

Hercules: Just Like Everyone Else

Imagine that you are Hercules, and the goddess Hera has brought upon you a fit of rage that makes you kill your wife and kids. Because you killed your family, you agree to do twelve labors that are supposed to be impossible. Many people think that other Greek heroes are in the way. So they send them on impossible quests thinking that they will be killed (Skidmore "Hercules"). Hercules, a very intelligent and very strong being, like many other heroes gets sent on impossible tasks and ends up succeeding, eventually.

Perseus is one of the heroes that is like Hercules. King Acrisius only had one child. Her name was Danae, and she was the most beautiful woman in the land. The oracle told the king that someday his grandson would kill him. So he locked his daughter in a castle, trying to prove the oracle wrong. Zeus disguised himself and got her pregnant. When Acrisius found out, he put Danae and her son Perseus in a chest and put it in the sea thinking it would sink and kill them both. It didn't sink. It ended up on the shore. The fisherman Dictys found them and took them home. He and his wife took care of them and Danae was satisfied to let Perseus follow in Dictys occupation and become a fisherman. But the king Polydectes fell in love with Danae because she was still beautiful. He wanted Perseus' mother but he did not want him. Polydectes told Perseus that he would want one of the Gorgon's heads more than anything else in the world. So Perseus set out to get Medusa's head. He sailed to Greece to find out where the Gorgons lived. He was told to find the Nymphs of the water because no man can slay Medusa unaided. He did not know where the nymphs were so he asked Hermes where they were. Hermes took Perseus to them. Hermes gave him a sword and Athena gave him a shield to look into because looking at her hair would turn a man to stone. When they got to the Nymphs they gave him the helmet of invisibility, some winged sandals, and a special sack to carry Medusa's head in. He found Medusa and cut her head off. He then put the head in the bag and sped away before her sisters woke up. He returned to Acrisius and told him he had succeeded and asked if he wanted to see it. The king said yes and was turned to stone. Perseus competed in the Olympics and was throwing the discus. He threw it and a gust of wind caught it and blew it into the crowd. There it hit his grandfather in the head and killed him (Skidmore "Perseus"). Hercules is like Perseus because he is smart and can think things through. The story of Perseus is very much like the story of Theseus.

Theseus was just about the only hero that did not have a god for a parent. His dad was a king of Athens and his mom was just normal. When Theseus was born his father dug a hole in the ground and put a sword in it and a big boulder on top. His father then returned to Athens to do his job. Now let's jump forward a few years. Theseus was being raised by his mother and grandfather. When he was sixteen his mother called to him and told him his father was a great king. But before she would tell him his name, she took him to the boulder and said move it. He did and found the sword. He set off on his journey to find his father on land. He came across Periphetes, who hit his victims in the skull with a club. Instead Theseus took the club and killed Periphetes with it. Later in his journey he found Sinus. Sinus often had passers-by help him bend down pine trees.

Then he would tie their wrists to the tops and let go. They would fly and die. Instead Theseus tied Sinus' wrist to the tree and killed him. Almost to Athens Theseus encountered Sciron. He would make strangers wash his feet in a tub and kick the strangers off the cliff. Instead Theseus caught his foot and threw Sciron off the cliff to be eaten by a man-eating turtle. With Athens in sight he came across Procrustes. Procrustes had a bed he would have passers-by lay down on. If they were too short for the bed, he would stretch them. If they were too tall he would cut off their arms and legs until they fit. Procrustes tried to do this to Theseus but Theseus had different plans. He laid him down and chopped off Procrustes legs. He finally made it to Athens. The king did not know who he was but all of the Athenians loved him for killing all of the thugs. So the king threw him a banquet. He put poisoned wine for Theseus. Theseus drew the sword and saw it was his. He realized it was his and hit the wine into the dirt and was reunited with his son (Skidmore "Theseus"). Theseus is very much like Hercules because he has a knack for turning things in his favor. While it took him a while he finally gets it done. Just like Odysseus.

It took him 10 years to get back but he finally succeeded. After the Trojan War, Odysseus set sail off to Ithica, his home. He got stuck in a storm and got pushed to the Cyclops. He locked him in a cave. Odysseus made a spear, heated it up and stuck it into the Cyclops' eye. He tried to grab Odysseus but could not see him. But he still did not open the door. So Odysseus used his brains. He and his men hid on the under side of the Cyclops' sheep and when he opened the door to let them out, they escaped. Odysseus and his men were blown to Circe's island. She entertained them and then turned them all into pigs. Circe then told Odysseus that he had to go and speak with the blind prophet Tiresias in the under world. He went and talked with him and he told his future. Then he went back to Circe and she told him to leave. Then they had to pass the Sirens. They sing and men follow it and end up dying. Odysseus covered his crew's ears with wax and told them to tie him to the mast and not let him go until they had passed them. They rowed passed the Sirens and Odysseus wanted to be let go but his crew obeyed. They got passed the Sirens without any incident. Then they had to pass between the sun god's island, a giant whirlpool, and a cliff with a man eating monster on the top. Circe told them to stay as close to the cliff as possible because it was better to lose six men then lose the whole crew. And if they landed on the island, they would all be killed. So they went up close to the cliff. Scylla got her six men but then the rest panicked and turned into the whirlpool. They were taken around and landed on the sun god's island. Disregarding everything he said, and sacrificed all of his cattle and the god was angry. He threw down a thunderbolt and Odysseus is the only one who survived. He landed on Calypso's island. He waited there for fourteen years and was eventually let go and he landed on Ithica but he did not know. The king did not recognize him. He put a mist around him so he could not tell. Finally his son Telemachus comes and takes him home (Skidmore "Odysseus"). Odysseus uses his head just like Hercules. He has to think things through.

Odysseus, Theseus, and Perseus all have things in common with Hercules. One, they all had to use their heads. They are all sent on impossible tasks and eventually succeed. Perseus survived killing a monster that turns men into stone (Skidmore "Perseus"). Theseus, as a young boy, lifted a boulder and rid the highway to Athens of thieves and thugs (Skidmore "Theseus"). Odysseus was gone for 14 years and never lost sight of home in Ithica (Skidmore "Odysseus"). They are all great guys that got what they wanted to do finished.

Devin Anderson
October 21, 2008
Period 5

Works Cited

- Cotterell, Arthur. The Encyclopedia of Mythology. London: Anness Publishing Ltd., 2008.
- Daniels, Maria. "Hercules; Greece's Greatest Hero." The Perseus Digital Library. 2-9-2008. Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the President and Fellows of Harvard College . 21 Oct 2008 <www.perseus.tufts.edu/Herakles/>.
- Hamilton, Edith. Mythology; Timless Tales of Gods and Heros. New York: Penguin Books USA, 1969.
- "Nemean Lion." Encyclopedia Mythica. 2008. Encyclopedia Mythica Online. 15 Oct. 2008 <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/n/nemean_lion.html>.
- Pontikis, Nick. "MYTH MAN'S HOMEWORK help center; HERACLES." Myth Man. 2003. Thanasi's Olympus Greek Restaurant. 15 Oct 2008 <<http://mythman.com/>>.
- Skidmore , Joel. "Labor One: The Nemean Lion." Mythweb. 24 August 2008. 15 Oct 2008 <<http://www.mythweb.com/hercules/herc03.html>>.
- Skidmore , Joel. "Theseus" Mythweb. 24 August 2008. 15 Oct 2008 <<http://www.mythweb.com/hercules/herc03.html>>.
- Skidmore , Joel. "Perseus" Mythweb. 24 August 2008. 15 Oct 2008 <<http://www.mythweb.com/hercules/herc03.html>>.
- Skidmore , Joel. "Odysseus." Mythweb. 24 August 2008. 15 Oct 2008 <<http://www.mythweb.com/hercules/herc03.html>>.
- Zimmerman, J. E.. Dictionary of Classical Mythology. New York: Bantam Books, 1964.