



Icarus

There was once a famous craftsman named Daedalus. His name was known throughout Greece. At the request of King Minos of Crete, Daedalus had created the impenetrable labyrinth; home of the fearsome minotaur. There was nothing that Daedalus couldn't create.

Worried that his prized architect might be persuaded to build another labyrinth for an enemy, King Minos imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in a tower. Daedalus wasn't allowed out of the tower for anything other than creating more inventions for his master.

It was during his time in the tower that Daedalus created a pair of wings. He built them from wax and the feathers of birds, and he soon taught himself to use them to fly high over the city of Crete. It gave him enough freedom to stop him going mad in the tower.

As Icarus grew older, Daedalus taught him how to use the wings as well. Whenever they took to the skies, his father would warn Icarus of the dangers of flying too high.

"Do not get greedy, my son," Daedalus would often remark. "These wings give us our freedom, but if you stray too close to the sun, the wax will melt, and you will fall."

In the beginning, Icarus was young and listened to his father. He would stop himself as soon as he saw the familiar look on Daedalus's face and swoop lower in the sky. Over time, Icarus became increasingly confident. The citizens of Crete would often see him swooping overhead, performing stunts or twisting in the air.

"Do not get greedy," Daedalus reminded him each time they returned him.

But Icarus was young and headstrong. He thought he knew best; that his father was telling him to be careful because he was too scared to fly any higher. Day after day, Icarus pushed himself higher, until his skin began to redden and sweat clouded his eyes.

It was mid-summer when his father approached him with a plan. "I am tired of living alone and trapped in this tower," he said. "Our wings can be our freedom. This afternoon we will fly from the tower and not look back. If we cross the sea, we will find a new land where they will value my

inventions and allow us to live free.”

Icarus had never known freedom before. The thought of a new life filled him with glee, and he spent the next few hours preparing himself. When the time came, Daedalus and Icarus stood on the parapet at the top of the tower and launched themselves into the aquamarine sky.

Cool air whipped at their faces as they glided out over the harbour. People scurried like insects on private errands. Icarus tasted the salty tang of the breeze whipped up from the crest of the waves out to sea. His eyes stung, but it didn't matter, he could sense freedom.

“Let us celebrate, father,” Icarus cried with a smile and turned his wings upwards. Higher and higher he climbed, pushing himself further than he'd ever been before. He didn't hear the cries of his father far below, his mind was filled with excitement.

Icarus didn't notice when the first feathers burst into flames, nor when the wax melted and dripped away. The first time he knew something was wrong, was when he flapped his arms and nothing happened. Too late, he realised that his father had been right, and his greed had cost him his life.

In his memory, the sea where Icarus drowned is now named the Icarian Sea.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How do you know that Icarus often tried to fly too close to the sun?
2. What tells you that Icarus had been born in the tower?
3. Why was Daedalus worried about Icarus?
4. How did Icarus feel as he fell towards the sea?
5. Why did Icarus fly so high as they escaped?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

Why did Daedalus create the wings?

V

Find a word or phrase that means “jobs or chores”.

R

Where was the tower in which they lived?

V

Find the sentence: He would stop himself as soon as he saw the familiar look on Daedalus's face.

What does the word “familiar” tell you here?

R

What did King Minos ask Daedalus to build him?

Answers:

1. Daedalus "often remarked" that he should not be greedy
2. He had never known freedom before
3. He was worried he would fly too high and die. Icarus kept flying higher and not listening.
4. Upset/embarrassed that he hadn't listened. Guilty that his greed had cost him his life
5. He was excited and arrogant

S: To give himself some freedom and stop himself from going mad in the tower

V: Errands

R: Crete

V: His father used the look a lot/it was a look he gave him whenever he flew too high

R: A labyrinth