

Chapter Two

The Fisherman



What can you tell by reading the story?

1. Why did Dictys think whatever was in the box might not have been ruined by salt water?
2. Did Dictys have a big fishing boat, or a small fishing boat?
3. Why didn't Dictys give Perseus anything to eat when they were on the beach?
4. Why does Dictys say it's not hard for him to understand what Dana's father is like?
5. How can you tell how Thalia feels about her brother-in-law, Polydectes?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. What are some adjectives that you might use to describe Dictys?
2. What did Dictys really mean when he said "The next box might have a leak in it?"

Let's talk about it: Dictys says that it's best not to worry about his brother's greed, because it won't change the way he is. Do you think this is a good way to handle that type of person? What has Dictys done in his life to keep from having conflicts with his brother, Polydectes? Do you agree with his choices?

Geography: Find Argos and Seriphos on the map. If the current took them straight from one to the other, how far did Dana and Perseus drift in their box? How many islands did they pass? If Dictys had not found them and pulled them to shore, where else might they have ended up?

Response Key

What can you tell by reading the story?

1. The box rode high in the sea, so it wasn't leaking and full of water. You could do an experiment by putting two jars in water, one with just an inch of water in it and one half-full of water. Push them around and see how they float, roll and move in the water. If you were an experienced fisherman like Dictys, you wouldn't have to be able to see through the glass to tell that the half-full jar had water in it!
2. His boat must have been small: He rowed it with oars and he pulled it up on the beach each night. A large boat would need sails or many people to row it, and you'd have to tie it up to a buoy or dock when you weren't using it, or at least you would need many people to pull it up on the beach.
3. He didn't have any baby food. Thalia made some by soaking bread in goat's milk. (*Dana would be able to breastfeed the baby for the first day or two in the box, but after she went a few days without food, her body wouldn't be able to make enough milk. Still, Perseus probably wasn't completely hungry.*)
4. Both Acrisius and Dictys have brothers who want to be king. The difference is, Dictys has decided not to fight with his brother over it. But, since he understands his own brother, he can also understand what Acrisius must be like.
5. She slaps the wet cloth down hard on the table when she talks about him. Thalia was gentle with the baby, but she doesn't like Polydectes and, when they begin to talk about him, it makes her angry just to think about him! She also says that he just wants what other people have. That's not a kind thing to say, but she sounds as if she is speaking from experience, doesn't she?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. Old, Greek, curious, friendly, kind, gentle, strong, hard-working, humorous, fatherly .. be sure to prompt for adjectives that are not used in the text! (And, according to Christopher's illustration, he's also bald!)
2. Certainly, Dana and Perseus were lucky not to have drowned in the sea. But Dictys is also warning Dana that she shouldn't try to go back to Argos because it's not safe for them there. Next time, Acrisius might do something to make sure they were gone for good. (Dana understands what he meant, which is why she answers, "It must be very hard for you to understand a man like my father.")

Teachable moment (Conflict resolution): Thalia says "I just hope Polydectes doesn't see what pleasure we have from having you here. That's usually how he decides what things he wants to take for himself." It sounds like Thalia is less happy with their life than her husband, Dictys. Do you suppose it's because they don't have a lot of nice things and have to work hard, or is it simply because she thinks Polydectes is unfair? Perhaps Dictys deserves a better life, but it seems she's more upset by the injustice than the actual damage done. Try to engage your class in a conversation about how sometimes you are less upset about what actually happened than the way it happened, how you might not be upset over what someone said, but about how they said it, or why. Ask for examples of times someone was unfair or unkind about something that, by itself, didn't really matter that much. Also ask about times they might have been misunderstood by someone who was offended or upset by something they did that they didn't think was that serious until they saw how it affected someone else. How can people avoid these situations?