

# Atticus and the Ancient Greeks

## Adult Guidance

'Atticus and the Ancient Greeks' is a story for Key Stage 2 children. It is perfect to accompany a topic about the ancient Greeks. It can be used as a whole-class book to read together or as a text to use in guided or reciprocal reading sessions. The story focuses on the character of Atticus who, with his family, discovers a secret island where ancient Greeks, gods and goddesses live. While on the island, Atticus is set his own quest and must complete a series of challenges in order to be reunited with his family and leave the island before time runs out.

### Story Overview

The story is set in the present, written in the first person and is told from the point of view of Atticus, an eleven-year-old boy who lives on a boat with his adoptive parents. They are often found travelling the seas, exploring places within Europe, particularly islands around Greece. The family have been trying to find a secret island for a long time and, at the start of the story, they finally discover it. As the family come onto the island, they find people living there from ancient Greek times. They all wish to explore but remember that they must leave the island by sunset, otherwise they will be stuck there for sixty years. Atticus ventures off alone and soon meets various characters from Greek mythology including a centaur, Zeus, Hera and many other gods and goddesses. Believing that Atticus is a hero sent to the island to help the gods, he is sent, by Hera, on a quest to prove his worth. He embarks upon a series of challenges: escaping a labyrinth with a Minotaur in it, finding his way out of a dark cave and then outsmarting a gorgon. Throughout the quest, Atticus is required to draw on skills he has learnt from his parents and, at the same time, goes on his own journey of self-discovery. Eventually, Atticus completes the tasks, finds his parents and, together, they return to their boat, just in time. He is left feeling a greater sense of belonging and belief in himself.

### Themes

The main themes in this story are Greek mythology, ancient history and family, including adoption. There are also subtle themes of destiny, fate, self-belief and perseverance.

### Additional Resources

A range of [additional resources](#) is available to download in order to support teaching of the text, including a [reading comprehension](#), ancient [Greek gods and goddesses information posters](#), a [storm description writing activity](#) and much more.



## Sensitive Issues

Teachers may wish to be aware in advance of some of the following content:

- At the start of the story, Atticus and his parents are on a boat, heading into the eye of a storm.
- Atticus is Home Educated and he and his family live on a boat. This could encourage a discussion about different ways of living and education experiences.
- Atticus explains that his birth-mum gave him up when he was a baby. He says that his mum and dad chose him when they adopted him and that's one of the things that makes him special. He considers the similarities and differences between himself and his adoptive parents. Be aware of adopted children in your setting who may find this triggering.
- There is regular mention throughout the story of the main character feeling lost and being alone in the dark. He references nightmares he has had in which he can't find his mum and dad.
- Atticus chooses to explore, away from his parents (with their permission), and then decides to follow someone he doesn't know. It could be helpful to discuss with the children the possibility of 'stranger danger' and the risks this poses.
- A centaur points a bow and arrow at Atticus and, for a brief moment, Atticus thinks he might die.
- Zeus introduces Atticus to his family, one of whom was born from his own head. He also introduces his wife and sister, Hera, and briefly Atticus looks for two women. Hera later accuses Zeus of having more children that she didn't know about. Some children may question this, as it references incest and infidelity.
- Atticus is set a series of challenges that put him in potentially dangerous situations: lost in a labyrinth containing a Minotaur; shut in a dark cave; and facing a gorgon. If he cannot complete these challenges in the time given, he risks being marooned on the island and separated from his family.
- Hera hears Atticus talking about having no battery left on his phone and then says that he should be in fear of battery himself. She says that it may be him who is dead if he doesn't give her his phone. Some children may find this unsettling.
- Before they manage to escape from the island, Atticus and his family are faced with vengeful gods and a three-headed dog behind them and the perils of the sea ahead of them.

## Plot Summary

### Chapter One – Storm in the Ionian Sea

Atticus and his parents are on board their houseboat, rolling through the waves at the beginning of a storm. His mum believes that this could be the sixty-year storm from the legend of Naberis – a secret island where ancient Greek people are said to still exist. Atticus details his family's life on the houseboat. He describes both his mum and his dad and explains that he was adopted when he was younger. He also introduces his pet, Catticus, found by the family during a trip to the port of Heraklion. Continuing through the storm, the chapter ends with Atticus holding on to Catticus and hoping for calmer waters.



## Chapter Two – Revelations and Explanations

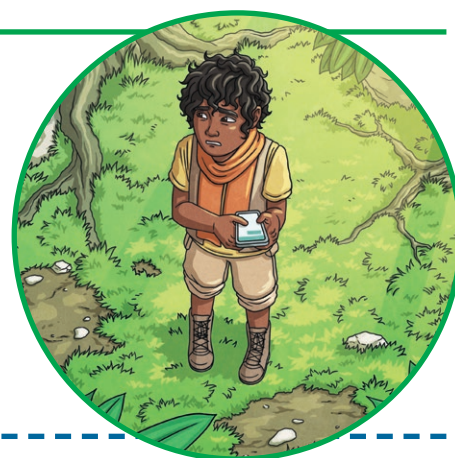
Atticus awakes the following morning to calmer waters and wonders what happened the night before. He recalls his dream – a recurring one – of being alone in the boat in the dark. He comes out of his cabin to find his mum and dad asking questions to each other while looking at an unusual map and old-fashioned compass. Atticus asks his parents what happened and they explain the events of the night before. Mum indicates that she believes they have found Naberros.

## Chapter Three – Ancient Island Arrival

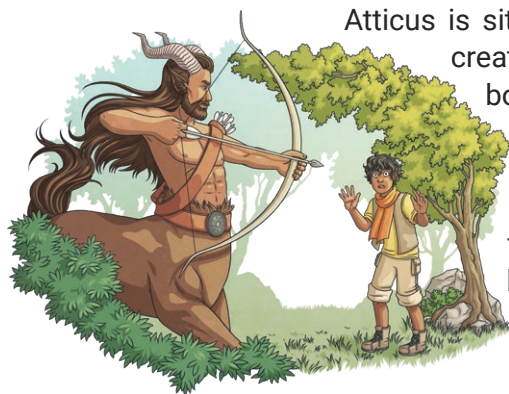
The family get into a dinghy and decide to go ashore, leaving Caticus behind on the boat. Uncertain of what they will find, they are still eager to take a look. Arriving on the island, they spot a path and an ancient-looking fishing boat. Making their way along the path and through the trees farther inland, they find an incredible sight. They see a group of people, wearing different clothes, going about their daily lives in a courtyard surrounded by old buildings. The family begin to wonder if the scene before them is ancient Greece. They discuss the legend and remember that the gateway to the island closes at sunset, so they must be away by then. Eager to explore, Atticus walks away from his parents to see more of the island.

## Chapter Four – Lost and Alone

Atticus sees a girl he initially thinks is his age and is tempted to follow her. Believing that he can find out more about the island, he walks after her up into the hills along a winding path and notices that there are two more girls with her. Trying to keep up, he loses sight of the girl and realises he is far away from his parents. He decides to turn back but cannot remember the way. He attempts to send a message on his phone and then tries to use the map but there is no signal or Internet. The chapter ends with Atticus feeling increasingly anxious and wondering what to do.



## Chapter Five – A Forest Fright



Atticus is sitting alone among the trees when he hears a noise. The sound is a creature called a centaur, who approaches Atticus suspiciously, holding a bow and arrow. Atticus and the centaur speak for a few moments and the centaur gets increasingly angry at him. He points his arrow at Atticus and, just in time, another voice shouts. A man arrives who is larger and more muscly than the centaur. The man and Atticus talk and Atticus finds out, after some initial doubts, that he is Zeus. Atticus shows him his phone and Zeus is in awe, believing Atticus is powerful. They take a selfie together and Zeus invites Atticus to join him for a celebration with the other gods.

## Chapter Six – To the Temple

Atticus briefly sees the three girls again. He then follows Zeus to a temple, where he sees various ancient Greek gods and goddesses, including Poseidon, Athena, Aphrodite and Ares. Zeus claims that Atticus is a 'prophesied arrival' and Atticus tries to explain that he is just lost.

## Chapter Seven – Heroes and Gods

The gods and goddesses discuss who Atticus may be and why he is on the island. Apollo and Artemis wonder if he is a descendant of Heracles. Atticus protests that he is on the island with his mum and dad, using his phone to try to prove this by showing a photo. Some gods and goddesses believe his phone is a weapon. Zeus appreciates seeing his family and, in turn, introduces his own, leaving his wife and sister, Hera, until last.

## Chapter Eight – Mission Suspicion

Hera inspects Atticus and asks if the people in the photo are his 'real' parents. Atticus explains to Hera, who misunderstands and believes that he is one of Zeus's other children. Demanding that he prove his worth as a hero, Hera sends him away to the North Labyrinth. She says that only if he can return to the temple before sunset can he leave the island.

## Chapter Nine – Lurking In The Labyrinth

Atticus is within the labyrinth with hedges all around him. He tries to remember what he has learnt about Greek myths and recalls the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. He decides to use his phone again to help and finds the compass app. Using this, he follows a series of paths to lead him to the south of the labyrinth but suddenly comes across another creature: the Minotaur. Panicking, Atticus searches for a plan to help him pass the labyrinth. He looks through his phone and chooses another app to help. He turns to run away and finds himself in a dead end with the Minotaur fast approaching behind him.

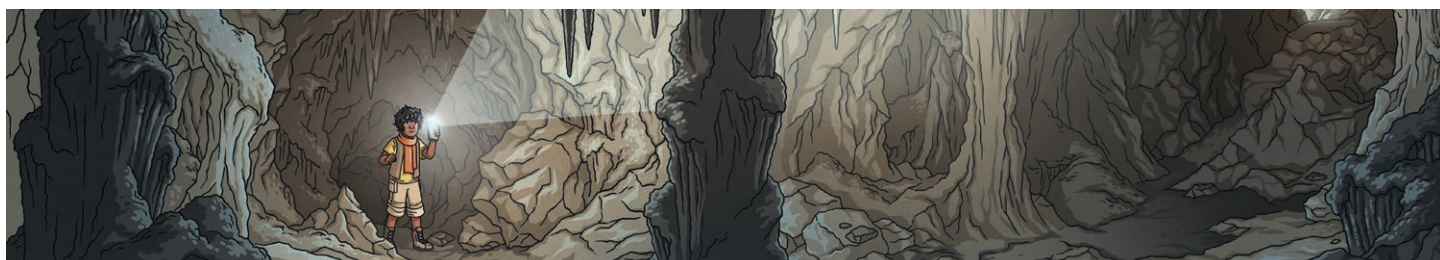
## Chapter Ten – Minotaur Muddle

Atticus stops running and opens the 'Switch Your Faces' app, while the Minotaur stands behind him. Both of their faces are revealed swapped on the screen. Using this as a distraction, Atticus manages to rotate himself and the Minotaur, so that he can escape the labyrinth. Once he is out, he comes across Apollo and persuades him, by playing music on his phone, to help him. Apollo tells Atticus to wait in the sacred caves while he goes to check if the path is clear. Atticus waits inside the cave but, soon, a giant rock is dragged over the entrance, by Ares, leaving him stuck in the darkness.



## Chapter Eleven – Cave Danger

Atticus is scared and alone in the dark cave and turns to his phone, once again, for help. He finds the torch function and uses it to guide his way through the cave to the outside once more. He sees Hermes waiting for him and cautiously asks him what he is doing. Hermes tells him that by completing these tasks, he is proving that he is heroic, just like Zeus. Hermes tells Atticus the legend of Zeus and Cronus. He then points Atticus towards the temple but warns him that he will meet a gorgon on his way, who can turn him to stone just by looking at him. Atticus reminds himself of how far he has come and sets off for the temple.



## Chapter Twelve – Ghastly Gorgon

Walking along the mountainside, Atticus sees the three girls in robes from earlier and asks them what they want. They explain that they are the Moirai and they guide people's destiny. They tell Atticus to trust himself and then they vanish. He walks on, making sure to look only at the floor and comes up with a plan to pass the gorgon. He opens the camera app so he can see where it is and then notices Hermes flying above him. Atticus opens another app called 'Animal Sounds' and uses a cat noise to distract the gorgon. He then throws his phone up to Hermes and successfully runs past the gorgon. Hermes throws it back to him and it crashes onto the floor. Atticus picks it up and runs to the temple.

## Chapter Thirteen – Hera and Now

Atticus arrives back at the temple and is greeted warmly by all the gods and goddesses, except Hera. She says that he is a trickster. Desperate to be able to leave the island, Atticus shows Hera part of an article on his phone about the discovery of a statue of her, proving that she is admired in modern times. Hera agrees to let Hermes take Atticus back to the shore by sunset, but only if she can keep the phone. Atticus nervously agrees and, just as he is leaving, Hera realises that the picture of the statue has no head and arms. Hermes quickly takes Atticus back to the beach but, there, he finds no boat, no Mum and no Dad.

## Chapter Fourteen – Hound of Hades

Hermes, Apollo and Artemis watch as Atticus sits alone on the beach. The Moirai join him and tell him that he can leave the island and he will be safe once he is in the sea. His mum and dad arrive on the beach and they all embrace. Noticing Hera, Ares, Hades and his three-headed dog, Cerberus, coming towards them, the family quickly run into the sea.

## Chapter Fifteen – End of the Legend?

Standing in the sea, the family are unsure what to do. Most of the gods and goddesses remain on land but, then, they notice a boat floating towards them and Poseidon calming the seas with his trident. Atticus, his mum and his dad climb aboard the boat and row back to their houseboat. They make it back to their home safely and are reunited with Catticus. When talking about Atticus's adventures, his mum and dad are unsure whether or not to believe him. In their rush to escape, they had to leave their cameras and equipment behind on the island. Luckily, Dad's phone, which had been left on the boat during their adventure, makes a noise and reveals some messages from Atticus and a selfie of him and Zeus.

