

Medusa - The Quest of Perseus

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 future son would cause his own death. To prevent this, the king locked Danae 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 they fell in love. They were married and had a son named Perseus.

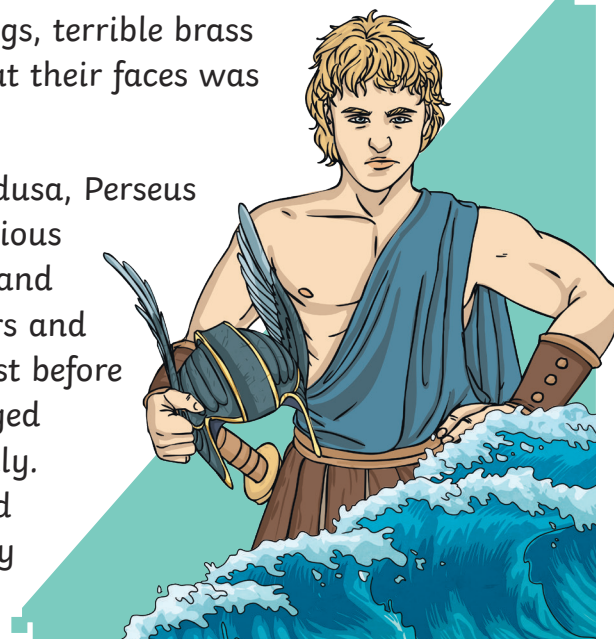
Despite all that he had done, Danae's father began to think the words of the **prophecy** might come true. So, Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest. The king thought that if they died together then the prophecy couldn't come true. But they didn't die. After several days at sea, 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 island had a cruel king who wanted to marry the beautiful Danae. When she refused, he plotted to send Perseus away in revenge. He challenged Perseus to bring him the head of the Medusa, who was one of the three monster sisters. Each had the body and face of a 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.



Glossary

prophecy: A prediction of what will happen in the future.

Questions

1. Which word from the text means the same as 'extremely ugly'? Tick one.

- Medusa
- hideous
- terrible
- revenge

2. What did Perseus use his shield as? Tick one.

- a weapon
- a mirror
- a plate
- a sledge

3. Name **two** things that Perseus was given while on his quest.

- _____
- _____

4. Fill in the missing words.

After _____ days at sea, they drifted _____ on a distant island and were found by a kind man, who sheltered and cared for them for many years.

5. Who was locked in the brass prison with Danae?

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

7. How do you think Perseus felt when he was given the challenge to capture the head of Medusa? Explain your answer.

8. Look at the section called **The Magic Sandals**.

Why is the king of the island described as 'cruel'?

Answers

1. Which word from the text means the same as 'extremely ugly'? Tick one.

- Medusa
- hideous**
- terrible
- revenge

2. What did Perseus use his shield as? Tick one.

- a weapon
- a mirror**
- a plate
- a sledge

3. Name **two** things that Perseus was given while on his quest.

Accept any two of the following: magic winged sandals; a sword; a shield; a magic pouch; a magic cap of invisibility.

4. Fill in the missing words.

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.

5. Who was locked in the brass prison with Danae?

Danae's old nurse was locked in the prison with her.

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

Pupils' own responses, such as: If I were king, I would have set Perseus the challenge of finding and bringing me the feather of an exotic bird.

7. How do you think Perseus felt when he was given the challenge to capture the head of Medusa? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: 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.

8. Look at the section called **The Magic Sandals**.

Why is the king of the island described as 'cruel'?

Pupils' own responses, such as: 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.

Medusa - The Quest of Perseus

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 from coming true, he locked his beloved 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.

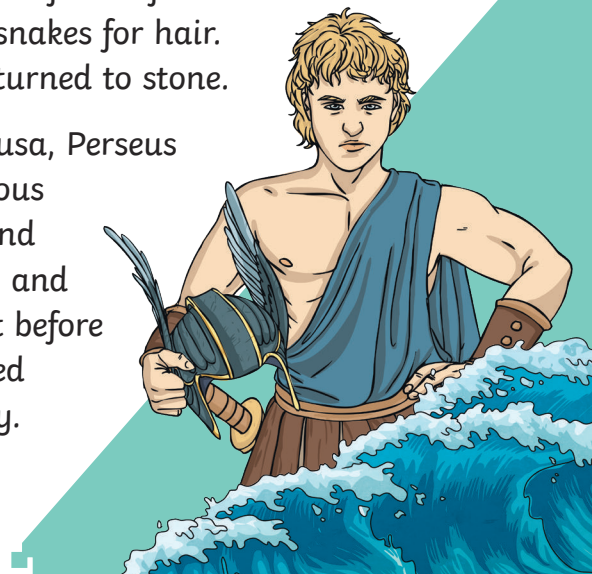
Despite all that he had done, Danae's father began to think the words of the prophecy might come true. So, Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest. The king thought that if they died together, the prophecy couldn't come true. But they didn't die. After several days at sea, they drifted 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 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. Once they heard of Perseus' plight, they willingly agreed to help him. 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.

Quick as a thought, he thrust the terrible head into his magic pouch and leapt again into the air, flying away with the speed of a lightning 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. Which of the following words from the text means 'a prediction of what will happen in the future'? Tick one.

- distant
 plotted
 travel
 prophecy

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they happen in the story.

- Perseus went to the shore to plan his quest.
 Perseus flew bravely onward in search of the dreadful gorgons.
 Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest.
 Perseus left the anguished screams of Medusa's sisters behind.

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

4. Look at the section called **The Dreadful Gorgons**.

Find and copy a phrase that includes a simile.

5. How many sisters did Medusa have?

6. **Very stealthily, he went nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters**

Explain what the word 'stealthily' means.

7. Compare the way the Grey Sisters and the Western Maidens treated Perseus.

8. Which gift from the Western Maidens do you think was the most useful to Perseus? Give reasons for your choice.

9. Discuss how the character of Perseus is similar to another character that you have read about.

Answers

1. Which of the following words from the text means 'a prediction of what will happen in the future'? Tick one.

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 4 Perseus left the anguished screams of Medusa's sisters behind.

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

Hermes' winged sandals flew Perseus to the sisters.

4. Look at the section called **The Dreadful Gorgons**.

Find and copy a phrase that includes a simile.

Accept any of the following: as invisible as the wind; quick as a thought.

5. How many sisters did Medusa have?

Medusa had two sisters.

6. **Very stealthily, he went nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters**

Explain what the word 'stealthily' means.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The word 'stealthily' means to move or act in a careful and cautious way so that you aren't seen or heard.

7. Compare the way the Grey Sisters and the Western Maidens treated Perseus.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The Western Maidens were very helpful and gave Perseus four gifts, whereas the Grey Sisters had to be tricked before they would help him.

8. Which gift from the Western Maidens do you think was the most useful to Perseus? Give reasons for your choice.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the shiny shield was the most useful gift because it allowed Perseus to find and slay Medusa without having to look at her.

9. Discuss how the character of Perseus is similar to another character that you have read about.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Perseus is similar to the character of Superman because he is a heroic character that can fly and slay villains.

Medusa - The Quest of Perseus

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 a 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. In which section of the text does Perseus first meet Andromeda? Tick one.

- Introduction
- The Great Sea Beast
- The Timely Rescue
- The Deadly Quoit

2. Draw **four** lines and match each word from the text to its appropriate synonym.

prophecy

begged

quest

search

haste

prediction

pleaded

speed

3. Look at the section called **The Great Sea Beast**.

Find and copy a phrase which describes how quickly Perseus moved.

4. What did Perseus use to protect Andromeda from the sea monster?

5. Who was Danae's father?

6. What is the purpose of the short paragraph at the end of each section of the story?

7. Look at the paragraph beginning '**Perseus could see the sea monster...**'

Explain what the phrase 'the inevitable happened' means.

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

9. Discuss why the author used the title '**A Timely Rescue**' for the third section of the story.

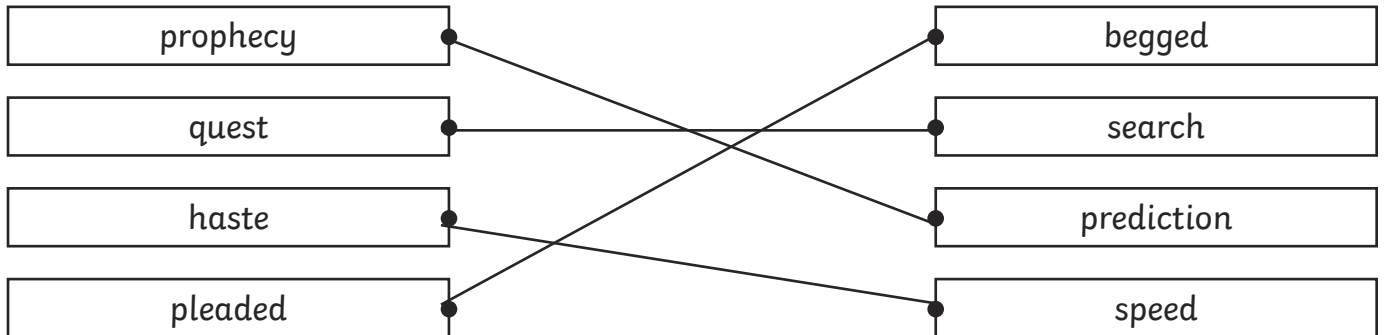
10. Summarise this story in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

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- Introduction
- The Great Sea Beast**
- The Timely Rescue
- The Deadly Quoit

2. Draw **four** lines and match each word from the text to its appropriate synonym.



3. Look at the section called **The Great Sea Beast**.

Find and copy a phrase which describes how quickly Perseus moved.

Quick as a blink

4. What did Perseus use to protect Andromeda from the sea monster?

Perseus used the gorgon's head to protect Andromeda from the sea monster.

5. Who was Danae's father?

Danae's father was the king of Argos.

6. What is the purpose of the short paragraph at the end of each section of the story?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The paragraph before each new section sets the scene for the reader and summarises the story so far.

7. Look at the paragraph beginning '**Perseus could see the sea monster...**'

Explain what the phrase 'the inevitable happened' means.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The phrase 'the inevitable happened' means that the monster was turned to stone.

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

Pupils' own responses, such as: 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.

9. Discuss why the author used the title 'A Timely Rescue' for the third section of the story.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author used this title because Perseus arrived in the town at the perfect time to save his mother from the king, who was trying to kill her.

10. Summarise this story in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Perseus returns to save his mother from the king. On the way, he uses Medusa's head to help him save Andromeda, who he then marries.