,’ says the Swallow. ‘But I cannot take your other eye.’

‘Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,’ says the Prince. ‘Do as I ask you.’

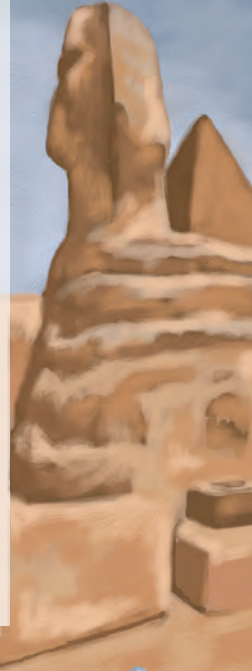
The Swallow takes the Prince’s other eye. He flies away to the match girl, and puts the jewel into her hand. ‘What a lovely piece of glass,’ says the little girl. And she runs home, laughing.

Then the Swallow comes back to the Prince. ‘You are blind• now,’ he says. ‘Let me stay with you always.’

‘No, little Swallow,’ says the poor Prince. ‘Go away to Egypt.’

‘No, I want to stay with you always,’ says the Swallow. And he falls asleep at the Prince’s feet.

All the next day he sits on the Prince's shoulder, and tells him stories about strange lands. He tells him about the red ibises. They stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch goldfish in their beaks. He tells him about the Sphinx. It is as old as the world, and lives in the desert, and knows everything. He tells him about the merchants. They travel slowly with their camels and carry amber beads in their hands. He tells him about the great green snake. It sleeps in a palm tree, and twenty priests feed it with sweet cakes. He tells him about the pygmies. They sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.



- **amber beads:** precious jewels
- **feed:** give it food
- **ibises:** type of birds with long red legs
- **lands:** countries
- **merchants:** men who buy and sell things
- **pygmies:** tribe of very small people
- **rows:** lines
- **shoulder:** part of the body on each side of the neck
- **Sphinx:** Egyptian monument, part lion part man



‘Dear little Swallow,’ says the Prince, ‘you tell me of wonderful things. Now fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see.’

So the Swallow flies over the great city, and he sees rich people in their beautiful houses. He sees the beggars• sitting at the gates•. He flies over dark streets, and he sees the white faces of hungry children. Two little boys are lying in a doorway•. ‘We are very hungry!’ they say. ‘You cannot stay here,’ shouts a man. And the boys walk out into the rain.

Then he flies back and tells the Prince.

‘I am covered with gold,’ says the Prince. ‘Take it off and give it to the poor people.’

The Swallow takes off all the gold and the Happy Prince is dull• and grey. He brings the gold to the poor. Now the children laugh and play games in the street. ‘We can buy bread now!’ they say.

GLOSSARY

- **beggars:** people asking for money
- **doorway:** door
- **dull:** not shiny and bright
- **gates:** doors into gardens

Then the snow comes, and after the snow comes the frost•. The streets are silver with snow and ice. Everybody wears fur• coats, and the little boys wear red caps• and skate• on the ice.

The poor little Swallow is very cold, but he does not leave the Prince. He loves him too much. He picks up crumbs• outside the baker's door when the baker is not looking. And he tries to stay warm by moving his wings.

He knows that it is time for him to die. He flies up to the Prince's shoulder once more.

'Goodbye, dear Prince!' he whispers•. 'Can I kiss your hand?'

'I am happy that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow,' says the Prince. 'Kiss me on the lips, for I love you.'



GLOSSARY

- **caps:** hats
- **crumbs:** small pieces of bread
- **frost:** ice
- **fur:** animal skin
- **skate:** go over ice
- **whispers:** says in a low voice

'I am not going to Egypt,' says the Swallow.
And he kisses the Happy Prince on the lips, and falls down dead
at his feet.

At that moment something cracks• inside the statue. The Happy
Prince's heart breaks in two. It certainly is very cold.

THE BROKEN HEART

Why does the Happy Prince's heart break? Tick.

- a Because it is cold.
- b Because the Swallow dies.
- c Because the Swallow goes to Egypt.

• **cracks:** breaks in two pieces

Early the next morning the Mayor is walking in the square below with the Town Councillors. They look up at the statue. ‘Dear me! The Happy Prince is dull and grey!’ says the Mayor.

‘Very dull and grey!’ say the Town Councillors. They always agree with the Mayor.

‘There is no ruby in his sword and he has got no eyes and he is not golden,’ says the Mayor. ‘He is like a beggar!’

‘He is like a beggar,’ say the Town Councillors.

‘And there is a dead bird at his feet!’ continues the Mayor.

And they take down the statue of the Happy Prince. And they melt the statue in a furnace. The Mayor has a meeting of the Council and he decides to make another statue.

‘I want another statue,’ he says. ‘A statue of me.’

‘Of me,’ say the Town Councillors, and they start arguing. They are probably still arguing.



THE MAYOR

What does the Mayor think of the statue of the Happy Prince?
Do you agree with him?

GLOSSARY

- **agree:** think he is correct
- **Dear me!:** Oh dear!
- **furnace:** very hot oven or fire
- **melt:** make liquid



‘What a strange thing!’ say the workmen at the furnace. ‘This broken heart did not melt in the fire.’

And they throw it away on a pile• of rubbish• beside the dead Swallow.

‘Bring me the two most precious things in the city,’ said God to one of his Angels. And the Angel brings him the Prince’s heart and the dead bird.



GLOSSARY

- **pile:** things, one on top of the other
- **rubbish:** things you throw away or put in the bin

K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 5**1 Read the short summary of the book. Choose the best word (A, B, or C) for each space.**

The story is a fairytale, but it is set in a real society with real problems (1) we can understand. A society that is selfish and with (2) compassion for other human beings. The prince is (3) a living person but a statue, decorated with gold and precious stones. And he is not even (4) He is very sad and cries because of the misery that he sees in the houses and lives of the poor people. The little swallow, who (5) on his way to reach his friends in Egypt, decides to help him and he becomes his messenger. The prince gives (6) all his gold and his precious stones with (7) help of the swallow. And in the end they (8) die for a noble cause.

- | | | | |
|---|----------|---------|---------|
| 1 | A who | B that | C where |
| 2 | A some | B the | C no |
| 3 | A about | B only | C not |
| 4 | A person | B happy | C sad |
| 5 | A is | B flies | C helps |
| 6 | A away | B to | C about |
| 7 | A the | B a | C no |
| 8 | A all | B two | C both |

K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 2**2 Complete the sentences with the best word (A, B or C) for each space**

- The prince is a statue placed over the city-
A tall B high C under
- The people in town are proud of the statue and admire beauty.
A its B their C a
- The swallow does not follow his friends as he in love with a reed.
A is B asks C his
- After flying all day long, the swallow is tired and for a place to rest.
A makes B finds C looks
- The swallow is surprised when he sees the eyes of the prince full tears.
A to B off C of