

The King Must Die Study Guide

The King Must Die by Mary Renault

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Plot Summary

"The King Must Die", written by Mary Renault, is a story based on the early life of Theseus. It is told by Theseus as an old man remembering his early life as the grandson of a king, his search to find his father, his captivity in Crete, and through his inner strength and leadership his return home.

Theseus begins the story with his childhood and the beliefs that had been handed down to him by his mother and grandfather. Theseus had thought himself to be the god begotten son of Poseidon. His mother and grandfather told him this for many years. Theseus didn't grow tall like other god begotten sons were said to grow. He pushed himself and challenged everyone around him to prove that he was worthy of Poseidon.

When Theseus was seventeen his mother showed him a stone and told him that if he could pull the stone up, by himself, and retrieve the items from under the stone she would tell him who his father was. He used poles and pry bars to move the stone and retrieved a sword and sandals. When he learns the truth, that his father was a mortal, he was angry that his father was a man and not a god. This meant that he and his mother had been abandoned but he soon learned that his father's kingdom was under siege and had been for many years and the father had kept his birth a secret so that his life wouldn't be in danger.

Theseus leaves his home and his mother to find his father. Along the way he is stopped in a kingdom called Eleusis. Here he is made to fight the current king, part of a yearly ritual, and becomes the new king in the process. He is trapped as the king, and will be forced to die in one year's time but he is slowly able to change the beliefs in the city and saves his own life. His queen, Persephone, becomes angry and tries to have him killed by her brother and then by Theseus' own father, unknowingly, with poisoned wine.

Theseus is able to gain control of the kingdom and Persephone flees. Theseus and his father spend a little time together between the two kingdoms when they are visited by the Creteans who have come for their yearly tribute. They take several young members of the city. Theseus is unwilling to let his men go as slaves and volunteers himself. Once in Crete they are made to be bull dancers. This is to appease the gods who either enjoy a well done show or receive a sacrifice when one of the youths are killed by the bull. Theseus falls in love with the king's daughter, Ariadne. When the Crete king dies there is an earthquake and a rebellion. Theseus takes Ariadne and the other bull dancers on a boat away from Crete. When they get to the island of Naxos Ariadne takes part in a sacrifice and is covered in blood. Theseus is unable to hide the way he feels about the sacrifice and leaves Ariadne there on Naxos and returns home.

When Theseus' ship nears his home he doesn't run up the white flag as his father asked. The king sees the ship but no white flag and knows that his son is dead. He jumps to his own death before the ship can make it into port. Theseus knows that every man is in the hands of the gods and the gods had a plan.



Book 1: Chapter 1-4

Book 1: Chapter 1-4 Summary

"The King Must Die", written by Mary Renault, is a story based on the early life of Theseus. It is told by Theseus as an old man remember his early life as the grandson of a king, his search to find his father, his captivity in Crete, and through his inner strength and leadership his return home.

Theseus recalls the story of his early childhood and the beliefs that he held to as a small child. His house is called Hellene and his grandfather is King Pittheus and Theseus is told from birth that he was begotten by the god Poseidon. His mother is the Chief Priestess of Mother Dia in the city of Troizen. When Theseus is seven years old he is taken to a ceremony where his grandfather, the king, sacrifices a horse that is considered to be to good for any mortal to ride. It is at this ceremony that Theseus is dedicated to the god Poseidon since he is Theseus' birth-god. Theseus' grandfather explains to him later that the horse, called the king horse, had to be sacrificed because the gods allowed him to live a life of great honor with the understanding that it will be a short life.

When Theseus turns eight he is sent to begin his service to Poseidon. He spends three years he spends one month out of four serving the god. Theseus hears the god sleeping in the ocean and can hear him sigh. His mentor, Kannadis, tells him not to be scared that it is just Poseidon stirring in his sleep. After Theseus' first three years with Kannadis another boy comes to serve Poseidon. His name is Simo and makes fun of Theseus because he is so much smaller than the other boys his age. When he asks Theseus why he is serving there he tells Simo that his father is Poseidon and Simo laughs. Simo tells Theseus that god begotten men are taller than normal men and that his mother has been lying to him. They fight and that night they have to sacrifice their suppers to atone for their transgressions before Poseidon.

Theseus returns home and begins to question the other children about their ages and finds that he is shorter than almost every child his age. He asks Kannadis how tall men that have deities for fathers are but Kannadis tells him that is a sin to even ask because a person should revere the gods in humility. Theseus decides he will patiently wait for a sign from Poseidon. Theseus waits for a sign but begins to challenge every boy to a task or a fight to prove his worth. When he goes back to Poseidon's sanctuary Simo continues to mock him but Theseus continually prays to Poseidon for a sign.

Theseus is standing outside when Simo begins to make fun of him. Theseus stomps his foot on the ground and an earthquake begins. Simo is scared into leaving Theseus alone and Theseus' grandfather tells him the fact that Theseus could sense the earthquake was coming is a gift and can be used to save lives. Theseus is reassured that he will grow tall and when he turns eleven he finishes his service to Poseidon.



Theseus turns fourteen and goes into his first battle. His uncle Diokles is killed and Theseus avenges Diokles' death. Theseus is sure this establishes his manhood but a few months later is made to hide in the hills when King Minos' men come in ships to gather taxes from Troizen. They take the smaller boys as slaves for entertainment to run with the bulls.

When Theseus turned seventeen his mother takes him to a place where there is an old altar tablet on the ground. She begins to cry and tells Theseus that if he can lift that stone that she will be able to tell him who his father is but that she swore an oath to him before the gods to keep her secret unless he was able to lift the stone. He tries to lift it and injures himself but is unable to budge the stone. Theseus is ashamed and angry with his mother.

A short time later a Harper comes to the palace to sing tales and Theseus hears about a city that moved great rocks and the methods that they used. That night Theseus dreams that he goes back to the rock and is able to move it using wood poles to pry with. He is able to get the items out from under the rock and confronts his mother with the sword and the sandals that he recovers. She gives him a little information but sends him to his grandfather for the story. She tells him before he goes that his father's name is Aigeus son of Pandion, son of Kekrops and that he rules in Athens.

When Theseus gets to his grandfathers chambers he notes how sick his grandfather is but he still obeys the king's commands to sit on a footstool. His grandfather tells him of a plague that befell the city and the people that were dying of the sickness. A stranger came to town, Aigeus, and he had married a barren woman and the next had died in childbirth with a still born child. One of the priestesses came to the king and announced that his daughter, Theseus' mother, needed to give herself to the first man that was sent by the gods as a sacrifice to atone for the neglect given to certain gods. Aigeus went to the king and asked for the ability to go to the princess since he had no sons of his own and was certain that the gods would grant one of this union. Aigeus' kingdom is under harsh circumstances because of his two brothers that seek to take the throne from him. He commanded the king and the princess to hide the true identity of Theseus' lineage so that he would be kept safe. He asked that when the boy was able to get the items out from under the stone that he be sent to be heir of Aigeus' kingdom in Athens.

Book 1: Chapter 1-4 Analysis

Theseus is proud and is quick to lift himself up. The reader sees that even his mother is aware that he is more likely to hurt himself rather than admit defeat. When she tells him about his quest to lift up the altar stone to learn of his true father he injures himself in the process and is only stopped because she forces him to. It appears that he cares a great deal for his mother but is so hurt by the things that he has learned that he appears to have a hard time letting go of his anger.

Theseus is recalling the story and so the reader is given insight into the past in relation to the future. The reader sees the way that the grandfather appears when Theseus is a



young boy and the way he appears just a few years later when he is beginning to take sick. It appears that there is a lot of love and concern between the two for each other but it seems that the position of the grandfather as the king keeps the relationship very formal.

Theseus doesn't want to go to Athens when he first learns of his birthright but the reader will see quickly in the story that he will go regardless. The way that Theseus reacted to the sacrificing of the King Horse will be significant later on in the book. There will be human sacrifice that comes into play and Theseus will show his convictions then even though people he cares for are involved in the acts. Theseus will continue to act in the way that he finds to be honorable to his friends throughout the story.



Book 1: Chapter 5-6; Book 2: Chapter 1-2

Book 1: Chapter 5-6; Book 2: Chapter 1-2 Summary

Seven days later a ship arrives at Troizen and Theseus' grandfather acquires a spot on the ship for Theseus. Theseus is offended by the words of the ship's captain and in front of the people in the city announces that the ship isn't good enough for him and he will begin his trip to Athens on the Isthmus Road. Theseus' grandfather is upset that Theseus isn't going on the ship but can't have him take back his word since he said all these things in the presence of the citizens of Troizen. Theseus' mother is worried for her son's safety and calls an oracle to look at Theseus' journey. The oracle announces that Theseus will meet trouble and it will be serious but that the journey will not take his life.

Theseus' mother is concerned about the men that might be along the way that would want Theseus dead because of his father's kingdom as Theseus will be the heir. She tells him not to tell anyone who he is or why he is going to Athens until he gets there. Theseus' childhood friend, Dexios, begs Theseus to let him go with him. They befall many robbers and thieves as they begin their journey on the Isthmus Road but are able to outrun them on horses. They find a man that has been beaten and left for dead on the side of the road that Theseus gives water to and after the man is given a drink of water Theseus kills him in an act of mercy.

Before they come to the end of Isthmus Road Dexios is killed by an attacker called Skiron. Theseus is able to kill him and continues along his journey alone. Soon after his battle with Skiron he comes to a camp of very young shepherds. They are very happy to have Theseus with them and tell him it makes them feel safer. He leaves them the next day and travels to a town called Eleusis.

Eleusis is ruled by women and Theseus is met by a woman that is the queen, Persephone, and announces that the oracle has proclaimed his coming to kill the current king. Eleusis' people believe that every year a new king is to be crowned. They pick someone to kill the current king and have his body plowed into the field. They care nothing about the king as it is the queen who rules the land. Theseus will be killed if he doesn't agree to kill the current king but finds upon meeting the man that he likes the man. When Theseus has won the fight he asks the man to forgive him any sin for taking his life and the man agrees to it.

Theseus is made the new king and is readied for the queen's bed chamber. Theseus and the queen are making love when the door is thrown open and the entire village is able to look at them. Theseus is outraged but the queen explains to him that they must witness the spreading of the seed to ensure that the crops will grow. Theseus suddenly



realizes that the queen has done this same ritual every year with a different man with the whole village to witness and dislikes it but resigns himself to her bed.

He is trying to figure out a way to get out of the kingdom without shaming his name before he goes to his father's kingdom. He fights against the way that he is treated in the kingdom while trying to assert himself as something more than the queen's chamber mate. Theseus decides he will make friends with one of the neighboring kingdoms and get them to ask the Eleusians for their help in a war. Theseus has trouble meeting with the neighboring kingdom by speaking with Pylas, son of Nisos, King of Megara. Pylas agrees to help Theseus and the two kingdoms agree for an autumn war against the thieves and gangs in Isthmus.

Theseus gets angry with the queen and the way she treats him and has a fight with her offering to beat her because she has forgotten that she is a woman. Much to Theseus' surprise she breaks down crying and he has to console her. The war is planned and the queen has been put in her place and Theseus feels that he has things in motion to meet his needs.

Book 1: Chapter 5-6; Book 2: Chapter 1-2 Analysis

The reader sees that Theseus is somewhat harsh in his mannerisms. He kills the man beside the road that is dying and the king at Eleusis, but each of these were deaths that could not be avoided. The man on the road was described as a dying man and the king would have been killed by his own people and then Theseus as well if he had not killed him. The reader sees that even though Theseus is a man in a lot of ways he is still very young and there is a lot that will pass before he has matured.

The reader will find that while Theseus is doing well in his planning, the queen is very intelligent and later will send her brother to kill Theseus to stop him from gaining control. It will be the death of the queen's brother that allows Theseus to leave Eleusis, although he will return later. It seems that the fact that the queen is perfect in the bed chamber is the only thing that continues to attract Theseus. He continually points out things about her nature and her culture that disgust him but is unable to resist her at this point in the story when she wants his attention. The reader will see that this shames him. He makes mention of the fact that it is the way that the women treat their men that cause them to have homosexual tendencies.

Theseus appears to have made friends with many of those that are under the control of the queen. It seems unlikely that one year would make much of a difference in the culture of the people but the reader will see that Theseus will have had a lasting effect on their customs and cultures.



Book 2: Chapter 3; Book 3: Chapter 1-2

Book 2: Chapter 3; Book 3: Chapter 1-2 Summary

Theseus gets ready to go into his first big war. He looks for someone to leave his sword to to take to Athens to the king if he dies in battle but can't find anyone that he trusts with that secret. When he gets up to leave for the battle the queen doesn't get out of bed to see him off but seems sad. They meet up with Megarians and the first castle they come to in Isthmus is called Sinis. They take the city in just a few days and kill every man in the city and keep the riches and the women of the cities as spoils. The queen's brother, Xanthos, tries to give Theseus' men a smaller amount of the spoils but Theseus openly comments on how much fighting his men have done and gives them his own rewards leaving none for himself.

Over the next few days they clean out the next large holds and come to the end of the borders of Isthmus only to find that a large remnant of the gangs and thieves have rallied themselves to a battlefield to fight. Theseus is given a chariot driver by Xanthos and they charged but the chariot crashes and Theseus has to battle hand to hand. He believes that his chariot driver has died but when the battle is over they pull the man from the crashed chariot and find that he doesn't have a mark on him and is in no way hurt. Theseus goes to inspect the chariot and finds that one of the bronze lynch pins had been replaced with a wax one that was made to give out and crash quickly. The chariot driver begs for his life stating that he was scared of Xanthos, who forced him to do it. Theseus kills the chariot driver and goes to confront Xanthos in combat.

They fight with spears and several of Xanthos' men and Theseus' men are cheering for Theseus. Xanthos dies with a spear in his side. When Theseus returns home he finds the queen unwilling to talk to him and she acts conflicted about wanting him to stay and wanting him to go when he tells her that he has to go to Athens to have the king, Aigeus, cleans him of his killing. He leaves that night for Athens.

After arriving in Athens he decides to wait to tell the king, Aigeus, who he is and joins the king in his chamber to have a drink of wine. After a moment Theseus moves his cloak and reveals his sword and the king violently stops Theseus from taking his first sip of wine. It is then that Theseus realizes that the king's woman, Medea, bearer of his two sons, had given him a poisoned drink per the request of Theseus' queen, Persephone. Persephone had sent word ahead of Theseus requesting his death because she feared he would take over control of her kingdom.

Theseus gets his father to agree that the people in Eleusis will be treated as equals because Theseus is their king. He heads back to his people and finds that the queen has given orders that he is to be killed. The men sent by the queen listen to Theseus and side with him. When reaching the palace Theseus finds the queen is ill and requests a boat to take her and her children away. He is told that she is faking her illness after she is gone to avoid his vengeance. He chooses to let her go and picks a



new priestess that doesn't lay with a man and sacrifice him every year. He also sets up a new rule of government for the people that isn't ran by women. He sends word to his father that he is coming to help in the war and bringing a thousand men.

Book 2: Chapter 3; Book 3: Chapter 1-2 Analysis

Theseus is telling the story in past tense to the reader so the reader knows already that Theseus' son that he cares for is dead. At this point you don't know who it is that bears this son but that the curse that was put on him by Medea, his father's woman, and Persephone came to pass. Even though Persephone is known to be faking her illness Theseus lets her go. He seems to have matured a lot in his time as king and it may be that he cares for Persephone despite her actions.

Theseus meets his father and the meeting is emotional for both of them but it is noted that the king believes that it may have been good for the child that he was raised by his grandfather. Theseus is a grown man at this point in many respects but still appears to be longing for the relationship that a boy would have with his father. He will spend little time with his father before they are separated.

Theseus is a king but he believes that it is his place to work for the people that he reigns over. The reader will see in coming chapters that he will put himself in the place of others that are to be taken into captivity. Theseus talked to his father about hearing the god Poseidon. It will appear that Poseidon is the driving force for Theseus' decisions and the reader will see that many of the ills that befall Theseus can be blamed on his listening to Poseidon as much as the good things that happen to Theseus.



Book 3: Chapter 3; Book 4: Chapter 1-3

Book 3: Chapter 3; Book 4: Chapter 1-3 Summary

The war lasted nearly a month and in the end Theseus and his father, Aigeus, are the victors. Theseus rules Eleusis with his father's advice to help. Aigeus and Theseus are speaking when Aigeus asks Theseus how he would like it if an invitation was sent to Theseus' mother to come live in Athens. They agree to send for her when she will be done with her priestess duties for the year. Aigeus also decides that he will have a great feast for Theseus' birthday. Theseus feels that his father is treating him like a child but an old woman in his father's kingdom tells Theseus that he should be patient with his father. She also says that the gods favor Theseus and that he will save Theseus. Theseus decides that she must be old and senile.

Theseus' father gives him a gift of a chariot and horses and they are planning a ride when his father begins to act worried. He refuses to tell Theseus at first and asks him to hide but Theseus is easily angered and his father tells him the Crete men have come for their tribute which will be several young boys and girls to dance with the bulls. The life expectancy of a bull dancer is six months and they are never set free. Theseus realizes that there are several of his men from Eleusis that have been called to draw lots to see who will go. Theseus stands with his men when he realizes that he can not free them. His father has the names drawn of those that will go. Theseus hears Poseidon and realizes that that Poseidon wants him to go. He takes the place of the last boy that was called and realizes that his father, being king, had kept Theseus' name out of the drawing and that is what had angered Poseidon.

His father asks Theseus to run a white flag up on the ship if he is able to return to Athens. Theseus and the others make a promise, while on the ship, to each other to protect each other and be kinsmen. They call themselves the cranes. Theseus is proclaimed the leader since he was the one that gave himself to the gods to go dance with the bulls and the others were chosen from lots. Theseus goes to talk to the ship captain and ask about the bull dancing and what will become of them. The other cranes had been full of stories of what would happen but all their stories were vastly different. The captain is willing to talk to Theseus even though they are considered barbarians. The ones that are chosen to be bull dancers are treated as precious cargo since they now belong to the god Minotaur. Upon talking to the captain Theseus learns that they are not immediately sacrificed to the bull. They will have three months to train at the Knossos Palace called the House of the Ax but are never allowed to leave it. Theseus also tells them that when they arrive the people of Crete will come out to make bets on how long the new bull dancers live. They also will be bought so that when they are killed by the bull it is a sacrifice for that person.

The cranes decide that in order to stay together they must do something to cause a scene when they arrive at Crete. They practice a dance that they will do when they get off the ship so that they will be thought of as a team already. Theseus tries to rally them



together to keep their spirits high as they sail farther from their own homes. Theseus' plan is to stay alive and together long enough to find a way to escape.

When they arrive at Crete Theseus is taken aback by the nature of the Cretes. He begins to doubt himself but calls for the cranes to gather around him and sing. They make a grand entrance and when their dance is finished they are surrounded by the people of Crete and prodded and pinched like cattle while the people talk openly about how soon they will die. A man appears to look them over and the other people seem to be almost afraid of him and give him open room to look over the new dancers. One of the boys in the group asks Theseus if that is the king, Minos, of Crete. Theseus openly states that he could not possibly be the king and offends the man. The man begins to grab at the girls and the boys making them angry and when he gets to Theseus he slaps him hard across the face. Theseus is able to keep his anger in check. The captain of the ship has told the man that Theseus came of his own will as a tribute to Poseidon. The man takes his ring and throws it in the water and commands Theseus to ask his "fish-daddy" to give the ring back. Theseus quickly jumps in the water and nearly dies but hears Poseidon and retrieves the ring from a squid. When he arrives back on the dock he holds the ring out for all to see but when the man reaches for it he announces that it had been given as a gift to Poseidon and must go back and throws the golden ring back in the water. The man is angry at first and Theseus knows he may be beaten or killed. The man suddenly begins to laugh and leaves.

When the people begin to disperse the cranes are taken to the House of the Axe. The ship's captain tells Theseus along the way that he had been a foolish boy and the man who threw his ring in the water was the king's son, Asterion. When Theseus sees the House of the Axe he has the feeling that he has been there in a past life and knows that something there is intertwined with his life's path and purpose though he doesn't know what. The House of the Axe is as large as many cities that Theseus has seen but there aren't any real walls at the palace. Theseus tries to act like he is unimpressed by the sights in the palace. When the cranes see King Minos he is in an ornate bull mask. The cranes gasp and are afraid but none of them cry aloud with fright. Theseus is told later that they are the only group brought in that did not scream aloud at the sight of the king in his mask.

They are taken to a room where a young woman in a goddess outfit came to ask them if they had killed any of their kinsmen. Theseus had killed in the war to save his father's kingdom and the goddess takes Theseus to a special room to be blood cleansed. A bull is sacrificed and the blood is used to draw pictures on Theseus. He is attracted to the woman with the painted face in the godly apparel but knows not to look at her.

When they have all been cleansed they are taken to a room where Asterion, the king's son, is giving some orders. He bought the whole group of cranes. Theseus is concerned that the others will pay for his mistake in angering Asterion. They are taken to a room where there are other bull dancers. The room is called the Bull Court. Once in the Bull Court, Theseus feels that his soul remembers this room but can't make real sense of it. One of the boys in the Bull Court, Corinth, tells Theseus that the goddess that he saw is a girl called Ariadne, the Most Holy, the Mistress of the Labyrinth. Theseus notes that



they are treated very well and he remembers that the King Horse was treated just as good the year he was sacrificed to the gods.

Book 3: Chapter 3; Book 4: Chapter 1-3 Analysis

Theseus tells his father before he leaves that he knows he will see Athens again. This is true enough although the reader only has Theseus' words to go on at this point in the story. He was quick to dismiss the old woman in his father's palace that told him that the gods would save him. The reader is not sure who will return to Athen's at this point but it seems sure that Theseus will go home even if it is alone.

Theseus is attracted to Ariadne, who is King Minos' daughter. The reader sees that he is attracted to her but doesn't realize that anything will come of it at this point in the story. She will grieve Theseus greatly later in the story after they become lovers and he will be forced to leave her behind. Theseus doesn't know what he is supposed to be doing while in Crete but he knows that Poseidon has him there to do something. The reader will see that he is to kill Asterion by request of King Minos who wears the bull mask to hide the fact that he is a leaper. It is not known at this point but Asterion is not King Minos' blood son, simply his heir. Theseus cares for those with him. He offered himself to go because of his love for his people as their leader. Theseus will continue with his strong set of values as the story continues. The connection that Theseus makes between the group of cranes that he leads and the King Horse's sacrificial year is easily understood since the Cretes believe it is good to do human sacrifice to appease the gods.

Theseus knows that Poseidon wants him to be king. Theseus will wait and not take the kingdom from his father because he loves his father but the reader will see that Poseidon causes the kings death while Theseus' ship returning from Crete is close enough to be seen.



Book 4: Chapter 4-7

Book 4: Chapter 4-7 Summary

Theseus and his group of cranes live in the Bull Court, a sealed city in the House of the Axe. The boys and girls train together but aren't permitted to bed together since the girls that are sacrificed to the bull have to be virgins. Theseus looks for Asterion, the king's son, to come and punish him for his actions the day that Theseus and the others arrived in Crete, but Asterion never comes. Theseus watches those that are the current bull dancers and wants to be a leaper. In the bull dancing each is dependent upon the others for their lives. If someone makes an enemy or is considered to be a coward the others will leave them to die with the bull. The leaper is the one that is watched and cheered by the crowds because the leaper jumps up and over the bull and makes an impressive show of it. Some are to catch the leaper so that when he falls the bull doesn't trample him and others do dancing to attract the bulls attentions. The dancing ends when either a bull is too tired to continue the chase or one of the dancer dies by the bull. The bull is never to be killed or hurt because the god dwells in him.

In the first month they trained and learned to leap and do cartwheels. It was taught the art of keeping the bull under you and tricks of the trade. The second month they are allowed to see a bull dance for the first time. It is forbidden for the first month because it may discourage the new dancers. When Theseus and the other cranes are allowed to watch the bull dance they see a boy die that had been a leaper and a bull dancer longer than any one there. Theseus realizes that the boy died because the others weren't there to catch him and he forces them to renew their vows to each other and treat each life like their own.

Theseus watches the Earth Goddess at the bull fight and decides that she is just as much human as he is. Theseus wonders how the gods can possibly forgive her for pretending to be a god when she is just a human. Theseus has watched the bull leaper and begs Poseidon to make him a bull leaper more than once.

In their last month they go to the pasture to get a bull. The dancers don't pick a bull. They go to the field with a cow tied and let a bull come and fight for the chance to mate with her. Whichever bull wins the right to mate with the cow is the one the dancers have to catch and will be the bull they dance each time till he is dead of old age or no longer is sporting to watch. Theseus names their bull Herakles. Theseus has heard that if a dancer lasts three years that the Earth Goddess sets them free but no one has lasted half that long that anyone can remember.

The time comes for Theseus and the other cranes to perform their live bull dance and one of the girls confides in Theseus that she is bull shy. This is enough in the unspoken code of the bull dancers that she should be sent to her death at her first dance but Theseus breaks the rules and has them loose their bull when no one is looking during a practice so that the girl can get the feel for how things should go.



After they have practiced and before they are ready for their dance in front of the Crete public, Asterion, the king's son, comes to check on the cranes. He makes no special note of Theseus. Theseus is troubled by the man and continues to wait on Asterion to reprimand him or keep him from being a leaper. When Theseus asks their trainer what Asterion wanted he is told that he is just checking up on his investment. After Asterion leaves the other boys tell Theseus that Asterion is not King Minos' son. There had been a young bull dancer years ago that had pleased the king so he set him out apart and never made him to dance. The queen was angry with the king and slept with the young dancer and begot Asterion. King Minos and his queen were of the old faith and he couldn't speak out against the child that his wife had born claiming it wasn't his because it would have disgraced his house. The king sent the bull dancer to the bulls when he found out and the next bull the dancer died.

Theseus is angry to realize that Asterion treats him so poorly since Theseus is of royal blood and a king while Asterion is nothing more than a son of a long dead bull dancer. Theseus keeps busy with training and learning the bulls. It is rare for a bull dancer to last three months but Theseus' cranes don't lose one member in three months though they all have scars of some sort from Herakles. There are other groups that begin to make oaths as the cranes have since Theseus' group has lasted so long.

After a long time Asterion calls Theseus to his home to dine as the custom. He is more a form of entertainment than a true guest but feels he can't refuse since he is a slave. Theseus is offered gold and jewels from Asterion but tells him that he can't accept because he is royal blood and can't accept gifts from a man that struck him. Asterion continues to laugh and mock Theseus.

Theseus is called in secret to a meeting chamber and finds that the Goddess Earth, Ariadne, daughter to King Minos is there waiting for him. She is younger by a few years than Theseus. They become lovers.

Book 4: Chapter 4-7 Analysis

Theseus is a strong leader. When he entered the city at Eleusis the reader sees that he was able to apparently change the thinking of the people and again with the bull dancers he is able to change their traditions and the way they treat each other. Before Theseus it was common for them to let each other die but they begin to band together under Theseus' supervision. He not only has the ability to lead, but also to plan as the reader will see when Theseus begins to have hope of an escape.

Ariadne is beautiful and Theseus will have intentions of marrying her but the reader will see that she will be unable to leave her old ways behind and it will come between her and Theseus. Theseus is proud but not from his own boasting. It has been shown that Theseus is quick to note his own faults and ask his gods for help and thank them when he is answered. It will be his strength and his pride that keep the other bull dancers together even when Theseus begins to feel defeated.



Theseus is telling the story in past tense and he will make wonder later if his problems come from the way he leaves Ariadne because of the oath that Theseus makes her father just before his death. The reader will see in the coming chapters that Theseus' ability to know when the earthquakes are coming will be a key factor in the bull dancers escape.



Book 4: Chapter 7-9

Book 4: Chapter 7-9 Summary

Theseus and Ariadne kept their meetings secret. Each night he would take a different path to her bed chambers. Along the way he was able to map out several places that he might need later on such as the ancient armory. On the night before a bull dance Theseus would not go to Ariadne keeping his pledge to his fellow cranes that their lives are just as important as his. Theseus tells Ariadne that the cranes are his people and he is responsible for them. She begins to cry that he is worthy to be a king of an entire kingdom. Theseus only responds by saying that it doesn't matter how many people you lead that you must be the best leader you can be with a few or many.

While talking to Ariadne, Theseus discovers that she has a deep hatred for her brother, Asterion, because of the difference in the way that her mother treated them. Ariadne was outcast by her mother and told that she was nasty and her brother was held dear by his mother. Ariadne also tells Theseus that King Minos is very ill and has leprosy. They know that he was infected but couldn't prove by who although they all knew it to be Asterion. Ariadne tells Theseus that Asterion needed the king to die slowly so that he could take control of the kingdom. If the king suddenly died there would be many that would denounce Asterion as king and fight him. Since the king has been sick for a long time Asterion has been able to take over different positions in the government and guard little by little but he needs more time before he will be able to control Crete.

Ariadne explains the customs and the prophecies of the Creates and Theseus learns that when Asterion threw his ring into the sea on the day that Theseus arrived on the boat, that was a symbol that the king does to show that he has wed the sea. Theseus ruined it when he dove down and retrieved the ring and then himself threw it in, wedding the sea himself.

Theseus talks with the bull dancers and they begin to smuggle weapons out of the ancient armory and begin to hide them knowing that they will need to stand against Asterion when he tries to take the crown. They are able to smuggle many weapons and have plans in place, but Theseus doesn't tell Ariadne what they are planing because he fears she would be unable to hide it from her brother.

As their plans continue Ariadne takes Theseus in secret to a lair under the palace where her father lives. King Minos still wears the mask of the bull to hide his leprosy. He tells his daughter to wait outside the door and he and Theseus begin to talk of Asterion and how they could stop him from gaining control of the kingdom. The king asks Theseus to keep his daughter safe and they agree that they will wait and see if a message can be gotten to Theseus' father by way of a bard who was singing in Asterion's palace. The bard is the twin brother of one of the girls taken from Athens at the same time of Theseus. Theseus promises the king that the other bull dancers will fight when the time comes.



Days passed and Theseus is called back to the king's chamber. Once there the king explains to Theseus that he must take the sacred ax and take the king's life to appease the gods. When this happens it is the hope that Asterion will be unable to gain the crown. The king makes Theseus swear that he will take care of Ariadne and tells Theseus that he will be forgiven for taking the king's life and be blessed for letting him free of his curse. Theseus leaves the body in the king's chamber and goes back to his own bed.

The next day Theseus waits for the call that the king has died but nothing is said. He can't say anything and so he waits eagerly. There is a bull dance that day and Theseus is tired. The bull begins to act funny and soon they cannot dodge him and Theseus and another of the dancers are caught in Herakles' horns. Theseus is hurt but lives and the others are uninjured past bruising and scratches. Herakles falls in the dirt and dies. As they leave the arena Theseus notices Asterion's eyes and knows what has happened.

The bull dancers are worried that Asterion knows that they have something planned and that is why he gave the bull medicine to make him mad. Soon they learn that Asterion had wagered large amounts of money on a death in the arena. Once they know that Asterion was acting out of lust for gold and not to prevent them from their plans they become angry at being treated like common animals and vow that they will have his heart.

Book 4: Chapter 7-9 Analysis

Theseus doesn't want to kill the king. It is their custom that the gods be appeased and that the king giving himself willingly is a great sacrifice. It appears that the first few chapters describing the death of the King Horse was to explain this scene in the story. While Theseus felt sick with what he had done he seems to feel that it is a necessity. He makes a vow to the king before he takes the man's life that he will take care of the king's daughter. The reader will see later on that Theseus didn't leave her in peril but did abandon her.

The bull dancers gain in leadership with Theseus picking leaders. They will play a crucial role in helping his quest to succeed. Although no help will come from his father the thought of help from his father's land appears to be what spurred many of the actions that will come. In this part of Theseus' tale we learn of the fate of his son. He will explain later on that his ability to hear Poseidon is gone in his old age but at this point in the story the reader sees that he still has answers from Poseidon.

Theseus knows he cannot say anything about the death of the king but he made a vow that the king's body would be taken and cared for. This becomes impossible when Asterion takes the body away. It will be Theseus who kills him and avenges the king for the disease set upon him. Theseus appears to take his beliefs very seriously, but Ariadne does not. The reader will see in coming chapters that she is willing to put a curse upon the man who killed her father, in the name of the Earth Mother. She will know that it is Theseus who struck the king with the ax but Asterion is the one that they

believe infected him to gain control of the kingdom. The reader will see it appears that the difference between the two is not what they talk but what they do that makes them so different.



Book 4: Chapter 10; Book 5: Chapter 1-2

Book 4: Chapter 10; Book 5: Chapter 1-2 Summary

The day following the death of Herakles Theseus is feeling uneasy. He can't understand what it is that makes him so unnerved until he remembers how the earthquakes felt that came from his youth. He is able to warn the bull dancers when a small earthquake is coming. Once it is over Theseus realizes a great one is coming and that the whole palace will come down on their heads if they don't get outside.

It is near night and many of the girls are already being ushered into their bed chambers and bolted in. Theseus tells those that are not in for the night to begin to get the weapons that they have hidden and prepare to fight. The bull dancers are getting excited and Theseus is beginning to have trouble controlling them in their excitement. He tells them that when they begin to fight their way out of the palace that they will have to be ready to kill any who are in their way.

As they charge the main doors to the Bull Court two guards open the doors to see what they are making so much noise about and are quickly killed by several girls led by an amazon girl picked by Theseus to be one of his commanders. They continue to make their way toward the outside walls that will get them to safety. Theseus prays to the gods along the way that he will have the ability to control the bull dancers in their excitement. When they make it outside Theseus is able to get the bull dancers hid and then remembers Ariadne. He goes to find her when the earthquake hits the city. Crete is in ruin and the many people are killed when the building collapse. Ariadne is unharmed and makes her way with Theseus back to the other bull dancers.

Before they leave the city the bull dancers and the citizens of Crete storm the walls of the city to kill Asterion because of the anger of the gods he has brought down on the city. Theseus find Asterion and fights him in single combat. Asterion is wearing the bull mask that belonged to his father. Asterion is fat but Theseus is able to stick his knife into Asterion belly and kill him. Theseus, the bull dancers, and Ariadne take a boat and leave Crete headed towards Athens.

On the way back to Theseus' home they stop at the island of Naxos and have a ceremony there with the people of the island to thank the mother Dias. Theseus goes for a short period of time and when he returns he sees that Ariadne is covered in sacrificial blood. It sticks to her hair, her hands and has dried on her teeth. Theseus decides he can't take her with him any farther. Rather than wake her to tell her why he doesn't take her he leaves in the night while she sleeps, to go back to Athens with the cranes.

When they are sailing home Theseus feels as though he is commanded by Poseidon not to raise the white flag as his father had asked him to do before he left for Crete. He asks the god for permission but gets no answer. When Theseus' father sees the ship



coming he doesn't wait for them to get to the harbor to see if Theseus is alive. The king throws himself over the balcony of the castle and commits suicide. Theseus is the king of his father's kingdom before they even reach the shore. Theseus says that it is not for men to question Poseidon because men are all in the gods hands.

Book 4: Chapter 10; Book 5: Chapter 1-2 Analysis

The story itself is only told through the period of time until Theseus returns home. The reader is allowed to have small pieces of the future from Theseus since he is the one telling the tale. He tells about his son dying and about the things that he remembers as an old man. The reader otherwise would have nothing more than foreshadowing it seems if he didn't give us a little after knowledge.

While we are not informed directly of what was sacrificed or what Ariadne held that made Theseus so angry it appears that it was probably human sacrifice. Theseus himself sacrificed to the gods and only had a problem with the thought of human blood spilling needlessly. It is possible that it is simply the sight of the blood on her teeth and the fact that she seemed to have enjoyed it so much that caused him to leave her there on the isle. The reader is left with guessing at some of this information but the story seems to be clear that it was the mystery item that she held in her hands that sealed Theseus' decision. The others that got on the boat were unwilling to talk about it as well.

Theseus had said before he ever left for Crete that it seemed that Poseidon wanted him to be king and not his father. It would appear that this is the reason that Theseus was not permitted by the god to raise the white flag on the way into the shore as his father had requested. There is a piece in the back of the book that gives additional information about the life of Theseus according to the legend but the story itself ends with his return to his fathers' land. In the extra reading given in the book it is explained that the bull dancers were needed to have small frames and be wiry. Theseus himself had desired to be large like the son of a god should look. It would have been impossible for him to have completed these accomplishments in Crete if he had been a large man.



Characters

Theseus

Theseus, also called Shepherd of the People, and Kerkyon, and Kouros of Poseidon. He began his life thinking that he was the son of a god, Poseidon. Theseus spends much of his life trying to prove himself worthy of the title of Poseidon's son even after he finds that he is not Poseidon's. The reader will see that Theseus has loyalties and honor. He doesn't do anything that he believes would be wrong because he fears the gods. The reader is able to follow Theseus in his journey from boy to man and the growth and changes that occur. When he is younger he is quick to fight and the reader sees that Theseus is hot tempered, but when he is older in Crete the reader sees that he is willing to take insult and control his temper.

The character is one that has a struggle and along the way changes the things that he touches. Theseus is told in the story that his life thread is strong and that anyone's life thread that meets his will be frayed from the meeting. There are few people in the story that Theseus is able to care for that continues to care for him, or doesn't die. He even makes mention of the future that the reader isn't told about. Theseus tells about his son that is to be born and how his child will die.

Poseidon

Poseidon is the god that Theseus thinks himself to be the son of. While the reader never sees Poseidon we do listen to the conversations of Poseidon that Theseus partakes in. We know what Theseus tells us of him and he is the only other character in the story that is a constant from the beginning till the end of the story. At the front of the tale Theseus explains that he feels a kinship to the Horse King who will later be sacrificed to Poseidon. He believes that Poseidon is his father and that the Horse King is his brother since Poseidon can make himself into the shape of either a horse or a man.

Poseidon is the one that protects Theseus and the reader sees that there are many times that the deity talks to Theseus and will either warn him or reprimand him. Theseus prays to Poseidon and receives answers but not always quickly. When the boat arrives at Crete with Theseus and the other cranes the King's son, Asterion, throws his ring into the ocean and challenges Theseus to get the ring back. It is Poseidon who gives the ring to Theseus by way of a squid. Poseidon tells Theseus that he wants him to be king. At the end of the story it is Poseidon who tells Theseus to not raise the white flag on the ship to signal to his father that his is alive and well. Because Theseus listens to Poseidon, his father jumps to his death because he believes Theseus to be dead.



King Minos

The king at Crete. He is a leper and asks Theseus to end his life with a sacrificial ax.

Asterion

The heir to King Minos in Crete. Asterion is not blood relation, his mother laid with a young bull dancer after which the king had him given to a bull for sacrifice.

Ariadne

Ariadne is the daughter of King Minos. Theseus means to marry her when they escape from Crete but finds on the way home that she has been sacrificing and has the blood covering her. He is disgusted and leaves her behind.

Aigeus

Aigeus is the father of Theseus. He is a king in Athens but is under attack constantly from his brothers that wish to assert themselves on his throne. He kills himself at the end of the book when he believes that Theseus is dead.

King Pittheus of Troizen

King Pittheus is the grandfather of Theseus. He is responsible for many of the values in Theseus that allow him to lead the people in both Eleusis and Crete.

Persephone

Persephone is the queen in Eleusis. She believes that women should rule the country since they are the ones that give birth. She tries to have Theseus killed when he attempts to change the customs.

Aithra

Daughter of King Pittheus and mother to Theseus. She is the priestess at Troizen and hides Theseus' father's name from him until he can move the alter stone and retrieve his father's things out from under it.

Dexios

A childhood friend of Theseus. He was killed while making the trip with Theseus to Athens.



Objects/Places

Athens

The city in which Theseus father, Aigeus, reigns. Theseus spends a large part of the story trying to get to Athens.

Crete

Ruled by King Minos. Theseus and several others are taken from Athens to be bull dancers and sacrificed to the gods.

Eleusis

A city that Theseus encounters on his way to his fathers kingdom. Here he is forced to fight the current king and take his place. In this kingdom the women rule the land.

Altar Stone

The large heavy stone that Theseus must lift in order to learn who his father is.

Sword

One of the items found under the alter stone. It is by the sword that the father knew who Theseus was. If he hadn't recognized the sword he would have fed Theseus poisoned wine.

Moira

The belief that your fate is already laid before a man. Theseus makes mention of feeling that his Moira knew a place.

Cranes

The names that Theseus and the other youths taken from Athens name themselves.

Polished Crystal Bull

The single thing left behind by the first bull dancer that Theseus saw killed. He was what Theseus wanted to be like.

Bull Mask

The mask worn by King Minos. It is to hide his leprosy and to acknowledge the bull god that they worship.

Gold Ring

Asterion throws his gold ring into the ocean. Theseus, upon a dare, jumped in and retrieved the ring and then offered it back to Poseidon.



Themes

The Desire for Power

Throughout the story the reader will see the struggle for power played out. Theseus begins the story wanting power of strength and physical stature to prove that he is the son of Poseidon. He doesn't want to be the son of Poseidon so that he can be powerful. It seems that he more wants to have a father figure and to not be looked at as a fatherless child.

The other characters in the book that have a desire for power are much more prominent. Theseus encounters the city of Eleusis with Persephone, queen of the Eleusians. She desires power and when Theseus attempts to change the customs of her people so that men are no longer servants to women, she tries to have him killed twice. Once by her brother and then by Theseus' own father.

There are men that want Theseus' father's kingdom but the reader doesn't meet them but follows the war that they fight to stop them. When Theseus is taken to Crete to be a bull dancer he meets Asterion. Asterion is a man that wants power from the king. He isn't the king's blood but is the heir because his mother had an affair while she was married. Asterion's desire for power kills him and is what allows Theseus to escape with the other bull dancers.

Faith

Faith is a central theme of the book. There are many places in the story where people have different faiths that they worship. There are many gods that are named and at one point there is even a brief mention of a character that worships the Lord in Heaven. Theseus continually asks Poseidon what he should be doing and tries to appease the gods that he knows from his youth. The life of Poseidon revolves around his faith and the faith that others have.

When Theseus goes to Eleusis their faith is different than his. It is their faith in the wife of Poseidon that convinces them that it should be women that lead the city because they are the ones that have children and not the men. The religion controls their customs and their actions. It is seen how large a contrast there is in the faiths when Theseus and the others are taken to Crete. The gods that they worship are much the same but the way that they worship is very different. The bull dancers are kept as a tribute to the gods and the ones that die are sacrifices for the gods. Even when the story is ending Theseus doesn't raise his sails coming home because he feels that Poseidon doesn't want him to.



The Role of a King

The reader sees that the role of a king is not what Theseus thinks it to be when he is a child. The King Horse is the first example we see of Theseus confusion about a kings place. He believes that the king is honorable and should be left but the horse is sacrificed because it is his time as given by an omen of the gods. When Theseus leaves to go to meet his father in Athens he stops on the side of the road to sleep with some poor shepherd boys. This is the first place that the reader sees that Theseus understands that here he could be king just as easily as anywhere else with these boys to watch over and protect.

He continues to make notice of the fact that the kings duties should always be to protect his people. He is even named Shepherd of the People. Theseus takes control of the group of youths that was taken from Athens to Crete. They needed a calming influence and someone to lead them and once again Theseus finds that he is in charge and taking care of people. The kings daughter tells him that he is fit for much more than that, but at this point in the story Theseus is bound to take care of the others and the reader sees that he knows that his job is to fight for them as their king.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in the story is told in past tense. It is told from the character Theseus as an old man looking back on his life. The reader sees that Theseus will very often interrupt his story so that he can tell something that happened later on in his life that may have been connected to the events he is telling about. The story is omniscient from Theseus' point of view but limited from all others. The reader will be left to wonder about the thoughts and actions of the other characters in the story but the thoughts of Theseus are reliable and constant although the reader doesn't hear all the things that Theseus hears and occasionally will only get descriptions from Theseus.

The story is told from someone looking back on events that have happened and much of the story is descriptions and facts with little dialogue. Occasional the narrator explains that he can't remember what happened exactly in between two events or that something isn't clear in his mind but other things from that particular moment are perfectly clear. The point of view occasionally will leave the reader guessing at motive and circumstances but the overall effect is easily read and enjoyable.

Setting

The story takes place in several different places including Crete and Athens. While the places in the story are concrete real places there is much in the story that is based on Greek Mythology. While the places are real they are tempered with tales of creatures that are unnatural, such as Phaea the she pig that was giant. To go along with the mythological element there are the stories of the gods that every culture in the story seem to worship and the answers that the people get when they talk to the gods. Theseus himself could tell when an earthquake was coming, a feat which saved the lives of the bull dancers in Crete, and hears the sea god Poseidon speaking to him.

The settings include both land and sea but most of the time at sea is mainly spent traveling between places. Theseus travels from his home and along the travel to his father's kingdom encounters many dangers. Theseus' mother calls forth an oracle to see what lies in Theseus' path and finds that while he will be in danger his life will be spared. This again adds to the mythological effect of the story. The setting make the story very easily read and it creates a clear picture in the readers mind of the look of the people and the country side that Theseus travels.

Language and Meaning

The language is very informal and relaxed for the era of time that the book portrays. The wording is easily understood and the author gives clear explanations of things. The language can be extensive and it leaves the reader with a very long description of

things at times. The author also uses foreshadowing with her phrases to give the reader a view of what will be happening in the coming chapters. Young Theseus sees the horse king killed for the gods and it makes a definite impression on him. Throughout the rest of the story this will be referred back to as a measuring point for Theseus especially when he is taken to the land of Crete.

Theseus also believes for much of his youth that his father is Poseidon. The reader sees that the young boy has the gift of knowing when the earthquakes will hit and the author uses this to show the connection between these two characters. The author will depict different cultures in the book but the reader will not be able to tell a difference in the speaking of these characters. It will be up to the descriptive passages to let the reader know who speaks with an accent or is a peasant or king. While the author makes no differentiation between the characters in speech it is still easy to see where one ends and the next begins in speaking.

Structure

"The King Must Die" is 332 pages and it is divided into 5 different books. Each book has chapters in it but the length of each differs greatly. The books are named for the city at which the story takes place in chronological order starting with Theseus' birth place in Troizen and ending when they leave Naxos. The fourth book, Crete, contains 10 chapters and is 142 pages long while the book of Naxos, book five, contains only two chapters and less than thirty pages.

The book also contains an additional section for the author's notes, The Legend of Theseus, and Select Bibliography. These sections will increase the readers knowledge about the writing of the book and how it differed from the original story of Theseus as well as where the author's information came from. While the plot of the book is fairly simple, a sons desire to reach his father, it is very complex and each book is a story within itself. The reader will see that while Theseus has many stories and adventures ultimately he is unable to connect at length with the father that he wants so much to know. The lack of dialog can make the story a little slow but it paints a picture that the reader should be able to grasp with ease.



Quotes

"Poseidon, as I knew, can look like a man or like a horse, whichever he chooses. In his man shape, it was said, he had begotten me." Book 1: Chapter 1: Page 4

"I swore your father the oath gods dare not break; or I would not do it. I promised him by the River, and the Daughters of Night, not to tell you who you are, unless by yourself you could lift this stone." Book 1: Chapter 3: Page 34

"To kill the man who killed someone last year, and lie with her four seasons to bless the corn, till she gets up from my bed to fetch my killer to me? Is that my moira?" Book 2: Chapter 1: Page 65

"'Lady,' I said, 'I never yet beat a woman; but I never saw one so forget herself'" Book 2: Chapter 2: Page 93

"You have struck at me with other men's hands. Come out now, and use your own." Book 2: Chapter 3: Page 107

"Theseus of Athens. You will cross water to dance in blood. You will be King of the victims. You will tread the maze through fire, and you will tread it through darkness. Three bulls are waiting for you, son of Aigeus. The Earth Bull, and the Man Bull, and the Bull from the Sea." Book 3: Chapter 1: Page 130

"Be at peace, Shepherd of Athens. You are dear to the gods. The gods will save you." Book 3: Chapter 3: Page 152

"You gave yourself to the god; we were only taken. No one else can be King." Book 4: Chapter 1: Page 172

"'Well, Kouros of Poseidon,' he said, 'if you are so thick with your fish-daddy, he will give it back to you.'" Book 4: Chapter 2: Page 188

"So he had bought me for his stable, and handed me to the trainer and thought no more of me; me the son of two kings' houses, both god-descended, Lord of Eleusis and Shepherd of Athens; me who had had the sign from Earth-Shaking Poseidon." Book 4: Chapter 4: Page 221

"There are still the bull-cancers. They will all fight, even the bull-shy ones, even the girls; they will fight for the hope of life." Book 4: Chapter 7: Page 265

"I could not see her mouth, for the blood all over it. It was open, for she was breathing heavily; I saw her teeth, even, crusted with dried blood." Book 5: Chapter 1: Page 323

"A bound is set to our knowing, and wisdom is not to search beyond it. Men are only men." Book 5: Chapter 2: Page 332



Topics for Discussion

Theseus leaves Ariadne on the isle of Naxos when he finds her covered in blood from the sacrifice. What do you think was the main difference to him between her actions and his actions with her father? Explain your answer.

Why do you think that Theseus' father killed himself when he saw the ship had no white sail instead of waiting to talk to those on the ship? Why do you think that Poseidon told Theseus not to raise the flag?

Theseus had the ability to tell when an earthquake was coming and it was said to be a gift from Poseidon but he never acquired the height that he asked for at this time. Speculate on why he was given and not given these attributes and how they worked for and against him.

Persephone and Ariadne are very different in a lot of ways. In Theseus' day Persephone would have been an old woman in many respects since girls often married in their teenage years. What do the two women share in character that would have made Theseus attracted to them? What about the two of them did they share that drove Theseus away from them?

Theseus' father, Aigeus, was aged and weary when Theseus finally met him. Describe Aigeus' state of mind that conflicted so with Theseus' ideas of what to do with the kingdom. If Aigeus had lived would he and Theseus have been able to rule together? Why?

Given the way the characters talk about a person's moira in the book, give a more modern description. Give an example of how it was shown in the book with characters other than Theseus.

Theseus has strong spiritual beliefs and the reader sees that often he is willing to offer sacrifice or help to an enemy, such as the queen's brother after Theseus kills him. Can you point out a place in the book where Theseus seems to be wavering in his beliefs or shows conflicting actions or thoughts? If not explain what it is that never changes. Give examples.