

Well what a strange turn of events year 6! It was lovely to see you (if only for the 1 day) but back home you go! We will be carrying on with our topic of Ancient Greece during lockdown, you can even wear a toga at home if you so wish. You must continue with your writing tasks while at home, Mr Jefferies has told me a lot of you engaged with the home learning very well and we will be looking for you to maintain those high standards!

One of your tasks for Thursday and Friday is to read the King Midas story, I will attach the pages at the end of this document. You will be doing a fair bit of learning about King Midas so make sure you are thorough when reading it and understand the main points of the story.

After reading the story, your job is to create a character description of King Midas (3 paragraphs). Make sure you use impressive vocabulary, sentence types relating to his physical aspects and what sort of a person he is.





The Midas touch

“Good evening,” King Midas said, peering out at the shadowy figure on the doorstep. The stranger stepped into the light, revealing a pair of pointed ears poking from a mop of silvery hair. He had a shaggy beard and a donkey’s tail. Midas recognized him at once as a satyr.

“Allow me to introduce myself,” the satyr said, “My name is Silenus. I’m a friend of Dionysus, the god of wine. He and I and a large party of others were passing through this area. I wandered off from the others and rather foolishly lost my way.”

Midas’s eyes had widened at the mention of Dionysus. Any friend of a god was not to be sniffed at. “Make yourself at home,” he urged, showing in his guest.

The satyr sank gratefully onto a chair by the fire. “We were going to set up camp somewhere near here,” he said, “in a grove of olive trees near the river.”



Dionysus was the source of merriment and feasts wherever he went. His followers always liked a party. They consisted of satyrs...



"It'll be tricky to find your camp in the dark," Midas said. "Besides, it's late, and you look tired. Why don't you stay here for the night? I'll help you look for Dionysus in the morning."

The next day, Midas showed Silenus the way to a nearby grove of olive trees. Sure enough, they found Dionysus and a huge party of followers camped there.

Dionysus himself came out to greet them. Midas gazed in awe at the god. He was a head taller than anyone else. His handsome face was framed with dark, lustrous curls and he had vines of jewel-like grapes dangling around his neck. "My dear friend," he cried jovially, throwing his arms around Silenus, "where have you been?"

"I got a bit lost," the satyr chuckled. "But King Midas here gave me a bed to sleep on for the night."

Dionysus clapped the king heartily on the back. "That's cause enough for celebration," he said. "Come, we'll have music and dancing and a feast to welcome an old friend and a new!"

Dionysus certainly wasn't a god to do things half-heartedly. At the click of his fingers, an entire roast ox appeared, complete with spit and fire. Servants hurried to carve the meat, and brought bowls of soft bread and sweet, musky grapes, not to mention barrel after barrel of berry-red wine. There were dancing girls and tumbling acrobats, pan-pipers and drummers; it was the best party Midas had ever been to.

After they had eaten their fill and were breathless with dancing, Dionysus came and sat next to King Midas.

"So, my friend," he said refilling the king's goblet, "how can I reward you for your kindness to Silenus? You can have anything you like!"

Midas's head spun with possibilities. "Anything at all?" he asked.

"Just name your wish," said Dionysus.

"Well in that case," Midas said. "I wish that from now on, everything I touch turns to gold!"

"So be it," said Dionysus.

Midas grinned from ear to ear. "I'll be the richest man alive!" he said.

Dionysus threw back his head and roared with laughter. Then, in the blink of an eye, the entire party vanished – Dionysus, the satyrs, the dancing girls and all the musicians were all gone. Midas found himself sitting alone on a moonlit hillside, his ears still ringing with the merry-making and music.

It was night already. How much time had passed? Had he really met a god? And had he been granted his wish? Midas got to his feet and hesitantly touched the nearest tree. Instantly the whole thing turned to gold, leaves and all.

Crowing with delight, he bent down and touched a flower. It too, turned to gold. "I'm rich, I'm rich!" Midas chortled, transforming leaves and pebbles and stuffing them into his pockets. He picked his way down the hillside and wandered home to his palace, touching a flower here and a dangling fruit there. By the time he got home, his path was littered with gold, all glittering in the light of the rising sun.

He pushed open the doors to his palace, laughing gleefully at their instant transformation. Hearing his master's voice, a servant came running.

"Bring me a feast," Midas ordered him, tossing the man a couple of gold pebbles. "Go right away. I want the finest food and wine gold can buy!" The servant hurried away, his eyes nearly popping out of his head.

Midas turned and looked at the rest of his palace. "Why settle for anything less?" he muttered greedily to himself, and he began to run his fingers across everything he could find – pottery bowls and vases of flowers, giant urns, tables and chairs, even the doors and floors and walls. He didn't stop until everything in sight had been turned to gold.

His wife came in rubbing her eyes, "Where have you been?" she asked sleepily.

"Consorting with gods," Midas boasted, "I've been blessed by Dionysus. I met him last night!"

"Where did all this come from?" his wife gasped as she looked around at all the gleaming gold.

"Me," said Midas proudly.

Just then the servant came in leading a line of others, carrying the finest feast gold could buy. Dish after dish was laid on the table.

"Sit down," Midas said to his wife, waving the servants away. "Let me tell you all about it."

His wife sank doubtfully into a chair. "We can't afford all this..." she began.

"Don't worry about that," Midas reassured her.

"We're rich beyond our wildest dreams." He picked up a dusky purple fig to put on her plate. Of course, the fruit turned to gold the instant he touched it.

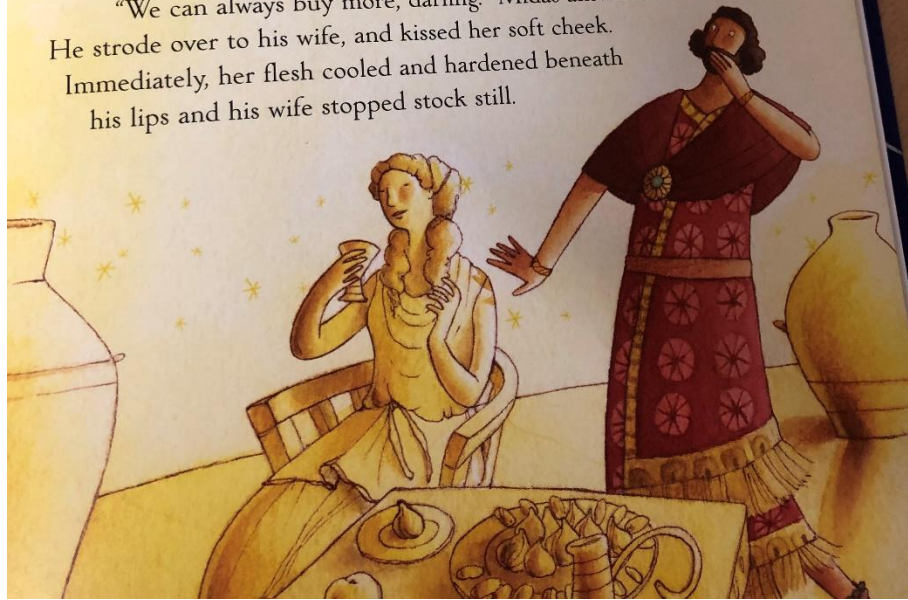
"See?" he laughed, unperturbed. "I have this amazing new power!"

His wife stared at the fig, unable to believe her eyes. "But how?" she asked.

"It's simple," Midas said, "Like this..." he got up and whirled around the table like a magician, touching all the food and turning it all to gold.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" asked his wife. "What good is gold food?"

"We can always buy more, darling," Midas answered. He strode over to his wife, and kissed her soft cheek. Immediately, her flesh cooled and hardened beneath his lips and his wife stopped stock still.



Midas stared in horror-filled fascination. Every strand of her hair, still tousled with sleep, was pure gold; her crumpled robe, her delicate throat, her slightly parted lips, her eyes, blank and gleaming. Every fingernail, every eyelash, was perfectly, terribly transformed.

He widened his gaze and took in the whole hall. Everything he'd touched was worth a fortune. He was surrounded by untold riches and yet the only thing that was truly precious to him had been lost.

"N-no," he choked miserably. He sank down into a chair, unthinkingly picked up a goblet of wine and dashed it down his throat. The wine became solid just as he swallowed. It slid lumpenly down his throat and settled heavily in his stomach. In horrified realization, he touched a piece of bread. Of course, it too instantly turned to gold. Only then did he fully understand what his wife had meant. "She's right," he murmured to himself. "Gold food is no good at all. I will die too. Oh, what have I done?"

When the servants returned to clear away the dishes, they found a feast all made of gold laid out on the table, and Midas with his head in his hands, weeping golden tears.

Suddenly he got up, ran out of the palace and back to the hillside where he had last seen Dionysus. He fell to his knees in despair. "Please undo my wish," he called to the empty air. "I beg you, noble Dionysus. Hear my plea."

"Now, now, don't upset yourself," said a jovial voice. He looked up to see Dionysus smiling down at him.

Midas threw himself at the god's feet. "Please can you take back the gift you gave me?" he begged.

Dionysus's smile grew a little cold. "I gave you exactly what you asked for."

"I was a fool to ask for it," Midas wailed. "I've landed myself with a curse."

Dionysus shrugged. "Very well," he said. "It was meant as a reward, so I'll remove it. Go and wash yourself in the River Pactolus, and your touch will return to normal."

"And my wife – I turned her to gold by accident. Could you please turn her back as well?" Midas asked.

Dionysus frowned. "Gods aren't responsible for putting right all the foolish mistakes men make," he said impatiently, and promptly disappeared.

King Midas went to the river immediately and did as the god had told him. As he washed, streams of gold ran into the water. The river carried the flecks of gold along and, where it touched the banks, left them gleaming in the sand. Midas rubbed and rubbed at his body until the water ran clear. Then he waded to the riverbank and reached out hesitantly to touch a flower. To his relief, nothing happened.

He returned home with a heavy heart. Inside his palace, his poor gold wife was sitting motionless at the table, exactly as he'd left her. He stroked her gleaming cheek with his fingertips. "I'm sorry," he whispered. Then he called to his bewildered servants. "Get ready to leave this place," he ordered them. "I'm moving house."

That very day, Midas abandoned his palace and all his riches. He went into the forest and settled down to live in a simple wooden hut, far away from all the terrible reminders of his foolish, fatal mistake.