

## **Perseus Taster Lesson (Age 8-12 years)**

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This lesson is suitable for use in a classroom space. We generally set up classrooms in a U-shape to enable students to do practical work on a regular basis but you can easily just push back your tables and chairs to give some added room.

This lesson has scripted out the Teacher's actual delivery but of course you can alter this to suit your own style.

**The use of Music** will greatly enhance these lessons.

Check out this website for good free music

<https://www.freesfx.co.uk/Category/Horror/223>

Tracks on there like **Hallowe'en Hunting, Suspended, Sacrifice** are great for this lesson (be prepared to wait a bit for the samples to load when you're having a listen!)

**Brief** – Perseus has a quest to get the head of the gorgon Medusa and bring it to the King. He meets various characters on his journey to the Medusa, who give him gifts to help him face danger. He has at this point – winged sandals, a mirrored shield, a sharp sickle or sword and for the Medusa the Nymphs have given him a cap of invisibility sickle and a bag for the head.

The Medusa is a hideous creature, one of three sisters who lives in a cave. She has a long tongue, sharp teeth and claws and her hair is a seething mass of snakes. Importantly if anyone looks directly at her she will be turned to stone.

## **Perseus In The Cave Of The Medusa**

### **1. The Stone Statues – Configuration Mime, Movement, Tension, Thought Tapping, Soundscape**

Gather the students to a seated position beside you. If using Full Lesson Plan you would re-cap the previous lesson (the Visit to The Stygian Nymphs).

**If using only the Taster you will need to give the students the introductory brief.**

Teacher – So Perseus continued on his mission to find the Medusa. Who can remember what the Nymphs gave him to protect him when entering the Medusa's lair?

**Cues response from students-** The Cap of Invisibility and a bag for the head as the power of the Medusa's stare will remain even when the head is severed.

Teacher – What else does Perseus have with him that might also come in handy?

**Cues response** – The sickle, the bag, the flying sandals.

Teacher – How do you think Perseus will be feeling on entering the lair?

**Cues response** – Nervous, scared, challenged etc

Teacher – The entrance to the Medusa's lair was filled with stone statues of creatures turned to stone by the Medusa. I wonder what the statues were?

**Cues response** – animals, human figures, creatures of the underworld.

Teacher – Everyone find a space and stand as one of these stone statues. Keep very still and try to look menacing!

### **Cues response – Students stand as menacing statues.**

Teacher – Let's have a few levels here. Some of the statues might be low and some very high.

### **Cues students to adapt statues.**

### **When the children are in position play the music.**

<https://www.freesfx.co.uk/Category/Horror/223>

Tracks like Hallowe'en Hunting, Suspended, Sacrifice are great (be prepared to wait a bit for the samples to load).

This will set the chilling mood for this dramatic scene.

Now choose someone to be Perseus. Ask him to put on the cap/helmet of Invisibility.

Teacher – As Perseus you must think how he is feeling and walk very slowly through the stone statues. Danger lurks everywhere in here! Remember to hold the items you have tightly.

### **Cues the student playing Perseus to walk slowly through the statues.**

Teacher – This time we're going to add in a technique to make the scene a bit more spooky. When Perseus passes a statue the statue turns its head slowly to look at him. When he senses this and turns round the statue is stony still once again. You can also add in some **strange sounds** coming from the statues.

This is a simple, effective technique that your students will really enjoy.

Replay the scene with the statue heads turning and strange sounds.

### **Thought- Tapping**

Teacher – This time I might tap one of the statues who can tell us

how they got turned to stone.

**You can thought tap several statues to get their stories.**

For the students to really grasp the effectiveness of this scene you can divide the class in two to do it – while one half performs the others watch and then switch.

You can get them to evaluate the look and the atmosphere that is created and get brilliant vocabulary to use later in the writing section.

**2) Meeting The Medusa – Improvisation, characterisation, tension build up, paired and group work.**

Teacher – Perseus passes the statues and enters a very dark cave where he can hear that the Medusa is sleeping. He must be very careful now, who remembers why?

**Cues response – He must not look at the Medusa.**

Teacher – The Medusa is ugly. Her head is a mass of snakes. Her snore is loud and she probably smells grim. He will need to see what he is doing but how if he cannot look directly at her?

**Discuss that he is carrying the shiny, silver shield which can act as a mirror so that he can see her reflection.**

Teacher – As Perseus approaches the Medusa, she yawns, looking like she might wake up, then sleeps and he walks again. Let's try this section with a partner.

In pairs the students can try this Mime/Movement. One person as Perseus walking very slowly to the sleeping Medusa who looks like she might wake up. Perseus watched her via the mirror shield.

Again the students will focus on slow movements building up tension.

Put on the music again to enhance while the students are doing the scene.

Once they have had a practice you can see a few pairs (use the music) that you have observed as good examples and encourage feedback.

Teacher – As Perseus gets very close to the Medusa the snakes on her head get restless as they sense Perseus approach. They start to wriggle and say to each other “Someone is here.”  
“I can sense a presence”.  
They speak strangely hissing out the “s” sound. Let’s practise this.

**As a group practise speaking altogether like the snakes sensing the presence of Perseus.**

Teacher – They warn the Medusa – “Mistress someone is here”. What will happen?

**The Medusa will wake up.**

Teacher - She scratches her head and wakes up. What will her reaction be when she cannot see Perseus?

**Cues response – anger, curiosity, defensiveness**

Teacher – She speaks to Perseus. What does she say?

Cues response – Who are you? What do you want? How dare you enter my cave! Show yourself !– Get some ideas.

Teacher –Do you think Perseus will answer?

**Cues response – Get some ideas on how Perseus will respond, still looking at the mirrored shield.**

Teacher – Will the snakes say anything?

**Cues response – Maybe they sense him moving from one side to**

**another and tell their Mistress who gets irritated by them.**

Teacher – Perseus has to be very careful the clever Medusa does not distract him from his task. She will try and trick him into looking at her. How might she do this?

**Cues response – Asking him to come closer, to look at something on her face, to say she has something for him etc**

Teacher- The snakes will also attempt to trick him or distract him. How might they do this?

**Cues response – Hissing towards his face, spitting at him etc**

If you are up for teacher in role technique **(and we highly recommend)** you can set up a demo of how this scene might look.

This will be very useful for the students when they come to trying the scene themselves.

To do this go in role as the Medusa seated and asleep, choose three snakes to stand to your sides and a Perseus. Start from the slow build up. Tell one of the snakes to be the first to see Perseus and take it from there.

From your demo the students will see the importance of taking turns to speak and get into the characterisation. The snakes should have good snake characterization for maximum effect.

After your demo the students in groups of 4/5 should try out the scene. Remind them about slow pace, characterisation, taking turns to speak, trying to trick Perseus (trying at least two tricks!)

**I suggest holding on the part where Perseus takes the head because there will be a temptation for them to go to that part too quickly and you want this dramatic build up first!**

After a while take a look at some of the scenes and feedback.

Teacher – I didn't add on the part yet when Perseus takes the head. Can anyone think why I've left that out so far?

**Cues response – it will be interesting for you to see if they understand the focus on the build up.**

Teacher – Perseus had to pick his moment. Perhaps he had a trick of his own diverting the Medusa and snakes so that he could pounce with his sickle, slice off the head and put it in the bag – WITHOUT LOOKING AT IT. What might he say/do to divert them?

**Cues response – Maybe he asks them to look at something to distract them.**

Teacher – You can decide in your groups how Perseus does this and add on this final section. Once the head is in the bag he must quickly get out of there as the scream of the Medusa may awaken her two sisters. Are there any gifts to help with not being seen and getting away quickly?

**Cues response – He puts on the flying sandals.**

### **Into Literacy**

You can stop between scenes and do smaller written pieces but if you are doing the whole practical session in a one you don't want to break the continuity so your Literacy task can come at the end.

Stone Statue Stories – The students draw the shape of the stone statue that they became and write a description of who they were and how they got turned to stone underneath.

Medusa Character Description – The students draw the Medusa and label parts of her grotesque body.

Creative Writing –1) The students write the Meeting The Medusa scene in pairs as a paired script to read and enact.

2) The students write this story chapter as an atmospheric narrative or as picture story with captions.

**We play the music while the children are writing as this also helps their focus and mood!**

We recommend with writing tasks that the students get the opportunity to **share their work with each other**, reading to a partner or whole class as this places value on the written work and is a real motivator when they **know** the writing will be used somehow!

We use a pop up tent with a flashlight or torch to present scary stories and this would work well here – see below. This would work well as the Cave and **be sure to play the music to give added atmosphere.**



This Taster is only a section of the Perseus story which contains the following sections.

1) The Oracle -The Birth of Perseus and a challenge is set him-  
Configuration Mime, setting the scene, characterisation in story circle.

2) Athena gives Perseus the shield and Hermes presents the winged sandals and sickle (sword) – Improvisation, shoe –shop. Mirror effect – whole class synchronized movement.

3) The Grey Sisters tell Perseus where the Stygian Nymphs with one eye live. They give Perseus the Invisibilty helmet and a bag for the head – Improvisation and Character

4) At The Medusa’s cave – Configuration, Improvisation

5) With Atlas and saving Andromeda from Dragon– Improvisation, movement

6) The Olympic Games and King Polydectes Is Turned To stone- Movement and Improvisation.



Above - Teacher works with groups to help them get started.

We recommend you try out this Taster scene with your students and if they like it then **the full set of lessons is also available. Click The Link below.**

<https://www.thedramastudio.com/store/product/161-perseus-and-the-medusa>