

# **GREEK HEROES**

Imitation in Writing Series  
Book 4

Matt Whitling

Logos School Materials  
Moscow, Idaho

## IMITATION IN WRITING

This *Greek Heroes* text is the fourth book in a growing series of Imitation in Writing materials designed to teach aspiring writers the art and discipline of crafting delightful prose and poetry.

Aesop's Fables

Fairy Tales

Medieval Legends

Greek Myths

**Greek Heroes**

The Grammar of Poetry Primer

The Grammar of Poetry Primer Teacher's Edition

The Grammar of Poetry

The Grammar of Poetry Teacher's Edition

C086 Imitation in Writing - Greek Heroes

ISBN 1-930443-20-X      20.00

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# Imitation In Writing

## GREEK HEROES

### Background:

We are commanded in Scripture to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also commanded to imitate those brothers and sisters who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises. To imitate something or someone means:

- To do or try to do after the manner of; to follow the example of; to copy in action.
- To make or produce a copy or representation of; to copy, reproduce.
- To be, become, or make oneself like; to assume the aspect or semblance of; to simulate.

This God-sanctioned method of learning is an essential tool for educating young people. For example, how is it that we teach a child to perform simple physical skills such as throwing and catching? “Hold your hands **like this**. Step forward as you throw **like this**.” Imitation. How is it that we teach a child how to form his letters correctly? “Hold your pencil **like this**. Look at **this ‘a’**. Trace **this letter**. Now, you try to make an ‘a’ **like this one**.” Imitation. How is it that we teach art? At Logos School students learn how to paint by imitating master painters of the past. “**This** is a good painting. Let’s see if you can **reproduce it**.” Imitation. How is it that music is taught, or reading, or math? Very often the best instruction in any of these areas necessarily includes imitation. Why, when it comes to teaching young people writing, do we educators regularly neglect this effective tool?

Educators in seventeenth century England knew the value of imitation as a tool through which they could teach style, particularly in the area of writing. The primary method of imitation in these English grammar schools was called **Double Translation**. In a double translation the teacher would translate a Latin work into English. The student was to copy this English translation over, paying close attention to every word and its significance. Then the student was to write down the English and Latin together, one above the other, making each language answer to the other. Afterwards the student translated the original Latin to English on his own. This was the first part of the translation. The second part took place ten days afterward when the student was given his final English translation and required to turn it back into good Latin.

Benjamin Franklin wrote of a similar exercise that he employed to educate himself a century later. When he was a young man, he came across a particular piece of writing that he delighted in, *The Spectator*. *The Spectator* is a series of 555 popular essays published in 1711 and 1712. These essays were intended to improve manners and morals, raise the cultural level of the middle-class reader, and popularize serious ideas in science and philosophy. They were written well, the style was excellent, and Franklin wanted to imitate it. Here is Franklin’s method of “double translation” regarding *The Spectator*:

With that view (imitating this great work) I took some of the papers, and

making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should occur to me. Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

But he realized that he needed a greater stock of words in order to add variety and clarity of thought to his writing.

Therefore I took some of the tales in the Spectator, and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the sentences and complete the subject. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure to fancy that, in particulars of small consequence, I had been fortunate enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think that I might in time become to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious.

Now the question is; “How can we employ a similar methodology?”

# Imitation In Writing

## GREEK HEROES

### Instructions:

1. READ SILENTLY: Have the students read the myth quietly to themselves, paying close attention to the story line. When they are done, they should underline the vocabulary words and describe the characters. Discuss, by means of questioning, who the characters are in the myth and what took place.
2. STUDENT READS MYTH: Choose a student to come to the front of the class and read the entire myth while the class follows along. (*Variation: To develop listening and note taking skills try reading the myth to your students without giving them a copy of it.*)
3. ORAL RETELLING: The teacher calls on individual students to retell the myth in their own words. These oral summaries should be short and to the point.
4. VOCABULARY: Call on one student for each of the vocabulary words. That student will read the sentence in which the word is found, providing context, and then define the word for the class. Occasionally the student definition will need to be modified by the teacher so that it is an exact match with the vocabulary word in the myth. One word definitions work well. The idea here is to provide the students with a synonym for each vocabulary word which could be substituted into the sentence without distorting the meaning. Have the students write the definition of each word on the blank provided.
5. OUTLINE THE PLOT: Initially this activity should be guided by the teacher and completed as a class. Providing every other simple sentence or phrase for each scene is helpful for younger students. There is some room for variation in the exact wording of the sentence or phrase. The rules are that each sentence or phrase must be three to four words long and represent a significant chronological event in that scene. From time to time the students will come up with a better sentence or phrase than the one provided in the *Suggested Plot Summaries* at the back of this book. Use it, by all means.
6. CHARACTERS: At this point the students will list the main characters in the story and write a few descriptive words about each.
7. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS: Discuss any additional requirements and have the students write them on the blanks provided at the bottom of each worksheet. For examples of additional requirements see *EXCELLENCE IN WRITING @ 800-856-5815* (stylistic techniques, dress-ups, sentence openers, etc...) or teach your students figures of speech and require that they use them in their own writing (metaphor, simile, synecdoche, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, rhetorical question, personification, pun, oxymoron, alliteration).

8. PASS IN ORIGINAL MYTH: Before the students begin rewriting the myth they must pass the original one in. Some students will want to read through the myth one more time to better understand what the whole thing is all about.

9. WRITE FIRST DRAFT: The students are now ready to rewrite the myth using their outlines to guide them. I allow my students to change the characters and some of the incidentals of the story in their rewrites as long as the plot is identifiable. The exceptionally good writers in the class will thrive off of this opportunity to be innovative. The students who are less comfortable with writing will tend to stick to the same characters and incidentals, which is fine. All of the vocabulary words must be used correctly and underlined in the rewrite. The students should skip lines on the first draft to allow room for editing.

10. PARENTS EDIT: Students take their rewrites home to complete the first draft and then they have their parents edit it. This is most profitable when the parents sit down with the student and edit the myth together. Guidelines for editing can be sent home at the beginning of the year or communicated at “Back to School Night” so that parents know what is expected.

11. FINAL DRAFT: Time in class can be provided for the students to work on the final draft. The students should not skip lines. I allow the students to draw an illuminated letter at the beginning of their story if they like.

12. GRADING: There is a grading sheet included which can be duplicated, cut out, completed, and stapled to each student’s rewrite. This will help the teacher to focus on the essential aspects of the composition as he is grading it and will provide specific feedback to the student and parents regarding which areas will need more attention in the future. If you have a different policy for grading writing assignments then simply disregard the grading sheet.

## GREEK HEROES

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft / Worksheet	10	_____
Handwriting	10	_____
Vocab. Usage	20	_____
Content (style, structure...)	30	_____
Mechanics (spell, punct...)	30	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

## GREEK HEROES

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft / Worksheet	10	_____
Handwriting	10	_____
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Handwriting	10	_____
Vocab. Usage	20	_____
Content (style, structure...)	30	_____
Mechanics (spell, punct...)	30	_____
<hr/>		
Total	100	_____

# PERSEUS AND MEDUSA

I. Vocabulary: Underline the following words in the myth and define them below.

- renown: fame
- hasty: quickly
- groped: felt around
- brazen: shining, brass
- tresses: hair

II. Plot: Write a simple sentence or phrase to describe the main actions that take place in each scene.

Perseus Sets Out	The Journey	Foul as Swine
1. Perseus is challenged. 2. He receives gifts. 3. He departs rapidly.	1. Perseus meets sisters. 2. Perseus meets Atlas. 3. Perseus receives hat.	1. Medusa gets killed. 2. Atlas is stone. 3. Perseus escapes.

III. Characters: List and briefly describe the main characters in this myth.

Medusa: once beautiful, now evil, vipers in hair, sister of Gorgons

Perseus: Jupiter's son, sent to kill Medusa, kills Medusa, turns Atlas to stone

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

IV. Rewrite this myth. Be sure to:

- Include and underline all of the vocabulary words in your rewrite.
  - Write at least three separate paragraphs, one for each scene.
  - Include the following additional requirements:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Student Example

### PERSEUS AND MEDUSA (Rewritten by Laurel Ruth McGarry - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Once a boy, by the name of Perseus, was born to Jupiter and Danae. His grandfather heard an oracle which greatly alarmed him. It reported that his daughter's child would one day kill him. Cruelly, he set mother and babe afloat in a sealed chest. A local fisherman found them and delivered them to Polydectes, the king of that region. They were treated well, but then Polydectes erred. He wished to marry Perseus' beautiful mother. Perseus refused to allow Polydectes to wed Danae. Wrathfully, Polydectes sent Perseus on a hopeless mission. He must go to the vast, barren wasteland of the Unshapen Lands to the hideous Gorgons to kill Medusa, the once lovely maiden of earth. Alas, Medusa now was a beautiful terror, sister to the Gorgons, her golden tresses writhing as the vipers mixed with them, her eyes lovely but treacherous as Scylla and Charybdis. Not too hastily, Perseus set out. A light fleecy cloud drew near bearing Minerva and Mercury. Minerva's words fell on him like honey, "Heed my words, son of earth. You must go to the Three Gray Sisters who sit on the edge of the Unshapen Lands. Go then to the Nymphs, and they will tell you the way to the Gorgons. Once there, you must not look into her eyes. Take then this shield, mirror her face in it and strike her with this sword. Take also my blessing." "Fly then, son of earth, with these winged sandals. Fly! Fly!" cried Mercury. Perseus walked upon the air and it bore him up. Faintly Mercury's words echoed in his ears, "Flyyyyyyy!"

It was not long before Perseus came upon the Three Gray Sisters. These hideous beings passed one eye and one tooth around. They were proud and scornful and rude. Perseus said, "With age comes wisdom, venerable ones. Which is the way to the Gorgons?" "You tease us with age, mortal. From us no advice will you receive," rasped one. "Give me that eye!" croaked another. As the eye was passed, Perseus put his hand in between theirs and they put their eye in his hands. He sprang back and laughed, "Ha! you fools! Tell me the way or I shall crush this eye!" "Go to the Nymphs, along that path. Now go away, for we don't remember anymore," they sobbed. Perseus tossed them the eye and left on the faint trail. Three days later, Perseus saw the Nymphs dancing. They called him to go with them. Perseus merely said, "Tell me the way to the Gorgons." The fair Nymphs replied in girlish voices, "We don't know, but we'll ask Atlas." While Perseus waited, he thought about the renown this would win him. Soon he was summoned to Atlas' presence. The great booming voice echoed around him, "You must find the cloak of darkness before you can dare to approach the Gorgons." "Where sh- shall I find-d this . . . this cloak?" stammered Perseus. "Ha!" the great laughter boomed, "No mortal can, for it lies in the depths of Hades. But my nieces are immortal, they will fetch it for you." Suddenly serious, the oldest Nymph slipped through a mountain crack. While waiting for her to come back, Atlas made Perseus promise to bring back the Gorgon's head and turn him into stone. Perseus agreed. Then the Nymph sprung up, pale but triumphant. She delivered the cloak to Perseus, who, with a parting thanks, sped away in the direction pointed.

The Gorgon's mountain approached quickly. Perseus threw the cloak over his shoulders and was immediately invisible. He advanced. In the shield he reflected Medusa's image. She tossed and turned, but Perseus was unmoved. He crept forward, silent as a mouse, eyeing her brazen claws. She awoke. Trusting in the Goddess's words, he struck, and Medusa lay decapitated. Hurriedly, he thrust the head into his goatskin sack and flew away on his winged sandals. His troubles were not over. The Gorgons had awoken. They smelled the blood and followed it. They could not see, but their needle-like fingers groped out farther and farther as they flew. Panting, they followed. He could feel their icy breath on his neck. But as he flew, they fell back. Soon they were specks on the horizon. Perseus made the journey back to Atlas' valley with ease. When he got there, he unwrapped the head and showed it to Atlas. Suddenly, he was stone. There was no mid-point. One moment he was alive and the next he was stone. One of the Nymphs began to cry. Perseus' heart was touched, and he took her for his wife. She became mortal then, but she didn't care. The two of them sped away to Polydectes. Then, one day, a little boy was born . . .

*Finis*

# PERSEUS AND MEDUSA

## I

Perseus was the son of Jupiter and Danae. His grandfather Acrisius, alarmed by an oracle which had told him that his daughter's child would be the instrument of his death, caused the mother and child to be shut up in a chest and set adrift on the sea. The chest floated till it was found by a fisherman who conveyed the mother and infant to Polydectes, the king of the country, by whom they were treated fairly. When Perseus was grown up, Polydectes wanted to marry Danae. He knew Perseus would never approve so he cruelly sent him to attempt a challenge which almost surely meant death—the conquest of Medusa, a terrible monster who had laid waste the country.

Before Perseus left, Minerva and Mercury came to him in a cloud. Minerva smiled at him and said, "Listen to me, for if you forget my words, you will indeed die. You must go northward till you find the three Gray Sisters. You must ask them the way to the Nymphs. The Nymphs will tell you the way to the Gorgon, that you may slay her. Once she was a maiden as beautiful as morn, till in her pride she sinned a sin at which the sun hid his face. From that day her hair was turned to vipers and her hands to eagle's claws, and her eyes became so terrible that whosoever looks on them is turned to stone. So she became the sister of the Gorgons.

Perseus replied, "but how am I to escape her eyes? Will she not freeze me into stone?"

"You shall take this polished shield," said Minerva, "and when you come near her look not at her herself, but at her image in the brass; so you may strike her safely. And when you have struck off her head, wrap it, with your face turned away, in the folds of the goat-skin on which the shield hangs. So you will win to yourself renown."

Then Perseus said, "I will go, though I die in going. But how shall I cross the seas without a ship? When I find her, how shall I slay her, if her scales be iron and brass?"

Then Mercury spoke, "Take these sandals of mine. They will bear you across the seas and over hill and dale like a bird. This sword itself will kill her for it is divine and needs no second stroke. Arise and gird them on and go forth."

So Perseus arose and girded on the sandals and the sword.

And Minerva cried, "Now leap from the cliff and be gone."

Then Perseus looked down the cliff and shuddered; but he was ashamed to show his dread. Then he thought of Medusa and the renown before him, and he leaped into the empty air. And behold, instead of falling he floated and stood and ran along the sky. He looked back, but Minerva and Mercury had vanished, and the sandals led him on northward ever.

## II

So Perseus started on his journey and his heart was high and joyful, for the winged sandals bore him each day, a seven days' journey. And he went on till he came to the Unshapen Land.

And seven days he walked through it till he came to the edge of the everlasting night. There at last he found the three Gray Sisters by the shore of the freezing sea.

There was no living thing around them, not a fly, not a moss upon the rocks. They passed one eye from one to the other, but for all that they could not see; and they passed one tooth from one to the other, but for all that they could not eat. And Perseus pitied the three Gray Sisters; but they did not pity themselves.

So he said, "Oh, venerable mothers, wisdom is the daughter of old age. You therefore should know many things. Tell me, if you can, the path to the Gorgon."

Then one cried, "Who is this who reproaches us with old age?"

And another, "This is the voice of one of the children of men."

And he, "I do not reproach, but honor your old age, and I am one of the sons of men. The rulers of Olympus have sent me to you to ask the way to the Gorgon."

Then one cried, "Give me the eye, that I may see him;" and another, "Give me the tooth, that I may bite him." But Perseus, when he saw that they were foolish and proud, left off pitying them, and said to himself, "Hungry men must needs be hasty; if I stay making many words here, I shall be starved." Then he stepped close to them and watched till they passed the eye from hand to hand. And as they groped about between themselves, he held out his own hand gently, till one of them put the eye into it, fancying that it was the hand of her sister. Then he sprang back and laughed and cried, "Cruel and proud old women, I have your eye; and I will throw it into the sea unless you tell me the path to the Gorgon and swear to me that you tell me right."

Then they wept and chattered and scolded, but in vain. They were forced to tell the truth, though, when they told it, Perseus could hardly make out the road.

"You must go," they said, "to the southward, till you come to Atlas the Giant, who holds the heaven and the earth apart. You must ask his daughters, the Hesperides. Now give us back our eye, for we have forgotten all the rest."

So Perseus gave them back their eye and leaped away to the southward, leaving the snow and the ice behind, till he saw far away a mighty mountain. Its feet were wrapped in forests, and its head in wreaths of cloud; and Perseus knew that it was Atlas, who holds the heavens and the earth apart.

At last he heard sweet voices singing, and he guessed that he was come to the garden of the Nymphs. When they saw him the nymphs begged him, "Come dance with us around the tree in the garden which knows no winter. Come, come, come!"

"I cannot dance with you, fair maidens; for I must do the errand of the Immortals. So tell me the way to the Gorgon, lest I wander and perish in the waves."

Then they sighed and wept and answered, "The Gorgon! she will freeze you into stone."

"It is better to die like a hero than to live like an ox in a stall. The Immortals have lent me weapons, and they will give me wit to use them."

Then they sighed again and answered, "We know not the way to the Gorgon; but we will ask the giant Atlas. He sits aloft and sees across the ocean and far away into the Unshapen Land."

So they went up the mountain to Atlas their uncle, and Perseus went up with them. They asked him, and he answered mildly, pointing to the sea with his mighty hand, "I can see the Gorgons lying on an island far away, but this youth can never come near them, unless he has the hat of darkness which whosoever wears cannot be seen."

Then cried Perseus, "Where is that hat, that I may find it?"

But the giant smiled. "No living mortal can find that hat, for it lies in the depths of Hades. But my nieces are immortal, and they shall fetch it for you, if you will promise me one thing and keep your faith."

Then Perseus promised; and the giant said, "When you come back with the head of Medusa, you shall show me the beautiful horror, that I may lose my feeling and become a stone forever; for it is weary labor for me to hold the heavens and the earth apart."

Then Perseus promised, and the eldest of the Nymphs went down and into a dark cavern among the cliffs which was one of the mouths of Hades. And Perseus and the Nymphs waited trembling till the Nymph came up again; and her face was pale, for she had been long in the dreary darkness; but in her hand was the magic hat.

Then all the Nymphs wept over Perseus a long while; but he was only impatient to be gone. And at last they put the hat upon his head, and he vanished out of their sight.