



ASCANIUS

The Youth Classics Institute

ACTIVITATES LIBERIS MINGLE WITH MYTH

TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

*A Collection of Studies and Lessons in Classical Art
and Mythology for the Elementary Classroom*

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Companion materials available at

www.ascaniusyci.org/companion/artmyth/



Mythology Through the Arts: Mars

In this activity, students will analyze Movement I (Mars) of Gustav Holst’s symphony “The Planets,” which was inspired by stories of the Roman gods. At the conclusion of the exercise, students will be asked to re-assess their previously held views of the god Mars in light of the new and different methods of interpretation that they have heard and created. Alternatively, you could conduct a lesson of the same format about Jupiter using Movement IV of the symphony.

Objectives

- To understand and appreciate the various ways an artist or composer can interpret a concept using visual arts or music.
- To describe and explain the music and its meaning at various points during the piece.
- To create visual or literary interpretations of the music to enhance the understanding of Mars.

Materials

- markers
- construction paper
- crayons
- LCD projector
- computer with speakers

Supplements

1. “Mythology Through the Arts” slideshow (www.ascaniusyci.org/companion/artmyth). The first part of the slideshow contains stories and pictures of Ares (Greek name of Mars) from the Iliad. The second part of the slideshow contains stories and pictures of Jupiter, for the alternate version of this lesson.
2. Recordings of Holst’s symphony *The Planets* (see www.ascaniusyci.org/companion/artmyth/)

Preparation

1. With a marker, create emotion cards by labeling the pieces of construction paper with the emotion that it will represent during the lesson: black – angry; green – triumphant; blue – sad; red – determined. (For Jupiter, use these colors: white – carefree; yellow – joyous; blue – sad; purple – noble.) Each student will need one piece of each color of construction paper.

Procedure

1. Invite students to brainstorm what they already know about Ares or Mars and write their ideas on the board. Then tell some stories about Mars using the “Mythology Through the Arts” slideshow. Ask students to analyze each visual representation of Mars in the slideshow, and write adjectives to describe them on the board. Suggestions: warlike, strong, powerful, protected. (For Jupiter: above all else, leader, omnipotent, like a mortal, noble, regal, powerful, strong, violent.)
2. Segue into interpretation through music by prompting students to think of ways to express emotion without literature and visual arts. You may need to have them think of Mozart and Bach. Briefly introduce Holst and *The Planets* symphony. Discuss what types of emotions might be expressed in a song about Mars.
3. Hand out one set of emotion cards to each student. Invite students to discuss the significance of the colors used for each emotion.
4. Play Movement I (Mars) of *The Planets* on the computer, asking the students to hold up the emotion cards that correspond to the style or tone they hear at each point in the music. They should pay close



attention to the music and change their emotion card when the music changes. Reassure students that they will not all agree on all the emotions throughout the recording.

5. Play the music and pause it periodically, discussing what has occurred in each segment. Listed below are suggested stop times and basic notes about what occurs in the music in each segment.
6. After the conclusion of the piece, discuss whether or not the musical interpretation of Mars matches what the interpretations of Mars that they saw in art and literature. Do the students agree with Holst's interpretation of Mars?
7. Pass out the paper and coloring supplies. Play the music a second time without pausing it and ask them to draw a picture inspired by the musical interpretation of Mars. They might also write a story that is described by the music.
8. Have students show their pictures to the class, or, if they wrote stories, ask them to read the stories aloud. Make sure that the students explain their reasoning.

Discussion

- What modern/pop song might you use to describe Mars (or Jupiter)?
- How does Holst's musical representation of Mars (or Jupiter) differ from other artistic representations like drawings, statues, or stories?

Passages about Ares in the slideshow are adapted from Stanley Lombardo (trans.), *Homer's Iliad* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). Passages about Jupiter in the slideshow are adapted from translations in Mark P.O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press, 2003).



Timetables and Notes**Mars (Movement I of *The Planets*)**

N.B. We discussed two possible interpretations of the music – as a storm and as a battle. These notes attempt to incorporate both interpretations.

- I. stop 1:28 gradually louder, marching from afar, rain starting to come down, comes to climax, battle is beginning – why is a storm appropriate for describing the gods?
- II. stop 2:15 battle continuing, blows of swords and guns, bombs – much excitement; rain pounding, wind blowing, flashes of lightning and claps of thunder
- III. stop 3:21 marches on, moves to new battle – steady beat – triumphant after win, building momentum for the next and then it drops off suddenly – why? foreshadowing a future event perhaps, or maybe the army is just tired – calm eye of the storm
- IV. stop 4:29 mysterious, planning next move, plan forms as volume increases, momentum builds, perhaps sneaking up for their attack and then BOOM – storm picks up again
- V. stop 6:37 battle rages again, persistent attacks, relentless; then seems to calm down
- VI. end exhaustion sets in before final attack; possibly defeat

The times and notes above are sequenced to follow the recording available online from *YouTube* at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0bcRCCg01I>. (For a link to this recording, see the companion website to this volume: www.ascaniusyci.org/companion/artmyth/)

Jupiter Notes (Movement IV of *The Planets*)

- I. stop 0:57 starts very strong, constant chatter in background, dancing in circles, thunderous, driving beat, very light at times, changes back and forth; does this sound like an appropriate introduction for a king?
- II. stop 1:36 french horns strong, then light bells, tiptoe in the woodwinds, then the strings alight, grows to a big...
- III. stop 2:52 CLIMAX; stonger, more regal dancing, gets faster and louder, comes to another climax – like a fanfare, then drops off to nervous and gentle
- IV. stop 4:40 processional, noble, regal, imagine the splendid, proud king walking by, powerful and emotional, shows king's sympathetic, respectable, and regal side – becomes louder and more profound; emphasizes his power – contrast this with mood of jollity in previous sections
- V. stop 6:14 light tiptoes again, changes to a heavy beat, strong, more dancing and jollity – images of people laughing and partying; changes in tempo, dynamics abound, perhaps emphasizing changing nature of Jupiter: between his power in war and rule as king.
- VI. end climactic, busy, party comes to a roar – but overtones of the regal processional theme can be heard, followed by a very powerful and strong ending – compare to the strength and power of the beginning; what does this say? Jupiter is capable of jollity but remains a strong and powerful leader who has command and control.

The times and notes above are sequenced to follow the recording available online from *YouTube* at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz0b4STz1lo>. (For a link to this recording, see the companion website to this volume: www.ascaniusyci.org/companion/artmyth/)



Mars (Ares) in the Iliad

From Book V:

Hector charged out into the open battlefield, shouting. Trojans ran out after him with force, led by Ares and Enyo, who held in her hands the deafening, shameless horror of War. Ares held an enormous spear in his hands and joined the battle line right next to Hector. Another soldier, Diomedes, stopped dead in his tracks when he saw Ares. Diomedes took a step backward because he was so startled to see the churning water of the river in the middle of the plains. When he had cautiously backed up, he said to his men, “My friends, we always thought Hector was good with his spear, a real fighter. It turns out a god has been helping him the whole time! Right now it is Ares, dressed like a mortal. Face the enemy, but be careful – you don’t want to fight with the gods!”

From Book XIII:

Ares himself sometimes goes into battle with his son, Disorder. The father and son are a very brave team: they can easily get an army to run away from battle. They pick up their weapons, leave home in Thrace, and join one side of battle or the other. They do not really care which side wins, and just fight for fun!



From Book XX:

Ares was on the Trojans’ side, and his helmet gleamed in the sunlight. When he yelled, the Trojans felt like there was a pitch-black hurricane pulling them into battle.

From Book XXI:

The gods were fighting in battle with each other: they were running at each other like opposing winds. When they hit the ground, the earth crashed like a cymbal and the sky sounded like a trumpet. Ares attacked Athena: first, he landed in front of her with a bronze spear and then stabbed at her. But she blocked the spear with her magical shield, called the *aegis*. Not even Zeus’ lightning can pierce this shield! By the force of Ares’ attack, Athena fell backwards.

Adapted from Stanley Lombardo (trans.), *Homer’s Iliad* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).



Jupiter (Zeus)

Predicting the destiny of Aeneas and the Roman race:

Jupiter told Aeneas: “Young Ascanius will be king for 30 months and then move the kingdom from Lavinium to a new city, Alba Longa. Here the descendants of Hector will rule for three hundred years, until the royal priestess gives birth to twin children. These twins will be raised in the forests by a she-wolf. Romulus, one of the twins, will become ruler of the race and found another city in honor of Mars. He will name its residents after himself: Romans. Their rule will have no boundaries on land and will last forever. I have given them empire without end.”



Creating Pandora:

Zeus, the father of gods and men, ordered Hephaestus immediately to mix earth with water and shape the mud into the shape of a beautiful woman. She would be just as lovely as the goddesses themselves. He also ordered Hephaestus to give the woman the voice of a human. At the same time, he ordered Athena to teach her the skills of weaving on the loom. Then he ordered golden Aphrodite to give her the ability to be kind, curious about everything, and always worried. Zeus commanded Hermes to give her the character of a thief. He said all these things to the other gods, and they obeyed at once. They had no choice because he was their king, son of Cronus.

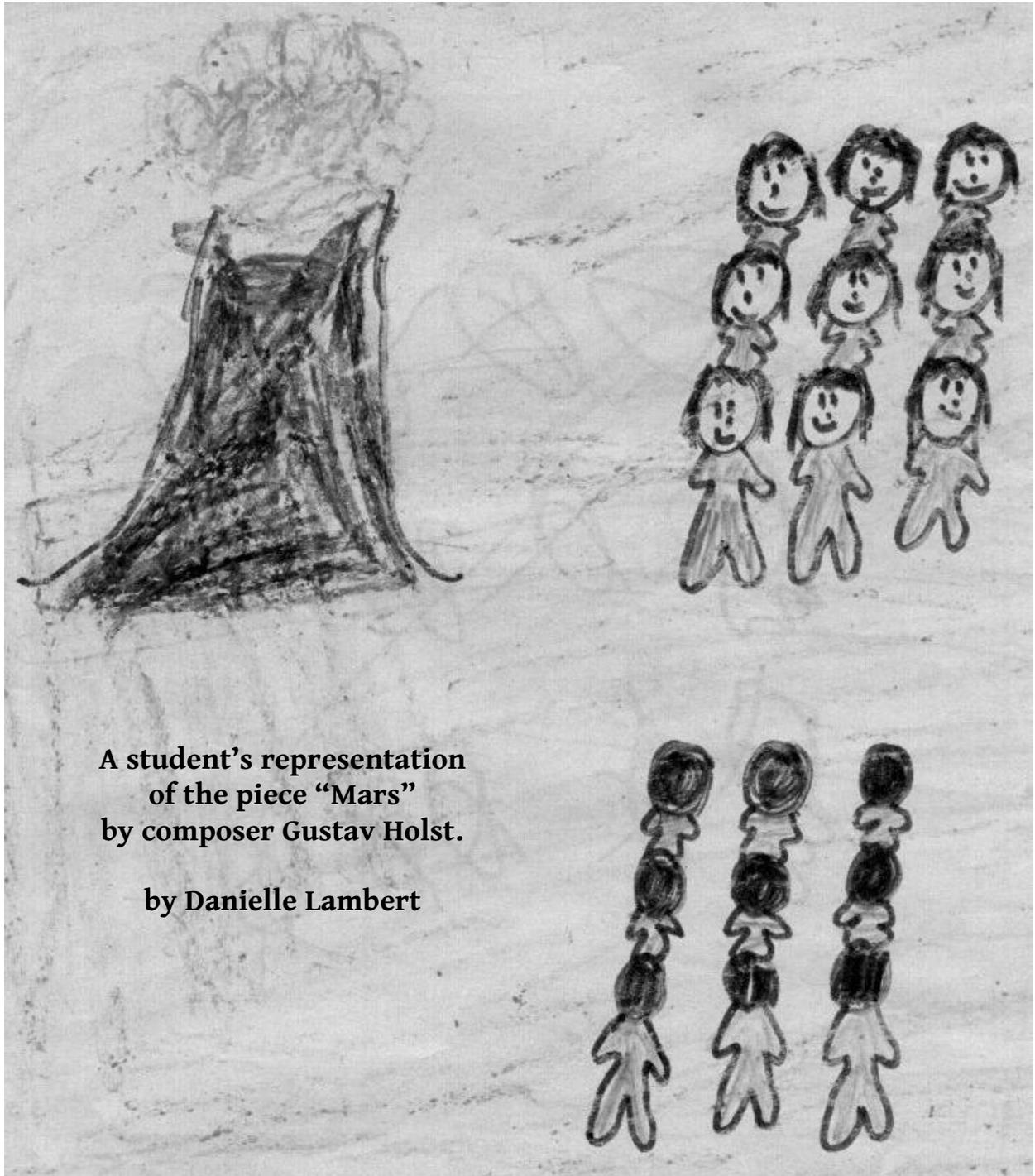
In battle with the Titans:

For a while Zeus did not fight back against the Titans. But after some time, Zeus could not hold back any longer, and now immediately his heart was filled with strength. He finally showed the Titans how much force he had. He came straight down from Mount Olympus, throwing lightning as he moved. The bolts flew out of his hand with flash and thunder. With all this lightning he created a dense whirlwind of holy flame.



Adapted from translations in Mark P.O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

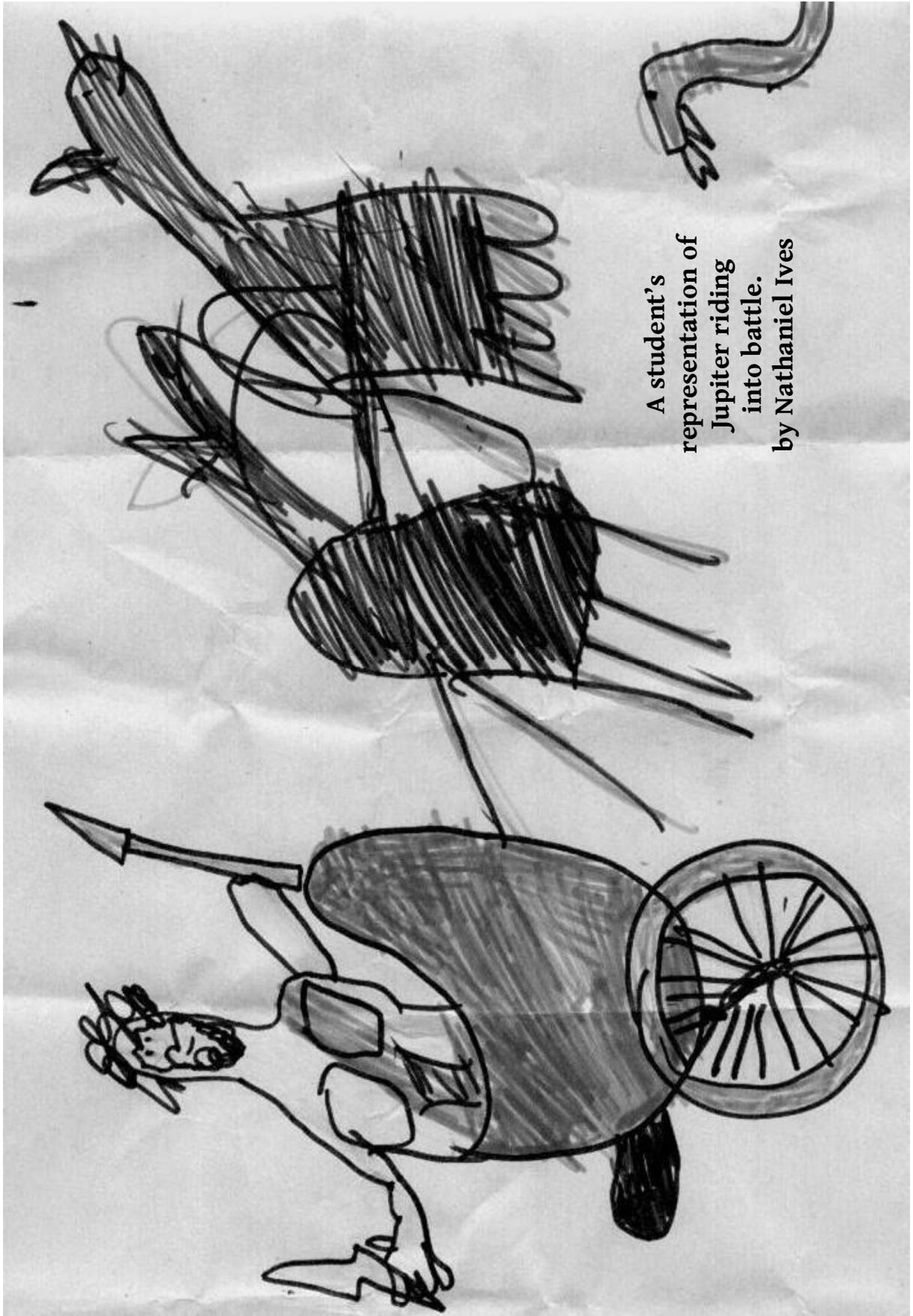




**A student's representation
of the piece "Mars"
by composer Gustav Holst.**

by Danielle Lambert





A student's representation of Jupiter riding into battle. by Nathaniel Ives



Perseus

This story incorporates many elements of mythology that have been taught in previous lessons. It draws upon knowledge of the gods and goddesses and mythological creatures, as well as the epic hero motif found in other myths like those of Heracles and Orpheus. In addition, it also introduces the concept of fate, a common theme in Greek mythology.

Objectives

- To learn the story of Perseus.
- To understand how mythology was used as entertainment.

Materials

- markers, pens, or pencils
- blank paper
- scissors
- glue
- aluminum foil
- cardboard or posterboard
- permanent markers
- mirror

Supplements

1. “The Story of Perseus” handout (p. 78)
2. Medusa image (p. 79). Make one copy for each student.

Preparation

1. Using the cardboard or poster board, cut out a few circles (about 10 inches in diameter) for the students to use as templates.

Procedure

1. Pass out “The story of Perseus” handout and have the students read it aloud.
2. Discuss with the students why this myth would be entertaining to an ancient audience. The students should begin to recognize that they are interested in many of the same things as children in ancient societies. Point out the roles of the gods and other mythological creatures in the story. For example, Perseus had to kill a Gorgon; Athena and Hermes both provided Perseus with tools to kill Medusa. Also point out that the ancients believed oracles would always reveal the truth about the future.
3. Explain to the students that they will now make their own shields like the one that Perseus had in the story. Instruct them to cut out circles of cardboard (or posterboard) using your circle templates as stencils. They should then use the aluminum foil to cover one side of the circle, fold the foil over the edges, and tape it on the other side to secure it.
4. Have the students put aside their shields for a moment. Pass out copies of the Medusa image to the students to color and cut out or allow students to draw their own version of Medusa’s head. Then tell the students to glue it to the shiny side of the shield. Allow the students to decorate the foil-side of the shield further with permanent markers.
5. Lastly, have the students cut out a small strip of posterboard and tape it to the backside of the shield so that they have a handle to hold the shield. Explain that the shield with the head of Medusa mounted on it is a symbol of Athena, called the *aegis*.
6. After you clean up from the craft, have the students help you rearrange the room so that there is a small obstacle course. For safety reasons, use desks or other large objects that will be difficult to trip over.



7. Gather the students at one side of the room. Point out an object on the other side of the room that will be their “goal.” Then instruct them that they will have to reach the goal by walking backwards and using a mirror to look behind them as they move across the room, much like how Perseus in the story had to reach his goal (Medusa) without looking directly at her. Stress the importance of walking very slowly so that they do not trip over the desks. Compare this to the story, explaining that Perseus did not want Medusa to know that he was coming towards her.
8. Allow one student through the obstacle course at a time, while everyone watches. Encourage students on the sidelines to whisper hints to the brave hero (or heroine) moving across the room!

Discussion

- Why was King Acrisius afraid of Perseus? Was his fear justified?
- What gods or goddesses appear in the Perseus myth? What do they do in the story?



The Story of Perseus

Long ago, King Acrisius of Argos learned from an oracle that he would one day be killed by his grandson. Fearing that, he hid his daughter Danae in a chamber underground. But Zeus came down from Mt. Olympus in the form of a stream of gold, which poured through the roof of the chamber, and soon Danae had a baby named Perseus. When Acrisius learned of this, he put her with the child in a trunk and cast it into the sea. The chest washed ashore on the island of Seriphus, where a kind fisherman opened it and gave shelter to the mother and child.

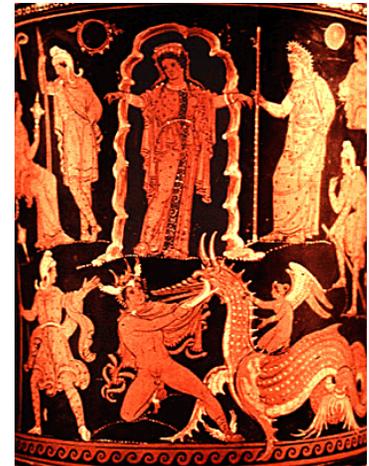


The king of the island, Polydectes, was the fisherman's brother. As Perseus grew up, King Polydectes fell in love with Danae. He wanted to get rid of Perseus before he married Danae, so he asked Perseus to slay the Gorgon Medusa and bring back her head as a trophy. This would be quite a challenge, since anyone who looked into her eyes was instantly turned into stone. After months of searching for the Gorgons, Perseus received help from Athena and Hermes. They led him to the lair of the Graeae, who knew where the Gorgons were to be found.

The Graeae were three old witches who shared a single eye and tooth: Perseus stole these from them, and refused to give them back until they told him where the Gorgons lived. As soon as he learned this and returned the eye and tooth, he received gifts from his divine guardians: Hermes gave him winged sandals, a cap of invisibility, and a magical bag that would grow to any size, and a sword that could cut through anything, and Athena gave him a shiny bronze shield.

From there, he flew to the island where the Gorgons lived. He held out the shield in which he saw only the reflection of Medusa, which could not turn him to stone. Perseus chopped off Medusa's head with Hermes' magical sword and put it in the magical bag. It is said that Pegasus, the magical flying horse, was born when blood dripped from Medusa's head into the ocean. The remaining two Gorgons tried to pursue Perseus, but his helmet made him invisible.

On his way back to Polydectes, Perseus found the princess of Ethiopia, Andromeda, chained to a cliff as a sacrifice to a sea monster so that it would no longer terrorize the country. When Perseus saw this girl in such distress, he promised the king that he would kill the monster if he could marry Andromeda. The king agreed and Perseus slew the monster with his magic weapons and released Andromeda. They were married soon after that.



Perseus came back to Seriphus only to discover that Polydectes had become a cruel ruler. He entered the palace and showed the head of Medusa to the evil king and his friends, and all who saw it were instantly turned into stone. After this he gave Medusa's head to Athena, who placed it on her shield, which she called the *aegis*.

Later, when Perseus was competing in an athletic event, he accidentally killed his grandfather Acrisius with the throw of a discus. Acrisius had happened to be visiting the king who was hosting the event, and the discus happened to swerve towards the audience away from the target. Thus the oracle from many years prior, before Perseus' birth, came true. Perseus, Danae, and Andromeda lived the rest of their lives in happiness.



