



Teacher's Guide

Minoans: Public Peace & Ritual Violence **Cultural Legacies of Ancient Civilizations Series**

Grade Levels:

7 - 12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

World History

World Geography and Cultures

Synopsis:

Explains that the Minoans were traditionally viewed as peaceful islanders whose legend of Theseus and the Minotaur became a part of classical Greek mythology. Delving deeper into this myth and examining the Minoans' bull worship, historians have discovered that secret human sacrifices, led by women, were the key to the stability of Minoan culture. Traces this worship of the bull by examining art, artifacts and archaeological sites that attest to the ritual violence that unpinned Minoan culture.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain the cultural significance of the legend of Theseus, the labyrinth and the Minotaur.
- Contrast the peaceful appearance of Minoan culture with the secret religious violence that resulted in the stability of Minoan culture.
- Consider the power of secret religious rites to control an entire population.
- Begin to understand that history, mythology and religion are often interconnected.

Vocabulary:

enigmatic, elite, passive, frescoes, labyrinth, brutish, ritualized, pastoral idyll, exceptional, sophistication, Stone Age, pigments, appeasing, sinister, crypt, excavation, appease, secluded, ethos, potent, initiated, monopoly, paradox, idyll

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

What is a labyrinth? What Greek legend is associated with the labyrinth? Who was the hero of this story? Who or what was his opponent?

Have you ever seen the bull depicted on pottery or in other art forms associated with the Greeks? Where have you seen this? Think back to when you first studied ancient Greek society.

Why is Greece a popular travel destination today? When people visit Greece what side trips do they often take?

Who were the Minoans? Were Minoans a distinct culture or were they Greeks? Would it surprise you to learn that the Minoans were the first to tell the story of Theseus and the Minotaur? Other aspects of the peaceful Minoan culture may surprise you as well.

Post-Viewing Discussion:

What historical evidence assures us that the Minoans were a peaceful people?

Why was the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur so popular with the Minoans?

Why was the bull a central image of Minoan art?

Why did Minoan priestesses perform sacrifices? What was the purpose of these sacrifices? How is it possible that women who are so often associated with nurturing and care giving, could be the ones to perform human sacrifice?

Further Activities:

Further investigate places where the Minoans worshipped and what these sites tell us about Minoan religion.

Investigate Minoan “cult furniture” and what it implies about Minoan religious rites.

Investigate Minoan divinities such as the snake goddess and the mistress of animals.

Find out what Arthur Evans discovered about Minoan culture and why the ancient Greeks may have conspired to forget about this civilization.

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