Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**THE ADVENTURES OF JASON AND ARGONAUTS**

1. Who was Aeson? Who was his brother?

Ans. Aeson was a king who lived in Iolcus, Greece. He had a stepbrother called Pelius who was very jealous of him. Pelius with great cunning, put his brother in prison and took over his kingdom.

1. What were the names of Aeson’s wife and their child? What did the wife realise? What did she do?

Ans. The name of Aeson’s wife was Alcimede and their son’s name was Jason. His wife, Alcimede realized that if Pelius came to hear of the baby’s birth, he would have him killed at once. So Alcimede pretended that her child had died and she mourned so loudly and long that Pelius did not even suspect that the baby was actually alive and well. Alcimede took Jason away secretly and gave him to Chiron, asking him to bring up the child in the forest where he lived and to take charge of his education.

1. Who was Chiron?

Ans. Chiron was a Centaur. A Centaur is a supernatural creature who is almost a god, with the head of a man and the body of a horse. Chiron was the wisest of the centaurs and was a teacher to many of the princes of Greece.

1. What did Jason learn from Chiron?

Ans. Jason learnt all about forests, trees, birds and beasts from Chiron. Under the care, Jason grew up to be strong and fearless, able to wrestle and run and hunt with the best of the young princes. Chiron also taught him the use of different weapons and all the other arts that a prince should learn.

1. What did the Oracle tell Pelius?

Ans. Pelius consulted the Oracle and was told that he would meet his death at the hands of a relative, someone who would be wearing only one sandal on his feet when Pelius first met him.

1. Why was Hera angry with Pelius? What did she realise?

Ans. Hera, the wife of Zeus, was angry with Pelius because he had once held a grand feast to honour the gods but had deliberately left Hera out, the only god to be thus ignored. Hera wanted to punish him for having insulted her and realized that Jason could do it for her. She then thought if he was brave enough for such a deed and decided to test him.

1. How did Hera decide to test Jason?

Ans. On his way to Iolcus, Jason had to cross a fast-flowing river which was in flood. On the bank sat a bent old woman looking despairingly at the rushing waters. She asked Jason if he could carry her over the torrent as she was weak and old. Jason agreed that he would unless they both would drown away. The old woman leapt onto his back, as nimble as a goat, and he waded into the angry stream, carrying her on his shoulders. With each step that he took, the old woman grew heavier and heavier until even a strong youth such as Jason huffed and puffed and struggled to stop himself from being swept away. Finally, he managed to take the old woman safely across and put her down gently on the other side. She thanked him and blessed him for his help. Jason did not realise that it was the goddess Hera in disguise who had come to test him.

1. What did Jason do when he reached the uncle’s court? How did Pelius react? Why?

Ans. Jason strode up to his uncle’s court and demanded to see him. The king grew pale when he saw the handsome young man standing before him, with a sandal on only one foot. He was sure that this was the relative that the Oracle had warned him about.

1. What did Pelius ask Jason to bring?

Ans. Pelius asked Jason to bring the Golden fleece back to Greece. The Golden fleece was their national treasure.

1. Mention in brief about Golden fleece.

Ans. Many years ago, Zeus, the king of the gods, had given a golden ram to King Phrixus, who was Jason’s ancestor. The ram had the power to fly through the sky, and King Phrixus flew on its back from Greece to the island of Colchis, whose king was Aietes, the son of Helios, the Sun God. Aietes sacrificed the ram and hung its fleece from the branch of the tree, which stood at the centre of a sacred garden and was guarded by a fierce dragon. The Oracle had told the King Aietes that he would lose his kingdom if he allowed the Golden fleece to leave his island, and so Aietes took every precaution that was necessary. The Greeks, however, felt that the Golden fleece belonged to them, as the ram had been given by Zeus to a Greek king. It became a matter of pride for all Greeks to try to bring the Golden Fleece back to their own country, but everyone realized that it was almost an impossible task as no one could get past the terrible dragon that guarded the Fleece.

1. Cite Jason’s preparation to bring back Golden fleece.

Ans. Jason requested Pelius to find him a ship which would carry him and fifty companions to Colchis. The wicked Pelius, who was sure that Jason would never return alive, readily agreed to the request. A master shipbuilder called Argos was ordered to build a great ship which would be rowed by fifty strong oarsmen. Jason then sent messengers to every corner of Greece, requesting other young men to join him in his adventure and help him bring the Golden fleece back from Colchis. He knew that only brave and able men would volunteer to join his team. The ship was built and named the Argo after its builder. The fifty young men who volunteered to join Jason were called the Argonauts.

1. Note on Argonauts.

Ans. The fifty young men who volunteered to join Jason were called Argonauts. Each one of them was a famous hero who had already performed wonderful feats of courage and strength. They were all good friends of Jason, as they had studied together under the wise Chiron. The mighty Hercules, the strongest man in the world, came, as did Theseus, the bravest and cleverest of all the warriors in Greece. The wonderful musician, Orpheus, was there along with the famous twins Castor and Pollux. Jason was the leader of the group. Before starting on his voyage, he prayed to Zeus to bless them and help them a complete their mission successfully.

1. What did Hercules suggest? What happened then?

Ans. Herules suggested that they should organize a contest to decide who was the best oarsman among them. Gradually, all the others dropped out of the contest except for Jason and Hercules. Finally, even Jason fainter from exhaustion and Hercules’ oar broke into two.

1. Note on King Phineus.

Ans. King Phineus welcomed the Argonauts warmly, but looked so think and weak that Jason asked him if he was ill. Phineus told Jason that he was being punished by Zeus because of the special power that he possessed to predict the future. Whenever Phineus tried to have a meal, two horrible creatures, the Harpies, came flying and snatched the food away from him. Anything that remained, smelt so bad that he could not eat it. Thus he was getting weaker day by day. The desperate king begged Jason for help.

1. How did the Argonauts help Phineus?

Ans. Phineus warned that only two of their Argonauts, the sons of Boreas, the North Wind, can drive away these creatures because only they had the power to do so. The two sons of the North Wind stepped out with their swords, ready to tackle the Harpies. They appeared as soon as a meal was served to Phineas and snatched the food away with their sharp claws. But the two brave Argonauts wounded them so badly with their swords that the Harpies flew away screaming, never to return.

1. How did Phineus reward Jason?

Ans. Phineas told Jason how to avoid a grave danger which the Argonauts would face on the way to Colchis. He said that there was only one way to get past the rocks safely. He advised that a dove should fly before them. The rocks would clash together and crush the dove. He advised to wait until the rocks separated and then row with all their might before they come together again.

1. Mention the threat Jason’s ship would have to face.

Ans. Jason’s ship would have to pass through the dangerous Bosphorous Strait, where the Black sea became so narrow that it was difficult for a ship to pass through it. At the entrance to this narrow channel, on either side of it, stood two huge, jagged rocks called the Clashing islands. Whenever a ship tried to sail through the channel they came together with a clash and smashed the ship into tiny pieces.

1. What happened when Jason went to meet the King of Colchis?

Ans. The next day, the Argonauts, led by Jason went to meet the king of Colchis, King Aietes and his daughter, Medea, who greeted them cordially. But Aietes was suspicious about the reason for their visit. Jason admitted that he had come to reclaim the Golden Fleece which in truth belonged to Greece. He also added that in return, he and the Argonauts were prepared to perform any task for the king.

1. Was King Aietes willing to give the Golden fleece? What did he do?

Ans. King Aietes was not willing to give the precious Golden Fleece. So he thought of a series of impossible tasks. He knew that in trying to perform them, at least some of the Greeks were sure to be killed. For the first task, Jason would have to yoke together a pair of fire-breathing bulls and use them to plough a field. Then, the teeth of a dragon would have to be sown in the field. An armed man would spring up, by magic, from each tooth and Jason would have to fight them single-handed and kill them all. Aietes promised to hand over the Golden Fleece after Jason had completed these three tasks successfully.

1. How did Medea help Jason?

Ans. Medea had fallen in love with Jason and was anxious to save his life. She sent a messenger to Jason. As soon as Jason arrived, Medea explained how she could help them perform the impossible tasks set by her father, the king. Medea gave him a magic ointment and a magic stone and then she gave him instructions on their use. Jason listened to her carefully and promised to do exactly as she said.

1. Give a brief note of how Jason carried out the tasks.

Ans. The morning dawned bright and clear. Jason woke up and spread the magic ointment all over his body and on his weapons and hid the magic stone in the folds of his clothes just as Medea had told him to do. The Bulls with eyes blazing and tongues of fire shooting out of their mouths were let loose. He approached the bulls fearlessly and spoke to them in a gentle voice. The magic ointment on his body prevented the fire from doing him any harm. Jason caught hold of both the bulls easily and yoked them to the plough. Jason was then busy sowing the teeth of the dragon in the ploughing field. But, when the warriors arose from the teeth of the dragon, Jason threw the magic stone into their midst. Immediately, a madness came upon them and the warriors started fighting and killing one another until all of them were dead.

1. How did King Aietes react to Jason’s successful attempt?

Ans. King Aietes was both angry and puzzled, but he pretended to look very pleased as he congratulated Jason and told him that he would hand over the Golden Fleece to him the next morning. However, Aietes and his son had made plans to attack the Argonauts when they were resting at night and kill them all.

1. Medea helped Jason the second time. Give details.

Ans. Medea got to know of her father, King Aietes, and her brother Prince Apsyrtus’ plan and went to warm Jason. She told him that she will lead him to the sacred grove where the Golden Fleece was hanging. The Argonauts rowed silently until they reached the sacred grove. They pulled up their ship and waited quietly. Medea and Jason stepped onto the shore. The Golden Fleece, hung from the bough of a tree, gleaming in the moonlight like a shower of gold. But at the foot of the tree was the huge fire-breathing dragon which guarded the Fleece. Medea went close to the dragon and started tossing a magic lullaby which put the animal to sleep. Jason grabbed the Golden Fleece and ran back to the ship with Medea.

1. What happened as the Argonauts sailed past the Island of the Sirens?

Ans. More danger awaited them as they sailed past the island of the Sirens. The Sirens were creatures who sang the most beautiful songs and lured unsuspecting sailors to their island. But, as soon as they came close, the ships would crash into the rocks and the sailors would be made captives on the island. This time, it was Orpheus, the musician, who saved them. As soon as they came near the islands and heard the Sirens sing, the Orpheus took out his lyre and played so beautifully that it completely drowned the song of the Sirens. As the Argonauts could not hear the Sirens, they passed by the island safely.

1. What happened after facing many perils at the sea?

Ans. After facing many perils at sea, Jason and his brave men finally reached home. Jason carried the Golden Fleece in triumph to Iolcus. Soon after Jason’s return, his wicked uncle died in a miserable death and Jason gave the kingdom back to his father.