

Readers Theater Play

GREEK MYTH
A supernatural story
from ancient Greece

THE HUNT FOR MEDUSA

A YOUNG WARRIOR'S DARING QUEST TO DEFEAT



A DEADLY MONSTER OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

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CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play.

***GREEK CHORUS 1, 2, & 3**
(GC1, GC2, GC3)

ALL GREEK CHORUS: GC1, GC2, and GC3 in unison

***PERSEUS (PER-see-us):**
a young hero

KING OF SERIPHOS (SEH-rih-foss)

DANAE (duh-NIGH): mother of Perseus

ADVISERS 1 & 2

ATHENA (uh-THEE-nuh): the goddess of wisdom

HERMES (HER-meez): the messenger of the gods

GRAY SISTERS 1, 2, & 3: sisters who were born as old women with gray hair

NYMPHS 1 & 2: spirits who live in the sea

GORGONS 1 & 2: cruel monsters

** Starred characters are major roles.*



AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:
THEME

A story's theme is its main message or moral. A major theme of this play is that goodness is rewarded and evil is punished. Look for examples of this theme as you read our exciting story.

SCENE 1

ALL GREEK CHORUS: Our story takes place long, long ago in the land of ancient Greece.

GC1: An honorable woman named Danae . . .

PERSEUS: . . . and her brave son, Perseus . . .

GC2: . . . live a modest life on the island of Seriphos.

GC3: But all is not well. The king

has become very fond of Danae. But Danae is not fond of the king.

KING: Danae, I wish to marry you.

DANAE: No thank you, my king.

KING: I could have any woman I desire, and I choose you.

DANAE: I do not wish to be married.

KING: Do you know what happens to those who refuse the king?

GC1: He begins to draw his sword.



GC2: Perseus rushes in.

PERSEUS (*forcefully*): My mother has the right to say no to you. Come, Mother, let us depart. It seems the king has become **overzealous** in his affections for you.

GC3: Perseus and Danae leave.

KING (*to himself*): I must find a way to get rid of that boy Perseus. He will always protect his mother. If he were gone, I feel sure I could convince her to be my wife. Or else force her.

GC1: The king devises an evil plan.

KING (*to his advisers*): Tell me, what is the most feared creature in the land?

ADVISER 1: There are many fearsome monsters. One of the most deadly is the gorgon Medusa.

ADVISER 2: She is an evil woman with a hideous face. Instead of hair, she has horrible live serpents that **writhe** on her head.

ADVISER 1: Instead of hands, she has sharp brass claws. Anyone who looks at her turns to stone.

ADVISER 2: She lives with her two gorgon sisters. They are immortal, and so they cannot be killed. Medusa, however, is mortal.

KING: Perfect. I will send Perseus on an impossible mission. He will never return alive!

GC2: The king announces that he plans to marry a different woman. A party is held for him.

KING: Perseus, all the men in my kingdom brought me a gift, except you. Are you so poor and lazy that you have nothing to offer the king?

PERSEUS (*furious*): I may be poor, but I am not lazy. I will bring you

whatever gift you desire!

KING: Very well. I want you to bring me the head of the gorgon Medusa.

GC3: The crowd gasps.

PERSEUS: I'll do it.

SCENE 2

GC1: Medusa's location is a mystery. Perseus travels over land and sea trying to find her.

GC2: Even with his immense strength and courage, Perseus cannot imagine how he will kill Medusa without turning to stone.

GC3: One night, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, appears before him. With her is Hermes, the messenger of the gods.

ATHENA: Perseus, we are here to help you with your task.

PERSEUS: O powerful Athena, I am so grateful to you. I do not know how I will cut off Medusa's head if I cannot look at her.

ATHENA: Take this shining metal shield. Use it as a mirror. Do not cast your eyes directly upon Medusa, but look at her reflection in the shield. Then you will be safe.

HERMES: Take this magic **sickle**. Its diamond blade can cut off her head with one stroke.

PERSEUS: Thank you. But where can I find Medusa?

ATHENA: Only the Gray Sisters can tell you. They live on a cliff by the edge of the sea.

SCENE 3

GC1: Athena and Hermes show Perseus the way to the Gray Sisters.

ATHENA: They live on the other side of this mountain. You must go

"I will send Perseus on an impossible mission. He will never return alive!"
—King of Seriphos

alone and go quietly.

GC2: Perseus climbs into the Gray Sisters' **lair**. He sees that they are old and **grotesque**.

GC3: They share one eye, which they pass back and forth.

GC1: Perseus hides behind a rock, watching them.

GRAY SISTER 1: I heard something. Did either of you?

GRAY SISTER 2: Don't be ridiculous. It's only the wind.

GRAY SISTER 1: Give me the eye. I want to look around.

GRAY SISTER 3: You just had it.

GRAY SISTER 1: I want it again!

GRAY SISTER 2: Selfish, selfish.

GRAY SISTER 3: Fine, here it is.

GC2: As she removes the eye to hand it to her sister, Perseus leaps in and snatches it.

GRAY SISTER 1: Well, where is it?

GRAY SISTER 3: I just gave it to you!

GRAY SISTER 1: You lie! My hand is empty.

GRAY SISTER 2: Did you drop it, you clumsy **crone**?

GRAY SISTER 3: No, I didn't!

GRAY SISTER 2: Then who has it?

PERSEUS: I have it!

ALL GRAY SISTERS: Give it back!

PERSEUS: Answer one question.

Where can I find the gorgon Medusa?

GRAY SISTER 1: We can't reveal that to you. The gorgons are our sisters!

GRAY SISTER 2: We'll never tell!

GRAY SISTER 3: Never ever!

PERSEUS: If you don't tell me, I will throw your eye into the sea.

ALL GRAY SISTERS: Noooooooo!

GRAY SISTER 1: We'll tell, we'll tell!

GRAY SISTER 2: You must go to the nymphs of the north. Only they can help you.

PERSEUS: Tell me their location, and I will return

your eye to you.

GC3: The Gray Sisters **grudgingly** tell Perseus where to find the nymphs. He returns their eye.

SCENE 4

GC1: Perseus finds the beautiful nymphs of the north.

NYMPHS 1 & 2: The winds told us you were coming.

PERSEUS: O lovely nymphs, I seek the gorgon Medusa so that I may cut off her head.

NYMPH 1: She is a **diabolical** creature. We would be honored to help you.

NYMPH 2: You will need three things. First, these winged sandals.

Put them on and you will be able to soar through the air to the gorgons' cave at the end of the world.

NYMPH 1: Here is a cloth sack. Even after Medusa's head is cut off, one glance can still turn you to stone. You must put her head in this sack immediately.

NYMPH 2: The last thing you need is the Cap of Darkness.

GC2: She hands Perseus a golden helmet.

NYMPH 1: When you put it on, it covers you in darkness, making you invisible.

NYMPH 2: Medusa's wretched sisters will not be able to find you as you escape.

NYMPHS 1 & 2: Now go. Be swift and be brave.

PERSEUS: Thank you, o nymphs!

GC3: Through the sky Perseus sails on his winged sandals, farther and farther, until he reaches Medusa's cave at the end of the world.

GC1: Everywhere he looks, he sees statues . . .

GC2: . . . statues that used to be humans and animals, turned to stone when they looked at Medusa.

GC3: Perseus creeps into the cave, walking backward and using Athena's shield as a mirror to see behind him.

GC1: Medusa and her sisters are sleeping.

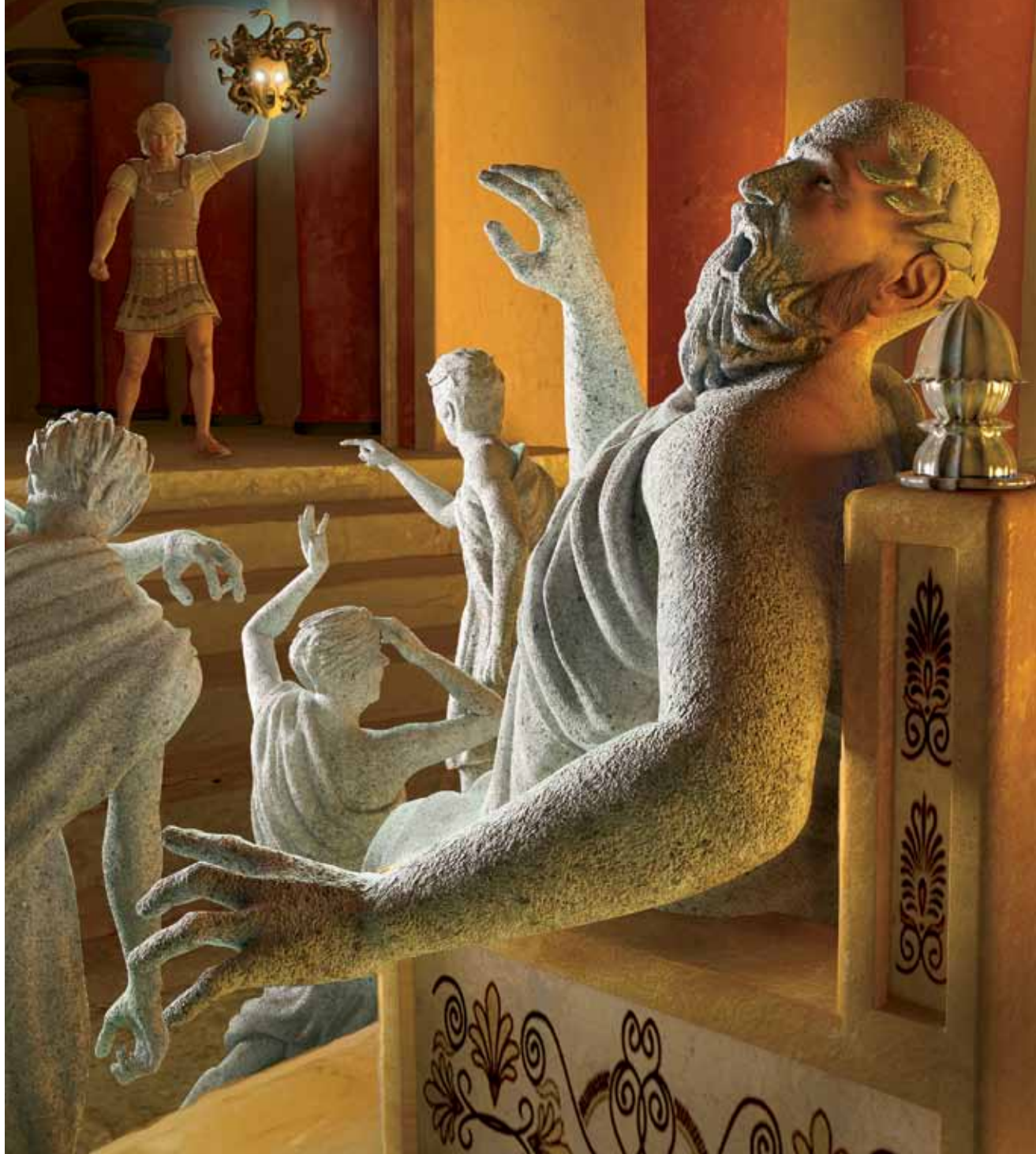
GC2: As Perseus gets closer, the snakes in Medusa's hair begin hissing and rearing their heads.

GC3: Medusa starts to awaken.

In the reflection, Perseus sees her lift her head. Her eyes fly open and she shrieks



**“I have returned with a gift
for you, o King.” —Perseus**



with rage when she sees him.

GC1: Perseus must act quickly, or he is doomed. He raises the magic sickle and strikes behind himself, giving one mighty swing.

GC2: Medusa's wretched scream ends abruptly as her head rolls away from her body.

ALL GREEK CHORUS: The deed is done.

GC3: Perseus grabs Medusa's head and shoves it into the sack without looking at it.

GC1: Just then, Medusa's sisters wake up and see her headless body.

GORGON 1: Aaaaaah! Our sister!

GORGON 2: Who has done this ghastly thing?

GC2: Perseus flees the cave. The gorgon sisters fly after him.

GORGON 1: You cannot get away from us!

GORGON 2: We will **avenge** the death of our sister Medusa!

GC3: Perseus throws the Cap of Darkness onto his head and becomes invisible. He flies off into the night.

SCENE 5

GC1: Perseus returns to Seriphos. He is horrified to discover the king lied about marrying someone else.

SCOPE VIDEO

MEDUSA: "MY SIDE OF THE STORY"

Sure, Medusa is a murderous, snake-headed monster, but she wasn't always so terrible. Once she was the most beautiful woman in Athens. So what happened? Go online and watch our video to learn the tragic truth about this unlucky lady.



GC2: The king has made Danae a slave because she still refuses to become his wife.

GC3: Perseus marches into the palace. Danae is on her knees, scrubbing the floors. The king is amazed to see Perseus alive.

KING: You? Here? How is that possible?

PERSEUS: I have returned with a gift for you, o King.

GC1: Perseus holds out the sack in front of him.

KING: Do you expect me to believe that you actually have the head of the gorgon Medusa in that bag?

GC2: The king and his advisers laugh.

PERSEUS: I do. Would you care to see it?

KING (not believing him): Of course we would.

PERSEUS: Mother, shield your eyes!

GC3: Perseus and Danae close their eyes as Perseus lifts Medusa's head out of the sack.

GC1: The king's eyes widen in shock.

GC2: He and his advisers are immediately turned to stone . . .

ALL GREEK CHORUS: . . . their faces forever suspended in an expression of awe and horror.

GC3: Perseus puts the severed head into the bag and runs to his mother.

DANA: My **valiant** son!

ALL GREEK CHORUS: Throughout Greece, word quickly spreads of Perseus's daring feat. Hereafter, he is regarded as a true hero. ●

CONTEST

Write About Theme A main theme of this play is that goodness is rewarded and evil is punished. Choose one good and one evil character. What makes them good or evil? How are they rewarded or punished? Use your answers to write a paragraph about the theme of the play. Send it to **MEDUSA CONTEST**. Five winners will each get *Quicksilver* by Stephanie Spinner. See page 2 for details.



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