

Troy

A long time ago, there was an ancient city-state on the coast of Turkey, across the sea from Sparta. This city-state was named Troy. At one time, Troy and the other Greek city-states were pretty good friends. But times had changed.

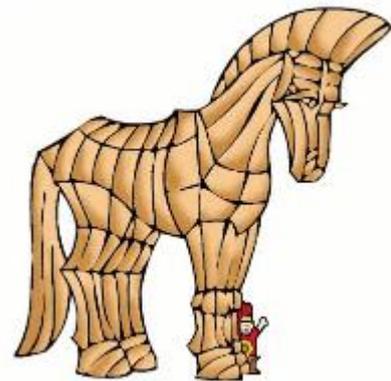
The city of Troy was protected by a high wall built around the city. Some parts of the wall were 20 feet high! There were gates in the wall to let people in and out but it provided great defence for the people of Troy. It gave the Trojan warriors a relatively safe place to stand, while they rained arrows down on the people below, who were trying to break into the city.

The Greek warriors had been trying to breach the wall around Troy for about ten years. The Greeks could not find a way in, and the Trojans did not seem able to drive the Greeks away.

Odysseus, a Greek general, had an idea. His plan was to build a horse, a beautiful and huge wooden horse, and leave it outside the gate. Then, the entire Greek army would pretend to leave, as if they had finally admitted defeat. But the horse would be hollow. Thirty men would be hiding inside. That's what they did.

As the Greek warriors sailed away, the people of Troy rushed outside, cheering. They found the horse. Fortunately, they did not try to burn the horse. They dragged the horse inside the city gates to keep it on display, which is just what the Greek general thought they would do - gloat.

That night, while the Trojan people were sleeping, the men hiding inside the wooden horse climbed out and opened the gates. The waiting Greek army entered Troy. That was the end of Troy



The Fox and the Goat

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a fox fell down a well. He was stuck there for a quite a while. Finally, a goat wandered by.

"What are you doing?" asked the goat curiously.

"Stay away," snarled the fox. "This is *my* water."

"That's not fair," snapped the goat. "Why should you get all the water?" Before the fox could say another word, the goat jumped in the well.

Quick as a flash, the fox leaped on the goat's back and out of the well. He ran happily off, leaving the goat stuck in the well.

The Hare and the Tortoise

The Hare was once boasting of his speed before the other animals. "I have never yet been beaten," said he, "when I put forth my full speed. I challenge any one here to race with me."

The Tortoise said quietly, "I accept your challenge. We shall run from here to the pond and the fox out yonder shall be the judge."

"That is a good joke," said the Hare; "I could dance round you all the way."

"Keep your boasting till you've beaten," answered the Tortoise. "Shall we race?"

So a course was fixed and a start was made.

The hare agreed and away they started together. True to his boasting the hare was out of sight in a moment.

The tortoise jogged along with a slow, steady pace, straight towards end of the course. Full of sport, the hare first outran the tortoise, then intentionally fell behind chuckling at the tortoise all the while.

Having come nearly to the goal, the hare began to nibble at the young plants. After a while, the day being warm, he lay down for a nap, saying: "The tortoise is behind me now. If he should go by, I can easily enough catch up."

When the hare awoke, the tortoise was not in sight. Running as fast as he could, the hare found the fox congratulating the tortoise at the finish line.



Once upon a time, a long time ago, there lived a king named Minos. King Minos lived on a lovely island called Crete. King Minos had everything a king could possibly want. Now and then, King Minos sent his navy to the tiny village of Athens, across the sea to attack.

The king of Athens did not know what to do. He was desperate. He figured if he had some time, he could build a strong navy, strong enough to send King Minos packing the next time he attacked Athens. The king of Athens offered King Minos a deal. If he would not attack Athens for 9 years, Athens would send 7 boys and 7 girls to the island of Crete to be eaten by the awful monster that King Minos kept as a pet, the dreaded minotaur.

The minotaur lived in the heart of a maze on the island of Crete. King Minos loved that old monster. King Minos only attacked Athens when he was bored. He really didn't want anything. This way, his beloved monster could look forward to a special treat every 9 years or so. King Minos took the deal.

Although Athens did build a navy, King Minos did not attack as the king of Athens had expected. In fact, King Minos kept his word. And now it was time for Athens to keep theirs. Everyone in Athens was crying.

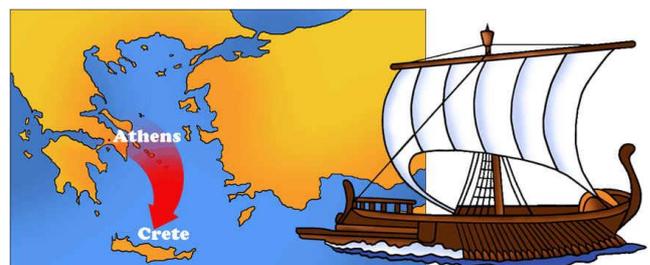
Prince Theseus of Athens knew the importance of keeping your word. He knew that a deal was a deal. But, he was also quite sure that it was wrong to send small children to be eaten by a monster. Prince Theseus told his father (the king) that he was going to Crete as the seventh son of Athens. He was going to kill the Minotaur and end the terror.



"The Minotaur is a terrible monster! What makes you think you can kill it?" cried his father.

"I'll find a way," Theseus replied gently. "The gods will help me."

His father begged him not to go. But the prince took his place as the seventh Athenian boy. Along with six other Athenian boys and seven Athenian girls, Prince Theseus sailed towards Crete.



When the prince and the children arrived on the island of Crete, King Minos and his daughter, the Princess Ariadne, came out to greet them. The Princess Ariadne did not say anything. But her eyes narrowed thoughtfully. Late that night, she wrote Prince Theseus a note and slipped it under his bedroom door.

Dear Theseus (Ariadne wrote)

I am a beautiful princess as you probably noticed the minute you saw me. I am also a very bored princess. Without my help, the Minotaur will surely gobble you up. I know a trick or two that will save your life. If I help you kill the monster, you must promise to take me away from this tiny island so that others can admire my beauty. If interested in this deal, meet me by the gate to the Labyrinth in one hour.

*Yours very truly,
Princess Ariadne (King Minos' daughter)*

Prince Theseus slipped out of the palace and waited patiently by the gate. Princess Ariadne finally showed up. In her hands, she carried a sword and a ball of string.

Ariadne gave the sword and the ball of string to Prince Theseus. "Hide these inside the entrance to the maze. Tomorrow, when you and the other children from Athens enter the Labyrinth, wait until the gate is closed, then tie the string to the door. Unroll it as you move through the maze. That way, you can find your way back again. The sword, well, you know what to do with the sword," she laughed.



Theseus thanked the princess for her kindness.

"Don't forget, now," she cautioned Theseus. "You must take me with you so that all the people can marvel at my beauty."

The next morning, the Athenian children, including Prince Theseus, were shoved into the maze. The door was locked firmly behind them. Following Ariadne's directions, Theseus tied one end of the string to the door. He told the children to stay by the door and to make sure the string stayed tied so the prince could find his way back again. The children hung on to the string tightly, as Theseus entered the maze alone.

Using the sword Ariadne had given him, Theseus killed the monstrous beast. He followed the string back and knocked on the door.

Princess Ariadne was waiting. She opened the door. Without anyone noticing, Prince Theseus and the children of Athens ran to their ship and sailed quietly away. Princess Ariadne sailed away with them.

On the way home, they stopped for supplies on the tiny island of Naxos. Princess Ariadne insisted on coming ashore. There was nothing much to do on the island. Soon, she fell asleep. All the people gathered to admire the sleeping princess. Theseus sailed quietly away with the children of Athens and left her there, sleeping.

After all, a deal is a deal.

The Reason for Seasons



Zeus, the king of all the gods, had two brothers and three sisters. Each had an important job. His sister, Demeter, was in charge of the harvest. If Demeter did not do her job, the crops could die, and everyone would starve. It was important to keep Demeter happy. Everyone helped out with that - both gods and mortals. It was that important.

As the story goes

Demeter loved her little daughter, Persephone. They played together in the fields most every day. As Persephone smiled up at her mother, Demeter's heart swelled with happiness, and the crops grew high and healthy. Flowers tumbled everywhere. As time passed, Persephone grew into a lovely goddess. That's when the trouble started.

Hades, the king of the underworld, was Zeus' brother. That meant he was Persephone's uncle. Hades was a gloomy fellow. He normally stayed out of sight in the Underworld. But one day, he felt restless. He decided to take his three-headed dog out for a run. Cerberus, his dog, usually stood guard at the gate to Underworld. But Hades gave his pup a break now and then, and left a couple of spirits in charge instead.

Hades flew his chariot up to earth. Cerberus leaped out of the chariot and ran around like a crazy thing, sniffing flowers with all three of his heads. The dog ran up to a lovely young woman, the goddess Persephone. Some people might have been startled if a three-headed dog came tearing up. But Persephone only laughed and scratched his heads.

Hades loved that old dog. He watched his dog playing with Persephone. He heard Persephone delighted laugh. Hades fell in love. Before anyone could stop him, he grabbed his niece, his dog, and his chariot and dove deep into the darkest depths of the Underworld.

Persephone cried about it. But it did her no good. Hades locked Persephone in a beautifully decorated room in the Hall of Hades. He brought her all kinds of delicious food. Persephone refused to eat. She had heard if you ate anything in Hades, you could never leave. She had every intention of leaving as soon as she could figure out how to do it.

Over a week went by. Finally, in desperate hunger, Persephone ate six pomegranate seeds. She promptly burst into tears.

She was not the only one crying. Demeter, her mother, missed her daughter terribly. She did not care if the crops died. She did not care about anything except finding her daughter. No one knows who told Zeus about it, but it was clear this could not go on. Zeus sent his son Hermes to work a deal with Hades.

This was the deal Hermes worked out: If Persephone would marry Hades, she would live as queen of the Underworld for six months each winter. In the spring, Persephone would return to earth and live there for six months. Everyone finally agreed.

That's why we have seasons. Every spring, Demeter makes sure flowers are blooming and crops are growing and the fields are green with welcome. Every fall, when Persephone returns to the underworld, Demeter ignores the crops and flowers and lets them die. Each spring, Demeter brings everything to life again, ready to welcome her daughter's return.

The Lion And The Mouse



One day a Lion lay asleep in the jungle. A tiny Mouse, running about in the grass and not noticing where he was going, ran over the Lion's head and down his nose.

The Lion awoke with a loud roar, and down came his paw over the little Mouse. The great beast was about to open his huge jaws to swallow the tiny creature when "Pardon me, O King, I beg of you," cried the frightened Mouse. "If you will only forgive me this time, I shall never forget your kindness. I meant no harm and I certainly didn't want to disturb Your Majesty. If you will spare my life, perhaps I may be able to do you a good turn, too."

The Lion began to laugh, and he laughed and laughed. "How could a tiny creature like you ever do anything to help me?" And he shook with laughter.

"Oh well," he shrugged, looking down at the frightened Mouse, "you're not so much of a meal anyway." He took his paw off the poor little prisoner, and the Mouse quickly scampered away.

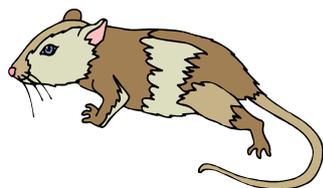
Some time after this, some hunters, trying to capture the Lion alive so they could carry him to their king, set up rope nets in the jungle. The Lion, who was hunting for some food, fell into the trap. He roared and

thrashed about trying to free himself but with every move he made, the ropes bound him tighter.

The unhappy Lion feared he could never escape, and he roared pitifully. His thunderous bellows echoed through the jungle. The tiny Mouse, scurrying about far away, heard the Lion's roars. "That may be the very Lion who once freed me," he said, remembering his promise. And he ran to see whether he could help.

Discovering the sad state the Lion was in, the Mouse said to him, "Stop, stop! You must not roar. If you make so much noise, the hunters will come and capture you. I'll get you out of this trap."

With his sharp little teeth, the Mouse gnawed at the ropes until they broke. When the Lion had stepped out of the net and was free once more, the Mouse said, "Now, was I not right?"



"Thank you, good Mouse," said the Lion gently. "You did help me even though I am big and you are so little. I see now that kindness is always worthwhile."

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted

King Midas

King Midas was a greedy man. He collected gold and even counted it in his sleep.

King Midas had a daughter and she wished she could spend more time with her father but he was always busy with his collections of gold.

One day, a strange creature came to see the King. He was half man and half goat and he was called a Satyr. The King allowed the Satyr to pick some of his fruit and because of this the Satyr was very pleased. He told the King that he could wish for anything he wanted and his wish would come true.

Of course, the King wished for more gold. He asked the Satyr to make everything he touched turn to gold. The wish was granted. Sure enough, everything that the King touched did turn to gold.

The trouble was, when the King got hungry, he could not touch his food because it too, became gold. The King began to feel worried. His daughter came to see him and he was afraid to touch her in case she changed to gold.

The King ran to find the satyr and begged him to take the spell away from him. He said that he was sorry for being so greedy and that he had learned his lesson. The Satyr told the King to wash in the river Pactolus to wash away his magic touch. The King did as he was asked and the spell was lifted. Immediately, the King ran to his daughter and hugged her. All of a sudden, he knew the meaning of happiness! Even today, the river Pactolus in Greece is known for its gold deposits and many people go there to find gold (prospecting)