

Perseus: Another Greek Hero

Do you ever find history repetitive? Greek history was the same way. Many of the heroes of Greek mythology followed similar patterns throughout their lives. For instance, all of the heroes received help in some way. Perseus received help from Athena and Hermes, Jason received help from Medea, and Bellerophon was helped by Pegasus (Skidmore). They all had to complete some hideous task or slay some terrible beast. Lastly, they either got a great reward, or a terrible and endless punishment. The myth of Perseus illustrates many common themes in Greek mythology.

Perseus, like most other heroes was aided by some one in his tasks. In Perseus' case it was Athena who helped him. Although her motives weren't to help a brave heart, she helped him nonetheless. Hermes also helped Perseus by giving him the special sword to slay the gorgon with, and a special bag to put her head in after it had been "removed". In some versions of the story he also gave Perseus his winged sandals, but that fact is disputed. Perseus practically forced help from Atlas and the Fates, but they helped him too. In a small way, Perseus helped Bellerophon by freeing Pegasus from Medusa's insides (Perseus). Pegasus was then free to help Bellerophon slay the Chimera (Skidmore).

Perseus and all other Grecian heroes had to complete a task before they could earn their title. Most of the tasks were favors for the gods, favors for kings, or a matter of honor. Bellerophon slew the Chimera because a king asked it of him (Skidmore). Sometimes, like in Perseus' case, it was a combination. He was doing it for all of those reasons. King Polydectes sent him on the quest. Athena aided him because she wanted it done as well. Perseus also did it for his, and his mother's, honor. Great rewards can come from all these reasons (Skidmore).

As a reward for completing their task, heroes received either a wondrous gift, or an endless punishment. Perseus received his honor, a helmet of invisibility, and a goddess' gratitude. He was able to return to his homeland, slay the slime that was wooing his mom, and kill his evil grandfather. Another example of a wonderful gift was Hercules, a hero who was taken to live with the gods on Mt. Olympus after he died (Skidmore). An example of endless punishment would be Prometheus, who had an eagle eat his liver everyday, and each day it would grow back. Another example would be Sisyphus, who had to roll a stone up a mountain, watch it roll back down, and roll it back up (Thompson). You were either eternally blessed, or eternally cursed.

As you can see Mythology, like History, repeated itself and showed visible patterns. This is probably because it **was** history for the Greeks, and was often their only way to explain an odd function of their daily life. Grecian Heroes were the idols of the Greeks, much like our athletes are today. It was their dream to accomplish something big, be recognized for it, and eternally rewarded. Isn't that the same today?