



Theseus

Beyond the sea-swept shores of Crete, King Minos ruled with an iron fist. He was rich beyond words, and yet he still desired more. His ships would sail out and attack other cities simply to bring back their treasures. He had taken prisoner the most wonderful inventor in the whole of Ancient Greece - Daedalus. King Minos had instructed the man to design him an impenetrable labyrinth to house the minotaur; half-bull and half-man. The labyrinth was the only way to keep him hidden from the world.

On the other side of the sea, the city of Athens was growing weary of King Minos's attacks. King Aegeus struck a deal with King Minos: if Crete stopped attacking, then Athens would send 7 boys and 7 girls every 9 years to be eaten by the minotaur. The deal was a terrible one, but King Aegeus was desperate.

For a while, things were good. Crete kept their word and didn't attack Athens again. Soon, it became time for Athens to hold up their part of the deal. Families wept as their children were selected for the sacrifice, but nothing could be done. Prince Theseus decided that enough was enough. He took the place of the seventh boy and set sail on the ship bound for Crete.

King Minos and his daughter Ariadne greeted the children as soon as they arrived. Ariadne immediately fell in love with the handsome prince and decided that she couldn't bear to see him killed by the minotaur. She arranged to meet him in secret later that night.

Theseus managed to sneak out from his chambers and crept to the palace where the princess was waiting. She begged him to take her with him when he left Crete, and in exchange, she would help him defeat the monster. She slipped him a ball of twine and a heavy sword.

Theseus and the other children were woken before dawn the next day and bundled into the labyrinth. Even the guards who delivered them were too afraid to stand near to the door for too long. Once the heavy iron door swung shut behind them, the children burst into tears. Theseus

calmed them down and told them of his plan. He tied the end of the string to the door and told the children to stay where they were.

“If I get lost in the maze,” he told them calmly, “I will use the string to find my way back here. You are my heroes now, you must make sure this twine doesn’t break free.”

The labyrinth was long and twisting, with many dead ends. Each time Theseus got lost, he wound back the string until he knew where he was. Ariadne’s brilliant idea saved his life. It had been a long time since the minotaur had last been fed, and it wasn’t long before Theseus found himself up against the beastly creation. He called upon the strength of the gods and used all of his speed and cunning to slay the monster. When he returned to the door, Ariadne was waiting. Together with the children, they crept out of the palace and onto a boat waiting at the dock.

On the way home, Theseus and the children stopped at the island of Naxos where Ariadne disembarked and drifted into the crowds.



SUMMARY FOCUS

1. Why did King Aegeus make a deal with King Minos?
2. Why was the deal such a bad one?
3. How did Ariadne help Theseus?
4. Which happened first: Crete stopped attacking Athens, or Athens sacrificed their children?
5. How did Theseus keep his word to Ariadne?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

Who built the labyrinth for King Minos?

V

Which word or phrase tells you that King Minos used violence to rule his city?

I

Why did Ariadne help Theseus?

V

What does the word “bundled” tell you about how the guards handled the children?

R

Find an example that shows Theseus cared for the children.

Answers:

1. He was tired of being attacked
2. Athens had to sacrifice some of their children
3. She gave him string and a sword. The string helped him to not get lost in the maze
4. Crete stopped attacking Athens
5. He stopped at Naxos and let her out so that she could escape Crete

R: Daedalus

V: An iron fist

I: She fell in love with him and wanted to escape Crete

V: They were nervous and in a rush. They wanted to get the job done quickly

R: He included himself in the sacrifice/he made them stay in the safety of the doorway and fought the minotaur himself