

Chapter Five

The Immortals!



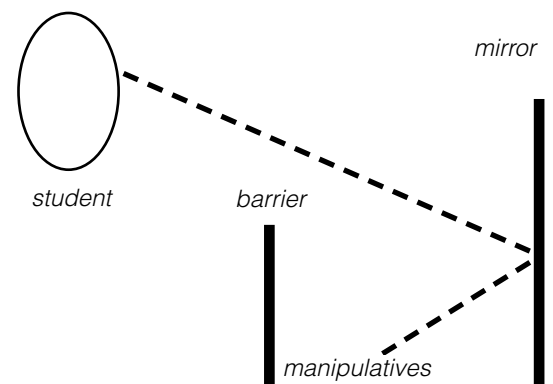
What can you tell by reading the story?

1. Who does Perseus think he has met on the path?
2. What is the first difficulty Athena reminds him about? How does she help him with it?
3. How can Perseus be sure Dana will be safe while he is gone?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. Why was Perseus going to the Temple of Athena? How was he feeling ?
2. Why do you think Athena has decided to help Perseus?
3. Hermes makes fun of Perseus' sword, but Perseus doesn't get mad. What makes Hermes' joking different than the joking that took place at the wedding feast?

Practicing to be Perseus: Perseus is going to have to use Athena's shield as a mirror in order to cut off the head of the Medusa without looking at it. This brings up some fun and interesting issues of perception to explore. Set up a book or other object to block direct vision (make sure it isn't too wide to reach around), and a mirror to reflect the hidden area. Have students try to print their names while looking at the paper in the mirror, then try to write their names in cursive. (Make it read correctly in the mirror and then do it again to read correctly in "real life.") Set up small objects for them to manipulate -- for instance, have them try to stack pennies, using a spoon instead of their fingers. Let them invent tasks to challenge their classmates!



Response Key

What can you tell by reading the story?

1. He thinks he is talking to the High Priestess. Why does he make that mistake? First, because he is thinking and worrying about other things. Second, because it makes a lot more sense to think you have run into the priestess at the temple than to think you have run into the goddess herself.

Sometimes we make mistakes because something is unusual and we weren't paying much attention. Students may enjoy sharing stories of times when they made similar mistakes -- for instance, assuming at first that a deer was a dog because it makes more sense for a dog to be in the back yard.

2. She reminds him that he can't cut off the Medusa's head without looking at her. She offers her bright shield as a mirror. Remember that the Greeks of this period would not have had mirrors like ours and had to use brightly polished metal or look into a pool of water in order to see their own faces. People probably didn't have a very good idea of what they looked like!

3. Athena has promised that Dana will be under her personal protection. There are only a handful of gods who would dare stand up to Athena (mostly Zeus, Poseidon or Ares), and even they wouldn't do it unless they had a particular favorite who needed their help against her. Polydectes isn't going to get any help with his wicked plans. Dana is about as safe as a mortal could possibly be!

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. Perseus was going to find his mother and tell her what he had done. He apparently hadn't thought any farther ahead than that. The emotions going through his mind are many: He feels guilty over his hasty promise and over ignoring his mother's advice and that of Dictys. He's afraid to face his mother and afraid she'll want him to abandon his quest. He also knows that he was foolish to take on the quest in the first place. Mostly, he's afraid of the disappointment in his mother's face. (See the Teachable Moment)

2. Athena says she loves him because he is bold when he should be cautious and cautious when he should be bold. She is also responding to the trust and devotion of Dictys and Dana -- even though Perseus is short-tempered and foolish, they have come to the goddess for help and she will not disappoint them. But right from the beginning, the immortals have taken a real interest in this family, starting with the mysterious birth of Perseus and the safe arrival of the box at exactly the right time and place for them to meet Dictys. However they may feel about Polydectes, the immortals are still angry with Acrisius. Keeping Perseus alive is very much on the agenda at Mt. Olympus.

3. Hermes jokes in a friendly way, and we often take kidding from friends that we would not accept from other people. This topic can keep your classroom going for quite awhile, and you can take it anywhere -- from the easily discussed issues of family and friends making fun of personal habits or appearance to a very sensitive place: Do you want to talk about jokes or terms that are insulting from outsiders but affectionate and welcome within an ethnic group?

Teachable moment: "Mostly, he did not want to see disappointment in her face." Perseus has been motivated by his concern for his mother's safety, but he is also deeply motivated by wanting to do right for her. He's not the only "hero" motivated by an intense need to meet his family's expectations and approval -- many high achievers are driven by the need to please their parents, and you can find many examples, both healthy and unhealthy. But there's more to think about than that: Remember that, for all the love Dictys and Thalia have lavished on them, Perseus and Dana are still a single parent family unit, and Perseus feels a particular responsibility towards his mother. You'll find more than one student in your classroom who can identify with his fear of disappointing her!