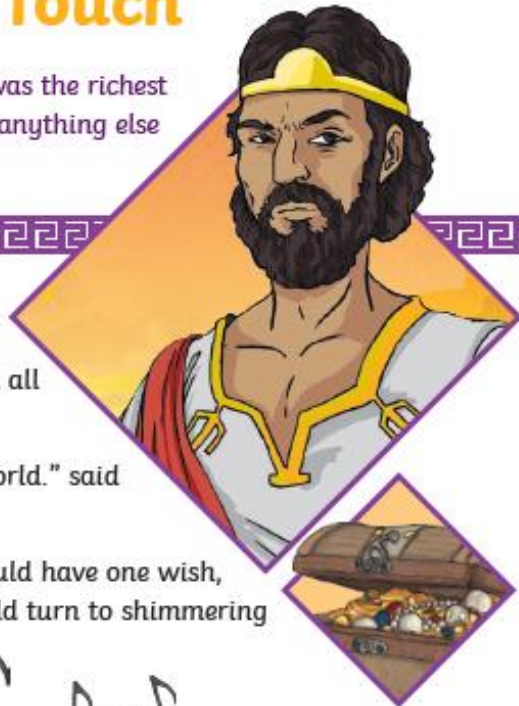


King Midas and the Golden Touch

There once lived a king named Midas who was the richest king in the world. He loved gold more than anything else on earth – including his daughter Marigold.



One day, a beautiful fairy boy appeared before Midas. The boy's face shone with a dazzling light and his cap, feet and wand all had wings.

"Midas, you are the richest man in the world." said the fairy.

"That may be," said the King, "but if I could have one wish, I would ask that everything I touch should turn to shimmering gold."



"Your wish shall be granted," said the fairy.
"From sunrise tomorrow, your slightest touch will turn anything into gold but your gift will not make you happy."

Midas woke early next morning, reached out and lightly touched his bed. It turned instantly to gold. Delighted, the King went to eat breakfast. However, when he tried to drink a glass of water, it too became solid gold. The bread and butter turned to gold in his hand and the soft, tender meat became hard, yellow and shiny. Not a thing could pass his lips. All was gold, gold, gold.



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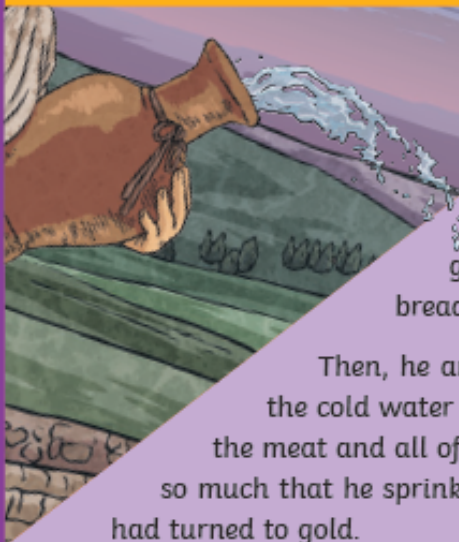
His daughter came running in from the garden. Without thinking, he gently kissed her cheek. At once, the little girl was turned into a golden statue. In his grief, he called upon the fairy for help.

"O fairy," he begged, "take away this horrible golden gift! Take all my gold, only give me back my darling daughter."



The beautiful fairy appeared and, convinced the King had learnt his lesson, told him how to fix what had happened.

"Take this pitcher to the spring in the garden and fill it with water. Sprinkle the things you have touched with the water to restore them."



The King did as the fairy said. He first sprinkled the head of his dear little girl. Instantly, she became his darling Marigold and he gave her a kiss. The King sprinkled the golden food and, to his joy, it turned back to real bread and real butter.

Then, he and his daughter sat down to breakfast. How good the cold water tasted! The hungry King ate the bread and butter, the meat and all of the good food. King Midas hated his golden touch so much that he sprinkled water over everything else that the fairy's gift had turned to gold.