

Chapter Four

The King's Feast



What can you tell by reading the story?

1. Is Perseus good at keeping his temper?
2. Why do the guests ask Polydectes if he is serving fish?
3. How does Perseus react to their teasing?
4. Where did Perseus get the idea to promise Polydectes the head of the Medusa?
5. What does Polydectes do after Perseus makes his promise?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. What happened to Dana when she arrived at the palace? How do you suppose that happened?
2. Do you remember the instructions Dictys and Dana gave Perseus last week? Do you think of their words differently now?

Act out the part we skipped: Have one student be Polydectes and another student be the steward. Dana has already been taken to the temple, but they have just learned that Perseus will be arriving at the palace gates. Let's hear the conversation between Polydectes and the steward as they make plans for this wedding feast without a wedding! Will they invite some of the guests to help them plot? What do they want to have happen?

Response Key

What can you tell by reading the story?

1. No. He nearly gets in a fight with the guards and then he shouts at Polydectes. It's not that Perseus doesn't have good reason to be angry, but he might be better off if he could be more like Dictys.
2. They're making fun of Perseus, pretending that he smells from his work as a fisherman.
3. He gets embarrassed and angry. He wants to prove that he's as good as they are.
4. The steward told him it was a better gift than the rich guests would promise.
5. He smiles at Perseus. (*What did we learn about Polydectes's smile in Chapter Three?*) Then he winks at the steward. (*Why?*)

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. As soon as she arrived, a messenger came from the High Priestess at the Temple of Athena, requesting that she be sent to the temple as a priestess. You might have thought that Dictys only went to the temple to pray, but it seems likely that he visited with the High Priestess and explained the situation to her. It's also worth noting that the sacrifices left at the temple were "for the Goddess" but that it was the priestesses who accepted those gifts. Dictys was so quick to think of heading to the temple that it seems likely he was no stranger there, and, if the High Priestess knew him well, (and she certainly would know what sort of person Polydectes was), she may have felt that protecting Dana was something she should do as a powerful member of the community.
2. Dictys said they should wait until they found out if the goddess would help them. Dana told Perseus to wait until Dictys got back from the temple. Dana may have simply trusted Dictys, but Dictys himself trusted the High Priestess. He knew what he was going to do and he knew that, if the High Priestess agreed to help them, Dana was in no danger. Dana said Dictys would know what to do. Did he?

Teachable moment: This chapter is critical to understanding the action that follows. Polydectes wants Dana's strong, proud son out of the picture, and so Perseus has been tricked into making a very brash, very dangerous promise. In real life, you might have to back down from such a foolish promise, because people sometimes die when they take on challenges they should not have accepted. There are valuable things to discuss both in learning not to speak when you are angry, as well as in learning the price of pride. The law says you can't be held to a promise made "under duress," like promising to give someone all your money if they are threatening to harm you. In this case, Perseus was reacting to anger, to fear for his mother's safety and to the insults of the guests. What would happen if he decided not to go on the quest after all? It's not a simple answer, and it could lead to some interesting discussion!