



# Greek Myths: *Theseus and the Minotaur*



Greek myths are stories about the beliefs created by the ancient Greeks. Most myths are about the Greeks' gods and heroes. Many Greek myths also feature a monster or beast.



The Minotaur was a terrible monster, which lived in a maze, called the Labyrinth, under the palace of King Minos of Crete.

Half man and half bull, it ate humans. Because the son of King Minos had been killed in Athens, he demanded that, every year, seven girls and seven young men were sent from Athens to Crete to be fed to the Minotaur.



Theseus, the son of the King of Athens, was a very brave, clever young man who loved adventures and who could never resist a challenge.

One year, he offered to sail to the island of Crete as one of the seven young men. Everyone was surprised, and believed he would never have a chance. But Theseus was determined to kill the Minotaur.

The next day the party sailed to Crete in a merchant's boat made of oak. By dusk, they could see the island on the horizon.





When the fourteen young Athenians reached Crete, they were taken to King Minos's palace. There the King's daughter, Ariadne, at once fell in love with Theseus; he was so good-looking. She went to him secretly when he was alone. "I'll help you kill the Minotaur if you marry me," she whispered. Theseus looked at the lovely princess for a moment, and agreed.





Very early one morning, Ariadne led Theseus to the entrance of the Labyrinth. She tied one end of a ball of string to the door post and gave the ball to Theseus.

"Take it, and let it unwind as you go on," she said. "Then you will be able to follow the string when you come back. Without it, you'll never find your way out again."

Theseus thanked her and bravely strode into the Labyrinth, letting out the string as he went.





He walked down long twisting tunnels and winding passages, around many corners, further and further into the maze. At last, he could hear the Minotaur bellowing and shaking the ground with his stamping hooves.

Theseus crept closer, shuffling his sandals on the sandy floor until he rounded the last corner. There he saw the huge monster. It sensed him and raised its head, red eyes glaring.





Theseus looked at the monster. It was a lot taller than Theseus, with bulging muscles and hands twice the size of his. Saliva dripped from the head of the bull, and its horns were long and very sharp. It was swinging a flail.

Suddenly it bellowed and charged. Dodging its massive horns, Theseus struck the Minotaur again and again with his sword. He was too quick for the Minotaur. The monster bellowed again, almost deafening Theseus, but he fought on until, at last, the Minotaur sank to the ground and lay still. It was dead.





Pausing only to get his breath back, Theseus caught hold of his string and, winding up as he went, he raced back through the twisting tunnels of the Labyrinth to the entrance where Ariadne was waiting for him.

"I've killed the Minotaur," he gasped, "but we must hurry before your father finds out."

It was still early in the morning and the sleepy guards rubbed their eyes as Theseus and Ariadne ran through the palace to where the young Athenian girls and men were locked in their rooms.





Theseus quickly released them. "Go back to our ship but don't make a noise", he said quietly. They followed Theseus and Ariadne down to the shore where their ship was moored.



Leaping on board, the sailors rowed away from Crete and out to sea where, hoisting the sail, they sped over the water back to the safety of Athens.

