

The Story of Hercules

“How could he do this to me again?” The goddess, Queen Hera, sobbed when she discovered her husband, Zeus, had had yet another love affair with a mortal woman. The King of the Gods had fallen in love with another earthly beauty: her name was Alcmene and Zeus thought she was the most beautiful woman in all of Greece.

Hera was **distressed** because she had learnt that a child was due to be born of this love affair and being Zeus’s son, he was sure to be a half god. She became even angrier when she heard Zeus **boasting** of his child’s birth on Mount Olympus.

“A son of mine will be born today and he will be a hero: a protector of men and gods,” Zeus told anyone who would listen. “He will be called Hercules and I will crown him King.” Annoyed by his behaviour, Hera decided to play a trick on her **unfaithful** husband.

“So you agree that a child born today will be made king?” she asked. Zeus agreed happily.

Hera was sly and used her powers to delay the birth of Hercules. His cousin, Eurystheus, was born on that day instead. Zeus had no choice but to keep his word: he had to make Eurystheus king. A day later, Hercules was eventually born and Hera was pleased the boy would not rule.

Zeus was furious with his wife’s **deception**. He knew Hercules was destined to be a great hero and tried to reason with his wife about his future.

“I will make a deal with you,” Hera suggested. “If your precious little Hercules can complete twelve special challenges, I will allow him to become a god and join us on Mount Olympus. I will not choose the tasks. That will be the job of the new King, Eurystheus.” She knew that she was wise to do this. The King would surely choose **gruelling** tasks for the boy to complete which would certainly lead to his end.

As Hercules grew, he became strong and powerful. When he was just a small child, Hera tried yet again to see the boy’s death. She sent two terrible snakes with rippling green scales and razor sharp fangs to the infant’s bed chamber in the depths of night.

In the morning, Alcmene found Hercules smiling with **contentment**, dangling the dead serpents from the edge of his cot. He must have strangled them with his bare hands.

Hercules continued to grow and became a strong and fearless man. He was extremely tall with blonde hair, which looked like spun silk, and eyes the colour of the Aegean Sea. He became a master of many weapons like the sword and spear, but he loved to fight with his club most of all. He had shaped it himself from the wood of an old olive tree. Eventually, Hercules reached the age where he would face the dreaded twelve challenges.

King Eurystheus intended the tasks to be impossible and smiled as he explained the first challenge.

“This first task will also be your last! There is no way you will survive.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure if I were you,” Hercules replied in a **defiant** tone.

“Your first challenge is to kill the Nemean lion and bring me back its hide.”

Everyone knew that the Nemean lion was a **fearsome** beast whose skin was **impenetrable**. But before he could attempt to kill it, he had to find the creature. He tracked the beast for days by following the trail of **devoured** bodies the lion left behind.

Eventually, he tracked it down to its lair and lay in wait for it to return. Soon the lion **sauntered** back; its mane splattered with the blood of its latest victim.

Being a skilled archer, Hercules shot the lion with an arrow, but it bounced straight off. Next he tried his sword, but it bounced back every time he went to strike the animal.

Finally, he wrapped his powerful hands around the lion's throat and strangled it until it lay dead on the ground.

Hercules returned to Eurystheus, wearing the lion's skin, and the king shook in fear and surprise. He knew the next task needed to be even more difficult than the last.

"Next, you need to defeat the evil Hydra."

Hercules knew this was almost impossible. The Hydra was a many-headed serpent and every time one of its heads was cut off, two more would grow in its place. People doubted Hercules's skill, but somehow he managed to defeat the beast as easily as the lion.

So Eurystheus set other challenges of a similar nature. He was asked to hunt and kill many animals and find objects which were difficult to obtain, all of which Hercules did with ease.

"Why don't you set a real challenge, Eurystheus?" Hercules teased. This time Eurystheus decided to set Hercules a task that would test his **determination** and will.

"I want you to clean out the stable of my friend, King Angeous." The king and his friends all laughed heartily at this for they knew this was truly an impossible task. The stables had never once been cleaned and was filled with heaps of dung and dirt.

"He will not be able to complete this task in a hundred years." Eurytheus laughed.

But Hercules was not **daunted**. He knew he would have to use his mind as well as his strength to solve this challenge. He had an interesting idea.

"I will have this done in just one day," he shouted.

Hercules worked hard to **divert** a nearby river so that it would run straight through the stables clearing away all of the dirt and **debris**. Soon the stables were cleaned by the force of the water.

"Done!" he cried proudly.

The next challenge was to collect a golden apple from the magical Garden of Hesperides. It was hidden in a distant location and protected by a fierce dragon who coiled around its branches. But yet again, Hercules was successful. He tricked the Titan Atlas to retrieve the apple for him and he returned to the king for his final task.

"One task left, Eurystheus," Hercules called. The king knew this challenge had to be the trickiest of all. Hercules must not survive.

"You must **descend** into the Underworld and bring me Cerberus, the guard dog of hell." The dog had three heads and teeth that could tear a living man to shreds. Its job was to keep the living out and the dead in.

When Hercules entered the Underworld, he saw the faces of many of his friends and family who were long dead. He saw the faces of heroes from days gone by who encouraged him in his final task.

"Welcome, Hercules." It was Hades, God of the Underworld, who was accompanied by his wife, Persephone. "The dog is yours, if you can take him from here," he said.

Hercules had to gather all his courage and threw his arms around the dog's neck, strangling it as he had done the Nemean lion. He dragged the beast into the living world and took it straight to Eurystheus. That was the last of the tasks and Hercules was **victorious**.

When Hercules came to the end of his mortal life, his ghost wandered the halls of the Underworld with Hades, but the **immortal** part of the man became a god, just as Hera had promised, and he was given the job of protecting the gates of the Heavens.

The Story of Hercules – Follow-Up Work

Put these events in the right order.

1. Cerberus is brought to King Eurystheus.
2. Hercules becomes a god.
3. Hera tried to kill Hercules by placing two snakes in his cot.
4. Hercules, the son of Zeus, is born.
5. Hercules kills the Hydra.
6. King Eurystheus gives Hercules his first challenge.

Why is Hera so upset about Hercules's birth?

What was Hercules's favourite weapon?

The Nemean lion is described as having 'impenetrable' skin. What does this phrase mean?

How do you think Hercules felt after completing the challenges?

Which task shows that Hercules is wise as well as strong?

Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'determination'.

Give some examples of evidence from the text that shows Hercules is determined.

Which words and phrases show that the challenges set for Hercules were difficult?

Circle the word that best describes Hercules.

- fuming
- valiant
- feeble
- fainthearted

How do you think Queen Hera feels at the end of the story?

This story is a 'myth'. What clues in the text show this?

If you could ask Hercules one question what would it be?

What is your favourite part of the story? Explain your answer.

The Story of Hercules – Vocab 1

Write the meaning of each of these words.

distressed _____

boasting _____

unfaithful _____

defiant _____

deception _____

gruelling _____

contentment _____

fearsome _____

impenetrable _____

devoured _____

sauntered _____

determination _____

daunted _____

divert _____

debris _____

descend _____

victorious _____

immortal _____

The Story of Hercules – Vocab 2

Unscramble the words below and find them in the word search.

naedutd

aoersfem

ormlmtia

tuinlfahfu

iadtefn

icsriovuto

srtedse

eptondeci

rliugelgn

u	a	n	o	i	t	p	e	c	e	d	b
n	c	e	f	m	t	n	a	i	f	e	d
f	i	a	g	m	b	r	y	a	e	g	e
a	j	n	n	o	d	h	o	m	a	t	s
i	w	x	i	r	c	u	o	n	r	u	s
t	p	i	l	t	a	d	k	s	s	h	e
h	r	s	l	a	l	z	p	n	o	u	r
f	a	b	e	l	s	i	a	u	m	i	t
u	d	a	u	n	t	e	d	g	e	a	s
l	e	n	r	o	a	m	o	q	u	d	i
v	n	o	g	h	r	s	u	c	f	e	d
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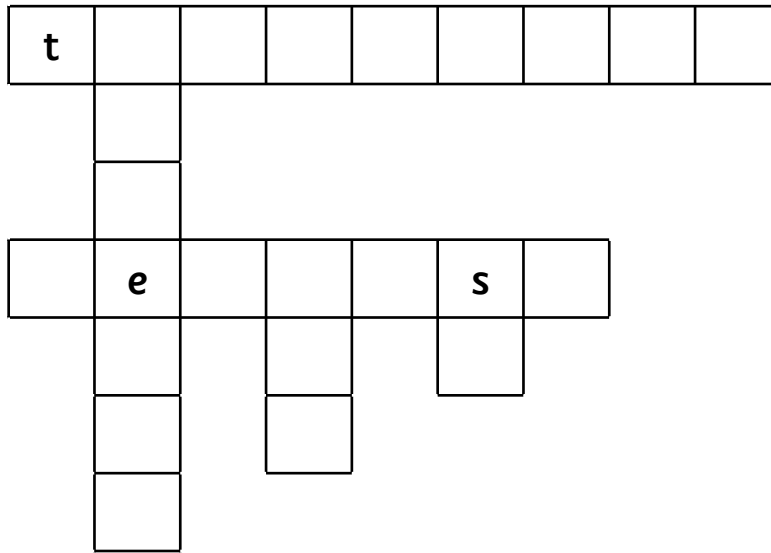
classroomsecrets.com

The Story of Hercules – Y4m/Y5d/Y6e – Vocab

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The Story of Hercules – SPAG

Use the clues to fill the crossword with conjunctions.



Complete the sentences using a conjunction.

Hercules was very strong _____ he trained hard everyday.

He was given difficult challenges, _____ he managed to complete each one.

Hercules completed the challenges _____ Hera was furious.

He was a strong warrior _____ he was a wise thinker.

Use each of these conjunctions in sentences of your own.

The Story of Hercules – Oral Teacher Questions

Put these events in the right order.

1. Cerberus is brought to King Eurystheus. 5
2. Hercules becomes a god. 6
3. Hera tried to kill Hercules by placing two snakes in his cot. 2
4. Hercules, the son of Zeus, is born. 1
5. Hercules kills the Hydra. 4
6. King Eurystheus gives Hercules his first challenge. 3

Why is Hera so upset about Hercules's birth? **Hercules was born from a love affair between Zeus, Hera's husband, and a mortal woman.**

What was Hercules's favourite weapon? **A club made from the wood of an olive tree.**

The Nemean lion is described as having 'impenetrable' skin. What does this phrase mean? **The lion has a skin which cannot be pierced by any weapon.**

How do you think Hercules felt after completing the challenges? **Satisfied to have completed the challenges and happy to prove King Eurystheus wrong.**

Which task shows that Hercules is wise as well as strong? **Clearing out the stables of Augeus because he was unable to complete the task using strength alone.**

Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'determination'. **To continue to do something even though it is difficult.**

Give some examples of evidence from the text that shows Hercules is determined. **Hercules succeeds in every task he is given. Phrases such as 'Hercules was not daunted' and 'I will have it done in just one day'.**

Which words and phrases show that the challenges set for Hercules were difficult? **Gruelling tasks, fearsome beast, almost impossible, many-headed serpent, difficult to obtain.**

Circle the word that best describes Hercules.

- fuming
- **valiant**
- feeble
- fainthearted

How do you think Queen Hera feels at the end of the story? **She keeps her word by accepting that Hercules has completed the challenges, but she is surprised and irritated that he succeeded.**

This story is a 'myth'. What clues in the text show this? **It is set in the past and has royalty, gods and goddesses, creatures, a challenge or quest and conflict.**

If you could ask Hercules one question what would it be? **Personal response.**

What is your favourite part of the story? Explain your answer. **Personal response.**

Write the meaning of each of these words.

distressed – **upset or worried**

boasting – **to speak too proudly about something**

unfaithful – **having a relationship with someone behind a partner's back**

defiant – **to refuse to back down**

deception – **hiding the truth**

gruelling – **extremely tiring and difficult**

contentment – **being pleased with a situation**

fearsome – **frightening**

impenetrable – **impossible to go through**

devoured – **to eat something eagerly and in large amounts**

sauntered – **walking in a slow and relaxed way**

determination – **the continue trying even though something is difficult**

daunted – **feeling frightened or worried about something**

divert – **to cause something to change direction**

debris – **broken pieces of something larger**

descend – **to go down or travel downwards**

victorious – **to win and be successful**

immortal – **living forever**

Unscramble the words below and find them in the word search.

naedutd

daunted

tuinlfahfu

unfaithful

srtedse

distressed

aoersfem

fearsome

iadtefn

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deception

ormlmtia

immortal

icsriovuto

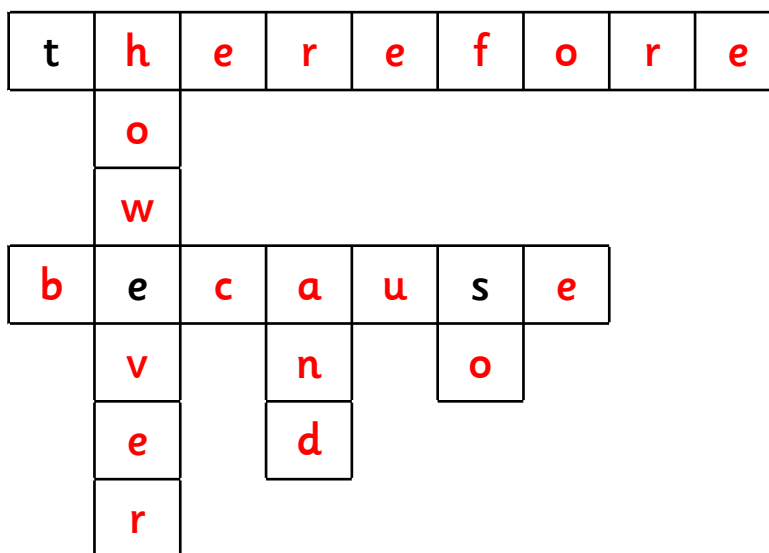
victorious

rliugelgn

gruelling

u	a	n	o	i	t	p	e	c	e	d	b
n	c	e	f	m	t	n	a	i	f	e	d
f	i	a	g	m	b	r	y	a	e	g	e
a	j	n	n	o	d	h	o	m	a	t	s
i	w	x	i	r	c	u	o	n	r	u	s
t	p	i	l	t	a	d	k	s	s	h	e
h	r	s	l	a	l	z	p	n	o	u	r
f	a	b	e	l	s	i	a	u	m	i	t
u	d	a	u	n	t	e	d	g	e	a	s
l	e	n	r	o	a	m	o	q	u	d	i
v	n	o	g	h	r	s	u	c	f	e	d
o	v	i	c	t	o	r	i	o	u	s	p

Use the clues to fill the crossword with conjunctions.



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He was given difficult challenges, **however** he managed to complete each one.

Hercules completed the challenges **therefore** Hera was furious.

He was a strong warrior, **and** he was a wise thinker.

Use each of these conjunctions in sentences of your own.

Personal response.