

King Midas and the Golden Touch***Cast of Characters***

King Midas, king of Pessinus

Dionysus, god of wine

Silenus, a satyr and friend of Dionysus

Phaedra, daughter of King Midas

Setting

The play takes place in the ancient Greek city of Pessinus, the capital of Phrygia.

Exposition

King Midas was a kind man, but he did not have very good judgement. One day, Midas was generous to Silenus, a satyr, and so Dionysus granted him one wish. Dionysus, like all Greek gods, liked to teach mortals lessons.

Scene One

(King Midas is walking in his palace garden when he sees a satyr, Silenus, asleep under an apple tree.)

KING MIDAS: What are you doing inside my palace?

(Silenus rubs his eyes and squints up at the king, then jumps to his feet.)

SILENUS: My apologies, sir. I must have fallen asleep. I did not know where I was. Please do not punish me.

KING MIDAS: No, no. You must be hungry. Come, you can wash and eat inside.

(Dionysus appears in the garden.)

DIONYSUS: Hello, King Midas. In exchange for your kindness to my friend, I will grant you one wish.

(King Midas smiles.)

KING MIDAS: I wish for everything I touch to turn to gold.

DIONYSUS: Are you very certain? You know the dangers of greed.

KING MIDAS: (Impatient) Yes, yes. That is my wish.

DIONYSUS: Very well.

Scene Two

(Midas shouts with happiness.)

KING MIDAS: Look, Phaedra! Everything I touch turns to gold.

PHAEDRA: (Laughing) Yes, father.

KING MIDAS: Do you see? I touched this rose, and it turned to gold.

PHAEDRA: Don't change them all, please.

(King Midas does not hear her. He touches the courtyard walls, and they turn to gold. He touches his horse, and it becomes a golden statue.)

PHAEDRA: Come, father, let's eat.

(King Midas tries to eat, but when he touches the food it turns to gold. He tries to take a drink of wine, but it becomes metal before it reaches his lips.)

KING MIDAS: Dionysus! Dionysus!

(There is no answer.)

How can I eat? How can I sleep? When I lay my head on my pillow, it turns to gold.

PHAEDRA: Father?

(King Midas embraces his daughter. She turns to metal.)

KING MIDAS: (Scared) Phaedra! Phaedra!

Scene Three

(Dionysus appears in the garden, beside the golden statue of Phaedra.)

KING MIDAS: Change her back!

DIONYSUS: I cannot.

KING MIDAS: You killed her.

DIONYSUS: No, you did. I only granted your wish.

KING MIDAS: I take it back. Please change everything back.

DIONYSUS: Go to the River Pactolus. Its waters will wash away the gold.

(King Midas fills a jug with the river's water. He pours it over himself, again and again, so the gold rinses away. Then he carries jugs of water to the palace. He pours water over the roses, his horse, and his daughter. They become alive once more.)

DIONYSUS: Do you see now the dangers of greed?

KING MIDAS: I do. I promise, I will never want for anything again.

The End

Close Reading Framework—King Midas and the Golden TouchSetting the Stage (Introduction)

Slowing down with reading instruction is imperative for creating critical thinking skills. When students linger over a text, they can start to identify patterns and pinpoint an author’s underlying message and purpose for writing the text. It is also important for students to realize that writing is a true form of artistry and self-expression. Gather the class to set the stage for the close reading exercise. Explain the importance of close reading, and also remind them of recent teaching points that they should be on the lookout for specifically. You could say:

Friends, I want to encourage you to slow down when you’re reading to make sure you notice every word on the page. Have you ever wondered why an author chose one word over another? Nothing on the page is an accident! Authors read and reread their work and write each sentence carefully. As readers, our job is to try and figure out what the author was thinking as he or she was writing. We should always take time to pause and ask questions like “Why did that character do that?”

Whole-Class Practice

Read the story aloud, acting out each character. Pause at logical places to point out your observations and model your inner thought process as you are reading. Use this whole-class time to talk about the questions from the Core Ready worksheet to model close reading for students. Leave two or three questions for the students to work through independently or in small groups after the whole-class discussion.

Okay, let’s pause here to see what special things we can uncover. What I notice about the way this play is written is that the author has to use both dialogue and special instructions to the actors to let us know what the actors are feeling and doing. Let me read the play again with just the dialogue, pay attention to what information you are missing. (Read only dialogue and discuss with the class how this changes their understanding of the characters and plot).

Continue reading, pausing to answer the close reading questions from the Core Ready worksheet below. When you reach the end of the story, instruct students to continue their analysis of the text by answering the remaining questions from the Core Ready worksheet.

Independent Practice

Instruct students to reread the story or to act it out in small groups. Have them work in small groups or independently to finish the remaining questions from the Core Lens worksheet below.

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| <p>Seven Core Ready Lenses <i>Guiding Questions for Close Reading Instruction</i></p> | | <p>The Personal Lens</p> <p>1) How would you feel if you were King Midas and everything was turning to gold?</p> <p>2) Why do you think King Midas wished for everything he touched to turn to gold? Do you agree or disagree with his decision?</p> |
| <p>The Linguistic Lens</p> <p>1) How does the author tell the reader what the actors are doing during a scene?</p> <p>2) Find three examples where the author uses only dialogue to show how a character is feeling.</p> | <p>The Semantic Lens</p> <p>1) What was your favorite part? Why?</p> <p>2) Retell the story in your own words.</p> | <p>The Analytical Lens</p> <p>1) Compare the characters King Midas and Phaedra. How are they alike? How are they different?</p> <p>2) Do you think King Midas will stay true to the promise he makes at the very end of the play? Why?</p> |
| <p>The Context Lens</p> <p>1) How does the exposition give you a hint about what will happen in the play?</p> <p>2) Has the author left out any information that you are curious about?</p> | <p>The Metaphoric Lens (not truly applicable for this text)</p> <p>1) Why do you think Phaedra tells her father not to change all the roses into gold? What does that tell us about Phaedra?</p> <p>2) Because of this play, people today will often tell someone that they have the “Midas touch.” What do you think that expression means?</p> | <p>The Critical Lens</p> <p>1) Did the story change your mind about something?</p> <p>2) Is the author trying to teach us something with this story?</p> |