



**STORYLAB**

PRESENTS



**RICK RIORDAN'S**

# **The Lightning Thief**

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*

**P**ercy has always struggled in school, but lately weird things keep happening to distract him. During a museum field trip, his math teacher turns into a monster and attacks him. Another teacher throws him a pen that magically becomes a sword. Percy defeats the monster. But afterward, everyone acts like it never happened.

Percy's life gets even stranger when his mom takes him to the beach. There they are attacked by a Minotaur—a half-bull, half-human creature. In a flash of light, Percy's mom disappears. Percy kills the Minotaur but passes out.

When Percy wakes up, he's at Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for kids who are demigods. If Percy is at the camp, he must be a demigod. This means that one of his parents is a Greek god. Percy eventually learns his father is Poseidon, god of the sea.

The campers learn Zeus's lightning bolt has been stolen. Zeus is the most powerful Greek god. Zeus blames Poseidon and, because Percy is Poseidon's son, Percy is blamed for the theft. Zeus gives Percy ten days to find and return the bolt or he will destroy the world.



Percy Jackson discovers his skill in sword fighting, his gift with water, and his father's identity at Camp Half-Blood. .

Percy sets off on a quest across the country. He travels with his friends Grover, a satyr, and Annabeth, daughter of Athena. They face many monsters, including Medusa, the Furies, and a giant dog.

The journey takes them to the Underworld, where they discover Hades is keeping Percy's mom. But it wasn't Hades who stole the lightning bolt. It was Luke, a camper working for Kronos, a Titan who wants to destroy the gods.

Percy returns the lightning bolt to Zeus, saving his mom and the world. He decides to stay at Camp Half-Blood for the summer to train, knowing more adventures await him.

## AN EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 8:

# We Capture the Flag, *The Lightning Thief*



A trident is a three-tipped spear and is the symbol of Poseidon.

Percy has been at Camp Half-Blood for a few days, and nothing makes sense to him. He is supposedly the son of a Greek god, but which one? Most campers know the identity of their godly parent, but Percy is stuck in the cabin with all the other unclaimed kids. He feels like a nobody—just like he did at home.

Then there is the night that changes everything. During a wild game of capture the flag in the woods, Percy's team is getting destroyed. Clarisse, the meanest girl at camp and daughter of Ares, the war god, has it out for Percy. She and her cabin mates corner him by the creek. When Clarisse's spear cuts Percy's arm, something strange happens.

"You're wounded," Annabeth told me. "Quick, Percy, get in the water."

"I'm okay."

"No, you're not," she said. "Chiron, watch this."

I was too tired to argue. I stepped back into the creek, the whole camp gathering around me.

Instantly, I felt better. I could feel the cuts on my chest closing up. Some of the campers gasped.

"Look, I—I don't know why," I said, trying to apologize.

"I'm sorry . . ."

But they weren't watching my wounds heal. They were staring at something above my head.

"Percy," Annabeth said, pointing. "Um . . ."

By the time I looked up, the sign was already fading, but I could still make out the hologram of green light, spinning and gleaming. A three-tipped spear: a trident.

"Your father," Annabeth murmured. "This is really not good."

"It is determined," Chiron announced.

All around me, campers started kneeling, even the Ares cabin, though they didn't look happy about it.

"My father?" I asked, completely bewildered.

"Poseidon," said Chiron. "Earthshaker, Stormbringer, Father of Horses. Hail, Perseus Jackson, Son of the Sea God."



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# Rick Riordan

**R**ick Riordan was a middle school teacher of English and history for 15 years. His son Haley was struggling in school because of dyslexia and ADHD. Haley hated reading. This was heartbreaking for Riordan, who loved to read.

One night, Haley asked his dad to tell him a bedtime story. Riordan told him about Greek mythology, starting with myths about the gods Zeus and Poseidon, and other characters such as Heracles and Medusa. Haley loved it. When his dad ran out of Greek myths to tell, Haley begged for more. That's when Riordan got an idea: what if Greek gods were still around today, and what if kids like Haley were actually demigods?



Rick Riordan

Riordan had always loved ancient stories, especially Homer's *The Odyssey*. As a teacher, he watched kids' eyes glaze over when he tried to teach them about Odysseus and his adventures. But he knew these stories were amazing. They were full of monsters, magic, and heroes who had to use their brains to survive. The problem was that the stories felt old and boring to modern kids.

So Riordan wrote Percy Jackson as a modern-day Odysseus. Percy has dyslexia and ADHD, just like Haley. But in Riordan's world, these aren't problems. They are signs that your brain is wired for ancient Greek and that you have superhuman battle reflexes. Your differences are what make you special.

The timing was perfect. The author J.K. Rowling had already proven with her Harry Potter series that young readers could read long and complex stories. By 2005, when Riordan published *The Lightning Thief*, publishers knew that young readers were hungry for epic adventures. The book was the first of a series that has sold over 180 million copies worldwide. The series has been translated into dozens of languages, proving that young readers everywhere love stories about mythology and heroes.

## TEXT CONNECTION

# Percy Jackson and Odysseus



Percy and Odysseus use their wits to beat monsters. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus tricks the Cyclops by lying about his name.

**R**ick Riordan chose to update the ancient story of *The Odyssey* when he wrote *The Lightning Thief*. He wanted to create a bridge between the old myth and modern readers.

Both stories follow the same plot pattern, known as the hero's journey. Odysseus and Percy start as regular people who get thrown into extraordinary situations. They both meet people who help them and enemies who try to kill them. Odysseus spends ten years trying to get back to his family after a war, while Percy gets ten days to stop a war from starting. They both come home different than when

they left.

The heroes deal with the same moody gods in both stories. Poseidon makes Odysseus's life miserable by creating storms and sea monsters. Poseidon is also Percy's dad. Athena helps both heroes by giving them smart advice. Zeus shows up in both stories as a powerful but unreasonable ruler who makes unfair demands.

Both heroes fight similar monsters, using their brains to beat them. Odysseus tricks the Cyclops by lying about his name. Percy uses clever strategies to beat monsters like the Minotaur and Medusa.

Loyalty is important in both stories. Odysseus's wife waits for him for twenty years while other men try to force her to marry them. Percy's loyalty to his friends and family makes him risk everything to save them.

Both heroes also struggle with fate versus choice. They have to complete dangerous quests. But they still make their own decisions about how to do it.

Riordan was able to rework ancient themes for today's readers. His hero deals with current problems like learning disabilities and complicated families. But the main message stays the same: heroes aren't perfect people. They are everyday people who choose to do the right thing even when it's scary and hard.

## TEXT REFLECTION

# Percy's Most Dangerous Challenges Define Him



A fan of the movie version of *The Lightning Thief* pretends he is Percy Jackson.

**P**ercy Jackson's quest to find Zeus's lightning bolt and save his mom is more than a road trip. It is a test of courage, loyalty, and identity. The journey is filled with impossible situations, but Percy handles each challenge and grows because of them.

From the very start of the trip, Percy must fight for his life. Percy, Grover, and Annabeth board a bus in New York.

They encounter the Three Furies, winged demons. With the help of Grover's magic and Annabeth's quick thinking, Percy escapes. This moment shows that Percy isn't just running toward a goal. He must also figure out who he is under pressure.

Driving out west, Percy and his friends stop at a garden shop. Too late, they realize the shop is run by Medusa, the snake-haired monster who turns people to stone with just a look. Percy figures out how to kill Medusa. He proves to himself he can use his brain as well as his sword.

Percy and his friends get to Las Vegas and check into the Lotus Hotel and Casino. They hang out for what seems like a few hours but is really five days. They have been trapped by time-bending lotus flowers. Percy finally comes to his senses and becomes a true leader.

The final challenge comes in the Underworld. Percy faces Hades, the god of the dead. He realizes someone else put the lightning bolt in his backpack. Yet Percy is able to stay calm and prove his innocence to Hades.

By the end of the journey, Percy has faced gods, monsters, and his own doubts. Each time, he has chosen to stand up for what is right. His journey is not just about saving his mom or stopping Zeus. It is about discovering the hero he is meant to be.

**What Are Adventure Stories?** Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* is considered an adventure story. Adventure writing consists of:

- a brave main character;
- an exciting journey often to a faraway and unsafe land;
- and dangerous challenges and conflicts that must be overcome.

**Keep Reading:** Want to read more of *The Lightning Thief*?

- Visit your library and get a copy!

If you like *The Lightning Thief*, then you might also like to read these hero tales:

- *Gregor the Overlander* by Suzanne Collins
- *Artemis Fowl* by Eoin Colfer
- *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston

**Past and Present Pair:** *The Odyssey* and *The Lightning Thief*:

- Read StoryLab's *The Odyssey* to connect the modern story of Percy Jackson to an ancient myth!

**Start Writing:** Inspired to write your own hero's tale?

Consider this prompt to get started:

- "You have recently arrived at Camp Mythos. Ever since, strange things have been happening to you. This morning, you noticed..."



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