

King Midas and the Golden Touch

Ancient Greek

King Midas had everything. His favourite thing of all, though, was his daughter. One day, Silenus came to his palace and King Midas looked after him.

To thank him, Silenus said that the next thing he wished for would come true. Midas was a greedy man. Without thinking, he wished that everything he touched would turn to gold.

A bronze cup of wine was brought. The moment Midas touched it, the cup turned to gold. Midas turned it in his hand, admiring the deep shine.

Then, he raised the cup to his lips to drink. Nothing came out. The wine had turned to gold, as well. From then on, everything Midas touched, including food and drink, turned to gold as soon as he touched it. He would starve to death!

Seeing his daughter, Midas reached out without thinking. She, too, turned to gold. Midas begged the god Dionysus to release him from the curse. Dionysus told him to bathe in the River Pactolus and the curse was lifted. The sand at the bottom of the river has been golden ever since.

1. Why was the wish a particular problem for somebody like King Midas?

The wish was a problem to King Midas because, being a greedy man, the first thing he wished was that everything he touched would turn to gold.

2. What would you have seen as Midas touched the bronze cup? Describe the scene, including people's expressions.

At first, Midas would have looked delighted as the cup turned to gold. His, and everyone else's, expression would have turned to horror, though when they saw the wine turned to gold, too.

3. Why did Midas' mood suddenly change and what happened from then on?

Midas' mood changed soon after the wine turned to gold, as he began to realise he would not be able to eat or drink anything, and would starve to death as a result.

4. Do you think Midas learned anything from his experience? If so, what?

Midas learned that some things, such as food and drink, and especially, his beloved daughter, were more important than gold, because he begged the god Dionysus to reverse the wish.