

CHARACTER STUDY PHOEBE

THE OTHERNAUTS

Whilst reading *The Othernavts* by Clare Pollard, what information can you gather about the main character, **Phoebe**?

Add to each section as you progress through the book.



What facts do we know about Phoebe?

How does Phoebe's relationship with Perry develop?

What effect does meeting her idol, Medea, have on Phoebe?

How does Phoebe change over the course of the book?



JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

THE OTHERNAUTS

The Othernavts re-tells the Ancient Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts. Using what you've learned from the book, and wider Greek mythology, answer the following:

Who is the main hero of the legend?

What is the name of the famous ship Jason sails on?

What was Jason sent to find?

Who was Jason's uncle who took the throne?

What are the crew members called who sail with Jason?

Why does Jason's uncle send him on a dangerous quest?

Name one challenge Jason faces on his journey.

What happens when you sow dragons' teeth?

Which crew member helps get the Golden Fleece by singing?

Who helps Jason complete his tasks in Colchis?

- A) Athena
- B) Medea
- C) Hera
- D) Helen

What creature guards the Golden Fleece?

- A) A lion
- B) A dragon
- C) A giant bird
- D) A sea monster

What happens to the men who hear the Sirens' song?

- A) They fall asleep
- B) They want to jump into the sea
- C) They become invisible
- D) They turn to stone



CHARACTER STUDY ZEUS AND HERA

THE OTHERNAUTS

In *The Othernavts*, as in *Jason and the Argonauts*, gods Zeus and Hera are engaged in a chess-like game that toys with the fate of the crew. Using your knowledge of the book, and anything additional you might have learnt about the Greek gods, fill out the following fact files on Zeus and Hera by answering the questions below:



ZEUS

Role:

Home:

Symbol(s):

Power(s):

Interesting fact:

HERA

Role:

Home:

Symbol(s):

Power(s):

Interesting fact:

BONUS QUESTION: Why does Hera choose to help Jason, and what moral do you think it teaches?



MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES

THE OTHERNAUTS

Throughout the crew's epic quest, we encounter many different mythological creatures famous in Ancient Greek myths. Looking to some of these creatures as a guide, create your own below. Think about their key properties, and sketch what they might look like.

SCYLLA

DESCRIPTION: A terrifying monster with multiple heads and lots of sharp teeth

FOUND: A narrow sea passage opposite Charybdis

TRAITS: Lethal, hungry and quick to attack

SPECIAL ABILITY:
Snatching sailors off ships with her long necks



DESCRIPTION:

FOUND:

TRAITS:

SPECIAL ABILITY:



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE OTHERNAUTS

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forgotten about, almost burned to cinders in the great fire at the Library of Alexandria, used to line a cat's litter tray (let's not even go there), and undergo various other humiliations before finally being discovered in the twenty-first century by a very silly publisher called Piccadilly Press who think it must be for kids because it's got jokes and pictures.

I know this because I'm an oracle. Seeing the future is kind of my job. How else would a person in 'Ancient Greece' (as you call it) know the crying-with-laughter emoji? 😂

But never mind, future reader: the important thing is, I've found you now. And what you hold in your hands is very important. It is the never-before-told **TRUE STORY** of Jason and the Argonauts, their legendary voyage to find the Golden Fleece, and the many monsters, gods and goddesses who they met along the way.

That's right - not the fake story in the *Argonautica*, made up by the poet Apollonius of

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Rhodes many years later, which is all about big, strong, manly guys doing man stuff and acting all important. No, **THIS** is the real story. Did you know, for example, that there were children on the quest too, and they actually helped defeat the monsters and save the day?

Have you heard of the Othernavts?  
(That's called a 'rhetorical question', which means I don't expect you to answer. I totally know that you haven't.)

Oh, just one more note before we start. It's important to understand that **ALL TIME EXISTS AT ONCE**. That's how oracles can see the past and the future. So this story happened, is happening and hasn't happened yet. Hope that's cleared things up! 😊

Now let us begin.

The narrator says this is the "TRUE STORY" of Jason and the Argonauts. Why might the author present the story in this way? Can we trust the narrator?

How is this version of the myth different from traditional Greek myths you know?

The narrator says "ALL TIME EXISTS AT ONCE." How does this idea help explain Phoebe's role as an oracle?

Why might the author choose to tell the story from Phoebe's perspective rather than focusing only on Jason and the heroes?

The narrator hints that Phoebe and other children helped "defeat the monsters and save the day." How does this change our expectations about the story and its heroes?



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## THE OTHERNAUTS

in her cupped hands then casts them on the deck. Is that the shape of . . . a yawn?

'I forgot to ask, honey,' the Argo says. 'What did you see yesterday when you cleared your mind? You looked distressed. It was something terrible in the future, wasn't it? Was it the death of the last dodo? Or global warming? Donald Trump's hair? That floss emote in *Fortnite* that's really annoying? Oh no, I've got it – was it Limited Edition Popcorn Chicken Flavoured Popcorn?' A shudder passes through the plank.

But Phoebe hesitates to answer. She's in denial. She feels like if she talks about what she saw happen to Perry she'll make it real. 'I have no idea what you're talking about. Anyway, I didn't see the future,' she lies. 'I guess you're right; I'm too cynical. It's holding me back.'

And then, behaving strangely, Perry lifts up a blanket near the prow.

'Oh look, a stowaway!' he says stiffly. 'Oh wow, how did she get there? I totally didn't

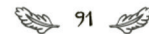


notice her on the Argo last night even one little bit.'

Phoebe and the Argonauts all look up and see, revealed, the ringlets, button nose and beady eyes of a six-year-old girl wobbling almost comically above a plump little owlish body with silver feathers. Phoebe can't believe it. Perry's smuggled a small harpy on to the ship, after they chewed his ears in the nest last night! Is he mad?



'No problem,' grunts Hercules. 'I'll sort this harpy out, fellas.'



Why does Phoebe lie about not seeing the future, even though the text tells us she did?

How does the author blend modern humour with Greek mythology, and what effect does this have?

Why does Perry pretend he didn't know the 'harpy' was on the ship, and how does this connect back to another moment in the story?

In traditional Greek mythology, harpies are dangerous monsters. How does this creature seem different, and what effect does it have on the story?

How does the author build tension in this scene, even though there is humour? Think about the secrets the characters are each keeping.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## THE OTHERNAUTS

before everyone makes up their mind to hate her. 'Oh my gods, honestly! I found out that Medea's untrustworthy. She was plotting to put Jason in a cage and snog him through its bars!'

Hercules shakes his head. 'You don't need that in your life,' he tells Jason gruffly.

'I'm afraid a lot of women feel like that about me,' Jason admits, pulling his tunic on. 'Well, that's fine, right? Don't worry, Phoebe – it sounds like you've helped me avoid a bad marriage! And we'll get through today anyway. How do I know? Because we're all *heroes*! I'm sure we can yoke a few oxen and slay a few dead people! I mean, the skeletons are already dead, that's half the job done right there.'

'Phoebe's already *brain-dead* more like,' Calais mutters loudly enough for her to hear.

Jason goes for a shave, whistling, while Hercules starts doing his morning warm-up exercises, including squats, planks, lunges and press-ups. Zetes is sent to fetch Chiron from the stables.

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'You're disappointed, aren't you?' Perry says to Phoebe, noticing her slumped shoulders.

'That I got zero hours sleep? Yeah, definitely,' Phoebe says, wiping drool from the corner of her mouth. 'I'm so tired that every other word you say sounds like wibble. I could accidentally eat a bowl of wasps if you told me it was breakfast cereal. I could sleep on a chicken's lip. I could fall asleep on a hydra's dinner plate. I'm so tired I'm having a premonition about a bitter liquid called coffee that comes in an insulated cup with my name misspelt on the side. Hang on . . . am I *real*?''

'I mean, you're disappointed in Medea. She was your heroine. You wanted to stay here and be a witch. Didn't you?'

There's a long pause as Phoebe swallows something down. She doesn't want to show Perry that she's bothered. 'You know what they say,' she says at last, shrugging. 'You can't always get what you want. That will teach me

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Why do you think Jason doesn't show any fear at Medea betraying them? What image does this help convey of him?

Jason calls the team heroes. What traits do we see from the other characters here that could be called heroic?

Why do you think Phoebe tries to act like she isn't bothered about being disappointed in meeting her idol?

What do these pages show about the relationship between Perry and Phoebe?

Why do you think different characters show different reactions to the threat Medea poses?

