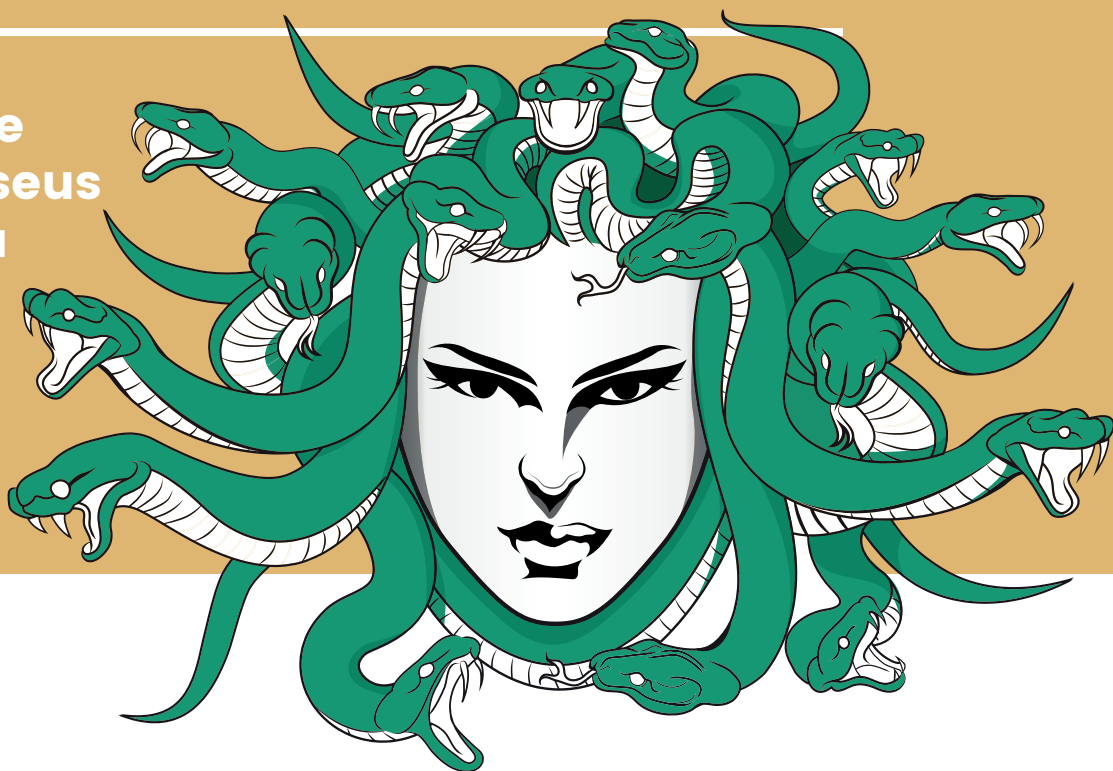


JOURNEY INTO ANCIENT GREECE

Based on the
myth of Perseus
and Medusa



GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The activities in this pack are designed to inspire your child – you don't need to adhere rigidly to them. If you (or they) have alternative ideas then please feel free to pursue them!

We've tried to keep resources to a minimum. Where there are suggestions, please feel free to adapt them to suit what you have available.

Don't feel you have to work on this every day or for long periods of time – dip in and out as suits you and your own child. Simply reading some of the content together will provide plenty of good learning. The main thing is to enjoy this time together.

This particular adventure takes you deep into one Ancient Greek myth. There are many more you can share with your child – here is a **treasure trove of myths** if you want to explore others.

1. A TROUBLED KINGDOM

RESOURCES

- Pen and paper.
- A crown (you can make this out of paper).



BACKGROUND

The myth of Perseus and the Gorgon sister, Medusa, is one of the best-known Greek myths. It dates from the Mycenaean empire (around 1600BC) but was only written down in the 1st century BC by a Greek historian called Apollodorus. In 8AD the Roman poet Ovid put it into *Metamorphosis*, his collection of Greek and Roman mythology. Perseus is thought to be the first myth to follow the 'hero's journey' narrative structure, which endures today in films and books such as *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter* and many disaster movies and thrillers. Even *Kung Fu Panda* follows this structure. It's explained in the appendix at the end of the learning pack. A hero's journey narrative begins with a 'wounded or troubled kingdom'. Our wounded kingdom is a place called Argos in Ancient Greece.



ACTIVITIES

1. Begin by asking your child what they already know about Ancient Greece so you can work out if you're starting from scratch or if they already have a little knowledge. In particular what do they know about the gods? You might want to introduce the word 'polytheistic' here. 'Poly' means many and 'theistic' means gods. The Ancient Greeks were polytheistic – they believed in many gods and their gods could cause a lot of trouble. They didn't think of their gods as kind or benevolent – their gods were more like humans with superpowers. They could be angry, jealous, vengeful and spiteful, as well as kind and helpful. The Ancient Greeks thought of their gods in this way in order to try to understand why bad things happened. In our story sometimes the gods are kind and helpful and sometimes they are not!

2. Start with a game. It's like Rock, Paper, Scissors but instead we're going to use:

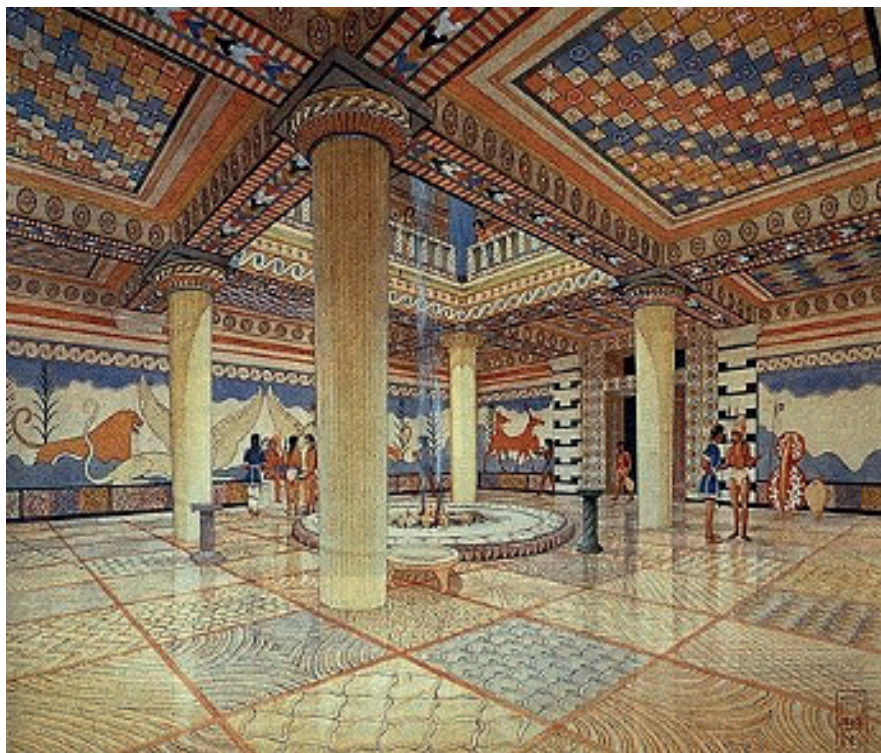
- a. King
- b. Monster
- c. Human

Stand opposite your child and decide together on an action to represent each one of the three above. You don't have to use just your hands; you could decide on an image of a monster with your whole bodies. Let your child make the suggestions, practise them and then explain the rules of the game. King beats human, human beats monster, monster beats king.

Ask your child: if we introduced gods into this game, could any of the other 'characters' beat a god? Would the god be 'omnipotent' or 'all-powerful'?

3. Our story dates from around 1600BC. You could make an ancient timeline with your child with masking tape, string, or you could walk one out across the floor – each step being a century. How many steps from our time would you have to take to go back to 1600BC? What else was happening in the world at that time? (The pyramids at Giza were already 800 years old at that time; Stonehenge in Britain was 1400 years old – how many more steps would you have to take to get there?)

4. If we are in this ancient time, what would we NOT have that we have today? Can you and your child make a list together? If we were in a palace in this ancient time, what might we have? Start building up an image of an ancient palace in your minds and the things it might have. Here are some ideas:



- a. Urns for storing wine
- b. Gold
- c. Baths but no taps with running water
- d. A throne and throne room
- e. Gardens and terraces
- f. Servants
- g. What else?

5. Explain to your child that you are going 'into' a story and that you will speak as a king. They are the king's adviser – their most trusted adviser. But tell them that the king has a very bad temper and the adviser tries hard to keep the king happy. Our king's name is Acrisius and he rules over a place called Argos (yes, the same name as the shop – perhaps where they got it from!). If you want to, you can put on a crown. Your child might want to put on a cape or something to help them be an 'adviser', but you don't need to dress up at all. You can just speak as the characters. Before you begin, show your child the map of Ancient Greece on the next page and point to Argos on that map. Explain that the king has just returned from a long and tiring journey to Delphi (also on the map), high up in the mountains. The journey took him a long time on his horse and he has been away for months. He has come back in a very bad mood. What words might your child use to address a king? Let your child practise the kind of language they might use to address the king and the gestures/body language they might adopt.



6. Leave the room and re-enter. Once in role, be a little fierce – it's okay if your child giggles. This is playful, but you are a despot and take no nonsense. You could have them killed at any moment; act as if that is a given. They'll soon play along.

Narration:

'I need to speak with you on a matter of great urgency. As you know I went to consult the Oracle to see what the future might hold for me and for our kingdom. The reply was very shocking. The Oracle told me that in the future, I will be killed by my own grandchild. I can scarcely believe it, but the Oracle is never wrong. I don't even have a grandchild, and even if I did, I'm sure my daughter, Danae, would never raise a child to harm its own grandfather. Or would she? I cannot let this happen – there must be a way to stop it. No child has been born yet, so there is time to act. But she is thirteen – suitors will be asking to marry her soon. What shall I do? No! Don't tell me now – I'm very tired and must rest. Think about it. I want an answer by dawn – get on with it!'



- 7. Recap:** Out of role – what has the king asked your child to do? What did he say he had consulted? What is this Oracle and where was it? Share this image with your child. What do they think? Who is the woman in the middle? What is she doing?



There is a useful explanation of the Oracle at Delphi in this [video clip](#). Watch until 2:41 as this is the most relevant section (unless your child is interested and wants to learn more in which case let them watch it all). So we have learned that the king went up into the mountains to speak to the woman who is the Oracle at Delphi, and that she told him his grandson would kill him. The king wants to stop the prophecy (you might need to explain this word to your child) from coming true. But how? Can your child make some suggestions and present them to the king?

- 8.** You need to respond to your child as if you are the king. If you don't like an idea be very clear about it. Be as playful as you like – you can offer to throw your adviser into a dungeon, or worse! Here are some suggestions children might make and how to deal with them. You're looking for the 'right' answer – i.e. the one the king in the story chooses, so you need to guide your child in that direction.
- a.** If they say "kill the baby", say: "But I don't want her to have the child in the first place! We need to stop a baby even being born!"

- b. If they say ‘kill your daughter’, say: “But I love her – I don’t want to kill her – I just want to make sure she never meets a man and has a baby!”
- c. If they say “kill all the men”, say: “But I need my soldiers and advisers and there are too many men in the world to kill them all!”
- d. You want to accept a suggestion that the daughter is kept hidden from all men. If this suggestion is not forthcoming, try to gently suggest it. “There must be a way of keeping her away from men! Couldn’t we just hide her?” In the story, he locks her in a tower, like Rapunzel. Try to lead your child in this direction.

Narration:

Acrisius went back to his room and thought about locking his lovely daughter, the Princess Danae in a tower. It saddened him to have to do this. She was a kind and gentle girl and he loved her. But he loved being king more and loved being alive even more than that, so the following morning he asked his trusted adviser to design the tower. It had to be unassailable; it had to be well guarded. It also had to be as pleasant a place for the princess as possible, with something to entertain her and at least one small window so that she could enjoy the view.



9. Design the tower – your child can use pens and paper (or they could even build it with recycling materials, or make it on Minecraft if they have it).
- a. What does it look like? Can they draw a cross section?
 - b. Where will Princess Danae be kept?
 - c. If there is a small window, what can she see from it; what is the view like?
 - d. What material is the tower made of so that people can’t climb up it?
 - e. What creature guards the entrance to the tower? How is it protected? If you want to, your child could choose a creature from **this clip** of Ancient Greek monsters. Which one would be best to guard the tower and frighten people away, while still allowing the king to have access if he needs it?

Guide your child away from choosing Medusa – she comes into the story later (suggest it would be too dangerous for the king to have her around – she turns everything that looks upon her to stone. Better to have something we can chain up and keep controlled).

10. Once they have designed their tower, they should present their ideas to you, the king.

2. THE LONELY PRINCESS

RESOURCES

- Pens and paper.



ACTIVITIES

1. What might a day in the life of the princess look like, now she is locked in a tower? Ask your child to mime some actions to show her daily routine at 8am, mid-day, 3pm, 6pm and 10pm. Discuss what she would and wouldn't be able to do. No TV or gadgets. No books. What would she have? Can they write a diary entry of how she feels and what she experiences? Now read the narrative below.



Narration:

Danae was lonely in the tower and she didn't understand what she had done to anger her father. There was little to entertain her and she was bored, but one day she looked out of the window and saw the most incredible sight. On this unbearably hot day, there were golden raindrops sparkling outside the window, creating hundreds of rainbows. Intrigued, she put out her hand to touch the sparkling drops. Little did she know that the rumours of a beautiful princess locked in a tower had spread all the way to Mount Olympus, where the Greek gods lived, and Zeus himself had come to see if her legendary beauty was true. He had turned himself into this beautiful rainfall, which sparkled in the sunlight. The princess was delighted. In his disguise, Zeus came into her room through the window and allowed her to dance in what she thought was heavenly golden rain. Nine months later, Danae had a baby, Perseus – the son of Zeus.



2. Learning recap: has your child heard of Perseus before? Why is he famous? If they know, then we can tell them that we know Perseus grows up, otherwise there would be no legend of Perseus. We need to keep this baby alive! If they don't know, simply tell them that Perseus is one of the most famous heroes in Ancient Greek myths and so we know for sure that he grows up in the story – we must keep him alive!

Narration:

Acrisius knew nothing of her pregnancy. He no longer visited his daughter: he did not want to have to look at her and be reminded of his actions. But one night, standing beneath the tower, he heard a sound that struck fear into his heart. The cries of a new-born baby. Enraged, he...

3. Freeze frame: what does your child think Acrisius did next? Can they work with you to make a still image or freeze frame (like a still mime) which shows what happened next? One of you can be Acrisius and the other the princess. Once you have done this, discuss their predictions for what happens. If they already know, you can talk about that instead.

Narration:

Enraged, Acrisius decided to get rid of the mother and baby once and for all. There was a storm brewing out at sea. He forced Danae and her baby, Perseus, into a wooden chest and ordered his soldiers to throw it off the edge of a cliff into the sea.

“Their fate is in the hands of the Gods!” he said, when his soldiers looked at him with sadness in their eyes.



4. Discussion – Here are some questions that might help:

- a. Why does the king behave in this way?
- b. What would your child have done?
- c. Can we think of other times in history where people have done the wrong thing because they were following orders?
- d. Is it always right to do as you are told?
- e. Why don't the king's advisers object? Can your child think of a situation where they or their friends might not have intervened, when they saw something unfair happen to someone else?
- f. Why didn't the king just kill the princess and her baby rather than cast them out to sea?
- g. What did he mean by 'fate'?

3. AN UNLIKELY HERO AND HIS CALL TO ADVENTURE

Before beginning the next section, ask your child if there is anyone who they think might be able to help Danae and Perseus. Who is the God of the Sea for example? What is his relationship to Zeus? You might want to watch this introduction to **Clash of the Titans** to help your child with their answers. (You might also want to watch the whole film at some point; it's a 12A so can be watched by younger children if you think they can cope with scary monsters).

Narration:

The storm was fierce, knocking the lock clean off the chest and opening it to the elements. Realising that the lives of Danae and Perseus were in danger, Zeus persuaded his brother, Poseidon, God of the Sea, to calm the storm and to direct the ocean currents to guide the chest safely to the shores of the small island of Seriphos. It was here that mother and child were rescued by a kind fisherman, Dictis, who helped them and shared all he had with them. Perseus grew up learning to fish with Dictis and lived a simple island life. But he was half-god too and he grew strong and handsome – too strong and handsome for some.

Dictis' brother was Polydectes, the king of Seriphos. Now I don't know what it is about Ancient Greek kings, but Polydectes was not a kind man either. He wanted to possess the beautiful Danae, but Perseus was very protective of his mother and didn't trust the king. Polydectes started to feel jealous of the close relationship the boy had with his mother.

"If only I could get Perseus out of the way," he thought, "then his mother would be mine!" He hatched a cunning plan. He organised a party and sent out invitations, but told Perseus to come later than everyone else. He also did another sly thing. On the invitations he told guests to bring a gift, but he left that instruction off the one he sent to Perseus.



ACTIVITIES

1. Ask your child to write and design the invitations. On one side the invitation sent to the other guests and on the other side, the one sent to Perseus. How are invitations laid out and worded?

2. Re-enactment: give your child the task of being Perseus. Something suggesting a costume will help: a cloth like a towel or sheet will do as a toga/robe. Tell your child that you are going to speak as Polydectes to try and trick him. Say you will ask him for a gift, but that he has none because it didn't say so on the invitation. Tell your child that when he comes to the party, it is clear that everyone else has brought a gift, which leaves him feeling embarrassed and guilty. Tell him to apologise and to offer to make it up to the king.

In your role as Polydectes, welcome Perseus and ask him why he is late. If your child tries to explain that he came at the time he was told, interrupt him and say, "No matter, no matter", and make great pretence of smiling at your guests and rolling your eyes. Then ask Perseus for a gift. When he apologises and offers to make it up to you, say: "Ah, well actually there is something you could do for me – something I imagine a strong and capable young man such as yourself would have no problem doing..." Wait for Perseus to agree... and then add: "Bring me the head of the gorgon sister, Medusa."



3. Out of role, discuss what has happened. Who is Medusa? Do they think this will be an easy task? How do they think Perseus is feeling now? Look at these images of Medusa – why is she so feared? Explain that all these pictures show how other people have imagined her to be, and that we're going to build up our own imaginative picture soon.



4. Explain to your child that in the tradition of Greek storytelling, they are going to create a description of Medusa to frighten Perseus. If you are working with more than one child, divide the parts below up and get them to write half each. They should finish the sentences with a description that they think will horrify or scare Perseus.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| a. Her eyes are | i. Her toes are |
| b. Her hair is | j. Her teeth are |
| c. Her voice is | k. She eats |
| d. Her skin is | l. She says |
| e. Her lips are | m. She walks like |
| f. Her fingers are | n. She drinks |
| g. Her arms are | o. She smells like |
| h. Her legs are | |

5. Explain that Perseus is sitting in the Agora – the market place. News of the task he has been set has spread far and wide and people are gossiping all around him. Tell your child that you will sit as Perseus, worrying about the promise he has made. Ask your child to stand behind you and read out their 'poem' to you. If you have more than one child, you have a ready made Greek Chorus!

How do they think Perseus is feeling now?

4. LEAVING HOME – WITH A LITTLE HELP

RESOURCES

- Pen and paper.
- Your child might want to make their own artefacts to play with:
 - A shiny shield (cover a round object with tin foil).
 - A sword (a stick will do).
 - Winged sandals (make some 'wings' out of paper and sellotape them to their shoes).
 - An eyeball (you can paint an eye on any ball or small, round object – even a grape or hard boiled egg).
 - An invisibility helmet (a hat will do).
 - A bag.



Narration:

Perseus realised he had got himself into a situation he didn't feel capable of carrying out. He was no hero – he was a fisherman who had only even known island life! Such an unlikely hero! He started to despair, but help was at hand.

Zeus sent Athena and Hermes to Perseus to offer him help and to give him special gifts with powers to assist him. Perseus had several problems to solve.

1. He didn't know where Medusa lived. The only people who knew were the Graeae – hideous blind witches who shared one eye between them and who were related to the Gorgons. And they were not likely to tell him.
2. Even if they did, the Graeae lived hundreds of miles away across the ocean on the north coast of what is now known as Africa. It would take ages for Perseus to get there.
3. If he found Medusa, how could he cut off her head without her turning him to stone? He didn't even have a decent sword!
4. Even if he cut off her head, how could he escape from her sisters and get home safely?
5. Medusa's head is so terrible, that even in death it would turn people to stone – how will he carry it and avoid accidentally killing people (or himself) on the way?

Talk with your child about what might be helpful to Perseus and see if their ideas are the same as the gifts that are given to Perseus.

Narration:

Athena and Hermes gave Perseus gifts and told him he must be both clever and brave to know how and when to use them. Hermes gave Perseus a pair of winged sandals, which could help him fly and travel huge distances quickly. He also gave him a hat which would make him invisible and a bag of strong, impenetrable material. Athena gave Perseus a wonderful sword and a shiny shield. Perseus was very grateful. He put on his winged sandals and set off to meet the Graeae sisters.



ACTIVITIES

1. Gather the 'gifts' that Perseus has been given. Your child can make them and use what they have available: a hat, a shiny shield and sword, flip flops or shoes with wings and a bag. The can also have a go at 'making' an eyeball and mask for Medusa as these will be used later. Medusa's head could be a swimming cap or beanie hat with coiled pieces of paper sellotaped onto it, or your child might have some more inventive ideas. If they would like to draw her, there's an easy to follow [**tutorial online here**](#).

If your child really wants to go to town on making, you could let them enter it through the eyes of prop makers for film and television. They have to research what the prop might look like, think of materials which could make it more authentic, source those materials and make a 'prototype' of the prop. A prototype is a model, so they don't need to have the 'right' materials to hand, they can use alternatives.

5. A PROBLEM

RESOURCES

- Any props your child made earlier.
- Pens and paper.

Narration:

Perseus knew before he entered the dark, dank, depressing cave – the home of the Graeae – that he would have to be clever. It would be no use just asking the sisters; they never told. It was no use threatening them; he was outnumbered and they were immortal. He decided to flatter them. He entered the space with the words:



Narration (continued):

“Most beautiful sisters, I come filled with desire to marry and seek the love of she who would have me.”

With feverish interest the sisters turned to see, but only one had the eye. What she saw pleased her very much – what a handsome chap young Perseus was! She was so pleased, she didn’t want her sisters to see him and held on to the eye for herself. The other two sisters thought Perseus had a very handsome-sounding voice and were keen to see if he looked as good as he sounded, and so began to argue about the eye.

“Please don’t argue, oh most gorgeous of creatures,” he said. “I will happily leave now without a bride, if my presence causes so much unhappiness.”

The prospect of Perseus leaving before they’d had a chance to even see him made the sisters even more cross and they fought harder. In the confusion, Perseus stepped forward and grabbed the eye for himself. The sisters were completely blinded.

At this point you could give your child the ‘eye’ that they made and they can stand as if they are Perseus as they listen to the story.

He squeezed the eye. The sisters screamed in pain and confusion. He put the eye in his pocket.

“Return the eye!” yelled the sisters. “We are in perpetual darkness without it.”

“I will return it,” said Perseus, “on one condition!”

“Name it. Name it!” cried the witches.

“That you tell me where to find Medusa.”

The witches were shocked. They whispered together. They had sworn never to reveal the secret. But then again, if they told him, he would surely be turned to stone. And wouldn’t that serve him right. Ha! And so in a spirit of revenge, the Graeae revealed the whereabouts of the Gorgon Medusa – many miles away.

Perseus returned the eye, and using his winged sandals, set off for the lair of the Gorgons.



ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the image of the sisters, taken from the film **Clash of the Titans**. Perseus sounded brave as he spoke to them, but was he really not scared? What might their cave have been like? Can your child describe it (either by telling you, drawing it or writing about it).



2. What sounds might we hear in that cave when the sisters are not talking? Are there other creatures living there? What do the sisters sound like when they move? Is there water in the cave, dripping? Could your child make some of the sounds we might hear in the cave?
3. Ask your child to imagine what this part of the story might look like to say, a bat, or other creature, who is silently watching and observing. You might interview them to see if they can recount what happened and if they can give the story from a different point of view. How might a bat who has watched these horrible sisters arguing over the years have felt about seeing them outwitted by Perseus? How might they describe Perseus?

6. MEETING THE MONSTER

RESOURCES

- Pen and paper.
- Your child might like to use the props they have to re-enact some of this part of the story.



ACTIVITIES

1. Perseus may have outwitted the Graeae sisters, but his journey is far from over. Legend has it that the Gorgon sisters were hidden in a cave in the mountains of Ethiopia. Look at the two maps below. Show your child where the north coast of Africa is in relation to Greece. Then show them where Ethiopia is. Then, on the map of Ethiopia, get your child to decide where the cave is. Remember it's in the mountains, so how do we identify mountains on this map. Are there other ways of representing mountains on maps?



When your child has identified where this part of the story is taking place, begin the narration again.



Narration:

Perseus crept into the cave, hiding behind statues and working out where he needed to go and how far. He was shocked at the sight of so many young men who had been turned to stone. It was very creepy. In fact, as he inched his way into the cave, it felt like they were all watching him and in the corner of his eye, he thought they were moving. Every time this happened, he would turn quickly to face the statue with his sword at the ready, but the statue would be still and Perseus told himself it was all in his imagination. It wasn't just the statues that made the cave scary. There were so many noises around him. Drips of water falling into pools, the flapping wings of bats in the darkness, strange sighing noises and, in the distance, the snoring of the hideous Gorgon sisters.

2. Stop the narrative at this point and play the game 'Grandmother's Footsteps' with your child. If you have more than one child, even better. If you don't know it, the game involves you standing on one side of the room and your child on the other. You turn your back to them and they have to creep forward to try to get to you before you see them. Every time you turn around, they must freeze like a statue and if they move you can send them to the back of the room to start again.
3. Ask your child to freeze like a statue again – one that looks like it has been petrified, or turned to stone, by a terrible monster. Tap it on the shoulder and explain that it can come to life for one minute to tell the story of what happened to it. After that it must freeze again.

Narration:

Perseus came closer and closer to Medusa until he was hiding behind a statue just feet away. He thought very carefully. Using his shield as a mirror, he looked at the Gorgon carefully. In her sleep she moved so that her head was thrown back and her throat exposed. It was a perfect moment. Perseus thought again. He knew that if he looked her in the face as he brought the sword down, she might open her eyes and he would be instantly frozen. He looked at his gifts and realised he was holding the answer in his hand – he would continue to use the shield as a mirror and then he wouldn't have to look at her at all. But how would he flee – her sisters would wake straight away and chase him?

6. MEETING THE MONSTER continued

Ask your child which of the gifts might be helpful to avoid being seen by the sisters?



Narration:

Of course! The invisibility helmet! He took it out of the bag. The bag! At first he thought it was just to hold his gifts, but a bag from the gods would be strong enough to contain the head of Medusa. He had all he needed.

He crept to where she lay sleeping, taking care only to look at her through the shield. Once in position, he quickly raised his sword and brought it down onto her throat. Time seemed to freeze as the sword touched her throat. She opened her eyes and screamed, but then the sword silenced her for ever. Quickly, Perseus placed her head in the bag and the cap on his head. Medusa's scream echoed around the cave and it was seconds before it was joined by the screams of her sisters, who came running to see what was wrong. Perseus threw some stones towards the entrance of the cave, making it sound like someone was fleeing, and then, invisible, he stood very still and waited. The sisters, hearing the noise, ran in pursuit of the murderer and, thinking he was outside, flew off to find him. Perseus waited until they were gone and then crept out of the cave, and using his winged sandals, set off in the opposite direction.

4. Ask your child to use a gesture to show what they think Perseus is feeling right now. What words could describe this feeling? Can they speak as Perseus and describe his thoughts?
5. Discussion – What is a monster? Ask your child to come up with a definition and three examples. Ask them if they think Medusa fits their definition of a monster.

Narration:

There once lived, in the city of Athens, a beautiful young woman called Medusa. Medusa was so beautiful that she was courted by every handsome and eligible man in the city. News of her beauty spread far and wide and reached the ears of the God of the Sea, Poseidon himself. Making himself man, Poseidon travelled to Athens to see for himself. Once he spied Medusa,

Narration (continued):

he knew that the rumours were true – she really was the most beautiful creature he had seen. Not only was her face lovely, her figure shapely, her voice sweet, but her hair was a wonder. Falling to her knees in gorgeous curls and waves like the ocean itself, her hair alone was enough to make him fall in love.

Medusa was fair but foolish. She had been praised and spoiled all her life and she was vain. Her mother and two sisters would spend half their lives dressing her, fawning over her and brushing her hair. Her father gave her anything she wanted. She would spend much of her day looking in the mirror and enjoyed rejecting the declarations of love from the poor men who thought they might win her heart. But even she was flattered that a god had taken to her, and agreed to meet with Poseidon in the Temple of Athena.

Poseidon was an impatient god, and he didn't like to have to wait around. He tried to persuade Medusa to kiss him then and there. But Medusa knew that it would anger the goddess Athena to do such things in her temple, so she refused. Poseidon was a god and he didn't like to be told he couldn't do whatever he liked. He kissed Medusa anyway and then walked away and left her. Athena, looking down at her temple, was outraged. She appeared to Medusa in a fury.

"How dare you," she cried. "This is a temple – a place of worship, how dare you behave like that in this place. Shame on you!"

Medusa was too frightened and shocked to speak.

"You silly, vain girl!" Athena cried. "You think a God would love you? You think he would protect you? You love yourself far too much. I will teach you a lesson! That hair you are so proud of? See if you like it now! And your face? Ha! From this day forward everyone who looks upon you will be turned to stone. You will be an object of horror – a monster – and all will despise you. The only men to seek you out will do so to kill you. Your pride has cursed you. Now go!"

Athena disappeared, leaving Medusa alone. Shaking with terror and shame, she peered at her reflection in a pool of water. She froze with horror. Now she was truly hideous and in place of her beautiful curls, her head was a mass of serpents. She fell to the ground weeping and was still there when her mother and sisters came to find her. Seeing the creature on the floor, her mother cried out and was instantly turned to stone. Medusa ran and hid so her

Narration (continued):

sisters could not see her and begged them to go. But her sisters loved Medusa. They prayed to Athena to change them too, so that they could take care of her, and she granted their wish. The three sisters became Gorgons, and keen to ensure that they caused no harm to innocents, they fled far, far away to a secret location, to hide from the world.

For many years, as Athena predicted, man sought out Medusa, not to woo her, but to kill her. Each time, as she looked to try to warn them away, she turned them to stone. And there she stayed until one day a boy called Perseus entered the cave...

6. Talk about the story with your child. Has it changed their perception of Medusa? Was Medusa really a monster? If Perseus knew her story would he feel so happy about what he had done? Can we think of other stories/films where a 'monster' has turned out to be misunderstood?
7. Do the gods behave in Greek mythology in the way we would expect a god to behave? How has our view of divine behaviour and intervention changed through time? How does a Christian, Jewish or Muslim god compare to these early gods (and how do they compare to Hindu gods)?

7. A DIVERSION

Narration:

Perseus set off for home on his magic winged sandals with Medusa's head in his bag. As he flew, drops of her blood fell onto the sands in Libya and an army of serpents was born – an army that a future ancient hero would have to face. As he was about to sail across the sea towards the island of Crete, another drop of blood dropped into the water and a magnificent



Narration (continued):

winged horse flew out. Pegasus. The horse was his – perhaps a thank you from Medusa for releasing her from her lifetime of suffering. But Perseus knew she was still dangerous, even in death.

As he passed over the Libyan coast, Perseus noticed a beautiful young woman, Andromeda, tied to the rocks of a cliff. She was trembling and nearby people were weeping. Even in her terror he was drawn to her beauty. Her black hair, her smooth, dark skin, her eyes as brown and deep and reassuring as the earth itself. He fell instantly in love.

As he drew closer, he wondered why the people didn't release her from her chains. Then he heard a terrible noise coming from the sea behind him. He swung around to see the waters parting and a monstrous beast arising from the depths. The Kraken – a monster of the sea. Perseus could not allow this young woman to be sacrificed in this way. Leaping off Pegasus onto the rocks in front of Andromeda, he faced the monster head on and, pulling Medusa's head from the bag, turned the Kraken to stone. No creature, whatever their size, could escape the power of Medusa's deadly glare. Taking Andromeda onto the winged horse, he took her back to her parents and was greeted as a hero by the local people.

Andromeda fell as deeply in love with Perseus as he had with her. When finally he returned to Seriphos having completed his task, he did so with a lovely new wife.





ACTIVITIES

1. In most kinds of stories, this would be the 'happy ever after ending' we have come to expect. But this is not just any story – it is a Greek myth and there are loose ends to tie up.

Our story has taken us from Greece to Ethiopia to Libya and now back to Greece. What does that tell us about the ancient world and how people travelled? Your child might be interested to know that there was a thriving trade culture between the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians during the time we would call The Bronze Age. But between the Bronze Age and the 'Classical Age' of Ancient Athens, almost 1000 years later, there was a period of history that we don't really know much about. We can find out a little more [here](#).

But what happened to Perseus? Read on.

Narration:

On his return to Seriphos, Perseus was shocked to find that Polydectes had captured his mother and forced her to marry him. When he entered the palace, he saw her veiled in the corner, weeping, and was furious with the old king. Now he understood why this mission had been set for him. How foolish he was to have been so easily tricked!

Polydectes was just as shocked to see Perseus. He had not expected the boy to return, and the creature who strode back into his palace was no longer a boy. He was a man. An angry man. Playing for time, Polydectes praised Perseus, but secretly he signalled for his soldiers to draw their swords and prepare to attack the young man. Perseus was no longer easily tricked though. He called to his mother to close her eyes and then pulled the head of Medusa out of the bag.

"Here you are. Your gift. Sire!"

The king's disbelief turned to horror as he realised that the Gorgon had retained her power in death. He slowly turned to stone along with all of his soldiers who also looked on. His task completed, Perseus realised that he must release Medusa again – he could not risk the safety of others by carrying her head and it seemed unfair to her and her sisters to do so. One quiet morning, as dawn was breaking over the sea and the world was as beautiful as Medusa had once been, he flew with Pegasus to the deepest

Narration (continued):

part of the ocean and let her head drop and sink down to the ocean floor. Here it lay as a reminder to Poseidon of the great harm he had once so carelessly inflicted.

News of Perseus' achievements spread all across the ancient world and it wasn't long before he was invited to take part in the great games of ancient times. News of his prowess also reached the ears of his old grandfather, King Acrisius who remembered all too well the prophesy he had been told all those years ago. Fearing his grandson would seek revenge for the way he and his mother had been treated, the king slunk away from Argos, dressed as a beggar and hid himself in the crowd at one of the games Perseus was to take part in. He was curious to see what this remarkable man was like, but also too afraid to reveal who he was.

And so, as Perseus threw his discus that day and as the crowd cheered at his strength, a wind blew in from the direction of Mount Olympus. A strong and strange wind. Perseus was surprised when it blew his discus off-course, and horrified when it veered towards the crowd. Little did he know that the old beggar man it hit and killed was his own grandfather – King Acrisius of Argos. The prophesy was fulfilled at last.



2. Discussion – The Ancient Greeks believed in fate, destiny and the idea that the future was pre-ordained. This is why in many of the stories, when men try to change the outcomes of prophesies, the same end ensues anyway. Ask your child these questions (you don't have to discuss them all at once – dip in and out of them as topics of conversation).
 - a. Did the two ancient kings get what they deserved?
 - b. Do they think that life is destined – that things are 'meant to be', or do they think that human beings have free will to make their own choices?
 - c. Do the gods seem fair or just? What would a better god be like, do they think? (They could create a job advert for a god, or if your family is religious, perhaps you could consider how those ancient ideas of a god are different to the God you believe in).

- d. How do women seem to be treated in these myths? Think of Medusa, Danae and Andromeda. What does it suggest about the way women were viewed in Ancient Greek times. Were those women heroes too? Medusa hid herself to protect others. Danae endured captivity and near death but survived and raised a strong and capable child. Andromeda was prepared to face certain death with the Kraken. Are there other ways of being heroic than by killing or being physically strong?
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MORE ACTIVITIES

1. Your child might enjoy reading Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson stories if they enjoyed the myth of Perseus.
2. Read some more myths with your children and compare them – Theseus and the Minotaur is a great one to look at. It comes from the Minoan empire based in Crete and dates back to around 3000BC.
3. Watch **Clash of the Titans** (if you think your child can cope with a 12A certificate).
4. You can learn more about later periods in Ancient Greece **here** – there are lots of activities that your child could do independently. Most of them explore the period of the Athenian empire – around 800 years after the Mycenaean one.
5. Perseus' story is a great example of the hero's journey:
 1. A wounded kingdom
 2. An unlikely hero
 3. A call to adventure
 4. Help from an unlikely source
 5. Leaving home – entering the unknown
 6. A problem – near failure
 7. Overcoming the problem
 8. Facing a monster and killing it
 9. Fleeing with something in pursuit
 10. A problem on the way home – sometimes a big loss
 11. Returning home (but things are not the same)
 12. A kingdom restored



How is this structure applicable to Perseus?

1. Acrisius is wounded by the prophesy and is unwilling to accept it. He is not acting as we would expect a good king to act and is therefore wounding his own kingdom's reputation.
2. Perseus is an unlikely hero (so is Harry Potter). He is raised without a father, dependent on charity.
3. Perseus is reluctantly called to adventure by Polydectes – he doesn't really want to go.
4. He gets help from an unlikely source – the gods.
5. He leaves home but his path is not clear – his quest is not an easy one.
6. His first hurdle is to find Medusa – he has to outwit the Graeae to do so.
7. He finds a solution to this problem and it gives him confidence.
8. He faces (nearly) and kills Medusa.
9. He flees knowing her sisters will want revenge on him.
10. He faces another battle with the Kraken to get the 'real' prize – love.
11. His return home is not what he expected. He is also horrified to learn that he has inadvertently killed his grandfather, a man he forgave long ago. What has he become? He is uncertain.
12. Perseus decides that home lies away from Seriphus. He becomes king elsewhere, and eventually founds Mycenae, one of the greatest cities in the ancient world. He is said to be an ancestor of Hercules.

From here you can get your child to create their own myth. You can use the hero's journey to help them to structure this.

Some useful tasks are to:

- Take a piece of paper – A3 if you have it, but A4 will do. Fold it in landscape so it look like this:
- Get your child to draw a picture of a moment in their story in each box – a storyboard – and caption it with the steps of the hero's journey. On the back they can then write a brief sentence or description.
- If they'd like to they could write this up into a full story to create their very own heroic myth!
