

This guide is aligned with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening, and provides grade level–specific standards for English Language Arts.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS



ABOUT THE BOOK

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As they discuss the following questions, encourage students to refer to specific passages from the book.

- 1 Percy says, "Mr. Brunner expected me to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact I have dyslexia and attention deficit disorder 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?
- 2 When describing his mother, Percy says, "She's the best person in the world, which just proves my theory that the best people have the rottenest luck." How does this apply to Percy's mom? Is this theory true in life? In the Greek myths?
- 3 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?
- 4 Percy's first encounter with an Olympian god is Mr. D, Dionysus. Initially, Percy has a hard time believing that 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?
- 5 Annabeth is the daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare. 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?
- 6 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, as if 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?

- 7 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, and not fit, the god Poseidon?
- 8 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”?
- 9 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?

Correlates to Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, R.L.5.1–8.1, R.L.5.2–8.2, and R.L.5.3–8.3; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration, S.L.5.1–8.1; and Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, L.7.5.A.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- 1 The Gods of Olympus.** Before reading the book, have students write down things they know about Greek mythology. Once they're done, 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 two to five minutes. Stress that it is okay to be wrong on this activity—students are simply trying to jog their memory as much as possible.
- 2 Pick an Immortal Parent.** Remind students that the gods frequently had children with mortals. Ask them to research which god or goddess they would most like to be related to. For ideas, visit www.theoi.com. Students should write down their top three choices and explain each one.
- 3 The Battle with the Titans.** Read an account of the Titanomachy, the war between the gods and Titans, from a Greek mythology book or website. Compare this to the version Percy gives Mr. Brunner in chapter I. Make a list of any differences between the two versions. Make a list of details Percy forgot to include.
- 4 Character Collage.** This activity can either be done on paper or with digital tools. Ask students to make a list of characters they've met in the book so far. These include: Percy, Grover, Nancy Bobofit, Mrs. Dodds, Mr. Brunner, Smelly Gabe, and Sally Jackson. Have them search and cut out (or copy on a computer) photos of people that they think are close to how these characters would appear. Paste these onto a large piece of a paper (or into PowerPoint, iMovie, or another digital 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.
- 5 Make a Graphic.** A graphic is an illustrated representation of one chapter. You can do this on regular printer paper, or larger art paper. It can be done individually or with a partner. A graphic has the following components:
 - a.** A picture in the middle that is a symbol for the chapter. It can be an important object mentioned in the chapter—the bus, for instance, or a pair of scissors.
 - b.** At least three colors used to color the object. Each color has to represent something, and you must write why you chose that color. For instance, “Red stands for Percy’s anger at being expelled.”
 - c.** On each corner of the page, pick a quote from the chapter and copy it. The quote can be any one-to-two-line section that you think is significant or tells something revealing about one of the characters. After each quote, explain in a sentence what it means and why you picked it.
 - d.** Put the title of the chapter and your name at the top.

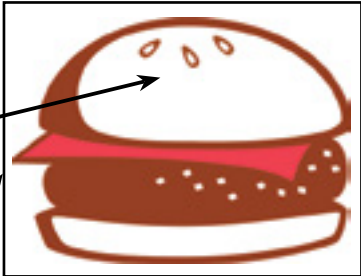
Once students learn how to do a graphic, it can be easily used with any chapter or short story in the future.

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

GRAPHIC FOR “I ACCIDENTLY VAPORIZE MY PRE-ALGEBRA TEACHER”
BY I. B. STUDENT

Quote 3

Quote 4



White stands for Grover’s fear of Mrs. Dodd

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

Red stands for Percy’s anger at Nancy

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

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

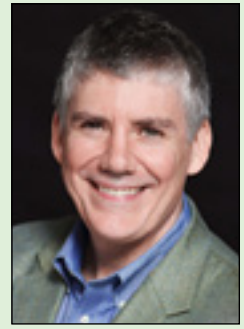
Quote 2

Correlates to Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, R.L.5.1–8.1, R.L.5.4–8.4, R.L.8.9; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration, S.L.5.1–8.1, and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, S.L.5.4–8.4, S.L.5.5–8.5; and Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge, W.5–8.9.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick Riordan (www.rickriordan.com) is the author of the *New York Times* #1 best-selling series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, the *Kane Chronicles*, and the *Heroes of Olympus*. Before he became a full-time author, Rick spent fifteen years as a classroom teacher in public and private schools in California and Texas.



Michael Frost

A TALK WITH RICK RIORDAN

1 Where did you get the idea for *Percy Jackson*?

My son was studying the Greek myths in second grade when he asked me to tell him some bedtime stories about the gods and heroes. I had taught Greek myths for many years at the middle school level, so I was glad to do it. When I ran out of myths, he was disappointed and asked me if I could make up something new with the same characters. Off the top of my head, I made up Percy Jackson and his quest to recover Zeus's lightning bolt in modern-day America. It took about three nights to tell the whole story, and when I was done, my son told me I should write it out as a book.

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

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.

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

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.

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

Don't be afraid to ask for help! Find a teacher you respect. Correspond with authors. You will find that a polite e-mail will almost always get a response.

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

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

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

BOOKS BY RICK RIORDAN

PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS



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The Lightning Thief
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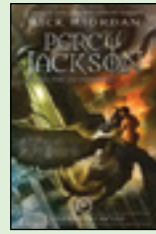
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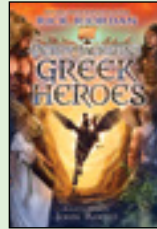
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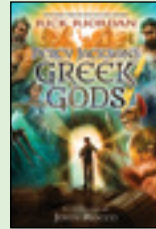
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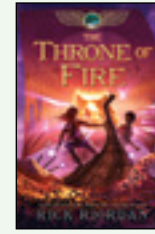


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THE KANE CHRONICLES



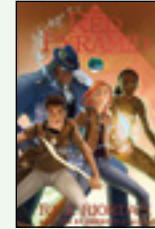
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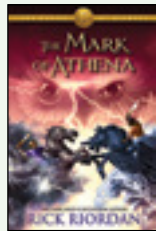
THE HEROES OF OLYMPUS



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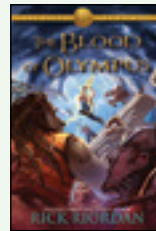
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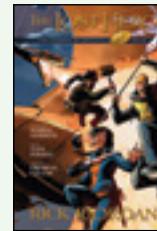
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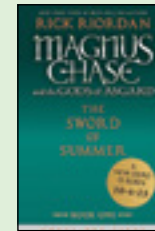


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