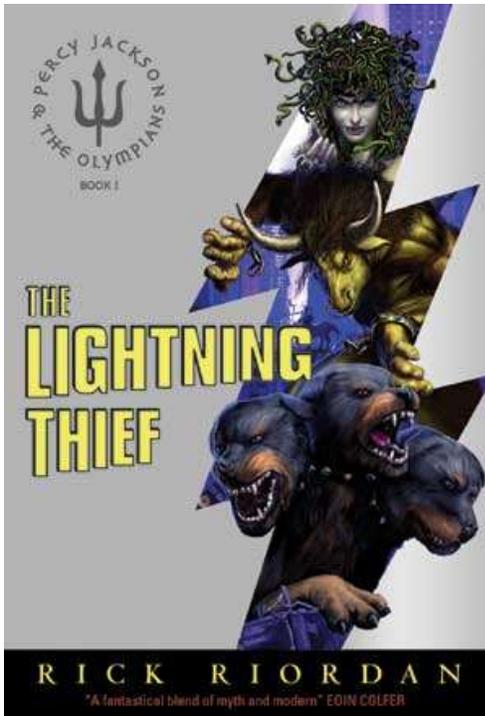


# HYPERION

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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## A TEACHER'S GUIDE



### THE LIGHTNING THIEF

*Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One*

By Rick Riordan

Ages 9-14

\$17.95 US

\$24.95 CAN

Tr. Ed. 0-7868-5629-7

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## Introduction

This curriculum guide has much more material than the average teacher will ever use. Alas, few of us have the luxury of spending an entire six- or nine-week unit on one novel. Having said this, I have a few pieces of advice before you dive in:

1. **Pick and choose what works best for you!** A colleague of mine once described a good curriculum guide as a grocery store. No one is expected to buy everything on the shelves. Only put into your cart what you like. You are the expert on what will work best for your classroom and your students.

2. **It's better to do one novel well than many novels quickly and poorly.** I learned this lesson the hard way. Invariably, the novels my students liked best were the ones I enriched with lots of activities, extensions, and chances to interact with the text. Whenever I rushed to finish a novel because I had to cover it and felt I didn't have time for any of the "extras," I bored the kids to death. They learned and retained very little. The extras aren't extra. They are critical elements of teaching well.

3. **On the other hand, don't torture the kids with too much!** A poor way to use this guide would be to run off copies of every single chapter's comprehension questions and have the kids answer all four million of them (using complete sentences of course). Try to engage the students with the book. As with any text, the goal should be to leave the students wanting to read more, not less.

4. **Have fun!** Another lesson I learned the hard way: If I'm not having a good time in the classroom, the chances are slim that the students are enjoying themselves. And yes, students do learn more when they find learning enjoyable. Don't you? Challenge yourself. Become a learner. Take the opportunity to explore Greek mythology more in depth for yourself! In other words, we as teachers need to model the traits we expect our students to acquire.

5. **Even if you don't teach Percy Jackson . . .** I've packed this guide with a ton of reading & writing ideas that can apply to any class. Feel free to use them. Many ideas can be adapted to a Greek mythology unit or any novel unit at all. You might also consider adding Percy Jackson to your optional outside/summer reading list. In this case, the essay and comprehension questions offer you an easy way to assess whether or not students actually read the book!

Note: You have permission to copy any of this material for classroom use. Share it freely with colleagues. All I ask is that you credit the website -- [www.rickriordan.com](http://www.rickriordan.com) -- and do not use this material for commercial profit. **This entire guide is available in .pdf format on the website!**

## Pre-reading Activities

*These activities are designed to get the students interested in the novel before you start reading. However, many of them can be adapted to use during the unit, too.*

### Discussion/Journal Questions

*Put one of these questions on the board. Give students 3-5 minutes to write a journal response. Have them pair off and share their responses with a partner. Then have a general class discussion. These can easily be expanded and revisited as essay prompts later in the unit.*

1. Have you ever been treated unfairly by a teacher (or parent, or other adult)? Describe the circumstances and why you considered the treatment unfair.
2. What do you know about learning disabilities such as ADHD or dyslexia? Do you know anyone who has a learning disability? Do you think a person with a learning disability should receive more time to complete tests or less homework than a person without a learning disability? Explain your position.
3. In Ancient times, the Greeks had gods for many important forces in their lives -- the sea, thunderstorms, farming, music, medicine, poetry, archery, etc. Why do you think they imagined many different gods rather than just one? Would this make life more confusing or less confusing?
4. Young children often imagine that their parents aren't really their parents. What would it be like if you suddenly found out that you had a "real" father or mother you never knew about? What if this person was extremely rich and powerful -- would you accept them as a parent?
5. Do you believe in anything that science can't prove -- such as magic, or ghosts, or creatures like the Loch Ness monster? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever been to summer camp? If so, describe what you did or did not like about it. If not, imagine and describe what you think a typical summer camp would be like -- any impressions from television or movies?
7. You have been granted one magical item of your choice. What would this item be, and what power would it have? Explain your choice.

## **Previewing the Book**

*Do any of the following as students are preparing to read the novel.*

1. **Creating the contents.** Read the table of contents aloud as a class, or have students read it silently. Ask them to pick the two or three chapters that sound like they might be the most interesting. Have them share their choices with a partner, then discuss them as a whole class. Finally, have students do a 2-3 minute journal describing what they think might happen in that chapter. This is pure guess work and prediction. They are not expected to guess correctly. Have them share their writing with a parent.

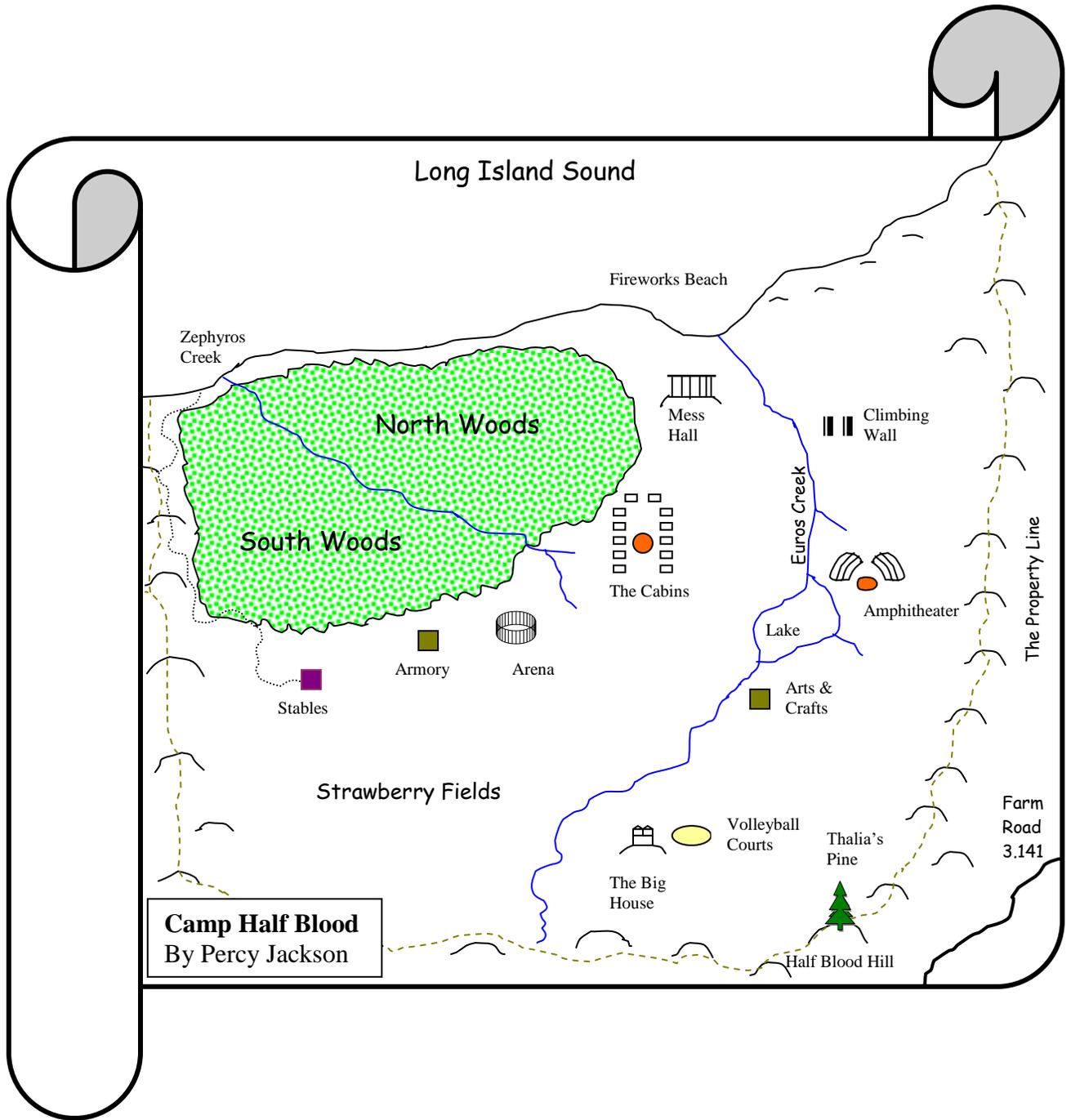
Here is a model for Ch. 21: “I Settle My Tab.”

*I think in this chapter the main character will get in trouble because he tries to leave a restaurant without paying for his meal. The waitress will catch him and make him wash dishes. Something will happen in the kitchen while he’s washing the dishes, and he’ll end up saving the lives of everybody in the diner. That’s how he’ll end up settling his tab.*

2. **Voices from the Future.** Use the *reader’s theater* method to have students preview the dialogue. Have students get in groups of two or three, then scan through the book to find 6-10 lines of dialogue together. Students should practice reading the dialogue like a script (without the ‘he said,’ ‘she said’). Ask volunteers to present these short vignettes to the class, then discuss with the students what they think is going on in that chapter, based on what they’ve heard.
3. **Walking the Map.** Have students look at [the map of Camp Half Blood](#) on the Percy Jackson web site. If they only had time to visit one location in this camp, which one would they choose and why? Have them answer either in a journal entry or in small group discussion, then follow up with a whole-class discussion. Encourage them to speculate about the locations that don’t make immediate sense, such as the Big House, Thalia’s Pine, or the armory.

## **Connecting to prior knowledge**

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.



## The Gods of Olympus

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

**Zeus**

**Hera**

**Poseidon**

**Demeter**

**Ares**

**Athena**

**Apollo**

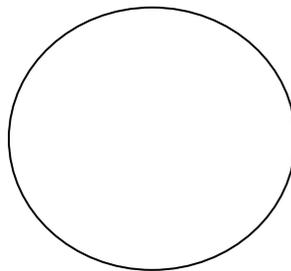
**Artemis**

**Hephaestus**

**Aphrodite**  
Hephaestus

**Hermes**

**Dionysus**



**(Hestia)**

## Other Ideas for “Unit Appetizers”

1. If you have access to computers, have students create a presentation about the gods of Olympus using Powerpoint, Hyperstudio, or a similar program. If your computer access is limited, students can work in teams of 2-3, and rotate to the computer workstation. Each student team can pick a different god to research, or every team can do their own overview of all twelve Olympians. Pick the best presentations to show the class.
2. 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 sites <http://www.mythweb.com> or <http://www.pantheon.org/areas/mythology/europe/greek/articles.html>. Students should write down their top three choices and explain each.
3. Using a U.S. map, tell students to plan a road trip from New York City to Los Angeles. They should draw a map of the highways used and at least five cities they would stop in. They should write a narrative giving driving instructions. You can also have them calculate how long it would take them to reach their destination driving 60 miles an hour for eight hours a day (or plug in your own numbers). Hint: AAA (the American Automobile Association) is sometimes amenable to giving away sets of U.S. maps for classroom use. Otherwise atlases or social studies textbooks can be used. There are also good maps of the U.S. available on many internet information sites, such as <http://maps.yahoo.com>.
4. For the artists in your class, ask them to find out about one monster from the Greek myths and do a color picture of that creature. <http://www.theoi.com> is a great source for many Greek monsters.
5. Set up “Olympian discussion partners” using the attached reproducible chart. Students each get a blank chart, then must set “appointments” with one other student at each block. It’s important that both students write these appointments down. For instance, if John and Bill are **Ares** partners, the John’s name goes on Bill’s sheet and Bill’s name goes on John’s sheet in the block marked **Ares**. Allow students about 5-10 minutes to sign up all their appointments. You will have to referee if there are people left out of a particular block. You may have some partner groups with three people, if you have an odd number of kids. Students have to sign up a different person for each of the twelve blocks. Students have to save their sheets. You may wish to photocopy them so you have a set.

This takes a while to set up, but once it is done, you have a built-in way to break students up for small-group discussions. You simply tell them which appointment to meet. For instance, “Get with your **Aphrodite** appointment and share your journal responses.”

6. Extra credit questions for those kids who want to do more:

- A. Find one hero whose father was Zeus (easy).
- B. Find one hero whose father was Poseidon (harder).
- C. Find one hero whose mother was Aphrodite (hardest).
- D. Dionysus is the only guy to have his throne on the women's side of the throne room in Olympus . Find out how this happened. Hint: It has to do with Hestia.
- E. Who is the one major Greek god who does not have a throne on Olympus , and why?
- F. What are the Roman names for the twelve Olympians?

**OLYMPIAN DISCUSSION PARTNERS**

- Make twelve appointments with other students to be your discussion partner. Put one student's name in each box. Make sure you write your name in the same box on their sheet. You have to have a different name in every box.
- Hold on to your sheet! You'll need it during this unit.

**Zeus**

**Hera**

**Poseidon**

**Demeter**

**Ares**

**Athena**

**Apollo**

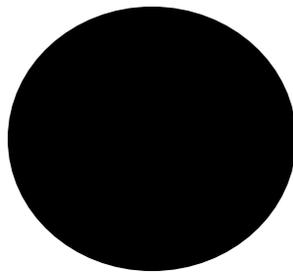
**Artemis**

**Hephaestus**

**Aphrodite**  
**Hephaestus**

**Hermes**

**Dionysus**



# Chapter 1

## *I Accidentally Vaporize My Pre-algebra Teacher*

### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Brainstorm as many school field trips as you can remember. What's the best (or worst) experience you've ever had on a school field trip?*
  - b. *Have you ever learned something in school you were absolutely sure you would never use in your life? Explain.*
2. Take a virtual field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan. (<http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp>). Go to "Collection" and choose "Greek and Roman Art." Have students explore the collection and fill out the following information for at least five different objects:

### **Art Object Analysis**

What kind of object is it? \_\_\_\_\_

What is it made out of? \_\_\_\_\_

Does it have a use, other than art? If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

When was it created? \_\_\_\_\_

Where is it from? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what it looks like:

\_\_\_\_\_

Does it have illustrations from the Greek myths? If so, what?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **As you read:**

*It is recommended you read the first chapter aloud to the students, or have someone read it who has a good flair for the dramatic. This gives students a chance to get used to the voice of the narrator and get hooked into the story.*

*The following questions can be answered as students read, assigned as homework, or given afterwards to assess comprehension. It is a good idea to have the students read the questions in advance. You don't have to assign all the questions. You might alternate evens and odds, or divide the questions by small groups.*

1. What kind of school is Yancy Academy ?
2. What bad experiences has Percy had on past field trips?
3. Why can't Percy get back at Nancy when she starts teasing Grover on the bus?
4. Why doesn't Percy get along with Mrs. Dodds?
5. When do you first suspect that something may be unusual/supernatural about Mrs. Dodds?
6. In the story about the gods and titans, who was Kronos and what happened to him after the gods defeated him?
7. Why does Percy get angry at Mr. Brunner? How would you have felt in his position?
8. What do you learn about Percy's home life as he's watching the taxis on Fifth Avenue?
9. How does Percy get in trouble with Mrs. Dodds? Do you think it's his fault?
10. How have things changed when Percy returns to the front steps of the museum?

### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Discipline report.** Fill out the [attached discipline report](#), or see if you can borrow an actual discipline report from your school's vice principal. Give students a chance to play disciplinarian by filling out a report on Percy for pushing Nancy into the fountain. Or if you wish, they can fill out a report on Nancy for picking on Grover. They should describe the incident and suggest an appropriate punishment.
2. **The Battle of Gods and Titans.** Read an account of the [Titanomachy](#), the war between the gods and titans. Compare this to the version Percy gives Mr. Brunner in the museum. Make a list of any differences between the two versions. Make a list of details Percy forgot to include.
3. **The Stele.** Draw and color a picture of what the stele (Greek funeral stone) might've looked like. Pictures of a stele can be found at the Met Museum web site <http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp>.
4. **Prediction.** Have students write a five-minute journal entry speculating about what will happen next. What was Mrs. Dodds? Why does everyone seem to forget her except for Percy? Did the fight really happen or was it in Percy's mind? What will happen when Percy gets back to Yancy Academy? Have students share their predictions with a partner, then volunteers can share with the class.



# Yancy Academy

Upsockawala , NY

"We educate the children everyone else wants to strangle."



## DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

<i>Name of offending student:</i>		<i>Date and time of incident:</i>
<i>Grade of student:</i>	<i>Teacher reporting:</i>	<i>Place the incident occurred:</i>
<i>Describe the incident:</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		
<i>Discipline action taken:</i> _____ _____ _____		

## Chapter 2

### *Three Old Ladies Knit the Socks of Death*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Have you ever had a teacher you wanted to do well for? If so, what made you respect that teacher's opinion? If you can't think of a teacher like that, what would a teacher have to be like to make you respect them?*
  - b. *There's an old expression: "I feel like someone just stepped on my grave." Do you think it's possible to foretell the future? Have you ever had a feeling that something bad was going to happen?*
2. Pros and cons chart. Make a graph by quartering off a piece of paper. Consider the pros and cons of boarding school versus day school. Try to put at least three ideas in each box. Compare these ideas with a discussion partner and decide which you would rather attend – a boarding school or a day school.

#### **As you read:**

1. Why does Percy think the whole school is playing a trick on him?
2. Why does Percy decide to study for the Latin exam even though he's given up on his other subjects?
3. What leads Percy to believe that Grover and Mr. Brunner think he's in danger?
4. After the Latin test, what do you think Mr. Brunner was trying to say to Percy? Why does Percy react angrily to Mr. Brunner's words?
5. How does Percy say he's different than the other kids at Yancy Academy?
6. Why does Percy tell Grover he's a really bad liar?
7. What responsibility does Grover claim to have, and why does this strike Percy as strange?
8. How do Percy and Grover end up on the side of the highway?
9. How does Grover react when Percy tells him about the yarn-cutting?
10. What does Percy think the yarn-cutting means? Does Grover seem to agree or not?

#### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Mapping the action.** Using a map of New York State, find the Hudson River Valley and plot an imaginary location for Yancy Academy. Draw a map showing which highway Grover and Percy would've taken to get to New York City, and indicate where you think the fruit stand would be.

2. **Make a graphic.** A graphic is an illustrated representation of the 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 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.
  - 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 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.

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

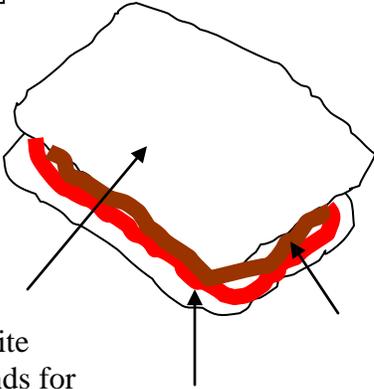
A sample handout of a graphic is below.

**A Sample Graphic**  
(this is for chapter one; yours will be for chapter two)

**Graphic for “I Accidentally Vaporize My Pre-algebra Teacher”**  
**By I. B. Student**

Quote 3

Quote 4



Nancy's sandwich

White stands for Grover's fear of Mrs. Dodds

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 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 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.

## Chapter 3

### *Grover Unexpectedly Loses His Pants*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *“The best people get the worst luck.” Do you agree? Can you think of a time when something terrible happened to a good person? Conversely, do bad people have good things happen to them?*
  - b. *What is the place that you feel most at ease – a place you’d like to be more than anywhere else?*
  - c. *Does your family have a favorite or traditional place to spend vacations? If so, describe it. If not, where would you most like to take a vacation if money was no object?*
2. **Does Percy have ADHD?** Using the attached worksheet, read the description of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder with the class. Based on what they’ve read so far, ask students if this fits Percy or not. Ask them to find at least three things in the book that would support their point of view.

#### **As you read:**

1. Why does Percy leave Grover at the bus station? What would you have done in his place?
2. Percy says “the best people get the rottenest luck.” How does this apply to his mom?
3. Describe Gabe.
4. Why doesn’t Percy tell his mom the truth about Mrs. Dodds and the ladies at the fruit stand?
5. How does Percy get even with Gabe as they’re loading up the Camaro?
6. Why is Montauk special to Percy’s mom?
7. Why does Percy’s mom eat blue food, and why does Percy love this about her?
8. What new information does Percy learn about his dad as he and his mother are roasting marshmallows?
9. Describe Percy’s dream. What do you think it means?
10. How does the title of the chapter, “Grover Unexpectedly Loses His Pants,” come true?

### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **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 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 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.
  
2. **Illustrated timeline for the Jackson family.** A lot of background information about Sally and Percy's lives is given in chapter three. Have students create a timeline with 5-10 events mentioned in the book, and draw a picture for each event. Some possible moments to illustrate: Sally's parents die in a plane crash; Sally meets Percy's father at the beach; Percy strangles a snake in his crib at day care; the one-eyed man stalks Percy on the playground. This assignment can also be done on computers with Timeliner software ([www.tomsnyder.com](http://www.tomsnyder.com)).



## Does Percy Have ADHD?

*Percy says he's been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. About two million kids have this condition in the U.S. Read the three main traits of an ADHD person, below, and think about whether this describes Percy, based on what you've read of Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief so far.*

### **The three main traits of an ADHD person:**

#### **Inattention.**

- Has a hard time keeping his mind on any one thing.
- May get bored with a task after only a few minutes.
- He may give effortless, automatic attention to activities and things he enjoys.
- Organizing and completing a task or learning something new is difficult.

#### **Hyperactivity.**

- Always seem to be in motion. Can't sit still.
- May dash around or talk incessantly.
- Sitting still through a lesson can be an impossible task. May squirm in his seat or roam around the room. May touch everything, or noisily tap his pencil.
- Hyperactive teens may feel intensely restless.
- May be fidgety or try to do several things at once, bouncing around from one activity to the next.

#### **Impulsivity.**

- Doesn't seem to think before he acts.
- May blurt out inappropriate comments.
- May run into the street without looking, or get into situations without thinking of the consequences
- Has trouble waiting for things he wants or taking turns.
- May grab something from another person or hit someone when they're upset.

Adapted from: NIH Publication No. 96-3572, 1996, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service

**Does Percy Have ADHD?**  
(page 2)

Ways Percy is like this:	Ways Percy is not like this:	
		inattentive
		hyperactive
		impulsive

## Chapter 4

### *My Mother Teaches Me Bullfighting*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:

- a. *Has someone ever protected you from danger? Have you ever protected someone else? Think of an incident and describe it.*
- b. *Is there anyone you would sacrifice your life for? Explain who and why.*

2. **Class comic book.** Read the [story of Theseus](#) from the internet, or from a Greek myth anthology. As a class, create an outline of major events from the hero's life. Have each student pick one scene and turn it into a comic book panel. When everyone is done, put the comic book together and display it on the bulletin board.

#### **As you read:**

1. What does Percy say that insults Grover?
2. According to Grover, who is after Percy?
3. What happens to make the car crash?
4. What does Percy's mom tell him to do when they get out of the car and why does Percy disobey?
5. What does Percy find strange about the bull-man's appearance?
6. What happens to Percy's mother?
7. Why does Grover keep attracting the monster's attention?
8. After the monster disintegrates, what gets Percy moving when all he wants to do is collapse?
9. What's the last thing Percy remembers?
10. Take a guess: Who is the "familiar face" that Percy thinks he sees?

### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Tableau (frozen scene)** -- This is a fun way to get kids out of their seats, appeal to kinesthetic learners, and help kids remember major scenes from the book. It's a good idea to model this with a sample scene and volunteer students first. Call up four or five kids and announce that you are the sculptor. Pick a scene from *The Lightning Thief* and assign the students parts. For instance, you might choose Grover appearing at the cabin door in the middle of a storm. Tell students how to pose and then order them to freeze in place. Grover could mime standing in a doorway, looking terrified. Sally could be holding the door, looking at Percy in horror, and Percy could be in bed, staring at Grover's hooves. Other students could be the Minotaur approaching, or even the wind or the door. Give the scene a title, like "Midnight Surprise," and explain who is who. Finally, instruct each student to begin saying their characters thoughts aloud as soon as you touch them on the shoulder, and to keep talking until you touch their shoulder again.

Once students have the idea, break the class into groups of 4-5 and let them choose any other scene from the book so far to act out. It's a good idea to brainstorm a list of ideas together first, so no one pleads ignorance when it's time to choose a scene! Don't worry if more than one group wants to do the same scene. Give students 5-10 to choose parts and prepare their scene. Remember: one student needs to be the sculptor; each actor must freeze in place, but must be ready to speak his/her thoughts when tapped; the scene must have a title. If you wish, you can give a small prize after the scenes are presented for best tableau.

2. **Percy's Letter to Gabe** -- Have students do a 3-5 minute journal entry. They are Percy, writing a letter to Gabe, explaining how the Camaro got totaled. Percy should try to convince Gabe the damage wasn't his fault. Students can tell the truth, or make up a false explanation, but they will have to consider the damage to the car as it is described in the book. Ask for volunteers to share their journals afterwards.

## Chapter 5

### *I Play Pinochle with a Horse*

#### Warm-up Activities:

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *If someone granted you immortality (being your present age, just as you are, forever) would you take it? Think of as many pros and cons as you can.*
  - b. *What do you think life will be like for humans 2000 years from now? Give some examples of how people might live, what they will believe, what technology they will use. What do you think those people of the future will think about us, their distant ancestors?*
2. Try a "**stick-note discussion**" with this chapter. For this activity, each student should have the smallest size sticky-notes available and a pen or pencil. The good thing about this method is that students can make notes in the book without marking up the text. As students read, tell them to put a sticky-note next to any place that: 1) they do not understand, in which case they should write a question on the sticky note; 2) a place they do understand and can relate to, in which case they should write a comment on the note, e.g. "I felt this way when my parents left me with Grandma for a whole week"; 3) places that surprised them, in which case they should write a reaction on the note. They should try to make at least one note on each page, but they can do more. It would be a good idea to model the method on the first page together, so students get the idea. Then have them read silently for the rest of the chapter. Once everyone has finished, students pair-off and have a discussion based on what they wrote on their sticky-notes. This is an excellent way to structure a discussion and have students compare what they thought was important or confusing about the reading.

#### As you read:

1. What does the blond girl ask Percy as she's feeding him pudding?
2. What is strange about the man who is guarding Percy as he sleeps?
3. Why does Grover say he retrieved the Minotaur horn?
4. How does Percy feel after he tries the strange drink?

5. As he's gazing out from the front porch, what surprises Percy about the summer camp?
6. Describe Mr. D. Anticipate: Will he be a hero or a villain? Why?
7. What does Percy find striking about Annabeth's appearance?
8. What clues help Percy guess Mr. D's identity?
9. What evidence does Chiron use to prove that the Greek gods are in America?
10. According to Chiron, what is the big question that everyone wants answered? Take a guess: what's the answer?

**Follow-up Activities:**

1. Go to [www.theoi.com](http://www.theoi.com) and look up "centaurs." You can also use a standard encyclopedia or other reference book on Greek monsters. There are three different types described. Make a mind map with *centaur* as the middle bubble, then branch out in three directions for the three different types of centaur. Off of each type, list at least five attributes of that kind of centaur. A mind map is started below. These can be hand-drawn. The computer program [Inspiration](#) is also a fun way to make a mind map. Where would Chiron fit on your chart?

## Chapter 6

### *I Become Supreme Lord of the Bathroom*

#### Warm-up Activities:

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Have you ever been bullied or treated mean by someone older than you? In your school, do the upper grades ever pick on the lower grades? Give examples, or if you do not think this is the case, explain why.*
  - b. *Have you ever been the "new kid" in school? If so, how did it feel? If not, have you ever had a new kid come into your school? What is easy for them to fit in or not?*
  
2. **Group-Teach on Hermes.** Break students into three groups and assign each group to read a different story or description of the god Hermes. Here are three possibilities from the internet:

["Hermes," from Mythweb](#)

["Hermes," from Winged Sandals](#)

["Hermes," from Encyclopedia Mythica](#)

Each group should read the article -- either silently (writing main ideas) or aloud (going around the circle, alternating paragraphs). They may take notes, either way. Warn students that at the end of the reading, they will be responsible for telling the story to someone who has not read it, and they may not refer to the story, although they may refer to their notes. After each group has finished, re-divide the class into trios, with one member from each of the three story groups. Students then take turns reporting their version of the story to their team members. As one person tells the story, another student acts as scribe, and writes down main facts. The goal is to be the trio that comes up with the longest list of facts about Hermes. Obviously, some facts will overlap between versions, but each fact can only be listed once. Give a minimum -- perhaps ten facts. Say you will be really impressed if anybody gets twenty. Offer a small prize -- candy works! - - for the trio that produces the most thorough list. This works well as a timed activity, with the last phase lasting about 15 minutes. At the end, students will know a lot about Hermes.

### **As you read:**

1. What does Percy noticed about the farm house as he walks away from it? What bothers him about the attic?
2. Why does Percy feel guilty about Grover getting in trouble?
3. Why do you think Percy asks Chiron about the Underworld? He says: "*The beginnings of an idea – a tiny, hopeful fire – started forming in my mind.*" What does he mean?
4. Based on the description, what Greek god is cabin three dedicated to?
5. Why is Annabeth upset with Percy after they leave Cabin Eleven?
6. How does Annabeth know that Percy is "one of us"?
7. Percy says the big girl from the Ares cabin reminds him of Nancy Bobofit. Is Clarisse like Nancy? Why or why not?
8. Why doesn't Percy want Annabeth's help when he gets into the fight with Clarisse?
9. What happens to Clarisse and her friends in the bathroom?
10. How does this incident change Annabeth's attitude toward Percy?

### **Follow-up Activities:**

#### **1. The RAFT method.**

The RAFT method was developed by Nancy Vandervanter, a junior high English teacher, as part of the Montana Writing Project. It's a simple yet powerful tool for structuring student writing. A RAFT prompt can be almost anything -- in fact you have already seen some in this teacher's guide -- but it has four basic parts:

**R -- role** of the writer. Who are you? The president, a political activist, a blood cell, a tree. Almost anything is possible, but the writer must write from that persona and that perspective.

**A -- audience.** To whom is this written? A mother, a child, Congress, the viewers of MTV. Your audience will affect your tone and content greatly.

**F -- format.** What form will the writing take? A letter, a speech, an obituary, a commercial. There are many possibilities besides the standard essay.

T -- **topic + strong verb.** What are you trying to do in this piece? What is your goal? e.g. To persuade the president to stop a war. To convince your little brother to do your chores.

More samples of RAFT components are below.

Begin class by creating your own RAFT prompt on any topic, and having students write a brief journal entry about it. One possibility: *You are a new student at this school. Write a complaint to the principal convincing him that one thing at this school really needs to be changed to make it a better place for the kids.*

After discussing student responses, introduce the RAFT method and have the kids find the components in the prompt you used.

Now, have the students create their own homework assignment! They are to design a RAFT prompt based on any chapter of *The Lightning Thief* covered so far. You might want to start them with some examples, and share the list of possibilities below. Have students pair off and discuss ideas, then share as a class. Students should check each other to make sure they've got all four elements of the prompt. Have students response to their own prompt in 1/2 to 1 page for homework, or as an in-class writing.

One possible prompt: *You are the janitor at Camp Half Blood. Write a complaint to Mr. D., blaming the campers for what happened to your toilets.*

The RAFT method trains students to understand perspective and audience -- two critical components of effective writing. It also raises their awareness of different modes and purposes of writing. Most importantly, it turns them into active learners who can make their own questions!

#### Possible Roles and Audiences

ad agency	athlete	cartoonist	editor
character in the novel	lawyer	parent	
movie star	older/younger student or sibling	historical figure	
TV character	poet		

#### Possible Formats

Advertisement	apology	application	cartoon
bumper sticker	commercial	complaint	poem
confession	interview	invitation	poster

diary                      news story      obituary      pamphlet  
rap                        text message    TV script      wanted posters  
warning      will

Strong Verbs

Admonish    accuse          advise          attack  
Beg            convince        dazzle          defend  
Deny          demand        excuse          flatter  
Harass        justify         protest  
Shock         satirize        warn

3. **The 12 Olympian Gods + 2.** This is a good point in the book to nail down the facts about the Olympian gods. Use the attached graphic organizer as an overhead transparency or projected Word document. Give students a blank copy and fill it out as a class. They may be able to volunteer some of the information. The rest you can provide. This makes a fun and easy “quick reference” sheet for review.

# The 12 Olympian Gods + 2

God/Goddess	Sphere of Control	animal/symbol
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		

# The 12 Olympian Gods + 2

God/Goddess	Sphere of Control	animal/symbol
1. Zeus	Sky, lord of the gods	Eagle, lightning bolt
2. Hera	Motherhood, marriage	Cow (motherly animal), lion, peacock
3. Poseidon	Sea, earthquakes	Horse, trident
4. Demeter	Agriculture	Red poppy, barley
5. Hephaestus	blacksmiths	Anvil, quail (hops funny like him)
6. Athena	Wisdom, battle, useful arts	owl
7. Aphrodite	Love	Dove, magic belt (that makes men fall for her)
8. Ares	War	Wild boar, bloody spear
9. Apollo	Music, medicine, poetry, archery, bachelors	Mouse, lyre
10. Artemis	(Apollo's twin sister) Maiden girls, hunting	She-bear
11. Hermes	Travelers, merchants, thieves, messengers	Caduceus, winged helm and sandals
12. Dionysus	wine	Tiger, grapes
13. Hestia	Home and hearth	Crane (gave up her council seat for Dionysus)
14. Hades	underworld	Helm of terror

## Chapter 7

### *My Dinner Goes up in Smoke*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *You're having a dinner party and can have anything on the menu you want. What food and drink would you choose for you and your friends?*
  - b. *If you could go to summer camp year-round instead of attending school, would you do it? Why or why not? What if the trade-off was that you couldn't ever leave the camp?*

#### **As you read:**

1. Who are Annabeth's parents?
2. What does it mean to be "undetermined"?
4. Why are some kids summer campers and others year-rounders? Which would you rather be?
5. What do the beads mean on Annabeth's necklace?
6. Why is Annabeth frustrated when she and Percy talk about quests?
7. Why does Luke feel bitter?
8. Why does Percy ask for a blue Coke at dinner?
9. What does Percy wish for as he puts his dinner into the fire?
10. In what way does Percy feel different once he gets to the bonfire?

### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Tournament Day.** *Credit to Mr. Brunner (yes, there is a real Mr. Brunner) who created this review activity.*

Divide the class into four teams. Try to make the groups as even in size and ability as possible. If you wish, you can have the students name their teams, e.g. Apollo's Arrows, the Bronze Blades, etc. It's best if the teams sit together.

Draw a line down the center of your blackboard or whiteboard. You can give the boundary line a creative name if you want, like "camp property line" or "the neutral zone." Draw a box with four columns for keeping score, one column for each team. Tell the students they are about to do a relay tournament with review questions on *Percy Jackson*. The team with the most points at the end will win a prize. I use "bonus buck" coupons for prizes, good for two extra points on any assignment in my class. You may choose to use candy, or no prize at all.

The rules: Everyone on every team must take a turn at the board. The team members have to rotate, and once they establish a "batting order," they must keep that order. Two teams at a time send representatives to the board. Let's call the teams A, B, C, and D, for example. To begin, the first person from team A comes to the board to challenge the first person from team B. You will say the question. The first person to get the right answer written on the board wins. Teams may not help or say anything unless both players are obviously stumped, in which case you can say "teams." At that point, team members may run to the board to assist, but the person whose turn it is still has to be the one who writes the answer. Whichever team wins, gets a point. If there is a tie, the same two people stay up for a second, tie-breaking question. If neither team is able to answer the question, no one gets a point and both players sit down. Then the tournament rotates -- the next person from team B plays the first person from team C. Then team C plays team D. Team D plays team A, and the whole process starts over until you run out of questions or time.

To spice things up, you can have different categories of questions. Start with one-pointers, then five-pointers, then ten-pointers. This way, teams don't get discouraged if they do poorly at the beginning. Sample questions are below. You are encouraged to make up your own, but it's very important to ask questions that are conducive to fast, short answers that can be quickly written on the board, and have only one correct answer. Otherwise you'll spend to contest arguing.

### **Sample Tournament Questions:**

#### 1 pointers

1. Who is Annabeth's mother? (Athena)
2. Who is Clarisse's father? (Ares)

3. What sort of creature is Mr. Brunner? (centaur)
4. What sort of creature is Grover? (satyr)
5. Two words: What is the name of Percy's boarding school? (Yancy Academy)
6. The three old women Percy sees on the side of the road are actually the Three \_\_\_\_\_. (Fates)
7. How many Olympian gods are there? (12)
8. What type of tree is on top of Half Blood Hill? (pine)
9. What is Mr. D's full name? (Dionysus)
10. Who were the enemies that fought a major war with the Gods? (Titans)

#### 5-pointers

1. What sort of animal head hangs above Ares' cabin? (boar)
2. Name one thing that Hermes is the god of. (travelers, thieves, merchants, roads)
3. Who is the wife of Zeus? (Hera)
4. What is the pattern on Mr. D's shirt? (tiger)
5. Where do Percy and his mother like to go on vacation? (Montauk)
6. Three words: according to Percy's mom, how did his dad disappear? (lost at sea)
7. Who is Dionysus' father? (Zeus)
8. What is Dionysus restricted from? (wine, alcohol)
9. What part of the Big House seems mysterious to Percy? (attic)
10. What does Percy use to defeat Clarisse when she tries to bully him? (toilets, plumbing)

#### 10-pointers

1. What lives in the canoe lake? (Naiads)
2. Two words: Dionysus was grounded to Camp Half Blood because he was chasing a what? (wood nymph)

3. Aside from pinochle, what is another game Dionysus considers the greatest human achievement? (gladiator fighting or Pacman)
4. Two words: How did Percy's mother's parents die? (airplane crash)
5. What is Smelly Gabe's last name? (Ugliano)
6. What sort of creature tried to attack young Percy when he was taking a nap in daycare? (snake)
7. Who was Zeus' mother, who hid him from Cronos? (Rhea)
8. Chiron says the United States eagle is actually a symbol of who? (Zeus)
9. Chiron says there is a statue of what Greek mythological figure in Rockefeller Center? (Prometheus)
10. Who is the Greek lord of the dead? (Hades)

## Chapter 8

### *We Capture a Flag*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *When you choose teams for a sport or P.E. activity, would you rather pick them yourselves or have the coach do it? Why?*
  - b. *If you were forced to decide right now what career you would study in the future, what would choose? What skills would make you good at that career? What is a career you would definitely not choose?*
2. Choose your “dream team” for the camp capture-the-flag game. Before you read the chapter, pretend you are Annabeth, the leader of Athena’s cabin. You will be fighting the Ares cabin. Using what you know about the gods, make a list of your top picks for the other cabins you’d like to have on your side. Rank them from first to last. Pair up with a partner and compare your lists. Discuss why you ranked them the way you did, and be prepared to explain to the class.

#### **As You Read:**

1. Why are the counselors having a hard time deciding who Percy’s Olympian parent is?
2. How does Percy surprise everyone during his first sword class? How do you think he was able to do this?
3. According to Grover, why did the “Big Three” gods swear never to have any more children?
4. Why does the story about Thalia make Percy feel “hollow and guilty”?
5. In capture-the-flag, why does Percy feel like he’s being left out of the action?
6. How does Percy manage to overcome the kids from Ares’s cabin?
7. What was Annabeth’s plan to win the flag?
8. Why does Annabeth make Percy stand in the water?
9. What does Chiron say about how the hellhound got into camp?
10. When you find out Percy’s true identity, are you surprised or did you see it coming? What clues were given earlier in the book?

## **Follow-up Activities**

1. Reader's Theater. Have students divided into groups of 3-4 and pick a page of dialogue to read out loud like a script. Students pick parts and only read what is inside the quotation marks for their characters' lines. Percy's fight with the Ares cabin, or ending scene with Chiron, Clarisse, Annabeth and Percy make good scenes to read. Once students have practiced their lines a few times, have them perform for the rest of the class.
2. Journal: Prediction. Now that everyone knows who Percy's father is, how will this change the way people at camp see him? Is it a good thing or a bad thing that Percy is the son of Poseidon? Why?
3. Learn Ancient Greek. Use the attached worksheet to try your hand at this ancient language, the way Percy does in his morning lessons with Annabeth.

## Learning Ancient Greek

Percy takes lessons in Ancient Greek from Annabeth every morning. He says a demigod's brain is "hardwired" for Greek. Try your hand at learning the Greek alphabet below. Try writing your name and the names of the Olympian gods using Greek letters.

Lower case	Upper case	Name of letter	English letter	Pronunciation
α	Α	alpha	a	<u>f</u> ather
β	Β	beta	b	<u>b</u> ig
γ	Γ	gamma	g, n	<u>G</u> od, <u>a</u> nkle
δ	Δ	delta	d	<u>d</u> oor
ε	Ε	epsilon	e	me <u>t</u>
ζ	Ζ	zeta	z, dz	<u>z</u> eal, kud <u>z</u> u
η	Η	eta	ē	obe <u>y</u>
θ	Θ	theta	th	<u>t</u> hing
ι	Ι	iota	i	pi <u>t</u> , poli <u>c</u> e
κ	Κ	kappa	k	<u>k</u> ee <u>p</u>
λ	Λ	lambda	l	<u>l</u> aw
μ	Μ	mu	m	<u>m</u> othe <u>r</u>
ν	Ν	nu	n	<u>n</u> u <u>m</u> ber
ξ	Ξ	xi (ksee)	x	fo <u>x</u>
ο	Ο	omicron	o	no <u>t</u>
π	Π	pi	p	<u>p</u> oo <u>r</u>
ρ	Ρ	rho	r, rh	<u>r</u> o <u>d</u>
σ	Σ	sigma	s	<u>s</u> ave
τ	Τ	tau	t	<u>t</u> ime
υ	Υ	upsilon	u, y	German <u>ü</u>
φ	Φ	phi	ph	<u>p</u> hone
χ	Χ	chi	ch	German <u>ich</u>
ψ	Ψ	psi	ps	tips <u>y</u>
ω	Ω	omega	ō	<u>v</u> ote

## Chapter 9

### *I Am Offered a Quest*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Have you ever had something stolen from you? Do you know anyone else who has? Describe the situation and how it made you feel. How did you deal with the theft?*
  - b. *What is the most dangerous thing you've ever done? Did you do it intentionally or was it unplanned?*
  - c. *Do you believe it is possible to tell someone's fortune? Do you have any faith in horoscopes, or magic eight balls, or fortune cookies?*
2. Research the Oracle of Delphi. What was it? Why was it important? A good (and fun) place to start is the Winged Sandals website. <http://abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/oracle/>. Here, you can ask the Oracle a question about your future, or see an animated story about how Apollo won his Oracle at Delphi.

#### **As you Read:**

1. Why does Percy feel miserable once he gets his own cabin?
2. Based on the newspaper article Percy finds under his door, what is happening in the real world while Percy is in camp?
3. What is the master bolt?
4. Why does Zeus think Percy stole the bolt?
5. Why can't the gods retrieve the bolt themselves?
6. What bothers Percy about the Oracle's prophecy?
7. According to Chiron, what evidence suggests that Hades stole the lightning bolt?
8. Why does Percy have to travel overland?
9. What will happen on the summer solstice if the lightning bolt is not returned?
10. What is unusual about the storm that moves in over camp?

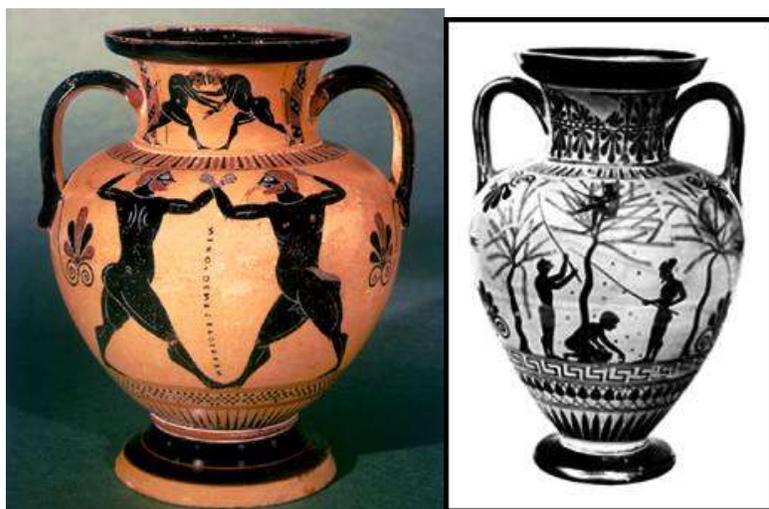
**Follow-up Activities:**

1. Make your own Greek vase. Use the attached worksheet to create a scene from the novel in Ancient Greek style.
2. Journal: How do you think the Oracle's prophecy will come true for Percy? How will he be betrayed by a friend? What does it mean: "he will fail to save what matters most in the end"?



### **Make your own Greek Vase**

Greek vases often showed pictures of daily life or scenes from myths. The vases were usually had a fancy border design around the edges. Below are some examples.



Design your own Greek vase showing a scene from *The Lightning Thief*. This could be an important event or simply a scene from every day life at camp. Use the blank shape below to draw the shape of a vase and plan your design. If you would prefer, you can use a circular plate. The design at the top of the page is part of a Greek dinner plate.

## Chapter 10

### *I Ruin a Perfectly Good Bus*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Many of the campers at Camp Half-Blood have their own magic item. Clarisse has an electric spear. Annabeth has a baseball cap that turns her invisible. What magic item would make sense for Percy, as the son of the Sea God? Design your own magic item.*
  - b. *Percy gets to try his hand at driving a bus in this chapter. Defend or attack this proposition: “The national driving age should be lowered to 13.” Can you think of any reasons that might actually convince Congress to pass such a law?*

#### **As you read:**

1. Who is Argus and why can he never be surprised?
2. What gift does Luke give to Percy? Why can't Percy use them?
3. What special properties does Riptide have?
4. What is Mist?
5. What are some of the reasons Annabeth gives for why Poseidon and Athena don't get along?
6. According to Grover, why did Percy's mom marry Gabe?
7. Percy says he's not going on the quest to retrieve the lightning bolt. What's his real reason for going?
8. How does Percy sneak to the front of the bus?
9. Why doesn't Percy leave the bus when he has the chance?
10. How do Percy, Grover and Annabeth lose their luggage?

#### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Draw your own Fury. Use the attached worksheet to see how the Ancient Greeks envisioned the Furies. Then draw your own updated version.
2. Olympian Travel Agency. Percy Jackson has ten days to go from New York to Los Angeles and back again, and he can't use air travel. Is this possible? Try to use internet sources to “book” and trip for Percy and his friends using buses or trains.

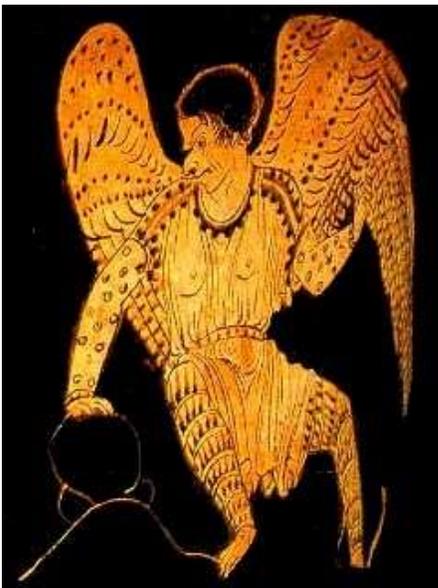
How much would the trip cost? How long would it take? Try these sources to start:

[www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) (for trains)

[www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com) (for busses)

## Draw Your Own Fury

The Ancient Greeks had many different ideas about what the Three Furies looked like. Below are some depictions from Ancient Greek pottery. Draw your own updated version of what modern Furies might look like.



## Chapter 11

### *We Visit the Garden Gnome Emporium*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion

- a. *An old piece of advice is: “Never talk to strangers.” Do you believe this is always the safest thing to do? Why or why not?*
- b. *What is the worst (or most embarrassing) photograph of you that’s ever been taken? Describe it.*

2. One of the stories Annabeth refers to in Ch. 10 is Poseidon meeting his girlfriend in the temple of Athena. See if you can find that myth. Who was the girlfriend? For extra credit, see if you can find the two children that were born from that relationship between Poseidon and his girlfriend. One place to find all the affairs of Poseidon is [www.theoi.com](http://www.theoi.com). Do a search for Poseidon. You’ll be amazed how many girlfriends he had!

#### **As You Read:**

1. Why is Annabeth upset with Percy for risking his life on the bus?
2. What does Aunty Em look like when she opens the door?
3. How does Percy explain why he went into the garden gnome emporium? Does this explanation make sense to you?
4. Why does Grover start to get nervous at the emporium? (There are several reasons)
5. How can you tell that Percy isn’t thinking straight after he eats his meal?
6. Did you guess Aunty Em’s true identity before Percy did? If so, what clues gave her away?
7. Why does Annabeth say they have to kill Medusa? Why can’t they just run away?
8. Medusa’s head doesn’t disintegrate along with the rest of her. Why not?
9. What important information does Percy find in Medusa’s office?
10. Why do you think Percy sends Medusa’s head to Mount Olympus? Do you think this is a good idea?

## **Follow-up Activities**

1. Halfway Party. You are now exactly halfway through the book! A good way to celebrate is by having a tournament day with questions from all the chapters so far. (For the rules of tournament day, see Ch. 7.) If your school allows, have some snacks with a Greek theme! Have each class generate their own tournament questions, like the models shown in Ch. 7. After screening them for fairness and appropriateness, you can use one class's questions to grill your other classes. Make laurel wreaths for the winners of the tournament.
2. Medusa's obituary. Study some obituaries from your local newspaper, then write an obituary for Medusa. Make it funny if you wish. Be sure to use facts about her life (from the myths) and her death (from *The Lightning Thief*). What will her funeral arrangements be? Where should people send flowers or charitable donations? If you want to get fancy, combine this idea with the halfway party above and throw a funeral party for Medusa. If your dress code allows, encourage kids to wear black armbands for mourning!

## Chapter 12

### *We Get Advice from a Poodle*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *Describe a vivid dream you've had. If you honestly can't remember any dreams, describe a dream you remember a friend or relative telling you about. Do you think dreams ever give important information?*
  - b. *Do you think animals can understand when you talk to them? Have you ever had a pet you understand very well?*

#### **As You Read:**

1. Why does Grover want a searcher's license?
2. Why does Grover's dream sound so hopeless to Percy?
3. What new information do you learn about Grover's past and how it relates to Annabeth?
4. According to Grover, why did Percy mail Medusa's head to Mount Olympus?
5. Describe the place Percy sees in his dream.
6. What terrible realization does Percy make toward the end of the dream? What does the voice want from him?
7. Who do think is talking to Percy in the dream? Who is this voice from the pit?
8. Who is Gladiola?
9. What is Grover's plan to get money for the trip?
10. If you were offered the choice in Percy's dream – to save your own parent's life or complete your quest and prevent a terrible war – what would you choose?

**Follow-up Activity:**

1. **Text message to Chiron.** In an earlier chapter, Percy mentions that cell phones are a no-no for half-bloods because monsters can trace the signals. But what if Percy had no choice? Imagine Percy has to send a text message to Chiron about their situation as it stands at the end of Ch. 12. He wants Chiron to know what's going on, but he has to keep it brief so the monsters don't trace the call. A text message can only be 150 characters, maximum (including spaces and punctuation). Write the best message for Percy to send Chiron. If you wish, perhaps you can arrange to submit this assignment as an actual text message to your teacher.

## Chapter 13

### *I Plunge to My Death*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *Many people have phobias. Fear of heights is one of the most common. Are you afraid of high places, or do you know anyone who is? What about other phobias – do you have any?*
  - b. *In this chapter, Annabeth says she wants to be an architect and build a monument that will last a thousand years. If you could be famous, what would you like to be remembered for?*

#### **As You Read:**

1. Why does Percy try to keep a low profile on the train?
2. What new information does Annabeth tell us about her father in this chapter?
3. Annabeth says a couple of unexpected friends took care of her when she ran away from home. Any guesses who these might be? Why?
4. Why does Percy laugh when Annabeth tells him what she wants to be?
5. What magic item does Hades have? What are its powers?
6. Describe the Chimera.
7. Echidna says Percy should feel honored to be killed by her. Why?
8. What is Percy's "fatal mistake" while battling the Chimera?
9. Why does Percy decide he has no choice but to jump? What would you have done in his place?
10. How would the battle have been different if there were no mortal spectators in the Arch?

### **Follow-up Activity**

1. **The Lightning Thief word search.** After having students read the chapter on their own, I use activities like the attached wordsearch as filler activities. They are optional, fun, and great for keeping the faster readers engaged while the rest of the class finishes up. Even better, get your kids on the Discovery.com website (<http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>) and use the free, easy wordsearch generator to create their own wordsearches and crosswords about *The Lightning Thief*.

## The Lightning Thief Word Search

PERCY	<u>N</u> <u>A</u> <u>G</u> <u>M</u> <u>W</u> <u>S</u> <u>I</u> <u>B</u> <u>D</u> <u>G</u> <u>A</u> <u>B</u> <u>E</u> <u>H</u> <u>J</u> <u>U</u> <u>D</u> <u>J</u> <u>O</u> <u>G</u>
ANNABETH	<u>V</u> <u>H</u> <u>G</u> <u>R</u> <u>S</u> <u>M</u> <u>L</u> <u>O</u> <u>N</u> <u>G</u> <u>I</u> <u>S</u> <u>L</u> <u>A</u> <u>N</u> <u>D</u> <u>D</u> <u>I</u> <u>A</u> <u>K</u>
GROVER	<u>K</u> <u>K</u> <u>R</u> <u>U</u> <u>U</u> <u>G</u> <u>L</u> <u>K</u> <u>A</u> <u>S</u> <u>W</u> <u>G</u> <u>O</u> <u>J</u> <u>K</u> <u>U</u> <u>R</u> <u>T</u> <u>C</u> <u>G</u>
CLARISSE	<u>R</u> <u>O</u> <u>O</u> <u>X</u> <u>E</u> <u>Z</u> <u>W</u> <u>R</u> <u>D</u> <u>V</u> <u>H</u> <u>T</u> <u>E</u> <u>B</u> <u>A</u> <u>N</u> <u>N</u> <u>A</u> <u>C</u> <u>J</u>
CHIRON	<u>F</u> <u>Q</u> <u>V</u> <u>C</u> <u>Z</u> <u>Q</u> <u>E</u> <u>S</u> <u>B</u> <u>H</u> <u>H</u> <u>E</u> <u>U</u> <u>P</u> <u>H</u> <u>X</u> <u>V</u> <u>F</u> <u>M</u> <u>P</u>
ARES	<u>M</u> <u>R</u> <u>E</u> <u>S</u> <u>D</u> <u>E</u> <u>P</u> <u>T</u> <u>D</u> <u>P</u> <u>C</u> <u>U</u> <u>K</u> <u>X</u> <u>W</u> <u>U</u> <u>E</u> <u>V</u> <u>B</u> <u>M</u>
SALLY	<u>E</u> <u>Y</u> <u>R</u> <u>X</u> <u>T</u> <u>A</u> <u>Z</u> <u>E</u> <u>E</u> <u>I</u> <u>E</u> <u>U</u> <u>N</u> <u>U</u> <u>Q</u> <u>X</u> <u>J</u> <u>J</u> <u>H</u> <u>H</u>
GABE	<u>J</u> <u>C</u> <u>A</u> <u>D</u> <u>W</u> <u>X</u> <u>A</u> <u>O</u> <u>R</u> <u>M</u> <u>O</u> <u>I</u> <u>D</u> <u>B</u> <u>L</u> <u>N</u> <u>A</u> <u>E</u> <u>F</u> <u>H</u>
RIPTIDE	<u>L</u> <u>D</u> <u>A</u> <u>R</u> <u>I</u> <u>Z</u> <u>K</u> <u>V</u> <u>J</u> <u>C</u> <u>I</u> <u>N</u> <u>W</u> <u>E</u> <u>H</u> <u>L</u> <u>P</u> <u>B</u> <u>S</u> <u>A</u>
LUKE	<u>A</u> <u>H</u> <u>R</u> <u>I</u> <u>P</u> <u>T</u> <u>I</u> <u>D</u> <u>E</u> <u>E</u> <u>Y</u> <u>J</u> <u>Y</u> <u>H</u> <u>Q</u> <u>H</u> <u>O</u> <u>A</u> <u>F</u> <u>L</u>
HEPHAESTUS	<u>M</u> <u>G</u> <u>V</u> <u>T</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u> <u>S</u> <u>X</u> <u>O</u> <u>E</u> <u>N</u> <u>Z</u> <u>X</u> <u>S</u> <u>A</u> <u>F</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u> <u>A</u> <u>F</u>
LONGISLAND	<u>D</u> <u>N</u> <u>U</u> <u>O</u> <u>H</u> <u>L</u> <u>L</u> <u>E</u> <u>H</u> <u>O</u> <u>J</u> <u>N</u> <u>G</u> <u>E</u> <u>U</u> <u>Y</u> <u>E</u> <u>C</u> <u>Q</u> <u>B</u>
DIONYSUS	<u>Q</u> <u>T</u> <u>F</u> <u>U</u> <u>K</u> <u>Q</u> <u>T</u> <u>D</u> <u>R</u> <u>P</u> <u>V</u> <u>L</u> <u>S</u> <u>X</u> <u>J</u> <u>S</u> <u>I</u> <u>L</u> <u>M</u> <u>L</u>
HELLHOUND	<u>Q</u> <u>C</u> <u>H</u> <u>M</u> <u>G</u> <u>J</u> <u>H</u> <u>I</u> <u>Q</u> <u>C</u> <u>Z</u> <u>T</u> <u>R</u> <u>O</u> <u>W</u> <u>G</u> <u>D</u> <u>A</u> <u>L</u> <u>O</u>
HALFBLOOD	<u>L</u> <u>O</u> <u>E</u> <u>G</u> <u>X</u> <u>F</u> <u>H</u> <u>H</u> <u>P</u> <u>L</u> <u>U</u> <u>A</u> <u>P</u> <u>U</u> <u>G</u> <u>D</u> <u>O</u> <u>R</u> <u>J</u> <u>O</u>
ZEUS	<u>S</u> <u>M</u> <u>N</u> <u>S</u> <u>K</u> <u>C</u> <u>J</u> <u>M</u> <u>Y</u> <u>S</u> <u>D</u> <u>D</u> <u>T</u> <u>R</u> <u>Q</u> <u>X</u> <u>N</u> <u>I</u> <u>B</u> <u>D</u>
POSEIDON	<u>Y</u> <u>A</u> <u>N</u> <u>O</u> <u>L</u> <u>E</u> <u>B</u> <u>N</u> <u>C</u> <u>X</u> <u>Q</u> <u>M</u> <u>O</u> <u>H</u> <u>Q</u> <u>X</u> <u>A</u> <u>S</u> <u>E</u> <u>W</u>
ATHENA	<u>G</u> <u>I</u> <u>L</u> <u>L</u> <u>Q</u> <u>B</u> <u>B</u> <u>O</u> <u>A</u> <u>R</u> <u>E</u> <u>S</u> <u>K</u> <u>H</u> <u>E</u> <u>O</u> <u>T</u> <u>S</u> <u>F</u> <u>E</u>
	<u>H</u> <u>U</u> <u>T</u> <u>L</u> <u>O</u> <u>X</u> <u>H</u> <u>K</u> <u>E</u> <u>T</u> <u>Z</u> <u>J</u> <u>Y</u> <u>X</u> <u>U</u> <u>N</u> <u>O</u> <u>E</u> <u>C</u> <u>M</u>
	<u>D</u> <u>Q</u> <u>W</u> <u>S</u> <u>Y</u> <u>S</u> <u>I</u> <u>I</u> <u>L</u> <u>U</u> <u>F</u> <u>S</u> <u>Z</u> <u>Q</u> <u>J</u> <u>P</u> <u>A</u> <u>M</u> <u>Z</u> <u>V</u>

### Check in out!

Make your own word searches for free at <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>

## **Chapter 14**

### *I Become a Known Fugitive*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion

*a. There's an old saying: "There's no such thing as bad press." What does this mean? Do you think it's true? Would you like to be famous in the national news, even if it was for something negative?*

#### **As You Read:**

1. When he lands in the Mississippi River, what does Percy realize that amazes him?
2. Why does Percy feel ashamed that Poseidon saved him?
3. What message does the woman in the water bring to Percy? What is her warning?
4. What does Percy learn by overhearing the reporters outside the Arch?
5. What happened to the family that was in the Arch with Percy?

#### **Follow-up Activity**

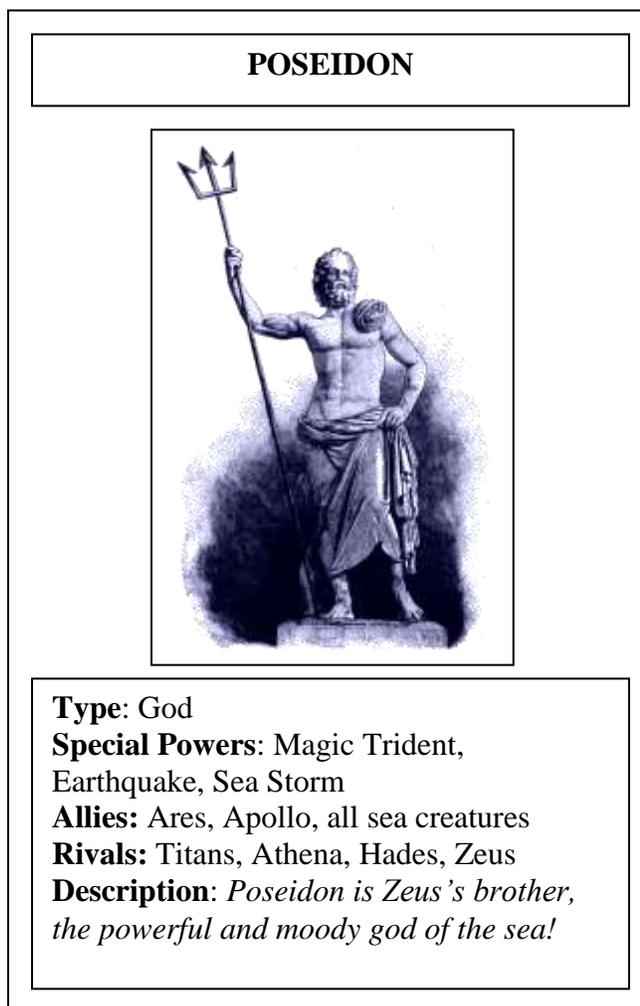
##### **1. Lightning Thief Trading Cards**

Using the attached handout as an example, have students each create one trading card for a character in *The Lightning Thief* – a monster, human or god. You may wish to vary the guidelines. If you decide to give each card a point value, students can even use the cards to play a game (such as war or battle).

### Lightning Thief trading cards

On a piece of paper or cardboard, make a trading card for a character from *The Lightning Thief*. This could be a god, half-blood or monster. You can draw a picture of your character or use clipart. You may have to use your imagination if you are doing a picture of Percy, Annabeth, or the other campers.

Decide what information you will put on your card. Besides the character's name, you should have a brief description and any special powers that character has. You might even want to assign an attack value and defense value to your card so you can play games with your friends!



Some possible characters for cards: Percy, Annabeth, Grover, Clarisse, Luke, Chiron, Poseidon, Zeus, Hades, Medusa, Minotaur, Furies, Chimera, Echidna, Hellhound, Athena, Hermes.

## Chapter 15

### *A God Buys Us Cheeseburgers*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *In this chapter, Annabeth says, “Even strength has to bow to wisdom.” Do you think that’s true? Would you rather be exceptionally strong or exceptionally wise?*
  - b. *Has someone ever tried to convince you to do something you didn’t want to do? How did you handle it? Have you ever convinced someone else to do something for you? How did you do it?*

#### **As You Read:**

1. What is Iris-messaging? How does it work?
2. Why does Annabeth want to leave as soon as Luke appears in the mist?
3. Luke says: “Tell Grover it’ll be better this time! Nobody will get turned into a pine tree . . .” What does this tell you about Grover’s past?
4. What does Ares say that convinces Percy to help him?
5. According to Annabeth, how does Hephaestus deal with his wife and Ares having an affair?
6. Grover doesn’t smell any monsters at the Thrill Ride O’ Love, even though it’s a trap. Why is that?
7. Why can’t Annabeth help Percy when they get trapped in the pool?
8. How does Annabeth put her knowledge of physics to work on the water ride?
9. How does Grover save the day?
10. At the end of the chapter, whom do you think Percy is angrier with – Hephaestus or Ares? Why?

### **Follow-up Activity**

1. **The Modernized Gods.** In this chapter you met Ares, who in modern times wears biker clothes and rides a Harley Davison with a shotgun holster. How might the other gods or goddesses look in modern times? Pick one god or goddess you know about. Look up information about them (a good place to start is [www.mythweb.com](http://www.mythweb.com)). Check for pictures of them on the internet. Then write a description of what they might look like today. What clothes would they wear? Hairstyle? Favorite car?

## Chapter 16

### *We Take a Zebra to Vegas*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *Have you ever had a fight with your parent? What was it about? How did you resolve the problem?*
  - b. *Describe your dream vacation. Where would you go? What would you do?*
2. **A virtual trip to Las Vegas.** In this chapter, Percy and his friends arrive in Las Vegas. What do you know about the city's attractions? A good place to start researching is [www.lasvegaskids.net](http://www.lasvegaskids.net) for kid-friendly activities. Pretend you are going to Las Vegas. Make a top ten list of activities you would want to do. (Not gambling!)

#### **As You Read:**

1. What's in the backpack Ares gives Percy? If you were him, would you have accepted this gift?
2. What news does Ares give Percy about his mom?
3. Annabeth says Percy wasn't smart to anger Ares. Was Percy right to talk back to him? Why or why not?
4. What do the beads mean on Annabeth's necklace?
5. Percy says that Annabeth should write her father a letter. What would you advise her to do?
6. Percy's dream has three different parts – what does he see in each scene?
7. How does Grover make sure the animals will be safe after they are released?
8. Percy, Grover and Annabeth are attracted to different types of games at the Lotus Casino. What does each one like, and what does this tell you about their personality?
9. When does Percy start to realize the casino is a trap?
10. How does Percy snap Annabeth out of her trance?

## **Follow-up Activities**

1. **Journal: The Perfect Trap.** The Lotus Casino is designed to make kids never want to leave. Do you think it would keep you entranced? Write a description of a place that would be a “perfect trap” to keep you there forever. What would such a place look like? What activities would be available? What kind of food?
2. **Journal: Time Travel.** Time travels slowly in the Lotus Casino. Darrin has been there since the 1970s but he’s still a kid, and it seems to him that he’s only been there a few days. Would you like to spend some time in the Lotus Casino? How far ahead in time would you like to travel before you stepped outside? Remember, though, you could never go back.

## Chapter 17

### *We Shop For Waterbeds*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *People are always looking for new ways to sell things. What's the worst or most annoying commercial you've ever seen? What is the best or funniest?*
2. **Quick Write.** This is a one-minute timed writing. The idea is to get as many words as possible onto the paper. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation. You will get more words if you write in complete thoughts rather than making a list. The teacher will give you the subject. Once you hear it, you will have exactly one minute. You CANNOT STOP writing for any reason. If you can't think of anything, write "I have nothing to say" until you think of something, but you can't write "I have nothing to say" the entire time. The purpose of this is to become a more fluent writer.

Teachers: Make your first subject something simple, like "the color blue." Then try something related to the chapter, such as "Los Angeles" or "California." Students write whatever they can think of about that subject. At the end, have them count their words and put the number at the top. Compare with a show of hands. Who got the most words? Do one or two of these a day and you will be amazed how much faster the kids get at writing by the end of the year.

#### **As You Read:**

1. How does Annabeth pay for the trip to Los Angeles?
2. Annabeth seems worried when they discuss the voice from the pit. Percy thinks she has an idea what it might be. Do you have any guesses?
3. Who is the spirit in the sea? What does she give to Percy?
4. Why is Annabeth uneasy about the gifts Percy received?
5. According to Percy, how is L.A. different from New York?
6. Why doesn't Riptide work on the kids who jump Percy in the alley?
7. What does Crusty do to his customers?
8. Why can't Percy simply fight Crusty?
9. How does Percy trick the giant?
10. How does Percy find the address for the Underworld?

## **Follow-up Activities**

1. **Make an Advertisement for Crusty's Waterbed Palace.** Crusty has hired you to advertise his fabulous waterbeds. Make a magazine ad for him. How would you attract customers? What special deals would you promise? If you prefer, you can write a television commercial for the Waterbed Palace and either perform it live or videotape it.

## Chapter 18

### *Annabeth Does Obedience School*

#### Warm-up Activities:

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *Have you ever been through a security checkpoint – at the airport, for instance? Do you think these checkpoints keep people safe? Why or why not?*
  - b. *Humans have always wondered what happens after death. The Greeks believed in the Underworld ruled by Hades. Do you have a personal belief about whether there is life after death?*
2. **The Rivers of the Underworld.** The Greeks believed there were five rivers in the Underworld. Divide the class into five groups and have each group look up information on one of the following. Each group should have a scribe, several researchers, a task master, and a reporter to share the group's findings with the rest of the class.

**Acheron**

**Cocytus**

**Styx**

**Lethe**

**Phlegethon**

#### As You Read:

1. Why does the DOA security guard get annoyed with Percy?
2. How does Charon realize Percy and his friends are not really dead?
3. How does Percy finally convince Charon to take them into the elevator?
4. What does the River Styx look like? Why does it look this way?
5. Describe the entrance to the Underworld.
6. If you were standing in that line, would you rather choose EZ Death and go straight to Asphodel, or risk being judged for your actions on earth?
7. What is Percy's plan to get past Cerberus? Why doesn't it work?
8. How does Annabeth save them? Why is she able to do this?
9. What does Percy realize about monsters at the end of the chapter?
10. Do you feel sorry for Cerberus? Would you have risked playing fetch with him, if you were Annabeth?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. **Obedience School.** Use the Internet to research how to train dogs. Did Annabeth do the right thing? Look up information on the Rottweiler breed in particular. How easy are they to train?
2. **Play Rockabye Cerberus.** Visit the Winged Sandals site at: <http://abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/games/cerberus.htm>. Try your hand at the Orpheus music game. Can you put Cerberus to sleep?

## Chapter 19

### *We Find Out the Truth, Sort of*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *In the last chapter, Grover says: “Most people, well, they just lived. Nothing special, good or bad.” Do you think this is true? Do think people are good by nature, or bad, or just neutral?*
  - b. *Who is the most evil person you can think of -- from history or from current times? What makes this person evil? Can an evil person ever have good qualities?*
2. **The Persephone Myth.** Many students will have heard some version of this myth, but this is a good time to read it again. Discuss: Is the settlement between Demeter and Hades fair? What would you think of this if you were Persephone? Does she get a say?

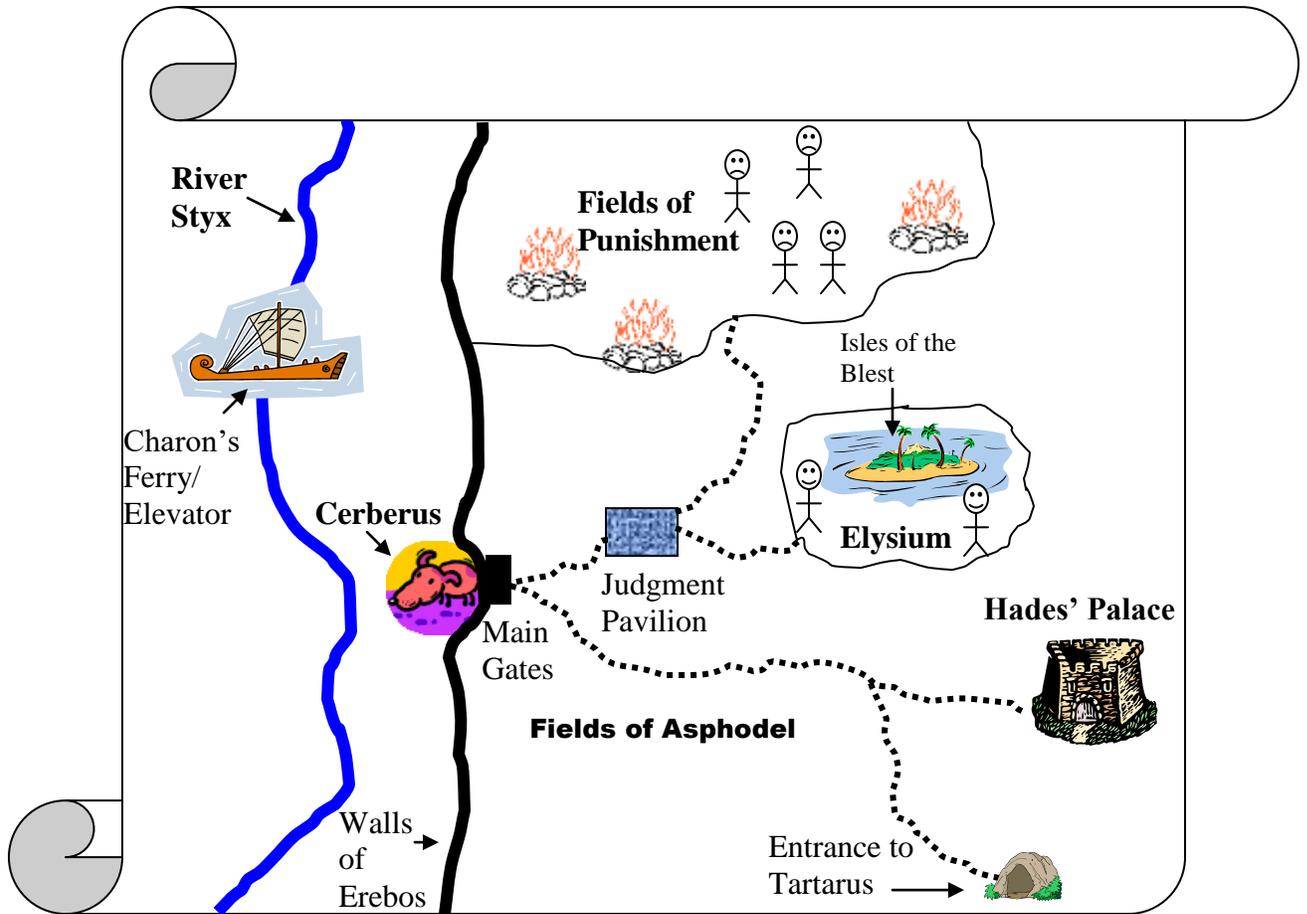
#### **As you Read:**

1. What does the Field of Asphodel look like?
2. What do you have to do to enter the Isles of the Blest?
3. How do Grover, Percy and Annabeth end up at the pit of Tartarus?
4. How is Hades’ aura different than Ares? How does Percy feel when he’s in Hades’ presence?
5. Describe the guards at Hades’ palace.
6. What sort of problems does Hades complain about?
7. Why was Percy’s backpack getting heavy?
8. What terrible choice faces Percy when he decides to use the pearls? Would you have made the same choice he does? Why or why not?
9. How do Annabeth and Grover prove themselves to be real friends to Percy?
10. What is the power of the pearls?

#### **Follow-up Activity:**

##### **1. A Map of the Underworld.**

Have students draw their own maps of the Underworld, based on the description in the book. Then let them compare theirs to Grover’s map of the Underworld on the author’s website: [http://www.rickriordan.com/Underworld\\_map.htm](http://www.rickriordan.com/Underworld_map.htm).



**Grover's Extremely Terrifying Map of the Underworld**

"Satyrs can't draw, so I used clipart. I hope this doesn't give anyone nightmares."

– Grover Underwood

## Chapter 20

### *I Battle My Jerk Relative*

#### Warm-up Activities:

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion
  - a. *How well do you get along with your relatives? If your family held a big reunion party, who would you most look forward to seeing? Who would you not like to see?*
  - b. *What's the nicest thing a friend has ever done for you? Have you ever been called to help out a friend?*
2. **Greek weapons and armor.** At the beginning of the book, Percy mentions that Mr. Brunner has an awesome collection of ancient armor and weapons. Use the attached handout to discuss Greek armor and weapons. Some questions to discuss:
  - a. Why is the helm shaped like that?
  - b. What purpose might the horsehair plume serve in battle?
  - c. Why does the sword have a leaf-shaped blade?
  - d. What do you think the main weapon would be – the spear or the sword? Why?
  - e. Why are the shields small and round? Why aren't they bigger?

#### As You Read:

1. Why does Percy will himself to get soaked in the water?
2. Ares says the best kind of war is when relatives fight each. Why would this be the most vicious kind of fight?
3. Why does Percy begin to suspect that Ares wasn't acting alone – that he was taking orders from someone?
4. Which failures does Ares point to when he says Percy “doesn't have what it takes”? Is this a fair criticism? Why or why not?
5. What deal does Percy make with Ares?
6. How does Percy's ADHD keep him alive in the fight?
7. What strategy does Percy use to beat Ares?
8. After Percy wounds Ares, something strange happens that makes Ares back off. What is it?
9. Why is important that the Furies witness Percy's battle?
10. At the end of the chapter, what does Percy decide he must do to complete the quest?

**Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Acting out the Battle.** Divide class into pairs. Read the scene where Percy battles Ares and try to reconstruct it as closely as possible – the right moves, the right lines. Ask for volunteers to stage the battle for the class (with cardboard swords?).
2. **Journal: Annabeth’s (or Grover’s) Diary.** Annabeth and Grover have very different views of the battle with Ares. Annabeth calls it terrifying. Grover thinks it’s cool. Write a diary entry for either Annabeth or Grover, explaining what happened that day on the beach.

## Greek Weapons and Armor



**Three views of Greek armor**



**A replica Greek sword**



**An Ancient Greek spear tip**

## Chapter 21

### *I Settle My Tab*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Which would rather have – a parent who is distant and doesn't show much emotion, or a parent who very affectionate and shows a lot of emotion? Why? Could there be disadvantages to both?*
  - b. *Have you ever had the desire to get back at someone? What did they do to you that made you feel this way? Did you in fact take revenge?*
2. **Journal: Prediction.** What do you think will happen when Percy brings the lightning bolt to Zeus? If you were writing the next scene, what would it be like?

#### **As You Read:**

1. When the Los Angeles reporters interview Percy, how does he get back at Gabe?
2. Why do Percy, Annabeth and Grover split up when they arrive back in New York?
3. How does Percy convince the guard at the Empire State Building to let him see Zeus?
4. What are some of the things Percy sees on his way through Olympus?
5. Why Percy start feeling a little sorry for Hades when he sees Zeus' palace?
6. Percy says he is glad, in a strange way, that Poseidon is so distant. Why? Does this make sense to you?
7. How does Zeus reward Percy?
8. Who was speaking from the pit? Why do think Zeus doesn't want to talk about it?
9. How do you think Poseidon feels about Percy? How can you tell?
10. Why doesn't Percy petrify Gabe when he has the chance? What would you have done?

**Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Percy's letter to his dad.** Imagine Percy has to write a letter to his father, Poseidon, explaining the choice he made not to petrify Gabe. What would he say? How would he explain his choice? Would he want to tell his father anything else? Any wishes or requests?

## Chapter 22

### *The Prophecy Comes True*

#### **Warm-up Activities:**

1. Journal questions for anticipatory discussion:
  - a. *Have you ever betrayed or let down by a friend? Is that person still your friend? If so, how did you make up?*
  - b. *If someone knew something really bad that was going to happen in your life, and there was nothing you could do about it, would you rather have them tell you or keep it a secret? Why?*

#### **As You Read:**

1. What's the tradition for campers who return from quests? How did the Ares cabin "honor" Percy?
2. How does Percy's mom get enough money to go to college?
3. What happens to Grover in this chapter? Speculate: Will he come back in another book?
4. What is the bead for Percy's first summer?
5. Why do you think Percy has so much trouble deciding whether to stay year round or go to seventh grade? What would you choose?
6. What is unique about Backbiter, Luke's new sword?
7. Why is it dangerous to litter at Camp Half-Blood?
8. Luke says, "Western Civilization is a disease." What do you think he means by that?
9. What turned Luke so bitter?
10. How did Annabeth take Percy's advice?

#### **Follow-up Activities:**

1. **Wanted Poster.** Now that we know Luke is the betrayer at Camp Half-Blood, design a wanted poster that can be posted around Mount Olympus. You will need to draw a picture of Luke, perhaps in the form of a mug shot. You will also need to include a physical description, a list of the crimes he is wanted for, the location where he was last scene, any special powers or weapons people should look out for, and a reward, if you want to offer one.
2. **Percy's choice.** Write a paragraph defending or attacking Percy's choice to leave Camp Half-Blood for the school year. Is it wise? Why or why not?

## End of Unit Activities

### 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?
  
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?

### **Unanswered Questions**

1. In chapter two, Percy witnesses the Three Fates snip someone’s thread of life. Grover warns him that this means someone – possibly Percy himself – is going to die. And yet, do we know whose life thread that was? What do you think that scene foretells? Is it symbolic of Percy’s “death” as a regular kid becoming a demigod? Does it represent Gabe’s death? Given that *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* is a series, is it possible this death is yet-to-come at the end of *The Lightning Thief*?

2. Percy is named after the great hero Perseus. Yet the original Perseus was the son of Zeus, while Percy is the son of Poseidon. This is not explained in *The Lightning Thief*, but why do you think Sally Jackson chose that name for her son? Theseus might have been a more appropriate choice, since he is the most famous son of Poseidon. Hint: Read the stories of the great heroes like Perseus and Theseus, especially how their lives ended. Think about what Poseidon says to his son in Ch. 21: “A hero’s fate is never happy. It is never anything but tragic.”

### **Olympian Festival – “A Day on Olympus”**

Celebrate the end of your Greek mythology unit with a Day on Olympus. Get parents involved! Send notice out about two weeks in advance. Arrange times with your administrators. When I did a Day on Olympus, I would have students prepare simple skits based on scenes from mythology (you could also do skits from *The Lightning Thief*). We would learn to warp togas and wear them to a feast featuring Greek foods, provided potluck by the parents. After the skits and the feasts, we would hold Olympian games for candy prizes. Foot racing, javelin throwing (with plungers or brooms), three-legged racing, arm wrestling, and discus throwing (with Frisbees) were all popular events. The whole Day on Olympus went through one class period and lunch time. It was a memorable, fun experience that kids would talk about for years to come. Try it out!

## ⚡ 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' 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 email 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.

# Myths Related to the Novel (by chapter)

## Myths by Chapter

### Ch. 1

The Creation

The Battle of the Gods and Titans (Titanomochy)

### Ch. 2

The Three Fates

The Three Furies (the Kindly Ones)

### Ch. 4

Theseus and the Minotaur

Satyrs

### Ch. 5

Dionysus

Chiron the Centaur

### Ch. 6

Nymphs and Naiads

The Olympian Council

Ares

The Marriage of Zeus and Hera

### Ch. 7

Athena

Hermes

The Garden of the Hesperides

**Ch. 8**

Poseidon

The division of the world by Zeus, Poseidon and Hades

Artemis

**Ch. 9**

Apollo Slays the Python

The Oracle at Delphi

**Ch. 10**

How the City of Athens got its Name

The Gorgons

**Ch. 11**

Perseus and Medusa

**Ch. 12**

The god Pan

**Ch. 13**

The Nemean Lion

Typhon and Echidna

Bellerophon and the Chimera

**Ch. 15**

Arachne and the Weaving Contest

Ares and Aphrodite

The Marriage of Hephaestus and Aphrodite

**Ch. 16**

The Land of the Lotus Eaters (from the Odyssey)

The Trojan War

**Ch. 17**

Theseus' Journey to Athens (Procrustes the Stretcher)

**Ch. 18**

Orpheus

Hercules and Cerberus

Charon the Ferryman & the Gates of the Underworld

**Ch. 19**

The Underworld

Persephone



# Greek Mythology



## A Quick Reference Guide

**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.

**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' 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' 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' 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' 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 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 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' sailors to forget about their journey and remain on the island.

## More Greek Myth Resources

### *Books for Students & Teachers:*

Colum, Padraic. The Children's Homer. Simon Pulse, 1982.

D'Aulaire, Ingri. D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths. Delacorte, 1992.

Evslin, Bernard. Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths. Laurel Leaf, 1984.

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](http://www.rickriordan.com)

[www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com](http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com)

#### **Greek mythology:**

[www.mythweb.com](http://www.mythweb.com)

[www.pantheon.org](http://www.pantheon.org)

[www.theoi.com](http://www.theoi.com)

“Winged Sandals” website: [http://abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/default\\_lowband.htm](http://abc.net.au/arts/wingedsandals/default_lowband.htm)

## Rationale

*If you choose to use Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief in your classroom, here is a rationale you are welcome to share with parents, principals, curriculum gurus, etc. Feel free to modify it to fit your needs.*

### **A Rationale for Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief***

#### **Grade Level and Audience**

*The Lightning Thief* is a light-hearted fantasy about a modern 12-year-old boy who learns that his true father is Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. Percy sets out to become a hero by undertaking a quest across the United States to find the entrance to the Underworld and stop a war between the gods. The novel provides a high-interest, humorous introduction to the Greek myths. It works well if taught in conjunction with mythology, which is a core component of most English state curriculum frameworks. The novel can also be taught at any time after the introduction of Greek mythology, to draw on students' prior experience as per standard three of the Standards for English Language Arts of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Rick Riordan, the author, has fifteen years experience as an English/language arts teacher at the middle school level. He designed *The Lightning Thief* to be appropriate reading for ages nine through fourteen.

The novel offers an excellent chance for students to explore the Classical heritage of Greece as it applies to modern civilization; to analyze the elements of the hero's quest rendered in a modern-day story with a first-person narrator to whom students can easily relate; and to discuss such relevant issues as learning disabilities, the nature of family, and themes of loyalty, friendship and faith.

#### **Plot Summary**

*Spoiler warning! Do not read this if you don't want to know the ending of the book!*

Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson has been labeled a troubled youth. Diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and dyslexia, Percy is attending Yancy Academy, a boarding school for problem teens in upstate New York. This is Percy's "sixth school in six years." Wherever he goes, he seems to get in trouble unintentionally. Strange, sometimes dangerous things happen to him.

As the novel opens, Percy begins to suspect that his life is not what it seems. During a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, his math teacher transforms into a Fury and attacks him. Percy's Latin teacher comes to the rescue, throwing Percy a ballpoint pen which turns into a bronze sword. Percy's sword stroke causes the monster to disintegrate, but afterwards the incident seems to have been a hallucination. Everyone, including Percy's Latin teacher, claims that the math teacher who attacked him never existed.

At the end of the school year, Percy's best friend Grover insists on escorting him home, but Grover's nervousness and cryptic comments about Percy being in danger make Percy uneasy, so he slips away from Grover at the first opportunity and goes home by himself.

Percy's home life is far from perfect. His mother Sally Jackson is a kind woman, but 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 during the summer. Their small Upper East Side apartment is a cheerless place. 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, as if a monster is hunting for them. 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 to camp, they are attacked by the Minotaur. Percy manages to defeat the monster, but only after 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' 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.

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 he 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 for 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 amongst his Olympian sons, Kronos caused the master bolt and also Hades’ helm of darkness to be stolen by a human hero whose identity Percy does not yet know. Kronos’ 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.

### **Theoretical Support and Redeeming Values**

While told in a humorous tone and cast as a fantasy adventure, *The Lightning Thief* explores serious issues that are highly relevant to the young reader. Percy is a young man whose learning disabilities and family problems have given him a negative self-image. He is self-conscious and needs acceptance. At the same time, he is fiercely loyal to his friends and his mother, and has a strong sense of justice and fair play. When he finds out his father's true identity, Percy must redefine who he is. He must decide whether to take Luke's path of bitterness and disillusionment, or set aside his resentment of his absent father Poseidon and try to accept his heritage. In this struggle, his new friend Annabeth acts as his foil. Rejected by her mortal father, who has married a "normal" wife and wants a normal life with their two new children, Annabeth has lived like an orphan at Camp Half Blood since she was seven. As Percy sees how unhappy Annabeth is, he reevaluates his own anger toward Poseidon and helps Annabeth find ways to reconnect with her father.

Grover the satyr, who can read emotions, acts as Percy's conscience, putting words to the feelings that Percy, as an adolescent boy, has trouble expressing. Grover also serves as the moral center of the book. He speaks up against the imprisoned animals on the truck to Las Vegas. He is the first to offer his life to help rescue Percy's mother. He rails against mankind for polluting the earth, but keeps an unshakeable optimism that the Great God

Pan can still be found – a metaphor for restoring harmony between man and the environment. Grover believes he will be the first satyr in two-thousand years to successfully find the god.

Among the important questions posed by the novel:

1. What can one individual do to benefit an entire civilization?
2. What is “Western Civilization” and have its central precepts changed since its origins in Classical Greece?
3. What is the nature of a family, and what are the duties and responsibilities of a parent and a child?
4. What is the definition of a hero?
5. Is one’s destiny preordained, or can one overcome environment and heritage?
6. What qualities make a true friend?
7. Does Classical mythology still have a role to serve in modern society?

Havighurst’s Developmental Tasks for Pre-Adolescence And Adolescence delineate the following issues which are paramount for ages 12-18:

- Achieving new & more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes
- Accepting one’s physique and using the body effectively
- Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults
- Selecting and preparing for an occupation
- Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence
- Desiring & achieving socially responsible behavior
- Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior

Percy and Annabeth clearly personify the struggle to achieve these tasks in ways young readers can identify with. Percy and Annabeth vacillate between gender mistrust and mutual fascination so common in boys and girls in early adolescence, eventually forging a more mature friendship based on shared experience. When Percy finds out his heritage, he must struggle to master the physical skills needed to defend himself, but also must discover what it means intellectually, morally, and ethically to be a hero. He evolves, over the course of the book, from an uncertain awkward boy who resents his own differences, to an assertive young man who has begun to think about the moral implications of his newfound powers and understands the value of relying on others. The need for emotional independence from parents, balanced with the need to maintain an emotional connection, is central to Percy and Annabeth’s motivation in pursuing their quest to the Underworld.

Piaget (1962) theorizes that children of Percy and Annabeth’s age group construct theories and make logical deductions about their consequences without any previous direct experience with a given subject. They can deal with abstractions and mentally explore similarities and differences, thinking their way through new problems and taking into account as many or as few qualities as seem relevant from past experiences. Percy and Annabeth clearly embody this experience in *The Lightning Thief*, as they must

compare their own different and yet strikingly similar backgrounds to understand their role in the Underworld quest, and more generally in the world of mortals. They must also constantly compare and contrast the archetypes and story elements of Greek mythology to their own modern-day quest in order to understand how to overcome the obstacles in their way – both the external threat of monsters, and the internal threats of selfishness, suspicion, fear and insecurity.

Percy and Annabeth also exemplify Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development (1968), making them mirrors for young readers to explore the issues and concerns that are most relevant to them. At age twelve, children are moving from industry vs. inferiority to identity vs. role confusion. They are solidifying the skills needed to achieve a sense of competency, especially at school, in order to avoid a feeling of inadequacy. At the same time, they are beginning to test limits and break ties of dependency, trying to clarify their own identity and life goals. Percy, and to a lesser degree Annabeth, still struggle to develop a sense of industry after being stigmatized in a school environment because of their learning disabilities. The revelation that Percy is a demigod brings him a whole new sense of competence and industry, while at the same time opening a world of questions about who he is and what he will become as a hero. Being forcibly removed from his mother, then rediscovering both her and his father and the end of a rite-of-passage quest, Percy personifies the testing and redefining of parent-child ties which all children must experience.

## **Objectives, Teaching Methods and Assignments**

### *Suggested Teaching Objectives:*

1. To trace the changes in Percy’s attitude toward his mother, father, and stepfather.
2. To study the development of Percy and Annabeth’s friendship.
3. To compare and contrast the Greek myths with the way those myths are referenced, modernized, and reinterpreted in the novel.
4. To contrast Luke’s attitude toward his quest with Percy’s.
5. To examine Grover’s maturation through the course of the quest.
6. To examine both positive and negative elements of “Western Civilization” as depicted in the novel and personified by the Greek gods.
7. To compare Annabeth’s evolving attitude toward her family with Percy’s attitude.
8. To analyze the elements of the hero’s quest within the novel.

### *Suggested Student Activities & Essay Questions:*

The attached teacher’s guide provides an array of possible activities and essay questions.

## **Possible Objections**

Young adult novels did not exist before 1950. In recent years, they have been targeted frequently by censors, either because these novels deal honestly with realistic issues

facing teenagers, or because they deal with fantastical subjects such as magic or mythology that some construe as being at variance with strongly held religious beliefs. Some reasons why a censor might object to *The Lightning Thief* are:

- Paganism/polytheism
- Fantastical elements such as monsters and magic
- Violence
- Unconventional families/unmarried parents

### **Why *The Lightning Thief* Should Not Be Banned**

The uneasy mix of Classical Greek and Roman heritage and Judeo-Christian values is the oldest conflict in Western Civilization. Understanding both strands, which blended to form our modern culture, is critical to becoming an informed member of society. *The Lightning Thief* explores Greek mythology in a modern setting, but it does so as a humorous work of fantasy, and makes no attempt to subvert or contradict Judeo-Christian teachings. Early in the book, the character Chiron draws a clear distinction between God, capital-G, the creator of the universe, and the Greek gods (lower-case g). Chiron says he does not wish to delve into the metaphysical issue of God, but he has no qualms about discussing the Olympians because they are a “much smaller matter.” The gods of Olympus are depicted as powerful beings who interact with their children and demand respect. They are archetypal forces deeply embedded in and inseparable from Western thought. However there is no suggestion within the book that pagan god worship be revived, or that it replace modern religion. Rather, the whole of Western culture is seen as a tribute to the enduring legacy of Olympus.

Similarly, the fantastical elements in the novel are drawn directly from Greek mythology, and thus operate at a deeply symbolic level. As with all stories based on the hero’s quest, *The Lightning Thief* presents monsters as external manifestations of the internal conflicts Percy must win to achieve his coming of age. The fight with Medusa is symbolic of the tension between Percy and Annabeth. The gorgon is the age-old grudge between their parents which the two children must put behind them. Facing the Chimera in the St. Louis Arch is really about Percy facing his own fears of inadequacy. The trip to the Underworld is central to Percy’s changing world view. When he returns to his family, he realizes he cannot simply petrify his step-father, as much as they loathe each other, because Percy now understands something about mortality and the responsibilities that go with his power. He appreciates the consequences of taking a life. Despite the trappings of fantasy, Percy is no magician. He must rely on his sword skills, his strength, and most of all his wits to think his way out of problems.

Violence in *The Lightning Thief* is neither graphic nor gratuitous. Percy disintegrates monsters with his sword, but even these are not truly dead, according to the fantastical rules that operate in the world of the novel. Annabeth and Chiron say that monsters are forces that can only be temporarily dispelled. No humans die, except for the implied petrification of Gabe Ugliano which happens off-stage at the end of the book. Percy is wounded several times, but even this is not graphically described, nor are the scenes of

fighting any more intense than would be needed to create a believable sense of danger in any young adult adventure.

As for the issue of unwed parents, one of the most relevant themes of *The Lightning Thief* is the way that the well-known affairs between Greek gods and mortals becomes a gentle metaphor for how modern children deal with a broken family. Both Percy and Annabeth must come to terms with distant, seemingly unapproachable parents who they simultaneously resent and admire. They must try to understand how their mothers and fathers show their love, and why their parents' relationships were, in the end, irreconcilable. In doing so, Percy and Annabeth undertake a struggle that resonates with a vast number of young readers, and encourages discussion about the nature of the family by offering an unthreatening metaphor couched in fantasy.

Censoring any book on grounds such as those discussed above does a disservice to young readers who are learning to become critical thinkers. As Henry Reichman argues (*Censorship and Selection, 1988*), “by suppressing materials containing ideas and themes with which they do not agree, censors produce a sterile conformity and a lack of intellectual and emotional growth in students.” And as stated in the National Council of Teachers of English’s *The Students’ Right to Read (1982)*: “Censorship leaves students with an inadequate or distorted picture of the ideals, values and problems of their culture.”