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LESSON 5: *Perseus* (Περσεύς)

FACTS TO KNOW

1. **Argos** – birthplace of Perseus
2. **Danaë** – daughter of the king of Argos
3. **Perseus** – son of Danaë; turned into a constellation
4. **Dictys** – fisherman who rescued Danaë and Perseus
5. **Polydectes** – brother of Dictys; ruler of Seriphos; fell in love with Danaë
6. **Gorgons** – three horrible sisters with snakes for hair
7. **Medusa** – the only mortal of the three Gorgons
8. **Gray Sisters** – told Perseus where the land of the Hesperides was
9. **Hesperides** – beautiful nymphs with magic treasures
10. **Andromeda** – to be sacrificed to Poseidon; rescued by and married to Perseus; turned into a constellation
11. **Cepheus, Cassiopeia** – king and queen; parents of Andromeda; turned into constellations

"See! I have brought you that which you desired." – **Perseus**

"What had been fated came to pass." – **Greek saying**

VOCABULARY

1. While playing **quoits** one day _____ gamepieces; rings of iron to be pitched at a stake

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Perseus end up on Seriphos, and what happened there?
The king of Argos was told by an oracle that Perseus, the son of his daughter Danaë, would kill him. So he cast them both adrift on the sea in a chest. The chest landed on Seriphos, where Danaë and Perseus were rescued by the brother of the king. The king wanted to marry Danaë, but she refused. Later, when he was to marry another, he asked Perseus to bring him the head of the Gorgon Medusa as a gift.
2. Describe Perseus' journey to find Medusa, who helped him, and so on.
Hermes offered his sword of light, Athena her shield, and both would guide Perseus to the Grey Sisters. Finding the Gray Sisters asleep, Perseus took the eye and tooth they shared, and by withholding them, he forced the sisters to reveal the location of the land of the Hesperides. The Hesperides loaned Perseus winged sandals of gold, a magic wallet for Medusa's head, and a cap of invisibility.

3. How was Perseus able to take Medusa's head, and why did it require special handling?
Perseus cut off Medusa's head without looking at it. The sight of a Gorgon's head turns one to stone. Using the cap of invisibility and the winged sandals, Perseus escaped the other Gorgons.
-
4. Who was Andromeda, and how did she end up marrying Perseus?
Andromeda had been chained at the shore by her parents as a sacrifice to Poseidon, who had been inflicting storms and a monster on the land after Andromeda's mother bragged that Andromeda was more beautiful than Poseidon's nymphs. Perseus cut her loose and killed the monster using the sword of light and the cap of invisibility. For his heroism and her sacrifice, the two were married in a joyful ceremony.
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5. Why was Poseidon angry with King Cepheus' people?
Cassiopeia, Andromeda's mother, bragged that Andromeda was more beautiful than Poseidon's nymphs.
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6. What happened back on Seriphos?
Perseus took Andromeda back to Seriphos to give Medusa's head to Polydectes. When he pulled the head from the magic wallet, Polydectes and his men were turned to stone. Perseus gave the head as an offering to Athena, returned the sword, sandals, wallet, and cap, and returned to Argos.
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7. How was the fate of the king of Argos fulfilled?
Perseus became good friends with the king of Argos but accidentally killed him in a game of quoits. Perseus, now king of Argos but overwhelmed with sorrow, exchanged his kingdom for the kingdom of Tiryns. After their deaths, he and Andromeda became stars in the sky.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate on Maps 1, 2: Argos, Seriphos, Tiryns
2. Draw a picture of a Gorgon.

For the teacher:

- What conflicting qualities are apparent in the appearance of Medusa? She is both very beautiful and extremely terrifying. We see here an illustration of all humanity—beautiful and horrid at the same time.
- The meaning of allegory is often very complex. What are two possible meanings of being "turned to stone"? Frozen in fear, or killed. Explore other aspects of the symbolism, such as "like a statue," etc. (spiritually dead, insensitive, emotionally dead)