



## Theseus

Once upon a time, King Minos ruled over the Greek land of Crete. He worshipped the gods, but he adored Poseidon most of all. One day, Minos prayed to Poseidon and asked him for a bull that was as white as snow to show off to the other kings. Poseidon granted the wish but ordered that the bull be sacrificed in his honour. King Minos thought the bull extremely beautiful and refused. As revenge, Poseidon and Aphrodite cast a spell on Minos' wife, and she fell in love with the bull. They had a child, which was a beast of both man and bull. It was called the Minotaur.

King Minos was perturbed, but he made a plan. If he had to have the Minotaur around, he would use it to his advantage. The beast was eating his own people, so he ordered Daedalus to construct a labyrinth as a prison for the monster. That way, he would send his enemies to their doom and keep his strange stepson fed.

King Minos may have ruled over Crete, but he liked to invade other cities as well. Athens didn't like to fight, so their king made a pact with Minos. King Aegeus of Athens agreed to send seven young men and seven young women to Crete every nine years. These children would be sacrificed to the Minotaur.

Theseus was King Aegeus' son. He was horrified by his father's actions and vowed to do something about it. When he was old enough, he volunteered to travel to Crete as part of the sacrifice. Theseus was a brave, kind and good-looking chap, so it's no surprise that Princess Ariadne fell in love with him when they started chatting. She was the daughter of King Minos and was equally disturbed by her father. She promised to help Theseus in any way she could.

Together, the daring duo formulated a plan. They spoke to the architect of the labyrinth, Daedalus, and he recommended taking a ball of string. Theseus could unravel it as he went so that he knew which way he had been.

One fateful night, Theseus was led from his jail cell and into the pit of the beast. He did as Daedalus had instructed. Slowly, he unraveled the thread, making sure to weigh it down with stones as he went.



It didn't take long for him to hear the roar of the Minotaur, and soon it was upon him. After a fierce battle, Theseus managed to slay the beast. He followed the string back to the entrance and fled back to Athens with Ariadne. Unfortunately, Theseus forgot that his ship was flying black sails, which usually showed that somebody had died. His father saw the approaching ship and feared that his son had perished. In sadness, he threw himself from the tallest tower.

*Did you know that in Old English, a ball of thread was called a "cliewen", which was eventually shortened to "clew"? Theseus followed a "clew" to find what he wanted, which is where we get the modern word "clue".*

## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Where did King Minos rule?
2. Where was Theseus from?
3. How often were children sent to the Minotaur?
4. Who created the labyrinth?
5. Which two people helped Theseus?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**V**

Which word in the second paragraph means "annoyed"?

**S**

Why was Poseidon annoyed?

**S**

How did Theseus ensure that he didn't get lost?

**E**

Why has the author included the final paragraph?

**I**

Why might Minos have been upset with Ariadne?