

MINOTAUR THE MYTH

There are a number of versions of the Minotaur myth. In brief, King Minos of Crete was competing with his brothers to remain ruler. Minos prayed to Poseidon to send him a snow-white bull, as a sign of support. He was to kill the bull to show honor to Poseidon but decided to keep it instead because of its beauty. He thought Poseidon would not care if he kept the white bull and sacrificed one of his own. To punish King Minos, Aphrodite made Pasiphaë, Minos' wife, fall deeply in love with this bull from the sea. Pasiphaë had the architect/craftsman Daedalus make a hollow wooden cow, and Pasiphaë climbed inside it in order to copulate with the white bull. The offspring of their coupling was the monstrous Minotaur, half human, half bull. Pasiphaë nursed him in his infancy, but he grew and became ferocious. Being the unnatural offspring of man and beast, he had no natural source of nourishment and thus devoured young men and women for sustenance. Minos, after getting advice from the oracle at Delphi, had Daedalus construct a gigantic labyrinth to hold the Minotaur.

Theseus, son of Aegeus, offers to try and kill the monster. King Minos' daughters, Ariadne and Phaedra, fall in love with Theseus. Ariadne weaves a thread to help Theseus escape the labyrinth. Theseus kills the Minotaur with the sword of

Aegeus. On his way home, Theseus abandons Ariadne on the island of Naxos and continues with Phaedra, his future wife. He had promised his father, Aegeus that he would put up a white sail on his journey back home if he was successful and would have the crew put up black sails if he was killed. He neglected, however, to put up the white sail. King Aegeus saw the black-sailed ship approach and, presuming his son dead, threw himself into the sea that is since named after him, thus committing suicide.



FURTHER READING

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariadne
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labyrinth
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minotaur