

The Quest of Medusa's Head

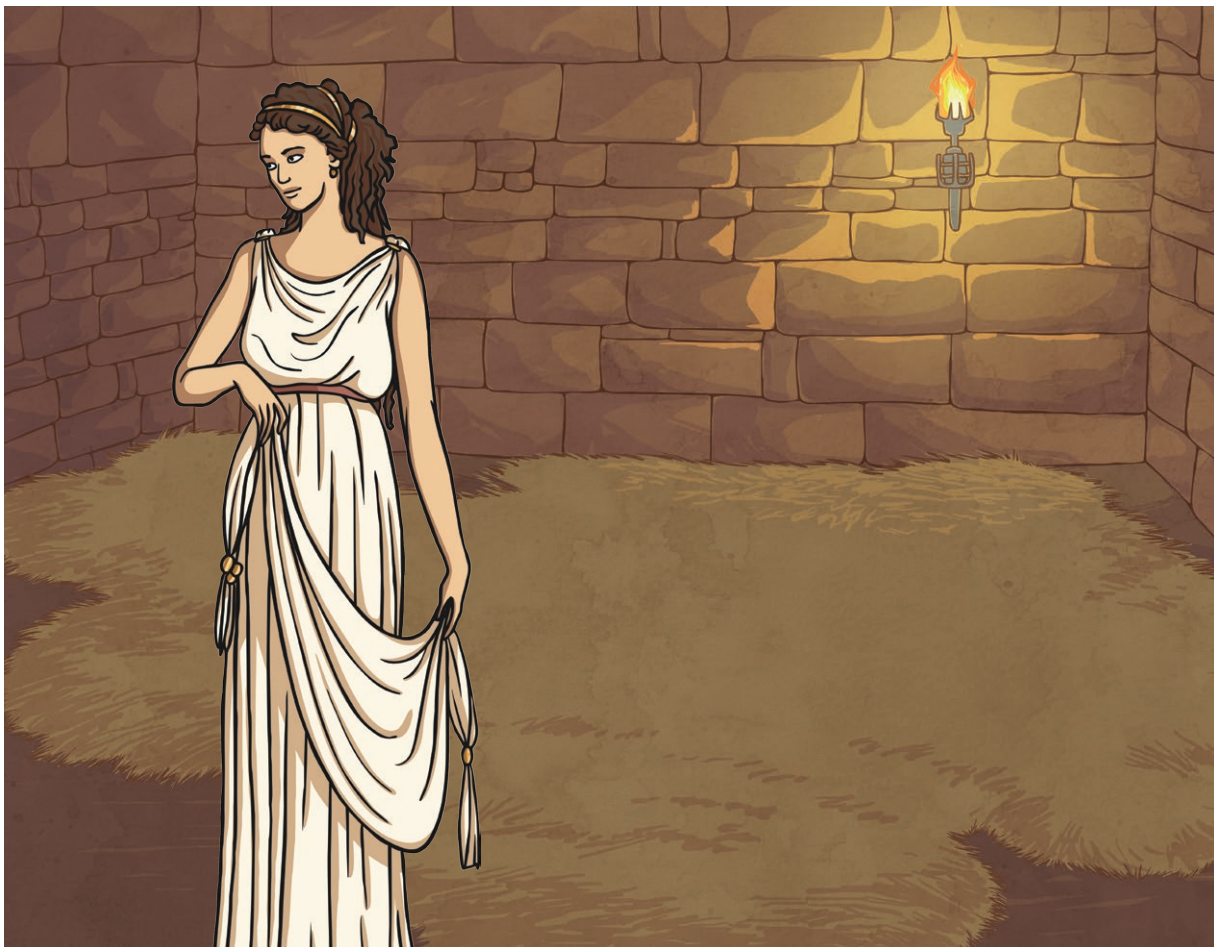
The Brass Prison

There was once a king of Argos, who had a daughter called Danae. She was growing up quickly but the king had been told that her son, his grandson, would cause his own death.

To prevent this, the king locked her in a prison of brass. Apart from her old nurse, she was completely alone. But, the god Zeus looked down on her from the heavens and fell in love.

They were married and had a son, called Perseus. In spite of all that he had done, Danae's father began to think the words of the prophecy might come true.

So, Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest. The king thought that if they died together, the prophecy couldn't come true. But, they didn't die. After several days at sea, they drifted ashore on a distant island and were found by a kind man, who sheltered and cared for them for many years.



The Magic Sandals

The cruel king of the island wanted to marry the beautiful Danae and when she refused he plotted to send Perseus away in revenge. He challenged Perseus to bring him the head of the Medusa. She was one of three monster sisters. Each had the body and face of woman but with golden wings, terrible brass claws and snakes for hair. Anyone who looked at their faces was instantly turned to stone.

Without weapons or any idea where to find Medusa, Perseus went to the shore to plan his quest. Two mysterious people told him where to set off on his journey and that he must get directions from the Grey Sisters and collect three things from the Maidens of the West before challenging Medusa. They gave him magic winged sandals so that he could travel quickly and easily. He realised the people were the gods Athena and Hermes, although he didn't understand why they were helping him.

After a long and tiring journey, Perseus now had directions from the Grey Sisters and had been given a sword, a shield, a magic pouch and a magic cap of invisibility by the Maidens of the West. He flew to Medusa's lair and waited.

At last she appeared. Using the shield as a mirror, so that he didn't have to look at her, Perseus cut off Medusa's hideous head with his sword. He carefully put it in the magic pouch and flew off to safety.

This part of his task was complete.



Questions

1. What is the name of the daughter of the King of Argos?

2. What is the prison made of?

3. What do you think the king's daughter felt about her father for locking her up?

4. What do you think the king's feelings are during 'The Brass Prison'?

Circle as many as you think apply.

brave

frightened

confident

worried

fearless

5. In The Magic Sandals, why is the king of the island described as cruel?

6. What challenge would you have set Perseus if you were king?

7. What do you think Perseus felt when he was given the challenge to capture the head of Medusa? Why do you think that?

8. Who was going to help Perseus on his travels? How were they going to do this?

9. Why do you think the gods gave Perseus some help to get started on his journey?

10. Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

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Answers

1. What is the name of the daughter of the King of Argos?

His daughter is called Danae.

2. What is the prison made of?

The prison is made of brass.

3. What do you think the king's daughter felt about her father for locking her up?

Responses could indicate a positive or negative view point:

I think the king's daughter would be pleased that he was protecting her even though she may not fully understand why he chose to lock her up to keep her from harm.

or

I think the king's daughter would have been cross and frustrated with her father for locking her away from everyone. There must have been other ways to protect her other than keeping her in prison.

4. What do you think the king's feelings are during 'The Brass Prison'?

Circle as many as you think apply.

brave

frightened

confident

worried

fearless

5. In The Magic Sandals, why is the king of the island described as cruel?

The king is described as cruel because he wants to force Perseus' mother to marry him and when she refuses, he takes revenge on Perseus.

6. What challenge would you have set Perseus if you were king?

A range of appropriate responses could be recorded here.

7. What do you think Perseus felt when he was given the challenge to capture the head of Medusa? Why do you think that?

Responses could include emotions such as fear, worry, anxiety, excitement, bravery or confidence. I think that Perseus felt afraid after he was given the challenge because Medusa and her sisters sound terrifying and Perseus doesn't have anyone to help him fight them.

or

I think that Perseus felt excited at having to carry out a challenge that could save his

mother. No matter how dangerous it may be I think he would want to try his best and be as brave as he could.

8. Who was going to help Perseus on his travels? How were they going to do this?

The Grey Sisters were going to give Perseus directions and The Maidens of the West were going to give him three things to help him.

9. Why do you think the gods gave Perseus some help to get started on his journey?

I think the gods helped Perseus to get started because they wanted him to succeed and to kill Medusa.

10. Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

Answers will vary.

The Quest of Medusa's Head

The Brass Prison

There was once a king of Argos, who had a daughter. The king was growing old and he had been told that the son of his daughter (his grandson) would cause his death. To prevent this prophecy coming true, he locked his daughter away in a prison made of brass. She had no one to talk to but her old nurse.

Time passed by and Danae grew more beautiful every day. From his heavens, the god Zeus looked down and saw her and fell in love with her. They were married and had a son, called Perseus.

In spite of all that he had done, Danae's father began to think the words of the prophecy might come true. So, Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest. The king thought that if they died together, the prophecy couldn't come true. But, they didn't die. After several days at sea, they drifted ashore on a distant island and were found by a kind man, who sheltered and cared for them for many years.

The Magic Sandals

The cruel king of the island wanted to marry the beautiful Danae and when she refused he plotted to send Perseus away in revenge. He challenged Perseus to bring him the head of the Medusa. She was one of three monster sisters, who each had the bodies and faces of women but with golden wings, terrible brass claws and snakes for hair. Anyone who looked at their faces was instantly turned to stone.

Without weapons or any idea where to find Medusa, Perseus went to the shore to plan his quest. Two mysterious people told him where to set off on his journey and that he must get directions from the Grey Sisters and collect three things from the Maidens of the West before challenging Medusa. They gave him magic winged sandals so that he could travel quickly and easily. He realised the people were the gods Athena and Hermes, although he didn't understand why they were helping him.





The Grey Sisters

Hermes' winged sandals flew Perseus to the sisters. These three creatures were so old that they had forgotten their own age and nobody could count the years which they had lived. The long hair which covered their heads had been grey since they were born. They had between them only a single eye and a single tooth which they passed back and forth from one to another. Perseus heard them mumbling and crooning in their dreary home, and he stood very still and listened. Tricking them, Perseus made the old women tell him where to travel to find the Western Maidens.

The Western Maidens

Once more Perseus put on his winged sandals and set off. When he arrived in the Western Lands, he saw the three Maidens of the West guarding a tree which was full of golden apples. Perseus spoke to the Maidens about his challenge. Once they heard his plight, they willingly agreed to help him but they offered not three but four things to help him kill Medusa: a sword, a shield, a magic pouch and a magic cap of invisibility.

Again, he put on the magic sandals and flew off to find Medusa and her gorgon sisters.

The Dreadful Gorgons

With the sharp sword at his side and the bright shield upon his arm, Perseus flew bravely onward in search of the dreadful Gorgons. He wore the Cap of Invisibility upon his head, making him as invisible as the wind.

Cleverly using the shiny shield as a mirror, Perseus saw the reflection of the hideous snake-haired monsters whilst they slept. Very stealthily, he went



nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters and always looking into his bright shield to see where to go. He drew his sharp sword and, dashing quickly, struck a blow, so sure, so swift, that the head of Medusa was cut from her shoulders and the black blood gushed like a river from her neck.

Quick as a thought, he thrust the terrible head into his magic pouch and leaped again into the air, flying away with the speed of a lightening flash. Escaping under his Invisibility Cap and with the help of his magic sandals, Perseus left the anguished screams of Medusa's sisters behind him as he made his way to safety and set off for home.



Questions

1. What did Perseus use to get to where the Grey Sisters lived?

2. Describe the Grey Sisters using as many appropriate adjectives as you can.

hair: _____

eye: _____

tooth: _____

3. What could the three sisters be mumbling about?

Use speech marks to record their conversation.

4. Sort the similarities and differences between the Grey Sisters and the Western Maidens.

Tick if describes the Grey Sisters or the Western Maidens. If it describes both, tick both.

Grey Sisters	Description	Western Maidens
	three in number	
	mumbling and crooning	
	old	
	singing and dancing	
	young	
	women	
	pleasant	
	unpleasant	
	protecting something	

5. What did the Western Maidens give the Perseus to help him? Which do you think is the most useful? Give reasons for your choice.

6. In *The Dreadful Gorgons*, find and copy a phrase that includes a simile.

7. Underline the adjectives in this part of the text.

Cleverly using the shiny shield as a mirror, Perseus saw the reflection of the hideous snake-haired monsters whilst they slept. Very stealthily, he went nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters and always looking into his bright shield to see where to go.

8. Underline the alliteration in this part of the text.

The head of Medusa was cut from her shoulders and the black blood gushed like a river from her neck.

In the last paragraph, how does the author use language to good effect in describing the speed that the action takes place?

Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

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Answers

1. What did Perseus use to get to where the Grey Sisters lived?

Perseus used Mercury's winged sandals to fly to the Grey Sisters.

2. Describe the Grey Sisters using as many appropriate adjectives as you can.

hair: **tangled, matted, knotty, straggly**

eye: **bulging, swollen, staring, ogling, gawking, glaring**

tooth: **decayed, rotten, jagged, sharp**

3. What could the three sisters be mumbling about?

Use speech marks to record their conversation.

A variety of correctly punctuated conversation should be recorded.

"Oh sister of mine, I can see with my little eye that your hair looks especially revolting today," croaked the oldest hag.

"Why thank you kind sister, I know that you are jealous of my fine locks but remember that I am the youngest and most beautiful of us all because today I have the single tooth to complete my beautiful looks," crooned the youngest of the three.

"Don't forget me you horrid hags," cackled the middle sister. "I don't need the eye or the tooth to make me beautiful – I am deliciously gorgeous all of the time!"

4. Sort the similarities and differences between the Grey Sisters and the Western Maidens.

Tick if describes the Grey Sisters or the Western Maidens. If it describes both, tick both.

Grey Sisters	Description	Western Maidens
✓	three in number	✓
✓	mumbling and crooning	
✓	old	
	singing and dancing	✓
	young	✓
✓	women	✓
	pleasant	✓
✓	unpleasant	
✓	protecting something	✓

5. What did the Western Maidens give the Perseus to help him? Which do you think is the most useful? Give reasons for your choice.

The Western Maidens gave Perseus a sword, a shield, a magic pouch and a magic cap of invisibility. Followed by appropriate reasoning for the choice of object that is most useful.

6. In The Dreadful Gorgons, find and copy a phrase that includes a simile.

The phrase that has a simile is 'making him as invisible as the wind'.

7. Underline the adjectives in this part of the text.

Cleverly using the shiny shield as a mirror, Perseus saw the reflection of the hideous snake-haired monsters whilst they slept. Very stealthily he went nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters and always looking into his bright shield to see where to go.

8. Underline the alliteration in this part of the text.

The head of Medusa was cut from her shoulders and the black blood gushed like a river from her neck.

9. In the last paragraph, how does the author use language to good effect in describing the speed that the action takes place?

In the last paragraph, the author uses similes to describe the speed; 'Quick as a thought, 'and 'flew away with the speed of a lightening flash'. The author also uses the word 'leaped' to describe how Perseus jumped, giving the impression that he is moving quickly.

10. Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

Answers will vary.

The Quest of Medusa's Head

Introduction

Perseus had been sent on a journey to capture the gorgon, Medusa's head. This trophy was to be exchanged for his mother's freedom from having to marry the evil king. Anyone looking at the face of the gorgon would be turned to stone so the challenge was dangerous and difficult. But, Perseus had help. The Maidens of the West had given him a sword, a shield, a magic pouch and a cap of invisibility to protect him. Once Perseus had completed his mission and with Medusa's head safely in his magic pouch, he headed for home to save his mother.

The Great Sea Beast

As Perseus made his way over the vast oceans, he came across a strange sight. He saw a beautiful girl chained to a rock by the seashore and far away a huge sea beast was swimming towards her to devour her. Quick as blink, he flew down and spoke to her.

Perseus removed his cap and stood by her on the rock. When the girl saw him with his long hair and wonderful eyes, she thought him the handsomest young man in the world.

"Oh, save me! Save me!" she cried as she reached out her arms towards him.

Perseus could see the sea monster coming closer so he took the Gorgon's head out of his magic pouch, held it up high and the inevitable happened.

Then, Perseus slipped the Gorgon's head back into the pouch and hastened to speak with the young girl. She told him that her name was Andromeda and that she was the daughter of the king and queen of that land. Andromeda told Perseus that she was being sacrificed to the sea monster as a punishment for her mother's vanity. As the pair talked, the king, queen and many people of the land came to see what was happening. As a reward for saving his daughter, the king agreed to let his daughter marry Perseus. Forgetting his quest, Perseus stayed happily with Andromeda and her family for many months.



The Timely Rescue

But, Perseus had not totally forgotten his mother. So, one fine summer day, he and Andromeda sailed in a beautiful ship to his own home. The ship came to land at the very spot where the wooden chest had been cast so many years before and Perseus and his bride walked through the fields towards the town.

Now, the wicked king of that land had never ceased trying to persuade Danae to become his wife but she would not listen to him. The more he pleaded and threatened, the more she disliked him. At last, when he found that she could not be made to marry him, he declared that he would kill her.

So, as Perseus and Andromeda came into the town, they were greeted with the scene of his mother fleeing to the safety of the altar of Zeus with the king following, intent on killing her. When Perseus saw the king rushing like a madman after his mother, he again took the head of Medusa from his magic pouch.

"I promised to bring you a present and here it is!" he cried.

The king saw it and was turned into stone, just as he stood, with his sword uplifted and a terrible look of anger on his face.

With his mother safe, Perseus decided that they should all return home to Argos. So the three of them set sail the following day.



The Deadly Quoit

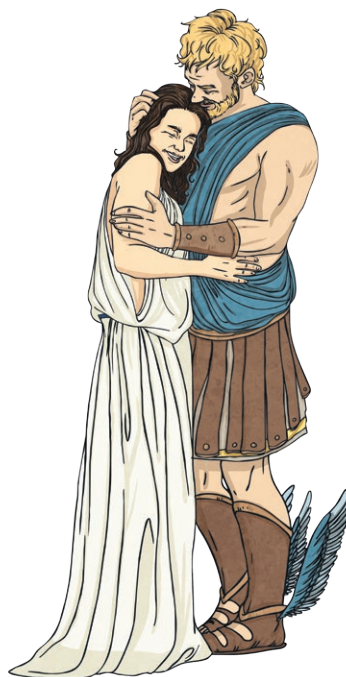
When Danae's old father, the king of Argos, heard that a strange ship was coming over the sea with his daughter and her son on board, he was in great distress; for he remembered what the Pythia had foretold about his death. So, without waiting to see the vessel, he left his palace in great haste and fled.

"My daughter's son cannot kill me if I keep out of his way," he said.

But, Perseus had no wish to harm him and was distraught when he heard what the old man had done. With his grandfather gone, the people of the kingdom wanted Perseus to rule over them, which he did willingly in memory of the man he had never known.

A while later, Perseus was taking part in challenges and games with neighbouring kingdoms. He threw a heavy quoit a great deal further than any had been thrown before. It landed in the crowd of spectators and struck a stranger who was standing there. As Perseus ran to help him, he saw that he was dead. The man was none other than Danae's father, the old king of Argos. He had fled from his kingdom to save his life, and in doing so had only met his death.

Perseus was overcome with grief and had no wish to continue as ruler of the kingdom, so he and Andromeda left the country and lived happily in the neighbouring kingdom of Mycenae for many years.



Questions

1. What is the purpose of the introduction before the next part of the story begins?

2. In The Great Sea Beast, locate and copy a phrase which describes how quickly Perseus moved.

3. What does the phrase 'the inevitable happened' mean?

4. Why do you think Perseus forgot his quest after he met Andromeda?

5. Why do you think Perseus and his bride continued on the quest sometime later?

6. Use the information in the text to help you work out the meaning of the following words. Write synonyms for each word that would make sense if they were used in the story.

Word used in the story	Synonym to replace it
intent	
uplifted	
foretold	
vessel	
distraught	
quoit	
struck	
overcome	

7. Why do you think the altar of Zeus was a safe place for Perseus' mother?

8. If the King of Argos thought that Perseus wanted to kill him, should he have run away or stayed to face him? Give reasons for your answer.

Do you think the King of Argos deserved to die?

10. Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

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Answers

1. What is the purpose of the introduction before the next part of the story begins?

The introduction sets the scene for the reader and to summarise the story so far.

2. In The Great Sea Beast, locate and copy a phrase which describes how quickly Perseus moved.

A phrase that describes how quickly Perseus moved is 'quick as a blink'.

3. What does the phrase 'the inevitable happened' mean?

The phrase 'the inevitable happened' means that the monster was turned to stone.

4. Why do you think Perseus forgot his quest after he met Andromeda?

I think Perseus fell in love with Andromeda and could only think about spending time with her, not completing the quest he was challenged to do.

5. Why do you think Perseus and his bride continued on the quest sometime later?

I think that once Perseus had some time to think about why he was on his journey he realised that he should return to his home and save his mother from marrying the evil king.

6. Use the information in the text to help you work out the meaning of the following words.

Write synonyms for each word that would make sense if they were used in the story.

Word used in the story	Synonym to replace it
intent	determined
uplifted	raised
foretold	predicted
vessel	ship/boat
distraught	very upset
quoit	throwing hoop
struck	hit
overcome	overwhelmed

7. Why do you think the altar of Zeus was a safe place for Perseus' mother?

I think that the altar would be a safe place for Perseus' mother because the evil king would not dare to kill her inside a temple as it is a place where people are protected. Zeus was also married to Danae and was Perseus' father.

8. If the King of Argos thought that Perseus wanted to kill him, should he have run away or stayed to face him? Give reasons for your answer.

I think that the King of Argos should have run away to leave the family to live peacefully again. If he didn't, there may have been more fighting and someone else could have died.

or

I do not think that the King of Argos should have run away because he could have talked to Perseus and his daughter and worked their problems out, rather than avoiding them.

9. Do you think the King of Argos deserved to die?

I think the King of Argos deserved to die because he was a coward in not facing Perseus and his daughter when they returned to him. He thought they would be cross with him so he ran away, but they did not want to harm him. He died as a result of his own actions, as his death was an accident.

or

I do not think that the King of Argos deserved to die because he only wanted to keep everyone safe and happy and he thought that by running away the family could live peacefully without him. It was an accident that caused his death but he didn't deserve it.

10. Write your own version of what happened to Perseus next in the adventure.

Answers will vary.