

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

Theseus was a young boy who lived in the city of Athens. He spent his free time learning how to fight because the children of Athens were different from other children. They were afraid – and they had good reason to be. Every nine years, King Minos of Crete demanded that Athens send seven boys and seven girls to his city to be fed to a monstrous creature called the Minotaur. The Minotaur was half-man, half bull, and he was kept in a dizzying maze called the Labryinth. For years the people of Athens had been forced to obey King Minos, and for years they had sent their sons and daughters to die. No child had ever returned from that fateful trip to Crete.

However, when King Minos's ship next came to Athens to collect seven boys and seven girls, Theseus surprised everyone in the city by volunteering. His friends and family feared he was welcoming an early death, but they did not realize that Theseus had a plan: he was going to kill the Minotaur.

When Theseus and the other thirteen children arrived in Crete, they were not met with a happy reception. After all, the people of Crete were looking forward to watching the Minotaur eat them. Everyone in the city was cruel to the children, except one. Her name was Adriadne, and she was the daughter of King Minos. Adriadne did not like to see other people suffer, especially at the hands of a monster such as the Minotaur, so she secretly gave Theseus a sword and a ball of string to aid him in the Labryinth.

Instead of panicking when his time came to enter the Labryinth, Theseus tied one end of his string to the door post. He began moving through the countless twists and turns cautiously, making sure to never let go of his ball of string. And then Theseus got lucky. He found the Minotaur, alone and sleeping. Theseus wasted no time, killing the monster with one strike of his sword. He followed his string to find his way out of the maze, but the deadly game was not quite over. Adriadne arrived to help Theseus free the other thirteen children, and then all of them raced to escape Crete. With King Minos and his men mere seconds behind them, the children reached a ship and sailed away to safety. And King Minos, devastated by the death of his monster and the loss of his daughter, never terrorized Athens again.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the city of Athens have to obey King Minos?
2. Why did Theseus volunteer to go to Crete? Why did this surprise every one else?
3. What was the purpose of the ball of string?
4. Why did Adriadne choose to leave Crete with Theseus?

