

## Greek myths

### King Midas and his golden touch

King Midas was counting his money, when a courtier appeared and told him that he had found a shabby satyr sitting in the palace gardens. The king ordered the intruder to be brought before him for punishment, but when he saw the satyr, he cried out in recognition: "Silenus, what are you doing here?" Silenus had been drinking rather a lot of wine and had forgotten his way home. King Midas was very understanding – the satyr belonged to his friend, Dionysus, the god of wine. The king thought it would be nice to take Silenus back home.

Dionysus was delighted to see his favourite satyr. He thanked Midas profusely and declared: "Wish for whatever you want! I will make sure that it comes true." Now, Midas was a pleasant, easy-going man, but he was not very clever. His only real fault was that he loved gold. So, he closed his eyes and whispered to Dionysus: "My greatest wish is that whatever I touch for the rest of my life will turn to gold." Without hesitation, Dionysus told him that his wish had been granted.

Midas could not believe his luck. He rushed home to see if Dionysus was telling the truth. As he entered his palace garden, he snapped a twig off a nearby tree. Immediately, it turned to gold. "So, my wish has come true!" he cried. "I will be the richest man on earth." Midas then plucked a rose and that, too, turned to gold. Entering his palace, he called for food and wine to celebrate his good fortune. But, as he began to eat and drink, they too turned to gold.

Finally, it dawned on Midas that he would no longer be able to eat his favourite food or drink wine. He wouldn't be able to hug or kiss his wife and children, or ride his favourite horse. "What have I done?" he cried. "Oh, Dionysus, please free me from this curse!" Dionysus took pity on him and told him to bathe in the nearby river to wash away his greed. Midas did so and the magic was washed away. But, if you happen to walk by the river when the sun is shining brightly, you can still catch a glimpse of tiny pieces of gold dancing on the water.

#### Activities

- Many of the Greek myths contain a moral or lesson. What is the moral of the story of King Midas? Why wasn't the king happy even though his greatest wish had been granted? If you could wish for anything, what would it be and why?
- King Midas also features in another popular and humorous myth – the story of King Midas' ears. What do both stories tell us about the kind of person the king was?