

Hercules

Vocabulary Words

1. courage (noun) the ability to control your fear in a dangerous or difficult situation
Example: They showed great courage when they found out about their baby's disability.
2. insane (adjective) mentally ill
Example: For the last ten years of his life he was clinically insane.
3. madness (noun) a word for mental illness, which was used by doctors in the past but is now offensive
Example: She felt as if she were sliding into madness.
4. horrified (adjective) very shocked
Example: He looked horrified when I told him.
5. awful (adjective) extremely bad or unpleasant
Example: He suffered awful injuries in the crash.
6. serpent (noun) a snake
Example: Despite the precautions, serpent handlers do get bitten.
7. brilliant (adjective) extremely intelligent or skilled
Example: Her mother was a brilliant scientist.
8. cleverness (noun) ability to understand and learn quickly and easily
Example: There is almost nothing worse than self-referential prose from writers enchanted by their own cleverness.
9. filthy (adjective) extremely or unpleasantly dirty
Example: Wash your hands - they're filthy!



In ancient Greek mythology Hercules was a hero with amazing strength and **courage**. According to legend, Hercules' father was Zeus, the chief god. His mother was Alcmena. Zeus's wife was Hera. She was jealous of all the women that Zeus loved, including Alcmena. Because of this, Hera hated Hercules.

Hera caused Hercules to become **insane** for a couple of minutes. During his **madness** Hercules killed his wife and children. As soon as the madness passed, he was **horrified** and overcome with grief. He consulted a priestess who was thought to speak for the gods. He asked her how he could make up for his **awful** deed. She told Hercules to visit King Eurystheus and do whatever he asked. Hercules followed the advice. But the king assigned Hercules 12 tasks that seemed impossible to accomplish.

Hercules was ordered to kill or capture several dangerous monsters. These included a nine-headed **serpent** and the three-headed dog that guarded the gates of the underworld. Another task was to steal golden apples that were said to make people live forever. He also had to wash horse stables that had not been cleaned in 30 years.

Hercules was not **brilliant**. But he was determined and strong. He accomplished all 12 labors. He even showed great **cleverness** at times. For example, to clean the **filthy** stables, he changed the paths of two rivers. The rivers washed the stables in a single day.

Discussion

1. Aside from Hercules, who is the strongest character that you know of?
2. Is it better to become strong physically, emotionally, or mentally?
3. Have you ever watched a psycho-thriller movie? What was it about?
4. What do you think leads to a man's insanity?
5. Is it difficult or easy to make up for one's mistake? Why or why not?
6. Name one thing that you would like to accomplish in life.