

# Theseus and the Minotaur



Long ago, King Aegeus of Athens had a serious problem. King Minos of Crete was constantly invading and attacking his city. The only way King Minos would stop was if King Aegeus sent seven boys and seven girls to Crete once a year. King Aegeus agreed but felt terrible because he knew that these poor children would be given to King Minos's half-man, half-bull beast called the Minotaur.

After three years, Prince Theseus was tired of the bargain and decided to speak with his father, the king, "This deal with Minos is wrong. Tomorrow, I am going to be one of the seven boys shipped to Crete. Then, I will fight the Minotaur and defeat it."

Theseus was strong and clever but Aegeus knew that the Minotaur was so dangerous that it had to be locked inside a complex maze called a labyrinth. Fearful, Aegeus let Theseus go but with one request, "Once you set sail for home, please change your black sails to white ones so that I can see that you are safe." Theseus promised to change his sails.

At sunrise, Theseus boarded the next ship for Crete. When they arrived, King Minos's daughter

Ariadne pulled Theseus away and told him that she recognised him. She offered to help Theseus if he agreed to take her away from Crete. Theseus agreed and the two decided to meet up later on. That night, Ariadne handed Theseus a ball of string, "This labyrinth is so complex that it's very easy to get lost. You will be able to follow it back to the entrance if you unravel this and lay it behind you."

Bravely, Theseus ran off to find the Minotaur.



He unravelled the string as he crept through the dark tunnels. Suddenly, the beast appeared in front of him. After a long battle, Theseus had won and the Minotaur had been defeated.

Quickly, Theseus escaped to his ship with Ariadne following behind. Theseus raised the black sails of his ship and headed for home. He'd forgotten all about the promise that he had made to his father.

# Questions

1. Where was the Minotaur? Tick one.

- in a labyrinth in Athens
- in a labyrinth in Crete
- on a ship in Athens
- in a cave in Crete

2. Who was King Minos's daughter? Tick one.

- Ariadne
- Minos
- Theseus
- the Minotaur

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Seven boys and seven girls are sent to Crete.
- Theseus doesn't like the deal.
- King Minos constantly attacks Athens.
- King Aegeus makes a deal with King Minos.

4. Draw **four** lines and match each character to their description.

Ariadne	the king of Crete
King Minos	the king of Athens
King Aegeus	King Minos's daughter
the Minotaur	a half-man, half-bull beast

5. Look at the first paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'always'.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Fill in the missing words.

Theseus was strong and clever but Aegeus knew that the Minotaur was so \_\_\_\_\_  
that it had to be locked inside a \_\_\_\_\_ maze called a labyrinth.

7. Do you think that Theseus will make a good king someday? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. Where was the Minotaur? Tick one.

- in a labyrinth in Athens
- in a labyrinth in Crete**
- on a ship in Athens
- in a cave in Crete

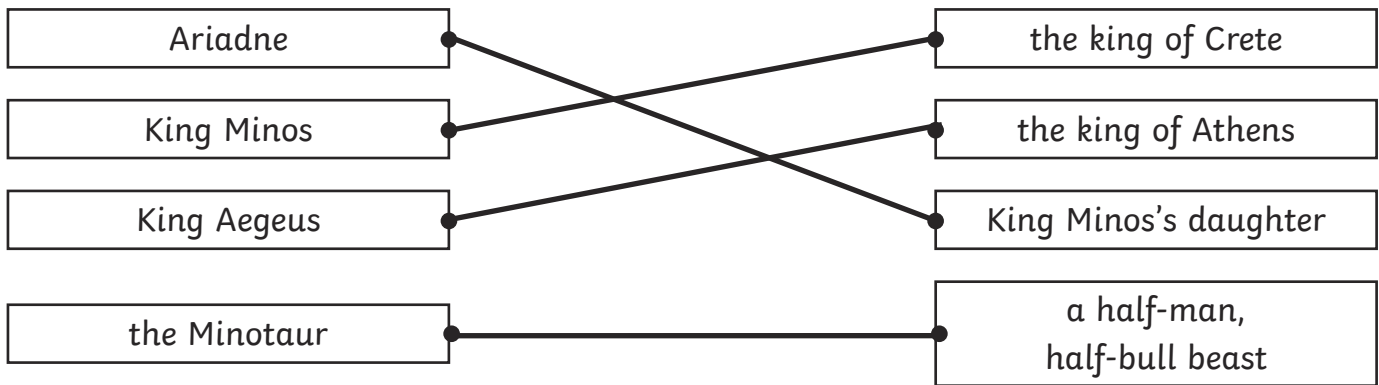
2. Who was King Minos's daughter? Tick one.

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- 3** Seven boys and seven girls are sent to Crete.
- 4** Theseus doesn't like the deal.
- 1** King Minos constantly attacks Athens.
- 2** King Aegeus makes a deal with King Minos.

4. Draw **four** lines and match each character to their description.



5. Look at the first paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'always'.

**constantly**

6. Fill in the missing words.

Theseus was strong and clever but Aegeus knew that the Minotaur was so **dangerous** that it had to be locked inside a **complex** maze called a labyrinth.

# Answers

7. Do you think that Theseus will make a good king someday? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Theseus is going to make a good king because he isn't afraid to fight for what he thinks is right. He didn't feel the deal between his father and King Minos was right and wanted to do something about it.**

# Theseus and the Minotaur

King Minos was the powerful and spiteful king of Crete. He would frequently launch surprise attacks on the beautiful city of Athens. King Aegeus was the king of Athens. He stopped the attacks by making a terrible deal with Minos. Every year, Athens had to send over seven girls and seven boys to be given to King Minos's half-man, half-bull beast called the Minotaur. As long as they sent the children, King Minos would not attack.



Soon, Aegeus's son called Theseus was tired of the bargain. Just before the next ship was due to leave, he spoke with his father in his study, "This deal with Minos needs to end. Families are constantly worried that their children will be picked next. Tomorrow, I am going to be one of the seven boys sent to Crete. Then, I will defeat the Minotaur and we can live in peace."



Aegeus knew that his son was strong and brave but the Minotaur was unstoppable. It was so dangerous that it had to be locked inside a complex maze called a labyrinth. Fearful, Aegeus begged Theseus to change his mind but Theseus refused. Finally, Aegeus agreed, "Alright, go to Crete. However, the moment you set sail for home, please change your black sails to white ones so that I can see from our cliffs that you are safe." Theseus promised to change his sails.

In the morning, Theseus joined the 13 children that had been chosen as offerings for the Minotaur. When they arrived, King Minos's daughter Ariadne pulled Theseus to one side and told him that she recognised him. She offered to help Theseus defeat the Minotaur if he agreed to take her away from her father and Crete. Theseus agreed and the two met outside the labyrinth's entrance that night. In the dark, Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of string, "This labyrinth is so complicated that no one can ever find their way out. If you unravel this string behind you, you will be able to follow it back to the entrance."

Courageously, Theseus set off to find the Minotaur. Unwinding the string as he searched, he crept through the dark tunnels until he found the beast. After a long and vicious battle, Theseus emerged victorious and the Minotaur had been defeated.

Immediately, Theseus escaped to his ship with Ariadne. He felt wonderful but exhausted. Eager to get away, Theseus raised the black sails of his ship and headed for home. He'd forgotten all about the promise that he had made to his father.



# Questions

1. Where was Theseus from? Tick one.

- Crete  
 Sparta  
 Athens  
 Olympia

2. How many children were sent every year? Tick one.

- 7  
 5  
 13  
 14

3. Draw **four** lines and match each setting to its description.

Theseus's ship	where Theseus is from
Crete	where king Minos lives
the labyrinth	where the Minotaur is kept
Athens	where Theseus forgets his promise

4. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Ariadne recognises Theseus as the prince.  
 Theseus and Ariadne meet up at the labyrinth entrance.  
 Theseus boards the ship heading to Crete.  
 Ariadne offers to help Theseus if he takes her with him to Athens.

5. Look at the second paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'deal'.

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6. Fill in the missing words.

He would \_\_\_\_\_ launch surprise attacks on the \_\_\_\_\_ city of Athens.



7. How do you think Minos will react when he discovers that the Minotaur has been defeated?

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8. How would you feel if you were one of the children travelling with Theseus?

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# Answers

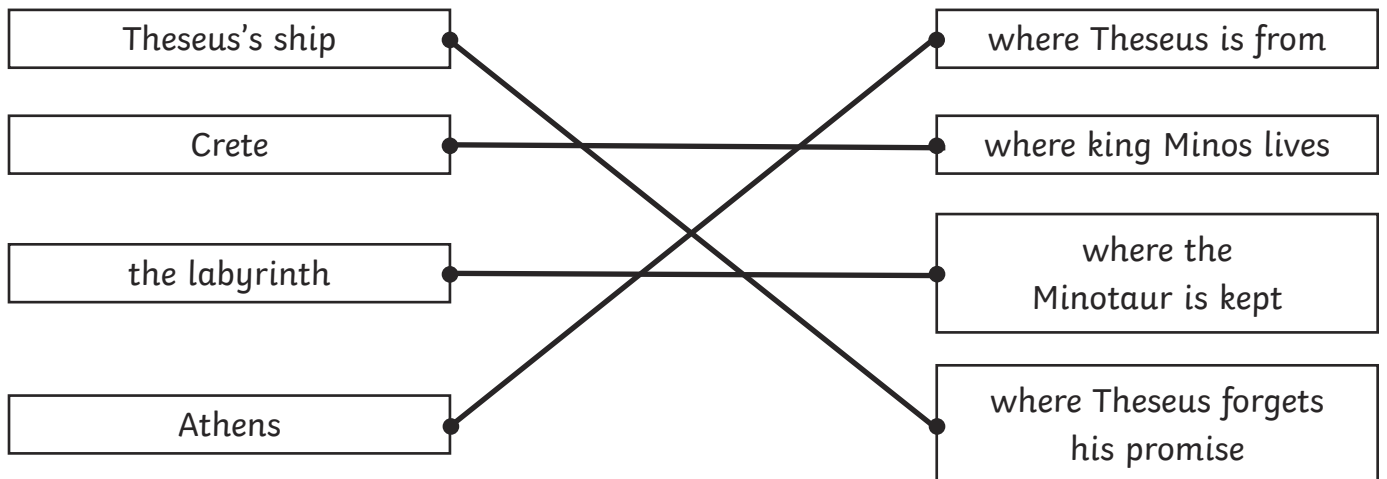
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- Athens**
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- 2** Ariadne recognises Theseus as the prince.
- 4** Theseus and Ariadne meet up at the labyrinth entrance.
- 1** Theseus boards the ship heading to Crete.
- 3** Ariadne offers to help Theseus if he takes her with him to Athens.

5. Look at the second paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'deal'.

**bargain**

6. Fill in the missing words.

He would **frequently** launch surprise attacks on the **beautiful** city of Athens.

7. How do you think Minos will react when he discovers that the Minotaur has been defeated?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think he will be angry that he's lost his beast and that Athens doesn't have to send children anymore.**
8. How would you feel if you were one of the children travelling with Theseus?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I would feel very safe and confident because Theseus was strong and could beat the Minotaur.**

# Theseus and the Minotaur

King Minos was the ill-natured king of Crete. He relished in frequently launching surprise attacks on the grand city of Athens. King Aegeus of Athens wanted to stop the attacks so he struck a terrible bargain with Minos. In exchange for peace, Aegeus would annually send over seven girls and seven boys to be sacrificed to King Minos's Minotaur: a half-man, half-bull beast.



After three years, Aegeus's son called Theseus was fed up. Mentally, he went over his plan as he knocked on the door of his father's study. Before Aegeus could even stand up to meet his son, Theseus had started talking, "This deal with Minos needs to stop. Families are terrified that their children will be picked next. We should be protecting our people – not feeding them to the Minotaur! Tomorrow, I am going to take the place of one of the boys on the ship. Then, I will vanquish the Minotaur and end this horrible agreement."

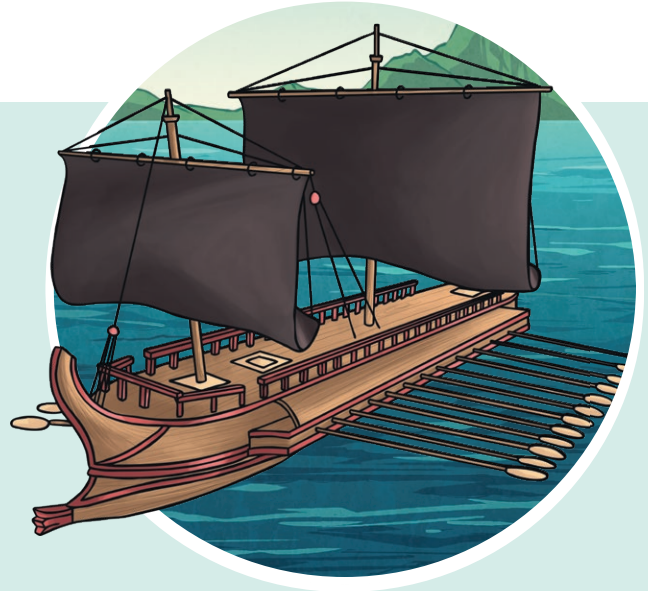


Aegeus was shocked. He knew that his son was strong and brave but the Minotaur was so huge and fierce. To keep it under control, it had to be locked inside a complex maze called a labyrinth. Aegeus begged Theseus to change his mind but eventually, he agreed, "I will not be happy until I know that you are safe. The moment you set sail for home, change your black sails to white ones so that I can see from our cliffs that you are alive and well." Theseus nodded and promised to change his sails.

The next day, Theseus climbed into the ship alongside 13 shivering, terrified children. When the boat docked, they were met by King Minos and his beautiful daughter, Ariadne. As Minos led the children away, Ariadne pulled Theseus to one side and told him that she recognised him as the prince. She explained that she wanted to escape from her father and offered to help Theseus if he promised to take her away from Crete.

Theseus agreed and the two met outside the labyrinth's entrance that night. In the dark, Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of string, "This labyrinth has been designed to be so complicated that no one can ever escape it. However, if you unravel this string behind you, you will be able to use it to find the entrance again. Good luck!"

With that, the doors to the labyrinth closed and Theseus set off to find the Minotaur. Trailing the string behind him, he searched through the narrow passages until he was face to face with the beast at last. The Minotaur was stronger but Theseus was agile and clever. After a long battle, Theseus emerged victorious. The Minotaur had been defeated.



Theseus immediately made his way to the ship with Ariadne. He had done it! No more children would ever have to meet the Minotaur. Feeling tired but happy, Theseus hoisted the black sails of his ship and headed for home. He'd forgotten all about the promise that he had made to his father.

# Questions

1. What colour was Theseus supposed to change his sails to? Tick one.

- red
- white
- black
- blue

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Theseus searches for the Minotaur.
- Theseus escapes with Ariadne to his ship.
- Theseus fights and defeats the Minotaur.
- Ariadne gives Theseus a ball of string.

3. What did the Minotaur look like?

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4. Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'lifted up'.

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5. Fill in the missing words.

He \_\_\_\_\_ in frequently launching \_\_\_\_\_ attacks on the grand city of Athens.

6. If you were from Athens, how do you think you would feel about King Aegeus and his deal with Minos?

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7. What do you think is going to happen to Aegeus when he sees Theseus's ship? Explain your answer.

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8. Do you think Ariadne agreed with her father's deal with Aegeus? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

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- red  
 **white**  
 black  
 blue

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- 2 Theseus searches for the Minotaur.  
 4 Theseus escapes with Ariadne to his ship.  
 3 Theseus fights and defeats the Minotaur.  
 1 Ariadne gives Theseus a ball of string.

3. What did the minotaur look like?

**The Minotaur was a half-man, half-bull beast.**

4. Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'lifted up'.

**hoisted**

5. Fill in the missing words.

He **relished** in frequently launching **surprise** attacks on the grand city of Athens.

6. If you were from Athens, how do you think you would feel about King Aegeus and his deal with Minos?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I would feel like he was a good king but not a great one. I think I would feel like he gave in without really trying to get a better deal or fight back.**

7. What do you think is going to happen to Aegeus when he sees Theseus's ship? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think he is going to think Theseus lost and that the deal with Minos will have to still go on. I think he is going to be sad that his son lost.**

8. Do you think Ariadne agreed with her father's deal with Aegeus? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: No, I don't think she does agree with it because she wants to get away from him and she agrees to help Theseus beat the Minotaur.**