Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: The Chocolate Touch by Margot Apple , Patrick Skene Catling", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/928. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Margot Apple , Patrick Skene Catling

The Chocolate Touch

United States of America (1952)

TAGS: Golden Touch Midas





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Chocolate Touch
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1952
First Edition Details	Patrick Skene Catling, *The Chocolate Touch*, ill. Mildred Coughlin McNutt. Dunedin: Longacre Press, 1952, 95 pp.
ISBN	9780688161330
Awards	1983 – Utah Children's Choice Honors Award; 1983 – Beehive Award from the Children's Literature Association of Utah; 1989 – Massachusetts Children's Book Award.
Genre	Didactic fiction, Fantasy fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Children (Recommended for ages 9 to 12)
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

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



Margot Apple , b. 1946
(Illustrator)

Children’s book illustrator and author, Margot Apple was born in Detroit, USA. A shy child with a vivid imagination, she loved stories, but was a poor reader and responded to the illustrations more than the written text. Her mother was a commercial artist, and both her parents encouraged Apple to enrol in drawing classes and go on to study Fine Arts at the Pratt Institute in New York. After experimenting with pottery and a variety of other jobs as a waitress, bus driver, and greeting card designer, she began to illustrate children’s books.

Since the 1970s she has illustrated over fifty picture and chapter books, working predominantly in coloured pencil. She has collaborated repeatedly with several authors, including Nancy Shaw, Judy Delton and Jessie Haas. In the 1990s, she published two books of her own, *Blanket* (1990) and *Brave Martha* (1999). She is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Western Massachusetts Illustrators' Guild.

Source:

Profile at biography.jrank.org (accessed: December 10, 2019)

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

Patrick Skene Catling , b. 1925
(Author)

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Patrick Skene Catling by Diana Laing, 2014. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 (accessed: January 7, 2022).

British journalist, author and reviewer, Patrick Skene Catling was born in London. Educated in the UK and the United States, he served as a navigator in the Royal Canadian Air Force and began working as reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* during the late 1940s, detailing his experiences in his memoir *Better than Working* (1960). Now based in Ireland, he continues to write for a range of newspapers, including the *Spectator* and the *Telegraph*.

Best known for *The Chocolate Touch*, Catling has published extensively both for adult and juvenile readers, including several other books about the adventures of John Midas. In *John Midas in the Dreamtime* (1986), the hero visits the Australian outback and travels thousands of years back in time to encounter an Aboriginal tribe. Catling has also revisited the theme of the chocolate touch in *Chocolate Magic* (1997), this time featuring Mary Midas, a female protagonist.

Sources:

Profile at goodreads.com (accessed: December 10, 2019)

Profile at encyclopedia.com (accessed: December 10, 2019)

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Additional information

Adaptations	In 1994 the book was adapted into a comedy film, written and directed by Elliot Strange.
Translation	Persian: *Dahān-i shukulātī*, trans. Shahlā Tahmāsbī, Tihrān: Intishārāt-i Khūdarang, 2000. Braille: *The Chocolate Touch*, Vancouver: Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired, 2019.
Summary	John Midas loves candy, especially chocolate. Concerned about his unhealthy diet, his parents take him to the doctor, who prescribes nutritional supplements, but John continues to crave sweets. When he finds a strange coin – emblazoned with the initials J.M. – lying on the pavement, he wastes no time in exchanging it for a box of chocolates from a mysterious sweet shop that John has never seen before. When John gets home, he is disappointed to find that the large and lavish box contains only a single chocolate, but he devours it greedily, finding it "the most chocolaty chocolate he had ever encountered" (p. 34). In the morning, John gets ready for school. He brushes his teeth, delighted at the chocolate flavoured toothpaste that he assumes his mother has purchased. At breakfast, his orange juice tastes like chocolate too, and his fried egg is a delicious combination of runny chocolate yolk and white chocolate. His mother is pleased that he is eating healthy food at last, but Mary, his sister, is upset by his gloating and teasing – her breakfast tastes the same as it always does. John goes off to school, marvelling secretly at his strange new power. As he ruminates he chews on his glove, which melts into a sticky brown mess. A bully, Spider, sees him eating his glove and demands a piece, but is humiliated when he bits into a piece of nothing but sweaty old leather. John is enjoying himself, but starting to get thirsty. He gets no relief from the water fountain, and is mortified when his pencil, his cafeteria cutlery, and finally his trumpet, turn to chocolate as soon as they touch his lips. He quarrels with his friend Susan, and ruins her birthday party when he tries to join in the game of apple

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bobbing. All the while he is feeling more sick and sorry for himself, and what initially seemed like a wonderful gift has become a horrible and embarrassing affliction. John tells his father what has happened, and together they seek out the candy store, but in its place find only an empty lot. Instead, they return to Dr. Cranium, who ignores John's insistent claims that everything he touches turns to chocolate, and instead dispenses another dose of his patented elixir, which, along with the measuring spoon, promptly turns to chocolate. The doctor is amazed and excited, inventing the diagnosis of chocolatitis – or Cranium's Disease – on the spot. He has ambitions for studying John's condition in detail, but Mr Midas manages to extricate them from his surgery. Back at home, John's mother is upset to learn of her son's illness, and seeking to comfort her, John kisses her cheek, thus turning her into a chocolate statue. Terrified and remorseful, he flees from the house and manages to find the sweet shop once again. He implores the shopkeeper to remove the curse, promising to be less selfish and more truthful, and renounce his gluttonous ways. Reassured, John returns home to find everything back to the way it was. His mother, restored to her normal form and with no memory of what has happened, offers him a cold glass of milk, which he drinks with relish. Rejoicing that the curse has been lifted, John slips out of the house again to return to the shop, but finds only the abandoned lot, full of rubbish and a sign reading *Sold*.

Analysis

Catling's *The Chocolate Touch* is an entertaining adaptation of the myth of the golden touch. The surname of the young protagonist, John Midas, makes the connection explicit, though the story makes no other direct reference to the classical myth and its influence. The vice of greed is exchanged for that of gluttony, and John's talent is purely oral rather than tactile. Rosemary Wells' *Max and Ruby's Midas* (1995) has also reframed the Midas myth as a cautionary tale about gluttony. While Wells' work becomes surreal when Midas' sister is turned into a quivering bowl of jelly, Catling exploits the tragicomic image of John trying to play a solo on a chocolate trumpet.

The story of King Midas is a perennial favourite among mythic retellings for children. Nathaniel Hawthorne's version, in *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* (1851), has had a persistent influence on more recent retellings, though it is rarely acknowledged directly. In particular, Hawthorne is responsible for the invention of the figure of

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	Marygold, Midas' daughter, who, in the tale's tragic climax, is accidentally turned into gold. In his version, Catling transposes this scene into John's transformation of his mother, but retains the focus on familial love as he comes to realise that his gift is in fact a curse. John's relationships with his family and peers are central to this coming-of-age story, which presents his moral enlightenment as a key part of his maturation. Through this experience of the chocolate touch, John not only learns to be less of a sweet tooth, but also to be a better friend, son and brother.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Golden Touch Midas
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Character traits Coming of age Desires Disobedience Emotions Family Friendship Gaining understanding Humour Love Magic Morality Names Punishment Relationships School Transformation
Further Reading	Review at kirkusreviews.com (accessed: December 10, 2019).
Addenda	*The Chocolate Touch* remains in print and continues to be used as a text for study in American schools. Study guides have been published to support its use within the curriculum (see here, accessed: December 10, 2019). A summary of story, with visual accompaniment, is available at You Tube (accessed: December 10, 2019). Genre: Juvenile chapter book with whimsical and magical elements and a moral message.

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