



Sea of Monsters

By Rick Riordan

Teacher's Guide

Written by A.L. Satterfield



CLASSROOM
FAVORITES

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Synopsis

ABOUT PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS

The Sea of Monsters is the second book in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan, which transports ancient Greek mythology into a modern American setting. The premise of the series is that the gods of Olympus are inextricably tied to Western civilization, which was created by the ancient Greeks. As long as the West remains, the gods will continue to exist, but their "headquarters"—the locations of Olympus and other important sites in Greek lore—shift with the shifting center of Western civilization. Currently, the United States is the heart of the West, so the gods are headquartered there as well; Olympus, for example, floats hundreds of floors above the Empire State Building in New York City, while the entrance to Hades is in Los Angeles.

The series follows the adventures of Perseus "Percy" Jackson, an American boy who is one of a number of demigods, children of a human parent and an immortal. Although these children have special powers, their lives are generally difficult: they are often unaware of their heritage and suffer from being different; because their brains are "hard-wired" for ancient Greek and battle skills, they are usually dyslexic and suffer from ADHD; and, even worse, they are frequently targeted for death by monsters. They become more noticeable to monsters as they approach puberty, so most demigods don't live past the age of about twelve. Those who are rescued by the gods' representatives find refuge at Camp Half-Blood, a school for young heroes on Long Island in New York. There, they learn of their heritage; study Ancient Greek and Greek mythology; learn battle skills such as javelin throwing, sword-fighting, and chariot racing; and prepare for diffi-

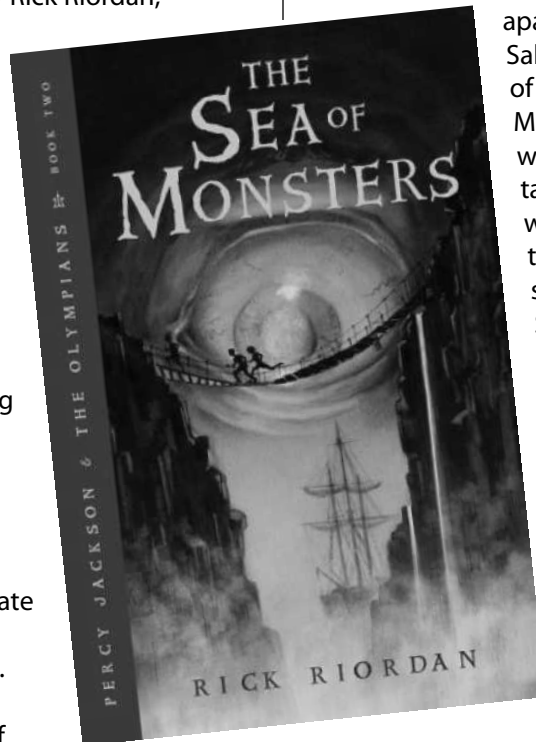
cult quests. If they are lucky, they are "claimed" by their godly parent, although this is rare. Their training is to prepare for a final, epic battle to save Western civilization from the forces of chaos. *The Sea of Monsters* starts at the end of Percy's seventh-grade year.

Chapter 1: My Best Friend Shops for a Wedding Dress

Percy Jackson is in the New York City apartment he shares with his mother, Sally Jackson, preparing for his last day of seventh grade at a private school in Manhattan. Sally is a single mother who works in a candy store by day and takes writing classes at night; she is a woman of unusual strength and gentleness, and she and Percy share a special bond. Another thing about Sally also has the ability to see through the Mist—the magical illusion that allows mythical beings to travel in the mortal world without detection. Of course, as a demigod, Percy can see through the Mist as well. He is Sally's son by Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. Poseidon and his brothers Zeus, the god of the sky, and Hades, the god of the underworld, are the three most powerful Olympians—the "Big Three." They are the sons of the

evil titan Kronos, who ruled the world before they overthrew him. Percy's biggest immortal enemy is his uncle, Zeus, who fears attempts to steal his throne and sees his brother's son as a possible tool to be used for such a scheme. In the world of the Olympians, gods can't attack each other directly, but their half-blood children are fair game.

Percy awakens to memories of a vivid nightmare, and thinks he sees a shadowy human figure outside his sixth-floor window. He recalls the dream, which he knows is prophetic: his friend, Grover, a satyr (half man, half goat), is being chased down a street in St. Augustine, Florida, by a terrifying giant. Percy is already worried about Grover, who has been gone for too long on a dangerous quest to find the vanished nature god Pan. Although Percy can't see the giant very well, he can



identify his smell: dirty sheep's wool, rotten meat, and a special "monster" stink. Grover takes refuge in a bridal shop. As the monster closes in, Grover mutters that he has to get away and "warn them."

Percy tells his mother the dream over a special, last-day-of-school breakfast. Sally also has news: Chiron—the wise centaur who is Camp Half-Blood's activities director—has called to warn that it isn't yet safe for Percy to return, as he plans to do the next day. Percy is upset and wants to know why, but Sally hurries him off, promising to explain later. As he leaves to meet his friend, Tyson, Percy again briefly spots the shadowy figure.

Chapter 2: I Play Dodgeball with Cannibals

At Merriwether College Prep, a "progressive" school in downtown Manhattan, Percy defends Tyson from bullies, who have free reign in the unstructured environment. Tyson is the "community service project," a homeless orphan who lives in a cardboard refrigerator box in an alley. Though he's strong and huge, Tyson's unkempt appearance and childlike behavior make him a target, and Percy is his only friend and defender.

During free time, Tyson accidentally knocks down the spoiled rich bully Matt Sloan, who promises revenge during P.E. class. Today, Sloan is surrounded by new "muscle" in the form of some very large visiting students. Tyson is scared, but Percy is just angry, wishing he was permitted to use his powers on regular mortals. Before P.E., Sloan steals Percy's photo of his beautiful friend Annabeth, a brilliant demigod from Camp Half-Blood whose mother is the goddess Athena. As he leaves class, Percy thinks he hears a girl whisper his name, but no one is there.

P.E. brings dodge ball—a free-for-all during which the oblivious teacher reads a magazine. Tyson notices that the new kids "smell funny," and Percy realizes they are growing. Through the Mist, he sees they are one-eyed giants. Their main purpose is to kill Percy, but they make it clear they'll gladly eat any collateral victims for lunch.

The monsters destroy the gym with exploding cannonballs as the teacher reads on. To Percy's surprise, Tyson is able to catch and return some of the magic weapons. Working together, they eliminate all but one of the monsters—Jo Bob, who corners Percy. Just as Jo Bob prepares to deal the death blow, he is impaled from behind by Annabeth, who, it turns out, has been trailing Percy all day, wearing her magic invisibility hat (which doubles as a New York Yankees cap). After making plans

to meet the boys outside, Annabeth disappears as the adults rush in to accuse Percy of setting the gym on fire.

Chapter 3: We Hail the Taxi of Eternal Torment

Percy and Tyson escape, and Percy and Annabeth quickly compare notes: Annabeth, too, has been having dreams, although hers are about trouble at Camp Half-Blood. She's traveled from her father's home in Virginia, chased by monsters all the way. She tells Percy that the dodge ball players were Laistrygonians, giant cannibals from the far north who once gave the hero Odysseus some trouble. To Percy's dismay, she seems to dislike Tyson on sight. Tyson, in turn, seems unsurprised as Percy explains the existence of heroes and half-bloods, but notes that the giants called Percy "son of Poseidon."

There's no time for further explanation, however. Instead, the trio agree to head for Camp Half-Blood. Accordingly, Annabeth uses magic to hail the "Chariot of Damnation," a ghostly gray magical taxi driven by three ancient crones, the Gray Sisters, who share only one tooth and one eyeball among them. As the cab careens sickeningly through New York traffic, Annabeth assures Percy that the Gray Sisters are very wise, and to prove this they start spouting examples of their knowledge, blurting out that they also know the location Percy seeks. Realizing he may have to go on a quest, Percy forces them to reveal the location by holding their one eyeball hostage until they tell him. They finally divulge a set of numbered coordinates just as the group arrives at camp to find a battle under way.

Chapter 4: Tyson Plays with Fire

Annabeth and Percy quickly take in the situation. Campers in Greek battle armor, led by Clarisse (daughter of the war god, Ares), are using swords and spears to fight two huge, fire-breathing bronze monsters. These are the Bulls of Colchis, created by the god Hephaestus. The bulls are winning, and there are some injured campers. Percy is surprised by the scene, since the camp is usually protected by its magical boundaries. Nevertheless, he rushes into battle alongside Annabeth, first instructing Tyson to stay back.

Percy saves Clarisse from being trampled, but Clarisse is characteristically unappreciative. The battle is going badly for the campers until Annabeth invites Tyson to cross the boundaries (non-demigods can only enter camp by invitation). Tyson goes to work. Unscathed by the fire, he displays unexpected strength by crumpling a bull's head with his bare fist. Forced to look through the Mist, a stunned Percy sees that Tyson has only one

eye; he is a Cyclops. Annabeth, clearly prejudiced, tells Percy that Cyclopes are “mistakes,” the product of nature spirits and a particular god—although she doesn’t say who—and that they usually grow up homeless and wild in the cities.

After the warriors clean up, they head to the Big House, the camp headquarters. There they learn that Chiron has been replaced. When they ask why, they are shown Half-Blood Hill, location of the pine tree that houses the spirit of Thalia, whose father, Zeus, transformed her as she lay near death. The tree has been an integral part of the camp’s magical boundary. Now, it is dying. It has been poisoned, and Chiron has been blamed.

Chapter 5: I Get a New Cabin Mate

The camp has changed for the worse. The greenery has turned brown and scraggly; the friendly atmosphere has been replaced by tension and suspicion. No one is having fun; everyone is practicing for war. At the Big House, Chiron is packing. Mr. D. (the wine god Dionysus) has made him the scapegoat for the poisoning. Chiron is philosophical; he plans to visit his wild relatives in the Florida Everglades until his name is cleared. His real concern is for Percy and Annabeth, and the camp. Percy, especially, is part of an important (but secret) prophecy, and must stay safe. The poison itself is so strong it has to be from Tartarus, deep in the Underworld, leading to the conclusion that Kronos is behind the poisoning. Chiron hints that there’s a magical object that could cure the poison, but he discourages talk of a quest.

The horn sounds for dinner, so Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson head for the dining pavilion. The camp features twelve “cabins,” modeled after ancient Greek architecture, where the children of the major gods live. As usual, Percy is embarrassed to be the only one in the Poseidon cabin; as a child of the “Big Three,” he’s not supposed to exist. (After World War II, the three strongest Olympians swore not to have more children with mortals, so any half-blood child of the three born since then, such as Percy and Thalia, represents a broken vow.)

Diners must eat with their cabin mates, so Percy sits alone. The new activities director is Tantalus, a haggard and evil-looking man in an orange prison jumpsuit. Percy remembers him from a trip to the underworld; he was an ancient Greek whose crime was so heinous, he was doomed to spend eternity in torment, chained under a tree whose delicious fruit is always just out of reach. Tantalus refuses to reveal his crimes. He grabs ravenously for the food and drink before him, but it

always scoots out of reach. Dionysus enjoys Tantalus’ suffering. He points out Percy as someone “you have to watch.” Although he infuriates Percy, “Mr. D.” is too dangerous and unpredictable to cross.

Tantalus announces a three-day suspension of all camp duties, including border patrols, so campers can train for dangerous chariot races. He ignores Clarisse’s protests; clearly, he wants to leave the camp defenseless. Percy prays to Poseidon for help. The response is quick and unexpected: a magical hologram of a trident appears over Tyson’s head, just as Tantalus is proposing they keep the Cyclops in the stables. Tyson has been claimed, and Percy now has a half-brother. However, Percy is mortified, both for himself and for Tyson.

Chapter 6: Demon Pigeons Attack

The next three days go according to Tantalus’ plans: campers train furiously amid misery and paranoia. Percy, once a hero, now feels like a camp-wide joke. Though loyal to Tyson, he is embarrassed to be related to a monster, and he resents his sudden social decline. Worse, Percy can’t understand Annabeth’s antipathy to Cyclopes. She won’t explain, and they quarrel. The child-like Tyson understands none of this, but he senses everyone’s negative emotions and is frequently hurt. He finds refuge with Beckendorf, a son of Hephaestus, who is the only camper besides Percy who treats him well. Beckendorf and Tyson have an affinity, since Cyclopes run the forges of the gods, and Beckendorf’s father is the god of the forges. Beckendorf takes Tyson under his wing.

Other issues are brewing as well. Campers have been organizing secret patrols behind Tantalus’ back, and Percy has another dream, in which Grover communicates directly through an “empathy link” that has entwined their fates; now, if Grover dies, Percy may, too. Grover is being held hostage by a murderous Cyclops, Polyphemus, on an island somewhere in the Sea of Monsters. Polyphemus is half-blind and not very bright, and believes Grover is a bride wearing alluring goat-scented perfume. Grover has put Polyphemus off so far, but the “wedding night” will soon arrive. His only hope is for Percy to rescue him. Percy promises he will find and save Grover, although he has no idea how. It also becomes apparent that Grover was lured to the island by the Golden Fleece, which exudes the same aura as the god Pan. The next day, Annabeth confirms that it is the same item originally captured by the hero Jason. It is the only thing powerful enough to revive the tree and the camp. Further, it’s fairly close. However, Annabeth

thinks the dream may be one of Kronos' traps.

Race day brings problems. The horses at first won't let Tyson into the chariot; they're afraid of Cyclopes. Then, the racers are attacked by murderous, flesh-eating Stymphalian birds. Percy, Tyson, and Annabeth defeat them with Hercules' tactic of confusing them with noise (in this case, Chiron's CD of *All-Time Greatest Hits of Dean Martin*). They have saved the entire camp, but Tantalus declares Clarisse's team the winner and punishes Percy's team for "disrupting" the race.

Chapter 7: I Accept Gifts from a Stranger

Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson get kitchen duty as punishment. During the hot and dangerous hours (they have to clean with lava and wear asbestos gear), the friends decide they must go on a quest for the Fleece; Tantalus will be unable to refuse if they ask at the evening bonfire. However, Tantalus thwarts them by awarding the quest to Clarisse instead. Since Percy has been given the location and dreams, and Clarisse won't let him or Annabeth help her, this is a prescription for failure. When the campers protest, Tantalus threatens them with a thinly disguised version of his own story, of a cruel mortal king who was punished for stealing ambrosia, and who retaliated by killing and cooking his own rebellious children and feeding them to the gods. Even now, he seems to believe his revenge was worth eternal torment. Tantalus sends Clarisse to consult the Delphi Oracle in the Big House attic. He warns that patrol harpies will eat any campers who try to escape.

At bedtime, Percy tries to reassure Tyson that his "daddy" cares for him, but he secretly doubts this. Later, unable to sleep, he sneaks out to the beach. There, he encounters the messenger god Hermes (father of the renegade Luke). Hermes still wants to redeem his son, and hopes to use Percy to make contact. He urges Percy to defy Tantalus and go on the quest, and gives him gifts that include magical restorative vitamins and a jar containing the four winds. Hermes points out a cruise ship sailing in the distance; Poseidon, he says, will help him get there if he asks. Then Hermes disappears, leaving behind three packed duffel bags, just as Annabeth and Tyson arrive on the scene, with a mere five-minute head start on the harpies.

Chapter 8: We Board the *Princess Andromeda*

Percy overrides Annabeth's desire to ditch Tyson. Instead, he reluctantly follows Hermes' advice. In response, Poseidon sends hippocampi—giant sea horses—to rapidly transport the three adventurers to the

ship. Called the *Princess Andromeda*, it sports a huge masthead featuring a three-story-tall carving of a young woman in ancient Greek garb, beautiful but clearly terrified, in keeping with the legend. (The original Andromeda was chained to a rock by her parents as a sacrifice to a sea monster, and was saved by the hero Perseus, who then turned the monster to stone with the head of Medusa. Although Percy's namesake, Perseus, was one of the only Greek heroes who had a "happy ending," the carving still seems like a bad omen.)

The hippocampi deposit the three travelers next to a service ladder. Tyson and his hippocampus, "Rainbow," are now friends and are reluctant to leave each other, but Percy finally persuades Tyson to come aboard. Once there, they explore, and Tyson smells monsters. Finally, they discover an empty suite where they can sleep for the night. Rather than touch the food, they eat the camp rations Hermes has packed. Percy has his worst dream yet: from the deepest pit in Tartarus, he hears the titan lord Kronos mocking him for "slaving" for the Olympians. Then the scene changes, and Percy sees Grover begging for rescue from an increasingly suspicious Polyphemus.

They awake to an announcement of the day's activities, which include "disboweling practice on the Promenade!" The three immediately go to investigate. The ship is full of zombie-like humans who seem not to notice the monsters in their midst. Even more chilling, they overhear Luke's voice in the corridor, discussing his plans and the need to "check on the casket" in the admiralty suite. They reluctantly decide to investigate.

Chapter 9: I Have the Worst Family Reunion Ever

Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson head to the admiralty suite on the thirteenth floor. Once there, Tyson's amazing powers of listening and mimicry allow them to eavesdrop as Luke brags to a companion about Chiron's disgrace and the poisoning of Thalia's tree. However, Luke discovers the heroes before they can get away. He brings them into the stateroom, which contains a ten-foot golden sarcophagus. There, Percy has an unpleasant flashback to the time the previous summer when Luke—who he'd thought was his friend—betrayed him by trying to kill him with a live scorpion. Luke's companions are Agrius and Oreius, half-human/half-bear brothers who hate the gods and, combined, are strong enough to overcome Tyson. Luke reveals that he knows all the plans for the quest, including the coordinates of Percy's destination—he has spies at camp—and that his goal is the overthrow of Olympus. Further, *he* poisoned

Thalia's tree. He invites Annabeth and Percy to join his crew of rebellious half-bloods. He also reveals that he is reviving Kronos, whose body is reforming bit by bit in the sarcophagus, each new half-blood recruit causing another piece to appear. Percy delivers the message from Hermes, sending Luke into a rage. Of course, Percy and Annabeth refuse to join Luke, so he sends them away to be fed to an Aethiopian drakon. However, they overcome the bear brothers with Tyson's help, escaping into the ship's lifeboat. Percy cuts the ropes just as arrows begin to fly. They free-fall toward the ocean.

Chapter 10: We Hitch a Ride with Dead Confederates

The three use the wind from Hermes' magical thermos to speed their escape. Once they're away, they attempt to send an "Iris message" (via rainbow) to alert Chiron of Luke's plot. However, the connection is poor, and there is a lot of background noise, as Chiron's relatives seem to have dragged him to a raucous party. Although they can't hear him well, Chiron seems to be telling them to meet him with the Fleece in Miami.

After an hour's travel at breakneck speed, Annabeth recognizes Virginia Beach. They have traveled 530 nautical miles, which Percy can tell with his innate sea knowledge, just as he knows their exact coordinates on the water. While Percy steers, Annabeth navigates them into Chesapeake Bay. Landing in wilderness, they head to a secret hideout—built by Annabeth, Luke, and Thalia when they were on the run years before. Percy sends Tyson on a fake errand for donuts so he can talk to Annabeth. Just as she starts opening up about Cyclopes, Tyson returns, donuts in hand.

The "Monster Donut" shop is clearly a trap. The monster in question is a hydra—a rhinoceros-sized creature with multiple snake heads; it spits green acid and can only be killed by fire. The heroes are cornered between the water and the hydra. Just as all seems lost, Clarisse appear in the water behind them. She is commanding an antique steam ship—the *CSS Birmingham*—manned by dead Confederate sailors. At Clarisse's command, the ship's guns vaporize the hydra.

Chapter 11: Clarisse Blows up Everything

Clarisse is determined to bring home the Golden Fleece. She is alone; no one from camp would join her. In an unguarded moment, she reveals that the oracle seemed to predict her failure. The ship is from Ares—like all losing combatants in war, the dead Confederates owe him a tribute. They approve of Annabeth because she's from Virginia, but immediately distrust the "Yankee" Percy.

They seem to ignore Tyson, who is terrified of them. Clarisse offers refuge, but it is clear she is really holding the trio hostage so they don't steal the glory.

That night, Percy dreams again. Polyphemus is showing off his beautiful home. Grover, through the link, reveals the location of the Fleece, as well as a "security system" that seems, confusingly, to consist of merely a rope bridge over a chasm, and a herd of giant sheep grazing near the tree where the Fleece is hanging.

Percy awakens to alarms: the ship is about to enter the Sea of Monsters. Running to the deck, Percy overhears Ares' Iris message to Clarisse; he'll punish her if Percy beats her in the quest. Clarisse acts uncharacteristically subservient and fearful. However, on deck a few minutes later, she is all blustering confidence again. She reveals her brave but foolhardy plan to enter the Sea of Monsters between the infamous Scylla and Charybdis—a lightning-fast meat-eating monster with multiple giant snake heads on one side, a powerful, all-consuming whirlpool on the other. Death seems certain.

Meanwhile, Tyson senses that the ship is in mechanical trouble; over Percy's objections, he heads to the boiler room. Attempts to escape Charybdis' whirlpool are straining the engines. Tyson manages to fix the ship and they clear the whirlpool, only to veer too close to Scylla. As Annabeth and Percy prepare to abandon ship, Percy gives Annabeth the wind thermos, planning to head below to rescue Tyson. However, he has a narrow brush with Scylla, who grabs his backpack and lifts him into the air. Escaping, he falls toward the water just as the ship blows up. Annabeth and Clarisse get away, but Tyson is gone. Percy plummets toward the sea, surviving what for anybody else would be a fatal fall. His last thoughts before fainting are sorrow for Tyson and regret that he can't drown.

Chapter 12: We Check into C.C.'s Spa and Resort

Percy awakens in a lifeboat with Annabeth; he is woozy and full of regret. Annabeth is now ashamed of her attitude toward Tyson. She has salvaged a few items, including Hermes' magical vitamins. They sail for hours, and Annabeth tells Percy some of the secret prophecy. He learns that at the age of sixteen, a child of the Big Three will make a decision that determines Olympus' fate, either to save or destroy it. (This is the real reason for the gods' post-World War II pact.) Right now, thirteen-year-old Percy is the only known living candidate, though Chiron once thought Thalia could be the one.

After several hours, their boat is drawn to a beautiful island with many abandoned vessels crowding the shore. At the dock, a hostess welcomes them to the resort. Although their intuition warns of a trap, Percy and Annabeth are lulled by the beautiful landscape and warm greeting. All the clients seem to be women. The hostess takes them to meet the director, C.C., in her beautiful apartment with, oddly, a cage of squealing guinea pigs in one corner. At C.C.'s command, Annabeth is whisked away for pampering, but Percy must stay for a makeover. Under magical influence, Percy drinks an elixir that turns him into a guinea pig. C.C. claims she has only revealed his true nature: like all men, he is a pig. Soon, he'll be ready for a kindergarten class on the mainland—unlike his new cage mates, who are hard cases and have been guinea pigs for 300 years.

Terrified and powerless, Percy awaits Annabeth's return. She looks elegant and beautiful, but not like herself. Annabeth correctly guesses that C.C. is the sorceress Circe, the ancient witch who held Odysseus hostage and turned his men into pigs. When she refuses Circe's recruitment offer, Circe prepares to turn her into a shrew. However, Annabeth tricks her, retrieving the vitamins from Percy's clothes. She pops one, dumping the rest into the guinea pig cage. The vitamins confer immunity to magic; they turn Percy and the others back into humans. Percy's cage-mates are Edward Teach—better known as the pirate Blackbeard (a son of Ares)—and his crew. Blackbeard and his men storm through the island, wreaking havoc in revenge. Percy and Annabeth escape in Blackbeard's ship, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, which Percy is magically able to sail.

Chapter 13: Annabeth Tries to Swim Home

They sail toward Polyphemus' island, and Annabeth explains why she distrusts Cyclopes: when she was seven, she, Thalia, and Luke nearly lost their lives to one in an ambush in Brooklyn. They escaped—barely—but the Cyclops alerted other monsters, who chased them all the way to Camp Half-Blood and attacked Thalia before she could reach safety. The experience traumatized Annabeth, and she has always blamed the Cyclops for Thalia's death. In light of this history, Percy admires Annabeth's bravery in traveling with Tyson.

Percy dreams again. This time, he sees a strange Goth girl standing beside a golden sarcophagus. He doesn't recognize her, but she seems familiar. Kronos is taunting her. As she asks for Percy's help defeating the titan, her bracelet transforms into the magical shield known as Aegis, a legendary weapon first wielded by Achilles and

imprinted with a terrifying image of Medusa. The girl opens the sarcophagus, and is shocked and overwhelmed by whatever she sees inside. Suddenly, she disappears in a flash of golden light.

Annabeth awakens Percy to tell him they are approaching the island of the Sirens, who lured sailors to their deaths by singing beautifully of their victims' deepest desires. Percy is unconcerned: there's a tub of candle wax on the ship with which to stop their ears. To his surprise, Annabeth says she wants to listen, since she wants to gain wisdom from the experience. Percy reluctantly agrees, tying her to the mast—as Odysseus' crewmen did long ago—and stuffing his ears full of wax.

All goes well until Annabeth jumps ship, having cut the ropes with her bronze knife. Castigating himself for forgetting to disarm her, Percy follows her into the water. It takes all his sea powers, but he manages to catch her before she swims to shore, and hold her until the spell is broken. Before he does, he gets a glimpse of Annabeth's heart's desire: in her dreams, she has redesigned Manhattan (she wants to be an architect) and she is picnicking in the park with her mortal father, her mother (Athena), and Luke. After the spell breaks, Annabeth sobs uncontrollably. She tells Percy she has learned her fatal flaw—*hubris*, or a prideful belief in her own ability to fix things. Percy, she says, must discover his own fatal flaw before it is used against him.

Chapter 14: We Meet the Sheep of Doom

Percy and Annabeth finally arrive at Polyphemus' island. Thanks to the Golden Fleece, it is absolutely beautiful, like a flawless Caribbean vacation spot. The Fleece itself is suspended from a low-hanging tree branch in a field close to shore, surrounded by grazing, hippo-sized sheep. Normal-sized sheep are farther away, separated by a rope bridge. The arrangement puzzles Percy and Annabeth, who wonder how Polyphemus defends his land and the Fleece from thieves.

As they watch, a deer bounds into the flock, and the sheep swarm it; a short time later they move away, revealing a pile of bones. Polyphemus' security system is a flock huge, carnivorous sheep. Percy and Annabeth also see the other lifeboat from the *CSS Birmingham*; they realize Clarisse must be in Polyphemus' lair. The two opt to scale a rock face rather than face the sheep.

At the top, Clarisse is trussed up over a boiling cauldron while a terrified Grover cowers in a corner. Clarisse taunts Polyphemus and spills Grover's secret. Once he

realizes Grover is a satyr, Polyphemus decides to eat him and marry the “spunky” Clarisse instead. Grover buys time by insisting the wedding feast include mango chutney, a lengthy process. Polyphemus shoves his captives in the cave, then seals it with a huge boulder while he goes off to feed the sheep.

Percy and Annabeth can’t budge the boulder. Instead, they use trickery to gain entry: when Polyphemus brings the flock in for the night, Annabeth dons her invisibility cap, while Percy climbs to the underbelly of a large sheep. Once inside, Annabeth distracts Polyphemus with taunts while Percy unties Clarisse. Polyphemus becomes enraged, especially when he hears that his tormentor is “Nobody”—the same name Odysseus used when he blinded Polyphemus. The angry Cyclops begins to lob boulders in the direction of “Nobody.” Annabeth screams, and then there is silence.

Chapter 15: Nobody Gets the Fleece

Annabeth is gravely injured, apparently brain-damaged, and unconscious. Grover carries her over the rope bridge while Percy and Clarisse fight Polyphemus. With a surge of adrenaline, Percy overcomes the Cyclops, but his mercy is nearly his undoing: unwilling to kill Polyphemus, Percy accepts his surrender, but it is a trick. Percy is about to be killed when Tyson appears, knocking Polyphemus into the chasm with a thrown boulder.

Tyson explains that he was saved by Rainbow the hippocampus, and has been trailing them ever since. Impervious to the carnivorous sheep, he retrieves the Fleece, which they put on Annabeth. She immediately begins to recover. Percy, Grover, and Clarisse—who is carrying Annabeth—run for the ship while Tyson distracts the sheep. They are almost there when Polyphemus reappears, battered but very much alive.

Chapter 16: I Go Down with the Ship

While the others swim for the ship, Percy and Tyson fight Polyphemus. The older Cyclops tries to enlist Tyson, calling him a traitor to his kind, but Tyson is loyal to Percy. Percy and Tyson finally best Polyphemus, but once again, Percy doesn’t kill Polyphemus, who after all is a son of Poseidon. They seem to have escaped, but Clarisse can’t resist taunting the Cyclops; in retaliation, he lobs a boulder that sinks the *Queen Anne’s Revenge*. At the last minute, Tyson and Percy remember the hippocampi. They send out a telepathic distress signal, and Rainbow and his friends appear just in time to carry the crew to safety. As they depart, they hear Polyphemus celebrating—he has finally sunk Nobody.

Chapter 17: We Get a Surprise on Miami Beach

The hippocampi let them off near Miami Beach. However, a quick look at a newspaper tells them that not only are they stranded, they are also almost out of time to complete their quest: the Fleece has to be back in camp tonight. A dejected Clarisse reveals her prophecy: she will “fail without friends, to fly home alone.” However, Percy understands the verse’s true meaning: she needs friends to succeed—she would fail without them—and she, alone, must deliver the Fleece. As they ponder this interpretation and wonder how they can accomplish it without any money, Tyson remembers the Ziploc bag full of cash—part of Hermes’ gift—that he retrieved from the wreckage of the *CSS Birmingham*. There is enough to pay for cab fare and a single plane ticket. In a generous gesture, Percy sends Clarisse on her way with the Fleece. Minutes later, Percy feels Luke’s sword point in his neck. Luke and the bear twins hustle everybody aboard the *Princess Andromeda*, docked nearby, and Luke demands the Fleece. While Luke is distracted, Percy sends an Iris-message to Mr. D. at camp. As he and the campers watch from the dining pavilion, Percy gets Luke to confess his entire plan to poison Thalia’s tree, frame Chiron, and get the Fleece to revive Kronos. Mr. D. banishes Tantalus and reinstates Chiron. Meanwhile, Luke vows to kill Percy.

Chapter 18: The Party Ponies Invade

Percy and his friends fight Luke and the bear brothers. The young heroes are losing when suddenly Chiron and a large group of centaurs invade the ship. The hard-partying, war-whooping “Party Ponies” jubilantly rescue Percy and the rest using supernatural strength and speed. They head to their camp out in the swamp. Chiron explains that he had been monitoring Iris-messages, and used Percy’s to locate him.

Chiron also imparts more information: Percy may or may not be the prophesied child; Kronos has let him live so far in hopes he can use him in the rebellion. Now, however, since Percy has proved loyal to Olympus, Kronos will likely try to kill him. When Percy asks Chiron how he can know Kronos’ mind, the centaur reveals that Kronos is his father. Despite Chiron’s loyalty to Olympus, his parentage had made him a suspect.

Chapter 19: The Chariot Race Ends with a Bang

The Party Ponies transport everyone back to Camp Half-Blood, which has been under monster attack for the past two weeks. Clarisse is hailed as a hero and gets to place the Fleece on Thalia’s pine tree. Immediately, the camp and the tree begin to revive. Chiron posts a

round-the-clock guard on the hill. He also elects to hold the chariot races. The prize is a month without chores. Everyone takes the next two days to prepare, and Percy and Annabeth join forces, with Tyson as their pit crew.

Hermes visits Percy the night before the race. Despite Luke's rejection, the messenger god holds firm in his philosophy of never giving up on family. He also delivers a letter from Poseidon. Percy is disappointed to discover that the letter contains only two words: "Brace yourself." Before leaving, Hermes tells Percy that the gods can't intervene directly in their kids' lives, but if he thinks about it, he will see that his father has helped him and shown him care. Percy realizes this is true. Later, Tyson confirms the same thing: Percy, he says, was an answer to Tyson's prayer to his father for a friend. Percy is deeply touched.

The next day, Percy and Annabeth win the chariot race, with the aid of Percy's amazing gift from Tyson: a watch that transforms into a huge shield. At the victory celebration, Annabeth praises Tyson, and Percy calls him his "baby brother." Tyson is hailed as a hero.

Chapter 20: The Fleece Works its Magic Too Well

Percy spends a joyful next day with his friends. Chiron has manipulated the Mist to make Percy's legal problems with his former school disappear, and he and his mom agree he should remain at camp rather than return to New York. That night, however, Percy goes for a stroll on the beach and gets bad news: Poseidon has offered Tyson a summer internship at the Cyclopes' forge under the sea, so he can learn to make celestial weapons for the coming war. Percy is hearbroken, though he tries not to show it. The two share a tearful goodbye, and then Tyson rides away on Rainbow.

That night, in a dream, Poseidon once again urges Percy to "Brace yourself." Percy is awakened by a frantic Grover. Thinking Annabeth is hurt, Percy runs with Grover to Half-Blood Hill. However, when he arrives, he discovers another girl lying under the tree: the girl who wielded Aegis in his dream. Percy rushes to help her, while the others hold back, stunned. Percy doesn't understand their reaction, or Chiron's comment that Kronos has tricked them all, until the girl opens her eyes and he recognizes her from his dream. She is Thalia, daughter of Zeus, brought to life by the Fleece.

Author Sketch

Texas native Richard "Rick" Riordan has won awards for

his best-selling novels for both adults and younger readers. Born in San Antonio, Texas, on June 5, 1964, to a musician and a ceramicist, Riordan was a reader of mythology, science fiction, and fantasy from an early age, and submitted his first story for publication at the age of thirteen. He initially trained as a musician, majoring in music at North Texas State College in Denton and singing with a folk rock band before transferring to the University of Texas at Austin. There, he changed his academic focus, graduating in 1986 with a double major in English and history. He subsequently taught middle school English and history in Texas and California for fifteen years while writing on the side, continuing to teach for several years after selling his first novel, *Big Red Tequila*, at the age of 32. As a teacher, he frequently incorporated lessons from Greek mythology, and these lessons were extremely popular with students. For teaching excellence, Riordan was recognized in 2002 by St. Mary's Hall in San Antonio with its first-ever Master Teacher Award.

Inspired by his son Haley Michael—who has dyslexia and ADHD and wanted to hear bedtime stories about Greek gods and heroes—Riordan conceived the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, which debuted in 2005 with *The Lightning Thief*. Although the series is a commercial and critical success, Riordan says he especially values the feedback of kids who read his books: "The ultimate compliment for a children's writer is when the kids like it." Now a full-time writer, Riordan lives in San Antonio with his wife and two sons.

Critic's Corner

A best-selling writer for both youngsters and adults, Rick Riordan began his career as a novelist with *Big Red Tequila*, the first in his series featuring hard-drinking detective Tres Navarre. That series has earned him Anthony, Edgar, and Shamus awards and a featured alternate designation for the Mystery Guild, as well as listings in the Texas Institute of Letters and a suspense novel citation from the American Library Association. His first book in the episodic *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, *The Lightning Thief*, sold well over a million copies and has been translated into multiple languages. *The Lightning Thief* won the first of Riordan's two *New York Times* Notable Book citations, a *School Library Journal* best book, nominations for the Bluebonnet Award and Askews Torchlight Award, and comparisons to J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Critic Amanda Craig of the *London Times* noted the Percy Jackson books' "fusion of the magical with the mun-

dane." Dean Schneider hailed "a rollicking story of great fun and adventure; ... a brilliantly imagined quest tale."

The Sea of Monsters, the second in the series, was a hit as well, receiving the first of two *Child Magazine* Best Book for Children awards, and bestseller awards from *BookSense* and *Publishers Weekly*. *Kliatt* called it "(A) fast and funny tale, full of action, wisecracks, and superhuman powers"; and *Publisher's Weekly* had this to say: "In a feat worthy of his heroic subjects, Riordan crafts a sequel stronger than his compelling debut."

Selected Other Works by Rick Riordan

FOR ADULTS:

Big Red Tequila, 1997
The Widower's Two-Step, 1999
The Last King of Texas, 2000
The Devil Went Down to Austin, 2001
Cold Creek, 2003
Cold Springs, 2004
Southtown, 2004
Mission Road, 2005
Rebel Island, 2008

FOR YOUNG READERS:

The Lightning Thief, 2005 (*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, Book 1)
The Titan's Curse, 2007 (*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, Book 3)
The Battle of the Labyrinth, 2008 (*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, Book 4)
The Thirty-Nine Clues, Book 1: The Maze, 2008
The Last Olympian, 2009 (*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, Book 5)
The Red Pyramid, 2010 (*The Kane Chronicles*, Book 1)
The Lost Hero, 2010 (*Heroes of Olympus*, Book 1)

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Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
 John Bierhorst, *The Mythology of North America*
 Ray Bradbury, *The Electric Grandmother* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*
 Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology*
 Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky"
 Bernard Evslin, *The Adventures of Ulysses*
 Susan Feldman, *The Storytelling Stone*
 Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*
 Joel Chandler Harris, "Br'er Rabbit and the Tarbaby Story"
 David Kalakaua, *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii*
 Ursula LeGuin, *The Tombs of Atuan*, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and *The Farthest Shore*
 Lois Lowry, *The Giver* and *Messenger*
 Alice Marriot, *Plains Indian Mythology*
 Eloise Jarvis McGraw, *Mara, Daughter of the Nile*
 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter* series
 Robert D. San Souci, *Fa Mulan: The Story of a Woman Warrior*
 Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"
 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses" and "Gareth and Lynette"
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about Rick Riordan, ancient Greek literature, Mount Olympus, mythic quest lore, epic, sacrifice, learning disabilities, and other subjects and issues deriving from the book, consult these sources:

ACTIVITIES

The Odyssey, Caedmon

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Monsters of Mythology
Mythology, Edith Hamilton
Myths from the Middle Ages

FILMSTRIPS/DVDS

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Humanities
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Titan (mythology),
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_(mythology))
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POETRY

"Gareth and Lynette," Alfred, Lord Tennyson
"Jabberwocky," Lewis Carroll
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"Ulysses," Alfred, Lord Tennyson

REFERENCE

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Dyslexia, Millbrook
A Guide to Research in Classical Art and Mythology
The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology
Mythology, Bright Ideas
The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History
The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology

VIDEOS/FILMS

Aesop's Fables
Aladdin
All Summer in a Day
Antaeus
Cupid and Psyche
The Electric Grandmother
Excalibur
Gifts of the North Wind
The Lightning Thief
Merlin
The Mists of Avalon
Mulan
The Natural
Sinbad
Something Wicked this Way Comes
Watership Down

General Objectives

- To identify classic Greek myths transposed to a modern setting
- To identify the morals or lessons of some of the myths
- To identify the human behaviors and foibles of various Greek gods and monsters
- To find parallels between the adventures of Odysseus and those of Percy and his friends
- To identify aspects of Greek life, such as worshipping in temples, training with weapons, and making burnt offerings to the gods
- To identify the role of hero, searcher, and teacher in myth
- To identify how the various heroes in the story reflect their divine parentage
- To discover how Riordan has updated many myths for a modern audience
- To examine ideas about family presented in the story
- To examine attitudes toward those who are different or disabled

Specific Objectives

- To identify how Percy and others refine their ideas of “family” in the course of the book
- To examine the role of betrayal in the plot
- To examine the idea of “reversal of fortune” as it is played out in the course of the story
- To assess occasions of divine intervention, both overt and covert, in the lives of the young heroes
- To examine the relationship between prophecy and outcome in the narrative, as well as the role of personal agency in affecting outcomes that appear to be preordained, such as in Percy’s decision to let Clarisse take the Fleece
- To identify Percy and the other campers’ attitudes toward people who are “different” or have disabilities, and how these change in the course of the story
- To examine the very human emotions of the various gods and supernatural personalities the heroes encounter
- To enumerate brushes with death among the heroes
- To discuss the role of Thalia’s tree in the well-being of Camp Half-Blood
- To discuss the role of details, such as the names of the Laistrygonians, the Monster Donut shop, the CSS *Birmingham*, and the smell of goats in Polyphemus’ lair

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Rick Riordan’s fiction, present the following terms and applications:

- **Allegory:** a literary work that functions on two or more levels of meaning by comparing objects to symbols beyond the scope of the work. The structure of myths often parallels identifiable human behaviors and motivations, such as curiosity or pride. For example, the myth of the titan Kronos and his children characterizes a time before civilization when cannibalism was an answer to human conflict.
- **Episode:** a coherent event, digression, or incident in a narrative or serial that stands out on its own merit; for example, the episode with the Party Ponies transposes the familiar American stereotype of the hard-partying redneck with myths of centaurs (other than the noble Chiron himself) as wild, lusty, uncultured delinquents; the episode accurately conveys the ancient Greek attitude toward these mythical beings in modern American terms.
- **Myth:** a form of folklore that accounts for the creation of all things, the origin of good and evil, and the salvation of the soul. Style and subject matter vary, as with the Greek myths explaining human evils, oracles and prophecy, storms at sea, guinea pigs, homeless children, shadows, human interactions with nature, and laurel wreaths.

The Importance of Setting

Riordan’s unique approach transposes ancient Greek myths to modern settings in and around the United States. Olympus is hundreds of floors above the Empire State Building; the entrance to Hades is in Los Angeles; a camp to train demigod heroes (and repository for the famous Delphi Oracle) is on Long Island; and the Sea of Monsters—where Odysseus, Jason, and others performed great quests and faced supernatural challenges—is now located in the Bermuda Triangle, off the coast of Florida. Laistrygonian giants attack the protagonist in a deadly dodge ball game at a school gym in Manhattan; the chariot of the three Gray Sisters is transformed into a ghostly New York taxicab; a poison-spitting hydra nearly vaporizes the heroes during a confrontation in the wilds of Chesapeake Bay; rambunctious centaurs live in a (horse) trailer park in the Florida swamp; hippocampi frolic off the East Coast; the Golden Fleece turns into a high school letter jacket in Miami; Percy’s sword masquerades as a ballpoint pen when not in use; and so forth. By transporting the

myths to the United States and modern American culture, Riordan creates endless opportunities for humor and wonder, while making the myths relevant to his target audience of modern, mostly American, young readers. His approach provides an important teaching value as well; as befits a former award-winning teacher, Riordan has created stories that invite research and further learning, inspiring young readers to look up the original myths and historical settings for comparison. By modernizing the setting, Riordan ensures that, in addition to being a great adventure story, *The Sea of Monsters*—like its companions in the *Percy Jackson* series—is also a great tool for educators teaching on ancient Greek civilization and the foundational myths and ideas of Western culture.

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Rick Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters* should include these aspects:

Themes

- Family dysfunction
- Power
- Social ostracism
- Unwanted children
- Single parenthood
- Fatherlessness
- Power
- Disabilities
- Being different
- Vengeance
- Compassion
- Quests
- Coming of age
- Journeys of self-discovery
- Rebellion versus following the rules
- Second chances

Motifs

- Searching for family
- Longing for reconciliation
- Not giving up
- Restoration or resurrection of people or things that seem irretrievably lost
- Searching out hidden meanings
- Being manipulated for a hidden purpose
- Parental involvement and love
- Good and bad parents and parenting
- Freeing of captives

- Identifying, and seeking, one's heart's desire

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the quest novel. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context in which each item appears.

1. My mom made blue waffles and blue eggs for breakfast. She's funny that way, celebrating special occasions with blue food. I think it's her way of saying anything is possible. Percy can pass seventh grade. Waffles can be blue. Little miracles like that. (Chapter 1, pp.4-5)

(Percy's mother, Sally Jackson, is a sort of anchor in Percy's life. A single mother, she has uncomplainingly sacrificed to keep Percy safe in a world that is often fatal to demigods. Understanding her son's true nature, and the challenges he faces because of his unique parentage, she remains supportive and proud of him despite apparent setbacks, such as his academic difficulties. Her faith is evident even in the name she chose for him: Perseus, after the only ancient Greek hero whose story didn't end in tragedy.)

2. "Stethi," she shouted in Ancient Greek. "Ô háрма diabólēs!"

As usual, the moment she spoke in the language of Olympus, I somehow understood it. She'd said: Stop, Chariot of Damnation!

That didn't exactly make me feel real excited about whatever her plan was. (Chapter 3, p. 29)
(Annabeth makes a supernatural "call" to the Graeae, or Gray Sisters—sisters to the Gorgons who traveled in an enchanted chariot and shared one tooth and one eyeball among them—so she, Percy, and Tyson can get quickly from New York to Camp Half-Blood. In ancient Greek mythology, the original Perseus held their eye hostage so they would give him information he needed to complete his quest—a strategy Percy Jackson uses as well. This is an example of the way Riordan cleverly transposes ancient myths to modern settings, and repeats motifs and situations from the original tales.)

3. "They're in almost all the big cities," Annabeth said distastefully. "They're ... mistakes, Percy. Children of nature spirits and gods. ... Well, one god in particular, usually ... and they don't always come out

right. No one wants them. They get tossed aside. They grow up wild on the streets. ... He's a Cyclops." Annabeth paused, as if she were remembering something unpleasant. "They work the forges of the gods. They have to be immune to fire. That's what I was trying to tell you." (Chapter 4, pp. 45-46)

(Annabeth explains to Percy that his friend, Tyson, is actually a "monster." Until now, the Mist has powerfully protected Tyson from discovery, even by Percy, who must make himself look hard to see through the magical disguise. Tyson has just saved Percy's life, helping him and other campers to defeat the fire-breathing, metallic Bulls of Colchis on the border of Camp Half-Blood. Although none of the campers want a Cyclops around, Annabeth has a particular prejudice against them—a prejudice whose origins will be fully explained later in the book.)

4. A sliver of ice ran through my chest. Now I understood why the camp was in danger. The magical borders were failing because Thalia's tree was dying. ... (Chapter 4, p. 47)

(Camp Half-Blood is magically protected from monsters. One key component of this magic is a tree imbued with the spirit of Thalia, a daughter of Zeus who died defending her friends from a monster attack on the border of Camp Half-Blood. As she was dying, her father took pity on her and turned her into a tree—a scenario that occurred frequently in the old Greek myths. Her strong protective spirit has reinforced the borders, making them virtually impervious to attack. Now, due to poisoning, the tree is dying, and the protection is weakening.)

5. "The whole valley is feeling the shock of the poison. The magical borders are deteriorating. The camp itself is dying. Only one source of magic would be strong enough to reverse the poison, and it was lost centuries ago." (Chapter 5, p. 52)

(Chiron, the wise centaur who is the teacher and battlefield medic of heroes in both the ancient myths and the Percy Jackson universe, hints at the only available antidote to the poison: the Golden Fleece. However, it seems unattainable, its retrieval too dangerous to attempt.)

6. Annabeth was trying hard not to cry. Chiron brushed a tear from her cheek. "Stay with Percy, child," he told her. "Keep him safe. The prophecy—remember it!" ...

"Um ...," I said. "Would this be the super-danger-

ous prophecy that has me in it, but the gods have forbidden you to tell me anything about?" (Chapter 5, p. 53)

(Percy is the subject of a mysterious prophecy foretelling dire consequences to the gods of Olympus, but for their own reasons they have banned Chiron and Annabeth—who has also been given part of the prophecy—from sharing their knowledge with Percy. Because of the prophecy, many of the gods distrust Percy. Of course, this frustrates Percy, and causes him to feel vaguely guilty much of the time.)

7. My father, the all-powerful Poseidon, had gotten moony-eyed for some nature spirit, and Tyson had been the result. I mean, I'd read the myths about Cyclopes. I even remembered that they were often Poseidon's children. But I'd never really processed that this made them my ... family. Until I had Tyson living with me in the next bunk. ... I admit—I was angry at my dad. I felt like being his son was now a joke. (Chapter 6, pp. 66-67)

(In response to Percy's prayer for help, Poseidon has claimed Tyson as his son. However, instead of being grateful, Percy is embarrassed and ashamed—as well as guilty for feeling this way. Tyson is a Cyclops, and as such is considered a monster at Camp Half-Blood. Even worse for Percy, Tyson makes Percy an object of ridicule and forces him to realize things about his father that he'd rather not face. Part of Percy's growth during the course of the novel is to buck the force of prejudice, stop caring about others' opinions of his family and friends, and recognize Tyson as the hero he is.)

8. The way Tantalus saw it, the Stymphalian birds had simply been minding their own business in the woods and would not have attacked if (we) hadn't disturbed them with our bad chariot driving. ... I told Tantalus to go chase a doughnut, which didn't help his mood. He sentenced us to kitchen patrol—scrubbing pots and platters all afternoon in the underground kitchen with the cleaning harpies. (Chapter 7, p. 85)

(Compounding the problems of Percy and his friends, Chiron's replacement as activities director is none other than Tantalus, the evil ancient king from whose name we get the word "tantalyze." He was a figure fabled in ancient Greek myth for his cruelty and evil. According to the legend, Tantalus was invited to Olympus, but angered the gods when he stole nectar and ambrosia. In punishment, the gods banished him from Olympus, and his own children scold-

ed him. His revenge was to kill and cook his children, then invited the gods to a banquet at which his offspring were served. When the gods discovered his crime, they sentenced Tantalus to eternal torment in Hades, chained beneath a tree with the most delicious fruit imaginable, which was always just out of reach, so that he was forever starving while being unable to assuage his hunger. In Riordan's version, Tantalus is constantly trying to grasp and eat the delicious food magically provided at camp, but it always scoots out of reach at the last minute. Tantalus especially hates Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson. His true goal is to help destroy the camp.)

9. "...But Percy, the Fleece has been missing for centuries. Tons of heroes have searched for it with no luck."
"But Grover found it," I said. "He went looking for Pan and he found the Fleece instead because they both radiate nature magic. ... We can rescue him and save the camp at the same time. It's perfect!" Annabeth hesitated. "A little too perfect, don't you think? What if it's a trap?" (Chapter 7, p. 87)
(As they talk during their kitchen duty punishment, the heroes see their quest taking shape. They will search for the fabled Golden Fleece of Colchis, which has magical life-giving powers and can revive both Thalia's tree and the magical protections of Camp Half-Blood. This is the impossible quest at which Chiron hinted earlier. Based on Percy's prophetic dreams, it appears that Grover, his best friend, has found the Fleece already. Percy, true to his brave and impetuous nature, sees only a perfect opportunity for an adventure that will save both his friend and the camp. However, as the wise and crafty Annabeth—a true daughter of Athena—points out, it may all be a trap.)
10. That night at the campfire, Apollo's cabin led the sing-along. They tried to get everybody's spirits up, but it wasn't easy after that afternoon's bird attack. ... We did all the standard camp numbers: "Down by the Aegean," "I Am My Own Great-Great-Great-Grandpa," "This Land is Minos's Land." The bonfire was enchanted, so the louder you sang, the higher it rose, changing color and heat with the mood of the crowd. On a good night, I'd seen it twenty feet high, bright purple, and so hot the whole front row's marshmallows burst into flames. Tonight, the fire was only five feet high, barely warm, and the flames were the color of lint. (Chapter 7, p. 89)

(Here, Riordan establishes the mood at the beleaguered camp with the use of sly humor. The song titles are re-workings of traditional camp songs to reflect a Greek mythology theme.)

11. Clarisse glared at me. "I accept the quest!" she repeated. "I, Clarisse, daughter of Ares, will save the camp!"
The Ares campers cheered even louder. Annabeth protested, and the other Athena campers joined in. Everybody else started taking sides—shouting and arguing and throwing marshmallows. I thought it was going to turn into a full-fledged s'more war until Tantalus shouted, "Silence, you brats!" (Chapter 7, p. 93)
(After Percy and Annabeth tell the campers about Percy's dream and their idea for finding the Golden Fleece, the evil Tantalus succumbs to the half-bloods' demands and awards the quest—to Clarisse, daughter of Ares, Percy's nemesis. Tantalus knows Clarisse is sure to fail, since she won't collaborate with Percy and Annabeth, who actually know where the Fleece is located and have the skills to find it. In response to protests about the choice of champion, Tantalus commands silence, then enforces his order by threatening them with a thinly-veiled retelling of his own horrible tale of punishment and revenge. Finally, he informs the group that the harpies have been given permission to eat any campers who break curfew.)
12. "Daddy always cared for m-me," he sniffled. "Now ... I think he was mean to have a Cyclops boy. I should not have been born."
"Don't talk that way! Poseidon claimed you, didn't he? So ... he must care about you ... a lot. ..."
My voice trailed off as I thought about all those years Tyson had lived on the streets of New York in a cardboard refrigerator box. How could Tyson think that Poseidon had cared for him? What kind of dad let that happen to his kid, even if the kid was a monster? (Chapter 7, p. 96)
(Percy tries to spare Tyson's feelings, and to reassure him in his belief that his immortal father, Poseidon, cares about him. At the same time—based on what he knows of Tyson's childhood—Percy doubts that this is really true. His doubts about Tyson's relationship with Poseidon echo his doubts about his own father-son relationship. Like Tyson, Percy wonders if his father truly cares for him.)
13. "I've got it," Hermes said. "Young people don't always do what they've been told, but if they can pull it

off and do something wonderful, sometimes they escape punishment. How's that?" (Chapter 7, p. 102) *(On the night Tantalus gives the quest to Clarisse, Percy escapes to the beach so he can think. There, he encounters the god Hermes, who—true to his nature as god of thieves and tricksters—urges Percy to undertake the quest himself, against orders. He also gives Percy gifts, including a thermos full of wind and a bottle of magical vitamins.)*

14. Hermes gazed up at the stars. "My dear young cousin, if there's one thing I've learned over the eons, it's that you can't give up on your family, no matter how tempting they make it. It doesn't matter if they hate you, or embarrass you, or simply don't appreciate your genius for inventing the Internet—" (Chapter 7, p. 104)

(When Percy asks Hermes why he is helping, Hermes explains that he hopes Percy "can save many people." Percy realizes that one of the people Hermes wants saved is his own son, Luke, Percy's arch nemesis. Luke hates the Olympians in general and Hermes in particular, and has become the evil titan Kronos' right-hand man. Although Hermes, like all the gods, is prohibited from directly interfering with the affairs of humans—including his own children—he does whatever he can to bring about Luke's redemption. Hermes is also stating one of the book's main themes: never give up on family.)

15. "The gods have blinded you. Can't you imagine a world without them, Annabeth? What good is that ancient history you study? Three thousand years of baggage! The West is rotten to the core. It has to be destroyed. Join me! We can start the world anew." (Chapter 9, pp. 127-128)

(On the evil, enchanted ship Princess Andromeda, Luke tries to recruit Annabeth and Percy. Luke is gathering an army of monsters and half-bloods to fight the Olympians on behalf of Kronos and the other titans. Luke's efforts are aimed especially at Annabeth, who has always had a crush on him.)

16. "A half-blood hideout." I looked at Annabeth in awe. "You made this place?"

"Thalia and I," she said quietly. "And Luke."

That shouldn't have bothered me. I mean, I knew Thalia and Luke had taken care of Annabeth when she was little. I knew the three of them had been runaways together, hiding from monsters, surviving on their own before Grover found them and tried to get them to Half-Blood Hill. But whenever

Annabeth talked about the time she'd spent with them, I kind of felt ... I don't know.

Uncomfortable?

No. That's not the word.

The word was jealous. (Chapter 10, p. 139)

(Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson have escaped the Princess Andromeda with the aid of Hermes' thermos of wind and have arrived hundreds of miles away, at Virginia Beach, Va., near where Annabeth grew up. As happens frequently, Percy is assailed by jealousy over Annabeth's unresolved feelings for Luke. The hideout is also an insight into Annabeth's childhood, about which she is close-mouthed.)

17. Clarisse sneered. "You think your daddy is the only one with sea power? The spirits on the losing side of every war owe a tribute to Ares. That's their curse for being defeated. I prayed to my father for a naval transport and here it is. These guys will do anything I tell them. Won't you, Captain?" (Chapter 11, p. 149)

(Ironically, Percy, Tyson, and Annabeth are saved from a murderous hydra at Virginia Beach by Clarisse, who has commandeered a Confederate ghost ship—an ironclad—to help her on her quest for the Golden Fleece. Although Clarisse is hostile to Percy and intent on showing him up, Percy ultimately turns her into an ally.)

18. Annabeth twisted her Yankees cap in her hands.

"Percy, I don't know the full prophecy, but it warns about a half-blood child of the Big Three—the next one who lives to the age of sixteen. That's the real reason Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades swore a pact after World War II not to have any more kids.

The next child of the Big Three who reaches sixteen will be a dangerous weapon." ... (T)hat hero will decide the fate of Olympus. He or she will make a decision that either saves the Age of the Gods, or destroys it." (Chapter 12, p. 167)

(Several years previously, the Oracle of Delphi made a prophecy—part of which was given to Annabeth—concerning the future of Olympus. On the orders of the gods, Chiron has kept the details of the prophecy away from Percy, who could potentially fulfill the prophecy. In fact, since Thalia was killed, he is the only known living child of the Big Three. This information about the prophecy explains both the troubles he's been facing and the reason Kronos has let him live in the past when he had a chance to kill him. Kronos—and Luke, through whom Kronos is working—hopes to persuade Percy to join the rebels,

then use him to overthrow Olympus.)

19. "A guinea pig," C.C. said. "Lovely, aren't you? Men are pigs, Percy Jackson. I used to turn them into real pigs, but they were so smelly and large and difficult to keep. Not much different than they were before, really. Guinea pigs are much more convenient! Now, come and meet the other men."

(Chapter 12, p. 177)

(To his horror, Percy's spa "makeover" involves being turned into an animal. C.C. is actually Circe, the witch who tempted Odysseus and turned his crew into swine. She hates men, and attempts to recruit women into the ranks of witches devoted to her service. Annabeth refuses the offer, and she and Percy make their escape—after Percy, with the aid of Hermes' magic vitamins, turns back into himself. In the process, some other guinea pigs in Circe's lair eat the vitamins and are transformed into their true selves. They are the infamous seventeenth-century pirate, Edward Teach, son of Ares—better known as Blackbeard—and his scruffy crew. Blackbeard is as warlike as ever, and bent on revenge against Circe—although he also has a strong craving for celery!)

20. "This Cyclops, he tricked us. He managed to split us up inside this maze of corridors in an old house in Flatbush. And he could sound like anyone, Percy. Just the way Tyson did aboard the *Princess Andromeda*. He lured us, one at a time. Thalia thought she was running to save Luke. Luke thought he heard me scream for help. And me ... I was alone in the dark. I was seven years old. I couldn't even find the exit." (Chapter 13, p. 188)

(After their narrow escape from Circe, Annabeth finally explains to Percy why she initially distrusted Tyson: when she was a little girl on the run with Luke and Thalia, a Cyclops nearly lured all three of them to their deaths. Despite the trauma of this harrowing experience, Annabeth now sees that she was wrong. Percy, for his part, admires her courage in consenting to travel with Tyson, given her bad experience.)

21. Now, the "Nobody" thing wouldn't have made sense to anybody, but Annabeth had explained to me that it was the name Odysseus had used to trick Polyphemus centuries ago, right before he poked the Cyclops's eye out with a large hot stick. Annabeth had figured Polyphemus would still have a grudge about that name, and she was right. ... Apparently, he didn't even stop to consider that Annabeth's voice was female, whereas

the first Nobody had been male. On the other hand, he'd wanted to marry Grover, so he couldn't have been all that bright about the whole male/female thing. (Chapter 14, p. 212)

(Using her Cap of Invisibility, Annabeth taunts Polyphemus, creating a diversion so Clarisse and Grover can escape Polyphemus' cave. As in the incidents involving Circe and the Sirens, Annabeth reprises some of the exploits of Odysseus, tricking Polyphemus with the riddle of "Nobody's" identity in order to throw him off-guard.)

22. Polyphemus yowled in pain. Tyson tackled him, pulling him down. I landed next to them—sword in hand, within striking distance of the monster's heart. But I locked eyes with Tyson, and I knew I couldn't do it. It just wasn't right.

"Let him go," I told Tyson. "Run." (Chapter 15, p. 228)

(For the second time during the escape from the island, Percy spares Polyphemus' life. Even though Polyphemus is murderous, treacherous, and completely without decency or conscience, Percy feels somewhat responsible for him as a fellow son of Poseidon. These and other actions by Percy may suggest that Percy's fatal flaw is an excess of mercy—he is too trusting.)

23. "Percy," Annabeth said, "that was so—"

"Generous?" Grover offered.

"Insane," Annabeth corrected. "You're betting the lives of everybody at camp that Clarisse will get the Fleece safely back by tonight?"

"It's her quest," I said. "She deserves a chance."

"Percy is nice," Tyson said.

"Percy is too nice," Annabeth grumbled, but I couldn't help thinking that maybe, just maybe, she was a little impressed. I'd surprised her, anyway. And that wasn't easy to do. (Chapter 17, p. 236) *(In the midst of Clarisse's despair, Percy reinterprets the oracle's message, which said Clarisse would "fail without friends, to fly home alone." Rather than indicating certain failure, the verse means that Clarisse would need help from friends to succeed, and would have to fly home alone. With a Ziploc bag of money Tyson has retrieved from the sea, Clarisse takes off at Percy's urging, flying home to Long Island with the Fleece to complete her quest, restore the camp, and earn glory for herself and her father, Ares.)*

24. "You were going to heal Kronos," I said.

"Yes! The Fleece's magic would've sped his mending process by tenfold. But you haven't stopped

us, Percy. You've only slowed us down a little."
"And so you poisoned the tree, you betrayed Thalia, you set us up—all to help Kronos destroy the gods."

Luke gritted his teeth. "You know that! Why do you keep asking me?"

"Because I want everybody in the audience to hear you." (Chapter 17, p. 240)

(After Clarisse departs, Luke and his goons ambush Percy and his friends, demanding the Fleece, and trap them on the Princess Andromeda. Percy realizes that Luke's plan all along was to get the heroes to retrieve the Golden Fleece so it could be stolen and used in Kronos' regeneration. On a sudden inspiration, Percy uses his last gold drachma to send an Iris message through the salt spray, tricking Luke into revealing the entire plot to the watching audience at Camp Half-Blood, including Dionysus, Tantalus, and all the campers. As a result, Chiron is exonerated and Tantalus is banished back to the underworld.)

25. "Ponies!" Tyson cried with delight.

My mind had trouble processing everything I saw. Chiron was among the crowd, but his relatives were almost nothing like him. ...

They exploded onto the deck with such ferocity and color that for a moment even Luke was stunned. I couldn't tell whether they had come to celebrate or attack.

Apparently both. (Chapter 18, p. 246)

(Chiron, who explains later that he has been monitoring Iris-messages to keep tabs on Percy's group, has arrived to save the day. He is accompanied by dozens of his relatives, the self-styled "Party Ponies"—a tribe of hell-raising rednecks with fierce fighting skills. This depiction jibes with the classical characterization of centaurs as generally crude, rude, belligerent hellions—all except Chiron, who was the "elder statesman," a wise, mature, self-restrained teacher and healer.)

26. Nobody gave Annabeth or me a second look. It was as if we'd never left. In a way, I guess that was the best thank-you anyone could give us, because if they'd admitted we'd snuck out of camp to do the quest, they'd have to expel us. And really, I didn't want any more attention. It felt good to be just one of the campers for once. (Chapter 19, 255)
(True to Hermes' prediction, Percy and Annabeth "get away with" going on the quest because the results are good. They've been able to retrieve the Golden Fleece, restore the camp, and thwart part of Luke

and Kronos' scheme.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important.

1. Discuss the origins of Greek myths. How did they come about? Why were they devised? What purpose did they serve? What lessons do they teach us today?

(Answers will vary. Greek mythology originated in the folk traditions of people who were literally trying to understand the meaning of life, to explain human nature and natural phenomena, and to derive a sense of comfort and control in the face of life's challenges and changes. It is difficult for modern people—beneficiaries of a scientific understanding of natural phenomena, and with an advanced technology capable of manipulating nature and of sometimes shielding us from its worst aspects—to fully understand the uncertainty and daily terrors that faced ancient humanity. At its most basic level, Greek mythology was an attempt by humans to make sense of their world, to avoid its pitfalls, and to give it a human face. Although they no longer serve to explain natural phenomena, the myths are still valuable today for their literary merit and their insight into human nature and events. Perhaps most importantly, they help us understand Western culture, which is permeated with ideas and references derived from the ancient Greeks and their mythology.)

2. The god Hermes unexpectedly provides aid to Percy when his plan to rescue Grover and retrieve the Golden Fleece appears hopeless. This is significant for several reasons. What are they? Based on your research about the gods, why is Hermes a logical choice to help Percy?

(First, and most obviously, Hermes is Luke's father, and he hopes that Percy will be able to help redeem Luke from the wrong course he's taken in life. Along these lines, Hermes voices one of the novel's main themes: never give up on family. Beyond that, Hermes is a logical choice because he is the god of thieves and travelers, a trickster who favors those who bend the rules and take big risks in hopes of having big success. While the more established Olympians may disapprove of Percy, Hermes recognizes a young man after his own heart—someone who has difficulty playing by the rules but neverthe-

less longs for a good outcome. Finally, Hermes is the messenger of the gods, so it is appropriate that he is the means by which Percy receives an important message: that his father, though necessarily distant for reasons of Olympian “politics,” nevertheless cares for him and helps him in whatever way he can. In demonstrating his own love for his son, Hermes in a sense, functions as a double for Poseidon.)

3. Why does the trident appear over Tyson’s head? What does this mean for Tyson? For Percy?

(The trident, a symbol of Poseidon, appears as a hologram over Tyson’s head during dinner at camp after Percy prays to his father to send help. For Tyson, this is a dream come true, as it means his best friend is also his brother. For Percy, however, it is initially an embarrassment, since the campers now all regard him as being related to a “monster.”)

4. How does Percy’s life vacillate between fantasy and reality?

(The child of a working single mother and an ancient Greek god, Percy seems to have a life straight out of fairy tales. He has special gifts, such as the power to manipulate water and an inability to drown, not to mention amazing sword-fighting skills and the ability to automatically understand Ancient Greek. Furthermore, he may be either a world-savior or a world-destroyer, according to a prophecy. He regularly meets, and frequently has to defeat, mythological figures, and he participates in quests that exist simultaneously in modern America and an alternative mythological reality. On the other hand, Percy faces many of the ordinary problems and issues of adolescent boys everywhere. He has learning disabilities; longs to fit in but feels like a perpetual outsider; struggles between his desire to do the right thing and his desire to get along and please others, especially in his relationship with Tyson; and worries about his mother and his friends. He frequently feels he is a failure. Furthermore, he has a sometimes prickly relationship with his beautiful friend Annabeth, who is the wildest warrior he knows but whom he likes more than he realizes. Although some of the details of his life are pure fantasy, his internal challenges and struggles growing up are those of a real boy.)

5. What lessons from the wise centaur, Chiron, help Percy and Annabeth as they rush to clear his name and save the camp?

(Percy, Annabeth, and their friends learn lessons in

Greek history, warfare, philosophy, and language from Chiron. Even more than that, they learn how to be heroes—how to act heroically, honorably, and wisely, even when faced with unfavorable circumstances. As important as the lessons he teaches are the examples he provides. Chiron accepts the false accusations against him philosophically, secure in the knowledge of his innocence while realistically recognizing that it might not be provable; his primary focus is not on himself, but on the welfare of the camp and its demigod inhabitants. Chiron also thinks strategically and is alert to traps and misdirections, a lesson he has imparted well to his pupils. Throughout their quest, Percy and Annabeth are accompanied, in a sense, by Chiron’s wise counsel; his teachings help them steer the right course.)

6. What are the key conflicts in the novel?

(The overt conflict involves the gathering battle between Olympus and the followers of the Titan lord, Kronos; the stakes are the destruction of the known world. There are a number of underlying conflicts as well. These include: A) the rivalries among the children of the gods, most evident in Clarisse’s loathing of Percy, which is spurred by her father, Ares. B) the controversy surrounding Chiron, who has been framed for poisoning Thalia’s tree—the desire to clear Chiron’s name and save the tree and the camp is one of the precipitating factors in beginning the quest. C) Various conflicts relating to personal prejudice, including Annabeth’s internal conflict as she deals with negative feelings about Cyclopes; and Percy’s problems balancing his strong sense of loyalty with the social fallout from having a “monster brother.” D) External conflicts surrounding the quest and Grover’s attempts to fend off Polyphemus. E) The conflict between those who want to save the camp and those, both internally and externally, who are trying to dismantle it. F) “Family conflict” involving the relationship between Olympians and their children, including Hermes’ attempts to win back Luke, and Percy and Tyson’s struggles with the question of whether their father, Poseidon, cares for them.)

7. Bullying is a recurring theme in Rick Riordan’s novels, and it’s a daily reality for many kids. How is bullying depicted in the novel? How do those in authority generally respond to bullying? How do the people affected respond, and what are the results? What can you conclude from this?

(Bullying and how to cope with it is a standard feature in the novel, and many of Percy’s heroic deeds

are a response to bullying, either of himself or of others. As a perpetual new kid with learning problems, Percy is someone who has been picked on a great deal, and his propensity to identify with, and defend, the underdog is one of his signature heroic characteristics. One of the opening scenes of the book involves him defending Tyson and others from the predations of the school bully, who has unwittingly acquired a pack of Laistrygonian giants as “muscle,” turning a game of dodge ball into a fight to the death with murderous monsters. Such scenarios recur throughout the book. Also, the bullying from kids generally goes hand-in-hand with corruption, or at least apathy, in adults. For instance, at Meriwether Prep, officials turn a blind eye to the predations of Matt Sloan but are quick to blame Percy; at camp, the fair and honorable Chiron is temporarily supplanted by the evil Tantalus, who delights in cruel and unfair treatment of true heroes like Percy and Annabeth. Tyson experiences this with supernatural bullies on the streets of New York; and even Polyphemus fits this mold. Of course, Kronos is essentially a super-powerful bully and evil genius rolled into one.

In each case, Percy and his friends must find their own deliverance and salvation, because those with greater strength and authority either can't or won't. Percy is a symbol and example of right action and defense of the vulnerable in a world where the strong routinely prey on the weak. As such, he—along with his good friends, particularly Annabeth—redeems or restores people and situations that have been harmed by the abuse of power. He rescues Tyson, not only from a schoolyard bully, but from the life of a homeless outcast “monster,” helping transform him into a hero with a purpose and a loving family. He retrieves Grover and helps restore his status with the Council of Cloven Elders. He saves Annabeth, as she saves him, and helps her become aware of her fatal flaw of hubris before it is too late. He is even instrumental in restoring Thalia to life via the Fleece, and in rescuing the bullying Clarisse from worse bullying at the hands of her own father, Ares.)

8. What surprising event occurs at the very end of the book, after the Fleece restores Thalia's tree to health? Why do Chiron, Annabeth, and Grover not react in the way Percy expects? Has Percy been warned, and if so, how? Explain the significance of this event.

(A surprise ending sees Thalia brought back to life by the Golden Fleece. Percy doesn't realize this at first when he responds to Grover's panicked cries for help and rushes to find an unknown demigod girl passed out on Half-Blood Hill. He is incredulous when nobody else rushes to his side to assist the girl. However, when he recognizes her from his dream and hears her name, he understands their shock. As he contemplates Thalia's return, Percy realizes what has occurred to everyone else: all the events leading up to this point have obscured the true motive for poisoning Thalia's tree: Kronos was plotting another way to control the prophecy by bringing back into play another child of the Big Three.)

9. What qualities do Greek myths inspire in readers? (Greek stories value the grandeur and deadly strength of nature as well as the human capacity to appreciate and experience the world. Cosmic forces create a two-sided tension between the quest for glory through heroic achievement, and the danger of overreaching mortal limitations through hubris, or pride. By endowing immortals with human foibles—curiosity, ambition, competitiveness, desire, vengefulness, jealousy, daring, deceitfulness, rebelliousness, pity—myths inform readers of the potential dangers of these characteristics and seek to explain the seeming capriciousness of the natural world. At the same time, myths posit a reward for true heroism—courage, selflessness, and goodness—as exemplified by Chiron and the young heroes, who are ultimately vindicated and rewarded. Also, in keeping with the ancient Greeks' complicated view of human character as containing the potential for both good and bad, Percy is still viewed as a potential threat despite his many demonstrations of heroism; and, conversely, the seemingly irredeemable Luke is presented as a candidate for redemption by his father, Hermes.)

10. How do Greek myths compare with those of other folk cultures? (The stories of folk myth makers retain motifs and themes common to humanity. As explained by analyst Joseph Campbell, myths of dangerous love affairs, toying with godly powers, flight from danger, competing in contests of strength, and violating heavenly sanctions belong in all mythologies. Because certain faults and foibles are common to the human condition, most world mythology contains stories that parallel those of a curious Percy, rebellious and deceitful Luke, cruel Mr. D, bullying

Clarisse, belligerent Zeus, warlike Ares, etc. Stories of cosmic punishments are offset by tales of godlike heroism—Annabeth’s childhood escape from an evil Cyclops, Thalia’s last stand on Half-Blood Hill, Clarisse and the other heroes’ rescue of Annabeth from Polyphemus’ island, Tyson’s saving of Percy on several occasions, and so forth. Although these themes occur in most world mythologies, the Greek myths have been rightfully noted throughout history for their vividness, their breathtaking variety and detail, their very human attempt to account for the seemingly incomprehensible, their simultaneous grandeur and humanity, and their exploration of such foundational themes of Western Civilization as free will versus fate and glory versus hubris. In short, they are still rightfully studied today for their breadth, scope, beauty, and genius.)

11. One of the recurring questions in the book has to do with whether the gods “care” for their demigod children. How does Percy struggle with this question? How has this problem helped create a monster in Luke? What does Percy learn, and from whom, to change his perspective?

(Percy himself struggles with feeling ignored or unloved by his father, Poseidon, and he is embarrassed when Tyson is revealed to be his half-brother. Percy also wonders how a loving father could allow his own child to grow up homeless and abused, as Tyson has. Luke, similarly, has felt abandoned by his father, Hermes, and his resulting rage has spurred his defection to Kronos’ camp. However, Hermes helps Percy see things in a different light. He reminds Percy that gods are forbidden from intervening directly in their children’s lives, but that they do what they can indirectly; and he urges Percy to recall signs of his father’s care for him. Percy realizes that Poseidon has helped him in many ways: by providing the hippocampi as a means of escape; by giving him additional special sea powers; and, most especially, by providing him with Tyson, a true brother who has saved his life numerous times. Tyson confesses that he, too, has seen his father’s care in providing him with a longed-for brother in Percy. As for Hermes, though Luke rejects him, he refuses to give up on his efforts to save his wayward son.)

Across the Curriculum

Education

1. In the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* books, dyslexia

and ADHD are a legacy of the demigods’ parentage. Research and suggest methods of teaching and learning for real-life kids with these learning disabilities—for example, large-print books and large computer fonts, or auditory learning.

2. Propose a textbook entry and diagram of the two layers of gods, the Titans and the Olympians, accompanied by symbols, such as Zeus’s thunderbolt, Iris’s rainbow, Artemis’s silver bow, Hephaestus’s hammer and forge, Kronos’s sunbeams, Poseidon’s trident, Athena’s shield, Hermes’s winged sandals and caduceus, Demeter’s grain, Persephone’s pomegranate, and Apollo’s rays. Show how the second layer refined and enhanced human life, as with the skills that people learned from Artemis, Apollo, Hephaestus, and Athena.

Literature and History

3. Compare elements of Greek mythology with myths and legends of other cultures, such as the tales of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table; stories of the Norse god Odin; the tale of Tristan and Iseult; the Native American myth of the Spider Woman; the legend of Robin Hood; Jewish folk tales concerning Elijah; the song of Roland; the Irish hero Cuchulain; Beowulf; the Cumaean Sybil; and the Monkey King of Far Eastern lore.

4. List at least a dozen examples of transformation or transmutation in classical mythology—for instance, Grover’s cloven hooves; Chiron’s white stallion body; the half-fish, half-horse form of the hippocampi; the “true form” of gods such as Hermes; Circe’s transformation of her victims into (guinea) pigs; and Percy’s special underwater powers. Do similar changes of form occur in Native American mythology? Why do you suppose storytellers often confer nature powers on gods and heroes? Discuss.

5. Odysseus was a legendary hero of ancient Greece, and his exploits were retold by the poet Homer in *The Odyssey*. Many of the situations in *The Sea of Monsters* are inspired by *The Odyssey* as well. Identify retellings of scenes from *The Odyssey* in *The Sea of Monsters*. Which character in the novel is a stand-in for Odysseus? How does Riordan’s version give the old stories a new twist? Explain.

6. The drachmas of ancient Athens featured the owl on one side. Why? What did the owl represent?

7. Compare Greek heroes and monsters with such American folk heroes and legends as Daniel Boone, Molly Pitcher, Jim Bowie, Joe Magarac, Calamity Jane, Bigfoot, Sasquatch, John Henry, Betsy Ross, Johnny Appleseed, Pecos Bill and Widowmaker, Mike Fink, Anansi the Spider, Davy Crockett, Barbara Allen, Rip Van Winkle, High John the Conqueror, Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, the sin-eater, Br'er Rabbit, and Br'er Fox.
8. Choose a scene from Greek mythology not included in the book, and re-enact it for the class. Consult Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (in which the Greek myths were adapted for a Roman audience), or other similar works.

Psychology and Reasoning

9. In ancient Greek culture, the desire to achieve personal glory was balanced by warnings against *hubris*—essentially, arrogance or pride. Acts of hubris included shaming or mocking one's victims after defeating them, challenging the gods' authority or trying to claim their rights and privileges for oneself, or thinking oneself somehow better or wiser than the gods or even other people. What characters—heroes, villains, or both—display hubris? What consequences do they face?
10. In a group, discuss the use of strategy and trickery to defeat an opponent—particularly its use by Annabeth, Luke, and Kronos, and against Polyphemus. How do apparently weaker opponents use their brains to overcome those who are physically stronger? How do some characters achieve their own ends while letting their opponents believe they have defeated them? Explain.

How Language Works

1. Despite the series' roots in fantasy, *The Sea of Monsters* and other *Percy Jackson* books contain many lessons about the value and importance of being human, and the need for right motivation and right action. Further, the books balance violent and fearful situations with expressions of courage, honor, devotion, and gallows humor. Examples from *The Sea of Monsters* include:
2. "Monsters never die. They are reborn from the chaos and barbarism that is always bubbling underneath civilization, the very stuff that makes Kronos stronger. They must be defeated again and again,

kept at bay. Heroes embody that struggle. You fight the battles humanity must win, every generation, in order to stay human. Do you understand?" (pp. 252-253)

3. Hermes shrugged. "Families are messy. Immortal families are eternally messy. Sometimes the best we can do is to remind each other that we're related, for better or worse ... and try to keep the maiming and killing to a minimum." (p. 258)
4. The crowd didn't want to be quiet, but Annabeth made herself heard: "We couldn't have done it without somebody else! We couldn't have won this race or gotten the Fleece or saved Grover or anything! We owe our lives to Tyson, Percy's ..." "Brother!" I said, loud enough for everybody to hear. "Tyson, my baby brother." (p. 268)
5. We only came close to dying six or seven times, which I thought was pretty good. Once, I lost my grip and I found myself dangling by one hand from a ledge fifty feet above the rocky surf. But I found another handhold and kept climbing. (p. 204)
6. *Don't let me stop you*, the titan said. *Perhaps this time, when you fail, you'll wonder if it's worthwhile slaving for the gods. How exactly has your father shown his appreciation lately?* (p. 116)
7. "My dear young cousin, if there's one thing I've learned over the eons, it's that you can't give up on your family, no matter how tempting they make it. It doesn't matter if they hate you, or embarrass you, or simply don't appreciate your genius for inventing the internet. ..." (p. 104)

Alternate Assessment

1. Rick Riordan based some of the stories in *The Sea of Monster* on classic tales of Odysseus' exploits. Read excerpts from *The Odyssey*, or a summary such as the one in Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, and comment on any parallels, including which stories are used, how they are altered, and who generally plays the role analogous to Odysseus.
2. Which characters in the novel do you find most sympathetic, and why? Choose at least two. Comment on both their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Discuss Hermes' admonition never to give up on family. What does this statement mean? How does it apply in the book? Discuss this idea as it relates to Percy and at least two other characters.
4. There are many fantasy stories for young people that contain elements of myth and the coming-of-age tale. What books have you read or heard of that

remind you of *The Sea of Monsters*, and why?

5. Report on why the Greeks chose vengeance, deception, loyalty, duty, and companionship as important themes in mythology. Note how their attitudes toward these sentiments reflect our own impulses to pride, revenge, deception, honor, achievement, and love.
6. Make a list of abstract feelings that Percy experiences, particularly uncertainty, pain, fearfulness, fatigue, guilt, desire for parental love, loneliness, shock, curiosity, shame, and triumph. Discuss why suffering is an important part of his maturity.

Vocabulary

Choose words from the following list; put the correct letter in front of the corresponding definition.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| a. ADHD | f. ambrosia | k. abandon | p. armory |
| b. brazier | g. caduceus | l. celestial | q. Cyclops |
| c. drachma | h. dyslexia | m. hologram | r. laurels |
| d. oracle | i. pavilion | n. satyr | s. sarcophagus |
| e. solstice | j. sphinx | o. titans | t. trident |

- _____ where burnt offerings are made
- _____ disability that causes difficulty focusing
- _____ longest or shortest day of the year; midpoint
- _____ leave alone and without help
- _____ half man, half goat; associated with nature
- _____ where spears, shields, swords, etc., are kept
- _____ leaves of a sacred tree; symbol of victory and honor
- _____ disability that makes letters and numbers appear to be switched
- _____ outdoor gathering place; an open outdoor shelter
- _____ having to do with the heavens or the gods
- _____ large coffin
- _____ a three-dimension image made of light
- _____ one-eyed giant gifted in mimicry and mechanical pursuits
- _____ ancient Greek coin
- _____ mythical monster with the head of a woman and the body of a lion
- _____ food of the gods
- _____ symbol of Poseidon
- _____ source of prophecies
- _____ powerful supernatural beings; in Greek myth, ruled before the Olympians
- _____ symbol of Hermes and medicine

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Identify the characters described below:

- _____ 1. Keeps killer sheep
- _____ 2. Sister is a whirlpool
- _____ 3. Cooked own children
- _____ 4. Share an eye
- _____ 5. Spits poison
- _____ 6. Confederate ghost ship
- _____ 7. Where Annabeth once fought a Cyclops
- _____ 8. Can't drown
- _____ 9. Brings things to life
- _____ 10. Thinks men are pigs
- _____ 11. Blackbeard's ship
- _____ 12. Daughter of Zeus
- _____ 13. Luke's dad
- _____ 14. Where Tyson works
- _____ 15. Try to eat stray campers

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| a. harpies | e. Tantalus | i. <i>Queen Anne's Revenge</i> | m. hydra |
| b. Thalia | f. Polyphemus | j. forges | n. Circe |
| c. Golden Fleece | g. Gray sisters | k. Percy | o. Hermes |
| d. C.S.S. <i>Birmingham</i> | h. Brooklyn | l. Scylla | |

Part II: Quotation identification (20 points)

Beside each quotation, place the name of the speaker and the person being addressed.

- _____ 1a. "He's a Cyclops. ... They work the forges of the gods. They have to be immune to fire. That's what I was trying to tell you."
_____ 1b.
- _____ 2a. "You must've done something really horrible when you were alive. ... What was it?"
_____ 2b.
- _____ 3a. "Look, this bridal dress is the only thing keeping me alive. He thinks I smell good, but I told him it was just goat-scented perfume."
_____ 3b.
- _____ 4a. "The harpies will be enforcing curfew from now on, and they are always hungry!"
_____ 4b.
- _____ 5a. "You asked me for this quest, girl. If you let that slimeball Jackson kid steal it from you—."
_____ 5b.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Tantalus was a hero of ancient Greece.
- _____ 2. Odysseus was the original "Nobody."
- _____ 3. Kronos is Luke's father.

- _____ 4. Annabeth invites Tyson into Camp Half-Blood.
- _____ 5. Tyson gets along well with Hephaestus' kids.
- _____ 6. Polyphemus thinks he has defeated Percy and his friends.
- _____ 7. The Party Ponies are hippocampi.
- _____ 8. Percy reveals the poisoner's identity via Iris message.
- _____ 9. Thalia is revived by the power of the Golden Fleece.
- _____ 10. Percy returns the Fleece to Camp Half-Blood just in time.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Discuss the theme of family in *The Sea of Monsters*. Show how this theme is developed throughout the novel. What appears to be Riordan's definition of "family"?
2. Discuss *The Sea of Monsters* as a coming-of-age novel. How do Percy and Annabeth's experiences—battling both external monsters and the internal monsters of their own prejudices and limitations—change them and cause them to grow?
3. Discuss the theme of revenge and how it affects Percy, Annabeth, Luke, and other characters.
4. Discuss Percy's interactions with Clarisse during the course of the novel. How does his relationship with Clarisse, who has been his enemy, evolve during the quest? How does his view of Clarisse, and her view of him, change?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select an answer to complete each statement below.

- _____ 1. Percy is the son of
a. Osiris.
b. Zeus.
c. Chiron.
d. Poseidon.
- _____ 2. It is dangerous for Percy to
a. fly.
b. take vitamins.
c. work with Clarisse.
d. sail.
- _____ 3. Annabeth has a problem with
a. Sirens.
b. Harpies.
c. Cyclopes.
d. Confederate ghosts.
- _____ 4. Grover is searching for
a. The Golden Fleece.
b. The god Pan.
c. Enchiladas.
d. His lost family members.
- _____ 5. The Fleece is returned to Camp Half-Blood by
a. Percy.
b. Annabeth.
c. Grover.
d. Clarisse.
- _____ 6. The original "Nobody" was
a. Hercules
b. Odysseus
c. Annabeth
d. Grover
- _____ 7. Luke tries to frame
a. Tantalus
b. Grover
c. Dionysus
d. Chiron
- _____ 8. Polyphemus
a. is killed by the heroes.
b. suffers a crushing defeat.
c. believes he has won.
d. vows to follow Percy and his friends.
- _____ 9. The Party Ponies
a. are hippocampi.
b. are Chiron's cousins.
c. are fierce warriors.
d. both B and C.
- _____ 10. Hermes
a. blames Percy for failing to sway Luke.
b. gives up on Luke after Percy's quest.
c. refuses to give up on his son.
d. decides to put Luke under house arrest.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Cyclopes are the children of nature spirits and the god Hermes.
- _____ 2. Polyphemus tries to marry Grover.
- _____ 3. Circe thinks men are "pigs."
- _____ 4. Annabeth's fatal flaw is impetuosity.
- _____ 5. Percy's quest is approved by Tantalus.
- _____ 6. Percy was an answer to Tyson's prayers to Poseidon.
- _____ 7. Chiron's parentage causes him problems at camp.
- _____ 8. Thalia's resurrection causes immediate celebration.
- _____ 9. Hermes is indifferent to Luke.
- _____ 10. George and Martha are snakes on a caduceus.

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in a name or term which completes each of these statements.

1. At Meriwether Prep, Percy and Tyson are attacked during dodge ball by the school bully and some _____ giants.
2. Tyson got the scars on his back from a _____ on Seventy-Second Street in New York.
3. Percy's magical sword is made of celestial bronze and named _____.

4. In an act of mercy on his daughter, Zeus turned Thalia into a _____ after she was mortally wounded defending Annabeth and Luke.
5. The prophecy states that a demigod child of one of the _____ will decide the fate of Olympus.
6. The Big Three are the three most powerful Olympians, and are also brothers. They include Poseidon, Zeus, and _____.
7. Luke tries to recruit disgruntled half-bloods to serve _____ in his plot to overthrow the Olympians.
8. In ancient times, Zeus and his brothers overthrew Kronos, whom they tore to pieces and threw into the deepest pit in _____. However, since he was immortal, he didn't die.
9. One of Circe's victims is Edward Teach, better known as _____, whom Annabeth recognizes as a son of Ares.
10. Clarisse explains that she got the *C.S.S. Birmingham*, a Confederate ghost ship, because the losers in all wars owe a tribute to her father, _____.

Big Three
Riptide

Hades
Laistrygonian

Kronos
Blackbeard

Ares
Tartarus

sphinx
pine tree

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. The Mist creates illusions to satisfy the expectations of mortals, supplying comforting explanations for strange events, and shielding them—and half-bloods—from the consequences of dangerous knowledge. Is this always a good thing for Percy and his friends? Cite instances where the Mist appears to either help or hinder the young half-bloods. Is manipulating the Mist to shield the world of Olympus always the right thing to do? Why or why not?
2. What role does the setting play in the story? Why is the setting so important in the novel?
3. What is the novel's primary theme or message about life?
4. What function does Luke serve in the novel? Explain.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 11. s |
| 2. a | 12. m |
| 3. e | 13. q |
| 4. k | 14. c |
| 5. n | 15. j |
| 6. p | 16. f |
| 7. r | 17. t |
| 8. h | 18. d |
| 9. i | 19. o |
| 10. l | 20. g |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- f
- l
- e
- g
- m
- d
- h
- k
- c
- n
- i
- b
- o
- j
- a

Part II: Quotation Identification (10 points)

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1a. Annabeth | b. Percy |
| 2a. Percy | b. Tantalus |
| 3a. Grover | b. Percy |
| 4a. Tantalus | b. campers |
| 5a. Ares | b. Clarisse |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- F
- T
- F
- T
- T
- T
- F
- T

- T
- F

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- d
- a
- c
- b
- d
- b
- d
- c
- d
- c

Part II: True/False (20 points)

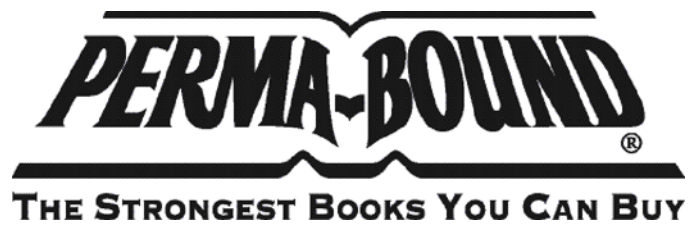
- F
- T
- T
- F
- F
- T
- T
- F
- F
- T

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- Laistrygonian
- Sphinx
- Riptide
- Pine tree
- Big Three
- Hades
- Kronos
- Tartarus
- Blackbeard
- Ares

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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