Map out story events using a story mountain use a different coloured pencil to list adjectives to use in each paragraph/event. 

Jason and the Golden Fleece

The monster had no eyelids, it had no name and it had no pity. It looked at Jason with eyes scorched red by sunshine............

Activity:
Highlight key words and phrases that describe a character.

The monster had no eyelids, it had no name and it had no pity. It looked at Jason with eyes scorched red by sunshine and moonlight. Then it pounced on him with gaping jaws.

Jason drew his sword, but its blade shattered like glass against the dragon's scales. Teeth tore his clothes and fiery breath scorched his hair.

• Use different parts of the text for children to work in pairs to highlight key adjectives to describe characters such as the dragon.
• Use adjectives found from these descriptions to paint a picture of character.
• Cut out key events of story and muddle them up. Children work in groups to plot and discuss events on a story mountain.
A long time ago there lived two brothers. Pelias hated his older brother, Aeson, because Aeson was the King of Thebes. Pelias and took the throne from his brother and put him in prison. But Aeson had a son, and after many years that son came back to fight for his father's rights. His name was Jason.

When Pelias heard that Jason had arrived he challenged him to a dare. "I'll give up the crown without a fight, if you can prove you are worthy to take it from me. I dare you to go and find the famous Golden Fleece. If you can bring it to me, the crown goes back to your father." "I accept! I'll do it!" said Jason.

Then Pelias smiled a wicked smile. For he knew that many had tried to take the fiercely-guarded Golden Fleece belonging to King Aeëtes—but none had lived to tell their tale.

Jason's first task was to search out the finest shipbuilder in the land. He called his ship Argo, which means swift, and he mustered a crew from all the heroes of the world and called them his Argonauts. But when he climbed aboard, he did not even know where to start looking for the Golden Fleece. Resting his hand on the wooden figurehead — carved from a magical oak tree — he could feel a throb, like a heartbeat. Suddenly the figurehead turned, and the carved eyes opened, and the carved mouth spoke: "King Phineas will tell you where. Ask poor, poor Phineas!"

Phineas was old and blind. He had chests full of robes and larders full of food. But when Jason and the Argonauts visited him he was as thin as a twig and his clothes hung in rags. Servants brought delicious food. But no sooner was the table set than in through the windows swooped a flock of hideous birds, their claws snatching, their wings clacking. They had women's heads, with flying hair and munching mouths, and they stole the supper out of the very hands of the Argonauts and slashed at their faces. "The Harpies! Shelter under the table, sirs!" cried King Phineas. "You'll be safer there." But Jason drew his sword and cried, "Up, men, and fight!" He and his crew fought the Harpies until feathers and hair fell like snow. The creatures beat at Jason with their leathery wings, but he cut them out of the air with his sword and jumped on them with his two feet. At last the Harpies fled shrieking across the rooftops and out to sea, never to return.

Jason grilled a plate with food and set it in front of the king. "Eat, friend, then tell us how to find the Golden Fleece." "Don't try it!" begged Phineas. "The Fleece hangs in the Land of Colchis, beyond the Clashing Cliffs. Think of that and tremble!" "Tremble? I, tremble? Ha!" said Jason grandly. And he gathered his men together and the Argo sped through, swift as darting seagulls. Soon they had reached Colchis, Land of the Golden Fleece.

But the cliffs were a terrifying sight. Two walls of rock, on either side of a narrow strait, crashed together like cymbals. Fire streamed down and sparks flew up, while boulders plunged into the churning sea below. Between one clash of cliffs and the next, the Argo sped through, swift as darting seagulls. Soon they had reached Colchis, Land of the Golden Fleece.

The next day Jason presented himself to the king of the island and told him his story. "I must have the Golden Fleece—it's my destiny," he said. The king's lip curled. "Well, of course I shall let you take my Golden Fleece ... but the soldiers who guard it might try to stop you. Ha ha!"

Out of his deep purple pockets he pulled handfuls of sharp white teeth. Dragon's teeth! He tossed them in among the Argonauts. As each tooth touched the ground, a warrior sprang up, bristling with weapons. Soon these soldiers outnumbered Jason's men a hundred to one. "We fought the Harpies, didn't we?" cried Jason to his men. "Surely we can knock out a mouthful of teeth!"

The Fleece hung in a lovely garden. By the gate of the garden stood a woman—the king's daughter. "I watched you fight the dragon-tooth warriors," said Princess Medea to Jason. "You are a true hero, I can see that. But you'll need my magic if you are going to win the Golden Fleece. Marry me and I'll help you."

"You're so beautiful that I'll willingly marry you," said Jason. "But I must lift down the prize by my own strength or I would be cheated." And he set out through flowery groves, across streams, past bushes hung with blossom. But here and there he passed piles of bones. Other heroes had entered the garden before him ... and met the dragon.

At last Jason found the prize he had come for. The Golden Fleece rested over the branch of a tree—as thick and heavy as a carpet, glistening with golden curls, soft, soft, soft. And round the tree coiled the dragon set to guard it. The monster had no eyelids, it was as thin as a twig and his clothes hung in rags. Servants brought delicious food. But no sooner was the table set than in through the windows swooped a flock of hideous birds, their claws snatching, their wings clacking. They had women's heads, with flying hair and munching mouths, and they stole the supper out of the very hands of the Argonauts and slashed at their faces. "The Harpies! Shelter under the table, sirs!" cried King Phineas. "You'll be safer there." But Jason drew his sword and cried, "Up, men, and fight!" He and his crew fought the Harpies until feathers and hair fell like snow. The creatures beat at Jason with their leathery wings, but he cut them out of the air with his sword and jumped on them with his two feet. At last the Harpies fled shrieking across the rooftops and out to sea, never to return.

Then the sun glinted on a splash of gold—a sheep's fleece. It was draped over Jason's shoulder as he came running down the beach. Alongside him ran a woman as beautiful as the Fleece. "Aboard, men!" cried Jason. "I've stolen the king's Golden Fleece and his daughter!"

So Jason and Princess Medea returned to Thebes—much to the amazement and fury of Pelias. Jason's father, Aeson, was freed from prison, but he refused to put on the crown of Thebes again. "I'm too tired to rule, Son," he said. "You must be king in my place."

But Medea said gently, "Trust me, father-in-law. I have magic to make you strong and young again."

She poured him a peculiar potion, which sent Aeson to sleep for three days. When he awoke, he had the body of a young man and the wisdom of an old one—and all the energy he needed to rule Thebes. When wicked old Pelias saw this amazing transformation, he went to Medea and offered her all his money if she would do the same for him. "Make me young again, Medea," he said. "I'd give anything for that!" So Medea gave him a potion, too, and he fell asleep for three days. Three months. Three years. In fact he never woke up again, because Medea had put him to sleep for ever.

So Jason and Medea lived together as man and wife, and although Jason dressed in simple clothes, his cloak was lined with a golden fleece.