

Welcome to the Teachers' Pack for

GROOVY GREEKS

GROOVY GREEKS takes you an exciting adventure through Greek civilisation starting with the Mycenaeans as we journey to Troy to see the Trojan horse. We discover the differences between growing up in Sparta and Athens and how the two cities dominated the country. We take part in a Greek play and join competitors in the first ever Olympic games. We learn about slaves, discover democracy and meet great philosophers and thinkers. We enter a Greek hospital to test ancient medicine and meet Hippocrates. The Greek gods Zeus, Poseidon and Athena compete for our attention and we enter the world of myth to confront the Minotaur of Crete. When the Persians invade we face them at Thermopylae and take to the seas to shatter their ships at Salamis.

This two hour show is a fantastic journey into Ancient Greece in a gripping and awesome production to help you cover the new history curriculum.

The following sections will help you cover the period with your students.

We would be delighted to receive your feedback on this pack and we look forward to seeing you at the show!

office@birminghamstage.com

The Trojan Horse



The story of the wooden horse and the destruction of the city of Troy, first appears in the poet Homer's work 'The Iliad' which was probably written several hundred years after the siege was supposed to have happened. Historians have debated its authenticity for years, but true or not it remains one of the most famous Ancient Greek legends.

The Greek Prince Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, had fallen in love with the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. He had wooed her, and brought her to Troy with him.

Unfortunately, Helen was still married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta.

Helen was so beautiful that nearly every Greek Prince had wooed her too but they had all sworn to abide by her choice – indeed they promised to punish anyone who might try and steal her away.

When Menelaus learned of Helen's disappearance, he was furious and asked his brother Agamemnon for help. Agamemnon rounded up the former rivals for Helen's hand, and, reminding them of their promise, demanded that they join his brother in recovering Helen and punishing the Trojans.

Despite some reluctance, soon a rescue force, commanded by Agamemnon, set out for Troy.

Troy was a well fortified city completely encircled by high walls. Rather than attack it directly, Agamemnon decided to first destroy the surrounding towns that supplied it with food and provisions.

For nine years the Greeks laid siege to Troy and despite many lives being lost on both sides, they were unable to penetrate its walls.

But in the tenth year of the siege, a Greek general, came up with an idea.

An enormous, hollow, wooden horse was built – big enough for a small army to hide themselves inside.

The horse with its occupants, was left near the city gates, then the rest of the Greek army went back to their ships and pretended to sail away.

The Trojans were delighted the Greeks had left and assumed they were victorious. When they found the horse, some wanted to burn it, or push it off a cliff, but others argued that it should be brought into the city to bring them good fortune.

A Greek in tatty clothing named Sinon, appeared. He claimed that he had escaped being sacrificed to the Goddess Athena, and that the horse had been built to appease her and bring them luck.

Persuaded by Sinon's lies, the gates were finally opened and the enormous horse was dragged in. It was so big some of the walls had to be taken down as well to allow it past.

That night there was much celebration of the great victory the Trojans believed they had won.

Finally when the city had fallen quiet, Sinon freed the warriors hiding inside the horse and sent a beacon to the Greek fleet which quickly returned. The soldiers opened the gates and the Greeks seized Troy in a single night.

Helen begged forgiveness from Menelaus, and he took her back to Sparta.

Activity

Imagine you are a film company about to make a film of the siege.

Talk through the story and decide what would be the most important scenes to tell it

In groups of five or six, make a still picture depicting one of those scenes

Decide on one sentence for each picture, that explains what it is depicting

Show the pictures and sentences, in order, to make a storyboard.

As a film company, you need to decide what point of view you want to take.

Who do you want the audience to sympathize with? Whose story is it?

*As that character, write a short voice over for the very end of the film,
explaining how you feel now the story is all over.*

Athens and Sparta

Modern Greece is a single country, with Athens as its capital, but Ancient Greece was very different. It was divided into independent 'City States'. Despite sharing the same language and religious beliefs, all city states had different laws and were governed in different ways. As we learn in 'Groovy Greeks' the most important of these were Sparta and Athens.



Sparta

Sparta was the first city state to develop after the Greek 'Dark Ages'. It was a military state and the only one with a full time army, in which most Spartan citizens (men) were expected to serve. Spartan men were known for their bravery and spent their whole lives training and fighting.

Sparta had its own system of government. Power was shared between two Kings and an assembly of important men. They held tight control over the people.

Every male Spartan citizen was given land to farm, however as their duty was to do their military service, the actual farming work was done by slaves, known as Helots. Helots were people taken from lands that had been conquered by

the Spartan army. They had no rights and were forced to give a half of all crops to their Spartan masters.

Life in Sparta was harsh. Reputedly, every new baby born was examined to establish its strength and fitness. If it was considered weak and sickly it would be left on the hillside to die.

Spartan children were kept hungry and were encouraged to steal food as ingenuity was considered a useful battle skill.

A Spartan boy was considered to belong to the state, rather than his parents, and from the age of seven would be sent to live with other boys in a military barracks and train as a soldier. Their days would be filled with weapons training, fitness sessions and beatings – to check their toughness.

Spartan girls were expected to live at home up until the time that they got married. However, unlike other city states, girls also received some form of education. They had some basic schooling in the mornings which would centre on domestic duties, and, like the boys, their afternoons would be filled with physical exercise. In *Groovy Greeks*, Alice is surprised that Spartan women learn running, javelin and wrestling. They were even allowed to take part in competitions. It was important that Spartan women were strong and fit so that they could produce healthy, boy babies who could join the army.



Athens

Athens was the largest and most powerful of the Ancient Greek city states, and it is the one modern historians know the most about as it produced many writers and artists whose work survived over the centuries.

The people of the city lived below the Acropolis – a rocky hill on which the great temple known as the Parthenon stood. (And still stands today)

The Parthenon housed a great ivory and gold statue of the Goddess Athene after whom Athens is named.

In contrast to Sparta, Athens in the later Ancient Greek times, did not have a King. It was ruled by the people as a 'democracy' (Demos = people, Kratus = rule). The citizens could choose their ruler and vote for and against new laws. Great meetings of at least 6000 citizens were held to debate new laws.

However, unlike modern democracies, only men could become citizens. Women, slaves and foreigners were barred from voting.

Education was considered important in Athens too. Sons of Athenian citizens went to school where the mornings were spent learning reading, writing, mathematics and poetry. Most learning was done by heart, but pupils would also use wax tablets to write on. The afternoons, were spent outside doing physical exercise. A healthy body was considered the key to a healthy mind. Schooling was not free so only rich people could afford to send their boys to school.



Athenian girls did not attend school. They were educated at home in housekeeping and how to look after a family. If their mother could read and write, they learned this too. They had far fewer freedoms than Spartan women.

Activity

- *In pairs, imagine that one of you is a Spartan child and the other is an Athenian.*
- *You met one day, whilst travelling from a visit with your parents to the Oracle at Delphi, and secretly became friends and pen pals.*
- *Write a letter to your partner, describing how you spend a typical day.*
- *Include details of your education – who is teaching you ? – are they friendly?*
- *Tell the other one about any friends you have and what you like to do in your spare time – if you have any*
- *What are your dreams for the future? How do you see yourself in twenty years time?*
- *Remember, Athens and Sparta are enemies – what would happen to you if you were caught writing this letter?*

Ancient Greek Theatre



Greek Theatre grew out of religious festivals held to honour the Gods, particularly Dionysus – the god of wine and pleasure.



The 'City Dionysia' was a four day long festival in which different tribes competed against each other, singing and dancing in honour of Dionysus. It was held originally in Athens, but soon spread to the City's allies – in order to form a common identity. Groups improvised songs all together - there were no 'Actors' as we would recognize them today.

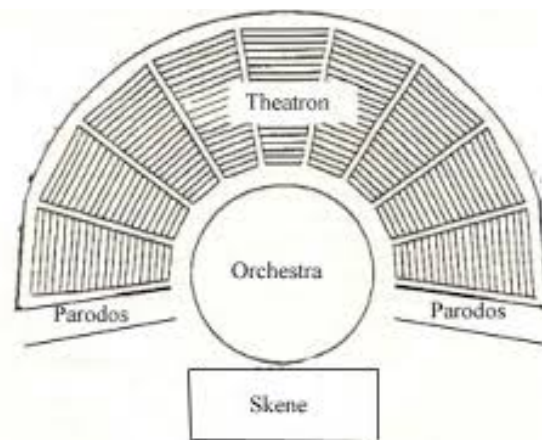
Over time the festivals became more structured, with formalised narratives being sung by a 'chorus'. These were poems known as 'Dithyrambos' and would combine a simple story with praise to the gods.

The first 'actor' to step out of the chorus, was 'Thespis', who is credited as being the originator of tragedy. As 'Groovy Greeks' tells us, Tragedy is the ancient greek word for 'Goat song' referring to the goats that were sacrificed for Dionysus as well as the goat skins worn by the performers. Thespis was a priest of Dionysus, and was the first performer to engage in dialogue with the chorus.

Later, up to three actors were allowed on stage bringing the possibility of dialogue between characters. Even so, the Chorus still played a vital part, and carried at least half of the lines. Most popular stories were grand sagas of conflict and murder with plenty of blood and gore. However Greek audiences were spared any actual gruesome spectacles as all the violence happened off stage and was reported by the chorus.

Around the fifth century BC, 'comedies' became popular too. These were often stories that poked fun at politicians and well known people of the day. Also there were 'satyr' plays which poked fun at tragedies. The name comes from the some of the cast who would dress up as 'satyrs' – half man, half beast.

Performances were held originally in the market place with the audience sitting in wooden stands, but as the popularity of performances increased, large open air arenas were built on hillsides where the spectators could look down on to the action.



Parts of a Greek Theater

These theatres were vast and could hold around 15000 in the audience. Spectators sat on stone benches in tiers. Blocks of benches were divided into city districts with the few stone seats being reserved for city officials and competition judges.

In such a big space, actors had to work hard to make it clear to the audience which character they were portraying. In general, happy characters would wear bright clothing, and tragic characters would dress in dark colours. Actors used big bold gestures to portray emotion and would wear masks made of linen or cork, with exaggerated expressions. Masks had open mouths which helped to amplify the sound and sometimes the actors wore built up shoes to increase their visibility. Only men were allowed to become actors, so masks became even more important for the female roles.

Activities

Grand Gestures

- *Imagine you are actors training to perform in a Greek Amphitheatre.*
- *Standing in a circle, the leader calls out an emotion and the rest of the group make statues depicting it.*
- *At a given signal, the group then begin to exaggerate what they are doing to make the statues even bigger until the leader calls 'stop'.*
- *The leader then calls out 'Move' and the statues begin to move around the space in the manner of the emotion.*
- *At the call of 'Circle', the group make their way back into the circle and relax from their statue.*
- *The leader asks for any observations – how did the emotion change the way you walked?*
- *Repeat with several contrasting emotions.*
- *Add any appropriate sounds – though not actual words.*
- *Divide into pairs*
- *Each pair picks a different emotion and moves in that manner adding any appropriate noises*
- *Watch each pair in turn – can you guess what emotion they are portraying?*

Masks



- *Look at each of the masks in this picture individually. Can you guess what sort of character it is portraying?*
-
- *Design a Greek style mask for one of the characters from the story of Theseus and the Minotaur.*

Chorus

- *In groups of three or four, Imagine you are ancient Greek playwrights, writing a play version of Theseus and the Minotaur.*
- *Write a short piece (ideally four to six lines) for a chorus to recite, describing how Theseus kills the Minotaur using as many different ideas as you can.*
- *Swap descriptions with another group.*
- *Practise performing the new piece as a chorus.*
- *You must all speak at the same time and include as many big gestures as possible to illustrate the words.*



The Olympic Games



According to ancient Greek mythology, the Olympic Games were started by the hero Herakles as part of his twelve labours. His task had been to clean the Augean Stables (where the cattle had not been tended to for thirty years) which he did by damming the river Alpheus so it flowed through them. Afterwards he cleared the rocks from the plain by the river and held the first Olympic Games there in honour of his father Zeus.

The more likely story is that the Games were founded by King Iphitos of Elis in order to try and bring some peace between the warring city states. The traditional date for the founding of the Olympic Games is 776, though undoubtedly competitions had been held before this date. A 'truce' was established for four weeks before the start of the games, so that athletes and spectators could travel safely to Olympia through hostile states. Heralds decked with olive wreaths, were sent out from Elis to every Greek state to announce the date of the festival, declare the truce and invite the inhabitants to attend.

A religious festival as well as a sporting one, the Games were held in honour of Zeus, at the sacred sanctuary of Olympia near Elis. It was decided that they would take place every four years – after the harvest, which would give the athletes time to train. Any free male citizen was entitled to participate, no matter what class he came from.

The first Olympic Games lasted just one day but over time this was extended to five. Athletes and their trainers would arrive at the stadium up to one month before the start of the Games, to acclimatise and train. Spectators would arrive in advance as well and camp outside the stadium, rich people in tents but most just sleeping under the stars. There would be much feasting and revelry in the camp with traders selling their wares and travelling entertainers amusing the crowds.

Stadium

The Ancient Greek Olympic complex was built around the Temple of Zeus. It featured many different areas:

- The Temple of Hera – dedicated to Zeus’s wife
- The Athletics stadium where most events took place. Unlike a modern stadium, the running track was straight. There was a Judges stand at one end and a tunnel for the athletes to enter through.
- The Hippodrome for horse and chariot racing
- The Lenidaion – a luxury hotel for VIP’s
- The Palaistra – Where training in jumping and combat events took place
- The Gymnasium where athletes practised.
- The swimming pool – where athletes trained and relaxed
- The Treasuries – belonging to different States housing objects of value to boost their prestige.

The complex also featured a sacred olive tree and a statue to Nike, the goddess of victory.

The stadium could accommodate around 50,000 spectators, though many more would watch from the grassy hills outside.

Activity

Design a map of your own Olympic complex. Mark each area. What extra features will you include? What are they for?





Events

The first Olympic Games featured only one event and it remained the most prestigious throughout the history of the Olympics. The Stadion foot race was run over one length (around 200 metres) of the stadium track. Preliminary heats were held over the day with the winners going into the final. A second race, the Diaulos, (two lengths of the stadium - around 400 m) was added about fourteen years later, and the Dolichos, (20 – 24 lengths), the year after that. Unlike today, competitors started from a standing position, with their toes lined up along a stone marker known as the Balbis. There was also a relay race where competitors passed a flaming torch to one another. The last foot race to be added was the Hoplitodromos, or race in armour, where competitors raced in helmets carrying shields. Sometimes they raced in full armour.

Pentathlon



The greatest test for the all round athlete, was the Pentathlon. The five events were: discus, jumping, javelin, running and wrestling.

Ancient Greek discuses were probably made of bronze and were smaller than those used today. The jumping event was similar to today's long jump; only an athlete would hold weights which were swung forwards as he jumped and back as he landed. Javelins had leather thongs wound around the shaft, which unwound when thrown causing the javelin to spin through the air.

Wrestling was very popular, and formed part of an ancient Greek boy's education. In the Pentathlon, the object was to throw the opponent to the ground, with three falls necessary to win.



Like other athletes, wrestlers would cover themselves in olive oil, but then powder would be dusted on to give the opponent a grip.

Other Events

Discus, long jump and javelin only took place as part of the pentathlon, but there were separate wrestling events, the most dangerous of which was the Pankration. This was a combination of wrestling and boxing where the only rules seemed to be no biting and no eye gouging. As Dad in 'Groovy Greeks' comments:

Remember athletes. You can twist arms, strangle, kick each other, break fingers, jump up and down on your opponent, break their neck or make them go unconscious. But no biting and no gouging out eyes. Begin!

Another combat event was boxing, with competitors wearing straps around their hands instead of gloves.

The Hippodrome was where the horse events were staged. There was bareback riding and more spectacularly, the chariot races. Chariots pulled by four horses were driven over twelve laps around two posts in the ground. It was very dangerous. As Sophocles writes in 'Elektra':

'They sped along in a dense mass, each driver goading his team unmercifully in his efforts to draw clear of the rival axles and panting steeds, whose steaming breath and sweat drenched every bending back and flying wheel together..'

All events were overseen by a panel of twelve judges, drawn from the officials of Elis.

Activity

What's my sport?

Imagine your class has been asked to design new statues for the Olympic arena depicting past sporting heroes.

In pairs decide on which event your statues will depict – both players showing different aspects of the same event.

Arrange the statues around the room. The teacher assumes the role of the city official coming to check up on their artistic endeavours. He/she must look at each of the statues and guess which event they are depicting. If the guess is right, the statues can sit down.

Then and now.

The Olympic Games of today include many more events than those in ancient Greek times. Look at the list of events below and decide which are ancient Greek, which are modern, and which took place in both.

Cycling	High Jump	Long Jump	Wrestling
Javelin	Swimming	Trampoline	Marathon
Archery	Fencing	Football	Boxing
200 metres	Hurdles	Gymnastics	Relay
Chariot racing	Horse racing	Weight Lifting	Discus

Winners and Losers

The games always started with the Athletes and judges swearing in ceremony, before the altar and statue of Zeus. Here they promised to abide by the rules and not to cheat. There were no actual prizes other than a crown of olive leaves, but victory would bring great honour to a state. A winning athlete, no matter what his class, would be treated with God-like reverence on his return. He would enter through a special gap knocked into the city wall. He would be treated with special favours – such as not having to pay taxes, or receiving free meals for life. At Olympia, he could build a statue of himself.

Cheating would bring disgrace. The most common ways of cheating were tripping other runners, distracting throwers or deliberately losing a chariot race to win bets. The worst was trying to bribe a judge.

As well as bringing disgrace on their state, cheats were whipped and forced to pay to have a statue of Zeus erected at Olympia in the hope he would grant them mercy.

Women

Only men were allowed to compete in the Olympic Games, indeed only unmarried women were allowed to be spectators although not encouraged to attend.

The only married woman officially allowed to watch the Games was the Priestess of Demeter, who sat on the marble altar of the goddess in the stadium.

In later years however, a women's festival was held at Olympia. Known as the Heraia, this was held in honour of Hera, the wife of Zeus. These games were also held every four years, but there was only one type of event – the foot race. It was divided into three separate contests for girls of different age groups. The winners were given olive wreaths and were allowed to dedicate images of themselves to be set up in the temple of Hera, though evidence suggests these were paintings rather than statues.

Olympic Programme

The first day would be mostly taken up with ceremony. As well as the swearing in of competitors and judges, sacrifices would be made to bring luck. There would be some running, wrestling and boxing contests for boys and contests for heralds and trumpeters.

Day two would see the grand procession to the hippodrome and the start of the chariot and horse racing and the pentathlon events beginning in the stadium. The second night would always coincide with the full moon and a great feast was held.

On day three a hundred oxen would be sacrificed on the altar of Zeus. The pile of ash was left to get higher every year. In the afternoon, the foot races would begin.

Day four saw the wrestling, boxing and pankration events and would end with the race in armour.

On the last day, the winners processed to the Temple of Zeus to be crowned with leaves from the sacred olive grove. There then followed great feasting and celebrations.

Activity

Diary

Imagine you are an Olympic athlete taking part in the Olympic Games for the first time. Write a diary charting your experiences from when you first arrived at Olympia before the games began, right up to the feast at the end. Consider the following: where did you travel from? What event were you taking part in? What was your training routine? Where did you sleep? Who were you competing against? Were you or anyone else trying to cheat? Were you a winner or a loser? What sort of treatment can you expect from your fellow citizens when you return home?

Make an olive wreath

Materials

2 or 3 sheets of green card

Dark green felt pen

Scissors

Stapler

Sticky tape

Method

Cut two long strips of card, about 3 cm thick.

Join them together with sticky tape to make one long strip

Get a friend to help you measure the strip around your head and stick it together to make a snug fitting circle

Cut about twelve leaf shapes out of the green card. Each one should be around six cm long and four cm wide.

Draw veins on the leaves with the felt tip pen.

Use the sticky tape to stick one end of each leaf to the crown so that they overlap.

Continue until the crown is covered in leaves.

Parade around like an Olympic Champion!!



Greek Gods



Greek mythology refers to twelve gods and goddesses who ruled the earth from the top of Mount Olympus. In fact there were many more. *Groovy Greeks* introduces us to four of the most important:

Zeus

'I'm King of the Gods, you know my name

I'm number one in the hall of fame'

Zeus was the all powerful King of all the gods. He was married to Hera (who was also his sister). He was lord of the sky and a rain god and carried a thunderbolt which he would use to punish anyone who disobeyed him.

Poseidon

'I'm also god of earthquakes – shake rattle and roll

I love to rock the world about with all of my soul'

Brother of Zeus, Poseidon was the god of the sea and the second most powerful of all the gods.

He carried a trident, one shake of which would cause earthquakes on the earth.

Aphrodite

'I love you all, and you love me

Cos love is the best, I guarantee'

Aphrodite was the goddess of love, beauty and desire. She was born in the sea and rode to the shore on a scallop shell. Aphrodite wore a magic golden belt and would enchant anyone she met.

Athena

'I'm Athena, let me hear ya

'I'm Athena, the Goddess of war..'

Athena was a daughter of Zeus – supposedly born, fully armed, from his head. She was the goddess of wisdom, war, agriculture, handicrafts as well as Cities and is the patron of Athens.

Other gods and goddesses:

Hera

Wife (and indeed sister) of Zeus, she was the goddess of women and marriage. She was beautiful but proud and jealous and known for her bad temper.

Hestia

Goddess of the home and family. Hestia was gentle and pure.

Ares

God of war and the son of Zeus and Hera. He was strong and handsome but had a violent temper.

Hephaestos

Another son of Zeus and Hera, Hephaestos was a blacksmith and the god of craftsmen. His blacksmiths forge lay under Mount Etna – the volcano on Sicily.

Artemis

The moon goddess. Also goddess of the hunt, she is usually depicted with a bow and arrows.

Apollo

God of the sun, light and truth. He is the twin brother of Artemis.

Hades

The god of the underworld and the dead. Hades (also known as Pluto), was another of Zeus's brothers.

Hermes

With wings on his feet, Hermes is the messenger to the gods. He's the patron of Tourists.

Dionysus

The god of wine and fertility, known for hosting wild parties.

Demeter

Sister of Zeus. The goddess of the harvest and agriculture

Hebe

A daughter of Zeus and Hera, Hebe was the cup bearer to the gods serving them nectar and ambrosia. She was the goddess of youth.

Activity 1

'What's my God?'

Working in pairs or threes, each group takes one of the cards below with the name of a god or goddess on it. They have five minutes to put together a still picture – using all members of the group – that shows some different aspects of their particular god or goddess.

Look at each group in turn. They show their still picture, and then ask the rest of the class 'What's my god/ goddess?'

Having looked at the picture and discussed what it was showing, the class offer suggestions of which god or goddess it could be.

Activity 2

Imagine you are Zeus. You have decided to create a new god or goddess for the twenty first century. Write a short description of your new deity. What are they god or goddess of? Do they have any special powers to punish or reward humankind? What do they look like? Draw a picture to illustrate your writing.

<p>APHRODITE Goddess of love and beauty</p>	<p>ZEUS King of the gods</p>
<p>HERA Wife of Zeus. Goddess of women and marriage</p>	<p>POSEIDON Brother of Zeus and ruler of the sea.</p>
<p>HESTIA Goddess of the home and hearth.</p>	<p>ARES God of war.</p>
<p>HEPHAESTOS God of blacksmiths and metalworkers</p>	<p>ARTEMIS Goddess of the moon and hunting</p>
<p>DIONYSUS God of wine and parties</p>	<p>APHRODITE Goddess of love and beauty</p>
<p>HERMES The messenger to the gods and god of tourists.</p>	<p>ATHENE Goddess of wisdom, war and cities.</p>
<p>APOLLO God of the sun, light and truth.</p>	<p>HADES God of the underworld and the dead. (Also known as Pluto)</p>
<p>DEMETER Goddess of the harvest and agriculture.</p>	<p>HEBE Goddess of youth and cup bearer to the gods.</p>



Theseus and the Minotaur



‘Groovy Greeks ‘ introduces us to the story of Theseus and the Minotaur – one of the most famous Greek myths. Like all mythical stories, there are many different versions. Here is a synopsis of one:

The story concerns two of the major powers in Greece at the time: the Kingdom of Crete and the Kingdom of Athens who were great rivals.

Every four years, athletes from both kingdoms, along with many others, would meet together in Olympia, to compete in the Olympic Games.

One year, the Prince of Crete, a tremendous athlete, took part. Such was his sporting prowess, that no matter what event the Prince took part in, he won! The citizens of Crete were filled with pleasure. But the Athenians were jealous. Very jealous. In fact so jealous, that they rounded on the Prince of Crete, and killed him.

The King of Crete, king Minos, was furious, and immediately declared war on Athens.

King Aegeus of Athens was appalled. Crete was a mightier power than Athens at the time, and war could destroy it. So he begged King Minos, to compromise.

This gave King Minos an idea, a solution to a problem he had had for many years:

Living deep down underneath his palace, locked in a complicated labyrinth, there was a monster – a Minotaur. Half man, half bull, this creature was a relation to King Minos, and he was obliged to care for it. But the Minotaur had an unusual diet. It ate only humans. Thankfully, it only ate every nine years, but when it did, it fed on seven young men and seven young women from Crete.

Understandably, the Cretans were unhappy about having to sacrifice their sons and daughters to this beast, and King Minos's popularity rating was tumbling.

The idea he proposed to King Aegeus, was that he would not declare war on Athens, if he promised to send seven young men and seven young women to Crete every nine years to be fed to the Minotaur.

It wasn't an ideal solution, but King Aegeus had little choice. From then on every nine years, fourteen young people from Athens would be loaded onto a boat and sailed to Crete, to be sacrificed to the monster.

This continued for many years, until King Aegeus's son, Prince Theseus, came to hear about it. Theseus was determined that no more Athenians should lose their lives in this way, and so begged his father to let him go as the seventh young man, in that year's group. He was determined to kill the Minotaur and stop the sacrifices. King Aegeus was adamant that Theseus should not go, but after many days of arguments, he realized that he had no choice. With a heavy heart he consented. Theseus set sail, with the other young men and women, in a boat with black sails. He promised his father that if his mission was successful, he would change the sails to white, on his return, as a sign that he was safe.

Theseus and the others soon arrived on the shores of Crete, to be greeted by King Minos himself! He couldn't believe his luck that the son of his enemy, was here to be killed by his Minotaur. What revenge! That night he organised a huge meal for the visitors – after all, it would be their last.

The King's daughter, Princess Ariadne, had also come to greet the arrivals from Athens. On seeing Prince Theseus, she fell madly in love, and decided she would help him. Ariadne was one of very few people, who knew the secrets of the labrynth – the maze where the Minotaur was entombed.

That night, she crept to Theseus's room. She gave him a ball of string. Theseus was somewhat perplexed, until Ariadne explained that he should use it to lay a trail. The Labrynth was so complex and dark, that even if he did manage to kill the Minotaur, he risked getting lost in it forever. She also gave him a sword telling him to keep it hidden, for no weapons were allowed in the labrynth.

The next day, Theseus and the other Athenians were taken down the dark staircases under the palace, to the Labrynth. They were thrown inside, and the door slammed and locked behind them.

Theseus was terrified, but he had to try. Clutching tightly to his sword, he took a few tentative steps along the damp, dark corridors of the maze. Far away he could hear the mighty beast snorting and roaring. Fear gripped him. Even if he did kill the Minotaur, he could still be stuck in this ghastly place for ever! Then he remembered the string Ariadne had given him. Quickly he found the door, tied one end to it, and then set off.

On he went, twisting and turning along the corridors. Sometimes he met a dead end and had to retrace his steps, but all the time he let out the string in a trail behind him.

Suddenly he turned a corner, and found himself face to face with the hideous form of the Minotaur. There was a mighty battle. The Minotaur was huge and powerful, but Theseus was determined, and after many hours, finally victory was his. To prove the Minotaur was dead, Theseus cut off its horns, carrying them with him as he followed the string to the door of the Labrynth. Theseus returned to the palace holding the horns high above his head. Everyone was delighted, especially Ariadne.

The next day, Theseus and the other Athenians, made preparations for their journey home. Ariadne could not bear the thought of losing the man she had fallen in love with, and so, without her father's knowledge, she crept to the boat, and sailed away with them.

On the way home, they stopped at the Island of Naxos to get supplies and to rest. In the middle of the night, Theseus woke up. Watching Ariadne sleeping, he thought about the reception she would receive back in Athens. Although with the Minotaur dead, there would be no more sacrifices, Athens and Crete had been enemies for a long time. He knew the Athenians would not welcome her. Leaving Ariadne sleeping, he woke the others and they quietly set sail without her. This was an act the Gods frowned upon.

All this time, King Aegeus had been keeping watch on the cliff top, desperate to see a sign of his beloved son's return. One day, at last, he saw the ship coming

over the horizon. But then his heart sank, it had a black sail, his son was surely dead. Beside himself with grief, unable to bear life without his precious son, King Aegeus threw himself off the cliffs and into the sparkling sea below.

By making him forget his promise, the gods had punished Theseus. However such was his acclaim with the people, he became the new King of Athens in his father's place.

ACTIVITIES

1. Film Trailer

- Divide into groups of four or five.
- Imagine you are a film company, making a film of Theseus and the Minotaur.
- You need to make a trailer to sell it
- What angle will you take?
- As a group, write three or four sentences that sum up the story and would persuade an audience to see it – but without giving away the ending.
- Re-cap the story and decide which is the most important scene.
- In mime, act out a short version of the scene.
- Narrate the sentences as a voice over as the scene is acted out.
- Show it to the rest of the group – does it make them want to come and see it??

2. Heroes

- Theseus is a classical Greek mythical hero.
- Read this dictionary definition of a 'hero'.
- **'A person (usually a man) of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities.'**
- Do you think Theseus fits this description?
- Are there any other words you would add to describe him?
- In pairs make a list of all the adjectives that you would use to describe Theseus
- Decide on the most important word.
- In pairs make two statues depicting that word.

- *Divide the class in half.*
- *Half the class make their statues all at the same time, while the others observe.*
- *In turn, each pair of statues speaks the line : 'Theseus is.....' adding in their word.*
- *Observe which words occur most frequently.*
- *Swap and repeat the exercise.*
- *Would a modern hero need any extra qualities?*
- *Write an advertisement for a job as a 'hero', listing all the qualities needed.*

3. Experts

- *Divide into groups of four or five*
- *One of the group will be the 'expert'.*
- *The rest have two minutes to use their bodies to create a Minotaur.*
- *The Minotaur must move and make a particular noise.*
- *Decide with the expert, a few facts about the Minotaur – what does it eat? What does it drink? What does it do all day? What does it do when it is frightened? Etc*
- *The 'Expert' then presents his/her Minotaur to the rest of the class.*
- *Draw a picture of your Minotaur and write a description underneath.*

4. The Labrynth Game

Needs a hall or other large space

- *The class stand in lines of five or six*
- *Each line stands behind one another*
- *Everyone sticks their arms out to the sides to make five or six horizontal tunnels.*
- *At the signal 'Change', the participants turn round ninety degrees so the tunnels become vertical.*
- *Two volunteers take the roles of Theseus and the Minotaur.*
- *Theseus chases the Minotaur along the tunnels to try and catch him/her*
- *Every so often, the leader calls out 'change' switching the tunnels, bringing dead ends and forcing the characters to find different routes.*
- *If the Minotaur is caught, the players change.*

Extension

- *Re play the Labrynth game, adding in the sounds from the soundscape exercise below.*

5. Soundscape

- *The idea is to create a creepy sound picture of the Labrynth*
- *Players sit in a circle.*
- *They try to imagine they are Theseus walking through the dark tunnels of the Labrynth, searching for the Minotaur*
- *The Leader asks them to suggest any noises he may have heard*
- *Take around six suggestions and assign each noise to a group*
- *The Leader stands in the middle of the circle and 'conducts' the noises using signals to bring groups in and out of the mix, and vary the volume.*
- *How can the combination of noises best be used to create a really creepy atmosphere?*

6. Conscience Alley.

Theseus is on the island where he has stopped to rest on the journey back from Crete. He needs to decide what to do. Does he take Ariadne back to Athens with him? What will the Athenian's reaction be? Should he abandon her?

- *Divide into pairs*
- *Each pair marks themselves A and B*
- *Take two minutes to discuss in pairs the possible consequences of taking Ariadne back to Athens or abandoning her on the island.*
- *A chooses one reason why he should take her home, B chooses one reason why he should abandon her.*
- *Make two lines across the room, so everyone is standing opposite their partner. A's on one side, B's on the other.*
- *Choose one person to be Theseus*
- *Theseus walks slowly between the lines. As he passes everyone takes it in turns to tell him what he should do and why.*
- *When Theseus gets to the end of the line, ask him what he has decided to do and why.*
- *Repeat with several different Theseus's – does the decision change?*