

Literature

Unit 1.1 The Selfish Giant (Short Stories)

Class 11 English Exercise

Oscar Wilde

Symbols

1. The Child – the innocence
2. Wall – unwillingness to accept others in life
3. Winter – his cold nature
4. The wind and the frost – suffering, agony, and solitude(single)
5. Spring summer – represent happiness, joy
6. Tree – self-realization
7. The corner of the garden – the human life

Summary of The Selfish Giant by Oscar Wilde

The selfish giant is a popular fairy tale however there are a lot of symbols in the story which make it an allegorical story. The symbols used in this story have contributed a lot to intensify the meaning of the story.

The children are the most important characters who love to play in the giant's garden. Here, children represent innocence. They played in the giant's garden regardless of whom the property belongs to, however, the wall made by the giant restricted them from entering the garden. The wall represents the giant unwillingness to let others enter his life or property. The wall also symbolizes the selfish nature of human beings.

Similarly, when the giant arrives home, he rudely drives out the children from his garden. The winter takes over the whole change of his garden after he forbade the children from entering the garden. Here, the winter symbolizes the cold heart of the giant which keeps him isolated from love and happiness. The garden loses its beauty when the snow, wind, frost, and hail start ruling

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over there. The snow covers the grass, frost paints the trees, the wind roars around the garden. In this way, they represent the suffering, agony, and solitude of the giant. Furthermore, the corner of the garden is to symbolize his past deeds which lead to overall unhappiness in the garden.

When he saw the trees offering their arm to a child, he realizes his mistake and reflects on his mistake by helping the little boy to climb up a tree. He also destroyed the walls and allow children to play in his garden because he knew that it was him who kept the spring away. Spring, summer resembles joy, happiness, and prosperity which came back to the garden with the arrival of children.

The Selfish Giant – Complete Exercise

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

a. Where did the children use to play?

Answer: The children used to play in the Giant's garden.

b. What did the Snow and the Frost do to the garden?

Answer: The snow covered the grass with its large white cloak and Frost painted all the silver trees.

c. What did the giant hear when he was lying awake in bed?

Answer: The giant heard a beautiful music when he was lying awake in bed.

d. Why do you think spring season never came to the giant's garden?

Answer: I think the spring season never came to the giant's garden because he was cruel to the children.

e. How did the giant realise his mistake?

Answer: The giant realised his mistake when his garden was covered by snow and frost as he stopped children from visiting the garden.

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Reference to the context

A. Read the extracts given below and Ans the questions that follow.

a. “How happy we were there!” they said to each other.

i. Where does ‘there’ refer to?

Answer: ‘There’ refers to the Giant’s garden.

ii. What does ‘they’ refer to?

Answer: ‘They’ refers to the children who used to play in the Giant’s garden.

iii. Why are they saying so?

Answer: They are saying so because they aren’t allowed to play in the giant’s garden anymore as the giant had chased them out of his garden.

b. “I have many beautiful flowers,” he said; “but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.”

i. Who is the speaker?

Answer: The speaker is the Giant.

ii. Who is he speaking to?

Answer: He is speaking to himself.

iii. Who are ‘the children’ that the speaker is referring to?

Answer: ‘The Children’ that the speaker is referring to are the small and innocent school kids who used to play in the Giant’s garden.

iv. Why is the speaker saying that ‘the children are the’?

Answer: The speaker says ‘children are the most.....’ because the children bring joy and happiness in the garden as like the flowers.

c. When the little child smiled at the Giant, and said to him, “You let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise,” shortly afterwards, the happy giant dies. What is the coincidence of this event? Describe it in relation to this fairy story.

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Answer: The coincidence of this event once, the giant let the little child play in his garden and make him happy and today the same child wants to take him to his garden paradise to make him happy in return, which means the final time of the giant has come and the little child is a messenger/ fairy who wants him to the heaven because of his noble works.

B. The story makes use of personification as one of the main figures of speech. Cite three examples of personification from the story. What is the significance of the seasons personified in the story?

Answer: The practice of representing the objects, qualities etc. as the human beings in art and literature is called personification. Three examples of personification from the story are the beautiful little flowers who slips back into the garden after seeing the notice board, the snow and the frost who says that the spring has forgotten this garden.

The story has the significance of the seasons personified. At the beginning, the seasons bless the garden with pleasant weather until the Giant sends the children away from his garden. Because of the Giant's unkindness to the children, the spring season leaves the garden. The seasons disfavor indicates that the Giant's selfishness goes against the natural order and thus deserves punishment. Thus the significance of the seasons personification is to show that if someone does bad then he/she will deserve the bad.

C. This story can be read as a fairy story, where the children, the seasons, the tree, the corner of the garden, the snow, the wind and the frost are all used as symbolism. Interpret those symbols.

Answer: The story 'The Selfish Giant' is a fairy tale. Here, the children symbolize innocence, love, compassion and blessings. Likewise the seasons represents life and death. The tree symbolizes patience and hope. The corner of the garden depicts the paradise. Finally the snow, the wind and the frost symbolize pain, suffering and discomfort.

D. Which figure of speech is used for 'winter, frost, snow, north wind, hail and little child'? Who is the little child compared to?

Answer: As a fairy tale, the story is full of figures of speech. The figure of speech is used for 'winter, frost, snow, north wind, hail

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and little child' is personification. The little child is compared to the God Almighty (Paradise).

Reference beyond the text

a. What is the main theme of the story?

Answer: The main theme of this story is selfishness and love. It is the story of transformation of selfish giant into selfless giant. At the beginning of the story, the giant was very selfish and wicked towards the children and he closes the gate of beautiful garden for them. But later he realizes his mistake when the children stop coming to the garden and the garden never experiences the spring season until and unless he allows them to play in his garden. At this point he realizes the meaning of love and sharing. This story is very much relatable to the nature of human beings. We hardly share our belongings to anyone if somebody is needy and we are selfish too. This story teaches us to share love and compassion to get love in return.

b. Does God punish those who are cruel to children and very selfish?

Answer: Yes, God punishes those who are cruel to children and very selfish. As in the story, Giant has really been so cruel to the children and selfish and he didn't let them play on the garden because of which spring never came in his garden. In the absence of children birds also did not sing. Once a flower bloomed out of the grass but after seeing the notice board, it also went back to sleep. Then came the North Wind and the hailstorm. Due to the giant's selfishness, autumn's golden fruits also did not come to his garden. In this way god punishes to those who are cruel to children and very selfish.

THE END

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