

Icarus

Name: _____

Read the passage all the way through before you start.

Daedalus was the finest maker in the world, and that was the trouble. King Minos had hired him to build a labyrinth, and once it was built the king would not let him leave, because a maker that good must not build for anyone else.

The sea was watched. The roads were watched. So Daedalus looked up.

He gathered feathers, the large ones and then the small, and bound them with thread and sealed them with wax until he had two wings, and then two more for his son. He warned Icarus carefully. Do not fly low, he said, or the sea spray will soak the feathers and weigh you down. Do not fly high, or the sun will soften the wax. Fly the middle course and follow me.

They rose from the cliff, and for a time the boy did exactly as he was told. A ploughman below stopped and stared, taking them for gods.

But flying is a joy, and Icarus was young, and the middle course is a dull place when the sky above you is open. He climbed. The wax softened and ran, the feathers loosened, and his arms beat against nothing at all. He fell, calling his father's name, and the sea took him.

Daedalus circled the water until he could no longer pretend, then flew on to land alone. He never made wings again.

Myth · 230 words

Before you turn over

1. Underline any word you are not sure of. Work out what you can from the sentence around it.

2. In one sentence, what is this passage about?

3. Write down one question you still have.

The questions are on the next page. →

Icarus

Answer in complete sentences. Look back at the passage as often as you need to.

1. Why would King Minos not let Daedalus leave?

2. What two warnings did Daedalus give, and why each?

3. The writer says "the middle course is a dull place when the sky above you is open". How does that line explain what Icarus does?

4. Why does the story include the ploughman who mistakes them for gods?

5. What lesson has this myth carried for thousands of years?

Icarus — Answer Key

1. Because he was the finest maker alive, and the king did not want him building for anyone else. (*Recall*)
2. Do not fly low — sea spray would soak the feathers and weigh him down. Do not fly high — the sun would soften the wax. (*Recall*)
3. Answers will vary. It shows the fall was not stupidity but the pull of joy and youth — the safe path felt like a waste of the sky. (*Character*)
4. Answers will vary. It shows how astonishing the flight was, and it raises them just before the fall, which makes the fall land harder. (*Author's craft*)
5. Answers will vary. Accept: ignoring a warning has a cost; or ambition without limits destroys the thing it was meant to serve. (*Theme*)