**Perseus and Medusa**

Long, long ago, in ancient Greece, there lived a vindictive king named Polydectus who was keen to marry the mother of Perseus, Danae. Polydectus knew that Perseus would not allow his mother to marry him so the manipulative king sent Perseus away on a quest, not expecting him to return. “Bring me the head of the monster Medusa,” blasted the King, “and I will not bother your mother again!”

Medusa (who was as ugly as a gargoyle) was a hideous creature. With claw-like hands and tusks for teeth, the monster was the most fearsome in the land. Instead of hair, Medusa had live, venomous snakes that hissed constantly like a tap that had been left on. Her skin had a loathsome, greenish tinge and she had the devil’s eyes. She was the loneliest and most miserable creature for anyone who made eye contact with her would instantly be turned to stone.

Knowing that he was facing an impossible mission, Perseus, who normally feared nothing, went to the Temple of Athena to pray for help. The gods heard his prayers and granted him some gifts. These were a razor-sharp sword, a brightly-polished shield and sack for the monster’s head. Perseus – who was now feeling more confident about his quest - set off.

After a long and difficult journey, Perseus eventually arrived at Medusa’s gloomy, death-filled lair. Courageously, he tiptoed up to the entrance and stopped, peering and listening. A wave of terror washed over him. All around him were stone statues of others who had tried and failed to defeat the hideous gorgon. How could he defeat a creature that he could not directly look at? Then an idea came to him! He remembered the gifts from the gods. While using his shield to look at the reflection of Medusa, he swung his sword and, with one clean sweep, cut off her head!

Positioning the head in his sack, Perseus headed to confront the evil king. On his return, a bewildered Polydectus demanded, “Show me the head!” Perseus carefully opened the sack and Polydectus gazed deeply into the Gorgon’s eyes. In an instant, he was turned to stone. Perseus had succeeded in his mission so he and his mother were now safe.