

storytime™

WE ARE HEROES

6

FACING CHALLENGES

IN THIS ISSUE

THESEUS AND
THE MINOTAUR
ODYSSEUS AND
THE CYCLOPS

PLUS!

Tricky puzzles,
a crossword
and a mythic
maze!



This issue of *Storytime: We Are Heroes* features two thrilling tales of action and adventure from Greek mythology.

‘Theseus and the Minotaur’ tells the story of a brave hero who goes on a quest to defeat a monster that lives in a terrifying maze, while ‘Odysseus and the Cyclops’ is about the encounter between a one-eyed giant and one of the heroes of the Trojan War. (You’ll remember Odysseus from two of our previous stories...)

At the moment, it is difficult for us to go out on real-life adventures – and sometimes we can feel trapped, just like Theseus did in the Labyrinth and Odysseus did in the Cyclops’s cave. Both heroes needed help and teamwork to succeed – who can *you* ask for help when you need it? Also, how can you help *them* out when they are facing challenges?

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THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR


Of all the kings of Ancient Greece, King Minos of Crete was the most powerful, and he commanded an invincible army.

To keep him happy and to prevent him from waging war, all the other rulers sent gifts to him. Some gave him food and wine, some gave him silks and treasures, but every spring, King Aegeus of Athens was forced to send to King Minos seven young men and seven young women.

When they reached Crete, King Minos locked the poor young people in an impossible maze, called a labyrinth, which was built beneath his palace. In the labyrinth lived a terrible raging monster called the Minotaur. It had the

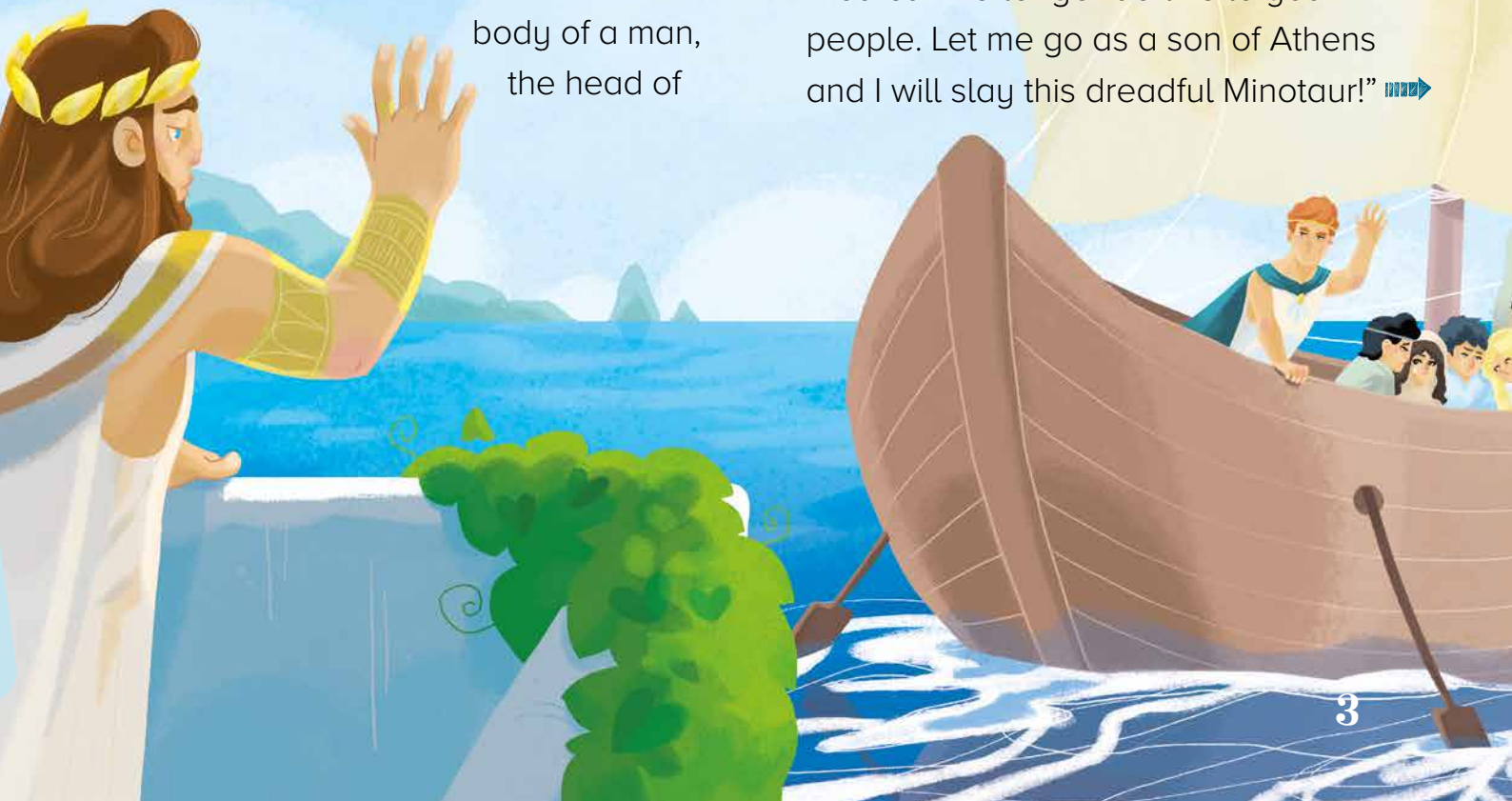
body of a man,
the head of

a bull and an appetite for humans. No person who entered the labyrinth ever came out alive.



In Athens, the time was approaching for King Aegeus to choose fourteen more youngsters to sacrifice to King Minos and his horrible Minotaur. However, this time, the king's son, Theseus, refused to accept such cruelty and unfairness and volunteered to go to Crete.

“This isn't right, Father!” said Theseus. “You can no longer do this to your people. Let me go as a son of Athens and I will slay this dreadful Minotaur!” ➡





King Aegeus begged his son not to leave, but Theseus was brave and headstrong and his mind was made up. Soon, the prince set sail for Crete with thirteen other young Athenians.

When they arrived, they were greeted by a sneering King Minos and his daughter, Princess Ariadne. Minos taunted the Athenians and tutted, “Not much of a meal for my beast, are you? Such pathetic weaklings!”

When King Minos asked for their names, everybody cowered and stayed silent, except for Theseus, who stepped forward boldly. “I am Theseus, Prince of Athens, and I have come to slay your Minotaur!”

King Minos laughed. “Ha! Have you now? Many before you have

tried and all have failed! You will die just as they did.”

However, Princess Ariadne admired Theseus’s courage and honesty, and she hated her father’s cruelty. That night, she crept into the cell where Theseus and his fellow Athenians were chained up, and woke him.

“Even if you kill the Minotaur, you will never escape from the labyrinth,” she told the hero. She handed him a sword and a ball of thread. “Trail this thread behind you and you will be sure to find your way out of the labyrinth.”

Theseus thanked the princess for her great kindness.

“You can show me your thanks,” she said, “by taking me with you when you leave – I cannot bear to stay here!

Besides, my father will have me killed when he discovers what I have done.”

Theseus vowed to help the princess escape if her plan was successful.

At the break of dawn the next day, the king watched his guards march Theseus and the other Athenians to the labyrinth. They were all terrified – except for Theseus, of course!

“Make sure he goes in first!” smiled King Minos, pointing at the hero.

A guard grabbed the prince by the shoulder and shoved him roughly through the door of the labyrinth.

It was dark inside, but for the faint flicker of burning torches. Theseus could smell the stink of the Minotaur..

The prince stood just inside the entrance, waiting for the other young Athenians to be pushed inside too.

“Stay here and hold the end of this thread,” he told them. “Whatever you do, don’t let go of it. I will return for you as soon as I can!”



Theseus began to creep through the gloomy, confusing labyrinth, trailing the thread behind him as he went. ➡

THINK ABOUT IT!

Ariadne gave two items to help Theseus survive in the Labyrinth. Can you think of something you have been given in the past year that helps to protect you?



His path was littered with skeletons and he walked into many dead ends. Sometimes, he spotted thread on the floor before him and realised that he had come full circle. He soon felt like he had been walking for many hours.

When Theseus stumbled upon the centre of the labyrinth, he finally found the Minotaur. It was more terrifying than he could have imagined. The monster's body was like a giant's, and its bullish head was as black as night, with flaming eyes and piercing horns.

When the Minotaur saw Theseus, it hunched its powerful shoulders and charged towards him at full speed, flinging the prince high into the air.

Theseus landed with a bone-cracking thud. At that moment, he thought he would never survive, but then he remembered Princess Ariadne's sword, which was hidden beneath his tunic.

The Minotaur charged again, but this time Theseus jumped to his feet and, quick as lightning, plunged the sword into the Minotaur's heart. It was enough to finish the mighty beast.

In the dim light, Theseus caught sight of the end of his thread trail and followed it back to his friends, who were overjoyed to see him.

With Theseus leading the way, the young Athenians left the labyrinth and found an anxious Princess Ariadne waiting for them outside.



“You did it!” she exclaimed.

“But I would never have succeeded without your help,” Theseus replied with a smile.

Grabbing her hand, he dashed with the other Athenians towards the port, and they boarded their ship.

Before most of Crete had stirred from its sleep, the hero and his friends had sailed quietly away.

Even King Minos had gone back to bed and, fast asleep, he was quite unaware that his greatest weapon – the Minotaur – was lying dead in the labyrinth, and his days of tyranny were over. 🌀

Before Theseus left Athens, he told his father that if he defeated the Minotaur, he would change his ship's sails from black to white. Unfortunately, he forgot to do this when he sailed back to Athens. When King Aegeus saw the black sails, he thought his son was dead. Overwhelmed by grief, he jumped into the sea – and some say that is how the Aegean Sea got its name.



ODYSSEUS AND THE CYCLOPS

The great Greek hero Odysseus was sailing home with his soldiers after a triumphant nine-year battle against the Trojans when strong winds blew his ship far off course.

Tired of battling the stormy seas, and running low on food, Odysseus dropped anchor near a dark, forested island. He and twenty of his bravest men rowed ashore to explore – and Odysseus brought some flasks of wine to give to whoever might live there.

When they reached the shore, they heard noisy bleating and followed the sound until they came to a huge sheep pen just outside a cave.

Odysseus led his men into the cave, where they were delighted to find big hunks of meat and wheels of cheese. Though the men longed to take the food from the cave and escape,

Odysseus ordered everyone to wait for the owner to appear so that they could ask his permission. He did not want to anger the gods by stealing!

They lit a fire and waited until they heard heavy footsteps pounding towards the cave, and the bleats of yet more sheep. Suddenly, a large flock was herded into the cave, followed by a giant humanlike figure.

Odysseus and his crew leapt back in surprise. The monster was so gigantic, he had to stoop to get into the cave, and they saw he had only one eye, in the centre of his forehead.



He was a Cyclops, one of a race of giants who once worked as blacksmiths for the gods.

The Cyclops was angered to find men inside his cave. “What are you doing here, stealing my food?” he shouted. Odysseus stepped forward bravely.

“We are Greek soldiers on our way home from the Trojan War and we hoped, by the laws of the gods, that you might show us some kindness and share your provisions with us, please. Our journey has been long and hard.”

“The laws of the gods! Ha!” sneered the Cyclops. “We Cyclops live by our own rules now!”

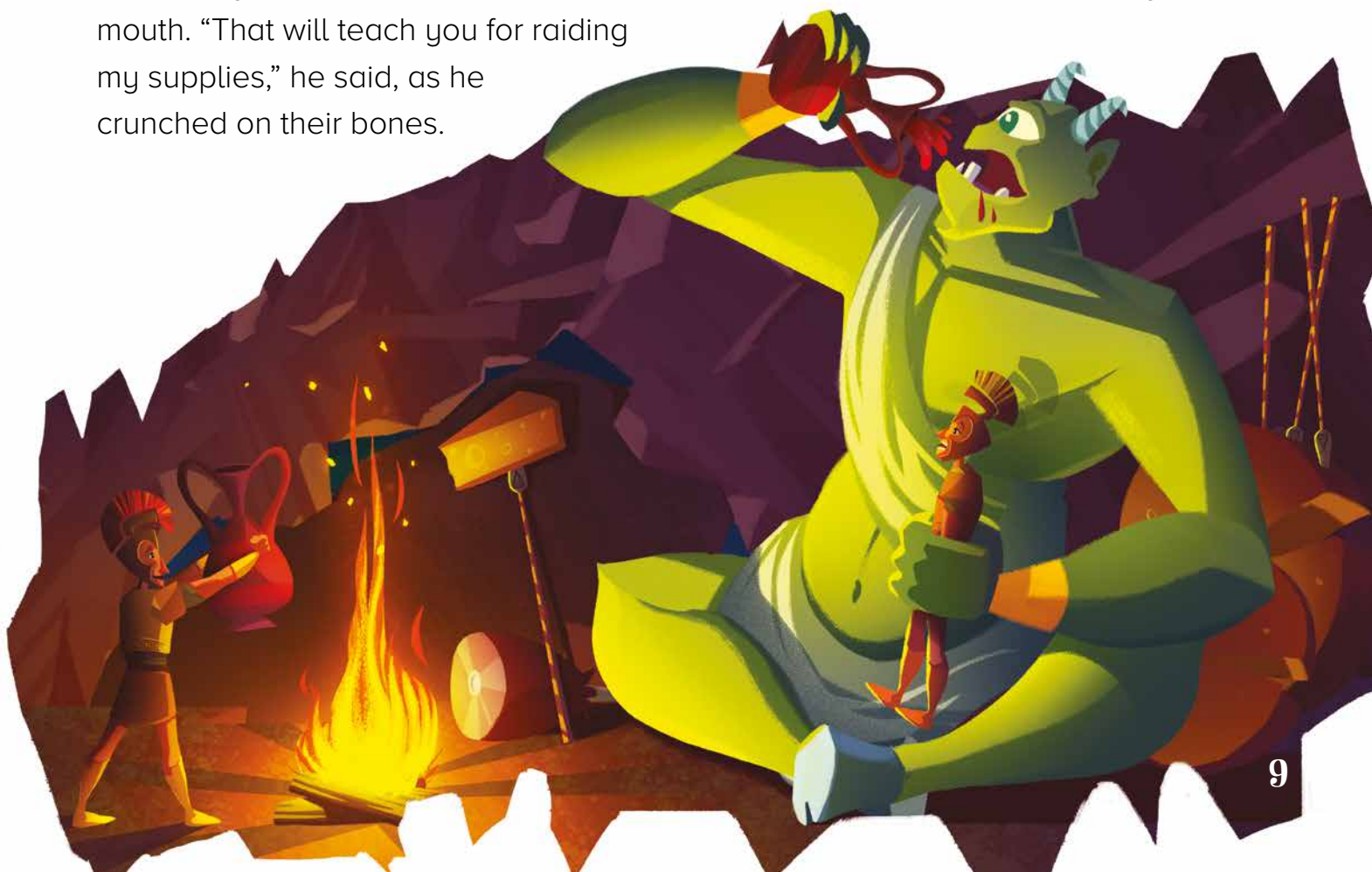
And he grabbed two soldiers with his fat, clumsy fists and threw them into his mouth. “That will teach you for raiding my supplies,” he said, as he crunched on their bones.

Then he rolled a great boulder over the entrance of the cave, trapping the crew inside. The Cyclops sniggered to himself, curled up by the fire and went to sleep.

Odysseus was horrified – what trouble had he got his men into? There was no way he could move the boulder to escape, even with the help of his soldiers! So they cowered in a dark corner. With no hope of escape, Odysseus didn’t get a wink of sleep.



In the morning, the Cyclops rolled aside the boulder that blocked the entrance and grabbed two more Greek soldiers for his breakfast. Odysseus pleaded with the Cyclops, but the giant didn’t care about what he had to say. ➡



TEAMING UP!

Odysseus and his men survived by working together. What are some things that are easier or more fun when you do them with others?



“If you are foolish enough to walk into my larder, then I will eat you,” he grunted. He left with his sheep and sealed up the cave behind him.

All day, Odysseus paced anxiously back and forth, trying to come up with an escape plan.

When the Cyclops returned that night with his sheep, he closed up the cave and tried to grab some soldiers for his dinner, but Odysseus leapt forward. “Oh, great one, to prove we are not your enemy, we have a gift – a wine so fine, only the gods are allowed to drink it. Would you like to try some?”

The Cyclops had never drunk wine before, and he guzzled down a whole flask. It dribbled down his chin.

Wiping his mouth, the Cyclops said, “You speak the truth, thief. This drink is good. Give me some more.”

Odysseus laid all the flasks of wine before the Cyclops and, one by one, he gulped them down until he was really quite drunk.

“Tell me, little man,” slurred the tipsy Cyclops, before letting out a loud burp, “What is your name?”

“Oh, I am called Nobody,” Odysseus replied with a grin.

“Well, Nobody,” smiled the Cyclops, “I like your wine! To thank you, I will eat you last.” And he slumped to one side and began snoring.

Quickly, Odysseus and his strongest men grabbed the stick the Cyclops used to herd his sheep. Together, they lifted it and drove it into his one eye, blinding him. The Cyclops leapt to his feet and let out a piercing roar of pain. He staggered around the cave, holding his eye and calling for help.

Odysseus and his crew hid, and were terrified to hear the footsteps of more giant Cyclops thudding towards the cave. “What is it?” they heard many thundering voices shout.

“Nobody has blinded me!” wailed the Cyclops. “Nobody did it to me!”

The other giants grumbled and shouted, “Well, if nobody has hurt you, why are you calling us, you fool?” And they stomped away.

The Cyclops groaned in agony and fell to the floor. In his drunken state, he soon fell asleep.




While he slept, Odysseus and his men worked on the next part of their plan, and prepared for their daring escape in the morning.

When the Cyclops woke up at dawn, he roared in anger. “Don’t think you can escape from me, Nobody and his little men. When I move this boulder, I will be standing guard – and, tonight, I will search every corner of this cave to find you and eat you!”

The Cyclops rounded up his sheep and, as each one left the cave, he checked its back to make sure the men weren’t trying to escape on them.

What he didn’t realise was that the soldiers were holding on to the bellies of the sheep. As soon as they were clear of the cave, they let go and dashed down the mountainside as quickly as they could. ➔

An illustration of a large, green-skinned Cyclops with a white blindfold and a blue sash, holding a wooden staff. He is standing in a landscape with a wooden fence and a blue sky with white clouds. In the foreground, there are several sheep with white wool and red harnesses. A purple text box is overlaid on the scene, containing text about the Cyclops.

The Cyclops was called Polyphemus, and he was the son of the sea god, Poseidon. After Odysseus escaped, Polyphemus prayed for his father to punish the Greek hero for blinding him. Angry Poseidon battered Odysseus’ ship with seas so stormy and waves so high, it took him ten years to find his way home!

When they reached the beach, they dragged their boat into the sea. They then rowed with all their might towards their ship, anchored offshore.

When the Cyclops heard Odysseus' crew scrambling over the rocks, he knew he had been tricked, and he grabbed great boulders and threw them into the sea. His blindness made his aim poor, but his powerful throws created huge waves that almost capsized their rowing boat.

"Missed!" shouted Odysseus, taunting the Cyclops. "I should tell you, my

name isn't Nobody – I am Odysseus. And I hope the loss of your eye puts an end to your cruelty, you monster!"

The Cyclops roared and threw another boulder, but it was too late – Odysseus and his men had made it safely to their ship, with their pockets and packs filled to the brim with supplies they had taken from the cave of the Cyclops. 🌀



COPING WITH CHALLENGES

We may not have to fight monsters like Theseus and Odysseus did, but we can learn from the way they faced difficulties!

- **Don't give up!** Heroes keep working even when faced with overwhelming odds.
- **Be clever!** Try to come up with new solutions to problems.
- **Ask for help!** Even heroes need help sometimes!

STORY QUEST!

In this month's stories, brave heroes are trapped in dangerous situations, but manage to defeat the foes threatening them and escape. Have YOU ever felt trapped, like Odysseus, Theseus and their friends were?

1

In 'Theseus and the Minotaur', what do you think were the qualities that helped Theseus to complete his quest and defeat the Minotaur? Do you think that being a bit like Theseus can help you today?

2

Theseus could not have completed his quest without two things given to him by Ariadne. What were they?

A. _____

B. _____

3

Theseus and Odysseus both needed help from their friends in order to triumph. What is a lesson that we can learn from this?

4

In 'Odysseus and the Cyclops', how did Odysseus manage to get the better of the Cyclops? Was it through strength or by some other means?

5

Can you think of a situation where it is better to be clever and talk about things, like Odysseus did?

HA-HA!

Q: Why did the Cyclops teacher have a very easy job?

A: Because he only had one pupil!



ANSWERS: 1. The special qualities that helped Theseus complete his quest were his *bravery* and his *determination*. Because he was brave he could venture into the frightening labyrinth and defeat the Minotaur, and his determination meant he did not give up when things were tough. 2. Theseus needed the sword Ariadne gave him to slay the Minotaur and the thread to escape from the labyrinth. 3. The lesson we can learn is that it is a good thing to get help when you need it! 4. Odysseus was not as strong as the Cyclops, so he outsmarted him instead.

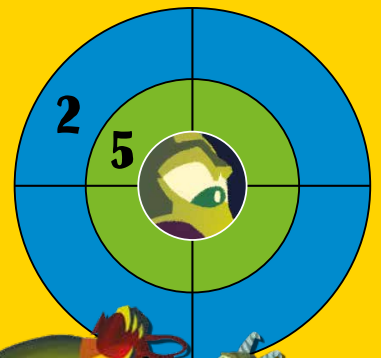
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PLAYBOX

Can you find your way out of the labyrinth, solve a maths puzzle and spot shadows of monsters from Greek mythology? Why not team up with a parent or carer to work on these puzzles together?

1 THE EYE OF THE CYCLOPS

Odysseus and his crew are having an archery contest – **can you add up how many points each of them got below?** (The bullseye... er, Cyclops eye is worth 10 points!)



A  +  +  =

B  +  +  =

C  +  +  +  =



2 WHAT MAKES A HERO?

Odysseus and Theseus are both heroes, and they each have their own unique strengths. **Which three words on this list could be used to describe the qualities that make YOU a hero?**

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Inventive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Selfless | <input type="checkbox"/> Brave |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wise | <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clever | <input type="checkbox"/> Kind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Courageous |

3 MINOTAUR LABYRINTH

Can you help guide Theseus through the labyrinth? **Draw a line to represent Ariadne's thread, showing the way out!** If you find it a bit tricky, why not ask someone to help you?



4 SPOT THE MONSTERS!

Odysseus' crew think that they can see the shadows of mythical Greek creatures on the cave wall. **Can you name them all?** (Clue: they have all appeared **We Are Heroes** stories!)



