

The Quest of Medusa's Head

The Brass Prison

There was once a king of Argos, who had a daughter called Danae. She was growing up quickly but the king had been told that her son, his grandson, would cause his own death.

To prevent this, the king locked her in a prison of brass. Apart from her old nurse, she was completely alone. But, the god Zeus looked down on her from the heavens and fell in love.

They were married and had a son, called Perseus. In spite of all that he had done, Danae's father began to think the words of the prophecy might come true.

So, Danae and her son Perseus were put to sea in a wooden chest. The king thought that if they died together, the prophecy couldn't come true. But, they didn't die. After several days at sea, they drifted ashore on a distant island and were found by a kind man, who sheltered and cared for them for many years.

The Magic Sandals

The cruel king of the island wanted to marry the beautiful Danae and when she refused he plotted to send Perseus away in revenge. He challenged Perseus to bring him the head of the Medusa. She was one of three monster sisters. Each had the body and face of woman but with golden wings, terrible brass claws and snakes for hair. Anyone who looked at their faces was instantly turned to stone.

Without weapons or any idea where to find Medusa, Perseus went to the shore to plan his quest. Two mysterious people told him where to set off on his journey and that he must get directions from the Grey Sisters and collect three things from the Maidens of the West before challenging Medusa. They gave him magic winged sandals so that he could travel quickly and easily. He realised the people were the gods Athena and Hermes, although he didn't understand why they were helping him.

After a long and tiring journey, Perseus now had directions from the Grey Sisters and had been given a sword, a shield, a magic pouch and a magic cap of invisibility by the Maidens of the West. He flew to Medusa's lair and waited.

At last she appeared. Using the shield as a mirror, so that he didn't have to look at her, Perseus cut off Medusa's hideous head with his sword. He carefully put it in the magic pouch and flew off to safety.

This part of his task was complete.

1. What is the name of the daughter of the King of Argos?

2. What is the prison made of?

3. What do you think the king's daughter felt about her father for locking her up?

4. What do you think the king's feelings are during 'The Brass Prison'?

Circle as many as you think apply.

brave

frightened

confident

worried

fearless

5. In The Magic Sandals, why is the king of the island described as cruel?

6. How is Medusa described? Use the text to help you.

7. What do you think Perseus felt when he was given the challenge to capture the head of Medusa? Why do you think that?

8. Who was going to help Perseus on his travels? How were they going to do this?

9. Why do you think the gods gave Perseus some help to get started on his journey?

10. Do you think the ending was fair?