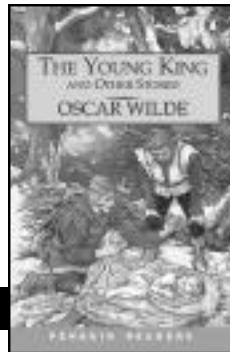


Teacher's notes

The Young King and other Stories

by Oscar Wilde



SUMMARY

When the *Young King* is plucked from the obscurity of the forest to take his rightful place at the palace, he is happy at first to see the beautiful things he has to wear. But after he dreams of the poor people, struggling to make the clothes and even dying to get the jewels, he does not want them any more. But the people, in turn, do not want a king who does not look like a king. When he refuses to be crowned in the normal way, it looks like he will lose his kingdom, until a shaft of light comes through the stained glass windows of the church and he is 'crowned' by one who is greater than the High Priest.

The *Infanta* is a spoilt child who has everything. She laughs at the ugly dwarf who entertains her on her birthday. On a whim, she gives him a rose, which he takes as a sign of love. But when he tries to find her in the palace, he comes face to face with his own image in a mirror for the first time and realises that he is ugly and kept for the Infanta to laugh at. He dies of a broken heart.

The *Happy Prince* is a statue of gold and jewels which looks down on a city. But he is not as happy as the people think. When a small bird shelters under his figure, she realises that the statue is crying. She helps him put right some of the poverty in his city, with the jewels from his belt and his eyes, and the gold leaf that covers him. She then stays with him because he is blind. However, she cannot survive the winter and, when she freezes to death, the Happy Prince's metal heart cracks. Both bird and prince are taken into heaven as the two best things in the city.

In *The Fisherman and his Soul*, the Fisherman understands why he has a heart but can see no point in having a soul. When a mermaid tells him he can only join her under the sea if he gets rid of his soul, he finds out from a witch that he can cut his soul free. He does this and lives for a while with the mermaid, but his soul returns several times to tempt him with knowledge and riches. Finally, he is persuaded to take back his soul just for a while, but the soul, without a heart, makes him do terrible things and he tries to rid himself of it again. Too late he discovers you can only send your soul away once. He can never go back to live with his mermaid. When the mermaid dies, her body is washed onto the shore. His heart breaks and his soul can enter his body fully again.

In *The Nightingale and the Rose*, a lovesick student needs a red rose for his lady. A nightingale, impressed by the student's devotion, sacrifices herself to make a red rose. But the lady rejects the offering when she gets jewels from another lover, and the student decides that love is a silly thing.

The Star Child seems to have come down from heaven.

But to the poor people of the country that he appears in, he is just another mouth to feed. Although he is taken in and looked after, he grows up cruel and proud, but beautiful. His final act of unkindness is to a beggar woman who turns out to be his mother. He sees that his behaviour has made him ugly, and he repents. Now begins a long search for his mother during which he is imprisoned by a magician and given tasks to perform. At the end of each, he gives away the gold he has received to a sick man, who is, of course, his father, the king of the country.

The Selfish Giant doesn't want children playing in his garden and so it is a desolate place of snow and ice and cold winds. When children creep in through a hole in the wall, spring comes and the giant realises his folly. He helps one little child into a tree and hopes to see him again the next day. But it is a long time before he returns, with holes in his hands and feet, to take the dying giant to heaven.

ABOUT OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde, or Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde to give him his full name, was born on 16th October 1854. He was an Irish poet and dramatist, best known for his one-liner sayings such as 'I can resist anything except temptation' and 'There is only one thing worse than not getting what you want, and that is getting what you want.' His plays are full of this kind of wit, but they also have good plots.

Wilde wrote many plays including, according to many critics, the best comedy play of the 19th century, the farce *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Wilde also wrote fairy stories, short stories and one novel.

He was born in Dublin, but went to Oxford University, where he proved to be brilliant academically and gained a reputation for wit and flamboyance.

He went to America to lecture in 1882. When asked by the customs officer if he had anything to declare, he said 'Nothing but my genius'.

He visited Paris in 1883 and returned to the United States for the opening of his first play. He got married in 1884 and had two sons, who were, possibly, the inspiration for his first fairy tales.

Wilde was not afraid to shock society, which eventually had its revenge. He was imprisoned in 1895 for indecent behaviour, the same year that his best play was produced. While in prison, he was declared bankrupt and he only lived a short time after his release, dying on 30th November 1900.

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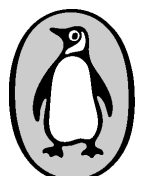
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PRE-INTERMEDIATE

THE YOUNG KING AND OTHER STORIES



Teacher's notes

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Oscar Wilde was a leading member of the 19th century Aesthetic movement in England. This movement was influenced by the writings of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer who argued that beauty was universal. Artists in the movement argued that art should not imitate life. Writers such as Wilde propounded the idea of art for its own sake, rather than as a useful object or as a moral guide to society.

And yet, the stories in this book are deeply moral and even religious. We learn of the need to be kind to people, that one good turn deserves another and that the soul and the heart are indivisible. We discover that even cruel and selfish people can repent and they will be taken into heaven. We also learn that money and power can make you blind to the suffering of others and we must strip away that veneer and see people for what they are, not for the money or possessions they have.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- Write the captions of the pictures in the book on separate piece of paper. Give students time to study the captions. Then hold up a copy of the book with the captions covered and ask students to work out which caption fits the picture best.
- Put students into pairs. One student describes a picture and the other student has to guess which picture they are looking at.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

After students have read each story, put them into small groups and ask them to think of a suitable moral from the story – e.g. One good turn deserves another.

'The Young King' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta'

Each of these stories has one very important sentence. Which is it? Ask students to work in pairs, then elicit the ideas and decide which sentence in each story is the most important.

'The Happy Prince' and 'The Fisherman and His Soul'

- In the story of *The Happy Prince*, the prince sees sad things and tries to help. Ask students to work in small groups to think of another example of a sad thing that the prince sees, and a way the prince can help.
- Ask students to work in groups and discuss these questions:

Do you believe there is such a thing as a soul?

Why/Why not? If you do, what is the purpose of the soul?

'The Nightingale and the Rose', 'The Star Child' and 'The Selfish Giant'

Ask students to work in three groups. Each group works on one of the three stories in this section, and tries to tell it as a mini-saga in just 50 words. You might even like to use this grid of 50 spaces and ask students to fit their writing exactly into the space available.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to decide in small groups which story they think they will always remember and to give reasons for their choice.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the *Lan gman Active Study Dictionary*.)

'The Young King' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta'

- crown** (n) a circle made of gold and jewels worn by kings and queens on their head
- dwarf** (n) an imaginary creature in stories that looks like a small man
- god** (n) a being who is believed to have power over some part of nature or the world
- jewel** (n) a valuable stone such as a diamond
- magic** (n) a special power used to make strange or impossible things happen
- pearl** (n) a valuable small white round object that forms inside an oyster and is used in jewellery
- priest** (n) someone who performs religious duties
- servant** (n) someone whose job is to live in another person's house and do cleaning and cooking, etc.
- slave** (n) someone who is owned by another person and must work for them without pay

'The Happy Prince' and 'The Fisherman and His Soul'

- beggar** (n) someone who lives by asking people for food or money
- mermaid** (n) an imaginary creature with a woman's body and a fish's tail instead of legs
- net** (n) a piece of material that you use for catching fish
- soul** (n) the part of a person which many people believe continues to exist after death
- statue** (n) a stone or metal object that is made to look like a person or animal
- wing** (n) one of the two parts of a bird's body that it uses for flying
- witch** (n) a woman who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do bad things

'The Nightingale and the Rose', 'The Star Child' and 'The Selfish Giant'

- giant** (n) an extremely tall, strong man in children's stories
- nightingale** (n) a small European wild bird that sings beautifully, especially at night
- rabbit** (n) a common small animal with long ears and soft fur, that lives in the ground
- thorn** (n) a sharp pointed part on the stem of a plant such as a rose



Student's activities

The Young King and other Stories



Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

Activities before reading the book

- 1 Read the table of contents. work with a partner. Which story do you want to read most? Why?
- 2 Read the Introduction. Answer these questions. What happened to the author in:
 - (a) 1854
 - (b) 1884
 - (c) 1888
 - (d) 1891
 - (e) 1895
 - (f) 1897
 - (g) 1898
 - (h) 1900

Activities while reading the book

'The Young King' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta'

- 1 In *The Young King*
 - (a) Who brought up the young king?
 - (b) Why did the old king bring his son back to the palace?
 - (c) How did the young king feel about the beautiful things in the palace?
 - (d) What were people making for the young king's special day?
- 2 The young king has three dreams. Number these sentences for the correct dream, 1, 2 or 3.
 - (a) Around him cloth-makers were at work.
 - (b) He dreamed that he was on a ship.
 - (c) He dreamed that he was standing in a long, low room.
 - (d) He had a pearl in his right hand.
 - (e) He was walking through a dark forest full of strange fruit and flowers.
 - (f) Hundreds of slaves were working on the ship.
 - (g) Little children were working with them.
 - (h) The seaman took one of the youngest slaves, tied a stone to his feet and let him down over the side of the ship.
 - (i) The young king saw that the cloth-maker was making gold doth.
 - (j) There he saw a great crowd of men, working in a dry river.
 - (k) 'These men are working in the river to find jewels for a king's crown.'
 - (l) They were weak and hungry and their little hands shook.
 - (m) 'Throw the body into the sea.'
- 3 Who, in the story of the young king, said ...?
 - (a) Take them away. I will not wear them.
 - (b) A dream is only a dream - it is not real.
 - (c) I did not wear fine dothes when I came to the palace.
 - (d) Sir, where is your crown?
 - (e) This is not the king.
 - (f) Only the king can come in here.
 - (g) What crown shall I crown you with?

- (h) Where is the dreamer of dreams?
 - (i) Someone has crowned you who is greater than me.
- 4 Who crowned the young king?
 - 5 In the first section of *The Birthday of the Infanta* (up to 'and the other children followed her'), who ...?
 - (a) was twelve years old.
 - (b) thought sadly about his wife.
 - (c) worked on the dead queen's body.
 - (d) went to the birthday show with the Infanta.
 - (e) was a great lady who looked after the Infanta.
 - (f) played music on a pipe and made magic.
 - (g) sat in a ring and played music.
 - (h) had very short legs and a very big head.
 - (i) followed the Infanta back to the palace.
 - 6 In *The Birthday of the Infanta*, did each of these things happen before or after the dwarf saw himself in the mirror?
 - (a) Hot tears poured down the dwarf's face.
 - (b) The dwarf died.
 - (c) The dwarf fell down on the floor.
 - (d) The dwarf lay crying on the floor.
 - (e) The dwarf looked angrily
 - (f) The dwarf pulled the white rose to pieces and threw the pieces away.
 - (g) The dwarf put his hand on his heart and went down on one knee in front of the Infanta
 - (h) The dwarf ran into the garden.
 - (i) The dwarf saw a little door and went into the palace.
 - (j) The dwarf saw someone standing in the shadow.
 - (k) The dwarf was afraid.
 - (l) The Infanta gave the dwarf a white rose.

'The Happy Prince' and 'The Fisherman and His Soul'

- 1 In *The Happy Prince*, to whom did the bird give:
 - (a) the red jewel?
 - (b) the first blue jewel?
 - (c) the second blue jewel?
 - (d) the gold?
- 2 Why did the bird stay with the prince after taking the second blue jewel?
- 3 When did the prince's heart break?
- 4 What happened to the bird and the prince after they died?
- 5 Put these events from the *Fisherman and His Soul* in the correct order.
 - (a) A fisherman caught a mermaid in his net.
 - (b) After another year, the soul came and told him about a ring which can make him richer than all the kings in the world.
 - (c) After another year, the soul came and told him about dancers with white feet.
 - (d) After one year, the soul came and told him about a mirror which shows everything.

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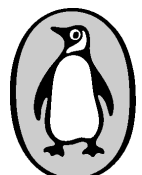
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THE YOUNG KING AND OTHER STORIES



Student's activities

- (e) One day the fisherman said to the mermaid, 'Take me as your husband.'
- (f) The fisherman asked a priest for help in sending away his soul but the priest said 'Stupid man! Your soul was given to you by God.'
- (g) The fisherman told the soul 'Love is better than gold and jewels.'
- (h) The fisherman told the soul 'Love is better than understanding.'
- (i) The fisherman tried to sell his soul in the market but the market-sellers said, 'Sell us your body and become a slave.'
- (j) The fisherman went back to the sea and called to the mermaid but she didn't come.
- (k) The fisherman went to a witch.
- (l) The fisherman went to live in the sea with the mermaid.
- (m) The fisherman went with the soul and did many bad things.
- (n) The fisherman's soul became part of him again.
- (o) The mermaid died.
- (p) The mermaid promised to come to the fisherman when he sang.
- (q) The mermaid said to the fisherman, 'Send away your soul and I will love you.'
- (r) The sea covered the fisherman.
- (s) The witch told the fisherman to cut his soul away from his feet.
- (t) The witch tried to take the fisherman but he called out God's name.

'The Nightingale and the Rose', 'The Star Child' and 'The Selfish Giant'

- 1 Match the beginning (a-r) and ending (i-xviii) of each sentence from the first section of *The Nightingale and the Rose*.
- (a) I will dance with you
 - (b) I have studied everything
 - (c) But my life is unhappy
 - (d) Love is happiness to me,
 - (e) The musicians will play
 - (f) But she will not dance with me
 - (g) There was a beautiful rose tree
 - (h) When the nightingale saw it,
 - (i) Give me a red rose
 - (j) There is a way
 - (k) If you want a red rose,
 - (l) You must sing to me all night
 - (m) The thorn must cut open your heart
 - (n) Love is more important than life,
 - (o) I shall be sad and alone
 - (p) Her voice is beautiful
 - (q) It is not really useful
 - (r) She thinks only of her music,
 - (i) and I will sing you my sweetest song.
 - (ii) and my love will dance to the music.
 - (iii) and the heart of a man is more important than the heart of a bird.
 - (iv) and your life blood must run into me and become mine.
 - (v) because I cannot give her a red rose.
 - (vi) because I have no red rose.
 - (vii) because she has no true feelings.
 - (viii) but her song does not mean anything.
 - (ix) but I do not want to tell you about it.

- (x) but it is pain to him.
 - (xi) if you bring me a red rose.
 - (xii) not about other people.
 - (xiii) she flew down to it.
 - (xiv) standing in the centre of another garden.
 - (xv) that wise men have written.
 - (xvi) when you go.
 - (xvii) with your heart pressed against a thorn.
 - (xviii) you must build it out of music by moonlight.
- 2 Work in pairs. What happened when the nightingale went to the rose tree that night? Tell the story.
- 3 Why didn't the girl want the student's rose?
- 4 How did the student feel about love at the end of the story?
- 5 In *The Star Child*

- (a) Where did the woodcutters find the Star Child?
- (b) What kind thing did one of the woodcutters do?
- (c) What unkind things did the Star Child do? Name at least six things.
- (d) Who was the Star Child's mother?
- (e) Why did he start searching for his mother?
- (f) Who bought the Star Child?
- (g) Why did the rabbit help him find the gold?
- (h) Who did the Star Child give all the gold to?
- (i) Who was the beggar woman really?

- 6 Complete these sentences from the story of *The Selfish Giant*. Use one word from the box in each case.

bird	boy	children	day	door	flowers	friend	garden
giant	hand	hole	spring	tears	trees	wall	winter

- (a) Once there was a selfish ...
 - (b) He had a big ...
 - (c) But he didn't want the ... to play in it.
 - (d) So he built a high ... around it.
 - (e) ... never came to the giant's garden.
 - (f) It was always ... there.
 - (g) One morning, the giant heard a little ... singing outside his window.
 - (h) He looked out and saw that there was a ... in the garden wall.
 - (i) - and there were children in all the ...
 - (j) One very small ... could not climb his tree.
 - (k) The giant opened the ... and went out.
 - (l) The little boy's eyes were full of ...
 - (m) The giant took the little boy carefully in his ... and put him in the tree.
 - (n) The tree was suddenly covered with
 - (o) From then on, the children played in the garden every
 - (p) But the giant didn't see his first little ... again for years.
- 7 What happened at the end of the story? Tell the story in pairs.

Activities after reading the book

Some ideas are introduced in most or all of the stories. Work with a friend. How do these things appear in some or each of the stories?

- heart/love
- money/being poor
- God/religion
- kindness/unkindness



Who is the Young King? Why is it always winter in The Giant's Garden? A book of fairytales, but one that will appeal to all ages. Oscar Wilde opens up a world of witches, mermaids and monsters but who all have very human feelings. Strange and wonderful things happen in the seven short stories in this book. Who is the Young King? Why is it always winter in The Giant's Garden? A book of fairytales, but one that will appeal to all ages. "The Young King" is a short historical fiction story for children by the Irish author Oscar Wilde. It was first published in 1891 as part of the anthology *House of Pomegranates*, which also includes "The Birthday of the Infanta", "The Fisherman and his Soul" and "The Star-Child". The action of "The Young King" takes place in an unnamed kingdom at an unspecified point in the past. The story's title character and protagonist is a 16-year-old boy. Although he has grown up in poverty, after he becomes king