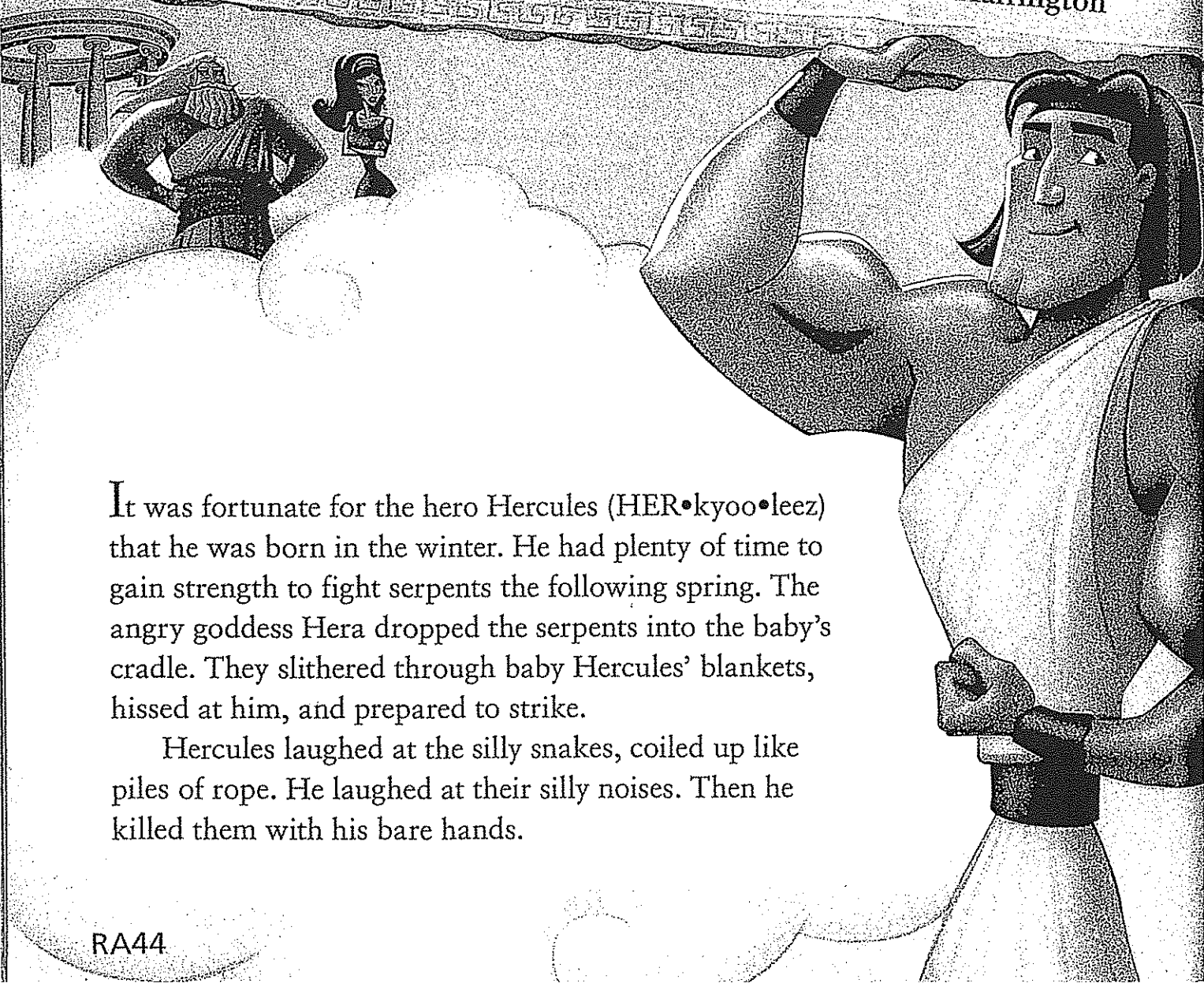


What Is a Myth?

A myth is a traditional story that explains how something in the world began or came to be. The characters may be gods and goddesses, monsters, and strange creatures who can do impossible things.

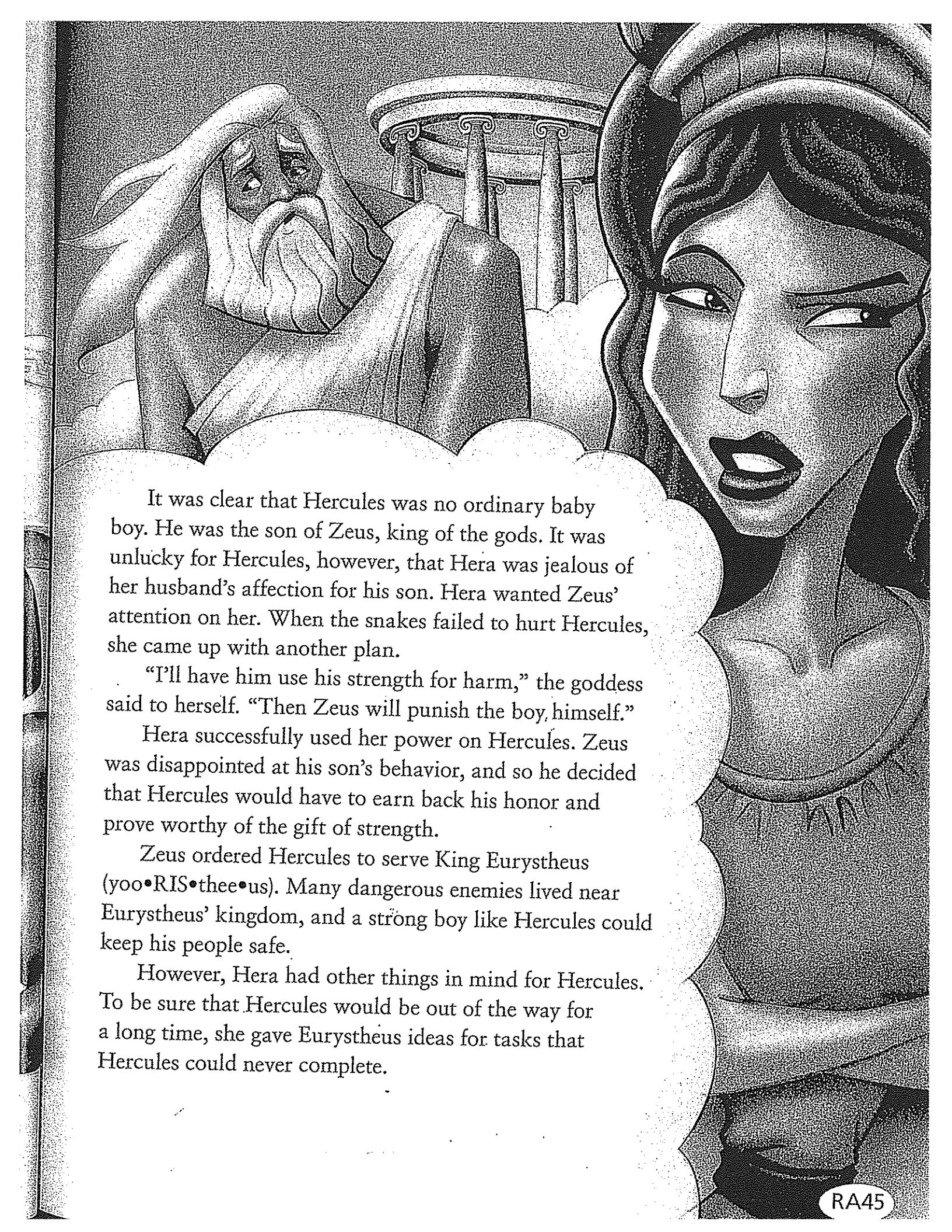
HERCULES' QUEST

retold by Martina Melendez illustrated by David Harrington

An illustration in a classical style. In the foreground, Hercules is shown from the waist up, wearing a white tunic with a dark sash. He has a muscular build and is looking towards the left. In the background, Hera stands with her hands on her hips, wearing a dark, patterned dress. To her right, a woman in a white dress is looking towards Hercules. The scene is set in a room with classical architectural elements like columns and a doorway.

It was fortunate for the hero Hercules (HER•kyoo•leez) that he was born in the winter. He had plenty of time to gain strength to fight serpents the following spring. The angry goddess Hera dropped the serpents into the baby's cradle. They slithered through baby Hercules' blankets, hissed at him, and prepared to strike.

Hercules laughed at the silly snakes, coiled up like piles of rope. He laughed at their silly noises. Then he killed them with his bare hands.



It was clear that Hercules was no ordinary baby boy. He was the son of Zeus, king of the gods. It was unlucky for Hercules, however, that Hera was jealous of her husband's affection for his son. Hera wanted Zeus' attention on her. When the snakes failed to hurt Hercules, she came up with another plan.

"I'll have him use his strength for harm," the goddess said to herself. "Then Zeus will punish the boy himself."

Hera successfully used her power on Hercules. Zeus was disappointed at his son's behavior, and so he decided that Hercules would have to earn back his honor and prove worthy of the gift of strength.

Zeus ordered Hercules to serve King Eurystheus (yoo•RIS•thee•us). Many dangerous enemies lived near Eurystheus' kingdom, and a strong boy like Hercules could keep his people safe.

However, Hera had other things in mind for Hercules. To be sure that Hercules would be out of the way for a long time, she gave Eurystheus ideas for tasks that Hercules could never complete.

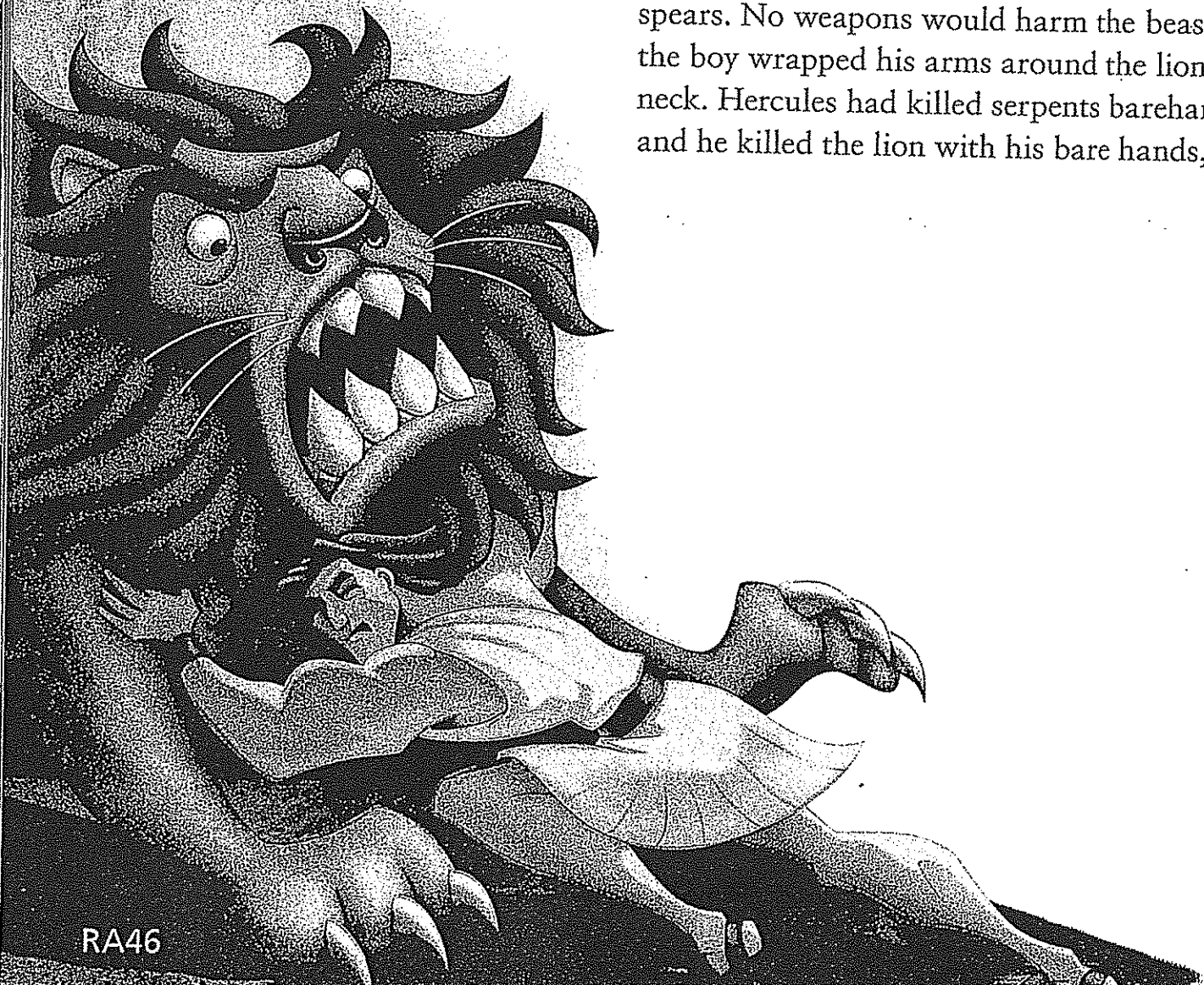
Hercules went to live among the herdsmen and cattle in Eurystheus' kingdom. A fierce, evil lion lived nearby in the valley of Nemea (NEE•me•uh).

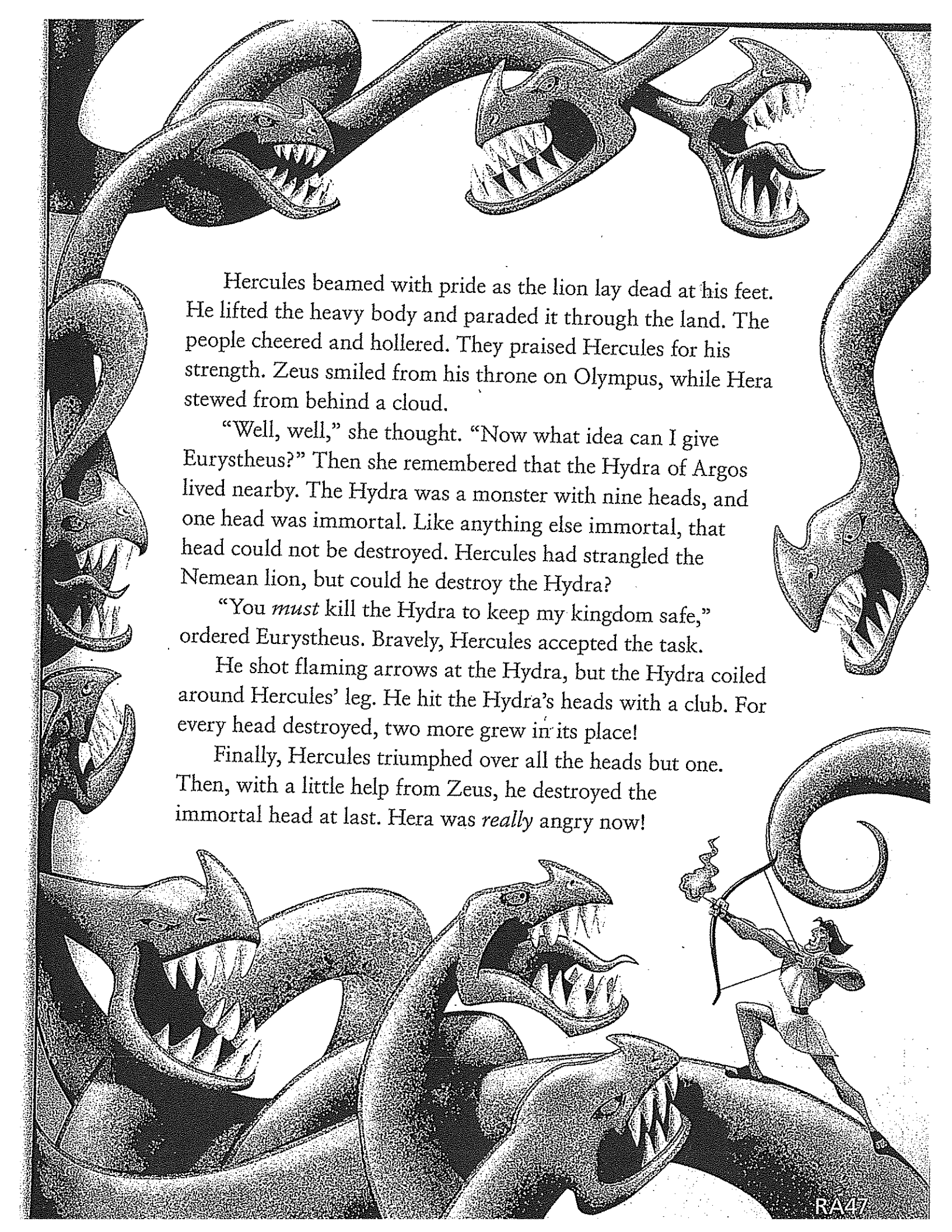
"Your first task," said King Eurystheus, "is to kill the Nemean lion."

The impossible mission was Hera's idea, of course. The lion had claws like gleaming swords and teeth even sharper. It could eat a herd of antelope for breakfast and a small boy in a single bite.

After accepting the challenge, Hercules watched and waited for the lion to come out of the forest. "The lion may be strong, but I am stronger," Hercules boasted. "I fought serpents when I was a baby. I killed them with my hands."

When the lion emerged, Hercules first tried to kill the lion with his mighty club. When that failed, he tried to kill the lion with razor-sharp spears. No weapons would harm the beast! So, the boy wrapped his arms around the lion's neck. Hercules had killed serpents barehanded, and he killed the lion with his bare hands, too.





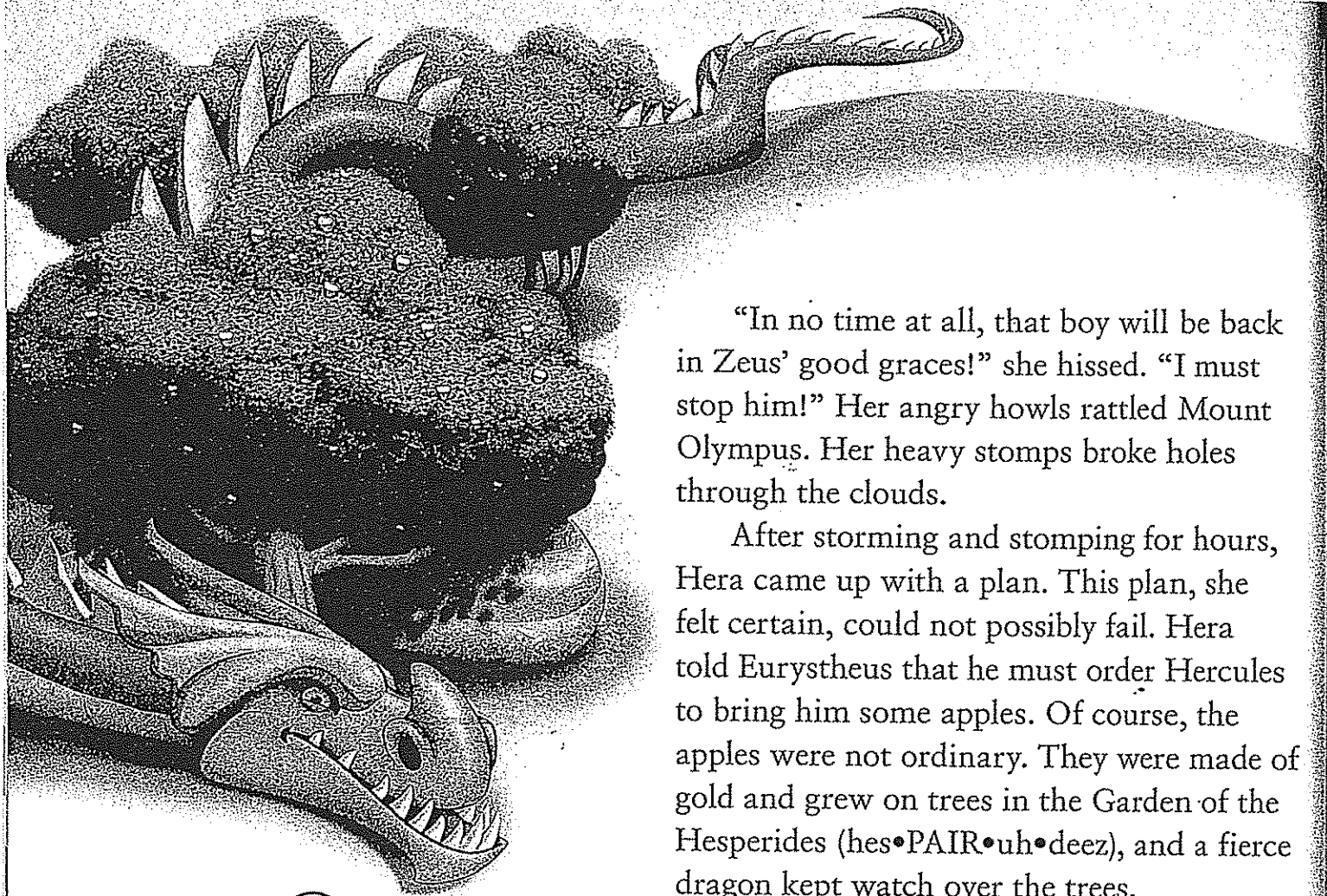
Hercules beamed with pride as the lion lay dead at his feet. He lifted the heavy body and paraded it through the land. The people cheered and hollered. They praised Hercules for his strength. Zeus smiled from his throne on Olympus, while Hera stewed from behind a cloud.

“Well, well,” she thought. “Now what idea can I give Eurystheus?” Then she remembered that the Hydra of Argos lived nearby. The Hydra was a monster with nine heads, and one head was immortal. Like anything else immortal, that head could not be destroyed. Hercules had strangled the Nemean lion, but could he destroy the Hydra?

“You *must* kill the Hydra to keep my kingdom safe,” ordered Eurystheus. Bravely, Hercules accepted the task.

He shot flaming arrows at the Hydra, but the Hydra coiled around Hercules’ leg. He hit the Hydra’s heads with a club. For every head destroyed, two more grew in its place!

Finally, Hercules triumphed over all the heads but one. Then, with a little help from Zeus, he destroyed the immortal head at last. Hera was *really* angry now!



"In no time at all, that boy will be back in Zeus' good graces!" she hissed. "I must stop him!" Her angry howls rattled Mount Olympus. Her heavy stomps broke holes through the clouds.

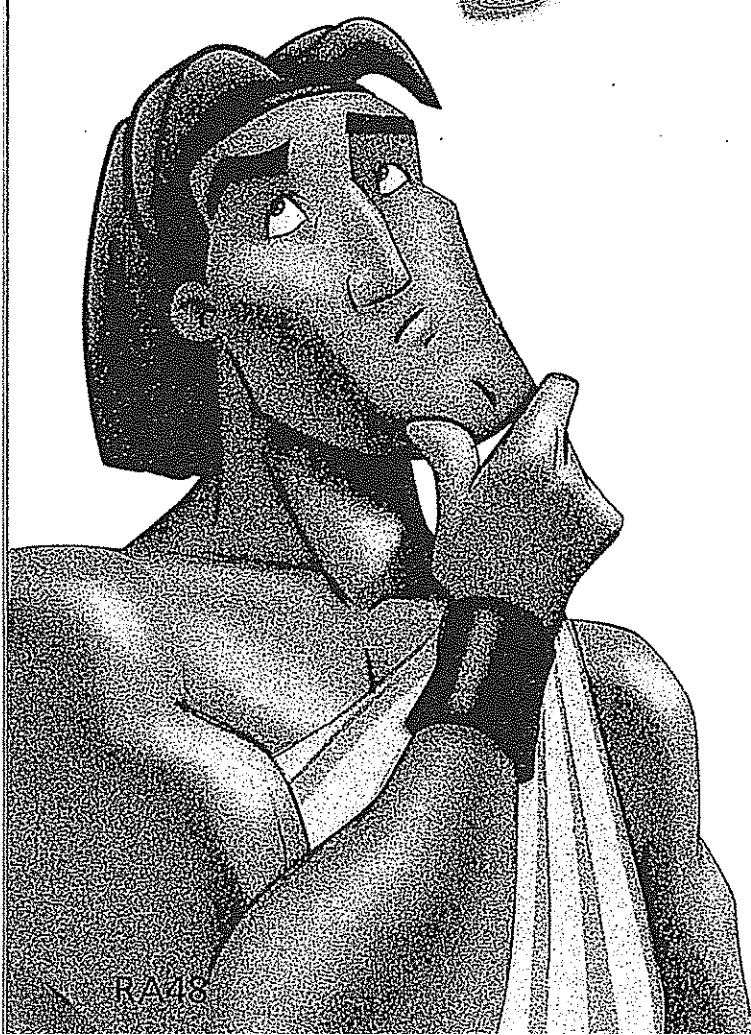
After storming and stomping for hours, Hera came up with a plan. This plan, she felt certain, could not possibly fail. Hera told Eurystheus that he must order Hercules to bring him some apples. Of course, the apples were not ordinary. They were made of gold and grew on trees in the Garden of the Hesperides (hes•PAIR•uh•deez), and a fierce dragon kept watch over the trees.

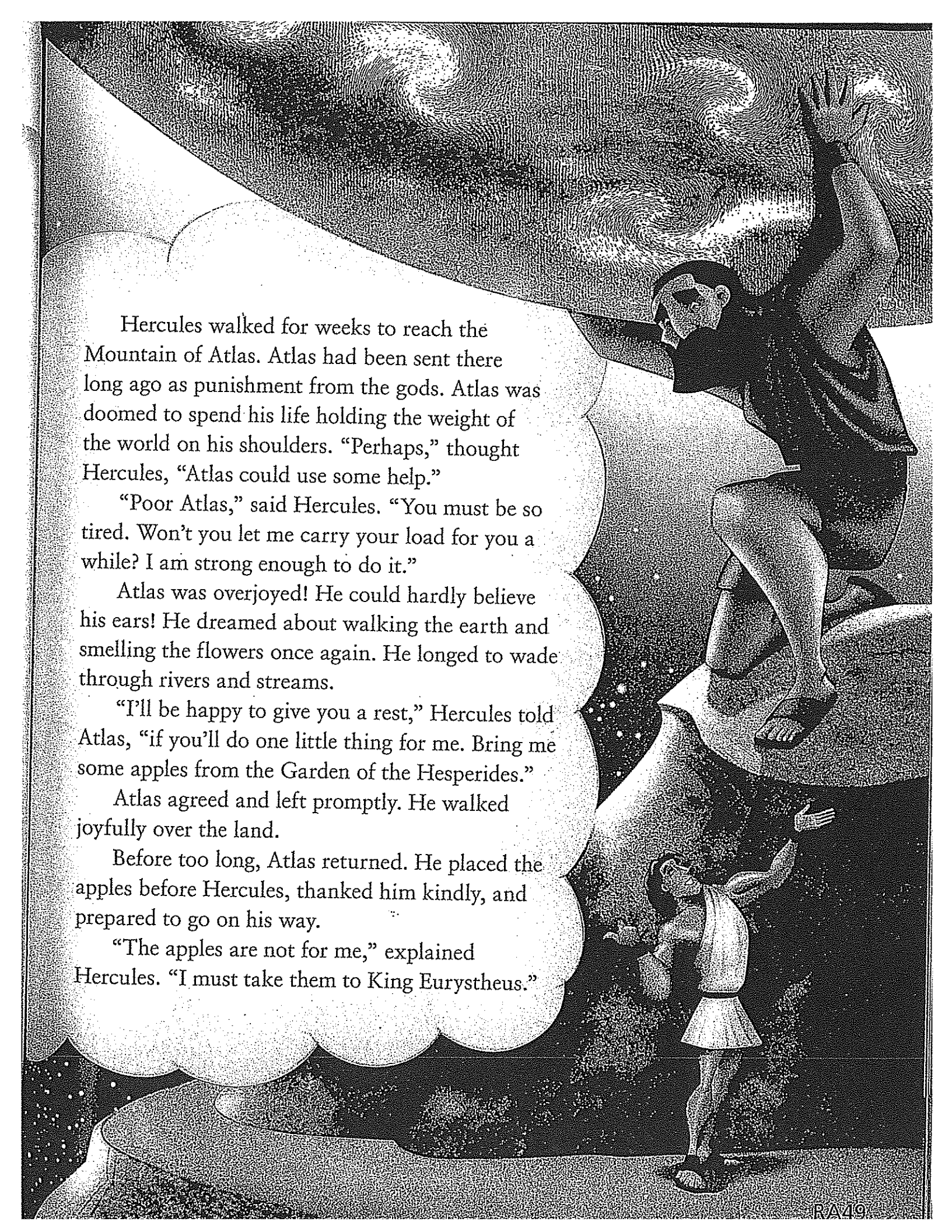
"I'm not afraid of that dragon," declared Hercules. "I killed the Nemean lion and the Hydra of Argos. I'll kill the dragon while he's sleeping."

When Hercules approached the garden, the dragon was sleeping, just as Hercules had hoped. Upon hearing the boy's footsteps, however, the dragon opened one eye to peek at his unwanted guest.

Hercules approached the creature, which lay coiled among the trees. The apples hung from the trees' branches. The branches hung over the dragon's head.

Hercules devised a plan. "I'll ask Atlas to get me the apples," he said with confidence. Atlas owned the Garden of the Hesperides, and the dragon worked for him.





Hercules walked for weeks to reach the Mountain of Atlas. Atlas had been sent there long ago as punishment from the gods. Atlas was doomed to spend his life holding the weight of the world on his shoulders. "Perhaps," thought Hercules, "Atlas could use some help."

"Poor Atlas," said Hercules. "You must be so tired. Won't you let me carry your load for you a while? I am strong enough to do it."

Atlas was overjoyed! He could hardly believe his ears! He dreamed about walking the earth and smelling the flowers once again. He longed to wade through rivers and streams.

"I'll be happy to give you a rest," Hercules told Atlas, "if you'll do one little thing for me. Bring me some apples from the Garden of the Hesperides."

Atlas agreed and left promptly. He walked joyfully over the land.

Before too long, Atlas returned. He placed the apples before Hercules, thanked him kindly, and prepared to go on his way.

"The apples are not for me," explained Hercules. "I must take them to King Eurystheus."

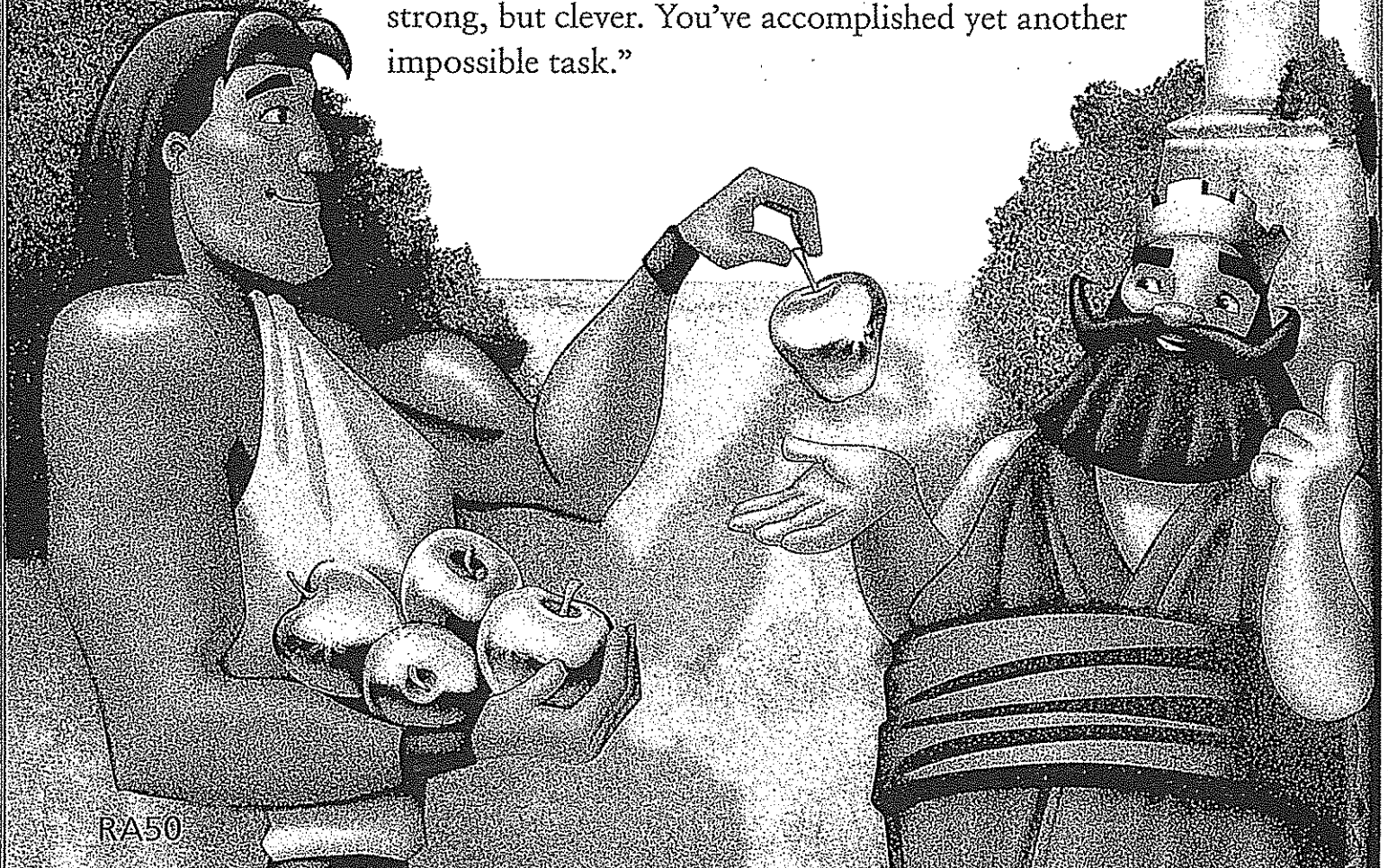
“I’ll take the apples to him for you,” said Atlas, who had tasted freedom and wanted more of it. Hercules was sure he would never return.

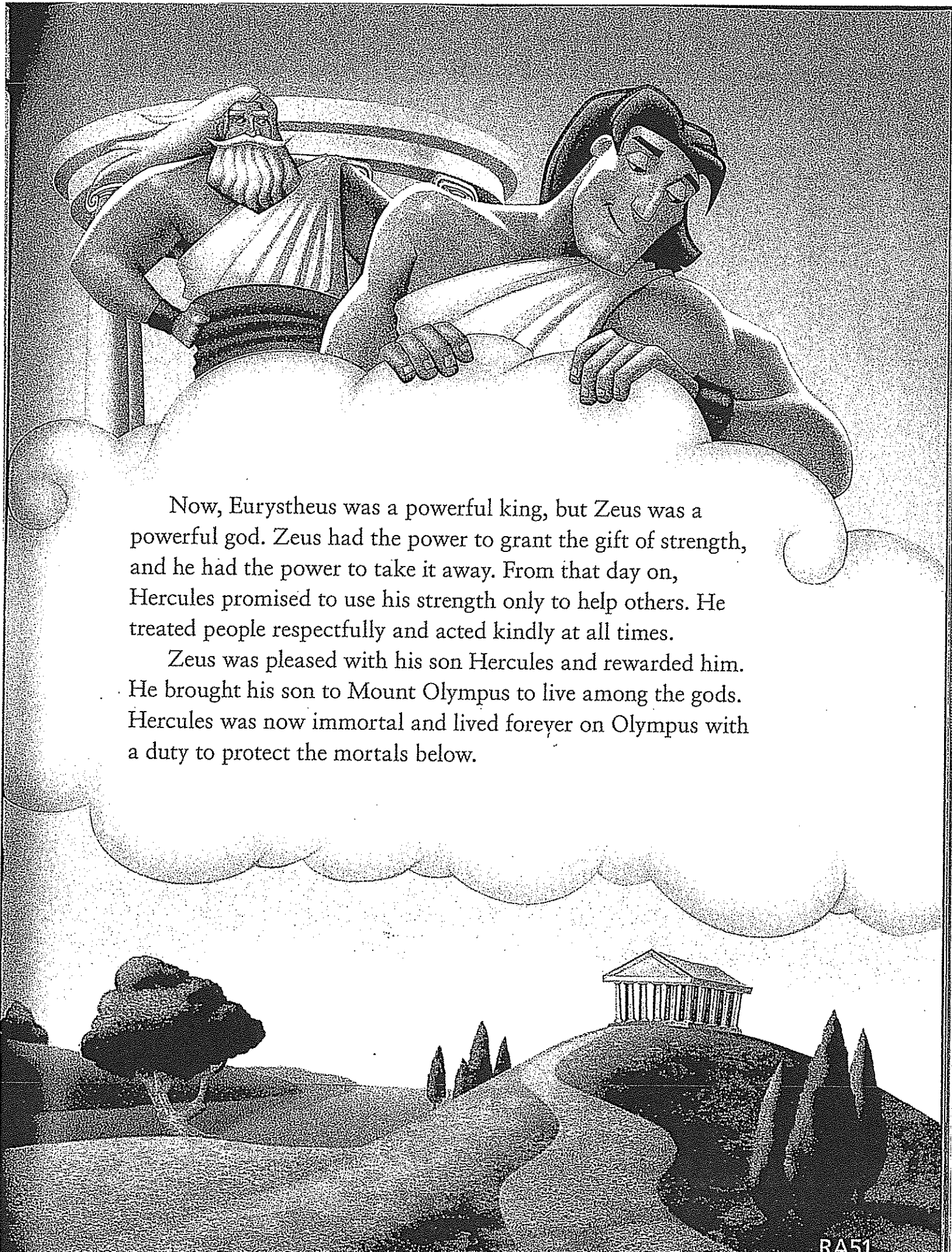
“Oh, would you *please* take them for me?” Hercules begged without missing a beat. “I would be forever grateful. But I am not as used to this load as you are, and my arms have grown tired and stiff. Would you relieve me for just a minute while I take a little rest?”

Atlas shrugged his shoulders. “Okay, just for a moment, and then I will personally deliver your apples for you,” he said. He handed Hercules the apples and took back the weight of the world.

Hercules stretched his weary shoulders. He stretched his arms and legs. Then he bid Atlas a fond farewell and left for Eurystheus’ palace.

“Well, well,” said Eurystheus when Hercules gave him the golden apples. “You are not only strong, but clever. You’ve accomplished yet another impossible task.”





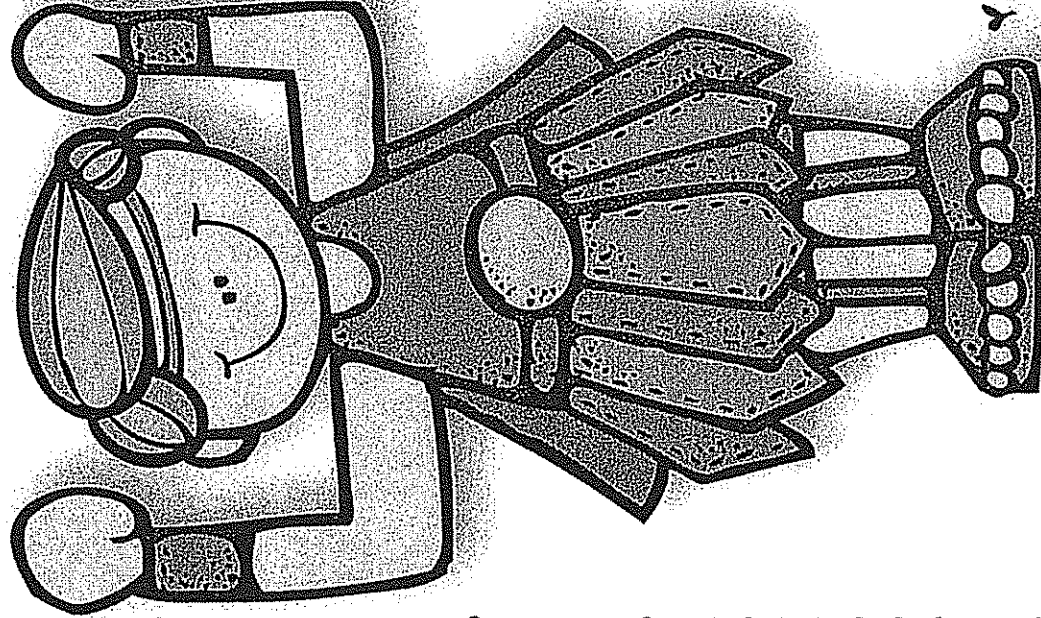
Now, Eurystheus was a powerful king, but Zeus was a powerful god. Zeus had the power to grant the gift of strength, and he had the power to take it away. From that day on, Hercules promised to use his strength only to help others. He treated people respectfully and acted kindly at all times.

Zeus was pleased with his son Hercules and rewarded him. He brought his son to Mount Olympus to live among the gods. Hercules was now immortal and lived forever on Olympus with a duty to protect the mortals below.

Hercules

Hercules was the strongest of all mortals. He was stronger than many of the Gods. Hercules is the last mortal son of Zeus. When Hercules was a baby he was so strong, he wrestled a snake that crawled into his baby cradle. Although Hercules was very strong, he was not very clever. He had a quick temper, which often got him into trouble. Once he was so angry, he threatened to shoot his bow and arrow at the sun.

Hercules often showed off his strength and argued with others who tried to say he was not as strong as he believed. Hercules also held grudges. Hercules was the only man to be born a mortal and to die a God. Hercules often searched for wisdom.



Name _____ Date _____

Complete the questions below using complete sentences.

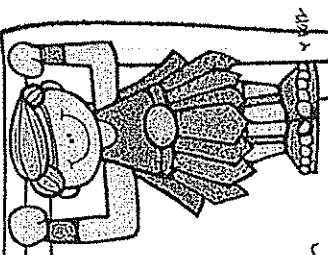
Hercules

1. How would you describe Hercules? Use part of the text in your answer.

2. Summarize the story of Hercules in your own words.

3. What was special about Hercules?

4. What did Hercules often search for? Why do you think he did this?



Name _____

Hercules' Quest

Reread the story, *Hercules' Quest*. Answer the questions from the text by using complete sentences and restating the question in your answer.

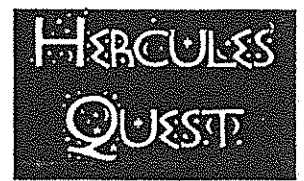
1. Why does Hera want to get rid of Hercules and how does she plan to do it?

2. Why do you think Zeus gave Hercules help with killing the Hydra? Use details from the text to support your answer.

3. Explain how Hercules got the gold apples from the Garden of the Hesperides.

4. How does Hercules trick Atlas into taking back the world?

5. What lesson does this story teach readers about how to reach goals?



Hercules' Quest

Answer Key

Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. *Why does Hera want to get rid of Hercules and how does she plan to do it?*

Hera wanted to get rid of Hercules because she was jealous of her husband's affection for his son. Hera wanted Zeus' attention on her. She planned to get rid of Hercules by having Hercules use his strength for harm.

2. *Why do you think Zeus gave Hercules help with killing the Hydra? Use details from the text to support your answer.*

Zeus gave Hercules help with killing the Hydra because he loved his son and wanted to help him. He didn't want Hercules to fail. Since the last head of the Hydra was immortal Zeus may have felt that the task was too difficult for Hercules to conquer on his own.

3. *Explain how Hercules got the gold apples from the Garden of the Hesperides.*

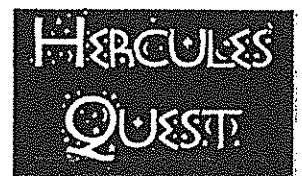
To get the gold apples from the Garden of the Hesperides, Hercules devised a plan. Since the dragon worked for Atlas, he offered to hold the world and give him a rest and told Atlas he had to bring the gold apples back from the Garden of the Hesperides as a favor. Atlas returned with the apples for Hercules.

4. *How does Hercules trick Atlas into taking back the world?*

Hercules tricked Atlas into taking back the world by asking Atlas to give him a rest before Atlas delivered the apples to Eurystheus. Once Atlas took the world back, Hercules was able to deliver the gold apples himself.

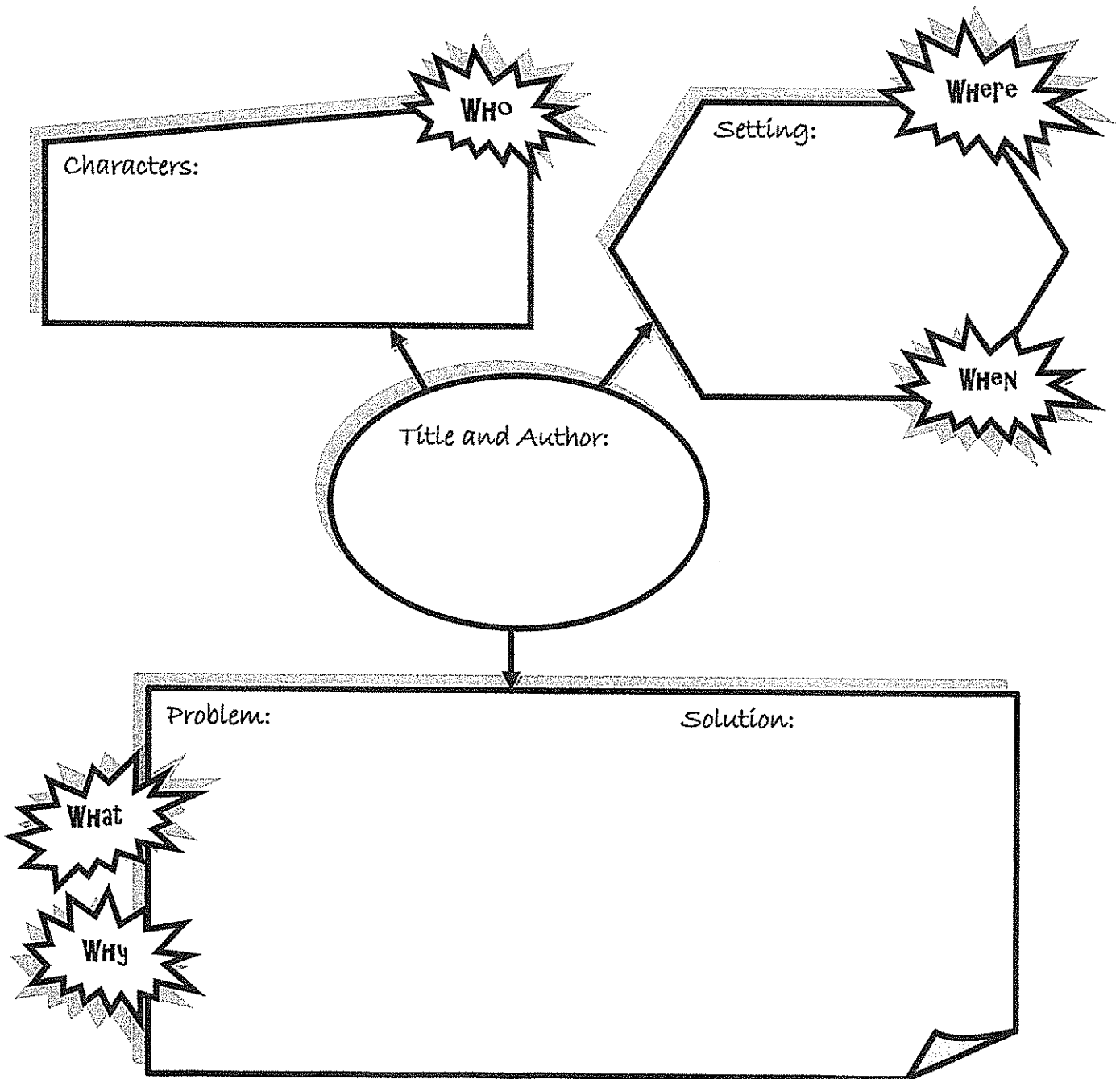
5. *What lesson does this story teach readers about how to reach goals?*

The lesson the story teaches readers about how to reach goals is you must be strong, brave, determined and resourceful.



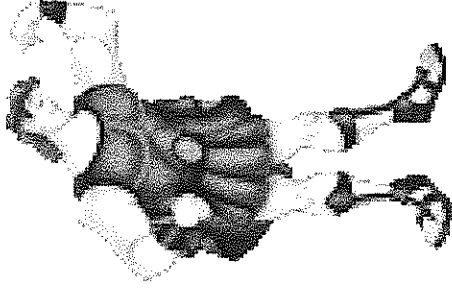
STORY STRUCTURE

Creating a Story Map helps readers understand the text better and focus on the key elements. While reading, answering the questions **who**, **what**, **where**, **when** and **why** assists readers in thinking carefully and considering the important details of story structure.



Hercules' Quest

Retold By
Martina Melendez

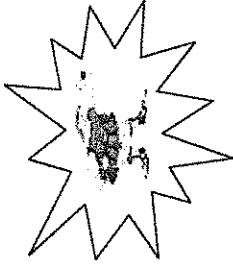


Name: _____

Date: _____

Theme

LACC.4.RL.1.1
LACC.4.RL.1.3

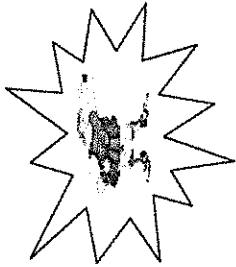


How does the title of the myth relate to the theme? What lesson can you learn from this story? Use text evidence to provide an example.

Respond:

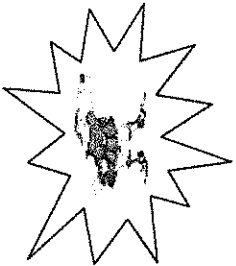
Allusions

LACC.4.RL.1.1
LACC.4.RL.2.4



How does Hera plot against Hercules? Based on her actions, is the allusion "the wrath of Hera" accurate? Why or why not? Use text evidence to support your answer.

Respond:



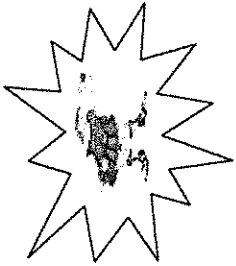
Story Structure

LACC.4.RL.1.3
LACC.4.RF.4.4.a

Describe the characters of this story. Where and when do the events of the story take place? What genre is this story? How do you know?

Respond:

12 horizontal lines for writing a response.



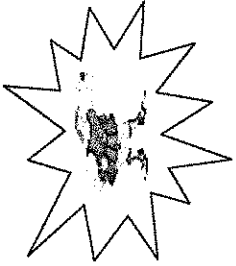
Character Analysis

LACC.4.RL.1.1
LACC.4.RL.1.3

What character traits do Hercules and Hera share? What evidence from the story could you use to support your answer?

Respond:

12 horizontal lines for writing a response.



Similarities & Differences

LACC.4.RL.1.1

Why does Zeus want Hercules to face dangerous tasks? How are his reasons different from Hera's? Support your answer using evidence from the text.

Respond:

12 horizontal lines for writing a response.