



2008 Theme: Journeys & Quests

Young Adult Selection:

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

For fifteen years, Riordan taught English and history at public and private middle schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Texas. In 2002, Saint Mary's Hall honored him with the school's first Master Teacher Award. The Percy Jackson novels draw on Riordan's experience teaching Greek mythology and his interaction with students who have learning differences. Film rights for *The Lightning Thief* have been purchased by Twentieth Century Fox, and a feature film is in development. Rick Riordan now writes full-time, but he still harbors hopes that someday he will return to the classroom. There are currently four books in the Percy Jackson series: *The Lightning Thief*, *The Sea of Monsters*, *The Titan's Curse*, and *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. Riordan's most recent novel is *The Maze of Bones*, the first book in The 39 Clues series. When asked how to pronounce his last name, Riordan tells people that the first syllable rhymes with "fire." He lives in San Antonio with his wife and two sons.



www.rickriordan.com



What if the gods of Olympus were alive in the 21st Century? What if they still fell in love with mortals and had children who might become great heroes like Theseus, Jason and Hercules? What if you were one of those children? Such is the discovery that launches 12-year-old Percy Jackson on the most dangerous quest of his life. With the help of a satyr and a daughter of Athena, Percy must journey across the United States to catch a thief who has stolen the original weapon of mass destruction – Zeus' master bolt. Along the way, he must face a host of mythological enemies determined to stop him. Most of all, he must come to terms with a father he has never known, and an Oracle that has warned him of betrayal by a friend.

Discussion Questions (questions in bold also appear in the printed Reading Guide):

- 1. What is a hero? Does that definition change at different stages in the book? The hero's journey or quest is a common element in literature, including trials/adventures, supernatural elements or monster, guides, certain companions, tool or weapons, etc. Plot Percy's journey as a hero. What is the purpose of his journey? What does he learn or bring back?**
- 2. Percy's learning disabilities become strengths in a different context. What seem to be attention problems allow him to be aware of all sides of attack during a battle. While he struggles to read English, he masters Greek easily. Do you have characteristics that might seem like weaknesses in one setting, but become strengths in another?**
3. To what aspects of Percy's character can you relate? What feelings or ideas does he have that seem similar to those you have?
4. At different points in the book, characters suggest that names have power. What power do names have? Does your name tell anything about you?
- 5. What strength does each of the three companions bring to the quest? How have your friends helped you complete something that was important to you?**
6. How does Percy handle bullies like Clarisse and Aries? How do you handle bullies?

Activity Ideas:

Talk about the ways in which myths were used to explain everyday situations (sunrise, seasons, storms, etc.).

Prepare an artistic representation of a god/goddess or a poster listing the attributes of various gods. Which trait/power would you most like to have?

Discuss examples of real life quests. Have you ever searched for a lost pet? Or searched for the answer to a question? Or worked hard to buy something you wanted?

Research one of the mythic characters in the book. How does the author's depiction of that character compare to your research? How does Riordan make the characters come alive in a modern way?

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7. When Percy and his friends go to the Underworld, they discover that "even monsters – needed a little attention once in a while". What does this suggest about mean or grouchy people?
8. Why do you think Percy chooses to go home rather than stay at Camp Half Blood year round?
9. Percy's mom believes in him, which makes him feel better about himself. Later, Percy returns the favor by encouraging him mom to improve her life. What people have encouraged you?

Related Materials:

Books related to Mythology:

- Coville, Bruce. *Juliet Dove, Queen of Love*
- Evslyn, Bernard. *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths*.
- Osborne, Mary Pope. *Favorite Greek Myths*
- Spinner, Stephanie. *Quiver and Quicksilver*

Books about other Journeys & Quests:

- Creech, Sharon. *The Wanderer*
- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy*
- Funke, Cornelia. *Inkheart*
- Paolini, Christopher. *Eragon*
- White, T.H. *The Once and Future King*

Websites:

Teacher's Guide

http://www.rickriordan.com/Teacher_Guide_to_Percy.htm

Literature Units by Kids' Wings

<http://suzyred.com/2006lightningthief.html>

Greek mythology sites

<http://techcenter.davidson.k12.nc.us/spring5/goddess2/index.htm>

<http://www.wingedsandals.com>

Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology

<http://www.mythweb.com>

Women in Greek Myth

<http://www.paleothes.com>

Myth Man

<http://thanasis.com/myth.htm>