The Selfish Giant

Prescribed to TYBA Compulsory English
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About the author:

- **Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde**
- (16 October 1854 – 30 November 1900) popularly known as Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet, short story writer and playwright.
- He wrote in different forms throughout the 1880s. Significantly in the early 1890s due to his masterpieces he become one of the most popular playwrights of London.
Introduction:

- The story *The Selfish Giant* is one of the most famous and most anthologized stories for its moral and spiritual significance written by famous writer Oscar Wilde.

- **Theme:** It is a story of transformation of Selfish Giant into selfless one.
When the story begins children are described playing in the garden. After returning from the school every afternoon the children used to play in the garden. The atmosphere of the garden is beautifully described.

It was a large lovely Garden with soft green grass. There were beautiful flowers like stars. There were twelve peach trees which in the spring time break out into delicate blossoms having pink and purple fruit.

The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their game in order to listen to them.
The children were very happy while playing in the garden and they cried to each other “How happy we are here!”

Thus the garden in the castle of the Giant is symbolic of Garden of Eden i.e. paradise.

The happiness in garden is the result of children playing happily in it. So what makes the garden as symbol of paradise i.e. Gods abode, is children’s playing.
After a gap of seven years one day the Giant returns from his friend's house and he notices that children are playing in his garden without his permission by entering through the gapes of the broken wall.

After watching this scene the Giant becomes very angry and he shouts, "What are you doing here?"

Listening this, the frightened children run away.
The Giant says, “My own garden is my own garden and anyone can understand that. And I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.”

This suggests that the giant was egoist.

And so, the Giant built a wall around his garden and put a sign board on it saying–

**Trespassers will be prosecuted**

This means that anybody who will enter in the garden will be punished.
The Giant was very selfish. Because of construction of wall, now the children had no place to play.

So, they tried playing on the road. But unlike the grass in garden, the road was very hard and full of stones, so they did not like it.

When the lessons in the school were over, the children used to look at the garden and say “How happy we were there!”.
As the time passed spring season arrived. The author personifies spring as living identity and his entrance brings happiness.

The nature everywhere was full of flowers blossoming and birds singing, but except for the Giant’s garden.

It was still like winter in the Giant’s garden. The garden was lifeless. The birds did not care to sing and even the flowers did not bloom in it.

This was all because children did not play there.
The snow and frost still covers all the trees and it looks like spring has forgotten to visit the garden.

The Giant was confused at this unexpected move. He said to himself, “I cannot understand why the spring is so late in coming. I hope there will be change in the weather soon.”

But the spring never came. The spring thought that the Giant was too selfish and therefore, the garden was still covered with wind, frost and snow.

Thus very dull atmosphere prevailed in the Giant’s garden.
One morning when the Giant was lying awake in his bed, he heard some lovely music. It was so sweet that he thought that the king’s musicians were passing by but actually the birds had started singing in his garden.

The Giant thought that the spring had finally arrived, so he jumped out of his bed to look outside in his garden. There, he saw the most wonderful thing. Through a little hole in the wall, the children crept into his garden and started playing there.
He could notice that there were children on every tree in his garden. The trees were also very happy with bearing children on the branches.

The flowers finally bloomed and looked like as if they were laughing and the birds had again started singing.

It was a very lovely scene. But in one corner, there was a little boy who was crying because he could not climb on the tree.
This scene melted the heart of the Giant and he said, “I now know how selfish I have been all this time. Now I know why the spring was not coming here.”

So he goes to the boy, picks him up and puts him on the tree. He also decides to break down the wall and make his garden as playground for the children to play forever.
He was very sorry for what he had done in past. The children saw that the selfish Giant had now changed and had now become selfless.

Now the children played all day long in his garden, and in the evening they came to the Giant to say him goodbye.

But one day the Giant asked the children where was their little companion, the boy whom he had helped to climb the tree. The Giant liked that boy the best because he had kissed him.

But the children told him that they had never seen him before and did not knew where he lived. The giant was very sad knowing this fact.
Every afternoon the children came and played with the Giant, but the little boy whom the Giant loved the most was never seen again.

Many years passed and now the giant had grew very weak. Now, he could not play with the children. So he used to sit on his armchair and watch the little children play.

He thought, “I have many beautiful flowers, but these children are the most beautiful flowers.”
One winter morning when the Giant looked into his window, he saw his favourite boy whom he loved the most sitting under a tree.

He suddenly rushed to the boy but found that the boy’s hands and legs were covered with the prints of nails.

After watching this the Giant asked the boy who dared to injure him and that he would take his big sword and slay him.

But the boy answered that these were the wounds of love. At this the astonished Giant asked him, "Who are you?" and he knelt before the boy."
The boy was none other than Jesus Christ himself. He smiled at the Giant and told him, “You let me play once in your garden today you shall come with me to the paradise to play in my garden.”

So when the children came to play in the afternoon, they found the Giant’s dead body in the garden covered with white blossoms.
Conclusion:

- Thus the short story *The Selfish Giant* is a story of transformation of selfish Giant into selfless one.
- It teaches us moral that we should always make other people happy by helping them and we should not become reason of anybody’s sorrow.
Questions for comprehension:

- Discuss the story *The Selfish Giant* as a story of transformation of selfish Giant into selfless one.
- Why is the Giant called Selfish? In the story *The Selfish Giant*?
- Explain the symbolic significance of the sentence “You let me play once in your garden today you shall come with me ...” in the story *The Selfish Giant*.

References:
1) www.wikipedia.org
2) TYBA Compulsory English Prescribed Text: Literary Pinnacles (Ed. Board of Editors, Orient Blackswan)