

Language Arts

Genre

A **Myth** is a story that often explains occurrences in nature through the intervention of gods and goddesses.

Literary Elements

A **Moral** is a practical lesson contained in the narrative.

Hyperbole is the deliberate use of exaggeration for emphasis. Myths often use hyperbole to describe human weaknesses.

The Golden Touch

retold by Mary Pope Osborne

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

“What an idea!” said Midas. “Anything I wish?”

“Indeed, anything,” said Bacchus.

“Anything?”

“Yes! Yes!”



“Ah, well,” said the king, chuckling. “Of course, there’s only one thing: I wish that everything I touch would turn to gold!” Midas looked sideways at Bacchus, for he couldn’t believe such a gift could really be his.

“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 good-bye 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 after Bacchus, “My wish has come true! Thank you! Thank you!”

The god turned and waved, then disappeared down the road.

Midas looked around excitedly. He leaned over and picked a stone up from

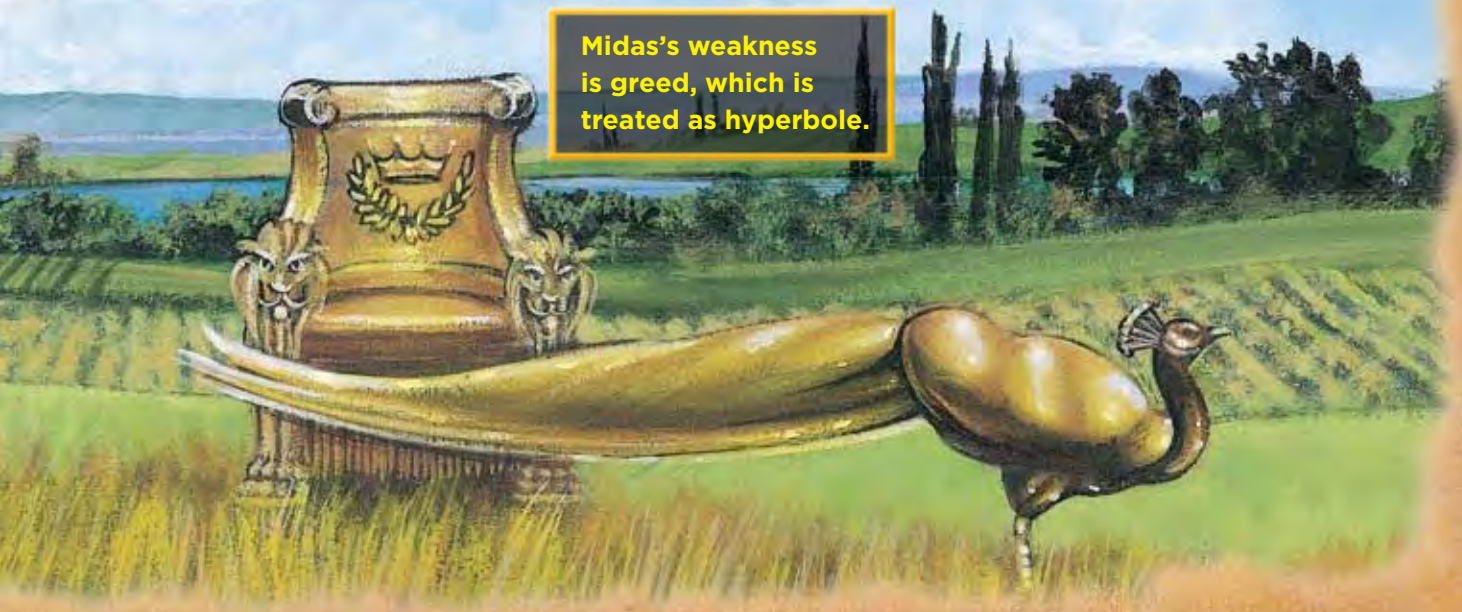
the ground—and the stone turned into a golden nugget! He kicked the sand—and the sand turned to golden grains!

King Midas threw back his head and shouted, “I’m the richest man in the world!” Then he rushed about his grounds, touching everything. And everything, *everything* turned to gold: ears of corn in his fields! Apples plucked from trees! The pillars of his mansion!

When the king’s servants heard him shouting, they rushed to see what was happening. They found their king dancing wildly on his lawn, turning the grass to glittering blades of gold. Everyone laughed and clapped as Midas washed his hands in his fountain and turned the water to a gleaming spray!

Finally, exhausted but overjoyed, King Midas called for his dinner. His servants placed a huge banquet meal before him on his lawn. “Oh, I’m so hungry!” he said as he speared a piece of meat and brought it to his mouth.

Midas’s weakness is greed, which is treated as hyperbole.



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, throwing his hands toward heaven. “I’ve been a greedy fool! Take away your gift! Free me from my golden touch! Help me, Bacchus!”

The sobbing king fell off his chair to his knees. He beat his fists against the ground, turning even the little anthills to gold. His servants grieved for him, but



none dared go near him, for they feared he might accidentally turn them to gold, too!

As everyone wailed with sorrow, Bacchus suddenly appeared on the palace lawn. The merry god stood before the sobbing king for a moment, then said, “Rise, Midas.”

Stumbling to his feet, King Midas begged Bacchus to forgive him and 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 and wash yourself in the

Pactolus River that runs by Sardis, 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 Pactolus, leaving behind streams of gold in the river’s sands. Then he returned home and happily ate his dinner.

And that is why the sands of the Pactolus River were golden.

The moral is not to wish for more than you need.

MODERN WORDS WITH GREEK ORIGINS

arachnid term for spider groups; from Arachne, the girl whom Athena turned into a spider

iridescent like the colors in a rainbow; from Iris, the rainbow goddess

mnemonic a way to remember something; from Mnemosyne, goddess of memory

Connect and Compare

1. What lessons does the myth teach? **Moral**
2. Think of another unwise wish that Midas might have made. What would be the unfortunate results of that wish? **Synthesize**
3. Compare the king in *Rumpelstiltskin’s Daughter* with Midas at the beginning of the selections and at the end. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



Find out more about myths at www.macmillanmh.com

Write a Point-of-View Essay

Writer's Craft

A Strong Opening

When you write to express your ideas on a topic, it is important to start with a **strong opening**. You may want to lead with an interesting question or quotation.

Money and People

by Donald R.

I included this question and quotation in my opening.

Did you ever hear people say, "Money is the root of all evil"? Do you agree? I disagree. Sometimes people do bad things when they have too much money. People also do bad things because they want more money, but the money itself is not a bad thing.

I gave examples to emphasize my ideas.

Think about all of the good things money can buy. Money can buy a home. Money can buy food. You probably take these things for granted, but think about someone who is in need. A little bit of money can help a hungry person get a good meal. Money can help a homeless person get an apartment to live in.

But some people do not try to help anyone but themselves with the extra money they have. It's not the money's fault. It is the fault of the person who uses the money. The same money in a kind person's hands might be used to help people. So let's not blame money for money problems. Let's blame some insensitive people.

Your Turn

Write a point-of-view essay about the good or bad aspects of money. You might use your own experiences with money, or you might use your ideas about others' experiences with money. Make sure you open with a strong statement. Perhaps you can include at least one familiar saying that relates to money. Use the Writer's Checklist to review your essay.



Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I use a **strong opening** to explain my point of view? Did I support my viewpoint with facts and examples?
- Organization:** Did I organize my paper in a logical way? Do my ideas flow smoothly from one to another?
- Voice:** Does my essay sound like me? Have I shared my point of view in a way that only I can?
- Word Choice:** Did I use strong verbs to express my ideas? Did I include persuasive language?
- Sentence Fluency:** Do my sentences work together to help me achieve my purpose for writing?
- Conventions:** Did I check my spelling? Did I place apostrophes in the right places for possessive nouns?