

Perseus: Just Your Every-day Hero

“Kill the woman with snakes for hair, and one gaze from her turns you to stone! You want me to kill Medusa!?” asked Perseus incredulously. Polydectes, the king and brother of Dictys, had fallen in love with Danae who was the mother of Perseus. Perseus wasn't happy about this so he made Polydectes leave his mother alone. Polydectes then told Perseus that he planned to marry another girl and told Perseus he expected a wedding present. For his present he wanted the head of Medusa. So, Perseus set out to kill Medusa. Athena, the goddess, helped Perseus. She told Perseus what he needed to get, where he needed to go, and who he needed to find to help him complete this task.

The main thing he needed to do was to trick the Grey Ladies into telling him where the Nymphs were. They only had one eye to share, and Athena had told Perseus that he needed to steal the eye. So he stole it, and told them if they wanted it back they had to tell him where the Nymphs were. So, at the end of his journey he found the water nymphs bathing in the Styx River. They gave him the tools he needed to kill Medusa. He got winged sandals, a sword, a pouch to put the head in, and Athena gave him a shield that had a mirror on the front. This was so that if she looked at him he could put the mirror in front of his face and he would be safe. So he snuck into the Gorgon's Lair. He chopped off Medusa's head while she was asleep. The winged horse Pegasus sprung from the wound. He took the head and escaped on his winged sandals (Skidmore "Perseus"). The story of Perseus and Medusa illustrates three main common themes in mythology.

First of all, someone sends the hero to do an impossible task, usually intending them to be killed. In this story Polydectes sends Perseus to kill the Gorgon, Medusa. This task seems impossible, because one gaze from Medusa will turn a man to stone (Skidmore "Perseus"). Another example is the story of Bellerophon and the Chimaera. Bellerophon was at the palace when the king's wife made a pass at him, and when he ran away, she claimed that he made a pass at her. The king was furious, but he didn't want to be inhospitable, so he gave Bellerophon a letter, and told him to take it to his father-in-law, King Iobetes. What the letter said was "Dear Iobetes please kill the person that hands you this letter". So Bellerophon delivered the letter. And Iobetes, not wanting to be inhospitable either, fed Bellerophon meals every night. Then one night he asked, "Bellerophon, could you rid our kingdom of the Chimaera?" So Bellerophon set out to do this (Skidmore "Bellerophon"). Both of these stories have the hero sent to do an impossible task. The monsters they are asked to kill are supposedly invincible. Also, notice that the people that asked them to kill the monsters didn't think they would succeed either. They also both get help from the gods.

Not only did these heroes both have help, but the help happened to come from the same goddess. Athena told Perseus where he needed to go to get the tools needed for the job. She also was the one that gave him the mirrored shield (Skidmore "Perseus"). Athena told Bellerophon that he needed to get the winged horse, Pegasus, to kill the Chimaera. She gave him a special bridal that would tame Pegasus when he wore it. So

Bellerophon found Pegasus and put the bridal on the horse. Then he got a spear and put lump of lead on the end (Skidmore "Bellerophon"). Athena helps many heroes, since she is the goddess of wisdom and war. And of course all mythological heroes need to kill a Monster!

The beasts of mythology were unable to be killed. Many heroes prove this statement wrong. Perseus snuck in and chopped of Medusa's head while she was sleeping (Skidmore "Perseus"). Bellerophon put a lump of lead at the end of his spear. He flew down on Pegasus' back, and shoved the spear down the Chimaera's throat, and of course it died (Skidmore "Bellerophon"). The reason heroes are heroes are because they do things that were supposedly impossible.

Mythology has many stories that illustrate common themes. All of the stories in mythology are fun to here about, whether they explain something; teach a lesson, or whether they are just a story. The story of Perseus illustrates some of the common themes in Mythology. Studying mythology helps a lot and we can learn a lot from it.

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