

The Rock of Doom (Picture) vs. Andromeda (Poem), information and tasks (in blue):

In ancient Greek myth, Andromeda was the daughter of King Cepheus of Joppa in Ethiopia and of Queen Cassiopea. The mother boasted to the sea god, Poseidon, that her daughter Andromeda was more beautiful than Poseidon's daughters. Poseidon was so incensed that he sent a dragonlike sea monster which ravaged the country and could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of Andromeda. She was therefore chained to a rock on the seacoast and exposed to await the monster's fury.

Perseus, the son of Zeus – king of the gods – and Danae, was returning from slaying Medusa, the Gorgon whose head turned all who looked on it to stone. Having cut off Medusa's head (and having first thoughtfully obtained her father, Cepheus' consent to his marrying Andromeda if he could save her), Perseus successfully slew the monster and was thus able to claim his prize.

Now look at the painting The Rock of Doom by Edward Burne-Jones:

1. Write down your thoughts on the appearance of Perseus (consider his face, his clothing and his stance).
2. Write down your thoughts on the appearance of Andromeda (consider her face, her lack of clothing and her stance).
3. Comment on the appearance of the rock and the chains.

Now read the poem Andromeda by Connie Rosen, who has written it in response to the painting:

Consider the problem of chains.

It would appear that Andromeda

Tied to the rock

Waited for our hero to arrive

To cut them.

But sea air is bad for chains

In time they'd rusted badly.

Broken links, small heaps of red dust

Lay around

Unobserved

That is to say, deliberately unobserved

Until

In spite of innumerable

Surreptitious efforts to piece them together

The facts were unavoidable

They'd crumbled, vanished

*Outlived their purpose.
But tendencies for chain-making
Continued to compel.
It was no great problem for one
Accustomed to such matters
To replace the old set with a new
But different...
Man-held not rock-held*

*Chains, chain-making and chain-makers
Are likely to be much affected
By the differences between men and rocks*

1. Consider the problem of chains. What does Connie Rosen suggest when she writes ‘deliberately unobserved’; ‘outlived their purpose’; ‘But tendencies for chain-making continue to compel’?
2. What is the nature of the new set of chains?
3. Write a letter to the painter – ‘Dear Mr. Burne-Jones...’ – telling him why you approve/disapprove, like/dislike his painting and, in particular, the depiction of male and female roles as portrayed by Andromeda and Perseus.