

King Minos of Crete had, for a very long time, **despised** the people of Athens. This was because they had killed his son in revenge when he took all of the prizes at the Athenian Games.

To prevent King Minos from **waging** a war against them, the Athenians sent seven young boys and seven young girls every nine years to Crete. These youths were **sacrificed** to a terrifying beast that was half-bull, half-man called the Minotaur.

Theseus, the son of Aegeus, King of Athens was a **gallant** and clever man who was greatly angered by this cruel act. **Thriving** on adventures and feeling so strongly about this situation, Theseus offered to be one of the next victims when the next ship sailed to Crete. He was most determined to kill the monster.

Aegeus was so **distressed** by Theseus' decision he begged his son not to **entertain** this idea but Theseus ignored these requests and insisted he must go.

The day came for Theseus to set sail with the thirteen other young people. A black sail was raised on the ship as a memorial and sign of respect to the Minotaur's previous victims.

"Don't worry father, I shall return victorious!" promised Theseus as the ship set sail. "I shall raise a white sail on my return to **signify** my success."

The journey was not an easy one and added to the tension and misery of the crew as they journeyed to their fate. Strong storms smashed and smacked against the ship on its dramatic voyage.

Finally, the ship arrived on the shores of Crete and the Athenians were met by the king himself and his daughter Ariadne. Minos immediately recognised the King of Athens' son as he **disembarked** from the vessel. Angered by his boldness and fearlessness in daring to confront the Minotaur, King Minos **taunted** Theseus.

"How dare you come to my kingdom, the son of a king whose people I loathe," the king spat.

"You do not frighten me," Theseus replied boldly. "I come in honour of my people who have been treated unreasonably."

On hearing these brave words, Ariadne fell head over heels in love with Theseus and in her mind **resolved** to help him in his **quest** to kill the Minotaur.

That very night, she went to Theseus in his dungeon, under cover of darkness and managed to speak to him.

"Theseus, Theseus!" she whispered. "It is I, Ariadne, the King's daughter. I have come to help you kill the Minotaur but only if you'll marry me."

Theseus was unsure but looking into her kind and trusting eyes, he believed that Ariadne was telling the truth and promised he would marry her.

“Take these,” Ariadne insisted, handing him a sword and a ball of golden thread. “As you enter the **labyrinth**, unwind the golden string as you travel through the maze towards the Minotaur. On finding the Minotaur, **slay** him with this sword and use the thread to guide you quickly back out of the maze. Without it, you will struggle to escape.”

The very next day, the fourteen young Athenians were thrown into the labyrinth and to their certain death.

Once inside, Theseus did as he had been **instructed** and tied one end of the thread to the entrance and set off in search of the Minotaur, telling the other Athenians to wait there.

The labyrinth was both **bewildering** and complicated as well as being dark and cold. He could hear the threatening and dreadful sounds coming from the Minotaur. Despite this, Theseus was determined and **persevered**.

Suddenly, Theseus came face to face with the hideous beast, its jaws dripping with blood. Clenching his sword, Theseus ran at the Minotaur and swung fiercely at him. The Minotaur, in anger, bellowed and charged. The monster was very strong and the fight was tiresome and vicious. But Theseus refused to be beaten and fought on, eventually driving his sword through the Minotaur.

At last, the Minotaur fell to the ground with a resounding thud and lay still.

It was dead.

Quickly, Theseus **traced** his way back through the maze and to its entrance, breathing heavily as he made his way through the twisted tunnels to his freedom and his friends.

Hearing the other cheering Athenians, Ariadne unlocked the door and hugged Theseus on his victory.

“We must leave quickly Ariadne to escape the **wrath** of your father.”

Rushing to the shore, they boarded the ship and set sail.

After a few days, the crew stopped for rest on a small island. While they relaxed, Theseus came to the conclusion that he actually did not love Ariadne and had no wish to marry her. So whilst she slept, Theseus called his crew together and set sail for home, leaving a **distraught** Ariadne.

However, in the excitement of the victory and the thought of returning home, the crew forgot to change the sail from black to white as Theseus had promised. Anxiously, King Aegeus waited for a sighting of his son from the cliff tops and on seeing the black sail he feared the worse.

“My son! My son!” he wailed and, in his torment, threw himself off the rocks.

So as the Athenians celebrated the victory and the return of the young people, Theseus suffered and mourned the death of his father. It was with a heavy heart that Theseus now became the new King of Athens.

By Jenny Turner

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Theseus and the Minotaur – 3a – Text

Theseus and the Minotaur - Oral Teacher Questions

Why does King Minos not like the Athenians? (AF2) **The Athenians had killed his son when he won all the prizes at the Athenian Games.**

What adjectives does the author use to describe Theseus? (AF4) **Gallant and clever.**

Looking at the first part of the story, describe in your own words the character of Theseus. (AF3) **Theseus is a brave and intelligent man who is also bold and courageous. He believes in justice and feels that the sacrifice of the young Athenians is wrong and must be righted.**

Why does Theseus decide to be one of the next young victims of the Minotaur? (AF2) **He is angered and feels the killing of these innocent young people is unjust and cruel.**

Why is a black sail raised when the ship sets sail for Crete? (AF2) **It is raised as a sign of respect to remember the previous victims of the Minotaur.**

“The journey was not an easy one and added to the tension and misery of the crew as they journeyed to their fate”. In your own words, what do you think the author is describing here. (AF5) **The voyage is stormy and difficult and only makes the situation worse for the crew who are already anxious, tense and terrified about where this journey is leading them to – their death at the hands of a monster.**

“Strong storms smashed and smacked against the ship.” What literary device is the author using here? (AF4) **Alliteration**

Think of another time connective for “finally”. (AF4) **Eventually. At last.**

How does King Minos react on seeing Theseus for the first time? How do we know this? (AF3) **He is angered. He is furious that the son of the King of Athens dares to come to Crete after what the Athenians have done to his own son. We know he is raging because he spits his words at Theseus.**

What type of word is “boldly”? Can you think of another word to replace it? (AF4) **Adverb. Bravely, courageously**

What do you think, “head over heels” means? (AF5) **Being completely and instantly in love with someone or something.**

What makes Theseus believe that Ariadne truly wants to help him? (AF3) **He looks into her eyes and sees that she is genuine. He sees that she is caring and sympathetic to his cause.**

Why do you think the author uses the word “thrown” to describe how the Athenians enter the maze? (AF6) He is describing how King Minos’ soldiers treat the young men and women, they do not care and show a disregard and indifference to the fate of the Athenians. The soldiers treat them cruelly by flinging the Athenians to their death.

Imagine you are Theseus. From the description, how might you feel as you make your way through the maze towards the Minotaur? (AF7) Anxious about what you are about to encounter. A nervous excitement as you travel towards the Minotaur. Tense and a little edgy as you are hesitant about what awaits you around every dark, mysterious turn of the Labyrinth.

Why do you think Theseus is breathing heavily as he tries to escape out of the maze? (AF3) He is exhausted and drained after killing the Minotaur and is trying to escape from the maze as quickly as he can to his freedom.

What does, “came to the conclusion” mean? (AF5) To reach a decision.

Why does Aegeus think his son has died? (AF3) The sail is black so he assumes, wrongly that Theseus has been killed. He is unaware that his son is on the ship and the crew have forgotten to change the sail to white, signifying victory.

What does the author mean when he says in the last line that Theseus has a “heavy heart”? (AF6) His heart is weighed down with sorrow and sadness. He has become king but under mournful circumstances.

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Why is a black sail raised when the ship sets sail for Crete? (AF2)

“The journey was not an easy one and added to the tension and misery of the crew as they journeyed to their fate”. In your own words what you think the author is describing here. (AF5)

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Think of another time connective for “Finally”? (AF4)

How does King Minos react on seeing Theseus for the first time? How do we know this? (AF3)

What type of word is “boldly”? Can you think of another word to replace it? (AF3)

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Vocabulary 1

Find the dictionary definition for the following words.

despised _____

waging _____

sacrificed _____

gallant _____

thriving _____

berate _____

distressed _____

entertain _____

signify _____

disembarked _____

taunted _____

resolved _____

quest _____

labyrinth _____

slay _____

Vocabulary 2

Find the dictionary definition for the following words.

instructed _____

bewildering _____

persevered _____

traced _____

distraught _____

despised	to really hate someone or something
waging	to start/engage in a war
sacrificed	the offering of an animal, person or thing to be killed usually to a God
gallant	brave, chivalrous
thriving	to grow, flourish, loving, be successful
distressed	deep sorrow, great pain, anxiety
entertain	consider
signify	to show, make known
disembarked	to go ashore from a ship
taunted	to say something in a jeering, sarcastic, insulting way
resolved	to come to a definite decision
quest	a search/journey to find something, mission
labyrinth	maze
slay	kill by violence
instructed	told to do, ordered
bewildering	extremely confusing
persevered	to persist in something, keep going
traced	track, a course
wrath	fierce anger
distraught	very upset and distressed

Vocabulary 2

Rewrite these sentences, changing the underlined word with a suitable synonym.

She despised herself for her dishonest actions.

The gallant knight rode on his trusty horse to rescue the damsel in distress.

The business Sam had set up last year was now thriving.

Bob entertained the idea of having the party at his house.

The quest to find the sunken ship in the deep ocean was proving most challenging.

The doctor instructed me that I must have rest and take to my bed.

The instructions to build the cupboard were proving to be most bewildering for Rob.

If you persevere, you will complete the maths challenge.

Read this passage describing the Minotaur.

Underline 20 verbs with red pencil crayon.

Underline 20 nouns with blue pencil crayon.

Underline 14 adjectives with green pencil crayon.

Underline 2 adverbs with orange pencil crayon.

Circle the simile.

The Minotaur was a monstrous, deadly and brutal beast. He was half human and half bull. It lived in a mysterious, haunting and dark labyrinth where he greedily ate people whom he thought were delicious.

The Minotaur had the head of a bull. His eyes gleamed delightfully and his mouth dribbled on seeing any human. His horns were enormous and threatening. He sneered and he snarled. He bellowed and he roared. He was terrifying.

The Minotaur's body was as strong as an ox. He had the strength of at least ten men and could defeat a human with one strike.

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Read this passage describing Theseus' travelling to the maze to confront the Minotaur. There are 12 spelling mistakes to spot.

Can you find them all?

Underline the word you think is misspelt and then write the correct spelling underneath the passage.

Theseus entred the maze nowing he was about to meat the Minotaur. This was going to be a challengeing task but he was determined to suceed. The maze was dark, gloomy and icy cold but Theseus wood not let this hinder him. Carefully he tyed the thread onto the door and whent on his quest to slay the Minotaur. The dreadfull bellowing and loud noises terrified the young Athenians but not Theseus as he persevered onwards. He strongly beleved he would conquer the beast.

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