

BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.The book opens with Medusa’s mother saying “She does not belong there” to Medusa. How does her mother’s disapproval of her appearance morph the way Medusa interacts with her family? How do you think her mother’s actions affected Medusa’s journey?**
- 2.Medusa’s two sisters, Euryale and Stheno, are key figures in Medusa’s life. How do Medusa’s interactions with her sisters change throughout the book? How do you think Medusa defines sisterhood?**
- 3.After Medusa petrifies a dog and two travelers outside Athens, she quickly realizes how powerful her petrifying abilities are. Do you think she dictates her powers or do her powers dictate her? Do her snakes guide or manipulate her actions? Did your perspective on this change throughout the story as Medusa understands her powers more and connects with her snakes?**
- 4.The Graeae tell Medusa a prophecy that a boy named Perseus will kill her. Did the Graeae’s prophecy make you worried about how Medusa would navigate the rest of her life, or did you feel confident that Medusa would make the right choices? What would you have done in her situation?**
- 5.Medusa develops a strong friendship with Dionysus. How do you think Dionysus changes her life, positively and negatively? Does she see Dionysus as a friend or mentor, or both? Why do you think Dionysus was the one to become her friend over other gods and goddesses?**
- 6.Medusa creates emotional bonds with Echidna, Polli, Dionysus, and Naidah, but at different times throughout the book. Which relationship do you think Medusa enjoys the most? Which relationship do you think she benefitted from the most?**
- 7.The label monster is associated with Medusa throughout the book. Do you see her as a monster? What other label would you use to describe Medusa, if any?**
- 8.At the end of the book, Perseus kills Medusa, but her consciousness still remains in the world. How has your perception of Perseus changed after reading this book?**
- 9.Medusa was able to learn more about her petrifying abilities over time, but her life was cut short when Perseus murdered her. Do you think Medusa had a fulfilling life despite it being so short? Why or why not?**
- 10. After Medusa’s death, Dionysus welcomes her to Mount Olympus as an immortal. Did Medusa receive justice for her death? Do you think Medusa ever wished to become immortal?**

3 QUESTIONS WITH NATALY GRUENDER

Q. What makes Medusa's story different from other stories of other Greek mythological figures? Why did you want to write her story?

A. When I read stories from Greek mythology, I would very often see overlapping characters like the Olympians or demigod heroes whose stories I had already read. But by seeing them outside of their individual stories, I was able to get a bigger picture of their lives.... One thing that bothered me about Greek mythology was that Medusa seemed to be left out of this trend. Sure, she would appear in the stories about Perseus or Athena, but she did not have her own story for those appearances to build off of. Her history was fragmented and incomplete. And, most frustratingly, her most common appearance in myths was as a beheaded monster or as part of a shield. I wanted to write her story so that I could see all the parts of her life that were missing. And I wanted to hear her tell the story herself. A decapitated head makes a poor narrator, but I knew Medusa was much more than the monster she was remembered as.



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Q. Was there any specific or unique research you had to conduct when writing your first draft?

A. A lot of the research I did was collecting all those fragments of stories that mentioned Medusa and piecing them together to get the outline of a picture. There are multiple versions of her origin story, and the one I built on was the one that I felt had a sturdier foundation. I took from passages of works like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to find the basics of Medusa's story, and the rest was subject to what I imagined her life was like.

The main thing I remember researching and puzzling over was the timeline of Medusa's big walk from Athens to Delphi. I studied Google Maps's recommended path for walking that distance to try to get a good estimate of how long it would take one woman to make the journey when there were only dirt roads. And she was roughing it, I had to remember. I gave her (and myself) a bit of leeway to make the journey.

Q. How do you want readers to view Medusa after reading your book?

A. My main reason for writing the book was to have Medusa tell her own story. She needed to be the narrator and be able to give the readers an inside look at her thoughts as she went through the most famous parts of her myth with Athena, Poseidon, and Perseus. But more than anything, I hope readers finish the book thinking of Medusa as a fully formed legend, whether that's as a monster or a woman or both. She's not just a part of someone else's story. She had her own story.

FETA & HONEY PHYLO PIES

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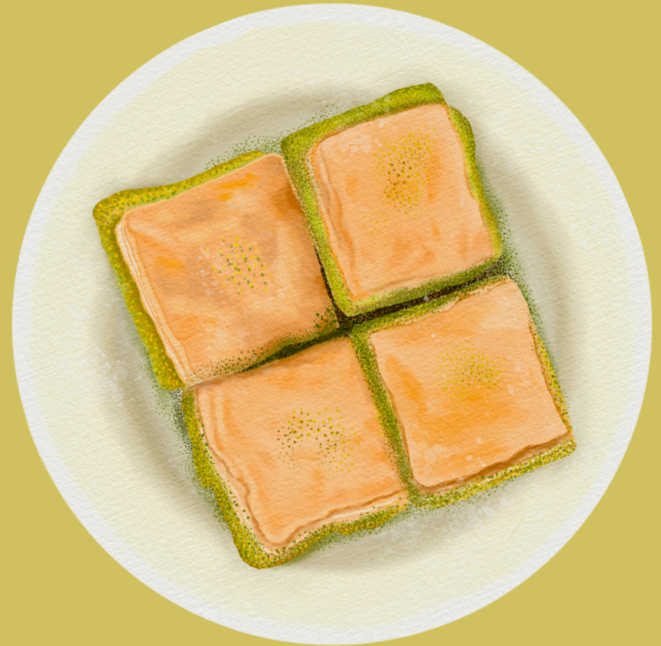
An appetizer fit for a god - or your book club.

Throw a Greek-themed event with even more easy appetizers like whipped feta dip and veggies, frozen spinach filo pies, and lemon potato wedges!

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 5 oz of good quality feta cheese
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil, plus more for brushing
- 2 tsp. honey, plus more for serving
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 4 sheets phylo pastry
- 1 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- A cold glass of ouzo (optional!)



DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-heat the oven to 390F/200C if baking.
2. Mash the feta with the 1 tablespoon of olive oil, the honey & the oregano.
3. Lay one sheet of phylo pastry onto your work surface and brush it lightly with olive oil. Lay another sheet on top. Cut the sheets in half across the width. Repeat this with the remaining two sheets of phylo so that you have 4 rectangles of pastry.
4. Spoon one quarter of the feta mixture into the centre of each piece of pastry. Fold one of the long edges into the centre, then repeat with the other edge. Fold the short edges into the centre, too, so that the cheese is wrapped up like a parcel.
5. Brush the parcels lightly all over with olive oil, then either bake them on a baking sheet until light brown and crispy (for about 10 minutes) or, if you prefer, pan-fry them for a couple of minutes on each side.
6. Meanwhile, toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet/frying pan until they are a light golden brown.
7. Serve immediately with a big drizzle of honey and some toasted sesame seeds over each parcel - with a little crusty bread if you like.

RECOMMENDED STORIES

A curated list from the author

