Reading comprehension exercises

The Curse of Medusa in Greek Mythology

Medusa is known as a winged Gorgon monster with snakes for hair who could turn anyone to stone just by looking into the person's eyes, but Medusa wasn't always this **despicable** monster that she became known as. Believe it or not, Medusa was a beautiful mortal before she was transformed into a monster.

Medusa Turns Into a Monster

While Medusa was a beautiful mortal woman, she served beside Athena, goddess of wisdom and knowledge. Athena was one of only three virgin goddesses, so Medusa vowed to remain a virgin while she served her.

While serving Athena, mortals and gods would both take notice of Medusa's beauty. Medusa did not take part in any of the attention she received until Poseidon, the god of the seas, took notice of her.

Poseidon was enamored by Medusa's beauty, and Medusa returned the same feelings. Medusa and Poseidon engaged in a love affair and would

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have two children together, but not before Athena discovered the illicit affair.

When Athena discovered the affair, she was enraged and immediately cursed Medusa by taking away her beauty. She turned her long hair into venomous snakes and made her beautiful face so **hideous** that those who looked into her eyes would immediately be turned to stone. Medusa's life was forever changed.

Medusa is Beheaded

Being the mystical creature she was, Medusa's head was sought after by King Polydectes. King Polydectes ordered Perseus, a Greek hero, to bring him the head of Medusa.

There are two versions of why King Polydectes requires Perseus to bring him the head of Medusa.

One version of this myth says that King Polydectes required gifts to be brought to him in honor of the king marrying Danae, Perseus's mother, and Perseus did not have a gift; therefore, he was ordered by King Polydectes to bring him the specific gift of Medusa's head.

Another version of this myth says that King Polydectes sent Perseus on this quest for Medusa's head to keep him from overpowering him on the throne.

Regardless of the reason, Perseus accepted the request and set out to fetch the head of Medusa.

Perseus Beheads Medusa

Perseus sets out on his quest to find Medusa and **behead** her. He is given gifts from the gods to help defeat her, including a **shield** made by the goddess of knowledge and wisdom, Athena. Without this shield, Perseus would not have been able to behead Medusa.

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The shield was polished and reflective, so Perseus used it as a mirror to sneak up behind Medusa without looking her in the eyes. As he closed in on Medusa, he beheaded her and placed her head in his **satchel** to take back to King Polydectes.

Medusa Gives Birth to Two Children

During their love affair, Medusa and Poseidon would have two children together. The children were sons who would be born when Perseus beheaded Medusa. As Perseus beheaded Medusa, her two children sprang from her neck. The sons were Pegasus and Chrysaor.

Pegasus was an immortal winged horse who could fly and create streams of water just by striking his hoof. Pegasus would have future ties with Greek hero Bellerophon. Athena gifted Pegasus to Bellerophon for his devotion to her.

Chrysaor was a young man whose name means "he who bears a golden sword." Chrysaor does not have a large role in Greek mythology as his brother Pegasus.

Medusa Turns King Polydectes to Stone

In an ironic turn of events, Perseus uses Medusa against King Polydectes by turning him to stone after he returns. Perseus pulls Medusa's head from his satchel and holds it up, causing King Polydectes to look into the eyes of Medusa and consequently be turned to stone.

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1. Say if the sentence is true or false.

1. Medusa was a very pretty girl. TRUE FALSE
2. Medusa respected Athena. TRUE FALSE
3. Athena decided to punish Medusa for her beauty. TRUE FALSE
4. Athena turned Medusa into a hideous monster. TRUE FALSE
5. Medusa's look turned people to ice. TRUE FALSE

2. Complete the phrase.

1. Athena was a goddess of _____.
2. Medusa's hair was turned into _____.
3. _____, the god of the seas, was enamored by Medusa's beauty.
4. When Athena discovered the affair, she was enraged and immediately _____ Medusa by taking away her _____.
5. _____ ordered Perseus, a Greek hero, to bring him the head of Medusa.

3. Answer the questions.

1. How did Perseus achieve beheading Medusa?

_____

2. Do you think the punishment for Medusa fair? Give your reasons.

_____

4. Match.

1. hideous	**a)** cut off the head of (someone), as a form of execution.
2. behead	**b)** a bag carried on the shoulder by a long strap.
3. shield	**c)** a broad piece of defensive armor carried on the arm.
4. satchel	**d)** ugly or disgusting to look at.

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