

Omar Rayyan , John Warren Stewig

King Midas

United States of America (1999)

TAGS: [Dionysus / Dionysos Midas](#)



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General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	King Midas
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United States of America
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	Worldwide
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	1999
<i>First Edition Details</i>	John Warren Stewig and Omar Rayyan, <i>King Midas</i> . New York: Holiday House, 1999, 32 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9780823414239
<i>Genre</i>	Picture books
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (Primary school children)
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
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Creators



Omar Rayyan , b. 1968 (Illustrator)

Omar Rayyan was born in Jordan in 1968. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, and moved thereafter to Martha's Vineyard, in Massachusetts, where he now lives with his wife. He is an illustrator whose style is influenced by Renaissance art, and combines realistic work in oils with fantasy and surrealist elements. He has illustrated a number of children's books, and worked as a concept artist for games and films (e.g. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005).)

Sources:

Official [website](#) (accessed: March 20, 2019)

[Interview](#) at mvarsandideas.com (accessed: March 20, 2019)

[Profile](#) at widewalls.ch (accessed: March 20, 2019)

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England,
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John Warren Stewig , b. 1937 (Author)

John Warren Stewig was born in Wisconsin in 1937. He is an educator and writer for children. He worked as teacher, before gaining his PhD (1967) and working at a number of universities in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. He has written several works for young readers, drawing on fairytales, folklore and observed family life.

Elizabeth Hale, "Entry on: King Midas by Omar Rayyan, John Warren Stewig", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/713>. Entry version as of April 05, 2025.

Source:

[Profile](#) at biography.jrank.org (accessed: 20 March, 2019)

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England,
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Additional information

Summary

This picture book for young readers retells the story of King Midas and the Golden Touch. King Midas, King of Phrygia, is "fonder of gold" than anything other than his daughter, Marygold. The text describes the nature of Midas's obsession with gold; the illustrations show the king lurking in his dungeon with his treasure while his castle is full of interesting life, mythical creatures and his daughter, playing. One day, a stranger arrives unannounced. Suspecting the stranger is a god, the king hopes he has come to do him a favour, and he hints at his love of gold. The stranger questions Midas, and ascertaining his desire for the Golden Touch, the stranger gives Midas the Touch. As the king excitedly touches things in his palace (plants, plates), Marygold is saddened when he turns her roses to gold. The king then discovers that his breakfast coffee turns to a lump of gold. He tries other food, to no avail, and when he groans aloud Marygold comes to comfort him. Bending to kiss his daughter, whose love was worth a thousand times more than the gold he had gained, he turns his daughter to gold, and weeps. The stranger appears again. His questions reveal the king has learned his lesson. He tells the king to step into the River Pactolus, and take a vase of water to sprinkle over anything he wishes to restore. Restoring Marygold to life, the king then sprinkles the roses with water, and they wander together in the garden. In future years, he tells the story of his foolishness to his grandchildren.

King Midas is illustrated with large images. Rayyan's paintings cover most pages, and surround the text. They depict a lush palace of classical columns, populated with rare animals (a hippopotamus, a leopard), and mythical beings (centaurs, Pegasus, harpies) appear throughout, as decorative motifs. The mysterious stranger is depicted as Dionysus. Humorous touches include Midas's breakfast cereal (Poseidon puffs), and the trademark on the base of his sandals (Apollo sole).

Analysis

The text of this straightforward retelling of the Midas myth makes sure to give a happy ending, in which Midas learns his lesson and his daughter is restored to him. The lavish illustrations elevate the story with their whimsy and humour. Incorporating mythical beings and exotic animals into the images of the palace (in places the palace is almost suspended in the air, held aloft by a giant Centaur and



Minotaur) likewise suspends the story in a space of myth and fantasy. Rayyan's illustrations are detailed paintings in the Renaissance style, in which fantasy and classical elements are mixed with modern touches. Humorous elements, such as Midas's breakfast cereal "Poseidon Puffs," and his gold John Lennon sunglasses, encourage rereading and close looking. The name Marygold indicates the influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne's retelling of the Midas myth in [*A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*](#) (1851) read by many American children.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Dionysus / Dionysos Midas](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Emotions Family Love](#)

