

# Jacob's Ladder

GIFTED READING  
COMPREHENSION PROGRAM

*Second  
Edition*

Year

4

**Student Workbook  
Short Stories**

Republished in Australia by



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Code: PRU5693  
ISBN: 9781760569372  
0119

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Printed in Australia

Originally published in 2017 by Prufrock Press

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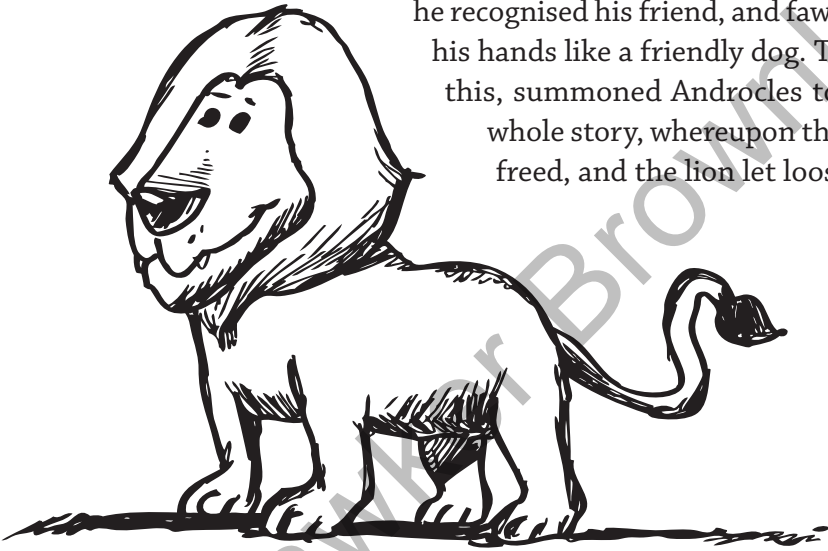
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## Androcles

A slave named Androcles once escaped from his master and fled to the forest. As he was wandering there he came upon a lion lying down, moaning and groaning. At first he turned to flee, but finding that the lion did not pursue him, he turned back and went up to him. As he came near, the lion put out his paw, which was all swollen and bleeding, and Androcles found that a huge thorn had got into it, and was causing all the pain. He pulled out the thorn and bound up the paw of the lion, who was soon able to rise and lick the hand of Androcles like a dog. Then the lion took Androcles to his cave, and every day brought him meat for his survival. But shortly afterward both Androcles and the lion were captured, and the slave was sentenced to be thrown to the lion, after the latter had been kept without food for several days. The Emperor and all of his court came to see the spectacle, and Androcles was led out into the middle of the arena. Soon the lion was let loose from his den, and rushed bounding and roaring toward his victim. But as soon as he came near to Androcles he recognised his friend, and fawned upon him, and licked his hands like a friendly dog. The Emperor, surprised at this, summoned Androcles to him, who told him the whole story, whereupon the slave was pardoned and freed, and the lion let loose to his native forest.



# ANDROCLES

## Main Idea, Theme or Concept

**C3** Theme: Write a moral for the fable. Explain why your moral is appropriate, providing evidence from the text.

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## Inference

**C2** Why doesn't the lion eat Androcles? Did it surprise you that the lion spared him? Why or why not?

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## Literary Elements

**C1** How would you describe Androcles? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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# Arachne and Athena

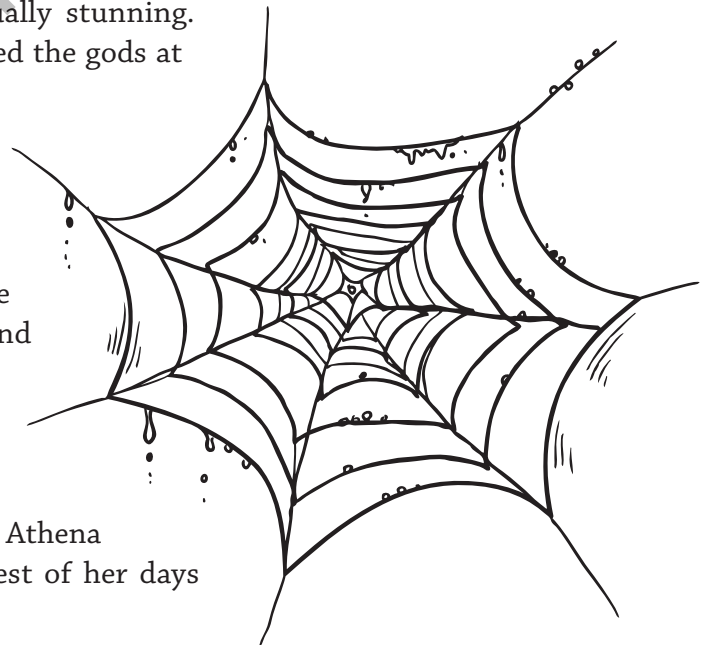
Arachne, who lived in Greece during ancient times, was famous for her incredible talent in weaving cloth. She could make the most beautiful cloth in the entire land. However, Arachne was not a modest girl. She would walk through the city boasting about her incredible talents. Arachne would even tell people that she was better at weaving than the revered goddess Athena.

Athena was not pleased by Arachne's boasting. One day, Athena knocked on Arachne's door. Arachne opened the door to find an old lady dressed in ragged clothes. She did not know she was really looking at Athena in disguise. The old lady pretended to be interested in buying some of Arachne's cloth. Arachne let the old lady enter. Immediately, Athena, disguised as the old lady, started criticising Arachne's weaving, saying she could do much better. Insulted, Arachne challenged the old lady to a weaving contest.

After accepting the challenge, Athena emerged from her disguise. Arachne was not at all frightened by the prospect of a weaving competition with Athena; Arachne was completely convinced she would win!

Both Arachne and Athena spent hours weaving beautiful cloth. Athena's cloth was spectacular. She had woven a picture of the gods performing their many wonderful deeds. Arachne's cloth also portrayed the gods and was equally stunning. However, Arachne's cloth portrayed the gods at their weakest moments, displaying their worst behaviour. Athena was furious. She could not believe Arachne had the audacity to insult the gods.

Athena complimented Arachne on her amazing weaving talent and told her she would be justly rewarded for her gifts. Arachne felt her head begin to shrink and watched in horror as eight furry legs sprouted from her body. Athena told her to enjoy spending the rest of her days weaving all she wished.



# ARACHNE AND ATHENA

## Generalisations

**B3** What generalisations can you make about change based on your list and categories?

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## Classifications

**B2** Using the list you created in B1, categorise the changes you listed.

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## Details

**B1** List 25 ways Arachne's life might change now that she is a spider.

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# The Myth of Heracles (Hercules)



Heracles (known as Hercules to the Romans) was the son of the god Zeus. When he was a baby, the goddess Hera was jealous of the attention he was given; she sent two serpents to his crib to kill him. Shortly after the serpents were sent, Heracles was found babbling happily with a strangled serpent in each hand. This event was the first clue of Heracles' superhuman strength.

As he grew older, Heracles became a champion marksman and wrestler. Unfortunately, he was driven mad by Hera and in a frenzy of anger killed his own children. To atone for this terrible deed, Heracles was charged with completing 12 tasks, or labours, for his cousin, King Eurystheus. The 12 labours were thought to be impossible; everyone believed Heracles would die trying to accomplish them.

The first labour Heracles was given was to slay the Nemean lion. This was no ordinary lion. Arrows or spears could not penetrate its skin. Heracles defeated the lion by blocking the entrance to his den and killing it with his bare hands. When Heracles returned carrying the defeated Nemean lion, everyone, including Eurystheus, was in awe of his strength.

One of the more exciting tasks for Heracles was to slay the much-feared Hydra. No one is entirely sure how many heads the Hydra had; some believe it was eight or nine, while others claim the Hydra had 10 000 heads! There was agreement, though, about the Hydra's ability to regrow two heads for every one that was cut off. As if many heads were not frightening enough, the Hydra's breath was lethal to mere mortals. Fortunately for Heracles, he was not a mere mortal. With the help of his nephew, Iolaus (who just happened to be waiting in the chariot), Heracles cut off each of the Hydra's heads while Iolaus seared the wound, making it impossible for another head to grow.

Heracles' final task was to bring back Cerberus from the Underworld, the land of the dead. His first obstacle was getting across the River Styx, the most famous river of the Underworld where all of the dead souls congregated. Heracles could not pay the bribe to Charon the Boatman, nor was he dead; both of these were prerequisites for entering the Underworld. Heracles had to use his superhuman strength to frighten Charon into taking him across the River Styx. Once in the Underworld, Heracles was confronted with Cerberus and his razor-sharp teeth and venomous snake tail. Luckily, Heracles was wearing the armour he made from the Nemean lion that he had slain during the first labour. The lion's skin was impenetrable to Cerberus' teeth or tail. Heracles eventually succeeded at this labour as well.

Many years later after many more adventures, Heracles died from wearing a tunic tainted by poison, much to the dismay of his beloved wife Deianara.



# THE MYTH OF HERACLES (HERCULES)

## Consequences and Implications

**A3** Why was Heracles's manner of death ironic? Explain.

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## Cause and Effect

**A2** What caused Heracles to be tasked with the 12 labours? What effects did the assignment have on his life?

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## Sequencing

**A1** List the five most important events in the myth in order.

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