

## KNOSSOS

Legend tells of a King Minos who lived on the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea. In his palace at Knossos he had a labyrinth (maze) where a mythical beast, called the Minotaur, lived. This beast had the head of a bull and the body of a human. Annually, the king of Athens had to send seven young men and seven young maidens to King Minos as food for the Minotaur. One year, Theseus, son of the king of Athens, accompanied the young victims to Crete. After arriving at Knossos, Theseus and his companions were helped by Ariadne, King Minos's daughter, who gave him a dagger to kill the Minotaur and some thread to find his way out of the labyrinth. And so Theseus killed the beast, found his way safely out of the labyrinth, and freed Athens from the annual obligation of sending fourteen youths to Crete.



**This fresco depicts the sport of bull-leaping, which was popular with the people of Crete.**

In A.D. 1900 a famous British archaeologist named Arthur Evans discovered a large palace at Knossos in north-central Crete. This palace belonged to a civilization that Evans called the Minoan civilization, named after the legendary King Minos of the labyrinth. This civilization flourished on Crete between 2000 and 1450 B.C. (See map on page 87.)

The Minoan civilization consisted of a number of palaces, the largest of which is located at Knossos. The palace had several purposes. It served as the residence of the king, who was the supreme ruler, along with his family and attendants. It was also a place where attendants and higher officials carried out the daily business of the palace and the area it controlled. Finally, food and trade items were stored there and redistributed to the common people of the countryside.

The Minoan people lived in towns and villages. Some cultivated primarily olives and grapes. Others were craftsmen and artisans. They manufactured luxury items, such as finely-painted pottery, elaborately-carved stone vessels, and jewelry. These items were traded as far away as Egypt and the Near East. Trade was an important part of Minoan life. This civilization was prosperous and technologically advanced. The palaces had an advanced drainage system complete with baths. Frescoes, or wall paintings, decorated the walls of the palaces with scenes of animals, games, and religious festivals. This indicates that the Minoans were a peaceful and fun-loving people. The Minoans loved games, such as boxing and bull-leaping. Bull-leaping involved jumping onto a bull by grabbing its horns, doing a somersault, and landing back on the ground.

About 1450 B.C. the Minoan civilization came to an end. The palaces and towns were destroyed. Archaeologists can only guess as to the cause of this destruction. About fifty years before, a volcano on the nearby island of Thera had erupted violently. It brought large amounts of ash and tidal waves to Crete. As a result, it is believed that the Aegean trading system, as well as Minoan food production, was disrupted. Today, only the ancient ruins of this once wealthy and advanced civilization remain.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# CHALLENGES

1. Who discovered the Minoan civilization and when?

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2. After which legendary figure was the Minoan civilization named?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What was the Minotaur?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Who was Theseus, and what did he do?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where was the Minoan civilization located?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where was the largest Minoan palace located?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What games did the Minoans enjoy?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. With which areas did the Minoans trade their goods?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What was the function of a Minoan palace?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What artifacts did the Minoans produce?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### POINTS TO PONDER

1. What would you see and experience if you were to visit the palace of Knossos during its finest period?

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2. What kind of evidence, or lack of evidence, indicates that the Minoans can be considered a peaceful and fun-loving people?

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3. What is believed to be the cause of the end of the Minoan civilization? Why?

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4. What characterizes the Minoan civilization? Why do you think we know much about the Minoan way of life but nothing of Minoan history?

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Section 1: Early Greek Civilization  
Ancient Greece**Section Quiz****A. Key Terms**

**Directions:** Match the definitions in Column I with the terms in Column II. Write the correct letter in each blank.

**Column I**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. an area of land nearly surrounded by water
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. member of a rich and powerful family
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. a fortified hill of an ancient Greek city
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. government in which citizens govern themselves

**Column II**

- a. peninsula
- b. acropolis
- c. aristocrat
- d. democracy

**B. Main Ideas**

**Directions:** Write the letter of the correct answer in each blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who were an early people who made an impact on Greek civilization?
  - a. the Athenians
  - b. the Minoans
  - c. the Knossos
  - d. the Homerians
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Most of the good land in ancient Greece was controlled by
  - a. aristocrats.
  - b. soldiers.
  - c. artisans.
  - d. merchants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What accomplishment is credited to Solon?
  - a. He won the war.
  - b. He freed citizens enslaved for having debts.
  - c. He built the first city-state.
  - d. He stopped law reform.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What portion of the population of Athens were citizens?
  - a. All were citizens except for the slaves.
  - b. Half the people were citizens.
  - c. One in five were citizens.
  - d. One in twenty were citizens.