



# Theseus and the Minotaur

5<sub>A</sub>

## ***Introducing the Read-Aloud***

**10** minutes

### **What Have We Already Learned?**

Tell students that they are going to use their illustrations from the previous lesson to create a tapestry and review the myth of Arachne the Weaver from beginning to end. Tell students that in their groups, they will come up to the front of the class in order and “spin the story” (retell or act out their part of the myth) shown in their illustration. After each group “weaves” its part of the tapestry, place the illustration accordingly.

**Note:** The final tapestry should have Group One’s illustration in the top left-hand corner, Group Two’s in the top right; Group Three’s illustration below Group One’s; etc., ending with the largest illustration, Group Five’s, at the bottom.

### **Essential Background Information or Terms**

Remind students that they have now heard three Greek myths: “Prometheus and Pandora”; “Demeter and Persephone”; and “Arachne the Weaver.” Write the names of these myths on a piece of chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard and have students vote for the one they liked most thus far. Have students share the general characteristics of myths. (Myths are ancient stories that usually try to explain mysteries of nature and humankind and include supernatural beings or events; Greek myths give insight into the ancient Greek culture.) Lead students in a discussion of these characteristics relative to each of the specific myths they’ve heard using the following chart:

(You may wish to add to the chart as each myth is introduced in later lessons.)

Myth	Tries to explain something in nature?	Insights into ancient Greek culture?	Mythical creatures?	Has Greek gods and goddesses in the story?
<i>Prometheus and Pandora</i>	Yes (how humans and animals were created; how humans got fire; how evil and sorrow came into the world)	Answers may vary.	None	Yes (Zeus)
<i>Demeter and Persephone</i>	Yes (the changing of the seasons; the life cycle of plants)	Answers may vary.	Cerberus	Yes (Demeter, Persephone, Zeus, Hades, Helios)
<i>Arachne the Weaver</i>	Yes (how the very first spider was created)	Answers may vary.	None	Yes (Athena)

Tell students that all of the myths they have heard so far have included gods or goddesses as main characters.

**Note:** Persephone, Hades, and Helios did not live on Mount Olympus, but they were also Greek gods.

Now share with students that not all Greek myths involve supernatural gods and goddesses. Tell students that some myths feature humans, heroes, and mythical creatures. Show students Image Card 7 (Cerberus). Ask the following questions:

- Which myth that you already heard featured this mythical creature? (Demeter and Persephone)
- Who is this mythical creature? (Cerberus, the three-headed dog, that lived in the underworld with Hades.)

### **Meet the Characters**

**Note:** You may wish to add to the Character Chart as you introduce the characters in this read-aloud.



← **Show image 5A-1: Prince Theseus returning in his ship to Athens**

Tell students that Prince Theseus is one of the main characters in this myth. Tell students that the story begins with Theseus sailing to Athens to see his father, King Aegeus.



- ← **Show image 5A-4: Theseus preparing to get on the black-sailed ship with other youth**

Tell students that in this image Theseus's father, King Aegeus, is shown in the foreground, or nearest to the viewer. Tell students they will hear about another important Greek king, King Minos, but they will not see an image of King Minos in this story.



- ← **Show image 5A-5: Ariadne talking to Daedalus**

Tell students that Princess Ariadne and Daedalus both play important roles in this story. Ask students to look at the image and ask them what they notice that they think might be important.

### **Purpose for Listening**

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Tell students that today's read-aloud does not have any Greek gods and goddesses in it, but it involves a mythical creature as well as a courageous person who does good deeds. Tell students to listen carefully to find out what the creature looks like and who the hero is.



## Theseus and the Minotaur

### ← Show image 5A-1: Prince Theseus returning in his ship to Athens

- 1 What do you remember about Athens? This story takes place before Athens was a democracy, when it was still ruled by a king.
- 2 or when he was a child
- 3 What does *fierce* mean?

Prince Theseus [*THEE*-see-us] was the son of the ruler of Athens, King Aegeus [*EE*-jee-us].<sup>1</sup> Theseus had been raised by his mother in a town far away from Athens and did not know his father in his youth.<sup>2</sup> When he was old enough, in order to meet his father, Theseus journeyed to Athens, had many adventures, and proved himself a fierce warrior.<sup>3</sup> When he finally reached Athens, he was shocked to hear what his father, King Aegeus, was telling him.

“Next week, King Minos [*MY*-noce] and his ship return to Athens after another nine years,” King Aegeus said. “This will be the most terrible time for our people when they see those black sails.”

“Black sails? Who is this King Minos, and what happens when his ship comes to Athens?” asked Prince Theseus.



### ← Show image 5A-2: Black-sailed ship

- 4 [Have a volunteer point to the island of Crete on a world map or globe.]

His father answered, “King Minos, who rules the great island of Crete, has the mightiest navy and army on Earth.<sup>4</sup> Several years ago, his son was visiting here in Athens. There was a terrible accident, and the young man never returned to Crete. I sent word to Crete explaining what had happened, and how sorry we were, but King Minos would not listen. He and his warriors attacked and conquered Athens.<sup>5</sup> Then Minos announced, ‘You Athenians must share my sorrow. My son was eighteen when he went to Athens. Every nine years I shall send to you a ship with black sails. This ship will take seven of your Athenian men and seven Athenian women, each my son’s age, to Crete. There I shall send those Athenians into the **Labyrinth.**’”

“What is ‘the Labyrinth,’ Father?” Theseus asked.

- 5 Why did King Minos attack Athens?



← **Show image 5A-3: Labyrinth and the Minotaur**

- 6 *Commissioned* means chose someone to do a specific job. [Show students Image Card 12 (Labyrinth).] This is a labyrinth.
- 7 Does the Minotaur sound like a supernatural creature to you?
- 8 What happens every nine years when the ship with black sails arrives in Athens?

“It is an enormous maze of twisting tunnels and rooms cut into the hillside near Minos’s palace. Minos commissioned the master inventor Daedalus [*DED-ah-lus*] to design it.<sup>6</sup> Once inside, a person becomes hopelessly lost. Worse yet, living in that maze is the Minotaur [*MIN-oh-tar*], a monster that is half-bull and half-man.<sup>7</sup> The Minotaur knows every inch of the maze and hunts down whomever enters there. Many times King Minos has sent his black-sailed ship to carry away seven of our young men and women, and none of them ever gets out of the Labyrinth. And now, next week the black-sailed ship will return.”<sup>8</sup>



← **Show image 5A-4: Theseus preparing to get on the black-sailed ship with other youth**

- 9 or young people

Theseus said, “Father, you know my skills as a warrior. I am eighteen years old. I will take the place of one of these youths<sup>9</sup> and stop the Minotaur before it can strike again.”

“No, my son! I will not let you risk your life,” King Aegeus replied.

“Father, how can I let this continue when I know I can stop it? I am the person with the best chance against the beast.” Finally, Theseus **convinced**<sup>10</sup> his father and told him that if he was successful, he and the other Athenians would return on King Minos’s ship with white sails.

- 10 or persuaded

A week later, the prince and the other young Athenians boarded King Minos’s ship. When they reached the island of Crete, guards led them to King Minos’s throne room in the palace. There, Minos **sneered**,<sup>11</sup> “It is fitting that the son of the king of Athens should not return to his home, as my son did not return to his.”

- 11 or smiled in a cruel, twisted way

Theseus answered, “It is more fitting that the son of the king of Athens should end this horrid business once and for all.”<sup>12</sup>

- 12 Do you think Theseus will be successful?



← **Show image 5A-5: Ariadne talking to Daedalus**

Standing at King Minos's side through all of this was his daughter, Princess Ariadne [ar-ee-ADD-nee]. The princess was amazed to see that Theseus was not afraid. She thought, "What an extraordinary man! I must save him. But how? Even I would not be safe from my father's fury<sup>13</sup> if he found out." Princess Ariadne needed help, so she went to see the most brilliant man she knew, the man who also happened to be the creator of the Labyrinth—Daedalus.<sup>14</sup>

13 or extreme anger

14 So Daedalus created the maze where the Minotaur lives.

15 What does Daedalus have in his hand? What do you think it's for?

The clever Daedalus told her, "It is impossible to sneak a weapon into the maze. The guards would find it and remove it, and eventually they would trace it back to you. However, if the reports of Theseus's bravery are true, he may still have a chance fighting the Minotaur. Then at least we can help him find his way back out of the Labyrinth. Here is what you must do . . ." <sup>15</sup>



← **Show image 5A-6: Ariadne advising Theseus and giving him a ball of string**

That night, Princess Ariadne went to Theseus's room in her father's palace. She told the young hero, "Wind this ball of string around yourself beneath your clothes so the guards will not see it. After you enter the Labyrinth, tie one end of the thread to the handle of the gate and unwind the rest as you go through the maze. If you defeat the Minotaur, rewind the thread, and it will lead you back by the same route to the gate. And if you succeed, you must take me with you to Athens, for if my father finds that I have helped you . . ."

16 What do you think will happen next?

"Of course we will take you," Theseus said. "Thank you, Princess."<sup>16</sup>



← **Show image 5A-7: Theseus wandering through the maze with string and other Athenians**

The next day, after the guards closed the gates of the labyrinth behind the Athenians, Theseus told the others, "Wait here. I go to seek the Minotaur. If I fail, you are no worse off; if I succeed, we will all be able to return safely to Athens." Tying the thread to the

17 The word *unraveling* means undoing or unwinding. What is Theseus unraveling?

door handle, **unraveling** it with each step, Theseus set off into the Labyrinth.<sup>17</sup>

Within five minutes he was hopelessly lost. Still he went on, though he knew that the half-man, half-bull might be waiting around the next bend for him, or sneaking up from behind ready to eat him.

Finally, Theseus found himself at the entrance to the great central room of the Labyrinth. Resting on the stone floor at the far end was the Minotaur. It had the huge, muscled body of a man, but instead of a man's head, there was the head of a bull with long, sharp horns.

Theseus broke off the golden thread and stepped forward. The Minotaur rose to its feet to face him. Then, the Minotaur charged.



← **Show image 5A-8: Theseus and Minotaur facing off**

Theseus waited as the huge beast rushed toward him. At the last moment, the young prince stepped to one side and **vaulted** over the monster's back.<sup>18</sup>

18 The word *vaulted* means jumped over, using the hands to push off.

Confused at not having caught him on its horns, the Minotaur turned back and charged again. Again Theseus avoided its horns, leaping to the other side this time. Over and over, Theseus escaped the deadly horns. Each time, Theseus was moving closer to the wall of the room. Finally, as Theseus leaped aside once more, the Minotaur, unable to stop, ran with an explosive shock into the wall. Staggering, it fell to its knees. Theseus leaped upon its back and seized the great horns. He wrestled the Minotaur to the ground and eventually defeated him.<sup>19</sup>

19 If Theseus defeated the Minotaur, who won?



← **Show image 5A-9: Athenians escaping the maze to the ship where Ariadne is waiting**

Hours later, the other Athenians saw their prince emerging wearily and triumphantly from the stone tunnels. Untying the thread that had led him back, he said quietly, "Let's go home." Opening the gate, which was never locked (for no one had ever returned), the Athenians stole out.<sup>20</sup>

20 or snuck out quietly

The day had passed, and the city was now shadowed with night. They moved down to the harbor and found Princess Ariadne waiting for them in the shadows by the docks. Then they all set sail for Athens, bearing the glad news: thanks to Theseus, the danger from the Minotaur was finally over.



← **Show image 5A-10: Triumphant Theseus returning on black-sailed ship**

21 Why was Theseus supposed to change the sails? What do you think King Aegeus is going to think?

Theseus, however, had forgotten to change the sails from black to white.<sup>21</sup> When his father, King Aegeus, saw the black sails from his perch on a cliff, he fainted and fell forward into the sea.<sup>22</sup> To this day, the sea King Aegeus fell into is called the Aegean Sea.

22 Why do you think King Aegeus fell forward into the sea?

## Discussing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

### Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

If students have difficulty responding to questions, reread pertinent passages of the read-aloud and/or refer to specific images. If students give one-word answers and/or fail to use read-aloud or domain vocabulary in their responses, acknowledge correct responses by expanding the students' responses using richer and more complex language. Ask students to answer in complete sentences by having them restate the question in their responses.

1. *Inferential* Who is the courageous character in today's read-aloud? (Theseus) How will you convince me that Theseus is courageous? (He volunteers to go and stop the Minotaur.)



← **Show image 5A-3: Labyrinth and the Minotaur**

2. *Literal* Who is the supernatural creature in today's read-aloud? (the Minotaur) What does the Minotaur look like, and where does he live? (half-man and half-bull; in the Labyrinth)
3. *Literal* Daedalus created the Labyrinth, which is a maze. Who owns and uses the Labyrinth? (King Minos) What does he use it for? (He uses it to punish the Athenians.)



4. *Inferential* Why does King Minos send fourteen Athenian youths into the Labyrinth every nine years? (He sends the youths into the Labyrinth because he is sad and upset over the loss of his son and blames the Athenians.)



← **Show image 5A-5: Ariadne talking to Daedalus**

5. *Inferential* Who comes up with a plan to help Theseus escape the Labyrinth? (Princess Ariadne) Why does she choose to help him even though she knows her father would be furious? (She thinks Theseus is an extraordinary man.)
6. *Evaluative* Theseus escapes the Minotaur's dangerous horns by vaulting over the beast every time he approaches. How does Theseus escape from the Labyrinth? (He ties a golden thread around the handle of the gate and unwinds the rest as he goes through the maze. After he defeats the Minotaur, he follows the unraveled string back to the entrance of the Labyrinth.) Do you think Theseus would have been able to find his way out of the Labyrinth without the unraveled string? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)
7. *Evaluative* Do you think King Minos sneered when he found out that Theseus had defeated the Minotaur and returned to Athens? (Answers may vary.)
8. *Inferential* Who can locate the Aegean Sea on the map? According to this myth, how did the Aegean Sea supposedly get its name? (Prince Theseus forgets to change the sails of his boat from black to white, and so his father, King Aegeus, thinks Theseus did not defeat the Minotaur. King *Aegeus* is so shocked he faints and falls into the sea . . . the *Aegean* Sea.)
9. *Evaluative* What clues did you hear that the setting for this myth was ancient Greece? (Athens had a king; Aegean Sea, etc.)

[Please continue to model the *Question? Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

10. *Evaluative Who? Pair Share:* Asking questions after a read-aloud is one way to see how much everyone has learned. Think of a question you can ask your neighbor about the read-aloud that starts with the word *who*. For example, you could ask, “Who defeats the Minotaur?” Turn to your neighbor and ask your *who* question. Listen to your neighbor’s response. Then your neighbor will ask a new *who* question, and you will get a chance to respond. I will call on several of you to share your questions with the class.
11. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

### Word Work: Unraveling

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard, “Tying the thread to the door handle, *unraveling* it with each step, Theseus set off into the Labyrinth.”
2. Say the word *unraveling* with me.
3. If something is unraveling, it is separating or unwinding.
4. The threads in the old, worn blanket began unraveling after it was washed many, many times.
5. Have you ever had some item that was unraveling? Try to use the word *unraveling* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “Once I had a \_\_\_\_\_ that started unraveling.”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use an *Antonyms* activity for follow-up. Directions: Antonyms are words that are the opposite of another word. What are some antonyms, or opposites, of the word *unraveling*? (Answers may vary, but may include words such as *tying*, *repairing*, *fixing*, etc.)



**Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day**



# Theseus and the Minotaur

5<sub>B</sub>

## Extensions

20 minutes

### Greek Myths Journal (Instructional Master 5B-1)

Tell students that they will be continuing their journal to help them remember important information they learn in this domain about the Greek gods and Greek myths. Have students share which characters they heard about in today's read-aloud. (Theseus, King Aegeus, King Minos, Daedalus, Princess Ariadne, the Minotaur) Ask students if any of these characters were gods or goddesses. (no)

Show students Instructional Master 5B-1. Tell them that for today's journal entry, they should write "Theseus and the Minotaur" on the title blank. They should then write two to three sentences about one of the characters to help them remember who s/he is, what s/he does in today's myth, and why s/he might have been important to the ancient Greeks. After writing two to three sentences, students may also draw a picture in the rectangle to illustrate the information.

### Which Happened First? (Instructional Master 5B-2)

Tell students that you are going to play a game called "Which Happened First?" You will read a pair of sentences that you have written on chart paper or sentence strips. Each sentence begins with a blank. One volunteer will choose which sentence happened first in the story and write the word *First* on the blank before that sentence. Then another volunteer will write the word *Then* on the blank before the sentence that happens second in the story.

➤ Above and Beyond: You may wish to do this extension as an assessment and have students use Instructional Master 5B-2 to write *First* and *Then* on the corresponding lines.

1. \_\_\_\_\_, Theseus defeats the Minotaur. (Then)  
\_\_\_\_\_, Theseus meets his father. (First)
2. \_\_\_\_\_, Theseus forgets to change the sails from black to white. (First)  
\_\_\_\_\_, King Aegeus falls into the sea. (Then)
3. \_\_\_\_\_, Theseus ties the gold thread around his body. (Then)  
\_\_\_\_\_, King Minos's son dies in Athens. (First)
4. \_\_\_\_\_, Daedalus creates the Labyrinth. (First)  
\_\_\_\_\_, Princess Ariadne asks Daedalus how to help Theseus escape from the Labyrinth. (Then)