

Starving on Gold

“Be careful what you wish for” is an adage that King Midas should have heeded. Instead, his greatest wish almost brought his death.

According to Greek mythology, Midas was king of Phrygia, located in present-day Turkey. (1) Phrygia was the land of roses, and these fragrant flowers *embellished* his gardens. (2) Midas lived in an elegant castle, where he *amassed* rich tapestries and expensive furniture. But all of these riches were not enough to satisfy him.

One day, Silenus, the former schoolmaster of the god Bacchus, wandered away, got lost, and fell asleep. Some Phrygian peasants found him and carried him to their king. (3) Recognizing him, Midas gave Silenus a warm welcome and spared no *extravagance* for his entertainment. The finest delicacies were served up on gold plates; the best poets, singers, and dancers performed for him. (4) Silenus ate *voraciously* and amused himself mightily. (5) After ten days, *glutted* and entertained, Silenus was ready to return to Bacchus’s home. Midas accompanied him on the journey. Bacchus was thrilled to see his former teacher and was so grateful to Midas that he offered to grant him any wish.

Now, Midas was a greedy person. (6) “Wouldn’t it be nice,” thought he, “to have an *inexhaustible* supply of gold?”

So he asked Bacchus to make everything he touched turn to gold. Bacchus sadly granted Midas’s wish, disappointed that the king had not made a wiser choice. (7) Thanking him *profusely*, Midas rushed out to test his new powers. A twig, a stone, and even a clump of soil instantly became gold as he touched them. He pocketed his newfound wealth and hurried home.

(8) To celebrate, he ordered a *lavish* feast. But as he reached to take some bread, it too turned to metal. The

food he raised to his mouth, and the drink in his cup, all turned to gold as soon as he touched them. (9) Realizing what he had done, he rushed back to Bacchus, begging to be released from the *outrageous* fate of starving on golden food.



In his mercy, Bacchus revealed that Midas’s wish could be reversed if he bathed in the Pactolus River. Midas followed the god’s orders. He had hardly touched the water’s surface, when his gold-producing powers left him. But in that fraction of a second, the river’s sands turned to gold. Even today, traces of gold can be found on the banks of the Pactolus River.

(10) It is said that Midas then came to regret being a *spendthrift*. He spent the rest of his life wandering through the woods and living a simple life.

Each sentence below refers to a numbered sentence in the passage. Write the letter of the choice that gives the sentence a meaning that is closest to the original sentence.

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|-------|---|
| _____ | 1. Phrygia was the land of roses, and these fragrant flowers _____ his gardens. |
| | a. decorated b. perfumed c. gathered d. grew in |
| _____ | 2. Midas lived in an elegant castle, where he _____ rich tapestries and expensive furniture. |
| | a. examined b. collected c. wasted d. decorated |
| _____ | 3. Midas gave Silenus a warm welcome and spared no _____ for his entertainment. |
| | a. great expense b. exaggeration c. singer or dancer d. decoration |

- _____ 4. Silenus ate _____ and amused himself mightily.
a. decoratively b. quietly c. politely d. greedily
- _____ 5. After ten days, _____ and entertained, Silenus was ready to return to Bacchus's home.
a. hungry b. generous c. stuffed d. broke
- _____ 6. "Wouldn't it be nice," thought he, "to have an _____ supply of gold?"
a. ample b. unusual c. unlimited d. extra
- _____ 7. Thanking him _____, Midas rushed out to test his new powers.
a. sincerely b. loudly c. politely d. abundantly
- _____ 8. To celebrate, he ordered a(n) _____ feast.
a. plentiful b. small c. decorative d. unlimited
- _____ 9. Realizing what he had done, he rushed back to Bacchus, begging to be released from the _____ fate of starving on golden food.
a. tragic human b. beyond limits c. excessive d. very unusual
- _____ 10. It is said that Midas then came to regret being a(n) _____.
a. bad friend b. wasteful spender c. overeater d. evil ruler

Indicate whether the statements below are TRUE or FALSE according to the passage.

- _____ 1. Before receiving his "golden touch," Midas preferred to live richly in expensive surroundings.
- _____ 2. Midas did not think through the consequences of his wish.
- _____ 3. With nothing to eat, Midas starved to death.

WRITE THE DERIVATIVE

Complete the sentence by writing the correct form of the word shown in parentheses. You may not need to change the form that is given.

- _____ 1. Some people are annoyed by the _____ purchases of others. (*extravagance*)
- _____ 2. At the press conference, the senator considered the news reporter's interruption to be an _____. (*outrageous*)
- _____ 3. Both candidates are _____ a large number of votes. (*amass*)
- _____ 4. Mark was no _____, but he found saving money very difficult. (*spendthrift*)
- _____ 5. The expense and effort that went into preparations were reflected in the _____ of the party. (*lavish*)
- _____ 6. The students complained about the seemingly _____ amount of homework assignments. (*inexhaustible*)
- _____ 7. The musicians added _____ to the melody, which made their performance unique. (*embellish*)
- _____ 8. If you watch Grace eat once, you will never again question her _____. (*voracious*)
- _____ 9. _____ is unhealthy behavior. (*glut*)
- _____ 10. Throughout the pasture, a _____ of daisies shimmered in the summer breeze. (*profusely*)