

THE LIGHTNING THIEF

Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One

By Rick Riordan

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READER'S GUIDE
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When 12-year-old Percy Jackson learns that his true father is Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, he undertakes a dangerous quest across the United States to retrieve a stolen lightning bolt and stop a war between the gods. *The Lightning Thief* provides a high-interest, humorous introduction to the Greek myths. It encourages young readers to explore elements of the classical hero's quest rendered in a modern-day setting, and to discuss such relevant issues as learning disabilities, the nature of family, and themes of loyalty, friendship and faith.

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PLOT SUMMARY

During a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Percy Jackson begins to suspect that his life is not what it seems when his math teacher transforms into a Fury and attacks him. Percy manages to vaporize the monster with an ancient bronze sword, but afterwards he wonders if the incident was a hallucination. Everyone, including Percy's best friend Grover, claims that the math teacher who attacked him never existed.

At the end of the year, Grover insists on escorting Percy home from boarding school. Grover's nervousness and cryptic comments about Percy being in danger make Percy uneasy.

Percy's home life is far from perfect. His mother Sally Jackson is a kind woman who never had any luck in life. She dreams of being a writer, but works at a candy shop to make ends meet and is married to "Smelly" Gabe Ugliano, Percy's abusive stepfather, who expects Percy to provide him with poker-playing money in exchange for room and board. Percy struggles to understand why his mother, who obviously loves him, takes such pains to send him away every year to a different boarding school.

When Percy and his mother go for a weekend retreat to the beach, their time together is interrupted by a storm and a horrible wailing in the middle of the night. Percy's friend, Grover, appears at their door and reveals himself as a satyr. He has been keeping an eye on Percy until Percy is old enough to attend Camp Half Blood, a summer camp for training demigods. Grover tells Percy that monstrous forces are now after him in earnest, and they have no choice but to flee to Camp Half Blood.

On the way, they are attacked by the Minotaur. Percy defeats the monster, but not before it knocks out Grover and squeezes Percy's mother until she disappears in a shower of gold. Heartbroken, assuming his mother is dead, Percy pulls Grover to safety over the property line of Camp Half Blood.

Once at camp, Percy is reunited with his Latin teacher, who in his true form is Chiron, the immortal centaur and trainer of heroes. Percy learns that the Greek gods are alive and well—an integral part of the collective consciousness called Western Civilization. Olympus, the home of the

gods, moves with the heart of the civilization, and now hovers invisibly over the Empire State Building, since America is currently the great power of the West. Percy learns that the gods still have children with mortals, and that monsters naturally seek out these young demigods. Camp Half Blood serves as a safe haven where these powerful, endangered young heroes can train to defend themselves. For the past sixty years, the "big three" (Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades) have kept an oath not to have mortal children because their powerful nature can cause great trouble in the world, but the other Olympians still have enough children to fill the camp. Percy meets Annabeth, a daughter of Athena, and Luke, a son of Hermes. He also makes a new enemy in Clarisse, a daughter of Ares. Percy's own parentage remains undetermined until a swirling trident appears above him during a Greek-battle-style game of capture the flag. To the astonishment of the other campers, Percy is recognized as a son of Poseidon—the first in three generations.

Soon after this revelation, Percy learns that there is trouble in Olympus. Zeus's master bolt—the weapon upon which all other lightning bolts are modeled—has been stolen, and Zeus has accused Poseidon of instigating the theft. The lord of the sky believes that Poseidon used Percy, a human hero, to steal the bolt in a plot to overthrow Zeus. Zeus has given Poseidon until summer solstice—only ten days—to return the weapon. Poseidon is offended, but he also dreads the thought of war with Zeus. He needs Percy's help to find out what really happened to the bolt. Chiron believes that Hades, lord of the underworld, stole the bolt to set his two brothers at each other's throats. Chiron tells Percy that he must travel to the entrance of the underworld in Los Angeles (by land, since Zeus would blast him out of the sky if he tried to fly), confront Hades, and return the master bolt to Olympus before the solstice passes in order to prevent a war between the gods.

As is customary, Percy consults the Oracle before leaving. He is warned that he will fail to save what matters most in the end, and will be betrayed by a friend. Deeply troubled, but believing that the quest to the underworld is the only way to see his mother again, Percy sets out with two companions, Annabeth and Grover.

PLOT SUMMARY

Along the way, the three friends learn to trust one another. Annabeth, whose mother Athena is an old rival of Poseidon, must overcome her doubts about Percy. Grover the satyr must overcome his fear of monsters and underground places. Only by showing courage can Grover convince the Council of Cloven Elders to grant him his life-long goal of a “searcher’s license,” giving him the right to quest for the missing god of the wilderness, Pan. Percy comes to terms with his anger toward his father, who has suddenly declared himself after ignoring Percy for twelve years. In his travels west, Percy encounters Medusa, the Chimera, Procrustes the Stretcher, and the Lotus Hotel and Casino (the Land of the Lotus Eaters). He also meets the war god Ares, who gives Percy a mysterious backpack in exchange for doing the god a favor, and a Nereid, who gives Percy three magic pearls from Poseidon—each of which will return one person to the sea from wherever they may be, even the land of the dead.

The friends finally arrive in the underworld only to discover that they have been tricked. The culprit is not Hades, but the defeated Titan, Kronos, who is trapped in the depths of Tartarus but is still able to manipulate the dreams of gods and men. Hoping to start a three-way war between his Olympian sons, Kronos caused the master bolt and also Hades’s helm of darkness to be stolen by a human hero whose identity Percy does not yet know. Kronos’s human thief was unexpectedly captured by Ares. The war god meant to keep the magic items for himself, but Kronos bent his will and caused the god to give the master bolt to Percy, hidden within the magic backpack, so that the young hero might bring it to the underworld for Kronos.

Hades is sure Percy is the thief who stole the bolt and his helm. The god of the dead is holding Percy’s mother—who is only frozen in a shower of gold, not dead—and demands Percy give up the magic helm before she is released. As armies of the dead surround him, Percy brings out his magic pearls. With only three, he realizes he must choose between the lives of his two friends and saving his mother. In the end, he can’t abandon his friends. Promising his mother that he will return for her, Percy and his friends escape to the surface, where Percy battles the god Ares for

possession of the bolt and the helm. Percy wins, gives the helm to the Furies to return to the underworld, and travels back to New York with the bolt in time to prevent a war.

At Olympus, Percy meets his father face to face. Poseidon seems distant and sad, but says he is proud of his son. He says he fears Percy has been born for a hero’s tragic fate. Poseidon tells Percy that his mother is back—returned as a peace offering by Hades—and that when Percy returns home, he will have to make an important choice. Percy rushes back to his family’s apartment, where he finds Medusa’s head waiting for him, a trophy he had forgotten mailing home earlier in his quest. He realizes he has the chance to petrify his stepfather and save his mother from a miserable marriage. His mother implores him not to do it, however. She must break away from Gabe herself. Percy respects her wishes, and thus breaks the mold of what the tragic hero might have done. The prophecy thus comes true in an unexpected way: Percy fails to save what matters most by allowing his mother to save herself.

Upon returning to Camp Half Blood, Percy is betrayed by his friend Luke, son of Hermes, who turns out to be the human hero whom Kronos used for the theft. Luke poisons Percy, and tells him before leaving that Kronos will rise and destroy the age of the gods. Western Civilization is unraveling.

Percy recovers from the poison with Chiron’s help and realizes his adventures are not yet over. He is a hero now and must fight the rise of the Titans.

The novel is ultimately about Percy coming of age, learning to trust his friends and his own abilities, accepting his parents for who they are, and choosing love and loyalty over resentment and despair.

The Lightning Thief immerses readers in the world of Greek mythology. Below are some key mythological characters referenced in the novel.

The Twelve Olympian Gods

Zeus: Lord of the sky, chief god of the Olympians. He led the revolt against his father, the Titan, Kronos. His main weapon is the lightning bolt. His symbol is the eagle. Zeus is married to Hera but has had numerous affairs with other goddesses and mortal women. His demigod children include Perseus and Heracles (Hercules).

Hera: Goddess of marriage and motherhood. The wife of Zeus and also his sister, Hera is a jealous goddess who resents her husband's unfaithfulness. Hera helps some heroes, like Jason, but was the enemy to others, namely Heracles (Hercules). Her symbols are the cow (the most motherly animal) and the colorful peacock.

Poseidon: God of the sea, Zeus's brother. Poseidon is a changeable god, like the ocean itself, sometimes violent, sometimes calm. He created horses from sea foam and like his brother Zeus has had many affairs with goddesses and mortal women. Theseus was his most famous demigod son. Poseidon's symbol is the trident, which he uses to stir up terrible storms at sea.

Demeter: Goddess of agriculture, sister of Hera and Zeus. The most famous story about Demeter tells how her daughter Persephone was captured by Hades and taken to the underworld. Demeter and Hades finally worked out an agreement by which Persephone would spend half the year with her mother and half the year with her new husband Hades. Demeter would only allow crops to grow during the time Persephone was with her. Thus the seasons were created.

Ares: God of war, Ares is the proud and cruel son of Zeus and Hera. He loves battle, but despite his strength he is not a smart tactician. At heart, he is a coward, like most bullies. His symbol is the wild boar and his favorite weapon is the spear. He is Aphrodite's lover.

Athena: Goddess of war, wisdom, and useful crafts. The patron goddess of Athens, from whom the city got its name. Athena sprang from Zeus's head, which Hephaestus had to split open to relieve the god's headache. Athena invented many things, including the chariot and the loom. She granted mankind the olive tree. One of the most popular goddesses, she often helps heroes who use their brains, like Odysseus. She dislikes Poseidon and Ares. Her symbols are the owl, the olive tree, and the aegis, a special shield upon which is mounted the head of Medusa.

Apollo: God of archery, divination, and the arts. Later, Apollo was also associated with the sun. Handsome and talented, Apollo is the twin brother of Artemis. He is the patron of archers, and created music. He slew the great Python, and became the force behind the Oracle at Delphi, which could tell the future. There were other oracles, but the one at Delphi was the most famous. The Oracle often spoke in riddles which were not clear until after events came to pass. Apollo's symbols are the lyre, the laurel tree, and the mouse (an animal which ran everywhere and overheard many secrets).

Artemis: Goddess of the hunt and the moon. Artemis vowed to always be a maiden. Because of this, her followers tended to be young unmarried girls who shunned men. A great archer and hunter, Artemis roams the wilds of the world with a band of maidens. Her symbols are the deer and the bow.

Hephaestus: God of fire and blacksmithing. As a baby, Hephaestus was thrown from Olympus by his father Zeus. Because of this, he grew up ugly and crippled, but was extremely good at working with his hands. He can make anything out of metal. He was given Aphrodite as his bride, because Hera thought it would help Aphrodite settle down. Unfortunately, Aphrodite has affairs behind her husband's back, and Hephaestus is always trying to catch his wife with her lovers.

Aphrodite: The goddess of love, who was born from sea foam. She is the most beautiful goddess, and very vain. She has a magic girdle (belt) which can cause anyone to fall in love with her. Though married to Hephaestus, her main boyfriend is Ares. Her symbol is the dove.

Hermes: The god of merchants, travelers, thieves, and medicine. Hermes watches over all who use the roads and are involved in commerce. The son of Zeus, Hermes could talk when he was only a baby and once stole cattle from Apollo. He made up for this by giving Apollo the lyre, which baby Hermes invented. Hermes uses his speedy winged sandals to deliver messages for the gods. He carries a caduceus, a winged staff entwined with serpents, which today is the symbol of medicine.

Dionysus: The god of wine. Dionysus was born a mortal, but Zeus granted him immortality when he invented wine. Dionysus once led a drunken army to India, where he captured some tigers. He once turned a boatload of sailors into dolphins because they would not honor him. Dionysus was also the god who gave Midas his golden touch.

Other gods and Titans:

Hades: The god of the underworld. Not technically an Olympian since he has no throne on Olympus, Zeus's brother Hades was made lord of the underworld when the gods took over the world. He oversees the souls of the dead and all the riches under the earth. He also guards the pit of Tartarus, where the Titans and monsters were imprisoned after the great war. His servants include the three Furies, Charon the ferryman of the dead, and the three-headed dog Cerberus.

Kronos: The lord of the Titans, Kronos ruled before the gods. He is called the Twisted One, and took over the world when he sliced his own father Ouranus to pieces with a scythe. He feared his own children, the gods, would do the same to him, so ate them all as soon as they were born, but his wife, Rhea, hid their sixth child, Zeus, and gave Kronos a rock to eat instead. When Zeus was older, he tricked his father into disgorging his other children. The gods united and waged a terrible war against Kronos. Eventually, Kronos was cast into Tartarus.

Rhea: The wife of Kronos, mother of the six first gods: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hera, Demeter, and Hestia.

Hestia: The goddess of hearth and home. A gentle, humble goddess, Hestia gave up her seat on the Olympian council to Dionysus in order to keep peace among the gods. Afterwards, she tended the hearth in the middle of the throne room. She is the goddess of domestic harmony.

Prometheus: A Titan who did not fight against the gods, Prometheus was one of the first to see the potential of men. Against Zeus's order, Prometheus brought man the secret of fire and allowed human civilization to begin. As a punishment, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a rock, where birds of prey would devour his liver each day. Some say he was finally freed from his torment by Heracles (Hercules).

Monsters and strange creatures:

Furies: The three Furies were avenging spirits controlled by Hades. They had bat wings, fiery whips, and are sometimes pictured with bleeding eyes, snake hair, and the heads of dogs. They oversaw some of the punishment in the underworld, but Hades would also send them into the world of the living to punish especially wicked people. They could drive their victims mad.

Fates: The three Fates were mysterious old hags who controlled the destiny of all living beings from birth to death. They spun out each life as a thread, and cut it at the moment of death. Even the supposedly immortal gods were afraid of the Fates.

Harpies: Harpies are wild, unruly bird-winged maidens, sometimes pictured as ugly hags. They stole food from the seer Phineas as a punishment from Zeus. Sometimes they carried off people to the underworld.

Cerberus: The three-headed dog who guards the gates of the underworld. A son of the monster Echidna, Cerberus permits new spirits to enter the world of the dead, but will not allow any to leave.

Charon: The ferryman of the dead. Greeks would leave a coin under the tongue of a dead person to pay for passage across the River Styx. Those who could not pay were doomed to wander the earth until they found some other way into the underworld.

Chiron: This immortal centaur was kindly and wise. He trained many heroes, including Heracles (Hercules).

Satyrs: These creatures are human from the waist up, goat from the waist down. They inhabit the wild places of the earth, and are the companions of the wine god Dionysus.

Centaurs: Centaurs are human from the waist up, horse from the waist down. Most are wild barbaric creatures, though one, the famous teacher Chiron, is immortal and quite wise.

Medusa: One of three sisters called the Gorgons, Medusa was once a lovely maiden. She had an affair with Poseidon in the temple of Athena, and because of this Athena turned her into a hideous monster. Her hair became live snakes, and her gaze could petrify any who looked upon her. Perseus later cut off her head, which was mounted on Athena's shield, the aegis.

Minotaur: The horrible son of Pasiphae, the queen of Crete, who mated with a white bull because of a curse inflicted by Poseidon. The Minotaur was half-man, half-bull. He caused so much destruction that King Minos had his famous architect Daedalus build a maze called the Labyrinth to imprison the beast. Each year, maidens and young men from Athens were sacrificed to the Minotaur until Theseus killed the monster.

Naiads: Female spirits that inhabit bodies of fresh water such as rivers and lakes.

Nereids: Female spirits of the sea.

Dryads: Female spirits of nature that live in trees or forests.

Procrustes: "The Stretcher." This giant challenged Theseus on his way to Athens. He made each guest lie on a bed. If the guest was too short, Procrustes would stretch him to fit. If the guest was too long, Procrustes would cut off whatever hung off the bed.

Echidna: The mate of the horrible monster Typhon, Echidna was half-woman, half-serpent. She had many monstrous children, which Zeus allowed to live as a challenge to future heroes. Her offspring included Cerberus, the Nemean Lion, and the Chimera.

Chimera: The Chimera was one monstrous offspring of Echidna. It had the body of a goat, the head of a lion, and the tail of a serpent. It terrorized Asia Minor until it was killed by the hero Bellerophon.

Lotus Eaters: On his way back from the Trojan War, Odysseus encountered the Land of the Lotus Eaters, where the inhabitants lived in perfect contentment doing nothing but eating lotuses all day. This lazy lifestyle was dangerous because it tempted Odysseus's sailors to forget about their journey and remain on the island.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Percy has been diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). The main traits of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. The ADHD child often has trouble keeping his mind on one thing and organizing a task. He feels restless and fidgety. He may blurt out comments or act without thinking. Does this profile fit Percy? Discuss how Percy does/does not seem like an ADHD child.
2. Percy says, “Mr. Brunner expected me to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact I had dyslexia and I had never made above a C- in my life. No—he didn’t expect me to be as good. He expected me to be better.” What do you think of Mr. Brunner as a teacher?
3. When describing his mother, Percy says, “She’s the best person in the world, which just proves my theory that the best people get the rottenest luck.” How does this apply to Percy’s mom? Is this theory true in life? In the Greek myths?
4. Percy gets exasperated with his mother because she puts up with Smelly Gabe, yet he is proud of her because “she did have a rebellious streak, like me.” Do you find Sally Jackson a strong character? Does she stand up for herself? For her son?
5. Percy’s first encounter with an Olympian god is Mr. D, Dionysus. Initially, Percy has a hard time believing Mr. D is immortal. What is your reaction to the way Dionysus is portrayed in the book? The Greek gods have very human traits—would this make them easier or harder to believe in?
6. Chiron describes Western Civilization as “a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years.” He says the Greek gods are part of this, and move around as different nations become the central power of Western Civilization—Greece, Rome, Germany, France, England, the United States. What do you think of this idea? Is “the West” a clearly identifiable cultural force?
7. Annabeth is the daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare. Read the description of Athena in this guide. Look at some of the myths about Athena, including the stories of Arachne, Medusa, and the founding of Athens. How is Annabeth like her mother? Does anything about Annabeth’s character strike you as *unlike* Athena?
8. After Percy learns he is a half-blood, he wonders who his own father is. He also learns that some half-bloods never find out. He says, “I thought about some of the kids I’d seen in the Hermes cabin—teenagers who looked sullen and depressed, like they were waiting for a call that would never come. I’d known kids like that at Yancy Academy, shuffled off to boarding school by rich parents who didn’t have the time to deal with them. But gods should behave better.” How would you feel if you were in Percy’s place? Would it be easier to believe your father was dead, or to know that he was alive but not communicating with you?
9. When Percy finally learns the truth that he is the son of Poseidon, are you surprised? What hints are dropped before the revelation? How does Percy’s personality fit/not fit the god Poseidon?
10. Throughout the book, humor is used to counterbalance the serious situations Percy faces. For instance, the Minotaur wears white Fruit-of-the-Loom underwear, and Percy wants to tell the mummified Oracle, “thanks, wrong door, just looking for the bathroom.” What’s your reaction to the book’s humor? Does it seem appropriate for a sixth-grade narrator? Does it change your perception of the mythology?
11. When describing the effects of Mist, Chiron says, “Remarkable, really, the lengths humans will go to fit things into their version of reality.” How is this true in the novel? In Greek mythology? In real life?
12. Medusa tempts Percy to stay with her as a statue. She warns him that he is simply a pawn of the gods. Does Percy seem like a pawn? Why or why not? If you were given Percy’s quest, would you undertake it or would you rebel?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

13. Read Grover's account of the search for Pan in Chapter 12. Percy wonders if this is a hopeless quest, trying to reclaim the spirit of the wilderness. Do you think the search for Pan is an appropriate metaphor for modern man's relationship with nature? Is "the wild" being lost forever?
14. Dreams play an important role in the narrative. At Montauk, Percy first dreams of a horse and eagle fighting on the beach. Later, he dreams of a voice from the pit. As he gets closer to Los Angeles, his dreams get scarier and more specific. What would the book be like without these dream episodes? Is there information that Percy can only get from his dreams?
15. Percy's fight with Echidna and the Chimera is a low point for his morale. He begins to doubt that he is capable of being a hero. Why does he feel this way, and do you think his doubts are reasonable? What does this fight scene reveal about Percy's character?
16. The god, Ares, says he loves America. He calls it "the best place since Sparta." What does he mean? Do you think this is a fair critique of American society? Why or why not?
17. The Lotus Casino in Las Vegas is a modern-day version of the Land of the Lotus Eaters, which Odysseus visited on his way back from Troy. Read the original version from *The Odyssey*. How do the two accounts differ? Is the danger Odysseus faced similar to the danger faced by Percy and his friends? Is society today more dominated by "Lotus Eaters"?
18. As the book progresses, we learn more about Annabeth's family life, and her unhappy history with her father. How does this compare with Percy's own family? How does this help the two half-bloods overcome their mutual distrust?
19. Read the modernized description of the underworld in Ch. 18—the EZ Death line, the security ghouls, the pollution in the River Styx. What do you think of this portrayal of the afterlife? Percy says Asphodel makes him depressed because "so few people did good in their lives." Do you think believing in paradise and punishment makes people more likely to do good deeds? What do you think of the Greek concept of Asphodel, a neutral area where most of the dead are sent to do nothing for eternity?
20. Percy's trip to the underworld does not turn out as he suspected. What do you think of Percy's decision to leave his mother behind? What does the scene in the throne room tell you about the three friends—Annabeth, Grover, and Percy?
21. When Percy finally meets his father, Poseidon seems distant and hard to read. Percy says that he is actually glad about this. "If he'd tried to apologize, or told me he loved me, or even smiled—that would've felt fake. Like a human dad, making some lame excuse for not being around." Do you agree with Percy? Do you find yourself liking Poseidon or not?
22. How does the last line of the prophecy—*you shall fail to save what matters most in the end*—come true? What do you think of this ending? Did Percy make the right choice? What would you have done in his place?
23. In the end of the book, do you sympathize at all with Luke's feelings of betrayal? How does his story act as a foil (a counterpoint) to Percy's own?

1. **The Gods of Olympus.** Before reading the book, have students fill out the attached worksheet, “The Gods of Olympus,” to see how much they know about Greek mythology. Once they’ve filled out as much as they know on their own, have them work with a partner to compare notes. This works well as a timed activity. Make it a competition to see who can get the most, with their partner, in 2–5 minutes. Stress that it is okay to be wrong on this activity—they are simply trying to jog their memory as much as possible.
2. **Pick an Immortal Parent.** Remind students that the gods frequently had children with mortals. Ask them to research which god or goddess they would most like to be related to. For ideas, visit the web site <http://www.theoi.com>. Students should write down their top three choices and explain each.
3. **The Battle with the Titans.** Read an account of the Titanomachy, the war between the gods and Titans. One is available online at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titanomachy>. Compare this to the version Percy gives Mr. Brunner in Ch. 1. Make a list of any differences between the two versions. Make a list of details Percy forgot to include.



4. **Make a Graphic.** A graphic is an illustrated representation of one chapter. You can do this on regular printer paper, or larger art paper. It can be done individually or with a partner. A graphic has the following components:
 - a. A picture in the middle which is a symbol for the chapter. It can be an important object mentioned in the chapter—the bus, for instance, or a pair of scissors.
 - b. At least three colors used to color the object. Each color has to represent something, and you must write why you chose that color. For instance, “Red stands for Percy’s anger at being expelled.”
 - c. On each corner of the page, pick a quote from the chapter and copy it. The quote can be any 1–2 line section that you think is significant, important, or tells something revealing about one of the characters. After each quote, explain what it means and why you picked it in a sentence.
 - d. Put the title of the chapter and your name at the top.

Once students learn how to do a graphic format, it can be easily used with any chapter or short story in the future. *A sample graphic is attached.*

5. **Character Collage.** This activity can either be done with computers and Internet clipart, or paper and old magazines. Ask students to make a list of characters they’ve met in the book so far. These include: Percy, Grover, Nancy Bobofit, Mrs. Dodds, Mr. Brunner, Smelly Gabe, and Sally Jackson. Have them search and cut out (or copy on a computer) photos of people that they think are close to how these characters would appear. Paste these onto a large piece of paper (or into PowerPoint or a similar computer program). Students should then label each character and find a quote about them from the book—either a description of the character or something they said. This line should be written underneath each character’s picture. This activity is good for keeping the characters straight and can be a lot of fun when students start comparing their visualizations of the different characters. Working in pairs is good for this activity.

Gods of Olympus

In each throne, write anything you think is true about that god or goddess.

Zeus		Hera
Poseiden		Demeter
Ares		Athena
Apollo	Hestia	Artemis
Hephaestus		Aphrodite
Hermes		Dionysus

A Sample Graphic

(this is for chapter one; yours will be for another chapter)

Graphic for "I Accidentally Vaporize My Pre-algebra Teacher"
By I. B. Student

Quote 3

Quote 4

White stands for Grover's fear of Mrs. Dodd

Red stands for Percy's anger at Nancy

Brown stands for the nasty feeling of having somebody throw food at you

I told Grover I didn't think Mrs. Dodds was human. He looked at me real serious and said, "You're absolutely right."

I chose this quote because it foreshadows what will happen to Dodds.

Quote 2

Your graphic has to have:

- A picture in the middle which is a symbol for the chapter. It can be an important object mentioned in the chapter—like Nancy's sandwich.
- At least three colors used to color the object. Each color has to represent something, and you must write why you chose that color. For instance, "Red stands for Percy's anger at being expelled."
- On each corner of the page, pick a quote from the chapter and copy it. The quote can be any 1–2 line section that you think is significant, important, or tells something revealing about one of the characters. After each quote, explain what it means and why you picked it in a sentence.
- Put the title of the chapter and your name at the top.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RICK RIORDAN spent fifteen years as a classroom teacher in public and private middle schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Texas. In 1997, he began publishing mystery novels for adults.

His popular Tres Navarre series has won the top three national awards in the mystery genre—the Edgar, the Anthony, and the Shamus.

He began *The Lightning Thief* as a bedtime story for his son. The novel draws on Riordan’s experience teaching Greek mythology and his interaction with students who have learning differences. It is his first work for young readers.

Rick Riordan now writes full-time. He lives in San Antonio with his wife and two sons.



A TALK WITH RICK RIORDAN

Q. Where did you get the idea for *Percy Jackson*?

A. My son was studying the Greek myths in second grade when he asked me to tell him some bedtime stories about the gods and heroes. I had taught Greek myths for many years at the middle school level, so I was glad to do it. When I ran out of myths, he was disappointed and asked me if I could make up something new with the same characters.

Off the top of my head, I made up Percy Jackson and his quest to recover Zeus’s lightning bolt in modern-day America. It took about three nights to tell the whole story, and when I was done, my son told me I should write it out as a book.

Q. You were a teacher for a long time. Why did you leave the classroom?

A. That was a hard decision. I love teaching. I love working with kids. After I finished the first *Percy Jackson* book, I didn’t think I’d be able to keep writing a book a year and do a good job in the classroom, so I made the reluctant decision to leave teaching.

The good part is I still get to work with kids as a children’s author. Hopefully, I’ll be able to get even more kids interested in reading Greek mythology.

Q. Did you share the *Percy Jackson* novel with any of your students before it was published?

A. My nine-year-old son was the first one to hear the story, but I also wanted to be sure it would interest older kids. I picked a few of my sixth, seventh, and eighth graders and asked them if they’d be willing to “test drive” the novel. I was nervous! I’m used to showing my work to adults, but I had no idea if kids would like *Percy*. I finally understood what it must be like for them, turning in an essay to me and waiting to get their grades back! Fortunately for me, the kids loved the book.

Q. Any advice for young people who might want to be writers?

A. Don't be afraid to ask for help! Find a teacher you respect.

Correspond with authors. You will find that a polite e-mail will almost always get a response.

Secondly, read a lot! Read everything you can get your hands on. You will learn the craft of writing by immersing yourself in the voices, styles, and structures of writers who have gone before you.

Thirdly, write every day! Keep a journal. Jot down interesting stories you heard. Write descriptions of people you see. It doesn't really matter what you write, but you must keep up practice. Writing is like a sport—you only get better if you practice. If you don't keep at it, the writing muscles atrophy.

Finally, don't get discouraged! Rejection is a part of writing, and it hurts. The trick is to keep at it. Wallpaper your room with rejection notes, if you want, but don't give up.



Books for Students & Teachers:

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Osborne, Mary Pope. *Favorite Greek Myths*. Scholastic, 1991.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Tales from the Odyssey*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.

On the Internet:

Rick Riordan's website: www.rickriordan.com

Greek mythology:

www.mythweb.com

www.pantheon.org

www.theoi.com

"Winged Sandals" website:

http://abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/default_lowband.htm

To read the first chapter of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians Book One: The Lightning Thief*, please visit www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com.