TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 221

Short Stories with Peter: The Happy Prince — Oscar Wilde

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

75 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

High above a cold city stood a statue covered in gold.

People called him the Happy Prince.

But one night, a small bird landed beside him and found him crying.

Welcome to Short Stories with Peter, from Your English Toolbox.

Today I will tell you an adaptation of The Happy Prince, by Oscar Wilde.

Find a comfortable place, and let us begin.

The statue stood on a tall column.

Sapphires were his eyes, and a ruby shone on his sword.

One evening, a swallow arrived in the city.

His friends had flown to Egypt.

Tired, he rested beneath the statue.

Then a drop of water fell on his head.

That is strange, the sky is clear.

Another fell, and the swallow looked up.

Tears were running down the prince's face.

Why are you crying?

When I was alive, I lived in a palace and never saw the suffering outside.

Now I can see the whole city, and I see people who need help.

From high above the city, the prince could see a small house.

A mother is working while her little boy lies ill.

Little swallow, please take the ruby from my sword to her.

My friends are waiting for me in Egypt.

The night was cold, and the swallow wanted to leave.

But the prince looked so sad that the bird agreed to stay for one night.

He carried the ruby through the streets and left it beside the sleeping mother.

Then he flew gently around the child and cooled his face with his wings.

When the swallow returned, he felt warm despite the cold.

You feel warm because you have done a kind thing.

The next night, the swallow returned to say goodbye.

But the prince had seen a young writer, cold and hungry, trying to finish his work.

Please take him one of my sapphire eyes, so he can buy food and firewood.

Dear prince, how can I take your eye?

Please do this for him.

The swallow carried the sapphire to the writer, who found it beside his papers.

On the next night, the prince saw a girl in the street.

Her matches had fallen into the water, and she was afraid to return home without money.

Take her my other eye.

Then you will not be able to see.

Please take it to her.

The swallow did as he asked.

The girl found the sapphire and ran home, delighted.

Now the prince was blind, and the swallow made a choice.

I will stay with you.

He told the prince what he saw as he flew over the city.

He saw people with plenty to eat and others with almost nothing.

Take the gold from my body and give it to the people who need it.

Leaf by leaf, the swallow carried the gold away.

The statue grew grey, but children found bread and smiled.

Winter came, and the swallow grew weaker in the cold.

He flew to the prince one last time.

Goodbye, dear prince.

He kissed the prince and fell at his feet.

At that moment, the statue's lead heart broke in two.

The next morning, the town leaders saw a grey statue and a dead bird.

They ordered the statue taken down, but its broken heart would not melt in the fire.

They threw the heart away beside the swallow.

In Wilde's ending, an angel carries the broken heart and the little bird to God as the two most precious things in the city.

End of the story.

Now, let’s dive into the language and break down some of the key vocabulary from the story.

First, a swallow is a small bird with long wings that travels great distances.

The swallow stayed with the prince instead of flying south.

Next, to be covered in something means to have a layer of it on the outside.

The statue was covered in gold.

We can also say that a road is covered in snow.

The expression in need describes someone who needs help or something important.

The prince asked the swallow to help people in need.

Finally, to melt means to become liquid because of heat.

The statue's broken heart would not melt in the fire.

What did the swallow take to the mother first?

He took her the ruby from the prince's sword.

Why did the swallow stay when the prince became blind?

He chose to stay and help his friend.

You can read the story and explore its vocabulary on the episode page at your own pace.

The link is in the description.

Thank you for listening, and see you next time.