

TITLE: Bringing a Legend Alive through Inter-thinking, Talk and Embodiment: Theseus and the Minotaur

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SUMMARY: This workshop is based on the legend of *Theseus and the Minotaur*. It is a well-known legend with various versions available. The following drama lesson was designed with the intention of stimulating and scaffolding different types of thinking, inter-thinking and talk (both in and out of role). The activities require participants to communicate in various ways, in groups of varying sizes, for a range of purposes at different points in the drama. Participants' attention was drawn throughout, to the different types of thinking and talk being generated. The opportunities that the drama offered for generating content and contexts for writing was also highlighted. There are many images available online, that depict various parts of this legend. Paintings, vases and statues that each depicted different scenes from the legend, were projected on screen at appropriate times during the drama.

KEY WORDS: Myths, Legends, Thinking, Talk, Writing

Story outline

Every seven years, the ageing King Aegeus of Athens had to send seven young women and seven young men to King Minos of Crete. They would be fed to the Minotaur. The Minotaur was half man and half bull. It lived in an underground maze beneath the Palace of Knossos in Crete. When the time came, for the next fourteen young people to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, the King's son, Theseus announced that he would go, as one of the seven men and would slay the Minotaur. King Aegeus made Theseus promise that he will set sail with a black sail but change it to a white sail if he is successful. King Aegeus will look each day for his ship returning, with a white sail. Theseus and the other thirteen young people leave for Crete.

On arrival they are taken to the Palace of Knossos and meet King Minos. The king's daughter, Ariadne sees Theseus and is attracted to him. She decides to help him kill the Minotaur and escape. The deal is that he will take her with him. He agrees to this. Ariadne gives Theseus a sword to kill the Minotaur and a ball of string that will help him find his way back out of the maze. Theseus travels through the maze, leaving a trail of thread as he does so. He slays the Minotaur and finds his way back, out of the maze. The young people with Ariadne, leave Crete and set sail for Athens. They land at Naxos, where Theseus abandons Ariadne. When she discovers he has set sail without her, she is furious. As the

ship approaches Athens, King Aegeus is looking from a cliff top. He sees a black sail and believes Theseus to be dead. Theseus has forgotten to hoist the white sail. Grief stricken, King Aegeus throws himself into the sea below and drowns. This is how the Aegean Sea got its name.

Activity 1: Move if ...

Stand in a circle and when the teacher calls out a sentence, move across the circle, if the sentence is true for you personally. If the sentence is not true for you, just stand still.

Move if...

- you have ever been to Crete
- you have been on a sea voyage
- you have ever been sailing at sea in a storm
- you have ever been terrified by an animal
- you have ever been bitten by an animal
- you have ever been alone and lost in a strange place
- you have ever been alone and lost in a maze

Activity 1 is a way of getting participants to engage personally with aspects of the story before the drama itself starts. The activity connects them personally with some of Theseus' experiences. It also visually reveals to all, how common or uncommon some of these experiences are within the group.

From time to time, the teacher will read or tell the next part of the story. Sometimes the 'Teacher as Storyteller' will move the drama forward, at other times, the teacher telling the story in a way that is consolidating and feeding back, what has just happened in the drama. The first use in this drama of 'Teacher as Storyteller' uses the technique, as a way of setting the scene.

Teacher as Storyteller:

In Ancient Greece, long, long ago, there lived a terrible creature called The Minotaur. It was half man and half bull. It lived, locked deep in a dark, underground maze, under the Palace of Knossos, on the island of Crete. Everyone on the island was terrified of the Minotaur because they knew the creature would kill and eat humans. King Minos too was afraid of it, for he

knew that if the Minotaur broke free from the maze, everyone would be in danger, whether a slave or a king.

Image: <http://108fineart.com/artists/paul-reid-3/>

The second activity enables participants to imagine themselves as one part of a collective Minotaur. This is a collaborative and inclusive activity, which shares ownership of the mythical creature who is central to the story. The teacher encourages a flow of adjectives. As each participant says what part of the Minotaur they are, they are required to add a powerful description that will help us all imagine. The sentences together, could form the basis of a powerful paragraph that describes the Minotaur and incorporates all their ideas. The group is benefitting imaginatively and linguistically, from each other's descriptions. They are talking like writers. The drama activity is not constraining their contributions by asking them to just replicate the painting of the Minotaur (which has been produced through someone else's imagination). Instead, the task is to generate together, the creature they see in their dreams. This enables and encourages greater freedom of creative thought.

Activity 2: Tableau

Enter the space in turn and become some bodily part of a terrifying Minotaur. As they get into position as part of the imaginary creature, they are asked to give some information and description, e.g. *'I am the razor sharp end of his deadly hoof. One kick will tear you apart.'*

Activity 3: Moving Image

Having created the Minotaur together, now move together as one creature.

This is their still image coming alive and is a team building experience. The creature they are all part of, can only move successfully, if everyone co-operates and moves together.

The still image comes alive and moves as the Minotaur

King Aegeus of Athens has been forced to send 7 young men and 7 young women to Crete every year, since losing a war to King Minos of Crete. They are cruelly put in the maze, as food for the Minotaur. Tomorrow is the day, when this year's victims will be decided. No-one will sleep well in Athens tonight.

Movement/Dance Drama: Groups of 4. Devise a short nightmare about the Minotaur, and repeat it twice.

Performance Carousel: Each group's nightmare is seen in turn, seamlessly.

Conscience Alley: Theseus, the son of King Aegeus is considering going as one of the young men. He thinks he can kill the Minotaur and heroically, prevent further deaths. Theseus passes through two lines of voices, one line persuading him to go to Crete and face the Minotaur and the other dissuading him. Theseus listens and then decides to go and kill the Minotaur.

Teacher in Role: The Athenians are in the meeting place, waiting for the selection of the 14 young people. Theseus announces that he has decided to go, so only 6 other young men will need to go this year (as well as 7 young women). He vows he will slay the Minotaur and return victorious.

Passing Thoughts: Theseus stands in the centre and the Athenians pass by and speak their thoughts aloud to him.

Proxemics: Standing circle. One at a time, people physically position themselves in relation to Theseus and justify their positioning, e.g. 'I am standing here because

Ritual: Either Athenians close their eyes in a standing circle and the teacher touched 13 people on the head. They leave the circle and gather together afterwards.

Thought-tracking: We hear the thoughts of the chosen and those who are safe for another year.

Improvisation or Small group playmaking: Groups of 4. One of the 4 has been chosen. Improvise or create a scene, which finishes with 'Farewell' and the victim leaves and enters a space, designated as the ship.

Performance Carousel: We see the 'Farewell' scenes, seamlessly in turn.

Tableau: One person from each group is now on the ship. The last person to enter the ship is the Teacher in Role as Theseus, who calls *'Farewell father. I will slay the Minotaur and I will return. I leave with black sails, as you have*

commanded but I will return triumphant with white sails billowing for you, as a signal that I am safe and victorious. Farewell.'

Still image/Small group play-making/Freeze-frame/Performance Carousel:

In groups of 4. each group makes one image. Each group creates a still image from 'The Voyage', that depicts one of the following.

A moment of terror

A moment of grief

A moment of friendship

A moment of anger

A moment of pain

A moment of happiness

Each still image then comes alive in turn and we will see a short, devised scene of no more than 10 seconds. At the end of the scene, the group freezes the scene and thus creates a freeze-frame. The scenes will be shared seamlessly through a performance carousel.

Essence Machine: Long voyages have repetitive moments too. Each person in turn, can enter the space and do a repeated action, with an accompanying word or phrase. The sounds and movements accumulate as more people enter. Gradually the machine will end in stillness and silence and the teacher calls, 'Land Ahoy!' The coastline of Crete has been sighted.

Thought-tracking: The teacher passes by each still citizen aboard and they speak aloud their inner thought, at the moment they see Crete on the horizon.

Look at painting of the Minotaur looking at the ship

– what is he thinking?

Look at the painting which shows the ship on arrival.

Still images/Teacher as Storyteller/Mantle of the Expert: Groups of 4 (with one person as either a storyteller or art expert). There are vases, frescoes, paintings, etc. of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. They depict various scenes from the story. Create a still image that could be found on an ancient vase or mosaic, or painting, etc. One person will explain the image to the audience, either as a storyteller or as an expert in art history. The scenes will be shown in sequence, either through a performance carousel or with opportunity to question the storyteller or expert.

Theseus sets foot on Cretan soil

Theseus meets King Minos

Ariadne first sees Theseus

Ariadne gives the string to Theseus
Theseus enters the Labyrinth

Corridor of Voices/Talking Objects: Becoming the Labyrinth

Two straight lines. Each person in the line talks to Theseus as he passes between the lines (with his eyes closed). The voices are trying to frighten him. They are talking objects or disembodied voices, e.g. 'I am a brick, covered in dried blood. Soon I will be covered in your warm blood Theseus.' Several people can be given the sensory experience of passing through the maze.
Look at the painting of Theseus travelling the maze.

Voice/Sound Collage: *The Death of the Minotaur*. In groups of 6, create the fight with the Minotaur in sounds and words, ending in silence. Decide where you will have the blind audience (the other groups) positioned when you perform the soundscape. Clap your hands when the audience can open their eyes again, so that they know it is over.

Look at the fight and death scenes on paintings and vases.

Ariadne – a poem by Rob John

I sit in the dust
at the cave's mouth,
hold my hot breath,
hold my red thread...and wait.

I hear sounds ;
dark, echoing
cave-deep sounds.

Time passes.
An hour since he went inside?
The red thread lies slack in my hand
It's been too long.

He's lost.
This was never going to work.
He was always lost to me.

Then a tug.

The faintest feathery tug

in my hand.
Something's in there.
Someone's still alive.

Now the thread is tight
and I'm pulling him in,
angling him home.

Then stumbling footsteps
and out of the cave he comes
bloodied, blinking in the light,
gasping for air.

He still holds his end of red thread
As he waves at the cheering crowds
and walks straight past me.

This was never going to work.
He was always lost to me

Talking Objects/Eye witness accounts: In groups of 4, become an object from the story and tell part of the story you were eye witness to. You might choose an object depicted in one of the paintings of this myth, or one listed below or another that you can think of..

Theseus' sword

Theseus' sandals

The ball of string

The entrance to the maze

The centre of the maze

Do not choose to be the black sails of the ship.

Passing Thoughts: Aegeus is waiting for the ship to return. Think about what Theseus might have said to Aegeus (but did not get the chance to as he threw himself from the cliff into the sea below). The teacher stands in the middle of the circle as Aegeus and the unspoken words of Theseus, arrive on the wind as he waits, watching the horizon.

Talking Object/Eye Witness/Collective Role: If the black sails had the five senses and could witness the death of Aegeus, what might the black sails say?

5 groups. Each groups is allocated a sense. They create and perform as a chorus.

I see ...

I hear ...

I smell ...

I taste ...

I touch ...

Teacher... *'And with the agony of grief in his pounding heart, Aegeus hurled himself from the towering cliff and was swallowed by the swirling sea below.'*

goals,

methodology,

expected results,

evaluation of the delivery in the Conference or any other contexts in which you have done the workshop.

The text should be sent as a word(doc or docx) file, be in full alignment, fonts **Calibri, 11**, single line spacing and in this order: title, name/names of author/s, summary (up to 150 words), key words(3-5), text not more than 4000 words,