

Chapter Seven

The Hesperides



What can you tell by reading the story?

1. Are the Hesperides helpful?
2. Why do the Hesperides start crying?
3. What does Perseus see outside the cave of the Gorgons?

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. Why does Perseus tell the Hesperides that he must slay the Medusa?
2. What do you suppose Atlas and Perseus were talking about?
3. Cutting off the head of the Medusa while she's asleep doesn't seem as heroic as facing her down in a battle. Do you agree with Perseus's decision?

The Medusa Game: Cut small squares of paper, one for each player. Make a mark on one square, then fold them up. Each player draws a square, looks inside, and then sits in a large circle. The player with the marked square is the Medusa. As players look at each other, Medusa turns other players to stone by winking at them. They must freeze just as they are! If you see Medusa wink at someone else, you can win the game by pointing out who is the Medusa. (But if you're wrong, you're both out!) Medusa wins by turning everyone else into stone!

(Somebody may say, "Hey! That's Assassin! I know how to play that!" Your line then is, "Good, you can help us!")

Response Key

What can you tell by reading the story?

1. Well, sort of. They help Perseus, but they also want him to stay and have parties with them, and there are more important things he needs to be doing. It's good that Perseus has a strong sense of duty, because it seems like it would be fun to hang out with the Hesperides for awhile.
2. They're afraid the Medusa will turn Perseus into stone. The Hesperides come across as airheads, but they know a lot about the strange world in which they live, in which giants hold up the earth and the king of the Underworld lends you his magic helmet. The Medusa is very dangerous, and they don't want to see a cute guy like Perseus turned into a statue.
3. He sees statues of people and animals who have seen the Medusa and been turned to stone. It may seem very peaceful, but everyone there was clearly frightened when they died. And notice that being invisible may protect him against being attacked, but it won't help him avoid turning to stone if he glimpses the face of the Medusa!

What can you tell by thinking about the story?

1. She is very dangerous and has already harmed many people. Perseus has his own reasons for needing to bring back the head of the Medusa, but what he is about to do will, in fact, save other lives. Of course, the Medusa would be even more of a threat to public safety if she were wandering around downtown Athens, but even in a distant cave, she lives surrounded by the evidence of people who have wandered out her way and died as a result.
2. I don't know either. I guess we'll have to just wait and find out. (Sometimes that's a pretty good answer.)
3. A good topic for debate, but Hermes has warned him of the danger of facing her and her sisters in an open battle. What's the difference between being a hero and being a fool? Perhaps students with parents in dangerous professions, like firefighting or other rescue work, can comment on the difference between what you see on television or in the movies and the decisions these professionals make in real-life situations. Consider, too, the exercise you did with the mirror back in Chapter Four.

Teachable moment: Perseus needs help from many people on his quest. It's easy to accept the help of Athena and Hermes, because they're focused on his mission, too. Besides, Athena is like a mother, and Hermes is like a big brother. But sometimes we have to work with people who don't share our goals and who aren't focused on what we want and need. Perseus had to get important information from the Gray Sisters, who didn't want to help him at all. How did he deal with them? In this chapter, he needed help from the Hesperides, who were very friendly but not at all focused on what he was trying to accomplish. How did he deal with them? Note that he was honest, in his way, with the Gray Sisters, despite their hostility, and that he wasn't rude to the Hesperides, but he also didn't let them distract him from what he needed to be doing. Working with others is easy sometimes, and sometimes it's hard. But a true "hero" learns to work with everybody necessary to get the task done!