Comparing Texts

Now, you will read a twentieth-century poem that takes the King Midas tale in a very different direction. After you complete the first-read and close-read activities, you will compare the poem to Hawthorne’s short story.

**from King Midas**

**Concept Vocabulary**

As you perform your first read of the poem, you will encounter these words.

| mail | obdurate | ore |

**Context Clues** If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using context clues—other words and phrases that appear nearby in the text—to help you determine their meanings.

**Synonyms:** Midas rules over his dominion, a kingdom spanning a portion of modern-day Turkey.

**Contrast of Ideas:** Though usually well-behaved, the toddler was incorrigible when it came to long car rides.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

**First Read POETRY**

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.

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STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
BACKGROUND
The Greek myth of King Midas identifies Midas as King of Phrygia, a region that is currently part of Turkey. As the story goes, one day some local farmers find a part-man, part-goat satyr asleep in their field and bring him to the king. Midas recognizes the creature as Silenus, a close companion of Dionysus, the god of grapes, wine, and festive merriment. Midas gives food and comfort to the satyr. Soon, Dionysus arrives and is grateful to Midas for treating his companion so generously. In recognition of this hospitality, Dionysus offers to grant Midas a single wish.

I. THE KING'S SPEECH
The palace clocks are stiff as coats of mail. Time stopped; I flicked it with my fingernail. My taste is shattered on these works of art It fathers by a touch: My bread's too rich, My butter much too golden, and my meat A nugget on my plate as cold as ice;
Fresh water in my throat turns precious there,
Where every drop becomes a millionaire.

I rather would be blind than see this world
All affluent in yellow, bought and sold
By Kings that hammer roses into gold:
I did not know I loved their warring thorns
Until they flowered into spikes so hard
My blood made obdurate the rose’s stem.

My God was generous. O much too much!
The nearest rose is now beyond my reach.

My furry cat is sculpture, my dog dead;
They stare at me with four wild sparkling eyes
That used to sparkle with dry wit; instead,
Having no wit that they can profit by,
They are pure profit, and their silences
Might make a King go mad, for it was I
Who made their lively muscles stiffly pose—
This jaundice\(^1\) is relentless, and it grows.

Princess, come no closer; my rigid kiss,
Though it is royal still, will make you this
Or that kind of a statue. And my Queen,
Be armed against this gold paralysis,
Or you will starve and thinly bed alone,
And when you dream, a gold mine in your brain
Will have both eyes release their golden ore
And cry for tears they could not cry before.

I would be nothing but the dirt made loud,
A ripeness of the weeds, a timid sun,
Or oppositely be entirely cloud,
Absolved of matter, dissolving in the rain,
Or any small, anonymous live thing
Than be the reigning King of this dominion
Where gold makes poor the richness of decay.

O Dionysus, change me back to clay!

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1. *jaundice* (JAWN dihs) *n.* disease that causes one’s skin to turn yellow.
II. THE PRINCESS’S SONG

I praise the bird, the river, and the tree.
If I were deaf or dumb, I could not see
Imagination is the heart of me.

A falling leaf in fall’s a thing to mourn.
When river beds are dry, nothing is born.
Dear sparrow, sing your song this blessed morn.

Divided into two, I am a tree.
The branches are too high for me to see,
The roots too hidden from reality.

They say that veins of gold lie underground.
Beware, explorers, of the spoil you find:
Though you sail back and forth, you sail around.

The laurel grows upon the laurel tree.
Apollo² plucked the string of mystery
And made a golden echo in the sea.

III. THE QUEEN’S SPEECH

May every child of mine be barren, golden!
May every mammal turn to golden swine!
Here is a list, O gardeners and huntsmen,
Of what to kill and what to leave alone:
All natural things must go excepting those
That are by nature golden. Whatever grows
The King’s touchy color let live, but close
Your nets upon the pink and crimson rose.

But I will save one rose tree in this pot
That I may gaze at it, and when he’s not
About, I’ll look and look till light is gone
At flower, petal, stem, and leaf. And then,
I’ll ponder how a King became a fool!
Long live King Midas! And the Golden Rule!

². Apollo (uh POL oh) Greek god of light and music.
Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

1. What causes the palace clocks to stop at the beginning of the poem?

2. What has happened to the pets in the king's household?

3. At the end of “The King's Speech,” what request does Midas make to the god that gave him the golden touch?

4. What orders does the Queen give to her gardeners and huntsmen?

5. How does the Queen view Midas and his wish?

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify  Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the poem?

Research to Explore  Find out more about retellings or adaptations of Greek myths. Which popular books and movies are based on these ancient stories?
Close Read
With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?

**Analyze the Text**
Complete the activities.

1. **Review and Clarify** With your group, reread lines 1–8 of “The King’s Speech.” Based on the speaker’s descriptions, what are some words and phrases you might use to describe Midas?

2. **Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the text that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed in the text, what questions you asked and what conclusions you reached.

3. **Essential Question:** *What do our possessions reveal about us?* What has this selection taught you about materialism? Discuss with your group.

**LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

**Concept Vocabulary**

| mail | obdurate | ore |

**Why These Words?** The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

**Practice**

**Notebook** Write a fill-in-the-blank sentence for each concept word, leaving a space where the word would be. Trade your work with another group member. Challenge each other to identify each missing word.

**Word Study**

**Latin Root: -dur-** In “King Midas,” the speaker laments that his touch has made a rose’s stem obdurate. The word *obdurate* is formed from the Latin root -dur-, meaning “hard,” “strong,” or “lasting.” Write the meanings of these words formed from the root -dur-: *endure, duration, durable.* Use a print or online dictionary to verify your definitions.
Analyze Craft and Structure

Author’s Choices: Poetic Structure  The way in which a poet organizes a poem is referred to as poetic structure. Two of the main building blocks of poetic structure are stanzas and rhyme.

- **Stanza**: A stanza is a group of lines, usually separated from other stanzas by space. Stanzas are named according to their number of lines, as follows: couplet: a two-line stanza; tercet: a three-line stanza; quadrain: a four-line stanza; sestet: a six-line stanza; octave: an eight-line stanza.

- **Rhyme**: Rhyme is the repetition of sounds at the ends of words. Exact rhyme is the use of identical sounds, as in love and dove. Slant rhyme is the use of similar sounds that do not match perfectly, as in prove and glove.

- **Rhyme Scheme**: A regular pattern of end rhyme—or rhyming words at the ends of lines—is called a rhyme scheme. Rhyme schemes are identified by the use of letters, with one letter assigned to each rhyming sound. For example, in “When You Are Old,” William Butler Yeats uses the rhyme scheme abba:

  When you are old and gray and full of sleep,       a
  And nodding by the fire, take down this book,     b
  And slowly read, and dream of the soft look,     b
  Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;   a

Practice

In the chart, use the letters a, b, c, and so on to identify the rhyming sounds that end each line from “The Queen’s Speech.” Then, note whether each pair of rhymes is exact or slant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINE</th>
<th>RHYMING SOUND</th>
<th>EXACT OR SLANT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**Notebook**  Respond to these questions.

1. Why do you think the poet chose to vary stanza lengths for each section of the poem? How do the different types of stanzas reflect the ways in which each speaker thinks and feels?

2. Note the rhyme schemes of “The King’s Speech” and “The Princess’s Song.” How do the two rhyme schemes affect your reading of these sections? Why might the second section be called a “song”?
Author’s Style

Author’s Choices: Poetic Structure In poetry, the arrangement of stressed (‘) and unstressed (‘) syllables is called meter. The basic unit of meter is the foot, which usually consists of one stressed and one or more unstressed syllables. The most frequently used foot in American poetry is the iamb—one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The type and number of feet in the lines of a poem determine its meter. For example, a pattern of five iambs per line is known as iambic pentameter (the prefix penta- means “five”). The sections from "King Midas" are written in iambic pentameter.

Poets also use enjambment, or the continuation of a sentence past a line break. Enjambment allows the poet to continue the flow of ideas and also maintain a metrical pattern. For instance, in “The King’s Speech,” the sentence that begins in line 9 ends in line 11.

Read It

Work individually. Reread the first stanza of “The King’s Speech.” Use a vertical rule to separate individual feet. Then, mark the stressed (‘) and unstressed (‘) syllables of each foot. Note: The poet may deviate from strict iambic pentameter, perhaps by including two stressed syllables or more than two syllables in a foot, or by using fewer than five feet per line. Identify these variations, and consider how they add to the poem’s meaning. The first line has been marked for you. After all members of your group have finished marking the stanza, compare and discuss your work.

The palace clocks are still as coats of mail

Time stopped; I flicked it with my fingernail.

My taste is shattered on these works of art
It fathers by a touch: My bread’s too rich,
My butter much too golden, and my meat
A nugget on my plate as cold as ice;
Fresh water in my throat turns precious there,
Where every drop becomes a millionaire.

Write It

Write a short poem based on the King Midas story, using iambic pentameter. You may choose whether to use either uniform or varied stanza lengths, as well as whether or not to use rhyme.