

Daidalos and Ikaros

Length: 8 min 25 sec

Summary

Daidalos, a master craftsman, lives in Athens with his son, Ikaros. One day, as Ikaros flies a kite made for him by his father on his birthday, King Minos of Crete appears at their door, demanding that Daidalos accompany him back to Crete and build him a splendid new palace. They depart the very next day and on arrival in Crete Daidalos sets to work on the new palace whose most impressive feature is a vast underground maze, the labyrinth.

Once the place is complete, Daidalos tells Minos he wishes to return to Athens but the king forbids it. Trapped on the island, Daidalos begins to plan his escape: he makes wings for himself and his son so that they can fly to freedom. Although he tells his son to follow the same path as him, Ikaros goes his own way and flies higher and higher until the wax binding his feathers melts and he plummets to his death.

Starting-points

Like the story of Arachne, Daidalos and Ikaros is a story about a creative genius and the price of fame. Try asking the children whether they would like to be famous. What are the benefits fame brings? What are the related problems? Is it possible to be famous and happy? What would it be like to have a famous mother or father?

This is also a story about the relationship between parent and child. Should you always obey your parents or guardians? Why don't children always do as they are told?

Pause points

2 min 50 sec: *'How would you like to help me make a palace... so astonishing men and women will tell tales of it for as long as there are people on this earth?'*

- What does Minos say to Daidalos to persuade him to come with him to Crete?
- Do you think Daidalos will accept Minos' invitation? Does he have any choice?

5 min 37 sec: *The soldiers, for their part, began to wonder if this great inventor had lost his mind: either he was staring at the sky or gathering fallen feathers.*

- What do you think Daidalos is thinking about as he stares up at the sky?
- Why might he be collecting feathers?

Questions for discussion

- In what ways does the opening of the story (up to the point when Daidalos gives Ikaros his birthday present) prepare the listener for what happens later? (*Daidalos' invention of the kite shows his interest in flight and suggests the means by which he will escape from Crete; the rumours of a possible invasion hint at Minos' imminent arrival.*)
- Even though Minos has given Daidalos and his son all they could possibly need, Daidalos wants to leave Crete. Why? (*He wants to return to the place where he was born; he feels trapped in his mansion, his 'golden cage'; he longs for the simple life, 'the little house they had left in Athens'.*)
- In what ways does fame limit rather than enhance a person's freedom?
- The very inventiveness that enables Daidalos to escape from Crete causes the death of his son. Do inventions (e.g. the motor car, television, the internet) always have a downside?
- Who is more responsible for Ikaros' death, Daidalos for creating the wings or Ikaros for disobeying his father's orders? Who do you feel more sorry for?
- What are the similarities and differences between the stories of Daidalos and Arachne?

Suggested activities

- You could ask the students to write a review of the stop animation version of Daidalos and Ikaros. (This film was made by a Y7 student.)
- Make a mobile of the flight of Daedalus and Ikaros. Here is a video for some inspiration:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsDfbJnbzI4&list=PL069FF57228D8F65B&index=3>