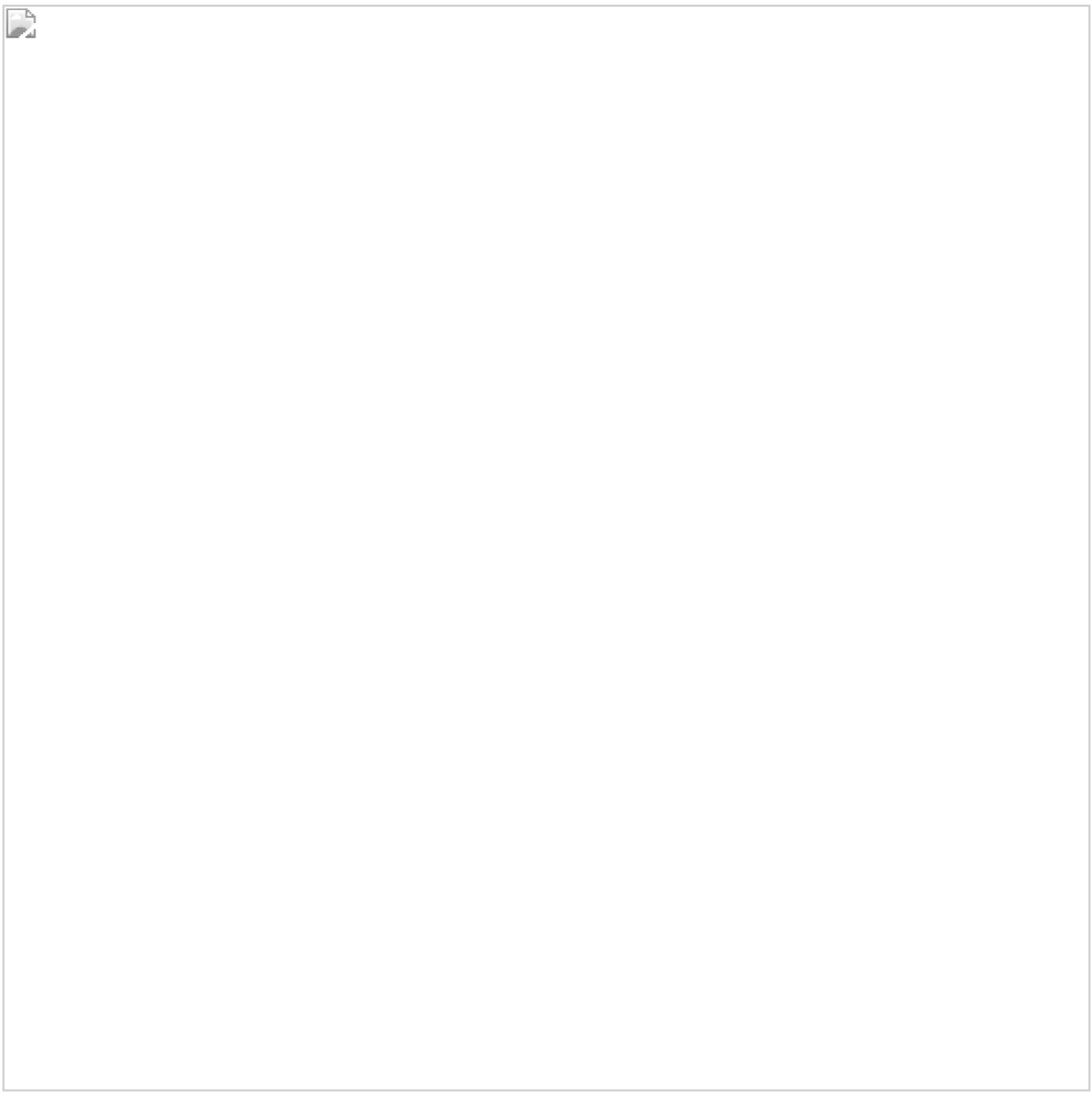
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Theseus

A Hero of Greece



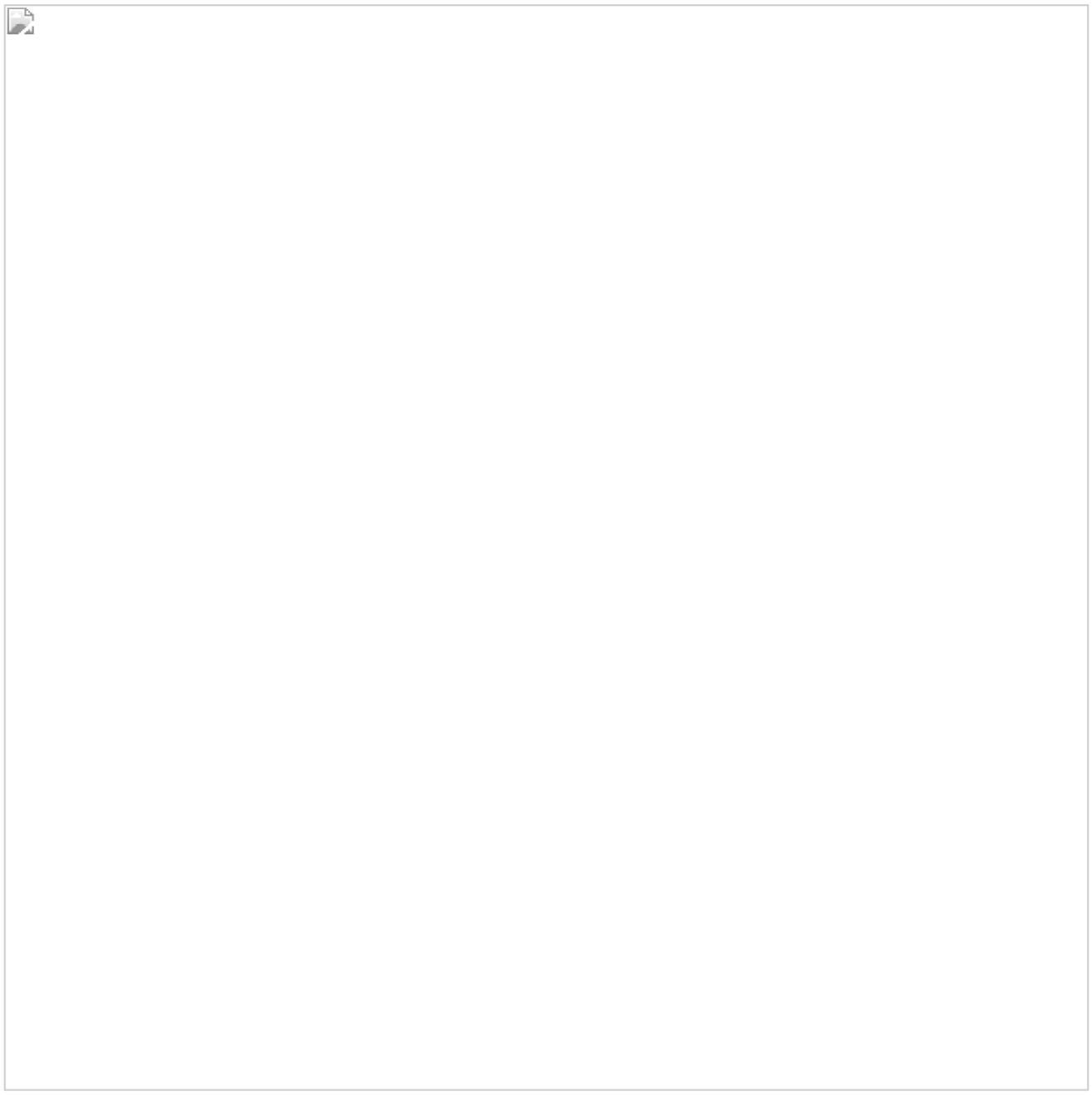
Aithra was a princess who smiled only when she looked at her son, Theseus. When he was fifteen, she took him up to the temple, into the thicket, and showed him a great flat stone under a plane-tree. “Lift it,” she said, “and bring me what lies underneath.”

TALK ABOUT IT

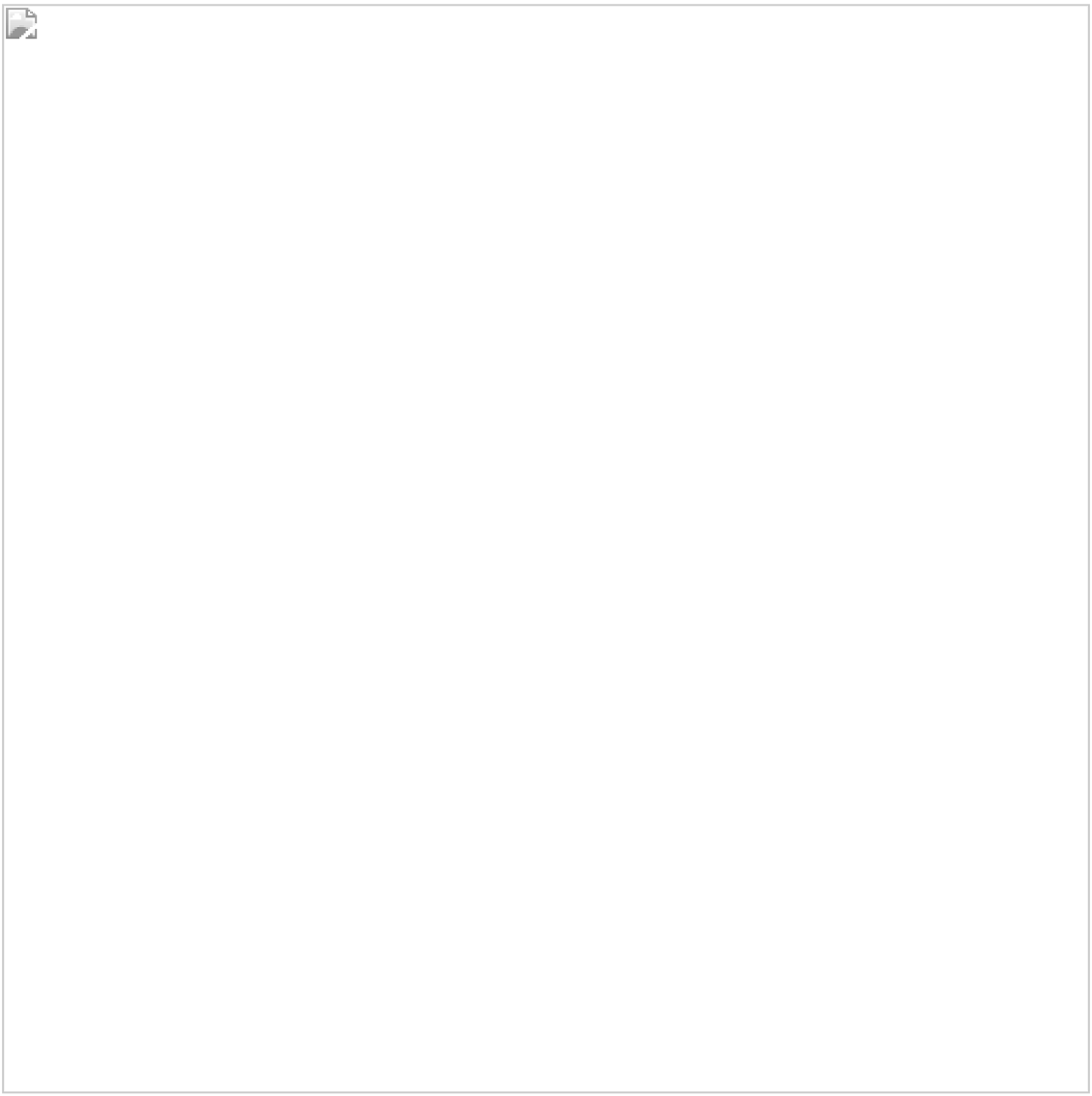
What do you think could be hiding under the stone?

This book belongs to _____

Theseus · another picture



The Stone That Would Not Move



Theseus pushed and pulled, but the stone did not move. “I have found the stone,” he told his mother, “but I cannot lift it.”

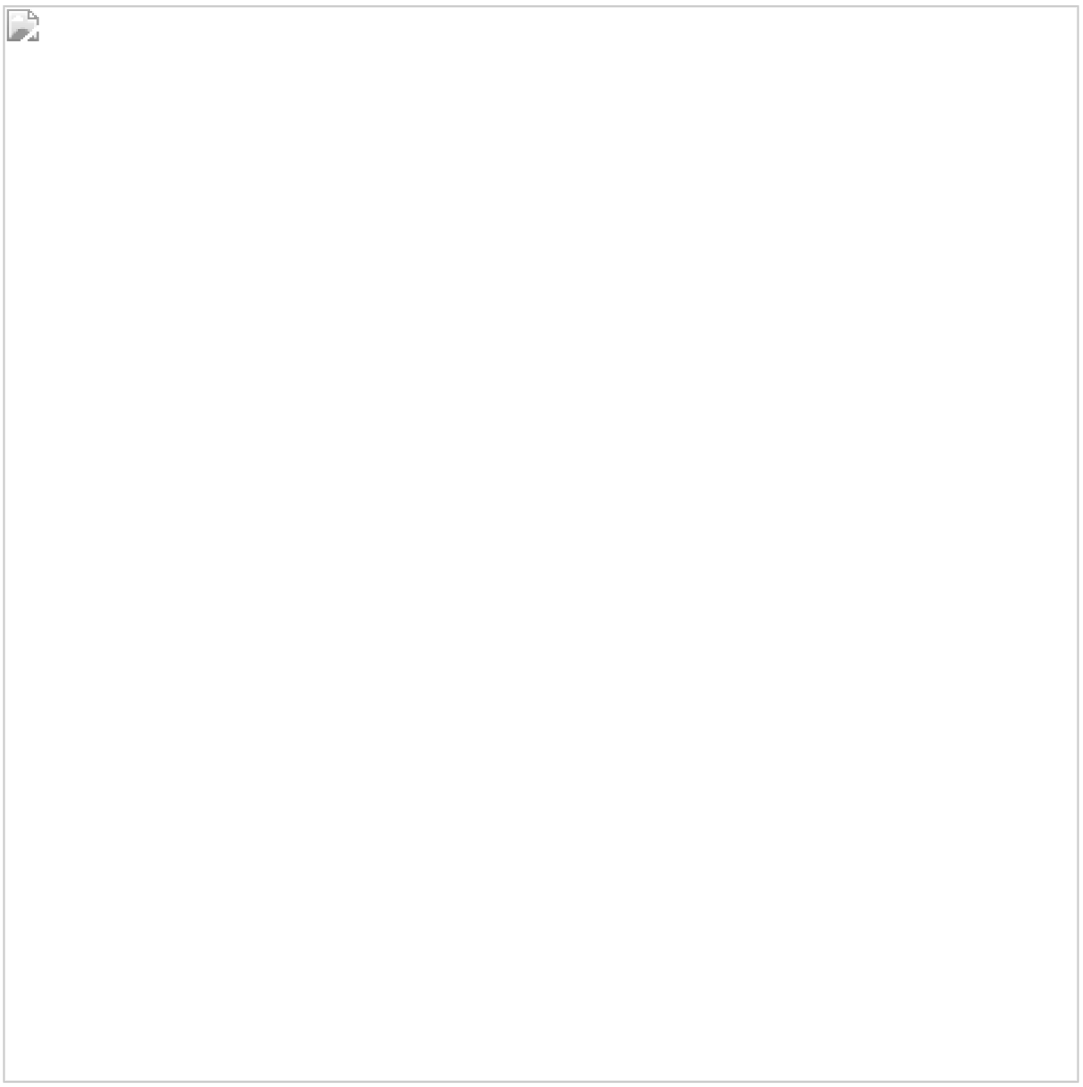
“The day may come,” she said, “when you will be a stronger man than lives in all the land.”

Every year he tried and failed. He longed to ask what lay underneath, but her face was so sad that he did not have the heart.

“The day shall surely come when I will lift that stone,” he said. He wrestled and boxed and hunted over the mountains, until no hunter was as fast as Theseus.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus did not stop trying, even when he failed three years in a row. What helps you keep trying?

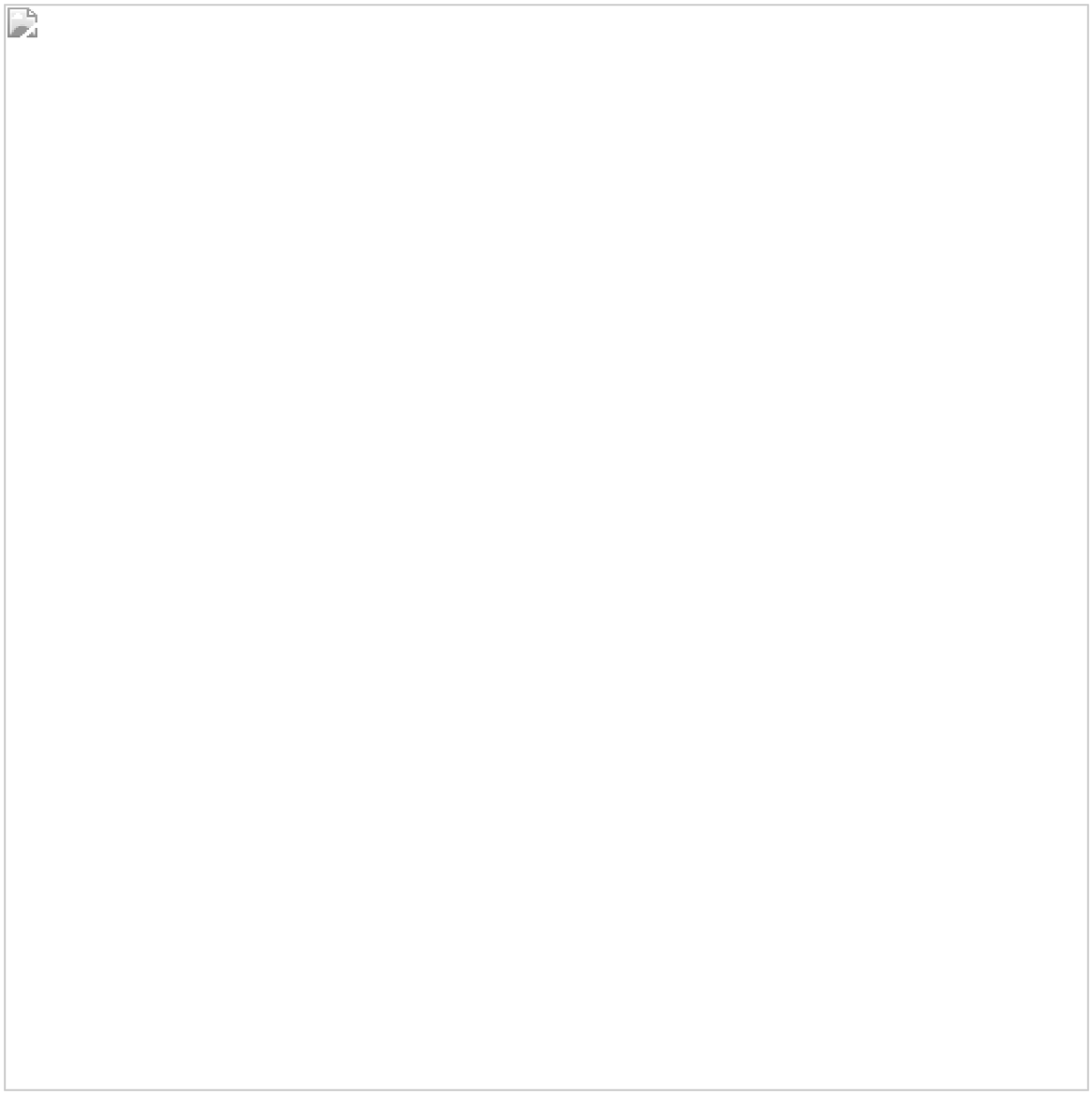


Think about it

1. What did Theseus do to get stronger?

- ○ Slept all day
- ○ Wrestled, boxed and hunted
- ○ Read books

The Stone Is Lifted



When he was eighteen, his mother said, “Theseus, lift the stone this day, or never know who you are.”

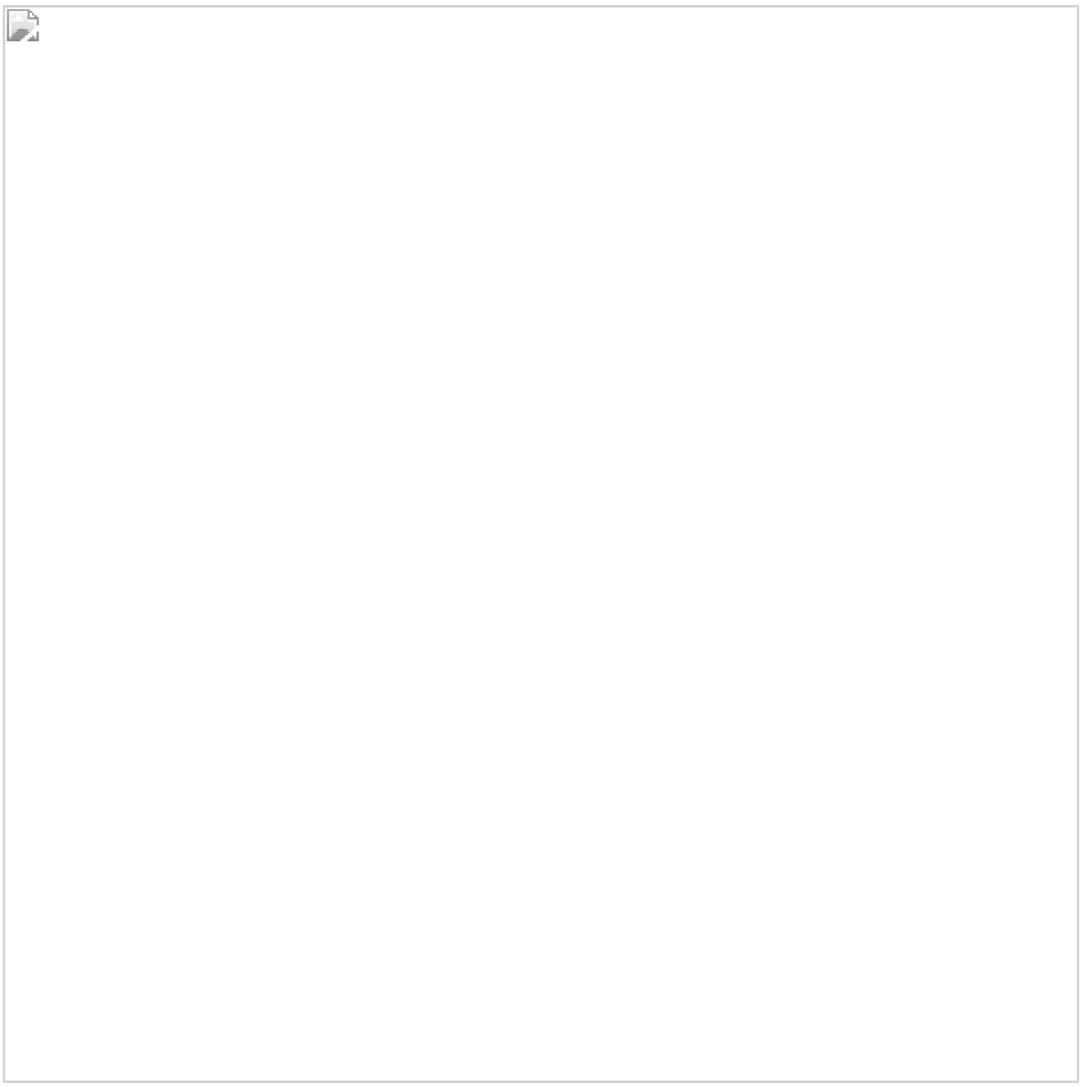
He tugged, and it moved. “If I break my heart in my body it shall come up,” he said. He tugged again, and rolled the stone over with a shout.

Underneath lay a bronze sword with a golden hilt, and a pair of golden sandals.

Theseus ran to his mother, holding them high. She wept for a long time, hiding her face in her shawl. Theseus stood beside her and wept too, though he did not know why.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Theseus and his mother both cried?

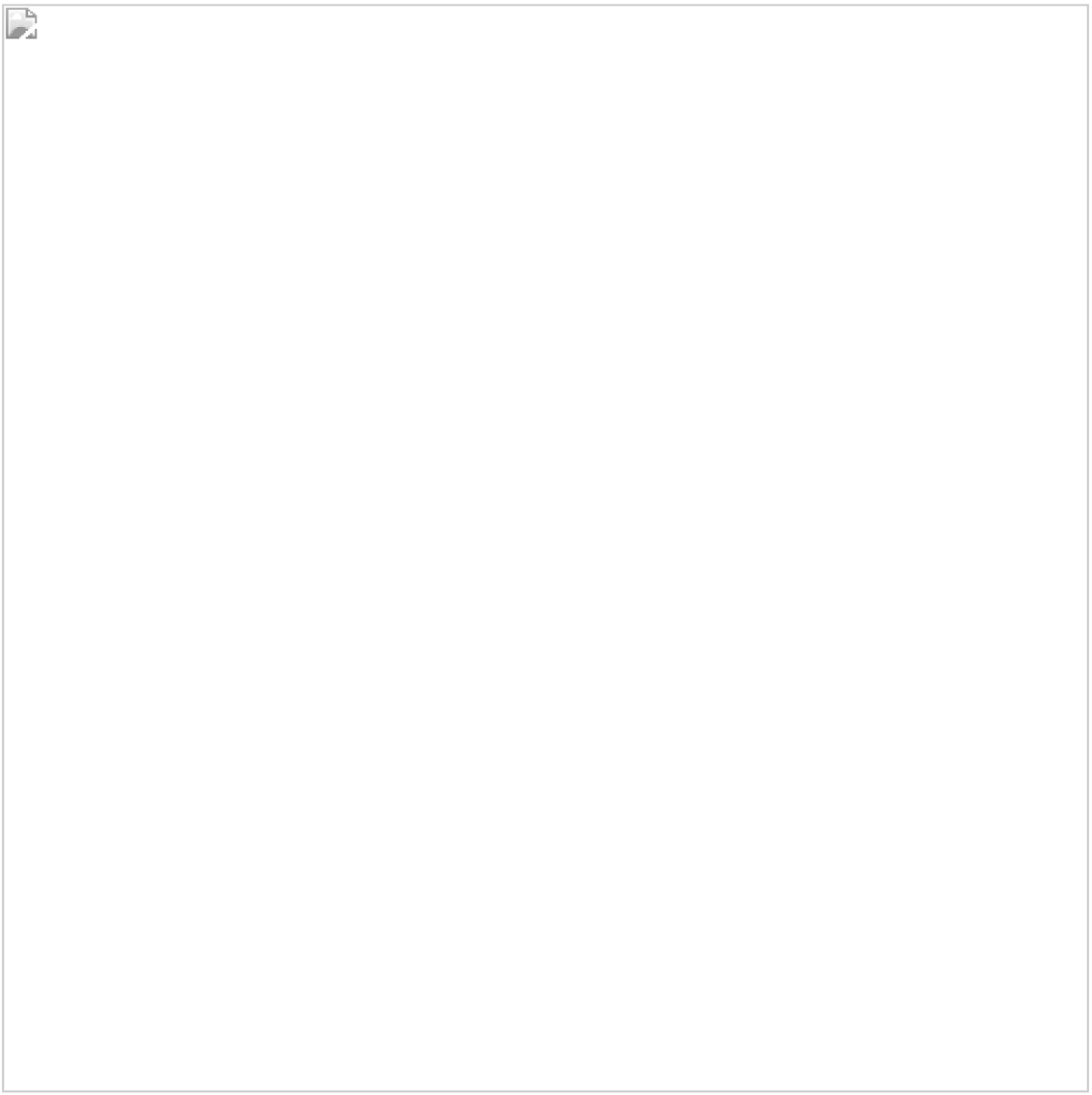


Think about it

1. What was under the stone?

- ○ A treasure chest
- ○ A snake
- ○ A sword and golden sandals

Go to Your Father



Aithra led him outside the temple wall and pointed across the bright sea to the land of Attica. “What would you do, Theseus, if you were king of such a land?”

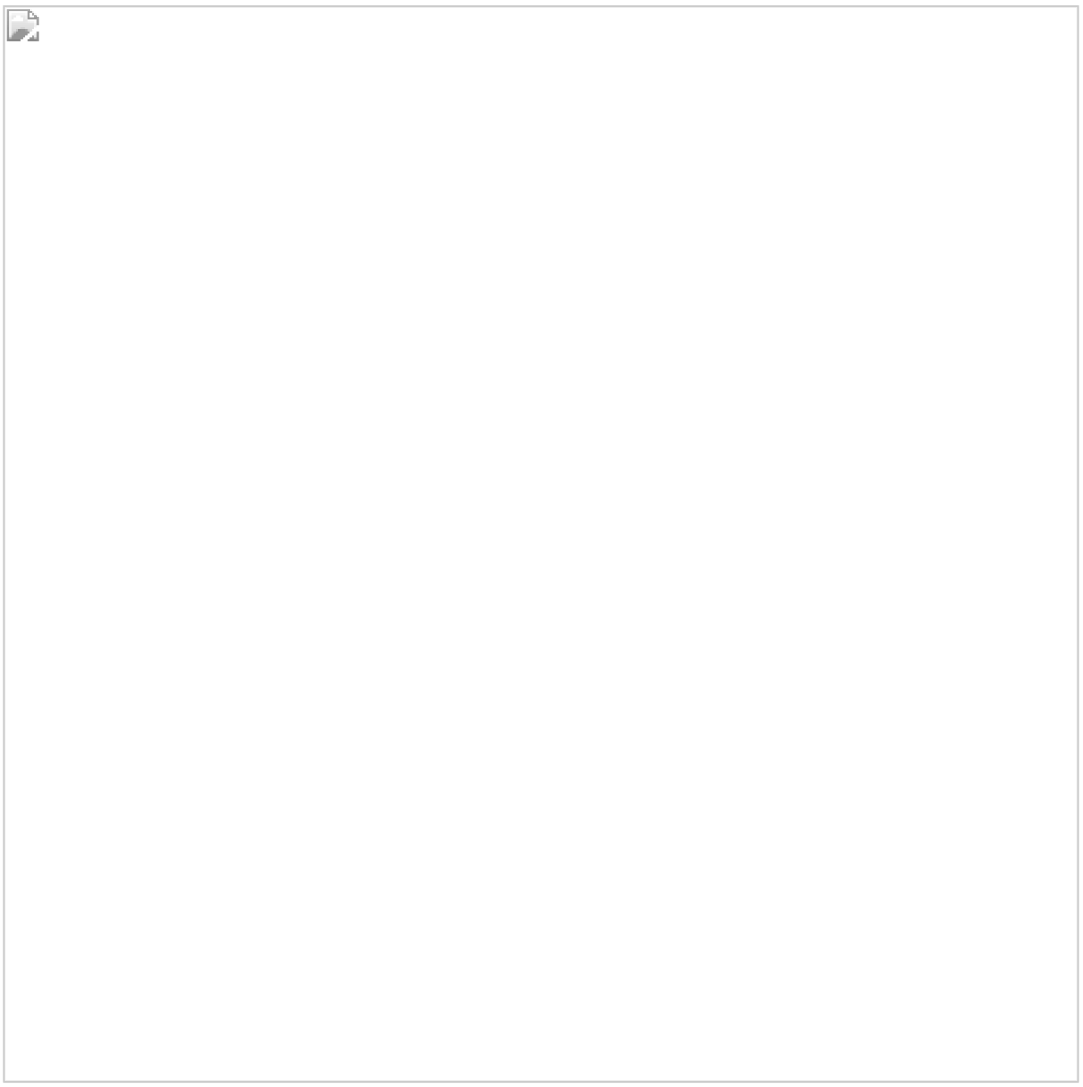
“I would rule it wisely and well, in wisdom and in might,” said Theseus.

She smiled. “Take, then, the sword and the sandals,” she said, “and go to thy father.” He was Ægeus, King of Athens. Theseus was to say to him, “The stone is lifted!”

Theseus asked, “Shall I leave you, O my mother?” She said, “Weep not for me.” She kissed him and went into the temple.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus said he would rule with wisdom and might, which means kindness and strength. Why do you think a good leader needs both?

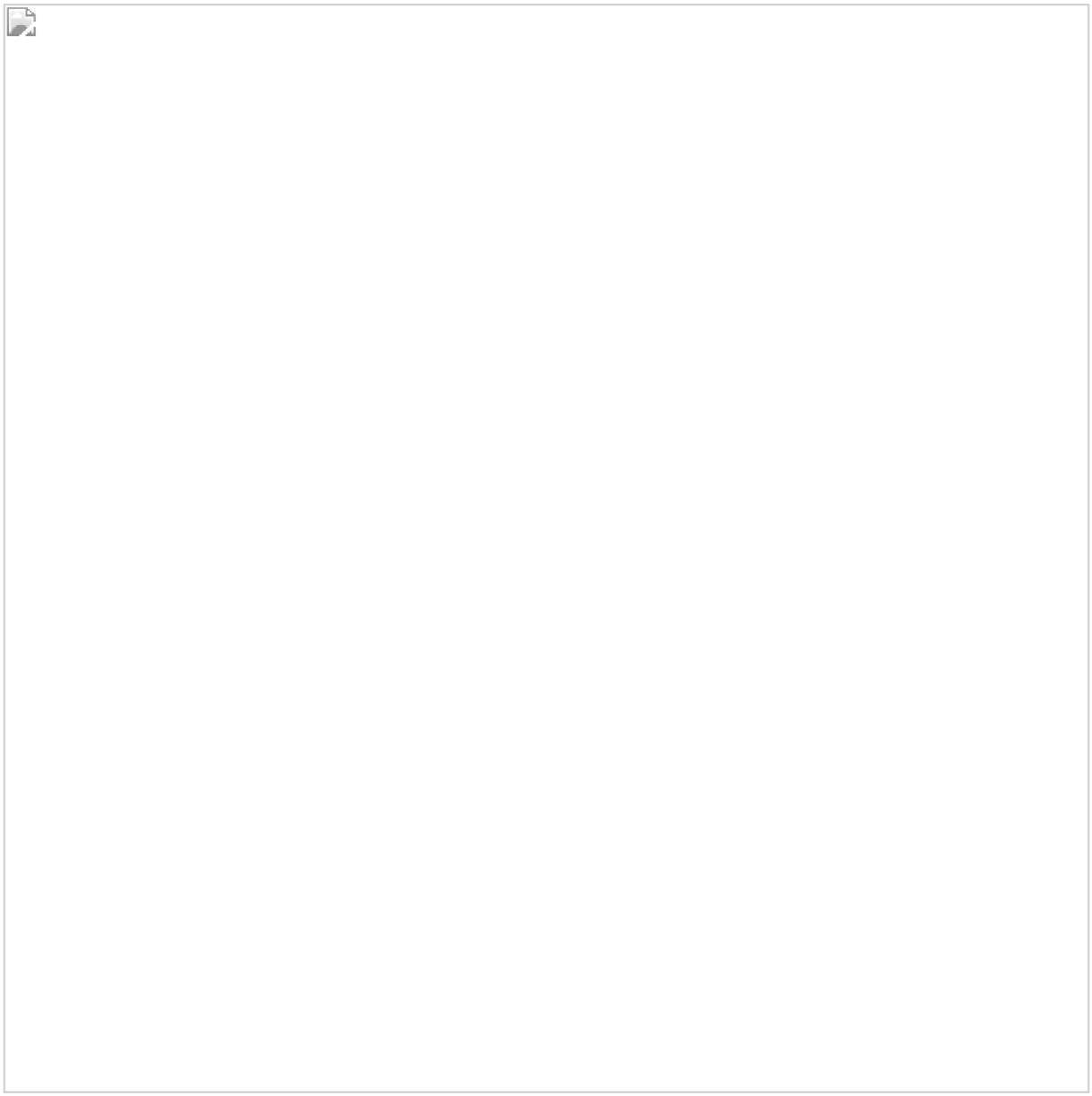


Think about it

1. What was Theseus to say to his father?

- ○ “The stone is lifted!”
- ○ “I am hungry.”
- ○ “I have come home.”

A Road with Trouble



Theseus could have taken a ship straight to Athens. But he chose to go by land, through the mountains.

He was a little afraid. “What if my father have other sons around him, whom he loves?” he thought. “What if he will not receive me?”

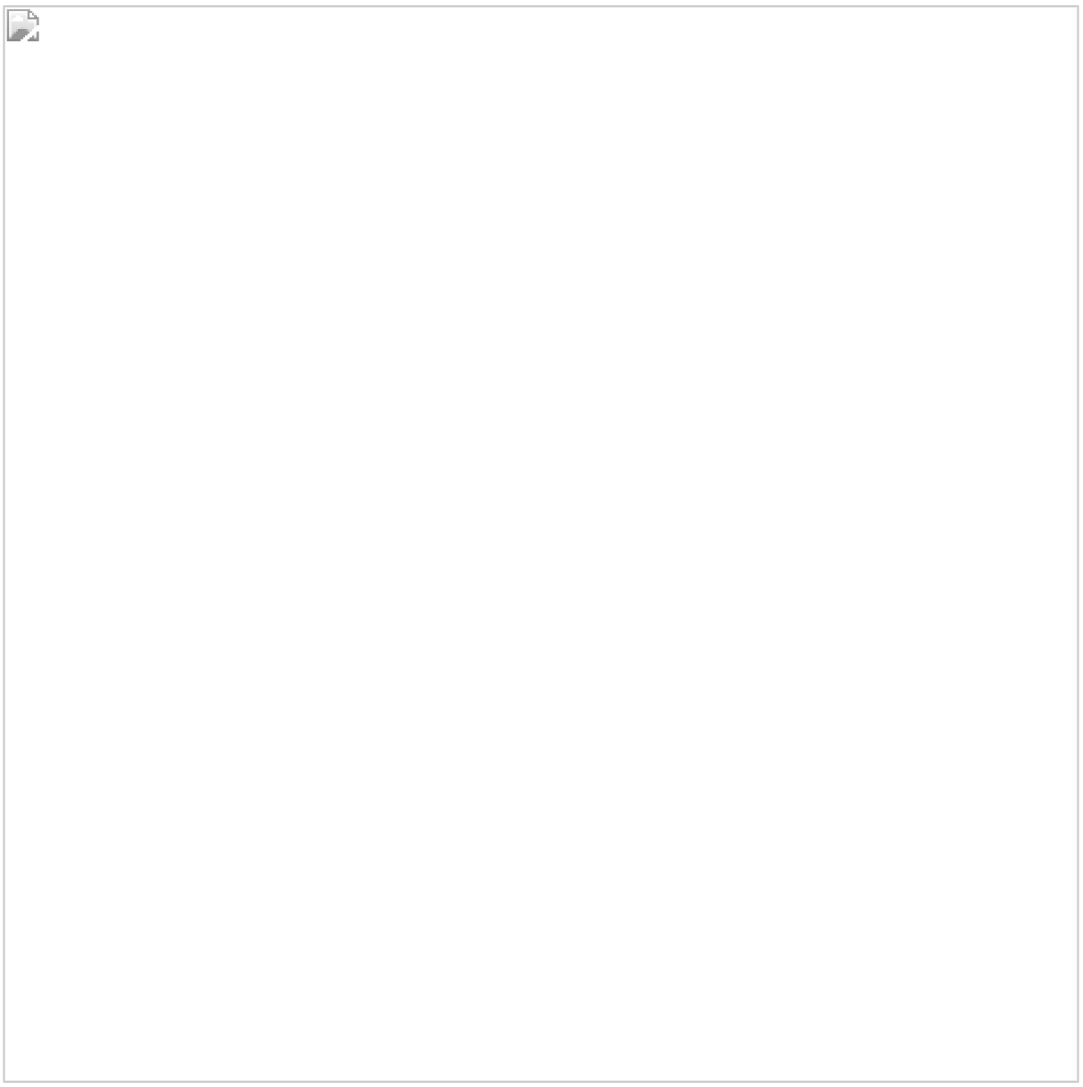
Then he made up his mind. “I will make him love me. I will win honor, and do such deeds that Ægeus shall be proud of me.”

He set off through the glens with his father's sword at his side.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus wanted his father to love him. Is love something we can earn? Why or why not?

A Road with Trouble · another picture

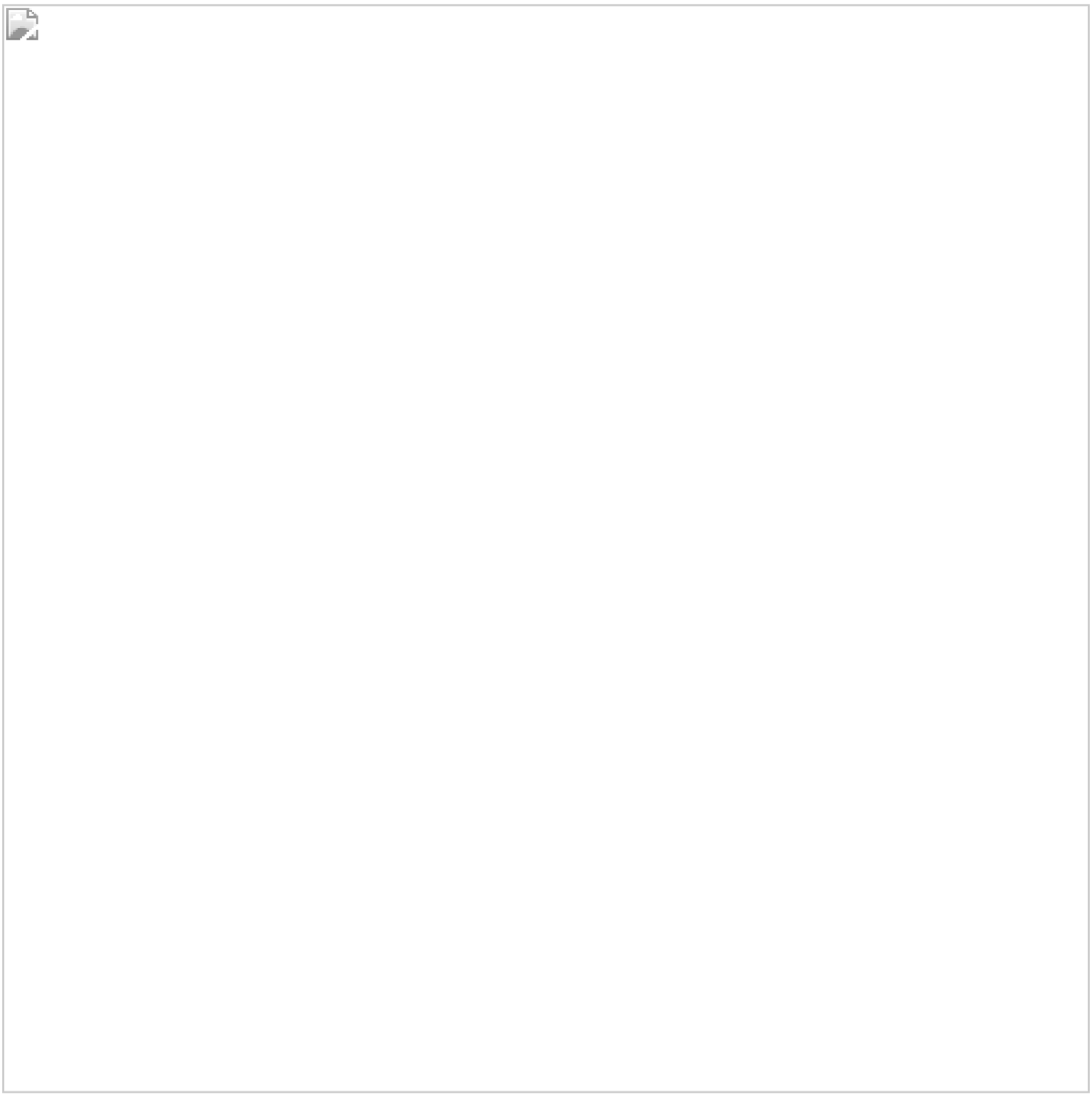


Think about it

1. Which way did Theseus decide to go?

- ○ By ship
- ○ By land, through the mountains
- ○ By flying

The Club-Bearer



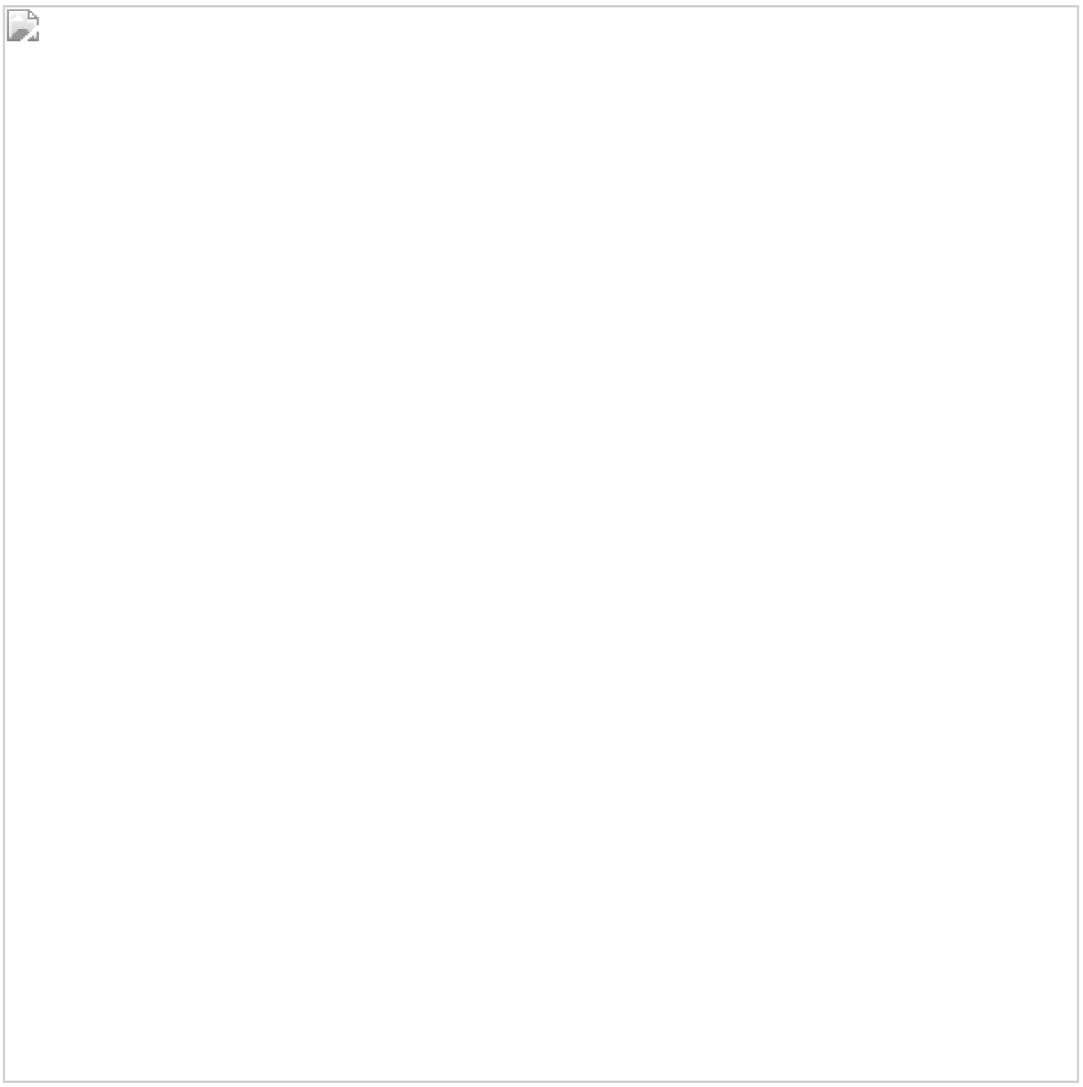
A man in a bear-skin sat on a pile of stones. “Who art thou, fair fly, who hast walked into the spider's web?” he laughed. He was a robber called the Club-bearer, who wanted Theseus's sword, mantle and sandals.

Theseus drew his sword. Three times the club swung at him, and three times Theseus bent like a sapling and sprang back up. Then he grabbed the robber, and the Club-bearer could trouble no one else.

Nearby, shepherds and nymphs had been dancing without music, they were so afraid. “Now we shall feed our flocks in peace,” they called, and the shepherds piped again.

TALK ABOUT IT

The shepherds were too afraid to play music. How do you think they felt when it was safe again?

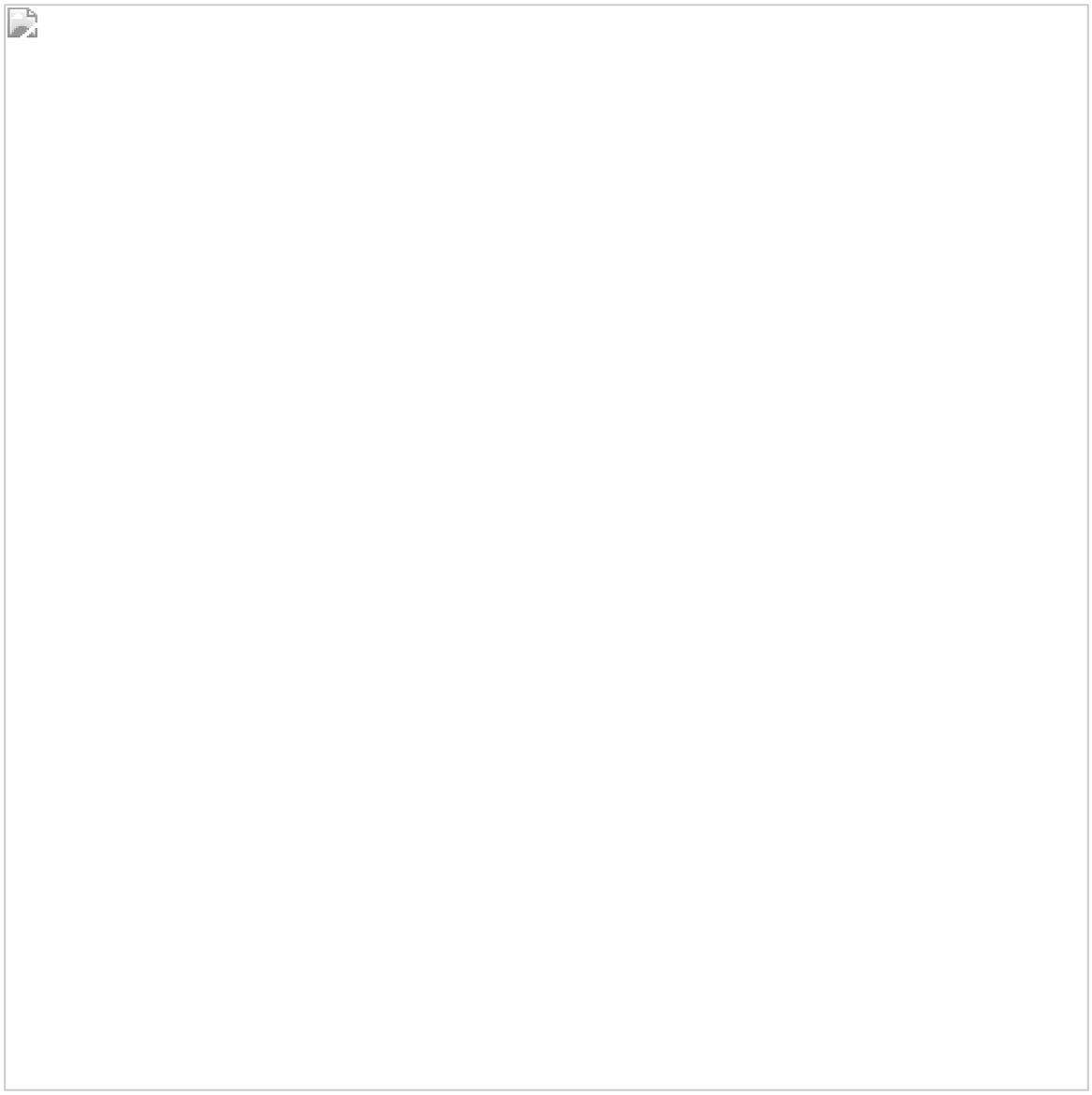


Think about it

1. Why had the shepherds and nymphs stopped playing music?

- ○ They were afraid of the Club-bearer
- ○ They lost their pipes
- ○ They were tired

The Pine-Bender



“You must look warily about you,” the shepherds told him, and they told him of a robber called the Pine-bender, who lay in wait for travelers along the road.

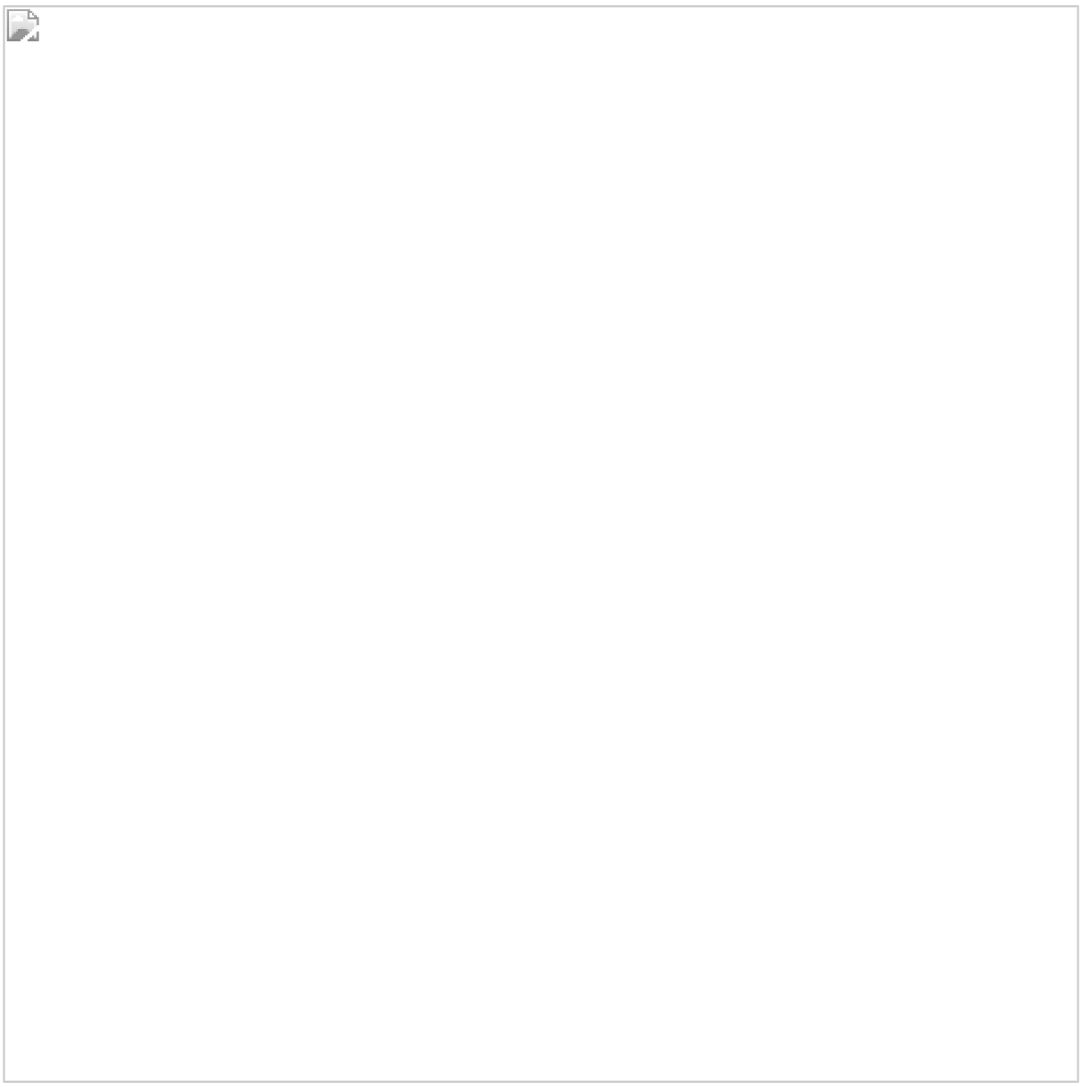
Theseus went on swiftly, for he wanted to meet him. In a pine wood, he found the robber waiting by the road.

They fought until the greenwood rang. Theseus won, and the road was safe again.

So Theseus went on, clearing the land of robbers and monsters as he went, until he saw the plain of Athens in front of him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus was not looking for gold or glory here. Who was he helping?

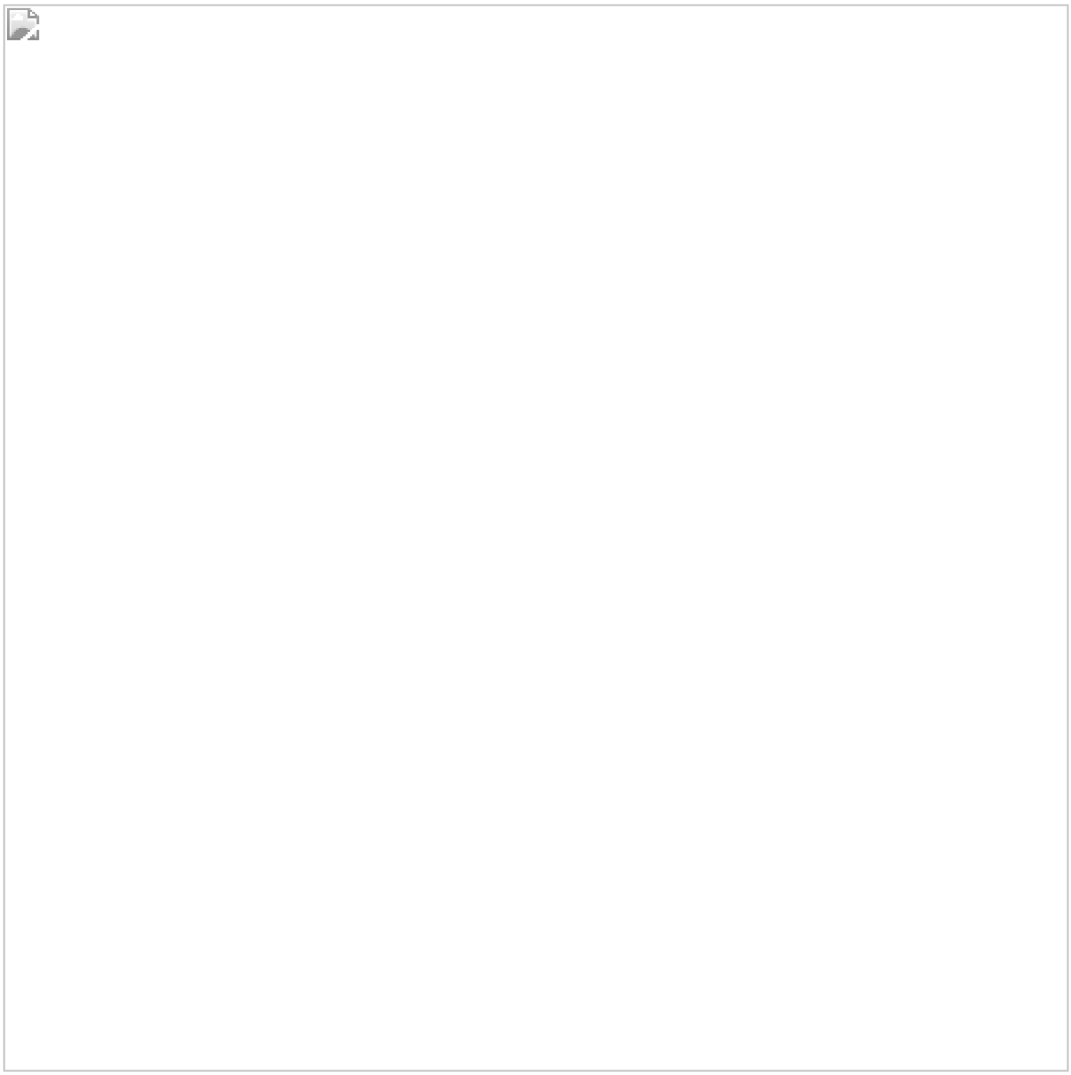


Think about it

1. Who did the shepherds warn Theseus about?

- ○ A dragon
- ○ A storm
- ○ The Pine-bender

Athens



As he walked up through Athens, people ran out and shouted, “Here comes the hero!” They had heard about his deeds.

But Theseus went on sadly and steadily, for his heart longed for his father. He went into the palace hall. His cousins sat at the table, laughing and passing the wine-cup, but King Ægeus was not there.

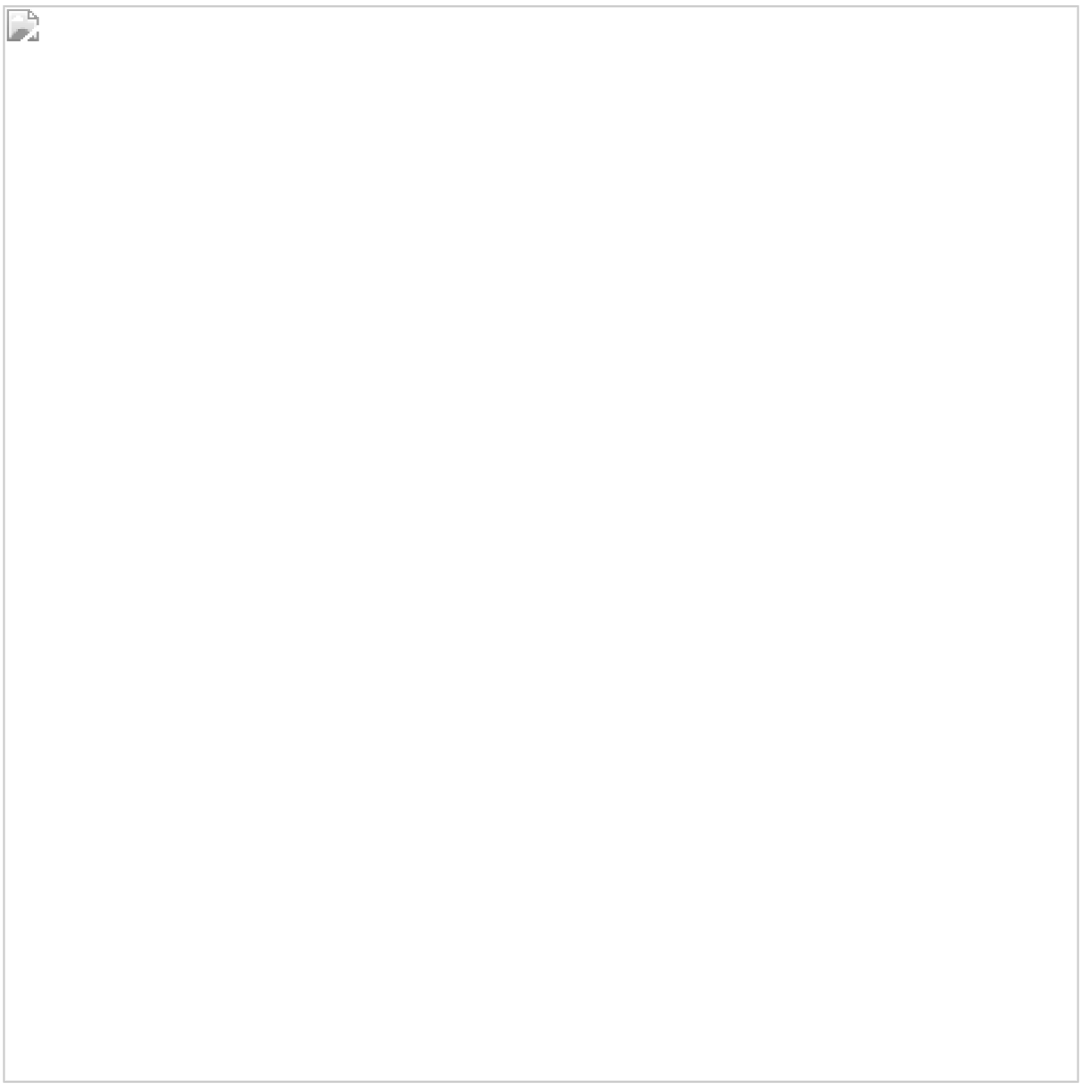
“Go tell King Ægeus, your master, that Theseus is here and asks to be his guest awhile,” he said.

When Ægeus heard the name, he turned pale and then red and rose from his seat, trembling. With him sat Medeia, a dark witch-woman, who watched him like a snake.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus did not say right away who he was. Why do you think he waited?

Athens · another picture

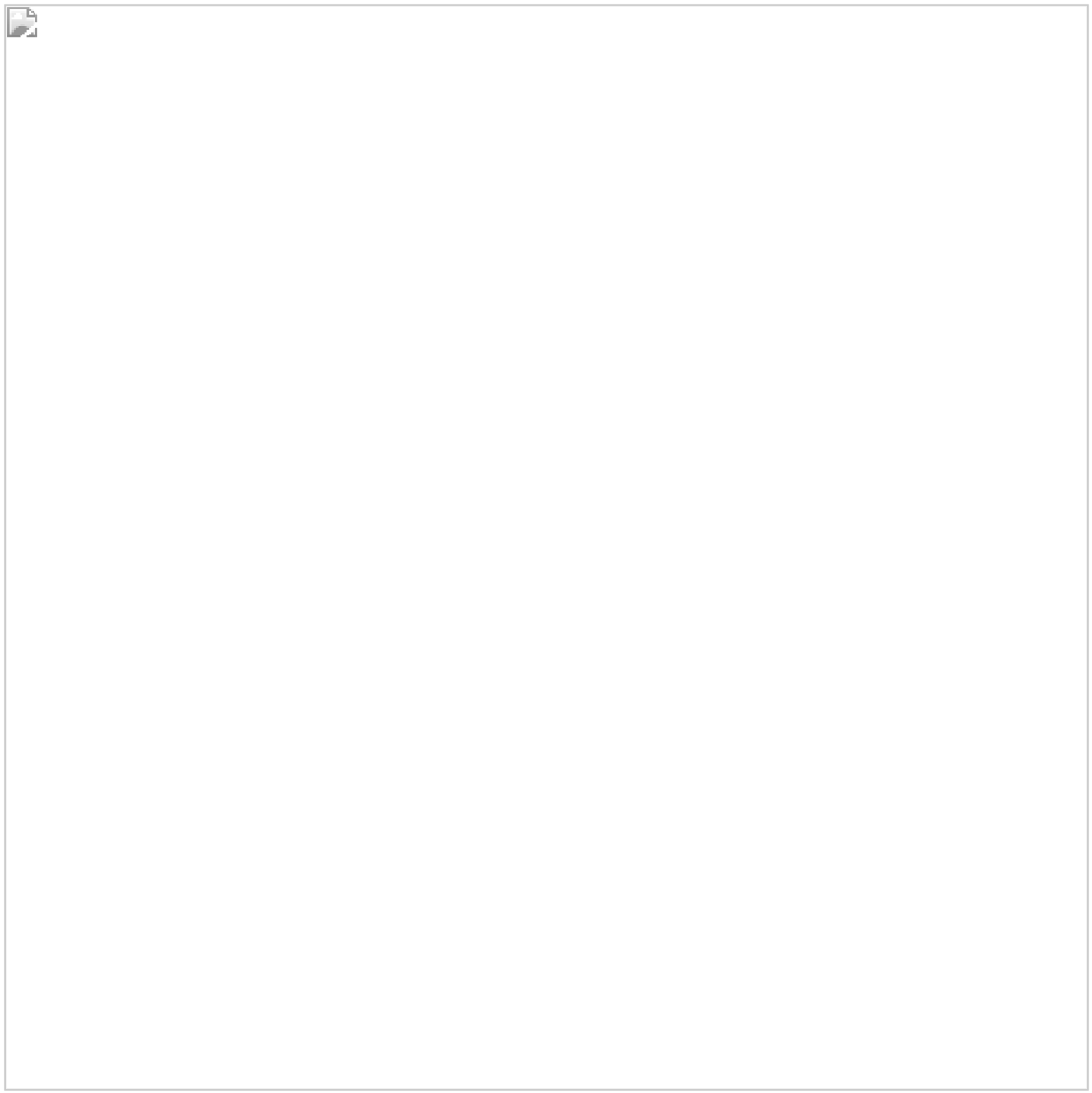


Think about it

1. What did the people shout when Theseus came into Athens?

- ○ “Go away!”
- ○ “Who are you?”
- ○ “Here comes the hero!”

The Cup of Wine



Ægeus came into the hall, looked at Theseus, and loved him.

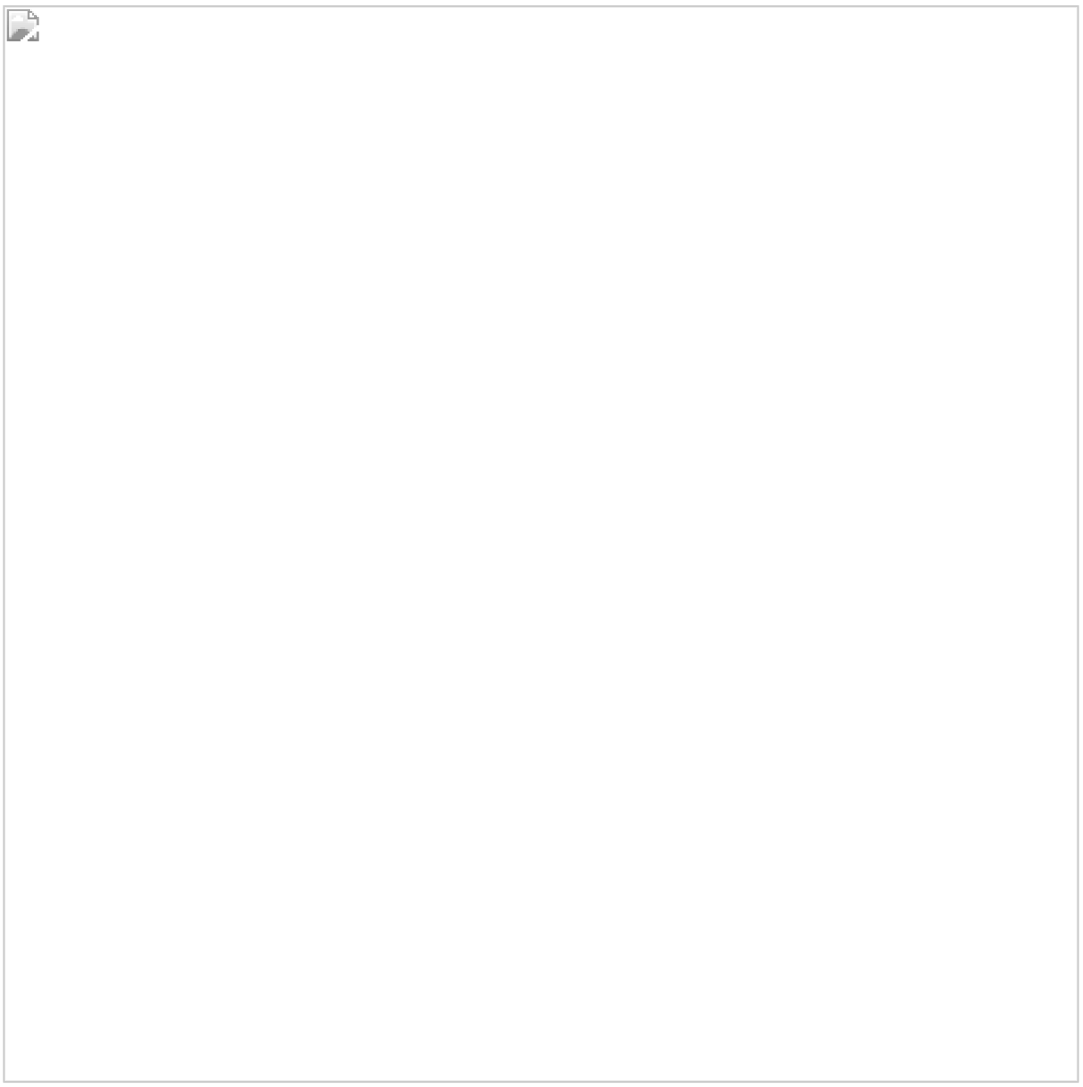
But Medeia the witch did not want a hero in the house. She came in with a golden cup. “Hail to the hero! drink of my charmed cup,” she said sweetly.

Theseus looked into her eyes and shivered. They were dry, like the eyes of a snake. He asked her to drink from the cup first, “that the wine may be sweeter.”

Medeia went pale. “I am ill and dare drink no wine.” She dashed the cup to the ground, for there was poison in it, and fled in her dragon chariot, never to be seen again.

TALK ABOUT IT

How did Theseus know to be careful? What helps you notice when something is not right?

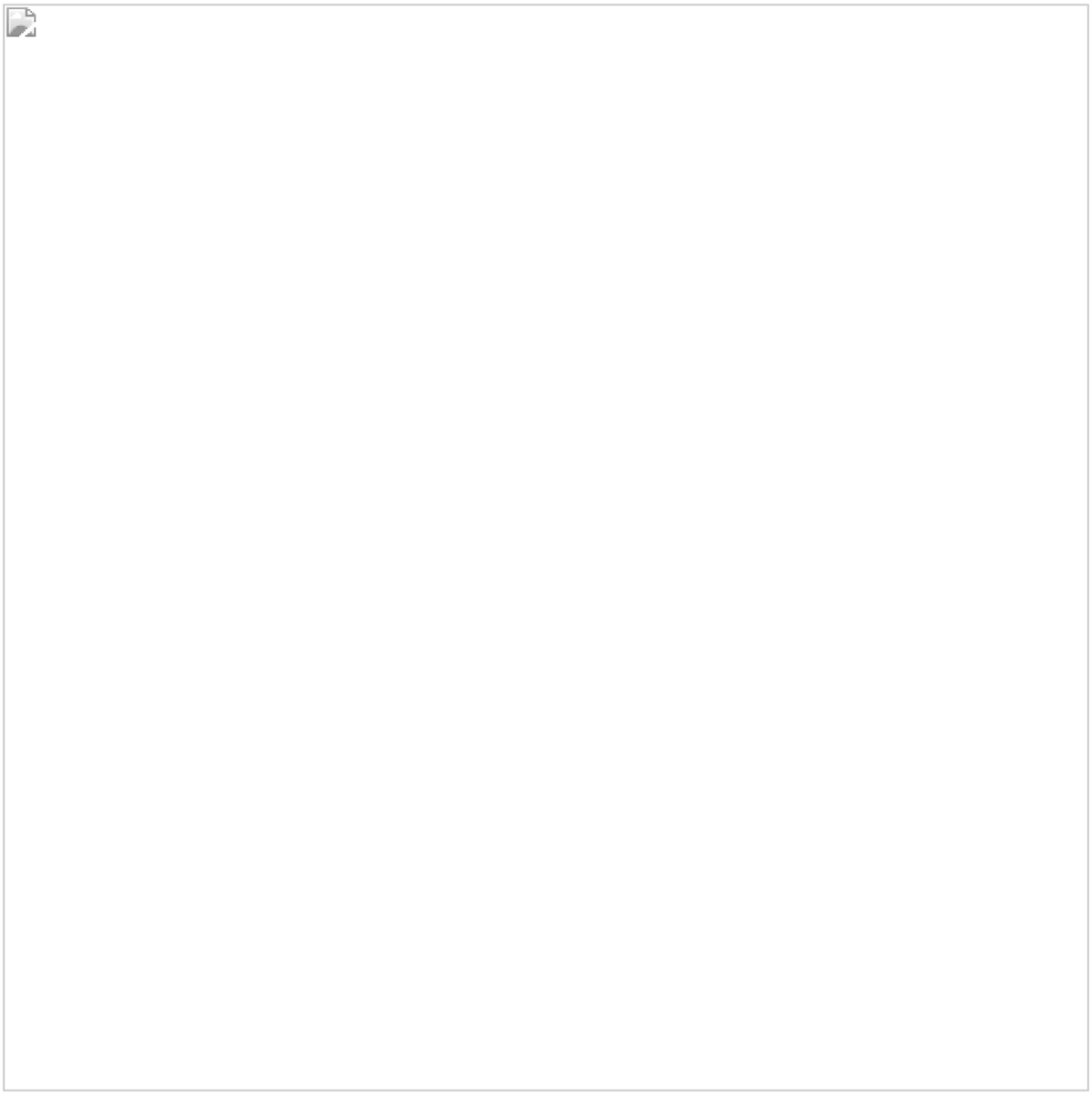


Think about it

1. What did Theseus ask Medeia to do with the cup?

- ○ Pour it on the floor
- ○ Drink from it first
- ○ Give it to the king

Behold My Son



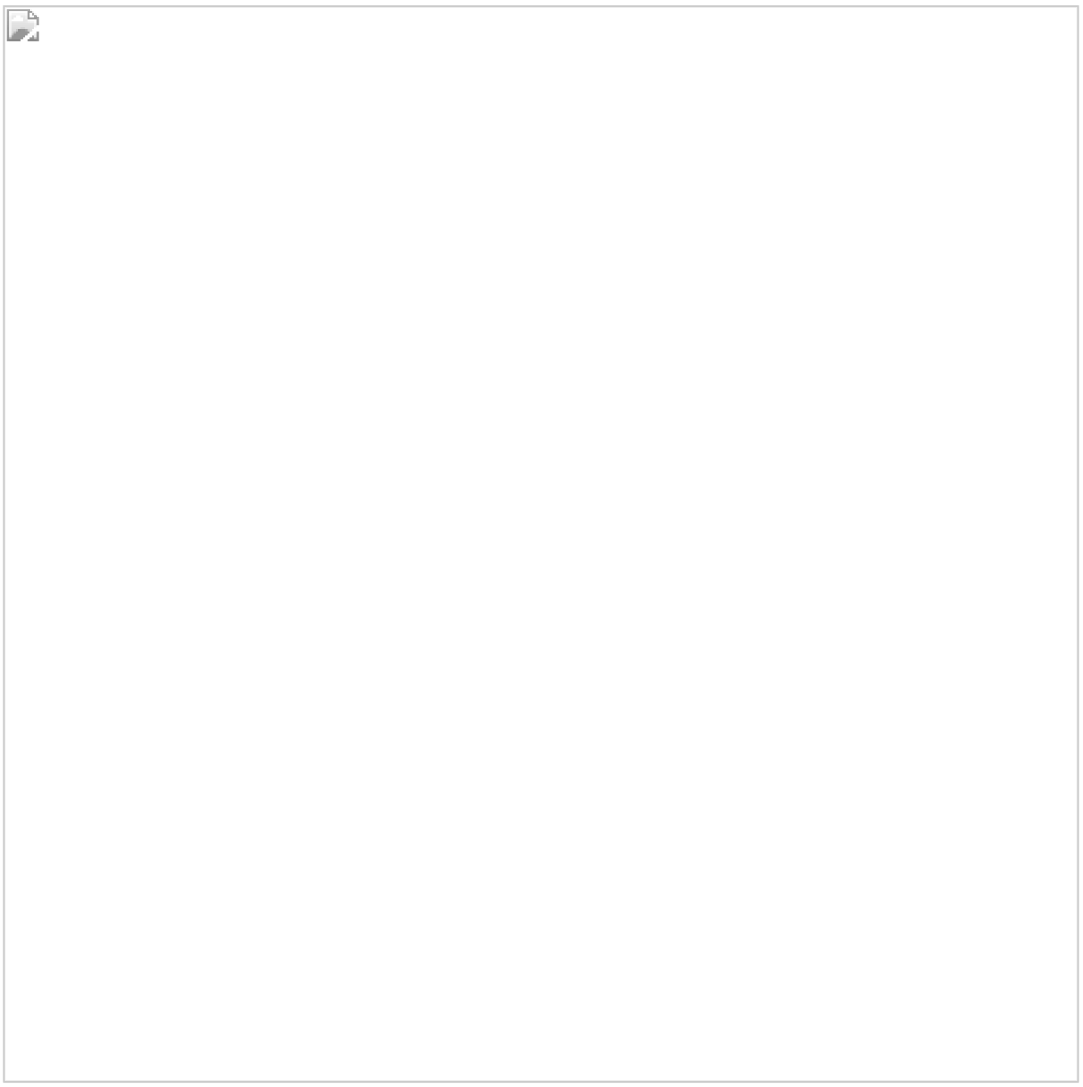
Then Theseus came close to Ægeus. He drew the sword and the sandals out of his cloak, and said the words his mother had told him: “The stone is lifted.”

Ægeus stepped back and looked at the young man until his eyes grew dim. Then he threw himself on his neck and wept, and Theseus wept too, until they had no strength left to weep.

Ægeus turned to all the people and cried, “Behold my son!” Before nightfall the whole town came up with dances and songs, because the King had found an heir.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus had been afraid his father would not want him. What do you think his father's words meant to him?

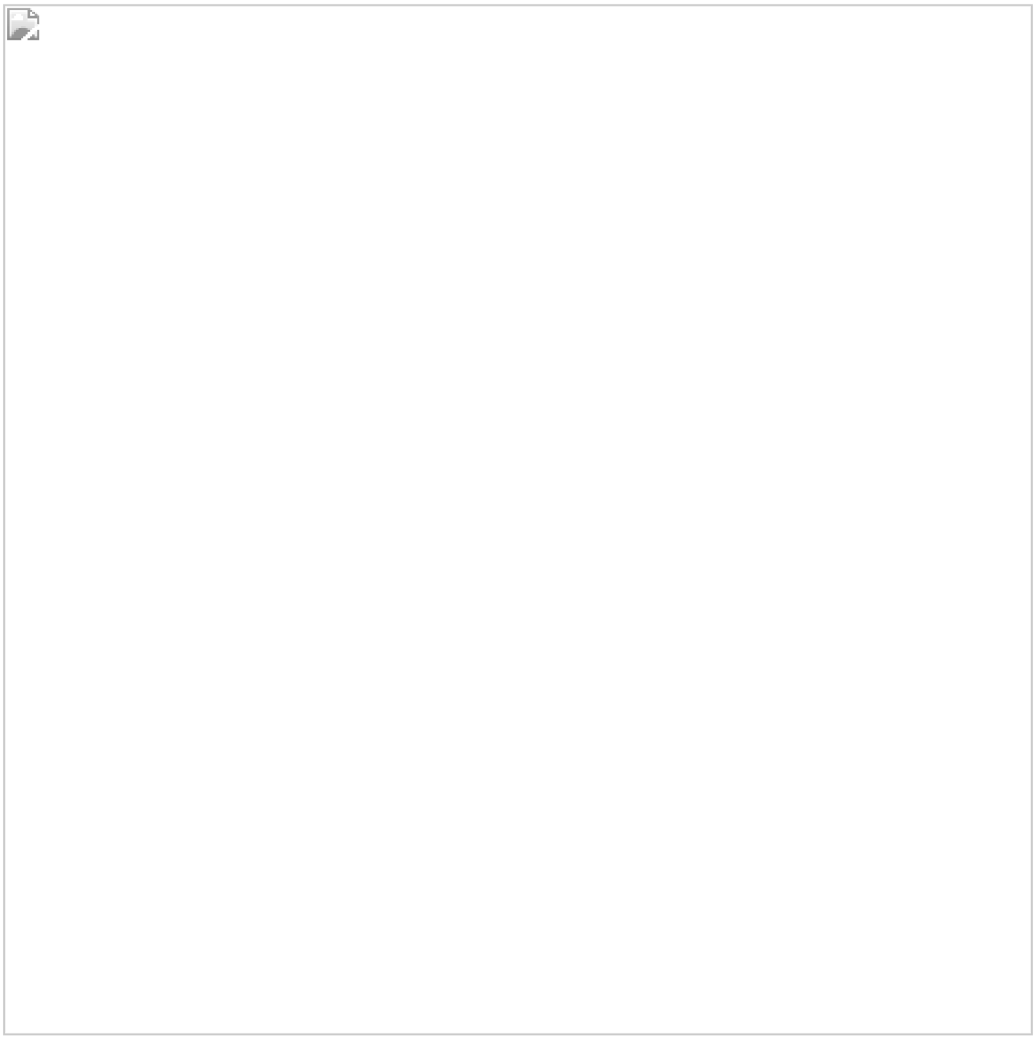


Think about it

1. What did Ægeus say to the people?

- ○ “Behold my son!”
- ○ “Go home!”
- ○ “Who is this?”

The Black-Sailed Ship



As spring came near, the people of Athens grew sad and silent.

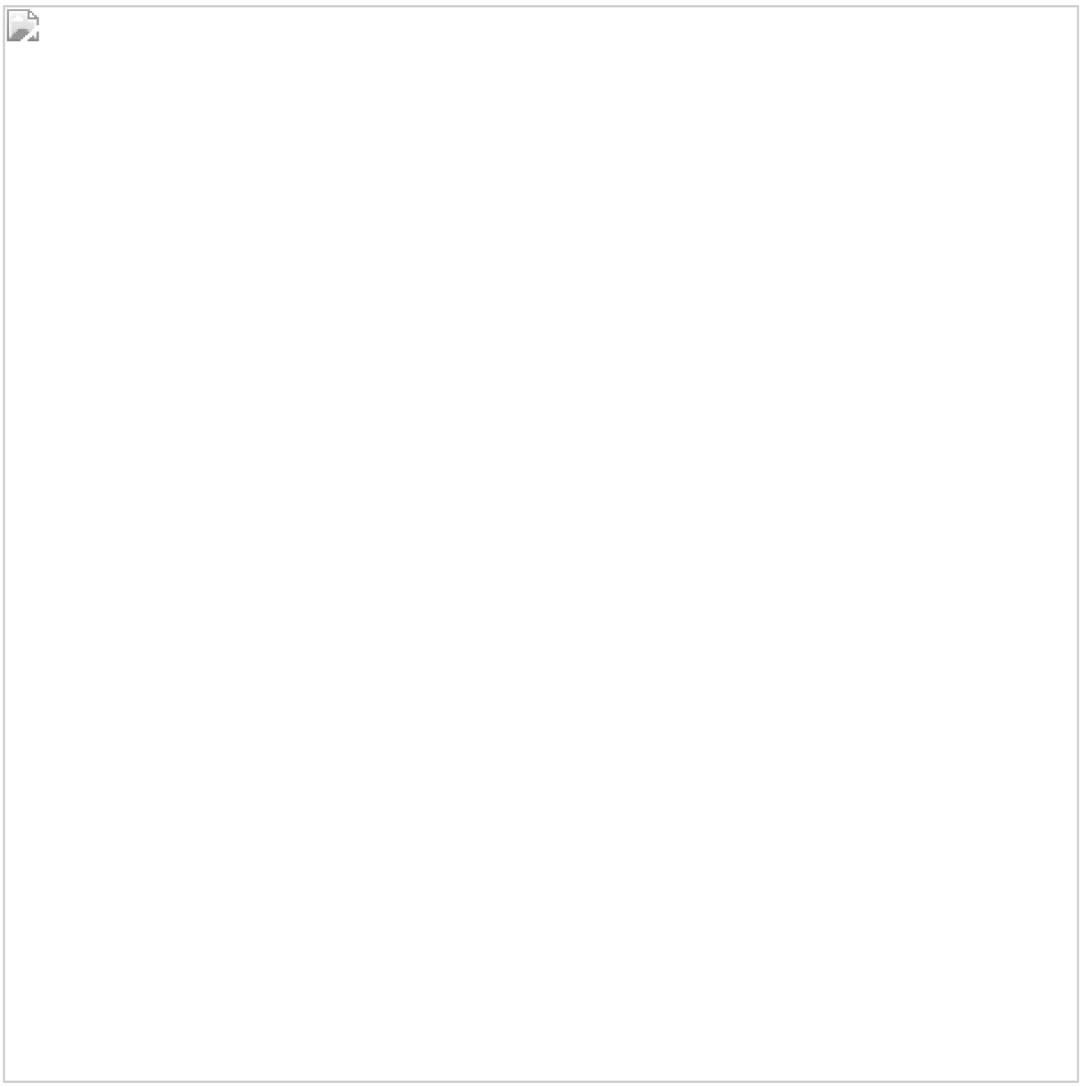
Every year, Athens had to send King Minos seven young men and seven maidens in a black-sailed ship, to a labyrinth where a monster called the Minotaur lived. They never came home.

Ægeus begged him not to go. But when a herald was drawing names, Theseus stood up. “Here is one who needs no lot,” he said. “I myself will be one of the seven.”

Ægeus let him go, weeping. “Take down the black sail,” he said, “and hoist instead a white sail, that I may know afar off that you are safe.” Theseus promised.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus did not wait to be picked. He chose to go for the others. What might it cost to do that?



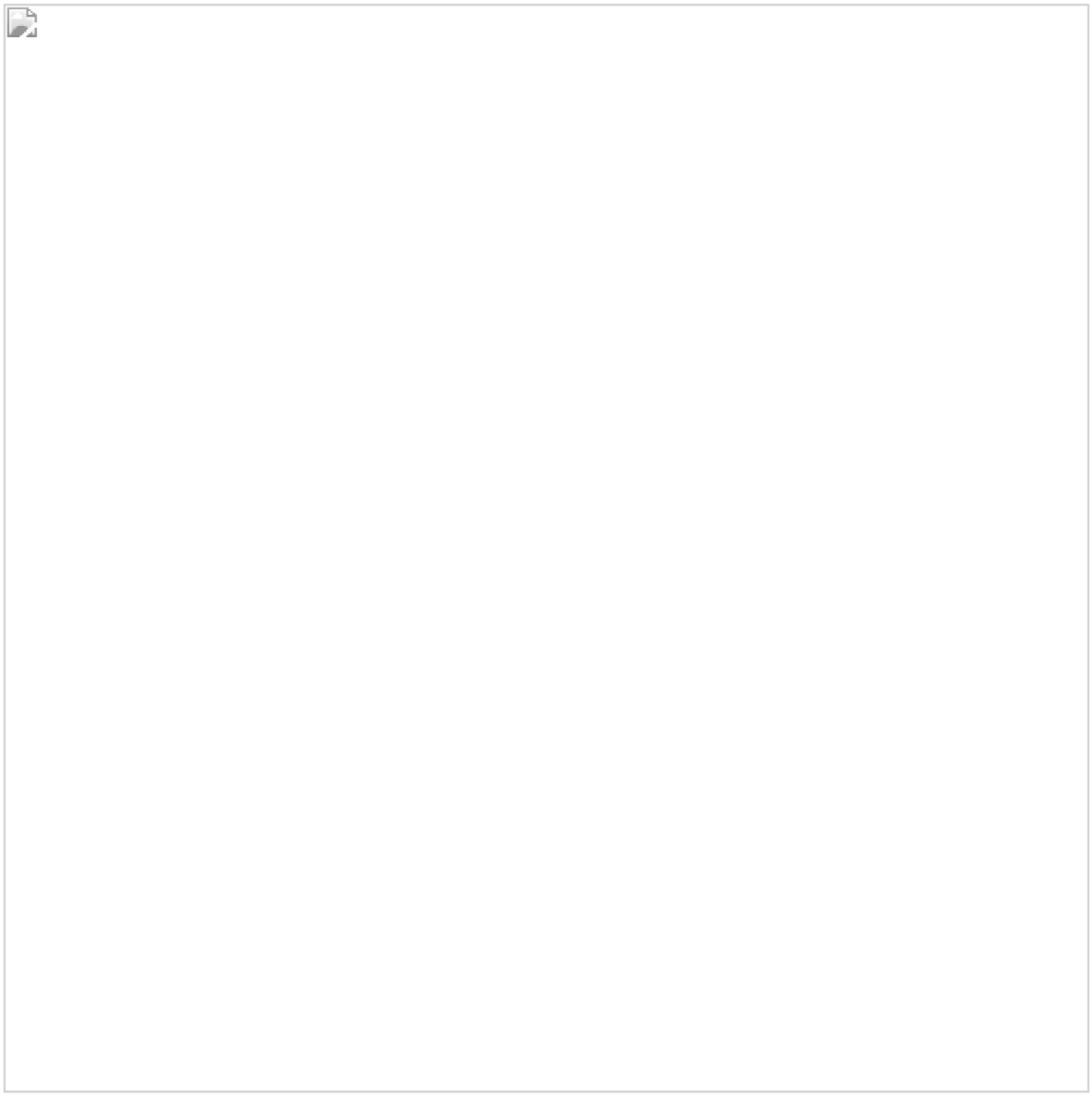
Think about it

1. What sail did Theseus promise to raise if he came home safe?

- ○ A black sail
- ○ A white sail
- ○ A red sail

2. Theseus whispered to the others, "Have hope." When is it hard to have hope? What helps?

Ariadne's Thread



In Crete, Theseus told King Minos he had come to end the yearly tribute. “Go back in peace, my son,” said Minos. But Theseus had sworn not to go back till he had seen the monster face to face.

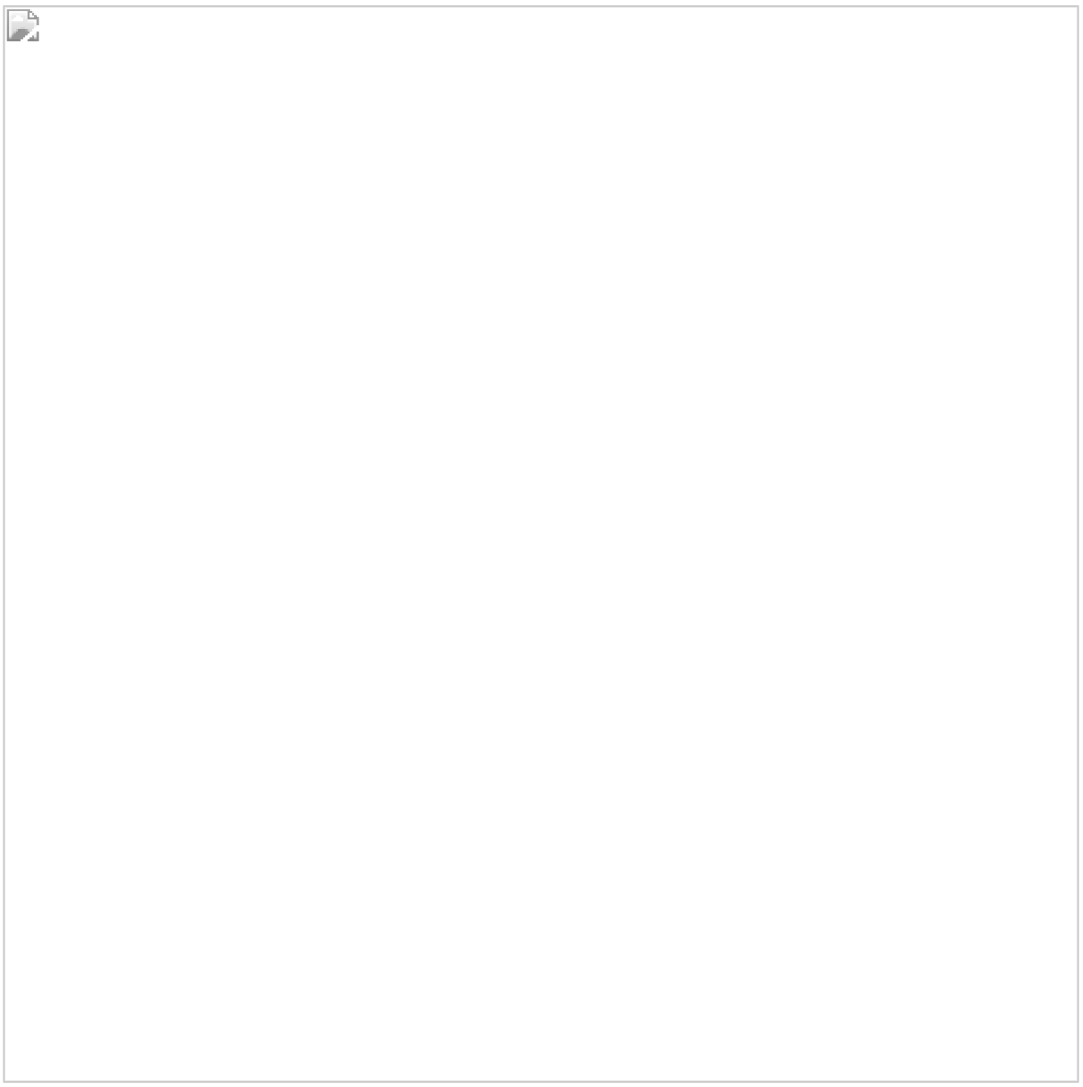
Minos's daughter, Ariadne, saw how brave he was. By night she came to the prison. “Flee down to your ship at once,” she said. But Theseus would not leave.

“I can help you, weak as I am,” said Ariadne. She gave him a sword, and a ball of thread to find his way out. “Only promise me that if you escape you will take me home with you.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Ariadne helped even though it could get her in trouble. Why do you think she did?

Ariadne's Thread · another picture

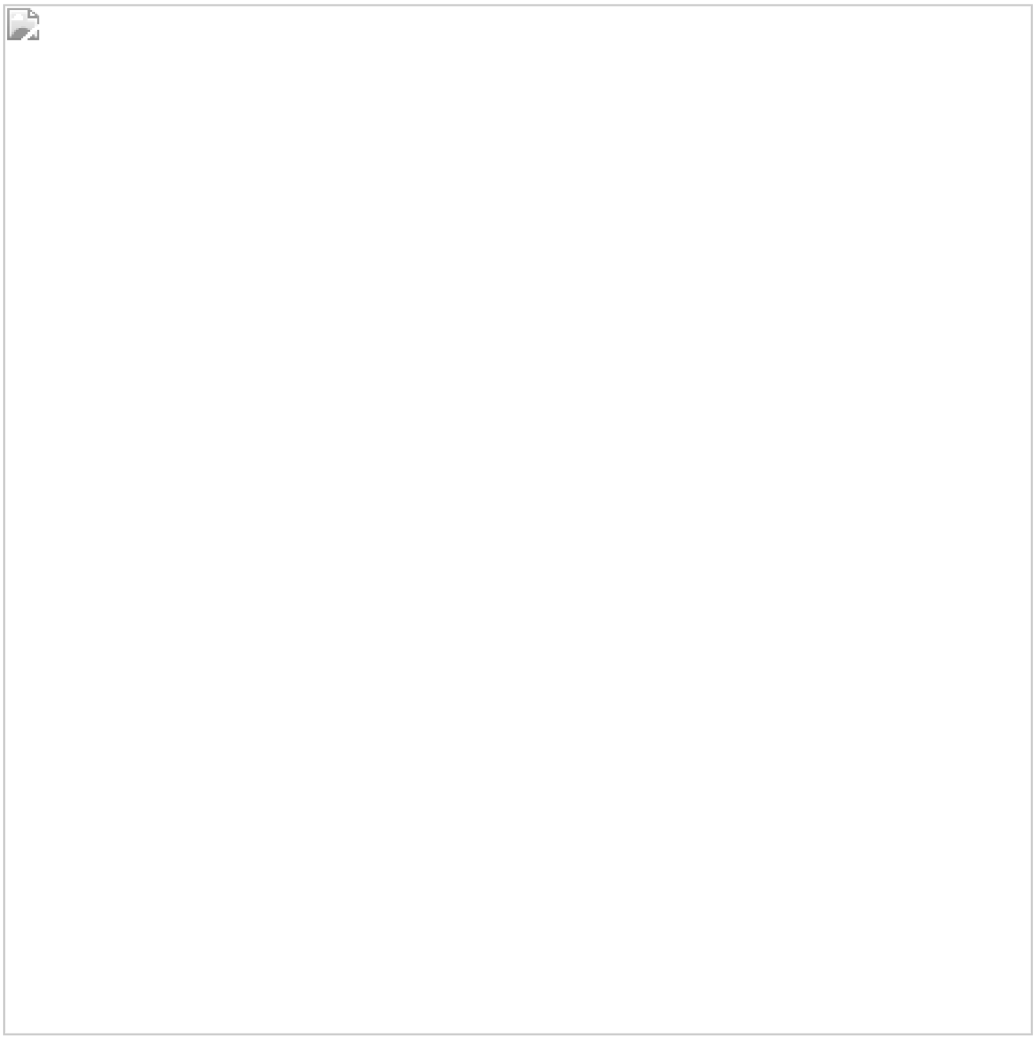


Think about it

1. What did Ariadne give Theseus to help him find his way out?

- ○ A map
- ○ A lamp
- ○ A ball of thread

Into the Labyrinth



The guards led Theseus to the labyrinth. He tied the thread to a stone and unrolled it as he went, turning left and right and up and down, until his head was dizzy.

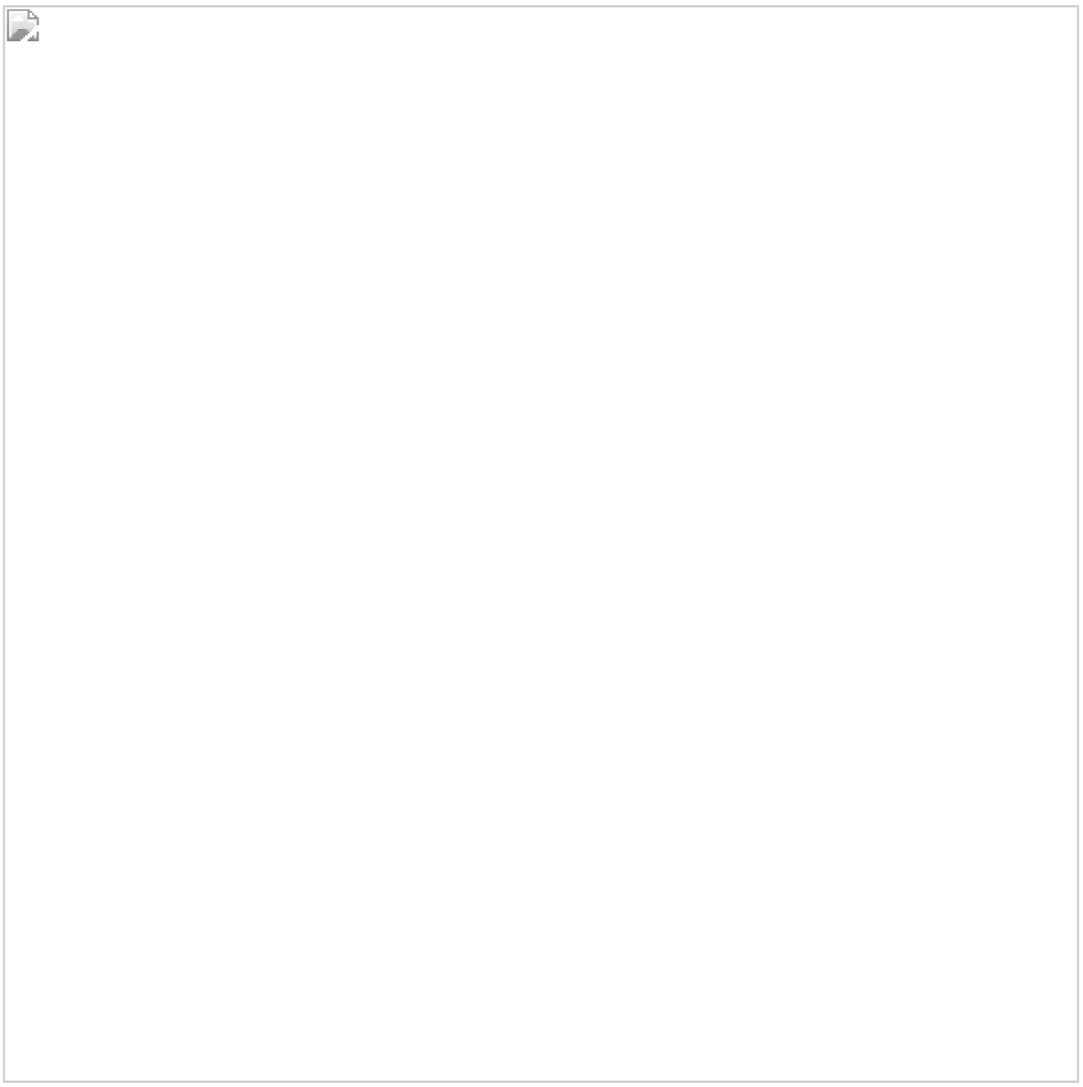
In a narrow place between black cliffs, he met the Minotaur, with a man's body and a bull's head. It roared and rushed at him. Theseus stepped aside, and in the end he won.

Weary and limping, he followed the thread back, and there at the mouth of the labyrinth stood Ariadne. “It is done,” he whispered.

Ariadne set the young people free, and they slipped away in their ship in the dark.

TALK ABOUT IT

The thread was a small thing, but it saved them. What small thing has helped you find your way?

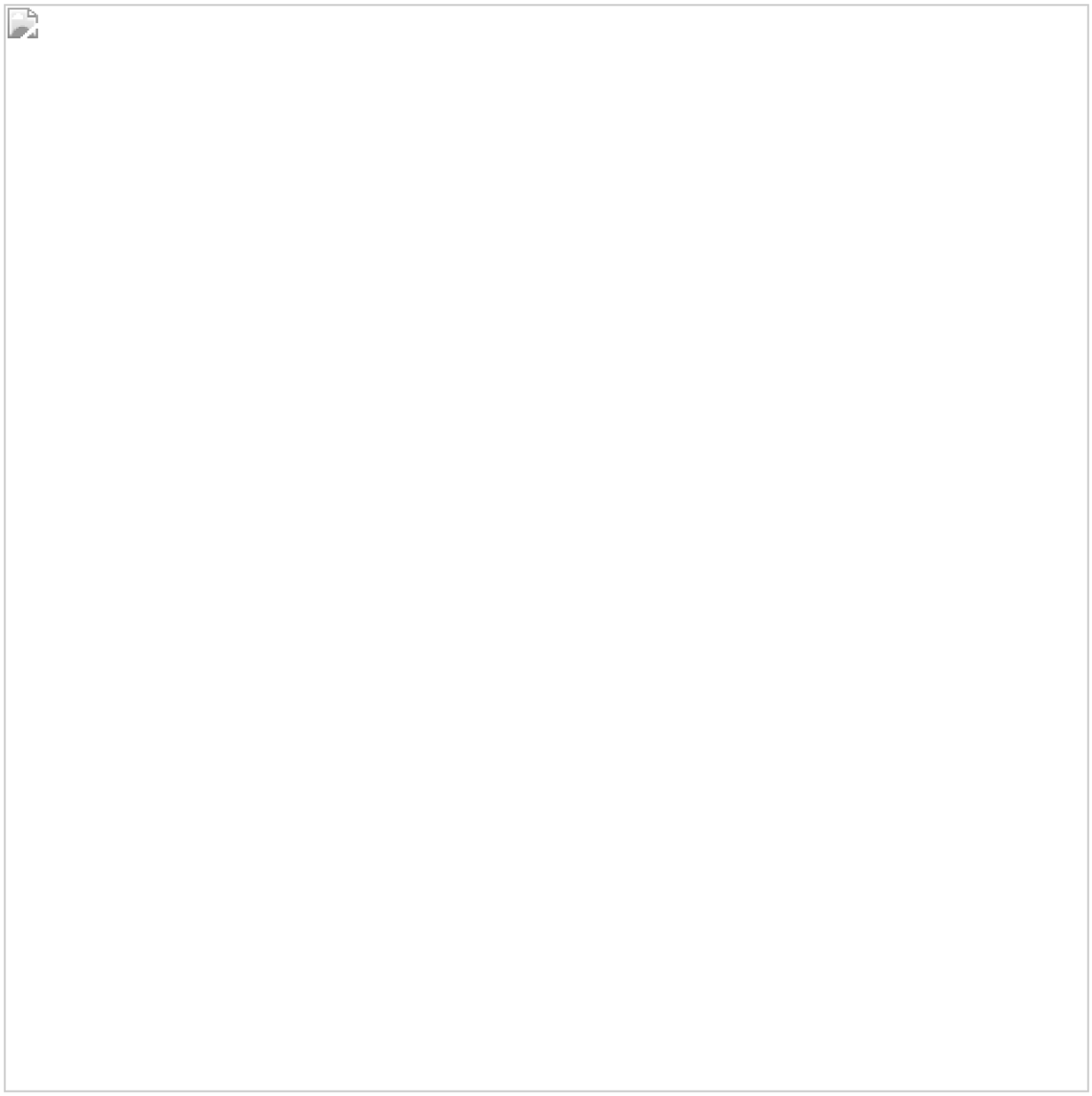


Think about it

1. How did Theseus find his way out of the labyrinth?

- ○ He followed the thread
- ○ He followed the Minotaur
- ○ He guessed

The Black Sail



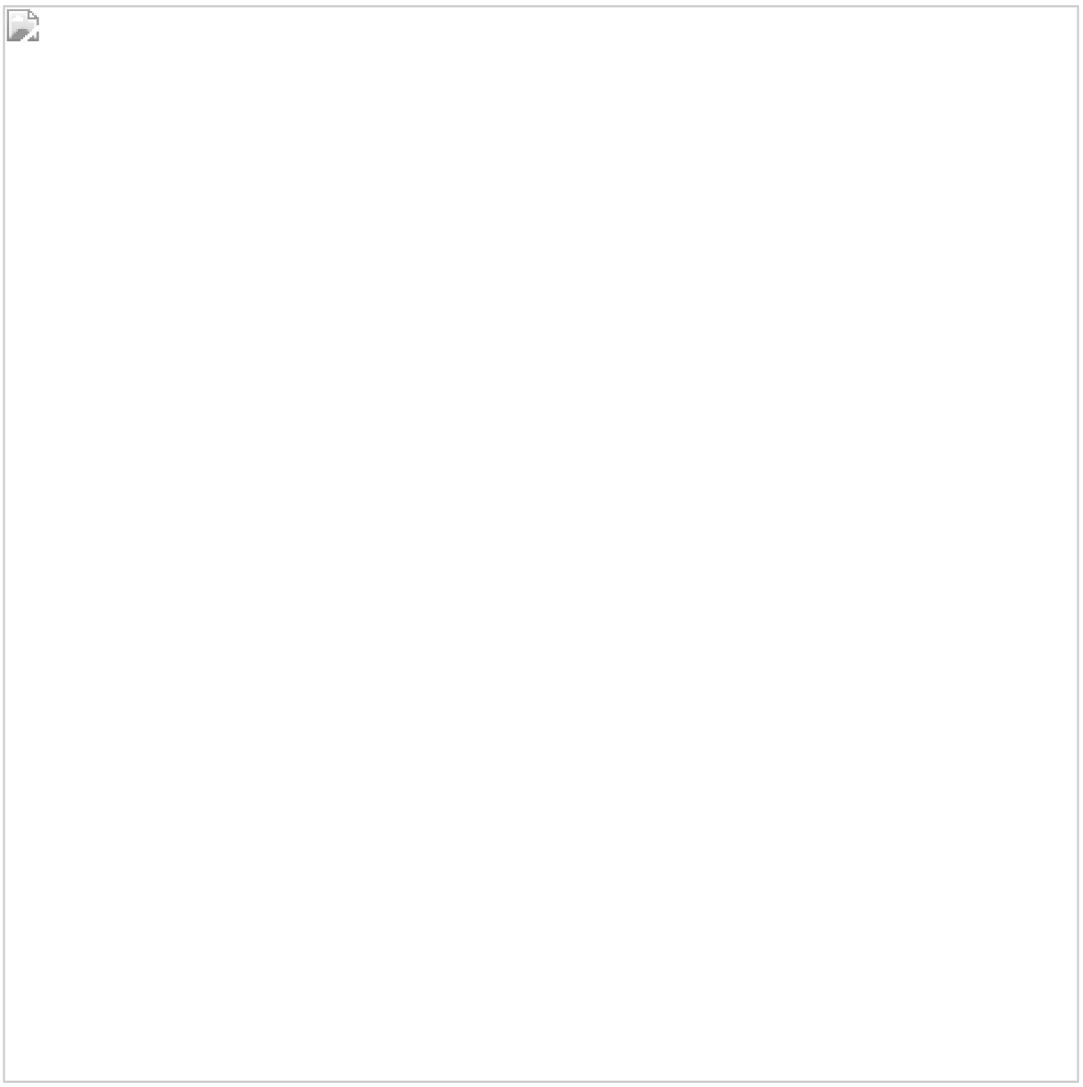
Ariadne became Theseus's wife, but she never came to Athens. Some say a god found her sleeping on the shore and took her up into the sky. In his haste or his grief, Theseus forgot to put up the white sail.

Old Ægeus watched the sea from the cliffs. When he saw the black sail, he gave up Theseus for dead. In his great grief the old king was lost to the sea, which is called the Ægean to this day.

Theseus became King of Athens. He ruled it well, and the people honored him as the father of their freedom and their laws.

TALK ABOUT IT

Theseus forgot the white sail, and it brought great sorrow, though he never meant to hurt his father. What do you think he would want to say to him?



Think about it

1. What sail did Theseus forget to raise?

- ○ The black sail
- ○ The white sail
- ○ The red sail

2. How do you think the people of Athens felt about their king?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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