

Theseus and the Minotaur

A long time ago, on an island called Crete, there lived a king named Minos. King Minos had a powerful navy, a beautiful daughter and huge palace. However, King Minos still grew bored. Whenever he got bored, he took his navy across the sea to attack a town called Athens.

The King of Athens grew tired of King Minos attacking his town, and in desperation made a deal with him. If Minos would leave Athens alone, Athens would send seven Athenian girls and seven Athenian boys to Crete every nine years to be eaten by the Minotaur.

The Minotaur was a monster that was half human and half bull. He lived in the centre of a huge maze on the island of Crete. King Minos loved his horrible monster and liked to give it a treat every now and again. He knew that his people would prefer it if he fed his monster Athenian children, so King Minos accepted the deal.

Nine years passed very quickly. It was just about time for Athens to send seven boys and seven girls to Crete to be eaten by the Minotaur. Seven girls and six boys had taken their place to go to Crete, everyone in Athens was upset.

Prince Theseus of Athens knew the importance of keeping your word. However, he also knew that it was wrong of his father to send small children to Crete to be eaten by a monster, just to avoid a battle with King Minos. Theseus told his father that he was going to Crete as the seventh Athenian boy. He swore that he would kill the monster and end the terror.

His father begged him not to go, but the prince did not listen. Theseus took his place as the seventh Athenian boy. Along with the six other Athenian boys and seven Athenian girls, Prince Theseus sailed towards Crete.

When the prince and the children arrived on the island of Crete, King Minos and his daughter, the Princess Ariadne came to greet them and welcomed them into their palace. The king told the children they would not be eaten until the next day, and in the meantime they should enjoy themselves in the palace.

Later on that night, Princess Ariadne wrote Prince Theseus a note and slipped it under his bedroom door. The note read;

Dear Theseus,

I am a beautiful princess as you probably noticed the moment you saw me. I am also very bored of my life here. Without my help the Minotaur will surely eat you. I know how to save your life. If I help you kill the Minotaur, you must promise to take me away from this island. If you are interested in this deal, meet me by the gate to the maze in one hour.

*Yours truly,
Ariadne*

Prince Theseus decided that this was a fair deal, so he slipped out of the palace and waited patiently by the gate to the maze. Princess Ariadne finally showed up a few minutes later. In her hands she carried a sword and ball of string.

Ariadne gave the sword and the ball of string to Prince Theseus. "Hide these inside the entrance to the maze. Tomorrow, when you and the other Athenian children enter the maze, wait until the gate is closed, then tie one end of the string to the door. Unravel it as you move through the maze. When you reach the Minotaur, kill it with this sword. Then find your way back again by following the unravelled string." Theseus thanked her for her kindness. "But don't forget," the princess warned, "you must take me with you."

The next morning, Prince Theseus and the Athenian children were taken to the maze and shoved inside. The door was locked firmly behind them. Following Ariadne's instructions, Theseus tied one end of the string to the door. He told the children to stay by the door so that they could make sure the string stayed tied, so that Theseus could make his way back. He took the sword and started to make his way through the maze, unravelling the string as he went.

Theseus found his way to the centre of the maze. The Minotaur charged at Theseus, and he raised the sword that Princess Ariadne had given him and killed the horrible monster. Prince Theseus began to make his way back to the gate, following the string he had unravelled along his way.

Princess Ariadne was waiting for Theseus at the gate. Theseus and Ariadne gathered the children and took them to their ship, and sailed away quietly without anyone noticing. On the way back, they stopped off at a small island called Naxos for supplies.

However, Princess Ariadne insisted on coming ashore to rest. There was nothing to do on the island, and soon she fell asleep. Theseus gathered all the children and quietly sailed away from the island towards Athens, leaving Princess Ariadne asleep on Naxos. After all, he did keep his word.