

Midas Touch

1 Long ago, there was a King named Midas, who did a favor for a god named Dionysus and in return the god wanted to grant King Midas a wish. King Midas knew well enough what he most desired. He cared more about gold than anything else in the world. In those days, kings had treasuries in their palaces. A treasury was a safe place where they would keep their valuable things. The treasury of King Midas contained a vast collection of rich jewels, vessels of silver, chests of gold coins, and other things that he considered precious.

2 When Midas was a little child, he used to watch the ants running back and forth over the sand near his father's palace. It seemed to him that the anthill was like another palace and that the ants were working very hard carrying in treasure. They came running to the anthill from all directions, carrying little white bundles. Midas made up his mind that when he grew up, he would work very hard and gather treasure like the ants did.

3 Once Midas became a king, he found that nothing gave him more pleasure than to add to his collection of treasure. He was continually coming up with ways of exchanging or selling various things. He would plot new ways to tax the people and turned all the money into gold and silver. So when the god Dionysus offered to grant King Midas any wish he wanted, King Midas's first thought was of his treasure. He asked Dionysus for the gift of a golden touch. King Midas wanted everything that he touched to turn into gold and Dionysus granted him his wish.

4 King Midas could hardly believe his good fortune and thought of himself as the luckiest man ever. The first thing he did was to touch the branch of a tree. Immediately, the branch became the richest of gold. He laughed triumphantly and then touched a stone, an apple, and other things. Oh there was no doubt about it; King Midas truly had the golden touch.



5 King Midas returned to his palace full of delight, but he began to have his doubts when he patted his favorite dog. As soon as the king touched his dog, the dog sadly turned into a cold, golden statue. The dinner gong sounded and he hurried to his meal where the table was loaded with food.

6 When he sat down at the head of the table, his chair turned into gold! At the same time that this was happening, he had popped a grape into his mouth and it turned into a golden lump. Oh horrors! In disgust King Midas spit it out and tried to sip the hot soup and it turned into molten gold and burned his mouth. Next he tried the bread, cheese, and everything on the table. It all turned to gold. King Midas's bright treasures began to look ugly to him and his heart grew heavy as if that too were turning to gold.

7 All of the sudden, King Midas's daughter Marigold ran in from the garden and hugged him lovingly with her arms around his neck. Immediately, she stiffened as her arms and legs grew hard. Little Marigold had turned into a golden statue!

8 Midas was devastated. He called out to the god Dionysus, "Take away the horrible gift! Take all my lands! Take all my gold! Take everything, but I beg you to please give me back my sweet Marigold!"

9 Dionysus heard his pleas and came to the king. "Well Midas," he said kindly, yet a little sternly, "Do you still think gold is the finest thing in the world?"

10 "Never again," replied the king humbly. "Take away the golden curse and give me my Marigold!" Dionysus took pity on the pathetic king and took away the golden touch, which was after all, a curse rather than a gift. To make sure that Midas didn't forget his own foolishness, the gods gave him a reminder. Two donkey ears sprouted from the top of his head, and Midas never forgot his lesson.

