

The Mighty Hercules



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HERCULES' STRENGTH AMAZES EVERYONE. BUT CAN MUSCLES ALONE MAKE HIM A HERO?

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UP
CLOSE

Character traits As you read, look for the character traits that Hercules shows. How do they help him complete hard tasks?



LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 8 WORDS IN BOLD

Characters

Circle the character you will play.

*Greek Chorus I, II, III

All Chorus: Chorus I, II, and III together

*Hera: queen of the gods

*Zeus (zoose): king of the gods

Chiron (KY-rah-n): a centaur, teacher of Hercules

*Hercules (HER-kew-leez): son of Zeus

*King Eury (YUHR-ee): cousin of Hera

Ferryman

Hades (HAY-deez): king of the underworld

Note: Hercules is known as *Heracles* (HAIR-uh-cleez) in Greek mythology. The well-known name *Hercules* is from the Roman version of the myth.

* indicates large speaking role

Scene 1

All Chorus: The strongest man who ever lived was born in Ancient Greece.

Chorus I: Stronger than Superman?

Chorus II: When he was a *baby*, he was stronger than Superman!

Chorus III: Which caused some problems between his father, the great god Zeus—

Chorus I: —and the goddess Hera, his jealous stepmother.

Hera: Look at your son. To pluck apples, he uproots the entire tree.

Zeus (proudly): Nine months old and already stronger than 10 men.

Hera: He is ruining Mount Olympus, home of gods and goddesses. He must be sent away.

Zeus: He's my son!

Hera: But he's not mine. His mother is a mere human, not a goddess like me.

Chorus II: Just then Chiron, a **centaur**, gallops in.

Chorus III: On four legs. After all, he's half man, half horse.

Chiron (stamping his hooves): Master! The baby

Hercules has brought a lion into the house. He's playing with it as if it were a kitten.

Hera: You see, Zeus? He is putting everyone in great danger.

Chiron: The servants fear for their lives.

Zeus (sadly): Chiron, take my son Hercules to the mountains. Train him well. Harness his strength.

Scene 2

All Chorus: Hercules grows into a strapping young man.

Chorus I: His strength never fails to surprise his teacher, Chiron.

Chiron: Hercules, I saw you shoot that arrow, but where did it go?

Hercules: I believe it hit the moon, master.

Chiron (jaw dropped): So it did. Now see if you can hit that vicious wolf that's about to attack us!

Chorus II: In the coming years, Hercules rides the entire countryside of wild beasts.

Chorus III: Admired far and wide for this success, he returns to his father's palace.

Hercules: Father, have I now earned the right to become a god, **immortal** like you?

Zeus: That requires more than just physical strength and fame.

Hercules: What more can I do?

Zeus: You must discover for yourself how to become a true hero.

Chorus I: But now Hera interrupts.

Hera: Hercules needs someone to challenge him with tasks worthy of his strength. I



know just the person: my cousin, King Eury.

Chorus II: Little does Zeus know, Hera has a plan.

Scene 3

All Chorus: Hera wants to get away with murder—literally.

Chorus III: She pulls King Eury aside.

Hera: Eury, you must help me get rid of Hercules once and for all.

Eury: Has he won Zeus' favor?

Hera: So much that Zeus ignores my children, even though they are gods.

Eury: We'll devise 12 impossible tasks. I'll tell him that he must complete them before he can be a hero.

Hera: Yes! One of them is bound to destroy him.

Eury: First, I will send him to kill the Nemean (neh-MEE-uhn) lion.

Hera (excitedly): Its fur is so thick, no spear can pierce it!

Chorus I: Hercules takes the challenge. He returns to King Eury and Hera wearing the Nemean lion's skin.

Eury: You succeeded!

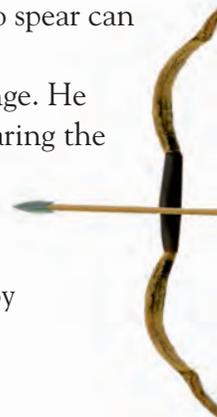
Hera (aside): Rats! Let's try another.

Eury: Hercules, now you must destroy the nine-headed Hydra that has poisonous breath.

Chorus II: Hercules dashes off.

Hera: Little does he know, when you cut one head off that monster, two grow back!

Chorus III: Faster than you can say "Greek yogurt," Hercules is back at Eury's palace.



Hercules: Done. Here are arrows dipped in Hydra poison.

Eury: Well then, for your next task, seek out the wild boar.

Hera: He has tusks as sharp as swords.

Eury: And bring him back.

Eury and Hera: Alive!

Chorus I: Hercules outsmarts the wild boar by chasing it until it's too tired to continue.

Chorus II: He slings it over his shoulder and carries it back to the palace.

Scene 4

All Chorus: The plot thickens (and so do Hercules' muscles).

Eury: If we can't destroy him, maybe we can disgust him.

Hera: What do you have in mind?

Chorus III: They call Hercules to the throne room.

Eury: Your next task is to remove the

mountains of manure from the stables of King Augeas (aw-GEE-us).

Hercules: Manure?!

Eury: You heard me.

Chorus I: Hercules sets off for the stables.

Hera: Ha! Those manure piles are as high as Mount Olympus. He will surely fail.

Chorus II: The smell alone nearly kills our hero.

Hercules: This royal manure royally stinks!

Chorus III: But his strength and wits save him.

Hercules: If I toss boulders into this nearby river, I can redirect the waters.

Chorus I: The waters flood the stables, washing them clean.

Chorus II: King Eury hears of Hercules' success.

Eury: Drats! Foiled again, Hera.

Hera: We must make the tasks even harder. Have Hercules bring me the golden belt from the deadly queen of the Amazons.

Eury: Yes! Then capture the man-eating mares.

Hera (gleefully): Then make him defeat the monster Geryon (JAIR-ee-uhn), who has three bodies joined into one. Hercules is sure to die.

Chorus III: Again and again, they send Hercules off to meet his death.

Chorus I: Again and again, he fails to die.

Scene 5

All Chorus: While Hercules keeps **toiling**, Hera's blood is boiling.

Hera: How is he still alive? We've got only one task left!

Eury: I've got it! We'll send him to kidnap Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the underworld.

Hera: That's perfect. No mortal has ever returned from there.



Chorus II: Hercules travels through a long, dark cave.

Chorus III: He arrives at the River Styx.

Hercules: I need to get across the river to the underworld.

Ferryman: What's the magic word?

Hercules: Uh . . . gladiator sandals?

Ferryman: No, it's *please*, you big numskull.

Hercules: Can you *please* take me across the river?

Ferryman: That's better.

Chorus I: Once across, Hercules makes his way through fiery tunnels.

Chorus II: At last he finds Hades, king of the underworld.

Hades: Hot enough for you?

Hercules: I always sweat like this.

Hades: We don't see many people with a heartbeat down here.

Hercules: I must have taken a wrong turn.

Perhaps your dog can show me the way out.

Hades: If you can get these collars over his heads, then be my guest.

Chorus III: Hades hands Hercules three spiked collars and a leash.

Hades: You'll find his **lair** over by the big mountain of bones. I'm sure he'll be delighted to tear into your juicy human flesh.

Chorus I: Hercules gently approaches Cerberus.

Chorus II: Cerberus cocks his heads to the side.

Hercules: Who's a good doggie?

Chorus III:

Hercules speaks to each of the three heads.



Hercules: You are, and you are, and you are.

Chorus I: Cerberus growls and licks his chops.

Hercules (*muttering*): I hear you only eat live flesh. Well, I don't intend to become dead meat!

Chorus II: Hercules lunges at the hound and wraps his massive arms around all three necks.

Chorus III: Teeth gnashing and tail slashing, Cerberus howls as Hercules wrestles him to the ground.

Hercules: Now roll over and play dead!

Chorus I: Hercules drags the beast back to Eury's palace.

Hercules (*bellowing*): Where is King Eury? I've brought him Cerberus.

Hera: Eury's hiding in a giant urn. He's terrified.

Eury (*from inside the urn*): Get that dog out of here! And you, Hercules, go away and don't ever come back!

Chorus II: Hera's plan has backfired. She seethes.

Hera: The tasks did not **vanquish** Hercules. He's even stronger and more celebrated!



Scene 6

All Chorus: Word spreads of Hercules' legendary feats.

Chorus III: Zeus welcomes him to Mount Olympus.

Zeus: As you've learned, my son, a true hero is measured not by the strength of his muscles alone.

Hercules: Yes, Father, but by how he uses them.

Zeus: With the strength of his mind and heart as well. You are now a god for all the ages.

Chorus I: And to this day, Hercules is remembered.

Chorus II: He is among the most famous of the Greek heroes.

Chorus III: Today, *herculean tasks* are still known as those requiring great strength or effort. ☺

WRITE TO WIN!

Describe Hercules' character traits. How does he use them to become a great hero? Respond in two clear paragraphs, using examples from the play. Send it to "Hercules Contest" by Oct. 15, 2013. Ten winners will each receive a copy of *Hera: The Goddess and Her Glory* by George O'Connor. See page 2 for details.

FIND AN
ACTIVITY
SHEET
ONLINE!

