

The Story of Icarus



King Minos looked out of the window and spotted the boat that his messenger had just mentioned. Ordinarily, he was not interested in those entering or leaving Crete but one of the passengers had been banished from Athens. All reports described him as a genius. He had even fooled Hercules with his inventions. The King smiled; this man was going to be very useful.

A short while after Daedalus had arrived on the island of Crete, he was taken to the palace and asked to become the King's master craftsman. "I have a way to use your skills," explained the King. "There is a Minotaur who terrorises Crete and we have been unable to contain it. I need you to build a maze that it will not be able to escape from."



Pleased that his reputation had followed him, Daedalus set to work. Helped by his son, Icarus, the pair designed and built an incredible labyrinth. When it was finally finished, the Minotaur was captured and locked away. The people of Crete celebrated and thought that Daedalus and Icarus were heroes.

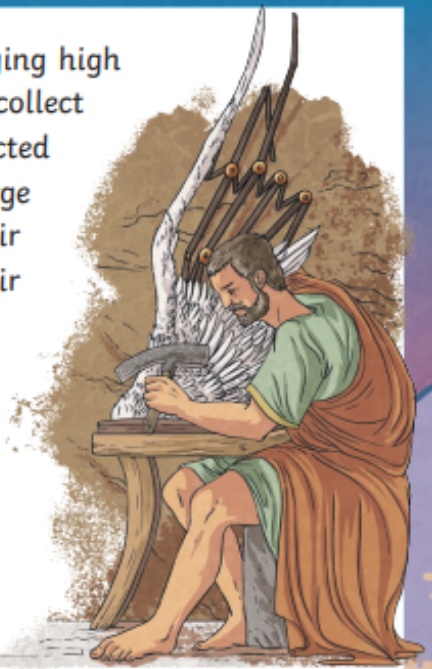


Weeks later, Daedalus was approached by a man named Theseus. He explained to Daedalus that he planned to slay the Minotaur but that he needed Daedalus's help to navigate the labyrinth. Unable to ignore the idea that this was a truly heroic act, Daedalus agreed. King Minos's daughter joined them and the three completed their mission before escaping the labyrinth. Immediately, Theseus fled back to Athens with King Minos's daughter beside him. Daedalus was surprised by the hero's sudden departure and began to worry that he had made a terrible mistake.

Less than an hour had passed before the furious King had locked Daedalus and Icarus within the labyrinth. He was outraged that Daedalus would dare to put his daughter in danger. Without having planned his route this time, Daedalus was lost in the labyrinth. Days went past and he couldn't think of how to escape.

One day, Daedalus was distracted by a flock of birds flying high in the sky. "That's it!" he shouted to Icarus, "Go and collect every feather that you can find." When Icarus had collected enough feathers, Daedalus carefully attached them to large wooden frames using wax from the candles which lit their prison. By sunrise, both Icarus and Daedalus had a pair of wings.

"Before we go," warned Daedalus, "I need you to listen carefully. While I'm sure that these wings will work, there are two rules which you must follow. The first is that you must not fly too close to the sea for the feathers will absorb the water and become too heavy to fly. The second is that you must not fly too close to the sun for, if you do, the wax which holds the feathers together will melt. Do you understand?"



Icarus nodded and the two began to beat their wings. Higher and higher they rose until the labyrinth was just a speck below them. Daedalus looked at his son, who was soaring like an eagle, and felt proud. They were free.

Icarus looked around and realised that he was closer to the gods than any human had ever been. Amazed by this thought, he forgot his father's warning; he began to soar higher until the heat from the sun became too much for the wax that held the feathers in place. With no feathers,

Icarus began to spiral down towards the sea. He hit the surface with a crash and was never seen again.

