

Theseus and the Minotaur

A long time ago on the island of Crete was a monster. He lived in a maze. He was called the Minotaur.

The island was ruled by King Minos. He did not like the people of Athens, a city in Greece. This was because many years ago the Athenians had killed Minos' son. This made Minos very angry. He said every nine years, 14 young Athenians would have to go into the maze. Here they would be killed by the Minotaur.

Another 9 years went by. It was time for the Athenians to send 14 more boys and girls.

In Athens they had a king called Aegeus. He had a son called Theseus. Theseus was a brave, young man who loved adventures. He really wanted to kill the Minotaur.

“No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not get on that boat to Crete!”

“But Dad, I know I can kill this monster,” said Theseus. “Do not worry. When I come back, I shall make sure the sail of the boat is white. This means I have won!”

So Theseus set sail and got to Crete. He met both King Minos and his beautiful Daughter Ariadne.

“I have come to kill the monster. I am not scared of it at all!” said Theseus.

Beginner

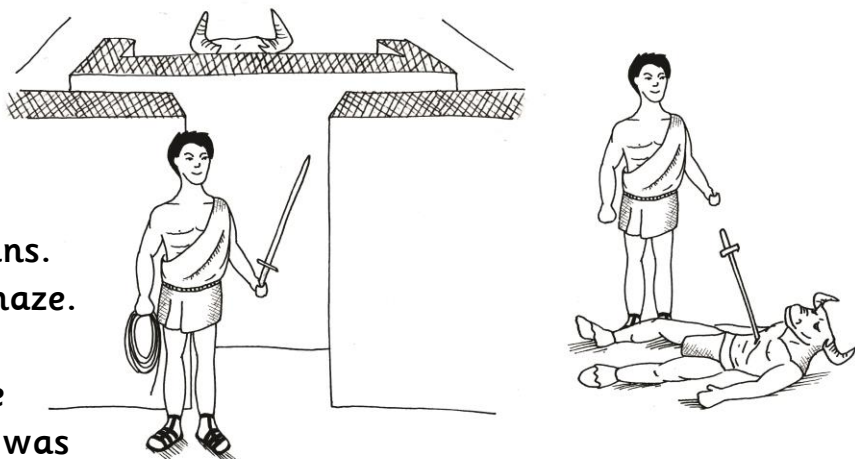
“HOW DARE YOU SAY THIS! YOUR PEOPLE KILLED MY SON!” roared King Minos.

Ariadne fell in love with Theseus. She thought he was a brave man wanting to kill the monster. She said that she would help him to kill the Minotaur. It was a promise. Theseus thought she was kind and said he would marry her as a gift.

Ariadne gave Theseus a sword and a ball of golden thread. "Tie the thread to the entrance of the maze. Then, unwind the string as you go to find the Minotaur. Kill the Minotaur with this sword. Follow the thread to get back out!"

The next day, Theseus followed what Ariadne said. He entered the maze with the other young Athenians. Theseus moved through the maze.

He came face to face with the large monster. The monster was very scary and strong. He roared and ran at Theseus. It was very hard but Theseus finally killed the Minotaur!



Quickly, Theseus used the thread to escape. With the other Athenians and Ariadne, he got on the boat and left Crete. They went to another island.

Ariadne was so happy. But, this did not last long. Theseus said that he did not love her. He left Ariadne on the island and went home to Athens.

But Theseus forgot one thing. He did not change the sail to white! Seeing the black sail King Aegeus screamed. He thought his son had been killed by the Minotaur.

"Darling Theseus!" cried Aegeus. He was so upset that he jumped off the high rocks into the sea.

Theseus was very upset at the huge mistake he had made. He became the next King of Athens but he was sad.

Beginner

Jenny Turner

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 1a – Beginner

Theseus and the Minotaur

1. What is the monster called and where does he live? (AF2)
2. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2)
3. Describe what you think Theseus is like. (AF3)
4. Who do you think says, “No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not get on that boat to Crete!”? (AF3)
5. Why has the author put some words in capital letters? (AF5)
6. Why does Ariadne help Theseus to kill the monster? (AF3)
7. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6)

Beginner

Theseus and the Minotaur

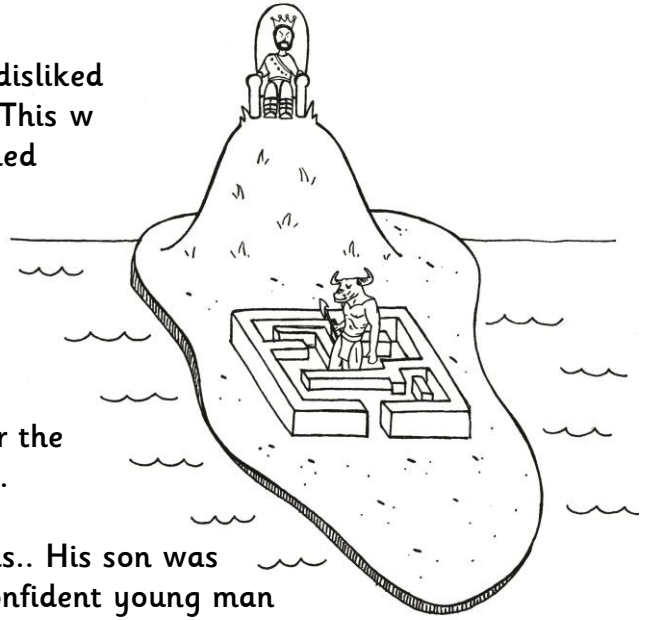
1. What is the monster called and where does he live? (AF2) **The Minotaur. In a maze on the island of Crete.**
2. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2) **They had killed his son.**
3. Describe what you think Theseus is like. (AF3) **He is a brave young man who enjoys adventures. He is not scared of the Minotaur or King Minos.**
4. Who do you think says, “No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not set foot on that boat to Crete!”? (AF3) **King Aegeus of Athens.**
5. Why has the author put some words in capital letters? (AF5) **To make it clear that King Minos is shouting the words very loudly in anger.**
6. Why does Ariadne help Theseus to kill the monster? (AF3) **She falls in love with him and so wants to help him.**
7. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6) **He forgets to change the sail from black to white and so his father thinks he has been killed by the Minotaur. Aegeus jumps off the rocks because he is so upset. Theseus would have been deeply upset and felt guilty that he is the cause of his father’s death, despite his great victory in Crete.**

Beginner

Theseus and the Minotaur

Many years ago, on the island of Crete was a terrifying monster who lived in a maze. He was called the Minotaur.

The island was ruled by a king called Minos. He disliked the people of Athens which was a city in Greece. This was because many years ago the Athenians had killed Minos' son. The prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games. This made Minos furious. He ordered that every nine years, fourteen young Athenians would enter the maze and be killed by the Minotaur.



Another nine years had passed and it was time for the Athenians to send another fourteen boys and girls.

Now in Athens, they also had a king called Aegeus. His son was called Theseus. Theseus was a brave and confident young man who loved adventure. He really wanted to kill the Minotaur because he was angry with what King Minos was doing to the young Athenians.

“No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not set foot on that boat to Crete!”

“But father, I know I can kill this monster,” Theseus said firmly. “Do not worry. I shall be victorious! When I return, I shall make sure the sail of the boat is white. This will show I have won and have returned home.”

So, the next day, Theseus set sail with thirteen other young Athenians. The journey was difficult.

Eventually they arrived in Crete where the crew were met by both King Minos as well as his beautiful daughter Ariadne.

“I have come to kill the monster. I am not frightened of it at all!” said Theseus.

“HOW DARE YOU SAY THIS AFTER WHAT YOUR PEOPLE DID TO MY SON!” roared King Minos.

On seeing Theseus and hearing his brave words, Ariadne fell head over heels in love with the young Athenian. She promised she would help him to kill the monster. In return for her help Theseus said he would marry her.



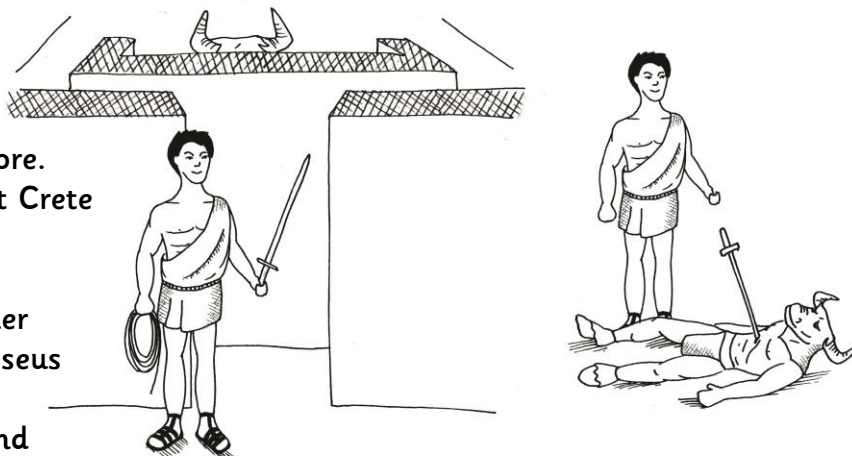
Ariadne gave Theseus a sword and a ball of golden thread. "Tie the thread to the maze's entrance. Unwind the string as you travel through the maze. Kill the Minotaur with this sword and then follow the thread to get back out!"

The very next day, Theseus, took the sword and thread and went to the maze. He entered it with the other young Athenians who were very frightened.

Theseus travelled through the dark, complicated maze. Eventually he came face to face with the terrifying monster. The monster was strong and frightening. He roared and charged at Theseus. It was a difficult battle but Theseus finally managed to kill the Minotaur!

Theseus ran quickly through the maze, using the thread to escape. With the other Athenians and Ariadne, he went to the island's shore. They all boarded their boat and left Crete for another island.

Ariadne was delighted to be with her love but this did not last long. Theseus thought he did not truly love her. He decided to leave her on the island and return home to Athens.



The final journey was full of excitement and happiness. The Athenians had defeated the Minotaur.

However, Theseus forgot one thing as the ship made its way towards Athens – to change the sail to white! As the ship came into view, King Aegeus saw the black sail. He thought his son had been killed by the Minotaur.

"Theseus! My son!" cried Aegeus. So upset was Aegeus, he threw himself off the rocks into the sea and to his death.

On landing, Theseus was told of the tragedy. He cried with grief, realising the huge mistake he had made.

And so, with sadness in his heart, Theseus became the next King of Athens.

Jenny Turner

Easy

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 2b – Easy

Theseus and the Minotaur

1. What is the monster called and where does he live? (AF2)
2. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2)
3. Describe what you think Theseus is like from what you have read. (AF3)
4. Who do you think says, “No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not set foot on that boat to Crete!”? (AF3)
5. What do you think the weather was like when Theseus and the other Athenians sailed to Crete? (AF3)
6. Why has the author put some words in capital letters? (AF5)
7. Ariadne falls “head over heels” in love with Theseus. What do you think this means? (AF4)
8. How is the monster described when Theseus finally meets him? (AF2)
9. Why is the final journey “full of excitement and happiness”? (AF3)
10. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6)

Easy

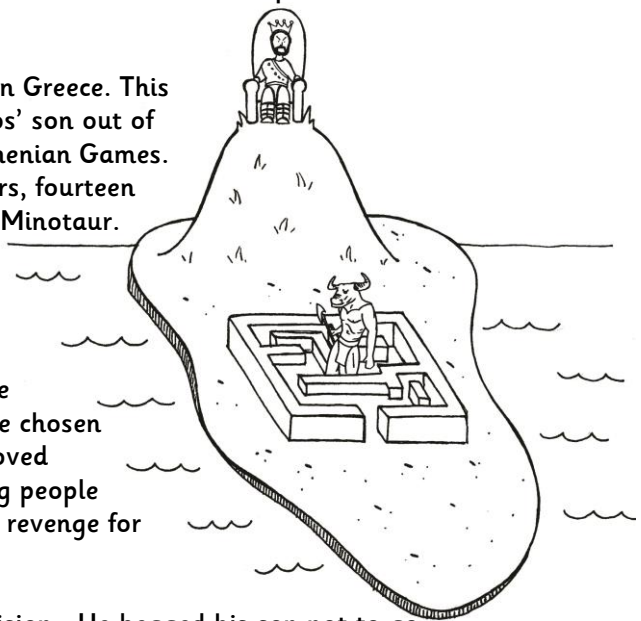
Theseus and the Minotaur

1. What is the monster called and where does he live? (AF2) **The Minotaur. In a labyrinth – a very complicated maze, on the island of Crete.**
2. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2) **They had killed his son because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games and they were jealous.**
3. Describe what you think Theseus is like from what you have read. (AF3) **He is a brave and confident young man who enjoys adventures. He is not scared of the Minotaur or King Minos and is determined to kill the monster.**
4. Who do you think says, “No son! I do not want you to go. You will be killed. Do not set foot on that boat to Crete!”? (AF3) **King Aegeus of Athens.**
5. What do you think the weather was like when Theseus and the other Athenians sailed to Crete? (AF3) **It was probably stormy as it says in the passage the journey was difficult.**
6. Why has the author put some words in capital letters? (AF5) **To make it clear that King Minos is shouting the words very loudly in anger.**
7. Ariadne falls “head over heels” in love with Theseus. What do you think this means? (AF4) **Very excited and completely in love with.**
8. How is the monster described when Theseus finally meets him? (AF2) **The monster is terrifying, fearsome and strong.**
9. Why is the final journey “full of excitement and happiness”? (AF3) **The Athenians are pleased to have escaped death and can’t wait to see their family and friends again.**
10. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6) **He forgets to change the sail from black to white and so his father thinks he has been killed by the Minotaur and so jumps off the rocks because he is so upset. Theseus would have been deeply upset and felt guilty that he is the cause of his father’s death, despite his great victory in Crete.**

Easy

A long time ago, the island of Crete was ruled by a king called Minos. On this island too lived a terrifying monster, which was half-man and half bull, called the Minotaur. He lived in a complicated maze called a labyrinth.

King Minos disliked the people of Athens, which was a city in Greece. This was because many years ago, the Athenians had killed Minos' son out of jealousy because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games. This made Minos furious. He demanded that every nine years, fourteen young Athenians would enter the maze and be killed by the Minotaur. If the Athenians failed to send these young people, Minos would go to war against them.



Another nine years had passed and it was time for the Athenians to send another fourteen boys and girls. This time the King of Athens' own son Theseus wanted to be one of the chosen ones. Theseus was a brave and confident young man who loved adventure. He really wanted to be one of the fourteen young people sent to Crete because he wanted to destroy the Minotaur in revenge for what King Minos was doing to the young Athenians.

The King of Athens, Aegeus, was very upset by Theseus' decision. He begged his son not to go. "No Theseus! Do not do this. You will be killed. Do not make the journey to Crete!"

But Theseus ignored his father. He told Aegeus with determination in his voice, "I know I can slay this monster. Do not worry. I shall win! When I return, I shall make sure the sail of the boat is white to show I have won and have returned home victorious."

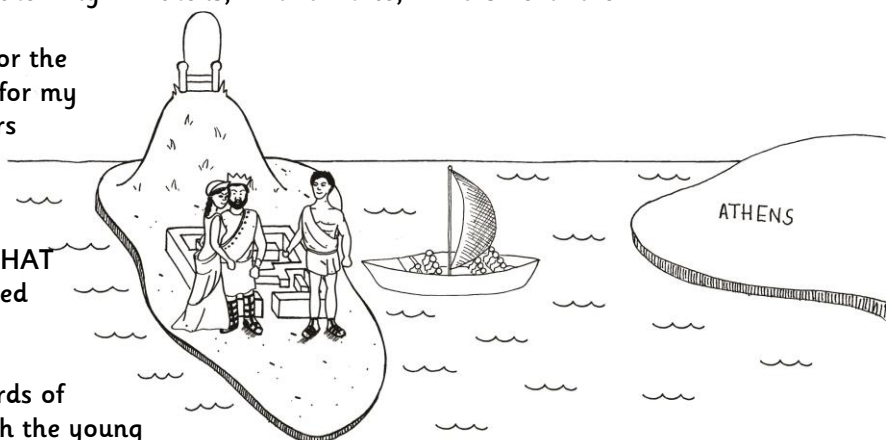
So, the day came and Theseus set sail with the thirteen other young Athenians. They raised a black sail to remember the young Athenians who had died before them at the hands of the Minotaur.

The journey was dramatic and the crew suffered terribly. Eventually they arrived in Crete where they were met by King Minos. With him was his daughter Ariadne. As the Athenians disembarked their ship, Minos immediately recognised Theseus.

"What are you doing here? The son of the King of Athens, a man I hate," Minos demanded.

"I have come to kill the Minotaur. You or the monster do not frighten me. I am here for my people who have suffered for many years because of what you demand!" declared Theseus boldly.

"HOW DARE YOU SAY THIS AFTER WHAT YOUR PEOPLE DID TO MY SON!" roared King Minos.



Ariadne, on hearing the courageous words of Theseus, fell head over heels in love with the young Athenian. Thinking to herself, she promised she would help him to kill the monster.

That night, Ariadne went to Theseus who was locked up in her father's prison in the palace. "Theseus. My name is Ariadne. I am the daughter of King Minos. Hearing your brave words today, I can see you are loyal to your people and I want to help you."

She gave Theseus a sword and a ball of golden thread. "Tie the thread to the maze's entrance and unwind the thread as you travel through the maze. Be careful. The labyrinth has many twists and turns and is dark and scary. When you eventually encounter the Minotaur, slay him with this sword and then follow the thread to guide you back out!"

Theseus was thankful for Ariadne's kindness and promised that he would marry her if he was victorious.

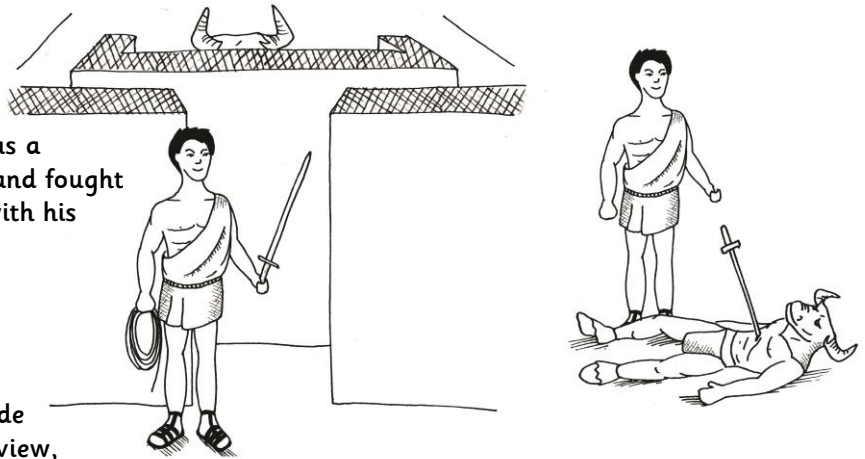
The very next day, Theseus, having listened to Ariadne's advice, took the sword and thread and went to the labyrinth. He entered the maze with the other young Athenians who were very nervous. Calmly, he followed Ariadne's instructions and tied the thread to the main door and told his friends to stay there.

Theseus then travelled through the dark, complicated maze in his quest to find the Minotaur, trailing the thread along as he went. As he got further in, he could hear the roars and growls of the terrifying beast.

Suddenly, he came face to face with the frightening monster. It was strong and fearsome; a mighty beast. He roared with anger and charged at Theseus. It was a difficult battle, the Minotaur was vicious and fought hard but Theseus would not give in and with his sword, he finally killed the monster.

Dead. Theseus had done it!

Exhausted but delighted, Theseus dashed through the maze, using the thread to guide him back to his friends. As he came into view, the Athenians gasped at their blood-soaked friend but ran to him, giving him hugs of celebration.



"We must leave at once," commanded Theseus, "before King Minos finds out what I have done."

So without a moment's thought, Theseus grabbed proud Ariadne's hand and with the other Athenians running behind them, went to the island's shore and boarded their boat, leaving Crete forever.

After a few days of travel, Theseus decided that rest was required so the boat docked at an island. The crew relaxed and Ariadne was delighted to be with her love. She had never been happier. However, her dreams were soon crushed. Theseus realised that he did not truly love her and decided to leave her on the island and return home to Athens. Ariadne was heartbroken.

The final journey however was full of excitement and happiness. The Athenians had defeated the Minotaur.

Unfortunately, in the excitement of the victory, Theseus forgot one very important thing as the ship made its final voyage towards Athens – to change the sail to white! As the ship came into view, King Aegeus saw the black sail and thought his son had been killed by the Minotaur.

"Theseus! My son!" cried Aegeus. So distraught was the king on seeing the doomed black sail, he threw himself off the rocks into the sea and to his death.

On landing, Theseus was told of this terrible tragedy. He wailed with unhappiness, realising the huge mistake he had made.

And so it was with sadness in his heart, that Theseus became the next King of Athens.

Tricky

Jenny Turner

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 3c – Tricky

1. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2)
2. What adjectives are used to describe Theseus? Can you think of any of your own? (AF4/AF3)
3. Why does Theseus want to go to Crete? (AF2)
4. Why do you think Aegeus is upset? (AF3)
5. Why is a black sail raised at the beginning of the journey? (AF2)
6. Describe the journey to Crete in your own words. (AF3)
7. What does “disembarked” mean? (AF4)
8. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5)
9. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3)
10. How might Theseus be feeling as he travels through the maze? (AF3)
11. Why do you think the author writes a very short paragraph that only says, “Dead. Theseus had done it!”? (AF5)
12. Why would Ariadne be proud of Theseus as they escape from the island? (AF3)
13. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6)

Theseus and the Minotaur

1. Why does King Minos not like the people of Athens? (AF2) **They had killed his son because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games and they were jealous.**
2. What adjectives are used to describe Theseus? Can you think of any of your own? (AF4/AF3) **Brave, confident, adventurous, young. Determined, loyal, heroic, daring, fearless.**
3. Why does Theseus want to go to Crete? (AF2) **To avenge the deaths of previous young Athenians who had been killed by the Minotaur.**
4. Why do you think Aegeus is upset? (AF3) **He does not want his precious son, the next King of Athens, to venture on this journey and be killed by the Minotaur.**
5. Why is a black sail raised at the beginning of the journey? (AF2) **It is raised as a sign of respect, in memory of those young Athenians who had previously gone to their death at the hands of the Minotaur.**
6. Describe the journey to Crete in your own words. (AF3) **It is unpleasant and scary. There are storms and the journey is dangerous. The crew who are already suffering with nerves and fear are only made to feel worse.**
7. What does “disembarked” mean? (AF4) **To get off/alight from a ship.**
8. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5) **To make it clear that King Minos is shouting the words very loudly in anger.**
9. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3) **She admires him for his bravery and courage. She completely falls in love with him and is so devoted to him she decides she will go against her own father and help Theseus kill the Minotaur.**
10. How might Theseus be feeling as he travels through the maze? (AF3) **Anxious and tense although perhaps a nervous excitement too.**
11. Why do you think the author writes a very short paragraph that only says, “Dead. Theseus had done it!”? (AF5) **To emphasis the importance of what Theseus has achieved.**
12. Why would Ariadne be proud of Theseus as they escape from the island? (AF3) **She has complete admiration for the bravery and skill Theseus has shown in killing such a terrifying beast.**
13. What huge mistake does Theseus make? How do you think he feels at the end of the story? (AF2/AF6) **He forgets to change the sail from black to white and so his father thinks he has been killed by the Minotaur and so jumps off the rocks because he is so upset. Theseus would have been deeply upset and felt guilty that he is the cause of his father’s death, despite his great victory in Crete.**

Tricky

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 3c – Tricky **ANSWERS**

In a time long ago, the island of Crete was ruled by a king called Minos. On this island too lived a terrifying monster which was half-man and half-bull called the Minotaur. This beast resided in the centre of a complicated maze called a labyrinth.

King Minos had long held a grudge against the people of Athens, a city in Greece. Many years ago the Athenians had killed Minos' son out of jealousy because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games. This made Minos furious and determined to seek revenge. So to avenge his son, he demanded that every nine years, fourteen young Athenians would enter the maze as a sacrifice and be killed by the Minotaur. If the Athenians failed or refused to send these young people, Minos would wage a war against them.

Another nine years had passed and it was time for the Athenians to send another fourteen boys and girls. This time the King of Athens' own son Theseus wanted to be one of the chosen ones. Theseus was a gallant and confident young man who thrived on adventure. He really wanted to be one of the fourteen young people sent to Crete because he wanted to destroy the Minotaur in revenge for what King Minos had been doing to the young Athenians.

The King of Athens, Aegeus, on hearing of his son's desires, was very distressed and begged his son not to go. "Theseus! Do not do this. It is not a wise thing to do and you will almost certainly be killed. The Minotaur is notorious – no-one ever escapes his lair alive. Do not make the journey to Crete!"

But Theseus ignored his father's pleas and told Aegeus with great conviction, "I know I can slay this monster. Do not worry father. I shall be triumphant! When I return, I shall make sure the sail of the boat is white to show I have won and have returned home victorious."

Finally, the day arrived and Theseus set sail with the thirteen other young Athenians. They raised a black sail in remembrance of the previous young Athenians who had died at the hands of the Minotaur.

The journey was not easy. It was perilous and dramatic and added to the tension on board the boat. The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.

Eventually, and with a slight sense of relief, they arrived in Crete where they were met by the king himself, Minos. With him was his daughter Ariadne. As the Athenians disembarked their ship, Minos immediately recognised Theseus and was greatly angered by his presence.

"What are you doing here? The son of the King of Athens, a man I despise," Minos demanded.

"Your words do not intimidate me. I have come to kill the Minotaur. I am here for my people who have suffered for many years because of what you demand!" declared Theseus boldly.

"HOW DARE YOU SAY THIS AFTER WHAT YOUR PEOPLE DID TO MY SON!" roared King Minos.

Ariadne, on hearing the courageous words of Theseus, was immediately besotted with the young Athenian. She was impressed with his fearlessness both towards her own father and his mission. Thinking to herself, she promised she would help Theseus to kill the monster.

That night, Ariadne, in disguise, went to Theseus who was locked up in her father's prison in the palace. "Theseus. Theseus!" she whispered. "My name is Ariadne. I am the daughter of King Minos. Hearing your brave and courageous words today, I can see that you are loyal to your people and I want to help you."

She proceeded to give Theseus a sword and a ball of golden thread. "Secure the thread to the labyrinth's entrance and unwind the string as you traverse through the maze. Be careful though. The labyrinth has many twists and turns and is it dark and eerie. When you eventually encounter the Minotaur, slay him with this sword and then follow the thread to guide you back out. Without the thread you will be forever trapped."

Theseus, although initially suspicious of Ariadne's motives, could see she was kind and genuine and was thankful for her support. As a token of his thanks, he promised that he would marry her if he was victorious in his quest.

The very next day, Theseus, having listened to Ariadne's advice, took the precious sword and thread and journeyed to the labyrinth with thirteen petrified and anxious Athenians. He entered the maze and told his companions not to move from the entrance and to support each other. Keeping as calm as he could, he followed Ariadne's instructions and tied the thread to the main door and took the first steps into the unknown. Theseus was apprehensive and beads of sweat trickled down his face as he began his journey.

Theseus proceeded to travel through the dark, complicated maze in his quest to find the Minotaur, trailing the thread along as he went. The maze was as Ariadne had described: dark, bewildering and frightening. As he progressed he could hear the roars and growls of the fearsome beast. This was the toughest of challenges but Theseus remained determined and ventured on.

Suddenly he came face to face with the terrifying monster. It was strong and fearsome; a mighty beast. He roared with anger and charged at Theseus. It was a difficult battle, the Minotaur was vicious and fought hard but Theseus would not relent and with a mighty swish of his sword he successfully slayed the monster.

The Minotaur fell to the ground, defeated and dead.

Exhausted but delighted, Theseus dashed through the maze, using the thread to guide him back to his friends. As he came into view, the Athenians initially gasped in horror at their blood-soaked friend but then ran to him, giving him hugs of celebration.

"We must leave at once," commanded Theseus, "before King Minos finds out what I have done."

So without a moment's hesitation, Theseus grabbed proud Ariadne's hand and with the other Athenians running behind them, ran to the island's shore and boarded their boat, leaving Crete forever. It was with a great sense of relief as the crew watched the island of the Minotaur fade into the distance.

After a few days of travel, Theseus decided that rest was required so the boat docked at an island. The crew relaxed and Ariadne was delighted to be with her love. She had never been happier. However, her dreams were soon crushed. Theseus realised he did not truly love her and decided to abandon her on the island and return home to Athens. On seeing Theseus' ship sailing away towards the horizon, Ariadne was heartbroken by his betrayal.

The final journey home was full of excitement, happiness and renewed hope. The Athenians had defeated the Minotaur.

However, in the excitement of the victory, Theseus made a fatal error as the ship made its final voyage towards Athens – he forgot to change the sail to white! As the ship came into view, King Aegeus, who was waiting impatiently, eventually saw the black sail and immediately thought his son had been killed by the Minotaur.

"Theseus!" cried Aegeus. So distraught was the king on seeing the doomed black sail, he cast himself off the rocks into the sea and to his death.

On landing, Theseus was told of this terrible tragedy. He wailed with unhappiness, realising the huge error he had made.

And so as the city of Athens celebrated the return of their people and the death of the Minotaur, it was with sadness in his heart, that Theseus became the next King of Athens.

Brainbox

Jenny Turner

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 4b – Brainbox

Theseus and the Minotaur

1. What does the word resided mean? (AF4)
2. “King Minos held a grudge against the people of Athens.” What does this mean and why did King Minos hold this grudge? (AF4/AF2)
3. Why do you think the Athenians would send fourteen young people to King Minos every nine years? (AF3)
4. Why do you think King Aegeus is upset at the beginning of the text? (AF3)
5. What does Aegeus mean when he says the Minotaur is notorious? (AF4)
6. Why do you think Aegeus describes the Minotaur’s home as a lair? (AF5)
7. How would you describe Theseus’ response to Aegeus when the king begs his son not to go on the ship? (AF6)
8. Why is a black sail raised as they set sail? (AF2)
9. “The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.” What do you think the author means as the Athenians travel to Crete on the boat? (AF5)
10. What does “disembarked” mean? (AF4)
11. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5)
12. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3)
13. Ariadne tells Theseus that she thinks he is loyal to his people. What do you think she means here? (AF4)
14. How might Theseus be feeling as he travels through the maze? (AF3)

Brainbox

15. Describe what you think the maze was like in your own words. (AF3)
16. Theseus, “with a mighty swish of his sword successfully slayed the monster.” What literary device does the author use here? (AF4)
17. Why would Ariadne be proud of Theseus as they escape from the island? (AF3)
18. Why would the journey home be one of “renewed hope”? What do you think the author means here? (AF5)
19. How do you think Theseus feels at the end of the story? (AF6)

Brainbox

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1. What does the word resided mean? (AF4) **To live, inhabit, dwell**
2. “King Minos held a grudge against the people of Athens.” What does this mean and why did King Minos hold this grudge? (AF4/AF2) **Minos is angry and has a grievance against the Athenians because they had killed his son because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games and they were jealous.**
3. Why do you think the Athenians would send fourteen young people to King Minos every nine years? (AF3) **They did not want King Minos to begin a war with them.**
4. Why do you think King Aegeus is upset at the beginning of the text? (AF3) **He does not want his precious son, the next King of Athens, to venture on this journey and be killed by the Minotaur.**
5. What does Aegeus mean when he says the Minotaur is notorious? (AF4) **It means that the monster is famous for being bad.**
6. Why do you think Aegeus describes the Minotaur’s home as a lair? (AF5) **He compares the maze to the home of a wild beast which is how he sees the Minotaur.**
7. How would you describe Theseus’ response to Aegeus when the king begs his son not to go on the ship? (AF6) **Theseus is determined and ignores his fathers pleas. He is strong-willed and refuses to listen. He speaks with conviction.**
8. Why is a black sail raised as they set sail? (AF2) **It is to remember the previous Athenians who had been sent to Crete as a sacrifice to the Minotaur.**
9. “The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.” What do you think the author means as the Athenians travel to Crete on the boat? (AF5) **The journey is stormy and difficult but this only makes the Athenians feel worse. They are already nervous and anxious as they believe that they are heading to their death with the Minotaur.**
10. What does “disembarked” mean? (AF4) **To get off/alight from a ship.**
11. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5) **To make it clear that King Minos is shouting the words very loudly in anger.**
12. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3) **She admires him for his bravery, fearlessness and courage. She completely falls in love with him and such is her devotion to him she decides she will go against her own father and help Theseus kill the Minotaur.**
13. Ariadne tells Theseus that she thinks he is loyal to his people. What do you think she means here? (AF4) **It means she thinks Theseus is devoted to his city of Athens and will do anything to save/protect his people.**
14. How might Theseus be feeling as he travels through the maze? (AF3) **Anxious and tense although perhaps a nervous excitement too – beads of sweat trickled down his face.**
15. Describe what you think the maze was like in your own words. (AF3) **The maze is very difficult to get through for a number of reasons – it is gloomy and dark as well as being very complicated.**

16. Theseus, “with a mighty swish of his sword successfully slayed the monster.” What literary device does the author use here? (AF4) **Alliteration.**
17. Why would Ariadne be proud of Theseus as they escape from the island? (AF3) **She has complete admiration for the bravery and skill Theseus has shown in killing such a terrifying beast.**
18. Why would the journey home be one of “renewed hope”? What do you think the author means here? (AF5) **That the Athenians are now free of the burden of having to send young people to be sacrificed every nine years. The Athenians can now move forward and their young do not have to live with the fear of being one of the ones to be sent to Crete and the Minotaur.**
19. How do you think Theseus feels at the end of the story? (AF6) **Theseus would have been distraught and felt guilty that he is the cause of his father’s death due to one forgetful moment. Although he is now king, he has received this at a terrible price.**

Brainbox

In a time long ago, the island of Crete was ruled by a king called Minos. On this island too lived a terrifying and hideous monster which was half-man and half-bull called the Minotaur. This beast resided in the centre of a complicated maze called a labyrinth.

King Minos had long held a grudge against the people of Athens, a city in Greece. Many years before, the Athenians had killed Minos' son out of jealousy because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games. This made Minos furious and determined to seek revenge. So to avenge his son, he demanded that every nine years, fourteen young Athenians would enter the maze as a sacrifice and be killed by the Minotaur. If the Athenians failed or refused to send these young people, Minos would wage a war against them.

Another nine years had passed and it was time for the Athenians to send another fourteen boys and girls. This time the King of Athens' own son Theseus wanted to be one of the chosen ones. Theseus was a gallant and confident young man who thrived on adventure. He really wanted to be one of the fourteen young people sent to Crete because he wanted to destroy the Minotaur in revenge for what King Minos had been doing to the young Athenians.

The King of Athens, Aegeus, on hearing of his son's desires, was very distressed and begged his son not to undertake this voyage. "Theseus! Do not do this. It is not a wise thing to do and you will almost certainly be killed. The Minotaur is notorious – no-one ever escapes his lair alive. Do not make the journey to Crete!"

But Theseus ignored his father's pleas and told Aegeus with great conviction, "I know I can slay this monster. Do not worry father. I shall be triumphant! When I return, I shall ensure the sail of the boat is white to show I have won and have returned home victorious."

Finally, the day arrived and Theseus set sail with the thirteen other young Athenians. They raised a black sail in remembrance of the previous young Athenians who had died at the hands of the Minotaur.

The journey was arduous and exhausting. It was perilous and dramatic and added to the tension on board the boat. The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.

Eventually, and with a slight sense of relief, they arrived in Crete where they were met by the king himself, Minos. With him was his daughter Ariadne. As the Athenians disembarked their ship, Minos immediately recognised Theseus and was greatly angered by his presence.

"What are you doing here? The son of the King of Athens, a man I despise," Minos demanded.

"Your words do not intimidate me. I have come to kill the Minotaur. I am here for my people who have suffered for many years because of what you demand!" declared Theseus boldly.

"HOW DARE YOU SAY THIS AFTER WHAT YOUR PEOPLE DID TO MY SON!" roared an indignant King Minos.

Ariadne, on hearing the courageous words of Theseus, was immediately besotted with the young Athenian. She was impressed with his fearlessness both towards her own father and his mission. In her mind she resolved that she would assist Theseus in killing the monster.

That night, Ariadne, in disguise went to Theseus who was locked up in her father's prison in the palace. She was nervous but knew in her heart that this was the right thing to do.

"Theseus. Theseus!" she whispered. "My name is Ariadne. I am the daughter of King Minos. Hearing your brave and courageous words today, I can see that you are loyal to your people and I want to help you."

She proceeded to give Theseus a sword and a ball of golden thread. "Secure the thread to the labyrinth's entrance and unwind the string as you traverse through the maze. Be careful though. The labyrinth has many twists and turns and is it dark and eerie. When you eventually encounter the Minotaur, slay him with this sword and then follow the thread to guide you back out. Without the thread you will be forever trapped."

Theseus, although initially suspicious of Ariadne's motives, could see she was kind and genuine and was thankful for her support. As a token of his thanks and his trust in her, he promised that he would marry Ariadne if he was victorious in his quest.

The very next day, Theseus, having listened to Ariadne's advice, took the precious sword and thread and journeyed to the labyrinth with thirteen petrified and anxious Athenians. He entered the maze and told his companions not to move from the entrance and to support each other. Keeping as calm as he could, he followed Ariadne's instructions and tied the thread to the main door and took the first steps into the unknown. Theseus was apprehensive and beads of sweat trickled down his face as he began his journey.

Theseus proceeded to travel through the dark, complicated maze in his quest to find the Minotaur, trailing the thread along as he went. The maze was as Ariadne had described: dark, bewildering and frightening. As he progressed he could hear the intimidating roars and growls of the fearsome beast. This was the toughest of challenges but Theseus remained determined and ventured on.

Suddenly he came face to face with the terrifying monster. It was strong and fearsome; a mighty beast. He roared with anger and charged at Theseus. It was a difficult battle, the Minotaur was vicious and fought hard but Theseus would not relent and with a mighty swish of his sword he successfully slayed the monster.

The Minotaur fell to the ground, defeated and dead.

Exhausted but elated, Theseus dashed through the maze, using the thread to guide him back to his friends. As he came into view, the Athenians initially gasped in horror at their blood-soaked friend but then ran to him, giving him hugs of celebration.

"We must leave at once," commanded Theseus, "before King Minos finds out what I have done and comes for my blood."

So without a moment's hesitation, Theseus grabbed proud Ariadne's hand and with the other Athenians running behind them, ran to the island's shore and boarded their boat, leaving Crete forever. It was with a great sense of relief that the crew watched the island of the Minotaur fade into the distance.

After a few days of travel, Theseus decided that rest was required so the boat docked at an island. The crew relaxed and Ariadne was delighted to be able to spend time with Theseus. She had never been happier. However, her dreams were soon crushed. Theseus realised he did not truly love her and decided to abandon her on the island and return home to Athens. On seeing Theseus' ship sailing away towards the horizon, Ariadne was heartbroken by his betrayal.

The final journey home was full of excitement, happiness and renewed hope. The Athenians had defeated the Minotaur and were now free of King Minos and his demands.

However, in the excitement of the victory, Theseus made a fatal error as the ship made its final voyage towards Athens – he forgot to switch the sail to white! As the ship came into view, King Aegeus, who was waiting impatiently, eventually saw the black sail and immediately thought his son had been slaughtered by the Minotaur.

"Theseus!" cried Aegeus. So distraught was the king on seeing the doomed black sail, he cast himself off the rocks into the sea and to his death.

On landing, Theseus was told of this terrible tragedy. He wailed with unhappiness, realising the huge error he had made. His sense of triumph dissolved in an instant.

And so as the city of Athens celebrated the return of their people and the death of the Minotaur, it was with sadness in his heart, that Theseus became the next King of Athens.

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Jenny Turner

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 5 – Genius

Theseus and the Minotaur

1. What does the word *resided* mean? (AF4)
2. “King Minos held a grudge against the people of Athens.” What does this mean and why did King Minos hold this grudge? (AF4/AF2)
3. Why do you think the Athenians would send fourteen young people to King Minos every nine years? (AF3)
4. Why do you think King Aegeus is upset at the beginning of the text? (AF3)
5. What does Aegeus mean when he says the Minotaur is notorious? (AF4)
6. Why do you think Aegeus describes the Minotaur’s home as a lair? (AF5)
7. Theseus speaks to his father with “great conviction”. What do you think this means? (AF5)
8. Why is a black sail raised as they set sail? (AF2)
9. “The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.” What do you think the author means as the Athenians travel to Crete on the boat? (AF5)
10. What does “disembarked” mean? Why would the Athenians feel a “slight sense of relief” on doing this? (AF4/AF3)
11. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5)
12. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3)
13. Why would Ariadne visit Theseus in disguise? (AF3)
14. Ariadne tells Theseus that she thinks he is loyal to his people. What do you think she means here? (AF4)

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15. “Beads of sweat trickled down his face.” Why do you think the author chooses to write these words? (AF5)
16. Theseus is “initially suspicious of Ariadne’s motives”. What does this mean and why would he feel this? (AF3/AF5)
17. Describe what you think the maze was like in your own words. (AF3)
18. Theseus, “with a mighty swish of his sword successfully slayed the monster.” What literary device does the author use here? (AF4)
19. Why would Ariadne be proud of Theseus as they escape from the island? (AF3)
20. Why would the journey home be one of “renewed hope”? What do you think the author means here? (AF5)
21. “His sense of triumph dissolved in an instant.” How do you think Theseus feels at the end of the story? (AF5)

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2. “King Minos held a grudge against the people of Athens.” What does this mean and why did King Minos hold this grudge? (AF4/AF2) **Minos is angry and has a grievance against the Athenians because they had killed his son because the prince had won lots of prizes at the Athenian Games and they were jealous.**
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6. Why do you think Aegeus describes the Minotaur’s home as a lair? (AF5) **He compares the maze to the home of a wild beast which is how he sees the Minotaur.**
7. Theseus speaks to his father with “great conviction”. What do you think this means? (AF5) **He speaks with determination and confidence. He takes pride in his people and has firm opinions. He will not allow anyone to change his mind about what he wants to do.**
8. Why is a black sail raised as they set sail? (AF2) **It is to remember the previous Athenians who had been sent to Crete as a sacrifice to the Minotaur.**
9. “The crew suffered terribly as they knew that this suffering was only leading to a more miserable fate.” What do you think the author means as the Athenians travel to Crete on the boat? (AF5) **The journey is stormy and difficult but this only makes the Athenians feel worse. They are already nervous and anxious as they believe that they are heading to their death with the Minotaur.**
10. What does “disembarked” mean? Why would the Athenians feel a “slight sense of relief” on doing this? (AF4/AF3) **To get off/alight from a ship. They are relieved to get off the boat after such a treacherous journey but the feeling is only slight as they know what awaits them.**
11. Why are some of King Minos’ words in capital letters? (AF5) **To make it clear that King Minos is shouting the words very loudly in anger.**
12. In your own words, what does Ariadne think of Theseus? (AF3) **She admires him for his bravery, fearlessness and courage. She completely falls in love with him and such is her devotion to him she decides she will go against her own father and help Theseus kill the Minotaur.**
13. Why would Ariadne visit Theseus in disguise? (AF3) **She does not want to be discovered as she is being disloyal to her own father and people in helping Theseus.**

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 5 – Genius ANSWERS

14. Ariadne tells Theseus that she thinks he is loyal to his people. What do you think she means here? (AF4) **It means she thinks Theseus is devoted to his city of Athens and will do anything to save/protect his people.**
15. “Beads of sweat trickled down his face.” Why do you think the author chooses to write these words? (AF5) **To emphasis the pressure and intensity of the task that lies ahead for Theseus.**
16. Theseus is “initially suspicious of Ariadne’s motives”. What does this mean and why would he feel this? (AF3/AF5) **He is not sure what Ariadne’s true intentions are. He is uncertain whether she genuinely wants to help him or is tricking him and is working on behalf of her father, King Minos.**
17. Describe what you think the maze was like in your own words. (AF3) **The maze is very difficult to get through for a number of reasons – it is gloomy and dark as well as being very complicated.**
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21. “His sense of triumph dissolved in an instant.” How do you think Theseus feels at the end of the story? (AF5) **His moment of glory is lost at once due to an awful tragedy. Theseus would have been distraught and felt guilty that he is the cause of his father’s death due to one forgetful moment. His victory now feels empty. Although he is now king, he has gained this at a terrible price.**

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Comprehension – Theseus and the Minotaur – 5 – Genius ANSWERS