



The Golden Touch

Bacchus, the merry god of the vine, raised his goblet. "King Midas," he said, "because you have been so hospitable to me, ask for anything you wish, and I will grant it to you."

"Ah, well," said the king, chuckling. "Of course, there's only one thing: I wish that everything I touch would turn to gold!"

"My friend, you already have all the gold you could possibly want," said Bacchus, looking disappointed.

"Oh, no! I don't!" said Midas. "One never has enough gold!"

"Well, if that's what you wish for, I suppose I will have to grant it," said Bacchus.

Bacchus soon took his leave. As Midas waved goodbye to him, his hand brushed an oak twig hanging from a tree—and the twig turned to gold!

The king screamed with joy, then shouted, "My wish has come true! Thank you! Thank you!"

The god disappeared down the road.

Midas looked around excitedly. He leaned over and picked a stone up from the ground—and the stone turned into a golden nugget! He kicked the sand—and the sand turned to golden grains!

King Midas threw back his head and shouted, "I'm the richest man in the world!" Then he rushed around his grounds, touching everything. And everything, *everything* turned to gold: ears of corn in his fields, apples plucked from the trees, the pillars of his mansion!

Finally, exhausted but overjoyed, King Midas called for his dinner. His servants

placed a huge meal before him. "Oh, I'm so hungry!" he said, as he speared a piece of meat and brought it to his mouth.

But suddenly King Midas realized his wish may not have been as wonderful as he thought, for the moment he bit down on the meat, it too turned to gold.

Midas laughed uneasily, then reached for a piece of bread. But as soon as his hands touched the bread, it also became a hard, golden nugget! Weak with dread, Midas reached for his goblet of water. But, alas! His lips touched only hard, cold metal. The water had also turned to gold.

Covering his head and moaning, King Midas realized his great wish was going to kill him. He would starve to death, or die of thirst!

"Bacchus!" he cried. "I've been a greedy fool! Take away your gift! Help me, Bacchus!"

The sobbing king fell off his chair to his knees. His servants grieved for him, but none dared go near him, for they feared he might accidentally turn them to gold, too.

Bacchus suddenly appeared. Stumbling to his feet, King Midas begged Bacchus to take away the curse of the golden touch.

"You were greedy and foolish, my friend," said Bacchus. "But I will forgive you. Now go wash yourself in the Pactolus River and you'll be cleansed of this desire to have more gold than anyone else!"

King Midas did as Bacchus said. He washed in the river, leaving behind streams of gold in the river's sands. Then he returned home and happily at his dinner.

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Dear Parents

Your child may have seen or heard references to "King Midas and the Golden Touch" in conversations or on television. This homework is a great opportunity to hear the real story behind those references. Please remember to listen to your child read it out loud, and enjoy this familiar tale, retold by popular children's author Mary Pope Osborne.

TIP OF THE WEEK

To figure out what an unfamiliar word means, try replacing it with another that makes sense in the sentence. For instance: "Bacchus, the merry god of the vine, raised his goblet."

Many students may not know what a goblet is. From the context of the sentence, a reader might try the word "glass," which makes sense. Encourage your child to try this technique for the words in the assignment below.

The Questions

Circle the following words in the story. For each word, think of another that makes sense in the sentence and could have the same meaning; write it below. Then try rereading the sentences, inserting the word you wrote, and see if they still make sense. Now that you know the meaning the words, write your own original sentence for each one.

1. nugget _____

2. exhausted _____

3. speared _____

4. dread _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature