

Medusa

Vocabulary Words

1. underworld (noun) in mythology, a place under the earth where the spirits of the dead go
Example: Hades is the Greek god of the underworld.
2. grotesque (adjective) strange and unpleasant, especially in a silly or slightly frightening way
Example: The figure was so grotesque that people would never want to look at it.
3. stick out (verb) to come forward from the rest of your body, or to make part of your body do this
Example: Lewis stuck out his tongue as teased his sister.
4. mortal (adjective) (of living things, especially people) unable to continue living forever; having to die
Example: All men are mortal.
5. vain (adjective) too interested in your own appearance or achievements
Example: He was very vain about his hair and his clothes.
6. spurt (verb) to (cause to) flow out suddenly and with force, in a fast stream
Example: Blood was spurting out all over the place.
7. spring (verb) to appear suddenly
Example: Where did you spring from? - I didn't see you come in!
8. lock (noun) hair; a small group of hairs, especially a curl
Example: There is a lock of Napoleon's hair in the display cabinet.



In Greek mythology, Medusa was the most famous of the monster figures known as Gorgons. Gorgons are monsters of the **underworld**. The Gorgons were usually represented as winged female creatures whose heads of hair were actually snakes. Their faces were **grotesque** and round, and their tongues **stuck out**.

Medusa was the only one of the Gorgons who was **mortal**. She used to be a very beautiful maiden but was extremely proud. She didn't care about anything else except how she looked. Nothing else was important to her except her beauty. Athena punished her for being **vain** and when she insulted the goddess in her own temple.

Medusa was killed by Perseus, who cut off her head. From the blood that **spurted** from her neck **sprang** Chrysaor and Pegasus (the winged horse), her two sons by the sea god Poseidon. The severed head was just as deadly and could turn anyone who looked at it into stone. It was given to Athena, who placed it in her shield.

Heracles, also known as Hercules, is said to have obtained a **lock** of Medusa's hair (which possessed the same powers as the head) from Athena. He gave it to Sterope, the daughter of Cepheus, as a protection for the town of Tegea against attack. When exposed to view, the lock was supposed to bring on a storm, which caused the enemy to flee.

Discussion

1. What are snakes a symbol of in your country?
2. Why are people afraid of snakes?
3. Why is being proud bad?
4. What are the worst punishments you have heard of?
5. What is the most fearful character in your country's mythology?