

Hunting a Snake-Headed Monster

A riveting retelling of the myth of Perseus and Medusa

About the Story

Lexiles: 960L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to identify the character traits
of a hero of Greek mythology

Key Skills:

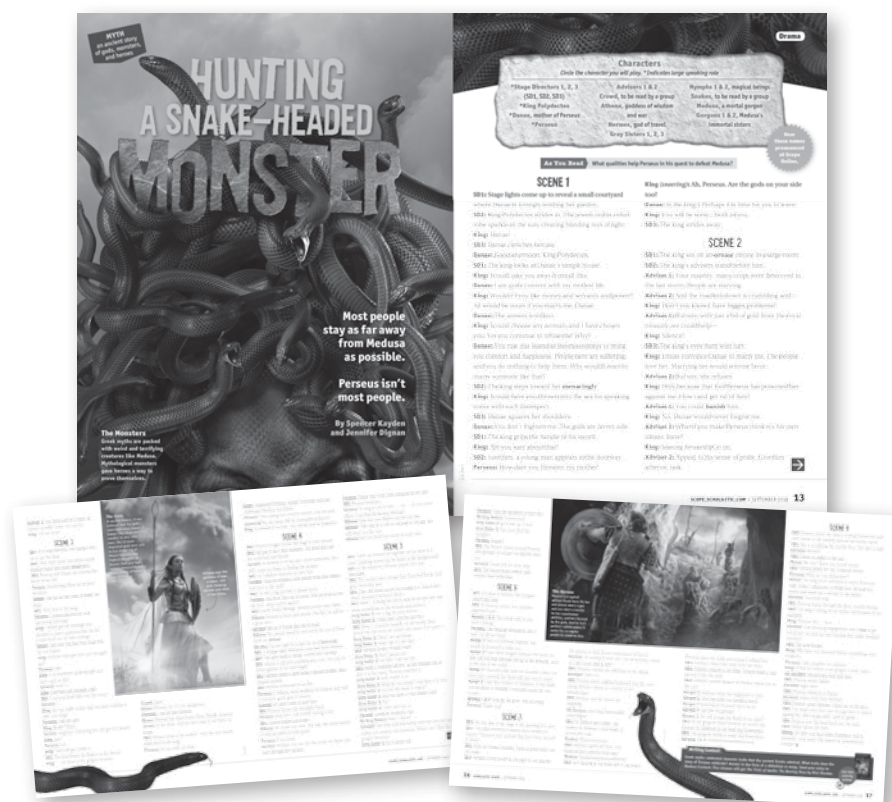
character motivation,
inference, character, text
evidence, interpreting text

Essential Questions:

- What is a hero?
- What is a monster?
- What character traits does our society most admire?

Standards:

The texts and the lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6.** *For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.*



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation guide for character names

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Vocabulary
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Character: Analyzing Perseus
- Quiz*
- **Core Skill:** Mood*
- **Literary Elements:** Theme
Anticipation Guide, Character
Thinking Tool, Genre Exploration
- Contest Entry Form

**Available on two levels*

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Theme Anticipation Guide

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

As a class, complete the **Theme Anticipation Guide** to activate prior knowledge and build curiosity. Have students explain their responses.

Preview vocabulary.

(7 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review the words as a class: *banish, demise, immortal, intervene, lavish, menacingly, ornate, ruse, writhe*

2 Reading and Discussing the Play

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

- As a class, listen to the pronunciations of the character names at Scope Online. Have students practice saying each name.
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud the “As You Read” box on page 13.
- Assign parts and read the play as a class.
- Discuss the following questions as a class.

Close-Reading Questions

In Scene 3, why does King Polydectes tell Perseus he wants Medusa’s head? Why does Perseus agree to get it for him? (character motivation) *The king asks Perseus for Medusa’s head because he thinks Perseus will die trying to get the head. Perseus agrees out of a sense of pride; he wants to prove that he’s neither lazy nor afraid.*

At the beginning of Scene 4, how is Perseus feeling? How can you tell? (inference) *Perseus feels exhausted and discouraged. He “trudges” across the stage and “collapses” under a*

tree. He says he’s searched for Medusa for 80 days with no luck. He describes himself as “in agony” and wonders if he’s going to die.

What kind of person is King Polydectes?

Support your answer with details from the play. (character) *Students will likely say that the king is selfish and cruel; they might describe him as a bully or a jerk. He’s only interested in getting what he wants and seems to have no concern for the needs of his people. He pressures Danae to marry him even though she has repeatedly told him she doesn’t want to, threatens her when she refuses him again, and later forces her to become a servant in his palace. Polydectes also sends Perseus on a quest that Polydectes believes will kill him.*

In Scene 4, Hermes tells Athena that Perseus is “full of pride.” How do Perseus’s words and actions in this scene support Hermes’s statement? (text evidence, character)

When Athena and Hermes offer their help, Perseus throws his shoulders back and says he was “merely having a rest”; he wants them to think he’s doing fine without help. When he accepts the shield from Athena, he says, “If you insist,” suggesting that he doesn’t really need it—though it is clear that he does. And when he asks how to find Medusa, he makes it seem like an afterthought rather than what it is: information he is desperate to have.

In Scene 5, what do Perseus’s actions reveal about his character? (character)

His actions reveal that he is bold and clever: He watches the Gray Sisters and comes up with a way to trick them into giving him the information he needs.

In Scene 8, Danae tells Perseus, “You have killed a monster with a monster.” What does

she mean? (interpreting text) *Danae is calling King Polydectes a monster and noting that Perseus used the head of another monster—Medusa—to kill Polydectes.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

▶ **Do you think Perseus was right to accept the king's quest? Why or why not?** *Answers may vary. Some students might say yes, because Perseus had to defend his honor and his mission was ultimately successful. Others might say no, because Perseus was motivated by pride rather than by responsibility or generosity.*

▶ **In Scene 4, why do Athena and Hermes help Perseus? Do you think Perseus could have succeeded without their help?** *Athena and Hermes want Perseus to survive. As Athena says, he's strong and brave and will be a great hero one day—and also, he's the son of Zeus, the king of the gods. Perseus probably couldn't have succeeded without the gods' help; he seems to be in serious trouble when they appear, and he clearly needs their guidance and tools to find and defeat Medusa.*

▶ **Did King Polydectes deserve what happened to him at the end of the play? Why or why not?** *Answers may vary. Some students might say yes; the king was a bad person and a terrible leader and therefore he*

deserved what he got. Other students might say no; Polydectes did not actually commit murder or force Perseus to accept the quest for Medusa's head.

▶ **At the end of the play, Danae tells Perseus that his name will be remembered forever. Do you think having your name remembered forever is a good goal? Explain.** *Answers will vary. Students might say that having your name remembered is a good goal as long as you are striving to have your name remembered for something good that you contributed to the world—that the desire for this type of immortality could motivate you to work hard and accomplish something important. On the other hand, some may say the desire to be remembered comes from pridefulness and is not admirable. What is important is what you do, not whether others know you do it.*

3 Skill Building: Character

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Break students into small groups to complete the activity sheet **Character: Analyzing Perseus**. This activity will prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 17. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

Name one character trait that Perseus displays in the play. Give two examples of when he displays the trait.

For Advanced Readers

In an essay, explain why Perseus was considered a hero in ancient Greek times. Then give your personal definition of a hero and explain whether Perseus fits that description.

For Theater Lovers

Choose a scene from the play and bring it to life. Choose a director, a costume designer, a set designer, a sound designer, and actors. Rehearse and perform the scene for your class.

For Myth Fans

Choose another Greek myth and compare it to the myth of Perseus and Medusa. What do the two stories have in common?