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 November 05, 2026.

Omar Rayyan , John Warren Stewig

King Midas

United States of America (1999)

TAGS: Dionysus / Dionysos Midas





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	King Midas
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1999
First Edition Details	John Warren Stewig and Omar Rayyan, *King Midas*. New York: Holiday House, 1999, 32 pp.
ISBN	9780823414239
Genre	Picture books
Target Audience	Children (Primary school children)
Author of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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 mvartsandideas.com (accessed: March 20, 2019)

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

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au



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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

on fairytales, folklore and observed family life.

Source:

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

Bio prepared by Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	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

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.