

Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*

Grade levels: 1-5

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 myth as a story form.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Understanding Myths

Myths are stories that help people understand and face the unknown. They also help to explain beliefs. As a group, study various myths including "Perseus and Medusa." Then create advertisements for the special goods and services that different Gods and Goddesses can create.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: What's so Scary?

What made Medusa so scary? Was it her head of snakes? Or her tail? What do you think would make you frightening to other people? Ask students to draw pictures of themselves and change one of their physical features to make them appear threatening.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

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

PRE-ACTIVITY: **UNDERSTANDING MYTHS**

LEARNING GOAL:

To explore the concept of myth as a story form and learn about characters from Greek mythology.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Short myth/myths
Posterboard and coloring supplies

TIME:

one hour

STEP 1: Read the enclosed story of Perseus and Medusa to the class. Select a few other short Greek myths and read them to the class.

STEP 2: Discuss the characters and the stories with your students. What belief or unknown situation was explained in the myth? What special and unique skills or objects did the characters in the story use to accomplish their goals?

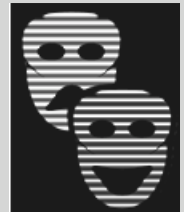
STEP 3: Divide students into groups and have each group select a character from a myth that has a special trait or object that makes them unique. Each group should learn as much as they can about the character they have selected.

STEP 4: Create a poster in each group advertising that character's special object or service (i.e., Hermes Package Deliveries, or Athena's Wisdom Elixir).

STEP 5: Present each poster to the rest of the class and learn about each group's character from Greek mythology.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Ask** students to write their own myth explaining something in their own lives that they don't completely understand.
- 2) **Discuss** with students the difference between a live performance and a pre-recorded performance (i.e., movies). What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Are there parts of stories that would have to be cut out or altered in a live performance that could be put in a pre-recorded performance? Why?



POST-ACTIVITY: WHAT'S SO SCARY?

LEARNING GOAL: To discuss and identify characteristics that make people intimidating

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:
Drawing paper

TIME:
45 minutes - one hour.

STEP 1: Ask students to think about what made Medusa scary. Discuss the reasons and list them on the board.

STEP 2: Explain to students that throughout time Medusa has been depicted by artists in many different ways. Sometimes she is a beautiful woman and sometimes a hideous monster. Why would that be? Look at various pictures of Medusa from different artists and time periods (included). How was she depicted in this production?

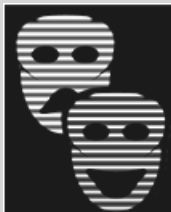
STEP 3: Ask students to draw themselves, but to change one or more of their physical characteristics in a way that would make them frightening.

STEP 4: Ask some or all students to share their drawings with the class and explain why they think they would be scary.

EXTENSIONS:

1) Ask students to write a short essay explaining why their character is scary. Is this what scares you? Why would it scare other people?

2) Ask students to draw their own version of Medusa. Would she be beautiful or scary? Why? Show them the pictures of Medusa drawn over the ages. Why do you think she looks so different in all the pictures? Why do you think those artists saw her so differently?



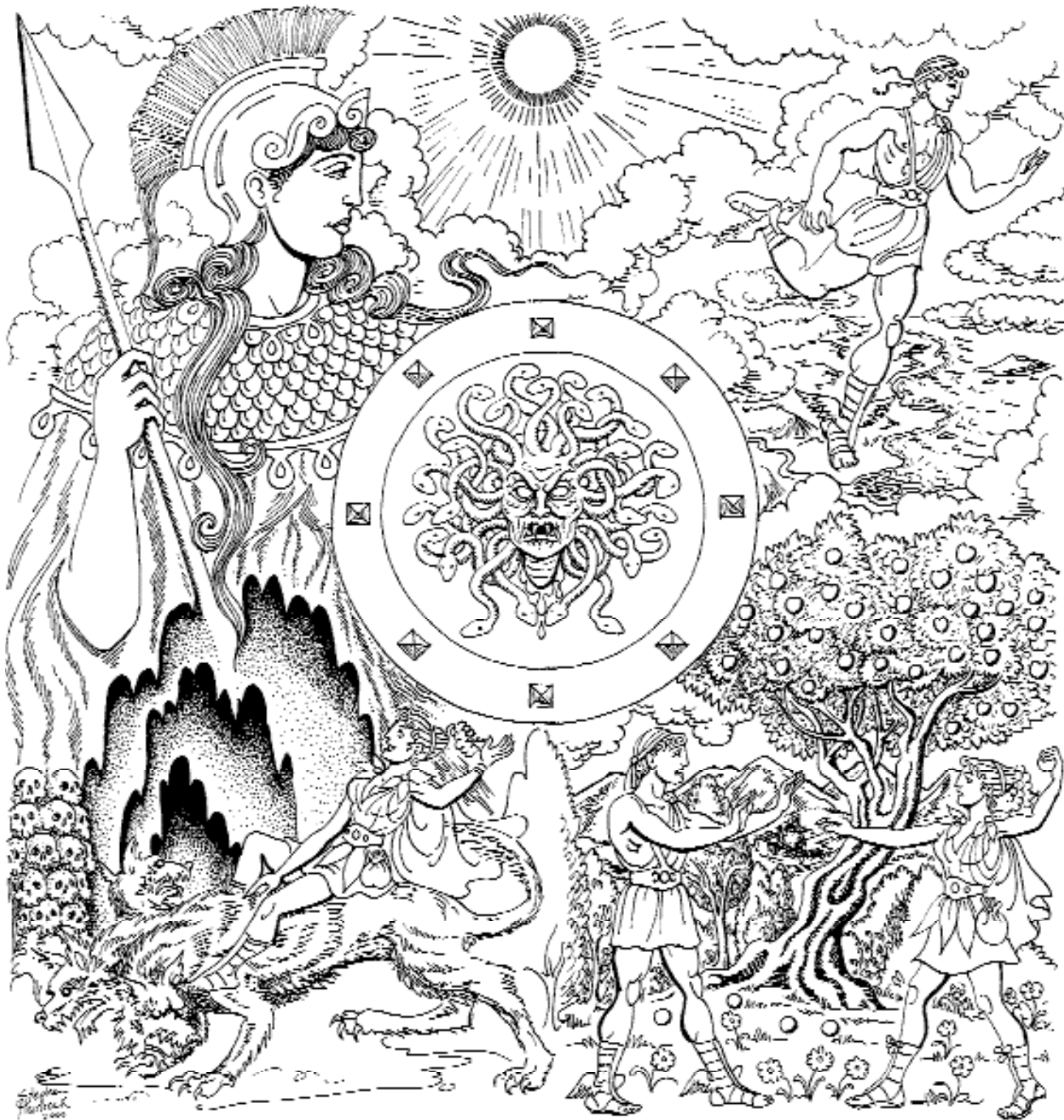
ENCLOSURE: Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*

Grade levels: 1-5

Throughout the centuries, Medusa has been depicted by artists in many different ways. Sometimes she is shown as a beautiful woman, other times as a hideous monster. Design and draw a Medusa of your own invention. Don't be afraid to experiment! (Remember to sign your drawings...)



ENCLOSURE II: Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*
Grade levels: 1-5



Young Audiences of Massachusetts
255 Elm Street, Suite 302, Somerville, MA, 02144
(617) 629-YAMA (9262)
<http://www.yamass.org>

Tanglewood Marionettes: *Perseus and Medusa*

Grade levels: 1-5

VOCABULARY:

Athena - goddess of wisdom

Hermes - herald of the Olympian gods

Medusa - a feminine creature with snakes for hair

nymph - spirits of nature

Perseus - the son of Zeus and Danae

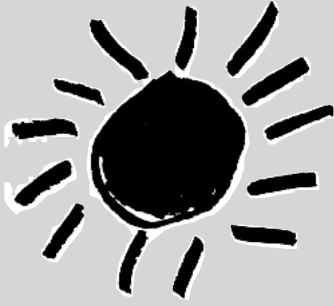
Zeus - supreme ruler of Mount Olympus and of the Pantheon of gods who resided there

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*

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| <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.

