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Perseus And Andromeda

Perseus¹, a hero in the Greek myth, killed the dreaded Gorgon², Medusa³. Medusa was a cruel monster She had hundreds of poisonous snakes instead of hair. Whoever looked Medusa in the face was immediately turned to stone. Perseus killed Medusa by using a mirror-shield which reflected her face in it. It was while he was returning from his adventure that he met and rescued Andromeda⁴.

On an island near Greece, there lived a woman called Cassiopeia⁵. She was very beautiful. She was also very proud. One day she boasted that she was more beautiful than any of the sea nymphs. They were very angry when they heard this.

The sea nymphs sent a sea serpent to the island where Cassiopeia lived. The sea serpent did much harm to the people living on the island. At last, the people consulted the oracle at the temple.

This was an old custom among the ancient people to go to the temples to consult oracles in times of doubt and trouble and to know the future. They would offer something as a sacrifice to the god. In return, the oracle would utter words of warning or advice.

¹Perseus ; per-siyus ²Gorgon ; gor-gun ³Medusa ; may-dyoo-za
⁴Andromeda ; an-drom-e-da ⁵Cassiopeia ; kas-si-o-pee-aa

When the people of the island went to the oracle to know the reason for their trouble they were told that it was because of the vanity of Cassiopeia. If she gave her daughter Andromeda to the serpent, the sea nymphs would be satisfied. And the sea serpent would not trouble them any longer.

The people were very sad to hear those words. Everybody loved the gentle and beautiful Andromeda. When Cassiopeia heard this, she rushed to the temple. She fell on her knees. She offered to make any sacrifice if the oracle would help her.

But, the oracle repeated the same answer, "If you wish your town and all the people to be saved from ruin, you must give up your daughter to the sea serpent."

The helpless people led Andromeda to the seashore, and bound her with chains to an overhanging rock. Then, they stood around sadly, waiting for the monster who would come to devour the fairest and best of all their young maidens.

All were watching anxiously. Suddenly, something black was seen above the water. They knew that it was the dreaded creature. Nearer and nearer came the serpent, lashing the water with its tail and snorting in the most horrible manner. Now it had almost reached the rock to which Andromeda was chained. The poor girl shrieked in terror and all the people covered their eyes with their hands. They could not bear to see what was going to happen.

Suddenly something like a little cloud came darting through the air. It was Perseus who was flying above the spot.



He had seen the girl bound to the rock and the cruel serpent raising itself to attack her. In a flash, he darted down, and was engaged in a fierce battle with the monster.

The people watched the long combat with eager eyes. At last, the sword pierced the heart of the serpent. The ugly creature floated lifeless on the water. Then Perseus unfastened Andromeda's chains and led her to her parents. All the people shed tears of joy.

Perseus had fallen in love with Andromeda at the first sight. So, he asked for her hand in marriage. Andromeda too had loved Perseus from the moment she saw him. Thus, she gladly consented to be his wife.

All the people of the island were invited to the feast of their wedding. But, there was an old man feared by Andromeda's parents. Sometime before, he had asked for the hand of their daughter. The parents had been afraid of saying no. But, the girl hated this old man.

When the merriment of the marriage ceremony was at its height, suddenly the wide doors swung open. The startled people saw an ugly, little man. He was angry, and was standing there holding a sword. He was followed by a band of armed soldiers.

There was complete silence in the room. Then the old man spoke, "Perseus, I have come to claim my bride." His right hand put on a bag which he wore at his side and said, "The one you call your bride, sir, is my wife, and no power of yours can take her from me."

"We shall see," was the old man's answer; and he moved towards Perseus.

But, in the middle of the room, he stopped suddenly, and stood there motionless, his sword raised to strike. For, Perseus had lifted the terrible Gorgon's head, and instantly the old man was turned to stone.

When his followers saw what had happened to their master, they turned and fled from the house. The merry-making went on as though nothing had happened.

The marriage ceremony being over, Perseus took his wife to his island home. There they lived happily together in the cottage of his mother.

Source: Greek Mythology

GLOSSARY

sea nymph	:	a goddess of the sea (in Greek Mythology)
serpent	:	a large snake
boasted	:	talked proudly
oracle	:	a person through whom God was supposed to speak
satisfied	:	pleased
rushed	:	moved with great speed
devour	:	to eat all of something quickly
dreaded	:	(adj) greatly feared
lashing	:	hitting very hard
snorting	:	making loud sound through the nose by breathing air out noisily
horrible	:	frightening
shrieked	:	gave a loud shout
darted	:	moved suddenly and quickly
consented	:	agreed
startled	:	surprised somebody suddenly
peaceably	:	in a peaceful way

COMPREHENSION

I. Answer the following questions:

1. How did Perseus kill Medusa?
2. Why did the sea nymph decide to punish Cassiopeia?
3. What were oracles? What powers did they have?
4. What answer did the oracle give to the problem of the sea serpent?
5. Who rescued Andromeda and how?
6. Why did Andromeda marry Perseus?
7. What happened in the midst of the wedding feast?
8. What did Perseus carry in his bag?
9. How did Perseus prevent the old man from carrying Andromeda away?

II. Read the following passage :

The councillor told King Solomon that the Queen of Sheba had come from the land of Yemen. The land was known for its craftspeople. They were highly skilled. As an example, the councillor showed the queen's palanquin. It was a real beauty. It was made of metal that looked like silver. It had the most finely carved designs and curtains of the softest leather. King Solomon wondered why the queen wanted to meet him. The councillor told the King that she wanted to ask him questions to solve her problems.

Now, answer the following questions.

(i) Why was the land of Yemen known for ?

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(ii) What proof did the councillor have about the skill of the crafts people ?

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(iii) What feeling did the queen's visit give to the King?

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(iv) How did the queen hope to solve her problems ?

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(v) How was the queen's palanquin a real beauty ?

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