

The Humanitarian Values in The Happy Prince and its Implication for English Language Teaching

Ayesha Noor ul Ann Rani
ayeshanoorulane@gmail.com

M.Phil English Linguistics, Mohi-Ud-Din Islamic University (MIU) Nerian Sharif, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: * Ayesha Noor ul Ann Rani ayeshanoorulane@gmail.com

Received: 09-03-2025 Revised: 10-04-2025 Accepted: 21-04-2025 Published: 21-04-2025

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to look at the impacts of industrialization on human values in Victorian era. This essay emphasizes how The Happy Prince skilfully employs fairy tale conventions to highlight important Victorian issues, involving the rise of aristocratic capitalist society, the challenge to the prevailing Christian socio-moral order, and the subsequent formation of class division. This study falls under the category of qualitative research since it accurately describes and interprets the indications made by the story's key characters. Both primary and secondary data are included as a source for the current study. The short tale served as the major source of data, and secondary sources included books, periodicals and magazines. The data was collected, combined, examined, and ultimately presented using description approach.

Keywords: *The Happy Prince, fairy tale, aestheticism, parody, social satire, Victorian society, Christian imagery.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the components or factors of language. In actuality, literature is one of the most fascinating human artistic creations, composed of written language, namely, theatre, poetry, and fiction, and it also contains an element of entertainment. Kosasih (2012) states that literature is divided into three categories. They are drama, poetry, and prose. Poetry is a monologue-based art form. This type of writing, which includes poetry, sonnets, ballads, and heroic couplets, is composed in metrical feet and has rhythmic lines.

Literature is essential for learning English, claims Bruton in Ardayati (2013, p. 1). Through literature, students may develop more comprehensive understanding. Students use literature to communicate their thoughts and to convey a message through artistic creations. Short stories, poetry, plays, novels, and essays are the five primary categories into which literature can be broadly divided. A play is the most captivating of them since it uses acting to bring stories to life. Film is one form of the play in contemporary media.

Reading literary works allows readers to learn, especially about mankind. Human values serve as a source of inspiration, motivation, and guidance, enabling people the determination to live meaningful lives and take meaningful action. In addition to teaching media such as novels and short stories, friends and family also play a significant role in shaping young people's behavior.

According to the expert's definition, the author believes that literature is a form of human cultural creation in which people can freely express their thoughts. Literature serves as a source of knowledge, particularly knowledge about humanity, in addition to providing pleasure or enjoyment through artistic writing.

People who are the curious about literature should understand the message that the author wishes to convey positive ideas from literary works and avoid negative ones, particularly to help students see the link between studying literature and their own lives. Story's well-defined framework, enhanced by several artistic elements and appropriate narrative techniques, makes it ideal for delivering a message to kids that encourages greater human kindness.

Social Condition of Victorian Era

Queen Victoria reigned over Britain from June 20, 1837, until her death on January 22, 1901. It was a protracted time of harmony, wealth, high moral standards, and national self-assurance. However, it was also a time when religious morality underwent a significant shift. The Anglican Church was extremely strong in managing colleges and universities at the time of Victoria's accession, and prominent church leaders held positions in the House of Lords. Throughout the Victorian era, the Church maintained its dominance in rural areas, but not in industrialized cities. There were a lot of people in the cities who were opposed to Church, and there was dispute or rejection everywhere.

The secular opposition group disagreed with Anglican Church's use of its influence. To force people to carry out the Church's will, the Church required submission to God, obedience to him, and resignation. Ironically, Methodism, Congregationalism, the Society of Friends (Quakers), and Presbyterianism sprang from the Church's attempt to appease the affluent while demonstrating little to no regard for the interests and preferences of the poorer, lower peasant class. Throughout Victorian era, individualism was highly valued and was further cultivated in middle-class life.

"Crisis of Faith" would hit religion and people's faith like a tonne of bricks. The Crisis of Faith began in 1859 with Charles Darwin's article "On the Origin of Species." His primary theory was that the Natural World had evolved over thousands of years to become what it is today. He said that man had survived for such a long time because of natural selection and the principle of survival of the fittest. His empirically supported theory of evolution would challenge Victorian standards and Christian beliefs. Individuals whose lives were completely upended felt the need to establish a new moral code and set of values. Unable to fully abandon their faith, they integrated personal responsibility with their religious convictions.

Oscar Wilde, a writer with a keen understanding of moral and ethical principles as well as social justice, was greatly influenced by these concepts. He attempted to offer profound critique through his fairy tales, such as "Happy Prince," after witnessing the negative effects of industrialization on urban culture in England. At first glance, this short narrative appears to be just another engaging children's bedtime tale, but after reading it several times, the reader notices something different. This was intended to teach and inspire moral behaviour in adults as well as children (Samekto ,1974).

Biography of Oscar Wilde

One of the most well-known writers of the Victorian era, Oscar Wilde, was born in Dublin in 1854. Born into a wealthy family, Wilde excelled at Oxford University in London and Trinity College in Dublin. Even before "The Picture of Dorian Grey" was published in 1890, he was well-known for his socializing and self-promotion. He was well-known from the start for his unique personality, which was particularly evident in his eccentric and self-consciously flamboyant appearance, as well as his appreciation of art and aesthetic awareness. The Happy Prince and Other Tales, Wilde's two collections he wrote, was published in 1888.

The critics gave this work high marks, most notably Walter Pater, a well-known literature and art critic whose thoughts and lectures at Oxford greatly impacted Wilde. The comedies Lady Windsor's Fan (1892), A Woman of No Importance (1893), and An Ideal Husband (1895) are among his other works. He

also compiled a number of children's book collections, such as *Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1896). It's astonishing to discover that Oscar Wilde originally made these artworks only for his own children's bedtime stories, but both adults and children soon came to love them..(British Encyclopaedia, 1964:120) The *Happy Prince* appears to hold a unique position among the four other stories in this first anthology. The *Happy Prince*, a gorgeous fine-art statue, and a small swallow whom he persuades to assist him in donating his jewels to the poorest members of his city are the subjects of this story, which ultimately results in their deaths. As God acknowledges their love and grants them eternal happiness, their spirits discover a greater purpose, even though their deaths represent the price of kindness and philanthropy in a materialistic society (Caizergues, 2020). He also wrote a play "The Importance of Being Earnest" and a novel "The Picture of Dorian Grey" Among the most famous writers of the Victorian era is this one as well. He found work as a critic and speaker in England after publishing his first book of poems in 1881.

Research Questions

The research will unfold following questions.

1. To explain the human values present in *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde.
2. To explain Oscar Wilde's humanity in the context of society.
3. To describe the implication of analysis literature as *The Happy Prince* in ELT.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of a short story is the main subject of this qualitative and descriptive study, so qualitative, descriptive methodology is used. The descriptive approach is employed to provide an accurate and factual description of an occurrence, subject, or location, according to Richards (2002, p. 152). Events are described using the descriptive technique as they naturally occur, claims Sugiono (2013, p. 21).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After examining this short narrative and uncovering the author's portrayal, the researcher deduces humanity's values, in the form of extracts from the text. The author of this study determined the human values expressed in Oscar Wilde's short story. *The Happy Prince* served as the literary piece examined in this investigation. Right from the start of the narrative. Through the major characters in the work, Oscar Wilde had highlighted the virtues of mankind. The primary focus of this paper was on human values.

An overview of the short narrative in brief *The Happy Prince*

"*The Happy Prince*" is a short story by Oscar Wilde, which was initially published in 1888. The prince in this tale led a contented and opulent existence. His palace was situated in a remote area and was a magnificent building. After he passed away, he was transformed into a statue that was erected upon town hill. Prince observed the suffering, tribulations, griefs, and heartaches of the town's citizens. While travelling to Egypt with his companions, a small bird named swallow took refuge in the statue's feet. He took up the role of messenger for the prince's monument and assisted the statue.

In the prince's statue feet, the swallow became cold and eventually perished. The statue lost its dazzling beauty and shine after losing its gold and diamonds and becoming blind. His statue and the deceased swallow's body were dumped on the dust heap after his heart was crushed. His generosity delighted God, and they were admitted to heaven. The monument of the prince would be positioned above the hill in heaven, and the swallow would soar through the happiness garden. A selection of *The Happy Prince*'s text has been used to describe human values.

“The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks.”

This quote from *The Happy Prince* emphasises the qualities of mankind via empathy, selflessness, and compassion. The Prince's tears demonstrate the human ability for empathy and represent his profound sadness for other people's suffering. He used to lead a protected and pampered existence, but now he understands the struggles of the world and reacts with real feeling. His tears reveal his true humanity, which prioritises selflessness and love over worldly splendour, while his golden exterior symbolises financial richness and beauty.

“When I was alive and had a human heart,” answered the statue, “I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. 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 all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot chose but weep.” The contrast between ignorance and awareness, the distinction between pleasure and true happiness, and the ability to empathize are some of the ways that this excerpt from *The Happy Prince* examines the aspects of mankind. The Prince, who mistook pleasure for happiness, lived in luxury and was protected from pain while he was alive. His seclusion inside the palace serves as a metaphor for how privilege may make one oblivious to other people's hardships. But in death, high above the city, he develops genuine consciousness and compassion, seeing the extent of human suffering. His tears and leaden heart symbolize the passage from flimsy happiness to sincere compassion, emphasizing the notion that genuine humanity is found in unselfish care for others.

“Far away,” continued 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 through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill.

He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.” This excerpt from *The Happy Prince* illustrates the qualities of humanity via selflessness, social injustice, and compassion. The Prince emphasizes the sharp contrast between wealth and poverty by demonstrating profound empathy for the struggling seamstress and her ailing kid after becoming aware of the suffering going on around him. The mother's worn-out condition and incapacity to support her son highlights the hard reality of the working class, while the opulent gown she sews represents the wealthiest people's disregard. The idea that humanity's greatest virtue is kindness and compassion for the less fortunate is further supported by the Prince's readiness to give up his ruby in order to assist them. This shows true generosity and selflessness.

“Dear little Swallow,” said the Prince, “you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there.”

Through awareness, empathy, and the contrast between beauty and pain, this excerpt from *The Happy Prince* unwraps the qualities that make us human. The Prince, who was previously unaware of the misery in the world, now understands that the biggest mystery of all is human sorrow. His remarks, which highlight the pervasive sadness that lies underlying the city's splendour, reveal a profound awareness of life's terrible facts. The Prince shows his altruistic desire to assist others by asking the Swallow to observe and report on the people's hardships. This reinforces the idea that true humanity is found in compassion and the wish to lessen suffering.

“So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another’s arms to try and keep themselves warm. “How hungry we are!” they said. “You must not lie here,” shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.”

This excerpt from *The Happy Prince* reveals the aspects of mankind via indifference, misery, and societal inequity. The stark contrast between the rich living in luxury and the poor struggling to survive serves to emphasize the wealth and poverty division. The hard realities faced by the most vulnerable members of society are reflected in the images of homeless youths looking for warmth under a bridge and malnourished children. The idea of unfairness and callousness is furthered by the Watchman's icy rejection of the lads, which represents society's disregard for the underprivileged. Wilde criticizes the harshness of a society where severe suffering and riches coexist through the Swallow's views.

I am covered with fine gold,” said the Prince, “you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy.”

This quote from *The Happy Prince* expresses the qualities of mankind through sacrifice, altruism, and the fallacious notion that happiness is correlated with material prosperity. The Prince's request to donate his gold represents a deep act of altruism and compassion for the plight of others. The idea that the "living always think that gold can make them happy" is a criticism of materialism and the false belief that monetary prosperity leads to contentment. Despite his previous life of luxury, the Prince recognizes that true happiness comes from assisting people in need rather than from having wealth, highlighting the value of compassion and putting the welfare of others before one's own interests.

“Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children’s faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. “We have bread now!” they cried.

The concepts of compassion, sacrifice, and the strength of giving are all demonstrated in this excerpt from *The Happy Prince*. The Prince loses some of his physical beauty when the Swallow takes away his gold to donate to the underprivileged, but the relief and happiness it gives the kids shows how important selflessness really is. The kids' rosier faces and lively spirits, which represent their newfound delight, show how deeds of charity and goodwill can change people's lives. The enjoyment that comes from assisting others is far greater than any material prosperity, and this moment serves as a reminder that true beauty comes from giving without expecting anything in return.

Implication of The Happy Prince for English language teaching

Emotional Expression: The narrative promotes teaching pupils how to communicate their feelings and empathy both orally and in writing.

Vocabulary Expansion: New vocabulary and its contextual meanings can be taught through the story's rich, descriptive language.

Moral Teachings: Teachers can use the story to talk about social justice, charity, and selflessness.

Cultural Awareness: By shedding light on societal injustice, the narrative can promote dialogue about international concerns and various cultural traditions.

Literary Devices: To teach literary analysis, the story provides examples of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism.

Character Development: Through the Prince and Swallow, students can improve their reading comprehension by learning about character attributes.

Critical Thinking: The moral intricacy of the story can stimulate ethical conversations and help students develop their critical thinking skills regarding right and wrong.

DISCUSSION

While some people lead wealthy lifestyles, many others struggle with poverty. There are many families in this nation who are struggling. Literature has enormous relevance in life since it reflects human values (Asmarani,2021).

“Bring me the two most precious things in the city,” said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird. “You have rightly chosen,” said God, “for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.”

As two most valuable items in the city, the two heroes are thus selected to ascend to Heaven while they are in the greatest suffering of their lives: dead "on a dust-heap" (285).This acknowledges the Christian-belief that only the righteous are accepted in Paradise. Therefore, from the perspective of Christian doctrine, both the Swallow and the Happy Prince are seen to be virtuous in nature ,kind hearted ,human lover and endowed with high moral characteristics (Caizergus,2020).

CONCLUSION

This essay has shown that The Happy Prince is a significant work among Oscar Wilde’s writings, particularly in its emphasis on humanitarian values. As a masterfully written story, it provides young readers with aesthetic components that deepen their understanding of literature while preserving an organised and approachable plot. Christian allusions are interspersed throughout, although their implicit nature makes them easier for mature readers to understand, besides paradoxical elements further blur strict religious interpretations.Ultimately, both adults and children learn a common moral lesson—an exhortation for increased human unity.This message resonates to the problems of Victorian society, especially when it criticises the inflexible demands of femininity and the vacuity of the upper class, among other established social andmoral standards. In addition, the story parodies capitalist bourgeois values by referencing

Marxist criticisms of utilitarianism, particularly with reference to the commodity of values(Caizergues,2020). Additionally, Wilde's artistic viewpoint is entwined with this societal critique, opposing a merely hedonistic approach to art and Victorian ideas that associate beauty with morality. In the context of teaching English, The Happy Prince is a useful tool for examining literary themes, moral principles, and social concerns while encouraging students to think critically and engage in ethical dialogue. Future studies can examine how Wilde's changing life experiences influenced his writing style,

connecting his writings to both an autobiographical viewpoint and the larger social context in which he lived.

As a result, the pupils may acquire the terms more efficiently and successfully in the classroom. Literature's worth extends beyond human understanding to include principles for teaching English in the classroom. Despite the fact that pedagogy is commonly thought of as a singular notion, it is actually a combination of the knowledge and abilities needed for successful instruction. This study falls under the category of qualitative research since it precisely describes and interprets the indications made by key characters.

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