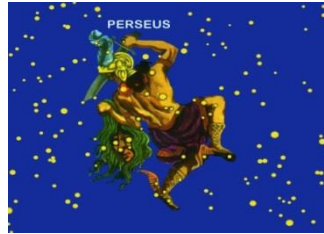


Perseus and the Gorgon

Chapter Four

Witches of the Forest



Perseus headed for the forest as quickly as he could. The shield was heavy, and the sword swung awkwardly from his belt, catching him on the legs as he ran, but he knew he would need both to stand any chance of defeating Medusa.

First, though, he had to find the witches.

Reaching the forest, Perseus darted between the trees, slowing slightly as the light grew dim. The wind whispered in the treetops and, as he went further in, only a few lonely shafts of sunlight pierced their tangled branches. But there was another light up ahead – firelight.

Three wrinkled old crones sat around a bubbling cauldron, which was giving off foul-smelling fumes. Perseus tried not to choke as he crept closer – and then shuddered when he saw that the witches had no eyes, only empty sockets, dark and dead inside.



One of the witches sprang up. “Who’s there?” she shrieked. “Who dares to enter our forest?”

Rummaging in her pocket, she pulled out a slippery eyeball. She slotted it into her eye socket and glared at Perseus across the fire.

“Ooh,” she said. “It’s a warrior. A fine, strong warrior with a heavy sword and shield, looking straight at us with his clear, brown eyes.”

“Let me see!” snapped another of the witches. She shuffled around the cauldron to the first witch, plucked the eyeball from her face and shoved it into her own.

She blinked a couple of times and smiled. “Ooh,” she cooed. “He does have lovely eyes.”

“Give me that!” demanded the third witch, snatching the eyeball.

As she peered at Perseus, her gummy mouth spread into a nasty grin. “Oooh,” she gurgled. “He has lovely, shiny eyes.”

“Enough talk about eyes!” said Perseus. “I need to find the Gorgon Medusa.”

The witches began to cackle. “Medusa?” they shrieked. “He seeks Medusa! No one ever makes it out of Medusa’s cave alive, warrior.”

“Cave?” said Perseus. “Which cave? Tell me!”

“Ah,” said the third witch, but there is a price for that information.”

“Name it.”

The witch stepped closer grinning hideously.

“We want your lovely eyes.” She said, and she reached up with her claw-like hands, as if to snatch them from his face.

“Hey!” cried Perseus, leaping back.

These old hags were crazy, Perseus thought, but he needed their help. “Very well,” he said at last, sliding out his sword. “I will give you my eyes.”

The witches scuttled closer, drooling with excitement. “Let me see,” they squabbled.

“Give me our eye!”

Fast as a flash, Perseus lashed out his sword and knocked the stinking cauldron onto the fire. A cloud of steam billowed out, hissing and spitting in the witches’ shocked faces.

The three staggered back, dropping their precious eyeball on the ground.

Perseus snatched it up and placed it on his palm. “I have your eye,” he said. “Now tell me where Medusa lives or I’ll squash it like a bug.”

The witches squirmed.

“We can’t tell you,” said the first.

“Medusa would hurt us,” said the second.

“Tell him!” the third witch screamed. “Tell him! Tell him!”

“She lives in a cave,” said the first witch sulkily.

“So you said. Which cave?” Perseus demanded.

Beneath the Black Mountain. The Cave of the Dragon’s Mouth,” muttered the second witch.

Satisfied, Perseus tossed them the eyeball. Then he turned and raced from the forest.



“You’ll die warrior!” the witches shrieked.

“Everyone dies in Medusa’s cave!”

Perseus and the Gorgon

Chapter Four Worksheet



1. Why did Perseus find it difficult to run quickly?
2. Apart from “witches” what other word is used to identify these three characters in the passage?
3. Which word tells us that the witches had no teeth?

4. Which word tells us that the eyeball wasn't easy to find?
5. Where exactly does Medusa live?
6. What do the witches predict and why?
7. Write down five adjectives which you think best describe a witch.



Finished everything so far?

This chapter contains several different words which can be used to describe speech. Check the meaning of the following words (if you are unsure) and then put each word into an appropriate sentence:

whispered

shrieked

snapped

cooed

demanded

TIP! You may find it helpful to use direct speech! (Look back at the passage for some ideas!)

