



# Daedalus and Icarus



**B**orn of royalty, Daedalus was a clever sculptor, architect, and inventor. After murdering his nephew, Talos, Daedalus was exiled to Crete, where he built the Labyrinth for King Minos. King Minos blamed Daedalus for the loss of his daughter Ariadne because Daedalus helped her destroy the Minotaur with Theseus, and Ariadne left thereafter. King Minos punished Daedalus and his son, Icarus, by imprisoning them in the Labyrinth. Using his ingenuity, Daedalus fashioned wings of feathers, beeswax, and string to escape. The father and son flew from prison like birds. Ignoring Daedalus's warning not to fly too high, Icarus flew too close to the sun, and the wax melted. Icarus plunged into the sea and drowned. Daedalus flew on to the island of Sicily, where he helped King Cocalus build a palace. King Minos followed in pursuit, and Daedalus killed him to avoid recapture. Icarus's story is sometimes told as a morality tale, cautioning listeners not to fly too high.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

The narrators should stand on either side. Talos should stand to one side and exit after his lines. Daedalus should stand in the middle with King Minos on one side and King Cocalus on the other. Icarus can stand on the opposite side of Talos and exit after his lines.

## *Props*

The kings can wear crowns. Talos, Daedalus, and Icarus can be dressed simply. Create a backdrop that shows a magnificent palace on an island with birds flying overhead. Include the sun and ocean.

## *Delivery Suggestions*

King Minos should sound angry during most of his delivery. Talos should sound eager to please. Daedalus should sound intelligent and resourceful. King Cocalus should sound forceful and strong.

## *Characters*

- ▣ Narrator 1
- ▣ Narrator 2
- ▣ Talos
- ▣ Daedalus
- ▣ King Minos
- ▣ Icarus
- ▣ King Cocalus



## Daedalus and Icarus

**Narrator 1:** Daedalus was a royal Athenian, having descended from Cecrops. He was a talented artist, who loved to invent mechanical devices. For a time, he worked in Athens as a sculptor.

**Narrator 2:** He agreed to tutor his nephew, Talos, and found him to be an apt pupil. Talos especially enjoyed creating new things.

**Talos:** Daedalus, look at my latest invention. I think you'll find it clever and quite useful.

**Daedalus:** What is it, Talos?

**Talos:** I was looking at the jawbone of a serpent, and it occurred to me that it could be the model for this tool that I've designed. Give me a piece of wood, and I'll demonstrate its usefulness.

**Narrator 1:** Daedalus watched in amazement as Talos showed him his creation—what we now know as a saw.

**Daedalus:** You are clever, young Talos. This is a fine invention.

**Talos:** It should indeed be useful, but I have other ideas, too. Let me tell you about some of them.

**Narrator 2:** Secretly, Daedalus was jealous of Talos, resenting his ingenuity. Daedalus decided to get rid of Talos. They often walked together, so at the next opportunity, Daedalus threw Talos off the top of the Acropolis, ensuring that no one would be cleverer than he was.

**Narrator 1:** Before long, the body was discovered, and Daedalus was found guilty of murder by the court that met on Areopagus, a hill in Athens. He was sentenced to exile and fled to Crete, where he became an architect and sculptor in King Minos's court.

**Narrator 2:** It was there that Daedalus was asked to design the labyrinth that would house the fearsome Minotaur, which demanded annual sacrifices of seven young men and seven young women.

**Narrator 1:** You've heard how Theseus killed the Minotaur and later abandoned Ariadne, King Minos's daughter, on the island of Naxos. King Minos was infuriated when he discovered that his daughter Ariadne had left with the Athenians.

**King Minos:** Someone had to have helped Ariadne outwit the Minotaur, and there's only one person who could have done it. Daedalus designed the labyrinth, and he is the only one who knows its secrets. He shall suffer for his treachery.

**Narrator 2:** Daedalus was brought before King Minos, who had given great thought to an appropriate punishment. Of course, Daedalus didn't realize why King Minos had summoned him.

**Daedalus:** King Minos, how can I serve you?

**King Minos:** You have dishonored my daughter Ariadne and me. Because of you, she has fled the island with the Athenians. I have no recourse but to sentence you to the very prison you designed. You shall be taken to the labyrinth and held there. And since I have lost my daughter, your son shall also suffer. I won't banish him. I'm not that cruel. Instead, you'll have your son—but he'll be captive with you in the labyrinth. Now go!

**Narrator 1:** Daedalus accepted his fate, knowing that he had little choice. He resented the imposition on his son, though, and was determined to find a way out for them. He spoke to his son.

**Daedalus:** Icarus, I have an idea that may help us get out of here.

**Icarus:** Father, I knew you'd think of something. What can I do to help?

**Daedalus:** Collect all the feathers you can find. The birds often drop them near the entrance to the labyrinth. I'll go to the beehives nearby. With feathers, wax, and a bit of string, we can escape this underground prison.

**Icarus:** Father, your cleverness always amazes me. Let's get to work!

**Narrator 2:** Daedalus and Icarus created huge wings, made of feathers, string, and beeswax.

**Icarus:** How will these work, Father?

**Daedalus:** You've watched birds in flight, Son. The principles are the same. We'll climb out of the labyrinth and fly away. But there's one thing you must remember.

**Icarus:** What is that, Father?

**Daedalus:** The feathers are held together with beeswax. If you fly too close to the sun, it will melt, and you'll fall back to the Earth.

**Icarus:** Don't worry Father. I'll take care.

**Narrator 1:** Just as Daedalus promised, the wings worked perfectly, and together the two flew away from the labyrinth. King Minos, disgusted at their treachery, watched them leave.

**King Minos:** That accursed Daedalus has outwitted me again! Will I never get my vengeance?

**Narrator 2:** Meanwhile, Icarus was enjoying his flight. In spite of his father's warning, he kept flying higher and higher. Finally his folly sealed his fate. He flew too close to the sun. The beeswax melted, and the wings disintegrated. Daedalus could only watch helplessly as his beloved son plunged to the sea and drowned. With great sorrow, Daedalus flew on to Sicily, where King Cocalus welcomed him.

**King Cocalus:** Daedalus, welcome to our island. I have heard of your many skills. Do you think you can design a new palace for me? I hear that you know the procedures for installing running water.

**Daedalus:** I would be honored to help you in any way that I can. But we must take care in case King Minos comes searching for me.

**King Cocalus:** Don't worry, for you'll be under my protection. Now, let's get started!

**Narrator 1:** While Daedalus worked on the new palace, King Minos set off in pursuit of Daedalus in his ship. When he saw the palace construction underway, he knew Daedalus must be involved and went to see the king of Sicily.

**King Minos:** King Cocalus, I am looking for Daedalus. Is he here on your island?

**King Cocalus:** I haven't seen him, King Minos. Perhaps he is on one of the nearby islands.

**King Minos:** Hmm. A shame. Well, I do have a problem that perhaps someone here can solve. I'll leave you this conch shell. I am looking for someone who could pull a thread through its windings. I'll give a sack of gold as a reward.

**King Cocalus:** An interesting challenge. Let me see what I can do to solve it.

**Narrator 2:** Attracted by the potential reward, King Cocalus asked Daedalus if he could meet the challenge.

**Daedalus:** Here's what we'll do. Tie the thread on this ant. Then put a bit of honey at the other end of the shell. Watch what happens.

**Narrator 1:** When King Minos saw the ant pull the thread through the shell, he knew that only one person could have been so clever as to meet this challenge.

**King Minos:** There is only one man who could do this. Bring Daedalus to me!

**Narrator 2:** The Sicilian king had no choice, but he knew Daedalus wouldn't come willingly. He stalled for time, pretending to cooperate with King Minos.

**King Cocalus:** I will have to dupe Daedalus into coming here. I'm having a feast tonight. Why don't you join us, and you can capture him there. Meanwhile, would you like to bathe after your long journey? My palace is equipped with running water.

**King Minos:** A good plan! And yes, I would appreciate a bath.

**Narrator 1:** King Cocalus called for Daedalus so that he could warn him.

**King Cocalus:** Daedalus, King Minos has caught up with you and demanded I release you to him. I have convinced him that you can be captured at tonight's feast. It's up to you to determine your fate.

**Daedalus:** Will King Minos bathe before the feast?

**King Cocalus:** Yes, I extended the invitation to him to use the new baths you have installed.

**Daedalus:** Then you needn't worry. I'll take care of him.

**Narrator 2:** As King Minos prepared for his bath, Daedalus made his own preparations. When King Minos stepped into the bath and turned on the tap, boiling water rushed out of the tap, scalding him to death.

**Narrator 1:** Free of his enemy, Daedalus spent the rest of his life serving the King of Sicily.