

Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*

Grade levels: 9-12

Perseus and Medusa is a myth about a young boy in ancient Greece who must go on a dangerous journey in order to fulfill a promise he has made to a young prince, Polydectes. On this journey he meets Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, three witches who send him to the underworld for a magical sword, and Medusa, a female creature whom he must battle to fulfill his promise.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To bring to life the story of *Perseus and Medusa* through the use of puppetry
2. To explore the concept of the myth as a story form
3. To exercise writing skills while exploring ancient Greek mythology and culture

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Creating Myths*

What distinguishes each of the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology? Students study the myths of ancient Greece and identify the qualities of each god and goddess. They examine how myths were used to explain the inexplicable, and write their own myth for the purpose of explaining an event.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *What's News?*

Students will organize an ancient Greek newspaper. Individuals or groups will be assigned to different sections of the paper including a review of the marionette show, a headline about Perseus defeating Medusa, Medusa's obituary and more! The class as a whole will develop a newspaper complete with all the top news of the day.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English Language Arts, History and Social Science, Theater, Visual Arts, and Music

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PRE-ACTIVITY: CREATING MYTHS

LEARNING GOAL:

To explore the concept of the myth as a story form

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Copies of short myths
Writing supplies

TIME:

60 minutes

STEP 1:

Have students read several myths from ancient Greek mythology. Focus in on the special qualities of each god and goddess in the story.

STEP 2:

Discuss how myths are often used to explain the unexplainable and chose a myth as an example to follow up with this concept.

STEP 3:

Have students write their own myth explaining something in their own lives that they don't completely understand.

STEP 4:

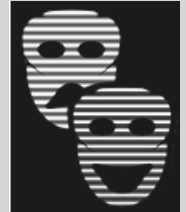
Share their myths with the class to hear what others have created.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Write** a resume applying for the position of a god or goddess on Mount Olympus. Choose a unique quality that could become god-like, and sell your skills to your potential employer.
- 2) **Hold** mock interviews based off of the student resumes. Students can conduct the interviews themselves and decide who they would hire as a God or Goddess for specific job positions.



Young Audiences of Massachusetts
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(617) 629-YAMA (9262)
<http://www.yamass.org>



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Grade Levels: 9-12

POST-ACTIVITY: WHAT'S NEWS?

LEARNING GOAL:

To exercise writing skills while exploring ancient Greek mythology and culture.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Paper and writing supplies

TIME:

60 minutes

STEP 1:

Divide students into groups. Assign each group to a section of the newspaper (i.e., Cover Story, Sports, Obituaries, Performance Review, Advertisements). Create news stories relating to the performance and other aspects of ancient Greek culture.

STEP 2:

Combine all the separate parts into a newspaper. Close attention should be paid to the format of the paper. Where should the top stories go? Where should advertisements be strategically placed?

STEP 3:

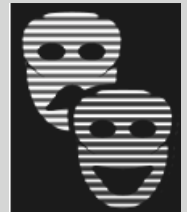
Create published copies of the paper for the entire class. Have students read what everybody else wrote.

EXTENSIONS:

* **Have** students create enough copies of their paper for their entire grade level. Pass out copies to the other classes.



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RESOURCES:

[Bulfinch's Greek and Roman Mythology: The Age of Fable](#) by Thomas Bulfinch

[Bulfinch's Mythology](#) by Thomas Bulfinch

[The Greek Myths](#) by Robert Graves

[Greek Gods and Heroes](#) by Robert Graves

[Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes](#) by Edith Hamilton

[Mythology](#) by Edith Hamilton

[The Dictionary of Classical Mythology](#) by John Edward Zimmerman

<http://www.mythweb.com/encyc/index.html>

<http://www.mythology.com/>

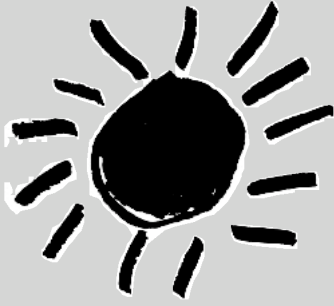
<http://www.greekmythology.com/>

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS:

Founded in 1993 by Anne Ware and Peter Schaefer, Tanglewood Marionettes is a nationally touring marionette theater based in New England. Their tales are performed by skilled puppeteers who have spent many years perfecting their art. In 1997 and again in 2001, Tanglewood Marionettes was a featured performer at the Puppeteers of America National Festival in Toledo, Ohio and Tampa, Florida. Tanglewood Marionettes has also been invited to perform several times at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the nation's foremost puppetry centers. In 1999 they received a Citation for Excellence in the Art of Puppetry, awarded annually by UNIMA-USA (The American Center of the Union International de la Marionette). For more information on Tanglewood Marionettes, please consult the web site: www.tanglewoodmarionettes.com.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For over 45 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and more than 95 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and storytellers. Its 36 ensembles offer 57 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs include educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.



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MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*

<i>Arts-Theatre 4</i>	Technical Theatre...demonstrate skills in using the basic tools, media, and techniques involved in theatrical production.
<i>Arts-Theatre 5</i>	Critical Response...describe and analyze their own theatrical work and work of others using appropriate theater vocabulary.
<i>Arts-Theatre 10</i>	Interdisciplinary Connections...Students will apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering, and scripted scenes.
<i>Arts-Music 6</i>	Purpose and Meaning in the Arts...describe the purpose for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created.
<i>Arts-Music 8</i>	Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change...demonstrate understanding of styles, influence, change.
<i>Arts-Music 10</i>	Interdisciplinary Connections...apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.
<i>Arts-Connections 6-10</i>	Students will investigate the historical and cultural contexts of the arts, learn about the arts in their communities, and use their knowledge of the arts in the study of other disciplines.
<i>English Language Arts 9</i>	Students will identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.
<i>English Language Arts 16</i>	Students will compare and contrast similar myths and narratives from different cultures and geographic regions.
<i>History & Social Science 8</i>	Places and Regions of the World...Students will identify and explain the location and features of places and systems organized over time.

Perseus and Medusa

STORY SYNOPSIS

In the land of Ancient Greece, on the island of Seriphos, a woman named Danae lived with her son, whom she named Perseus. He had never known his father, and his mother never spoke of the man, but alone she raised her son well among the simple fisherpeople by the



shore of the Aegean Sea. Though Perseus was poor, he grew up strong, intelligent, and fearless. Now, there was another youth on the island who lived a different kind of life. Prince Polydectes was the son of the king. He was terribly proud, and refused to go near the common subjects. Polydectes and Perseus were destined never to cross paths, until the year both boys turned sixteen. That was the year the Panhellenic Games came to Seriphos, and athletes from all over Greece came to the island to compete. Since the day he could walk, Polydectes had been trained by the finest coaches for this moment: he planned to win the highest honors at the games on his own home ground, in front of his people. But, since all were allowed to participate, Perseus decided to try his luck. In each event, Polydectes excelled, only to be bested by this poor fisherboy. Polydectes was humiliated, and from that moment on, he swore revenge against the upstart who had stolen his glory...

And so it came to be that Prince Polydectes invited Perseus to the palace -- ostensibly in

honor of Perseus's accomplishments at the Games, but in reality to gain his revenge against the unwitting fisherboy. Perseus brought with him a gift for the Prince -- a precious heirloom and his mother Danae's most prized possession. Polydectes scorned the gift, and crushed it underfoot. At the Prince's callous treatment of his family heirloom, Perseus flew into a rage and rashly promised to bring the Prince another gift -- anything the Prince should desire. Sensing his opportunity, the Prince bid Perseus bring him the head of the Gorgon, Medusa, knowing full well that such a quest would almost certainly end in death for Perseus. Perseus agreed to bring Polydectes the Gorgon's head.

Later, Perseus lamented his foolish promise to the Prince, for he knew as well as any the danger that faced him. Suddenly, from out of the clouds above, a majestic figure appeared. It was Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, there to help Perseus in his quest. She gave to him a pair of winged sandals that would allow him to fly. Athena also advised Perseus to seek the council of the Gray Sisters, as they had crucial information that Perseus would need to accomplish **his goal. She told him that the Gray Sisters could be**



Perseus and Medusa

STORY SYNOPSIS (cont.)

his goal. She told him that the Gray Sisters could be found in the far Frozen North. Perseus thanked Athena for her help, and winged his way swiftly northward.

The Frozen North is a cold and inhospitable land of crags and gullies and snow-capped peaks. Perseus found the Gray Sisters, and saw that they had but one eye between them, which they shared by passing from Sister to Sister. When Perseus asked them for the information he needed to defeat Medusa, the Gray Sisters jeered at him and refused to help. Realizing that he needed a bargaining chip, Perseus darted in and stole the Eye as it was being passed from one Sister to another. Terrified that he would destroy the Eye, the Sisters told Perseus that he must go to the Land of the Evening Star, there to find the entrance to the Underworld. It was in the Underworld, they told him, that he would find the Sword of Hades, the one blade sharp enough to cut off Medusa's head. Perseus returned to them the Eye, and thanked the Gray Sisters for their help. He flew south.

After many days travel, Perseus arrived at the Land of the Evening Star. While he was there, he met the nymph Hesperia. Hesperia learned of his quest, and warned Perseus that, as a mortal, if he tried to enter the Underworld to retrieve the Sword of Hades, he would die the instant he set foot inside. Hesperia offered to go in his stead, as she was not a mortal. Perseus accepted her offer, and Hesperia entered the Underworld and retrieved the magical sword for Perseus. Perseus thanked her, and sword in hand, flew away to the land of the Gorgon's lair.

When Perseus finally encountered Medusa, she was more hideous than he could have imagined. Remembering that to look eyes with Medusa would turn him instantly into stone, Perseus hid behind a statue and used his wits to trick the Gorgon into coming closer. With one sweep of his magic blade, Perseus severed Medusa's neck.

Quickly Perseus flew back to Seriphos. He placed Medusa's head in a leather sack, for even though she was dead, her eyes still had the power to turn living flesh to stone. Perseus took the sack to the palace, where he



tossed it at the feet of Polydectes. Perseus warned the Prince not to open the sack, but Polydectes did not believe that the sack contained the Gorgon's head. Despite Perseus's warning, the Prince opened the sack, and was instantly turned to stone.

Perseus returned the sword and winged sandals to Athena, and thanked her once again for all her help.

From that time forth, Perseus had many more adventures, and eventually became a great king himself. After his death, the gods honored Perseus by placing him up in the sky, in the form of a constellation.

