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ENGL 112B Sec 01
21 October 2024

Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

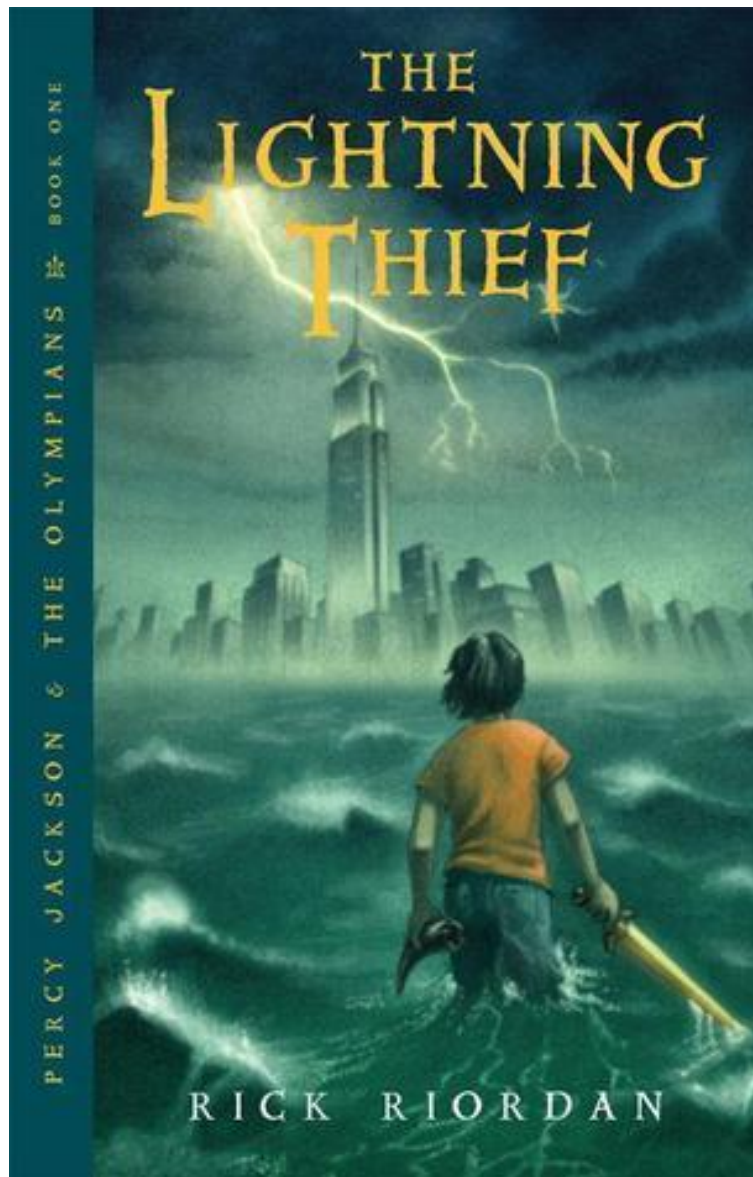


Image source:

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/28187.The_Lightning_Thief

About the Author:



Image source:

<https://rickriordan.com/about/contact-information/>

Rick Riordan is a New York Times bestseller author of over twenty novels for young adult readers. He was born in San Antonio, Texas, and studied English and history at the University of Texas at Austin. Riordan went on to receive his teaching credentials at the University of Texas at San Antonio and for fifteen years taught at private and public schools in Texas and the San Francisco Bay Area. While teaching full time, Riordan began writing novels and stories and eventually retired as a teacher in order to commit to writing full time.

Rick Riordan began his professional writing career with a mystery series called *His Tres Navarre*, which ended up winning the top three national awards. Afterwards, Riordan turned to children's fiction and published some of his most popular works, such as *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *The Heroes of Olympus*, *The Kane Chronicles*, etc.

Summary:

The *Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan follows twelve-year-old Percy Jackson as he discovers that not only is he a demigod, but is also the son of Poseidon—one of the three big gods, which puts him in greater danger than the other demigods. After finding out that he is a demigod, Percy gets sent to Camp Half-Blood, a sanctuary for demigods, but during his stay, Percy is accused of stealing Zeus's lightning bolt.

To clear his name and prevent a possible war between Zeus and Poseidon, Percy joins the demigod Annabeth and the satyr Grover on a quest to retrieve the lightning bolt. Throughout this journey, the trio will travel across the United States and face several mythical creatures and gods that will not only help Percy get one step closer to the bolt but will also allow him to discover more about his identity and destiny.

Quote #1:

“I thought about how he had squeezed the life out of my mother, made her disappear in a flash of light, and rage filled me like high-octane fuel... The bull-man roared in agony. He flailed, clawing at his chest, then began to disintegrate—not like my mother, in a flash of golden light, but like crumbling sand, blown away in chunks by the wind, the same way Mrs. Dodds had burst apart. The monster was gone.” (55)

For context, this event happens right after Percy discovers he is a demigod and is on his way to Camp Half-Blood with Grover and Sally, Percy's mother. However, on their way to the camp, they encounter a mythical monster called Bull-Man, whose only plan is to kill Percy Jackson but instead ends up killing Percy's mom. Throughout the car ride to Camp Half-Blood, Percy is in denial about his identity and doesn't believe he has the capacity of being a demigod, but shortly after his mother is killed, Percy's is filled with rage, and he masters enough courage to stand up against this powerful monster. This moment captures Percy's transformation from a normal boy to a demigod capable of battling mythical creatures.

Quote #2:

“I was angry, not just with Annabeth or her mom, but with all the gods for this whole quest, for getting us blown off the road and in two major fights the very first day out from camp... The package floated off the table and disappeared with a pop! ‘I am impertinent’ I said.” (185-187)

Percy's decision to send Medusa's head to Mount Olympus not only demonstrates his growing confidence in himself but also allows the readers to see that this confidence is giving Percy the much-needed boost in order to defy the gods. At various points throughout the book, Percy emphasizes his feelings of being used and ignored by the gods—particularly Poseidon, who has been an absent father throughout his life.

Sending Medusa's head to Mount Olympus is more than Percy claiming/exhibiting victory over a monster, but the beginning of Percy's journey in leaving behind the passive pawn that could be

used by the god and becoming an active player in his own destiny. Through this act of rebellion, Percy shows that not only has he become the powerful demigod he aspires to be, but that he can also choose and determine his own destiny.

Quote #3:

“Poseidon called you a queen,” I told her. “He said he hadn’t met a woman like you in a thousand years.’... ‘I think you know, Percy. I think you’re enough like me to understand. If my life is going to mean anything, I have to live it myself. I can’t let a god take care of me...or my son. I have to...find the courage on my own. Your quest has reminded me of that.’... ‘I’ll leave the box,’ I said.” (352)

In addition to highlighting Sally Jackson's desire for independence, this quote also illustrates Percy's newly acquired maturity and understanding of true heroism. As a result of this conversation, Percy has become aware that, although he now possesses the power and strength to remove Gabe from his mother's life, true heroism is not just about strength and the ability to wield power but is also about respecting people and their choices as well. Furthermore, this quote underlines the ongoing themes throughout the book of self-discovery, empowerment, and character growth.

Why Teens Should Read This Book

Although *The Lightning Thief* is primarily aimed at children aged nine to fourteen, older audiences will also be drawn to it due to its themes of adventure, friendship, self-discovery, and personal growth. As teens navigate the struggles and challenges that come with adolescence and new life chapters, they can seek shelter in Percy Jackson’s story as he struggles to find a sense of belonging in a world that is too overwhelming for him. Additionally, Percy’s sense of humor and the writing style implemented in the book make the narrative feel more genuine and approachable since the dialogue is written in a way that reflects how teens actually speak and, in some cases, act. This book combines relatable struggles, adventure, Greek mythology, and amusing characters that together create a story that is able to connect with teens on different emotional levels while helping them navigate any struggles that they might encounter while transitioning into a new life stage.

Classroom Use

The Lightning Thief is an engaging book that contains plenty of rich material for students’ to explore and deepen their understanding of crucial themes presented in the book, such as friendship, identity, heroism, and belonging. Furthermore, with its blend of mythology and reality, it provides endless opportunities for students’ to demonstrate their creative side. Some of the ways that I would implement and teach this book in a classroom would be by having students do their own research about Greek gods and create a short presentation of what Greek god they would be related to or in what cabin of Camp Half-Blood they would reside in. The

goals of this assignment would be for students to self-reflect, explore their identities, engage with Greek mythology, and develop public speaking skills. Additionally, I would encourage students to collaborate in small groups and share not only their research about these gods but the characteristics in themselves that made them believe they were related to a specific god. These interactions would help build a sense of community, teamwork, and belonging, which are not only crucial for a classroom but themes that are seen in the book as well.

How it best fits in Chapter 4-8 of Adolescents in the Search for Meaning

Chapter 4: Books about Real-Life Experiences

- Some of the places in the book do exist.
- The story is set in modern contemporary times.
- Struggling with school.
- Hard family dynamics.
- Feelings of not belonging anywhere.

Chapter 5: Books about Facing Death and Loss

- Luke's betrayal towards Percy.
- Sally Jackson's death.

Chapter 6: Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions

- Percy Jackson's discovery of him being a demigod.
- Percy struggles with the knowledge of not being able to save his mother from Hades.
- Percy struggles with dyslexia and ADHD.

Chapter 7: Books about Courage and Survival

- The entire book is about courage and survival.
- Percy's quest.

Chapter 8: Books allegory fantasy myth and parable

- Heavy use of Greek mythology.

Quantitative Analysis

Page count: 384

Word count: 86,826

Lexile level: 680

Age range: 8-12 years

Interest level: Grades 4-9

ATOS level: 4.7

Dale-Chall Readability Level: 6

Qualitative Analysis

Structure

- Story follows a linear narrative that is told from Percy Jackson's point of view, which allows the reader to access emotional information that might be left out if the story were to be told from a third pov.
- Follows the hero's journey arc.

Language Conventions and Clarity

- Clear, simple, and engaging writing style since it mirrors how teens speak.
- Incorporation of Greek mythology causes a contrast between the more casual writing style and these formal mythological stories.
- Heavy use of literary devices such as foreshadowing, metaphors, and symbolism.

Knowledge Demands

- This reading doesn't require pre-knowledge of Greek mythology, but readers who do possess it will be able to catch on quicker to the reading and appreciate how the author modernized the myths.

Levels of Meaning

- On the surface level, it follows the story of a 12-year-old boy who discovers he is a demigod and is required to go on a quest in order to retrieve Zeus's lightning bolt, which he is being blamed for stealing.
- On a deeper level, the story explores complex themes such as identity, belonging, family, self-discovery, and friendship. Percy Jackson's story not only reflects the universal struggle teens experience of finding one's place in an overwhelming world but also portrays the importance of coming to terms with one's own identity.