Gold Hunt

First graders love magic, especially if it comes on a holiday and even more if it's connected to “treasure.” So it's not surprising that leprechaun lore is a big hit in March, when St. Patrick's Day rolls around. This hunt for leprechaun gold is so much fun, kids won’t even realize they’re working their reading muscles at the same time. Invite a friend or two, or get help from a couple of siblings who like a sweet adventure.

What You Need:

- A “treasure” (gold chocolate coins are a classic favorite, but you can also use a small toy, dried fruit, or some other surprise)
- Several Sheets of yellow or goldenrod card stock or construction paper
- A pack of round gold “medallion” stickers, at least 1-1/2” in diameter
- A black sharpie marker
- Scissors (creative edging ones are a special plus)

What You Do:

1. **Hide your treasure.** Remember, this is leprechaun work, so have fun. Did the tricksters hide the treasure outside, in a tree? Did they creep inside, perhaps under a pillow or bed? Did they leave sparkles in their wake, or turn the toilet water green? You decide.
2. **Make “leprechaun gold” clues.** Let's say that the treasure is “Under the living room couch.” To write this message, mark a 2” circle for each letter in the phrase and add one extra circle for each space between words-- 27 circles in all, in this case.& Cut them out, and lay them in a long row on a flat surface. Now use your sharpie to write one letter on each circle, leaving a plain blank circle between each new word. Leave your circles in this order, but turn each one over so that it's front is blank. Stick a medallion sticker on each circle, and then number each one from left to right. In this case, you'll go from 1-27.
3. **Hide the clues.** Leprechauns are known for leaving clever clues in a rather fun, careless way. So spread the clues all over, making sure that they're not so carefully hidden that nobody will find them!
4. **Send your child hunting!** Show your child one example of the leprechaun “gold,” and explain that you've heard that there are at least 26 more pieces out there. Tell your child that you have it on good authority (who knows from where?) that if all these pieces can be found, there's a special message to read.
5. **Decode the message.** When all the “gold” has been found, take a look with your child at what’s been collected. Letters on one side; numbers on the other! Hmm! Start by having your child line up all the numbers in order, in one long line. Then suggest turning each gold piece over to find the letter underneath. Challenge your child to sound out the message with you, and be prepared to step in and help if a word seems hard.

Make sure you’re prepared for the grand finale: a mad dash to the big treasure and a lot of happy laughs!

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