

# Theseus and the Minotaur

Ken Beatty



## Summary

This is an adaptation of a Greek myth. Theseus, a strong and clever young man, finds out that King Aegeus is his father when he moves a rock and finds the king's sword. He goes to Athens to meet him. There, he also meets the king's new wife, Medea, and their son. She is angry because she wants her own son to be king.

King Aegeus is worried. The Athenians killed the son of Minos, king of Crete, in battle and then lost. Now, fourteen young Athenians have to go to Crete and become food for the Minotaur, the king's other son. He is half bull and half man and lives in a maze. Theseus promises to kill the Minotaur and come back soon. The sails in his boat will be white to show he is back safely.

When Theseus gets to Crete he meets Minos and his daughter, Ariadne, who immediately likes Theseus and helps him. She gives him a knife to kill the Minotaur, and some string to help him find his way back out of the maze. In return, she wants him to take her to Athens and marry her. Theseus kills the Minotaur, escapes from the maze and takes Ariadne with him, but only to Naxos. She is angry and promises he will be very unhappy. Everybody is happy on the boat but they forget to put up the white sails. Aegeus thinks his son was killed and dies before Theseus' return. Theseus becomes the new king, yet he is very unhappy.

## Background and themes

**Greek mythology:** Greek myths are tales about the gods and their origins, the creation of the world etc (divine

myths). They can also be tales related to kingdoms on earth, heroes and heroines, such as Theseus and the Minotaur (heroic myths). In Greek tragedy, the hero is extraordinary but always makes a mistake, as all human beings do.

**Heroism:** What are the qualities of a hero nowadays? What were the qualities of a hero in Ancient Greece?

**Promises:** Is it important to keep a promise? Why?

**Forgetfulness:** How do we try to remember important things? Through association? Tying a piece of string round one of our fingers etc? What are the consequences of not remembering something important?

## Discussion activities

### Pages 1–5

#### Before reading

- 1 **Discuss:** Have students look at the covers in pairs and do the following.
  - a Make a file card: Have students identify title, author, publisher and ISBN and write a file card for the book.
  - b Describe the picture: Have students point to Theseus and to the Minotaur and to compare them. Teach 'half man/bull'.

#### While reading

- 2 **Role play:** Have students act the conversation between Theseus and his mother in the garden (pages 1–2).

#### After reading

- 3 **Guess:** Have students answer the following questions. *What is Theseus going to do in Crete? Is it going to be difficult to kill the Minotaur? Is he going to make friends?*

### Pages 8–11

#### Before reading

- 4 **Guess:** Have students look at the titles of Chapters 3–4. *A Lost Ring: Who lost this ring? Who found it? Where was it?* *A Woman's Help: Who is this woman? Why does she help Theseus? How can she help him?*

#### After reading

- 5 **Discuss:** Have students talk about the two promises in this section. *What do the people in the story promise? Do you usually make promises? Is it difficult to remember promises?*

## Theseus and the Minotaur

---

Pages 14–19

**Before reading**

- 6 **Guess:** Have students look at the picture on page 14.  
*Where is Theseus? Is he going to get out of the maze?  
How?*

**After reading**

- 7 **Role play:** Have students act the conversation between two people in Crete the day after Theseus goes away.
- 8 **Write:** Have students add a short comment on the story to their file cards.

# Theseus and the Minotaur

Photocopiable

## While reading

Pages 1–5

### 1 Match A and B.

A	B
King Aegeus	is Poseidon's son. is Ariadne's father.
Theseus	is King Aegeus's son. is young and strong.
Minos	is the Minotaur's father. is King Aegeus's new wife.
Medea	lives in Athens with Medea. is Theseus's father. has two fathers. has one daughter.

### 2 Theseus and his father are talking. Write Theseus's answers.

Father: Oh, Theseus! I am happy you are here.  
Did you walk for many days to come to Athens?  
Theseus: .....  
Father: Was it difficult to get here?  
Theseus: Yes, father, there were ..... on the road.  
Father: Did you fight them?  
Theseus: ..... and killed them.  
Father: You found my sword and now it is yours.  
How did you find it?  
Theseus: .....

Pages 8–11

### 3 Write about the Minotaur.



- a ..... is its father.
- b ..... Ariadne's .....
- c It's tall and .....
- d It's ..... and ..... bull.
- e It ..... maze.
- f It eats ..... young ..... every year.

### 4 Are these right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a The Athenians can sleep because the Minotaur is tired.
- b The men at the door of Theseus's room opened the door for Ariadne because she had a knife.
- c Ariadne helps him because she doesn't like her father and she doesn't like Crete.
- d Theseus is going to kill the Minotaur in the evening.
- e He killed the men at the door with the string.

### 5 What is Ariadne thinking? Put the letters in the right place.

I (IKLE) ..... Theseus very much. He's got a beautiful (AEFC) ..... and he is (LALT) ..... and (TNOGSR) ..... He can help me. I am unhappy. I want to go to (EHNATS) ..... He can take me in his (ABTO) ..... I want to be his (IFWE) ..... This evening I am going to visit him in his room. I am going to give him a (ORWSD) ..... and some (IRGNST) ..... Then, he can (LILK) ..... the Minotaur and go away with me!

Pages 14–19

### 6 Answer these questions.

- a Why was there no noise in the maze?
- b What was always in Theseus's hand?
- c Did Theseus kill the Minotaur with a rock?
- d Why didn't the Athenians want Ariadne on the boat?
- e Why did Theseus cry for his father in Athens?

### After reading

### 7 What did Theseus do? Tick the things he did.

- In Troezen ...
- a he found a king's sword.
  - b he fought many bad men.
- In Athens ...
- c he made a promise to Ariadne.
  - d he made a promise to his father.
- In Crete ...
- e he found Minos's ring with the help of two black dolphins.

## Theseus and the Minotaur

Photocopiable

- 8 Answer the following questions about the story.
- a Did you like the story? Why (not)?
  - b Who in the story did you like? Why?
  - c Do you like old stories from Greece? Why (not)?

# Theseus and the Minotaur

Photocopiable

Pages 1–5

1 Match A and B.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>A</b></p> <p>1 'I am going to walk to my father's home.'</p> <p>2 'I am going to fight ill the Minotaur.'</p> <p>3 'You are my son. You are going to be king after me.'</p> <p>4 'I am going to sail to the island of Crete.'</p> <p>5 'You are going to be king after your father, not him.'</p> | <p><b>B</b></p> <p>a Theseus to Aegeus</p> <p>b Aegeus to Theseus and</p> <p>c Theseus to his mother</p> <p>d Medea</p> <p>e Theseus to Aegeus</p> |
|---|--|

2 Are these right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a Theseus moved a rock and found Poseidon's sword.
- b Theseus went to Athens to meet his father.
- c In Athens Theseus met his father and his new wife. She wanted to kill him.
- d On the road he fought and killed a lot of bad animals.
- e King Aegeus was crying: Minos's son, the Minotaur, was going to eat Theseus.

Pages 8–11

3 What happened first? Write the numbers, 1–10.

- a  The first night Ariadne went to Theseus' room with a knife and some string.
- b  In Crete he met King Minos and Ariadne.
- c  Theseus wanted to go into the maze when the Minotaur was sleeping
- d  Theseus went to the maze and Ariadne took the young Athenians to the boat.
- e  King Aegeus was happy about Theseus, but was very unhappy because fourteen Athenians were going to Crete.

- f  Theseus wanted to go to Crete to kill it and he promised he was going to come back home again.
- g  Ariadne was helping Theseus because she wanted to go away with him.
- h  Theseus did not want to wait for the morning.
- i  He was going to have white sails on the boat. This was his promise.
- j  They were food for the Minotaur, Minos's son. It lived in a maze on the island of Crete.

Pages 14–19

4 Look at the picture and answer the questions.



- a Who is on the island of Naxos?  
.....
- b Where is Theseus going?  
.....
- c Who is on the boat with Theseus?  
.....
- d Where does Ariadne want to go?  
.....
- e Why does she want to go there?  
.....

## Theseus and the Minotaur

Photocopiable

### 5 How are these people feeling? Why?

a Theseus is happy because .....

.....

b Ariadne is unhappy because Theseus .....

.....

c The Athenians on the boat are happy because

.....

.....

d Back in Athens, Theseus is unhappy because his father

.....

e The people in Athens are happy because .....

.....

.....

## Theseus and the Minotaur

### Book key

- 1.1
- 1 room
  - 2 dark
  - 3 name
  - 4 good
  - 5 bad
  - 6 knife
- 1.2 Open answers
- 2.1
- 1 Yes
  - 2 No
  - 3 No
  - 4 No
  - 5 Yes
- 2.2
- a Poseidon good?
  - b King Aegeus good
  - c Medea bad
  - d Theseus good
  - e Theseus's mother good
  - f Medea's son bad?
  - g King Minos bad
  - h Minotaur bad
- 2.3
- 1 'I am going to walk to my father's home.'
  - 2 'You are going to be king after your father.'
  - 3 Medea's son is not going to be king.
  - 4 Is the Minotaur going to eat the Athenians?
  - 5 Theseus is going to fight the Minotaur.
- 2.4 Open answers
- 3.1
- 1 sail
  - 2 sails
  - 3 loves
  - 4 help
  - 5 eat
  - 6 waits
- 3.2
- 1 Theseus
  - 2 King Aegeus
  - 3 King Minos
  - 4 King Minos
  - 5 Ariadne
  - 6 Theseus
- 3.3
- 1 promise
  - 2 Promise
  - 3 promised
  - 4 promise
  - 5 promise
  - 6 promised
- 3.4 Possible answers:
- 1 Theseus is going to go to the maze.
  - 2 Theseus is going to fight the Minotaur.

3 Ariadne is going to go to Athens with Theseus.

4 King Aegeus is going to watch for Theseus's boat.

4.1 Open answers

4.2 Open answers

**Talk about it** Open answers

**Write about it** Open answers

### Project

- 1

  - 1 His father, King Aegeus
  - 2 Theseus promised he is going to come back. He is going to kill the Minotaur. The boat will have white sails.
  - 3 He came back. He killed the Minotaur. But the boat did not have white sails. There were black sails.
  - 4 Open answers

- 2 Open answers
- 3 Possible answers:  
Picture 2: I'm going to clean it up. I promise!  
Picture 3: I'm going to do the washing up later. I promise.  
Picture 4: I'm going to be on time. I promise.
- 4-5 Open answers

### Discussion activities key

1 File card

Title	<i>Theseus and the Minotaur</i>
Author	Ken Beatty
Publisher	Pearson Education Limited
Book ISBN	978-1-4058-5050-6

2 Possible answers:

Mother: Come into the garden, Theseus. Look at that big rock. Can you move it?

Theseus: Yes, mother. Look, there is a sword!

Mother: This is the sword of King Aegeus. And now it is your sword.

Theseus: Why is it mine?

Mother: You have two fathers: Poseidon and King Aegeus.

Theseus: Where is King Aegeus?

Mother: He lives in Athens. Go to him. It is time.

3-4 Open answers

5 Possible answers:

*Theseus promised to his father that he was going to kill the Minotaur, that he was going to come back again, that his boat was going to have white sails. Theseus promised to Ariadne that he was going to take her away with him, etc.*

## Theseus and the Minotaur

6 Possible answers:

*Theseus is in the Minotaur's maze. He is going to put one end of the string under a rock near the door and then he is going to take the string into the maze with him.*

7–8 Open answers

### Activity worksheet key

1 **King Aegeus:** is Theseus's father / lives in Athens with Medea.

**Theseus:** is Poseidon's son / is young and strong / is King Aegeus's son / has two fathers.

**Minos:** is Ariadne's father / is the Minotaur's father / has one daughter.

**Medea:** is King Aegeus's new wife.

2 Suggested answers:

Theseus: *Yes, (I walked for) ten days.*

Theseus: *Yes, father, there were (many) bad men on the road.*

Theseus: *Yes, I fought them and killed them.*

Theseus: *I moved a (big) rock (in the garden).*

3 a *King Minos* is its father.

b *It is Ariadne's brother.*

c It's tall and *strong*

d It's *half man* and *half bull*.

e It *lives in a maze*.

f It eats *fourteen* young *Athenians* every year.

4 a  b  c  d  e

5 LIKE / FACE / TALL / STRONG / ATHENS / BOAT / WIFE / SWORD / STRING / KILL

6 a (There was no noise in the maze) because the Minotaur was sleeping.

b (There was always) some string (in Theseus's hand).

c No, (Theseus did not kill the Minotaur with a rock. He killed it) with a knife.

d (The Athenians didn't want Ariadne on the boat) because she was Minos's daughter.

e (Theseus cried for his father in Athens) because he was dead.

7 a

b

c

d

e

8 Open answers

### Progress test key

1 l c 2 e 3 b 4 a 5 d

2 a  – Theseus moved a rock and found Aegeus's sword.

b

c

d  – On the road he fought and killed a lot of bad men.

e  – The Minotaur was going to eat the young Athenians.

3 a 6 b 5 c 9 d 10 e 1

f 3 g 7 h 8 i 4 j 3

4 a Ariadne (is on the island of Naxos).

b (Theseus/He is going) to Athens.

c The Athenians (are on the boat with Theseus).

d (Ariadne wants to go) to Athens.

e (She wants to go there) because she loves Theseus/ She wants to be his wife.

5 a Theseus is happy because *he killed the Minotaur*.

b Ariadne is unhappy because *Theseus doesn't want to take her to Athens*.

c The Athenians on the boat are happy because *they are going home*.

d Back in Athens, Theseus is unhappy because *his father is dead*.

e The people in Athens are happy because *their children are home and they have a new king*.