

michael morpurgo

Twist of Gold



Twist of Gold – The Red House

“Children,” she said and took a deep breath. “For three months now we have looked high and low for any trace of your father. We have circulated his description widely in Boston. It is remotely possible he passed through here a year ago, but we feel it is most unlikely. Someone surely would have remembered such a striking-looking man. What is quite certain that he is not here now. He could have gone on to California – we do not know. If you set off to look for him you would probably die before you reach California – many people do. Such a journey would be foolish and I could not allow you to embark upon it. And even if you got there and you found his valley, he himself may well not be there. Many things can happen to a man between Boston and California. My sister Martha and I have talked of little else for the past weeks, and this afternoon we decided we would ask you to stay and make your home with us at “The Red House”. You would grow up in this house. We should send you to the best schools in Boston and we would care for you as if you were our own.” Sean was about to speak. “Say nothing now, dear boy. Go to bed, talk about it together and you will tell us your decision when we meet again at breakfast.”

They did indeed talk until the small hours of the morning. It took that long for Sean to persuade Annie that what they were about to do was the only thing they could do.’

(Twist of Gold, Chapter 17, Page 148)

Working with a partner, imagine that you are Annie and Sean.

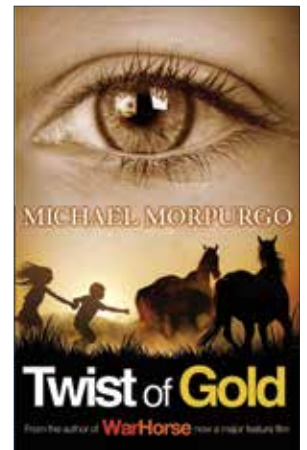
Write a dialogue play/script about the conversation that took place between Annie and Sean that night.

What do you think their decision was? How did Sean persuade Annie that his decision was the right one?

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Twist of Gold – The Golden Torc

'I have told you children, as your father has told you often enough, that a long, long time ago our family was a great family, rich in land, that we fought alongside the kings and everywhere we rode was our own. All that is left of our birthright now is the golden torc that belonged to the first of the O'Brian chieftains over a thousand years ago. So long as we keep it we will never forget who we are. And wherever the O'Brians go the golden torc must go with them – you know that well enough. You will wear it now, Annie, and carry it like a battle standard to America 'til you meet your father again.' And from underneath the letters in the tin box she took out a torc, a ribbon torc of thin beaten gold, and handed it to Sean. It will protect you both from the dangers you'll be facing.'

(Twist of Gold, Chapter 5, Page 41)

The Golden Torc becomes Annie and Sean's lucky charm.

Do you have a lucky charm? If so, can you describe what it is and why it is lucky?

Make a list of the types of things people do to bring good luck. For example, cross their fingers, carry a rabbit's foot.

'Annie unclasped the torc carefully and laid it on the table in front of the Captain. 'It belongs to us,' she said, her eyes full of tears that she would not allow to flow. 'It will always belong to us. And Father says anyone who steals it will be cursed to the day they die.'

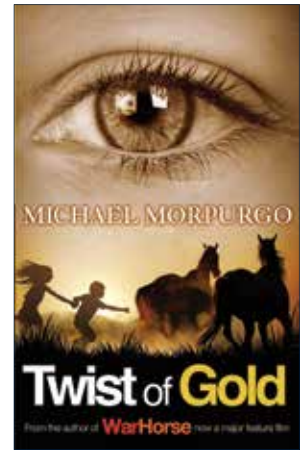
(Twist of Gold, Chapter 7, Page 60)

Imagine that somebody stole your lucky charm and therefore fell under a curse until they returned it. What happened to them?

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Twist of Gold – The Dragoon

'Sean, I'm a soldier for over thirty years. I've fought the world over for my Queen and for my country – that's my trade and I do it well. But in this country I've seen and done things that turn my stomach with shame. Perhaps it's a way of saying sorry, do you understand, son?'

'I think so,' said Sean. 'I think I do.'

'Well I don't understand what he's talking about,' Annie said, tugging at Sean's hand.'

(Twist of Gold – Chapter 3, page 22)

READ CHAPTER 3 TO THE CLASS IN FULL

Imagine that you are the Dragoon talking to Sean. Write a letter to Annie explaining what you mean by 'a way of saying sorry'.

Use books or the internet to carry out some research into the Irish Potato Famine of 1847 and the role of the British Army during this time.
