

Chapter Twelve

King Dictys



What can you tell by reading the story?

1. How did Dictys know that Perseus had met Athena on the road to the temple?
2. What joking promise did Hermes make Perseus keep?
3. What will Athena do with the head of the Medusa?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. How does Dictys feel about the death of Polydectes?
2. What reward did Perseus ask of Athena? Did she promise it to him?
3. How does Dana feel about Perseus wanting to go back to Argos?

Let's talk about it: What does Perseus mean when he says he doesn't want to be a hero anymore? What does Dictys mean when he says that Perseus is a hero? What does it take to be a hero? Who are the heroes in this legend so far?

Response Key

What can you tell by reading the story?

1. He no longer had the winged sandals, the shield, the sword or the bag with the head of the Medusa in it.
2. He had promised to trade back their swords. Perseus now has only the sword he was given for his military training instead of the curved sword that could cut through anything.
3. She's going to put it on the front of her shield for when she goes into battle. Dictys says he's glad Athena likes them. Who could possibly stand up to Athena in battle if she has the head of the Medusa on her shield?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. He's sad, because Polydectes was his brother. But he understands what happened and he's prepared to become king of Seriphos. Remember, in the second chapter, Dictys told Dana he thought it was a good thing to help people. Now he repeats that. What sort of king do you think Dictys will make? Have students compare his motivation for being king with the motivation someone like Polydectes might have had.
2. He asked to live and to be happy. He no longer wants to be a hero, he insists. But Athena did not make any promise at all. She just took the head of the Medusa from him. What does that mean? Well, this is only Chapter Twelve in a 14-chapter serial. Students have probably figured out that, when it's only 40 minutes into an hour-long TV show and the police have arrested the person they think committed the crime, there's probably something else coming. In the same way, you can tell by the number of pages left in a book whether you've arrived at the ending yet!
3. She doesn't tell him not to. She says he's an adult now and has to make his own decisions. And she tries to prepare him for the fact that, however positive and friendly Perseus may feel towards his grandfather, Acrisius may not want to see him, and may in fact be terrified of the idea of Perseus showing up. With sensitivity, you may be able to channel this discussion into some interesting places for some of your children who may also have relatives that they don't see and about whom they are curious.

Teachable moment: There are many models for the good ruler Dictys appears determined to become. Many years after this story first appeared, Plato wrote of "The Philosopher King" in his book "The Republic," in which he talked about the importance of wisdom and education in proper governing. The Bible tells us that, when Solomon became king of Israel, he pleased the Lord by asking for "an understanding heart" with which to rule, rather than riches or a long life or vengeance over his enemies. Solomon was considered a great and wise king.

Consider this quote from the Tao te Ching (I Ching):

The best leaders the people barely know.
The next best they love and praise.
The next they fear.
And the next they hate.

Why does Lao-tse write that the people "barely know" the best leaders? Because, he goes on to say, when the people are properly led, they accomplish things and say, "We did it ourselves!"

Make a list of things a good ruler needs -- skills as well as attributes. Think of "rulers" in terms of kings, but also in terms of parents, teachers and student leaders like team captains and class officers. Are the skills and attributes similar?