

# 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!

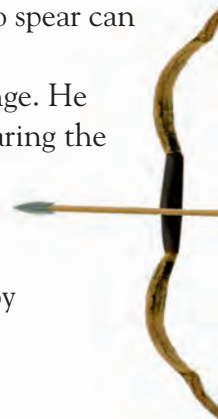
**Hera (aside):** Rats! Let's try another.

**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!

