

Hercules was the son of the God Zeus and Alcmena, a woman from Thebes. When Hercules was a baby, two poisonous snakes found their way into his crib, and he strangled them with his bare hands. As he grew up, Hercules' extraordinary strength increased. When he reached adulthood, the Gods decided to test Hercules. They challenged him to complete a dozen dangerous tasks known as *The Twelve Labors*. In each of these tasks, Hercules had to risk his own life to save the lives of others. One labor involved capturing an enormous snow-white bull with the strength of a dozen bulls. This bull had run wild over the Greek island of Crete, crushing the homes of villagers and trampling their crops. It also struck fruit trees with its sharp horns and knocked them to the ground. The people of Crete despaired over the damage to their island, and prayed that someone would be able to help them. Hercules arrived on Crete and spotted the bull thundering across a meadow. He ran after it, captured the powerful bull with his bare hands, and wrestled it to the ground. The people of Crete cheered. Hercules then hoisted the bull over his shoulders and carried it to the Gods, who praised him for his great strength.

Hercules (pronounced HUR-kew-leez)

Zeus (pronounced ZOOSS)

Alcmena (pronounced alk-MAY-nah)

Thebes (pronounced THEEBZ)

Crete (pronounced KREET)

(fold)

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Modern situation: a student in a physical education class must run a mile in under 7 minutes