

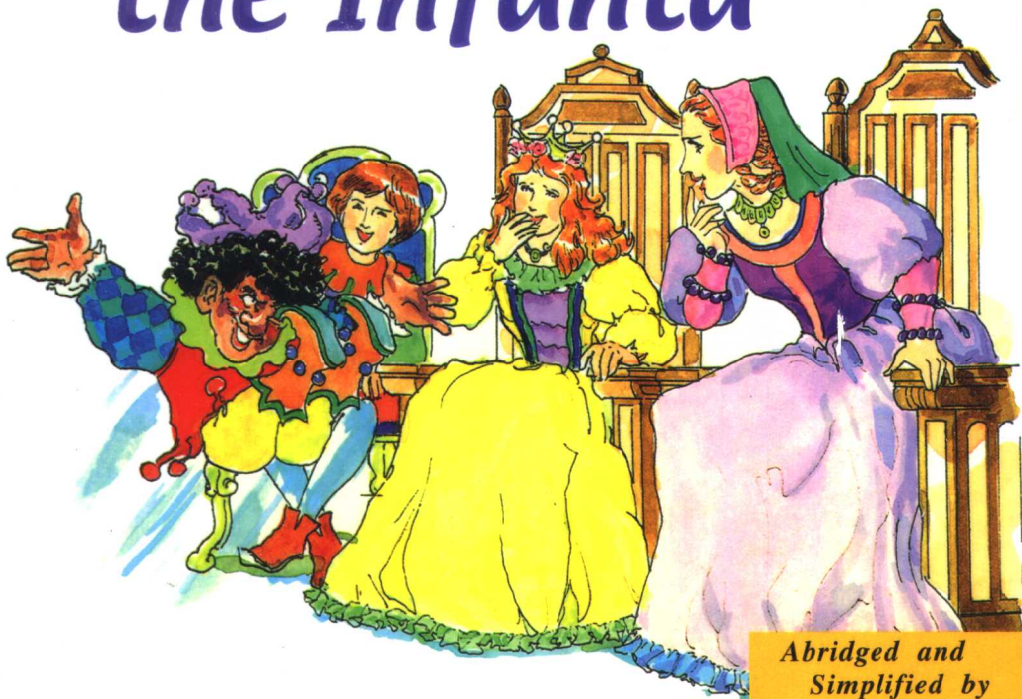


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The Birthday of the Infanta



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英语课外自学文库·第三辑·II

张道真 主编

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《公主的生日》

O. 王尔德

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序

这次应社会科学文献出版社之邀，主编了这套《英语课外自学文库》，旨在为英语学习者创造一个良好的英语阅读环境。

长期以来，我深感国内缺乏适当的英语读物，在书店能够看到的英文原版图书不是价格昂贵，就是鸿篇巨制，对在校的学生及英语学习者来讲，这样既会造成畏难情绪又不实用，对培养他们学习英语的兴趣、提高他们的英语水平极为不利。社会科学文献出版社针对这种情形，同时配合他们的“自学英语行动计划”，精心策划出版《英语课外自学文库》，并诚邀我担纲主编，他们用心良苦，我也欣然应允。

《英语课外自学文库》首批编辑出版的各辑图书都是依据在世界各地流传广泛而受欢迎的英语文学作品缩写而成（以后还要出版各类英文版知识性读物），是长期在非英语国家从事英语教育的英国专家 S.E. Paces 特意为中国学生精心打造的。

这样的简写读本实际上也非常适合中国的初学英语的成年人。有些内容只要掌握上千词汇甚至几百词汇就能阅读，同时，语法结构也简单化。更为可取的是，每册图书都配有一张动画光盘，既可以像唱卡拉 OK 那样随字幕跟读，又可以在光盘上做相应的练习，而且光盘还具有修改练习错误的功能。总之，是一套听说读写兼顾，很实用又很有趣味的英语读物。

阅读原文著作，听原声讲话，通过英语学习英语，是吸收英语知识，掌握英语规律最有效的途径。大量阅读英语著作的作用很多，首先是培养阅读的兴趣和能力。认真读完这几十本简写著作，在为

精彩的故事所吸引的同时，英文阅读自然也打下了初步基础；其次是巩固课内所学知识，提高整体英文水平。课堂上所学的知识，孤零零很难巩固，如果在阅读中反复印证，就会既丰富了语法知识，又扩大了词汇量，不知不觉中语言修养就得到了稳步提高；再有就是通过阅读，能开拓视野，体会异域风情和文化背景，扩大知识面，反过来又为进一步学好英语打下基础。另外，在这里我要建议读者要充分利用原声朗读光盘来学习语音，提高口语能力。在读完一本书或一段文字之后，结合跟读录音，像讲故事一样的进行复述。试试看，你的英文水平会有神速的进步。

我念书的时候条件艰难，英文原著不容易找，我是千方百计地寻觅。现在，国家逐步富裕起来，有条件出版更多更好的英语读物给莘莘学子，让他们很容易从学校图书馆里借来阅读，让他们很容易从书店里买来做藏书随时翻阅。希望这套颇具规模的《英语课外自学文库》成为可以让学生们尽情遨游的英语学习海洋，成为广大读者乐而忘返的英语学习乐园。那么，作为主编，更作为一名英语教育工作者，我将倍感欣慰。

张道真

2003年7月于深圳

Introduction

OSCAR WILDE (1856–1900), the famous Irish dramatist and poet, is best known for his witty comedies, the most popular of which are "*Lady Windermere's Fan*" and "*The Importance of Being Earnest*". He has also written a number of fairy stories, and the best of these are included in this book. They describe in a simple and poetic style happenings which are unreal and impossible but there is always a strong element of truth and wisdom in them. Some of them reflect the social discontent of the author's time, when class differences were greater than they are today.



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The Happy Prince



The statue of the Happy Prince stood high above the city, where it could be seen by all the citizens. It was covered all over with the finest gold. For the eyes, there were two splendid sapphires and there was a large red ruby in the handle of its sword.

It was very much admired by everyone.

"Why can't you be happy like the Happy Prince?" mothers said to their children when they cried. "The Happy Prince never cries about anything."

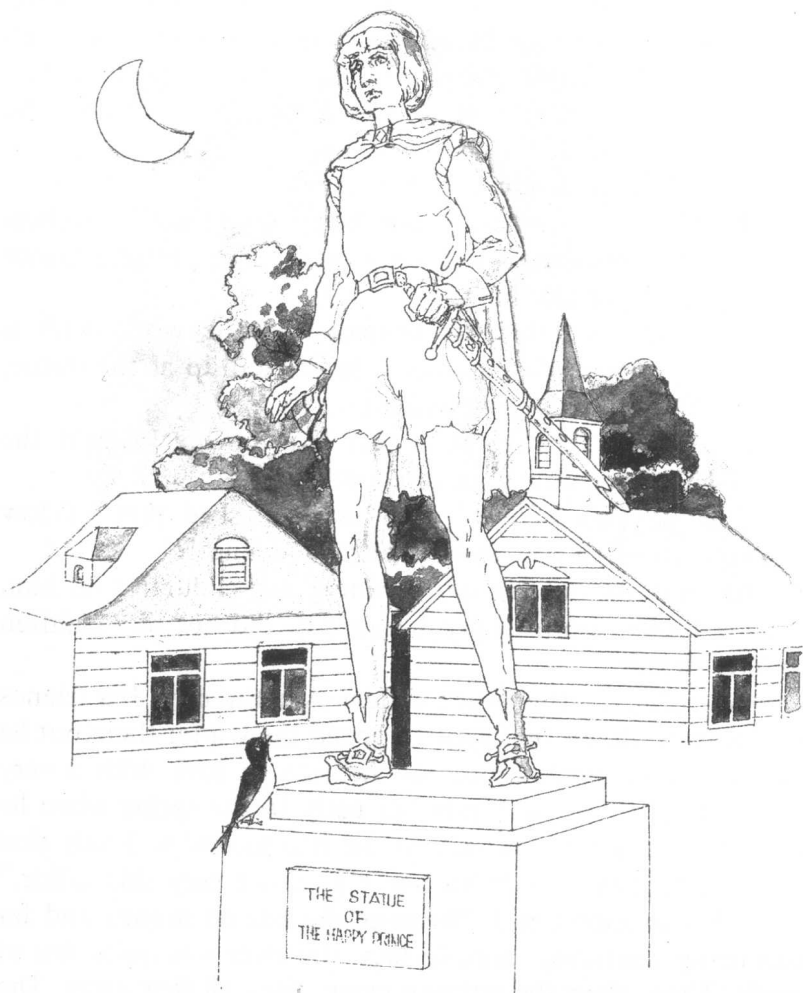
"I'm glad that there is someone in the world who is happy," a sorrowful man said as he looked up at the statue, and he felt that his heart was lighter.

"The Happy Prince looks just like an angel," said the school-children coming out of church.

"How do you know?" their teacher asked them. "How can you tell when you have never seen an angel?"

"Ah, but we have in our dreams," the children told him, and he looked quite angry because he did not like children to have dreams.

One night, a little swallow flew over the city. His friends had already flown to Egypt to spend the winter there but he had remained behind because he was in love with a very beautiful reed. He had met her early in the spring when he was flying down the river, and she had looked so lovely that he had stopped to talk to her. "This is a very silly affair," the other swallows said, "because she has no money and far too many relations," and, in fact, the river was quite full of reeds. Then when the autumn came, they all flew away. The



little swallow stayed behind for some weeks but he grew tired of the reed who never had anything interesting to say. "Goodbye, my dear, I am off to Egypt," said the Swallow. And he left her without a single sigh.

All day long he flew, and arrived at the city late at night. "I hope I can find somewhere to sleep," he said to himself. Then he saw the statue, standing high above the city. "That's just the place for me," he decided. "A fine position, with plenty of fresh air and a very good view." He flew down to rest just between the feet of the Happy Prince. "I have a golden bedroom," he thought as he prepared to go to sleep. But then, just as he was putting his head under his wing, a large drop of water fell on him.

He looked up. "It is very strange," he said. "There is not a single cloud in the sky and the stars are shining bright, but it is raining. The winter in the north of Europe is really very bad." Then another drop fell on him. "What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?" he said. "Well, I shall have to look for somewhere else to sleep." But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell. He looked up again and saw — Ah, what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears and tears were streaming down his golden face. He looked so sorrowful in the light of the moon that the little Swallow felt grieved for him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am the Happy Prince."

"Then why are you crying? You have made me quite wet with your tears."

"When I was alive and had a human heart," the Prince explained, "I did not know what tears were. I never cried because I lived in a palace where sadness was never allowed to enter. In the daytime, I played with my friends in the

garden and in the evening I danced in the palace halls. There was a very high wall round the garden, but I never wondered what lay on the other side because everything on my side of it was so beautiful. Everyone called me the Happy Prince and indeed I was happy — if pleasure is the same as happiness. I was so pleased with my little world. Well, so I lived and so I died. And now that I am dead, they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and unhappiness of my city, and though my heart is made of lead, yet I cannot help but weep.”

“Oh, so he is not solid gold. He’s only gold on the outside,” the little Swallow said to himself. He was far too polite to say such a thing out loud.

“Far away,” said the Happy Prince in a soft sweet voice, “far away from here, there is a poor house in a little street. One of the windows is open and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and weary and her hands are red and tired. She is a needlewoman and she is sewing flowers on a silk dress for a noble lady to wear at a dance in the palace. Her little boy is lying ill in a corner of the tiny room. He keeps on asking for oranges but his poor mother has nothing to give him but river water, and so he cannot stop crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not take her the ruby out of my sword. My feet are fixed here and I cannot move.”

“My friends are waiting for me in Egypt,” said the Swallow. “They are flying up and down the River Nile and at night they are sleeping in the tombs of mighty kings among gold, jewels and things of marvellous beauty. They have been waiting for me a long time. I must go to them now.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not stay with me just for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty and his mother is so sad.”

"I don't like boys," answered the Swallow. "Last summer, when I was flying over the river, some boys kept on throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course. We swallows fly too well for that, but still it was an unpleasant experience."

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow felt very sorry for him. "It is very cold here," he said, "but I will stay with you for one night and be your messenger."

"Thank you, little Swallow," said the Prince. And so the Swallow pecked the great ruby out of the Prince's sword and flew away with it over the roofs of the town.

He passed over the church and heard the sound of singing. He passed over the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A lady was leaning out of a palace window, looking up at the stars. "I hope that my dress will be ready in time for the ball next week," she said, "but these needlewomen are so lazy."

The Swallow passed on, over the river, the shops and the banks which in the daytime were crowded with people buying and selling. At last he came to the poor little house and looked in. The boy was lying restlessly on his bed and his mother had fallen asleep in her great weariness. He flew in and dropped the great ruby on the table beside the woman's hand. Then he flew round and round the bed, cooling the boy's head with his wings. "How cool I feel now," said the boy. "I think that I am getting better," and he fell sound asleep.

The Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince and told him what he had done. "I don't know why it is," he said, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is really very cold."

"That is because you have helped someone," said the Prince. The little Swallow began to think about these words but he soon stopped thinking and fell asleep. Thinking always made him feel sleepy.

When day broke, the Swallow flew down to the river and had a bath. A very learned professor happened to be crossing the bridge at that moment and saw the bird. "How very extraordinary!" he cried. "A swallow in winter!" He wrote a long letter about it to the newspaper. For some time afterwards people were talking about his letter. They were deeply impressed by it and thought it extremely clever because it was full of long words that they could not understand.

"I shall fly to Egypt tonight," the Swallow decided, "and I ought to see the sights of the city before I set out." And so he paid a visit to all the most important buildings in the city and sat for a long time on the top of the church. Wherever he went, the other birds looked at him admiringly, and they whispered to one another, "What a very distinguished foreigner. Who can he be?" This made the Swallow feel rather proud of himself.

When the moon rose, he flew back to the Happy Prince. "Have you any message that you would like me to carry to Egypt for you?" he asked. "I am just setting out."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me for one more night?"

"My friends are waiting for me in Egypt," replied the Swallow. "The sun is shining there and the air is warm. I have to go."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "far away across the city I can see a young man in a cold attic. He is sitting at a table covered with papers, and in a glass at his side there is a bunch of dead flowers. His hair is brown and he has large dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the theatre but he is too cold to go on writing. There is no fire in his tiny room and he is weak with hunger."

"I will stay with you for one more night," said the Swallow who was very kind-hearted. "Have you another ruby

for me to take to the young poet?"

"I have no other ruby," said the Prince. "My eyes are all that I have left. They are made of beautiful sapphires which were brought from India a thousand years ago. Peck one of them out and take it to him. He can sell it to a jeweller. Then he will be able to keep his fire going and to buy food to eat. He will be able to finish his play and make his dream of fame come true."

"Dear Prince," said the Swallow sadly, "I cannot peck your eye out. Don't ask me to do that." And he began to weep.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

The Swallow pecked out the Prince's eye and flew away with it to the young man's attic. It was easy enough to get in because the roof was full of holes. The young poet, who was sitting with his head buried in his hands, did not hear the bird's wings. When he looked up, he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the dead flowers.

"This must have come from a great admirer of my work," he cried. "I am beginning to be famous." And he set to work on finishing his play, feeling very hopeful and happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour where the seamen were loading and unloading ships that had come from all parts of the world. The sailors were singing and shouting to one another. Their excitement reached the Swallow and he cried out to them, "I am leaving, too. I am going to Egypt," but no one paid any attention to him.

When the moon rose, he flew back to the Happy Prince. "I have come to say goodbye," he said.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay one more night with me?"

"It is winter," replied the Swallow sadly, "and soon it will

be snowing. In Egypt the hot sun is shining on the green palm trees. My friends are waiting for me. Dear Prince, I must leave you but I shall never forget you. And when I return in the spring, I shall bring you two very precious jewels in place of those which you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than the reddest rose and the sapphire as blue as the wide ocean."

"There is a little girl standing in the Square below us," said the Prince. "She is selling boxes of matches — that is how she earns her living. She has just dropped them all in a puddle of dirty water and they are spoiled. Her father will beat her cruelly if she does not bring any money home, and she is weeping bitterly. She has no shoes on her feet and her clothes are in rags. Peck my other eye out, and take it to her. Then her father will not beat her."

"I will stay with you for one more night," said the Swallow, "but I cannot peck out your other eye. You would be quite blind if I did."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

Then the Swallow pecked out the Prince's other eye and flew off with it. When he came to the little match-girl, he dropped the sapphire into her hand. "What a lovely bit of glass!" cried the little girl, and ran home laughing.

The Swallow flew back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "and so I will stay with you always."

"No," said the poor Prince, "you must fly away to Egypt."

"I will stay with you always," repeated the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder and told him tales of what he had seen in strange lands far away. He told him about the strange red birds that stand in rows

on the banks of the River Nile, waiting to catch goldfish. He told him about the Sphinx, that ancient monument in the desert, with a head half-lion and half-man. Oh, he told him so many tales of merchants crossing the desert with their camels and their caravans! One wonderful story was about the great green snake that sleeps in a palm tree and has twenty men to feed it with sweet cakes.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me about marvellously strange things but I think that the strangest thing of all is the suffering of men and women and poor little children. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and come back and tell me the story of what you have seen there."

So the Swallow flew over the city and saw the rich feasting in their fine houses while beggars were starving at the gates. He flew into the dark and dirty lanes and saw the white faces of little children who were hungry and cold and miserable. Under a bridge, two little boys were lying in each other's arms to try and keep themselves warm. "How cold we are, and how hungry!" they said. "Get out. You can't lie here," shouted the policeman, and he made them go out in the rain.

The Swallow flew back to the Prince and told him what he had seen.

"I am all covered with fine gold," said the Prince. "I want you to peck it off, little by little, and take it to my poor people. The living always think that gold can make them happy. That is not true but, at least, it can buy them food and warmth."

Little by little, the Swallow pecked off the fine gold till the Prince looked dull and grey. He carried the gold to the poor, and the children's faces became rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. "Now we have something to eat," they shouted to one another excitedly.

Then the bitter cold winds brought snow and ice. The

streets were so bright and shining that they looked as if they were made of silver. Icicles hung down from the roofs. Rich people went about in furs.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder but he would not leave the Prince. He loved him too much to forsake him. He ate the bread crumbs that he found outside the baker's door and he tried to keep himself warm by beating his wings.

At last he knew that he was going to die. He had just enough strength to fly up on to the Prince's shoulder. "Good-bye, dear Prince," he said weakly. "I have to leave you now."

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt," said the Prince. "You have stayed here too long. I shall miss you, dear little Swallow, because I love you."

"I am not going to Egypt," said the little Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Perhaps that is better. Death is the brother of Sleep—" Then he fell down dead at his feet.

At that very moment, a strange noise sounded inside the statue, a crack, as if something had broken. It was the leaden heart of the Prince which had broken right in two. Was it the frost? It was bitterly cold that night.

Early the next morning, the Mayor was walking in the Square with the Town Councillors. As they were passing the statue, the Mayor happened to look up at it. "How disgustingly old and dirty the Happy Prince looks!" he said. "The ruby has fallen out of his sword. His eyes have gone and so has all that gold which covered him. He looks more like a beggar than a prince."

"Yes, indeed. More like a beggar than a prince," said the Councillors, who always agreed with everything the Mayor said.

"And here is a dead bird at his feet," said the Mayor. "Disgusting!"