



THE NEW YORK TIMES #1 BEST-SELLING SERIES

RICK RIORDAN

PERCY JACKSON
AND THE OLYMPIANS



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION



PRAISE FOR
PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS

BOOK ONE
THE LIGHTNING THIEF

“Perfectly paced, with electrifying moments chasing each other like heartbeats.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

A *New York Times* Notable Book of 2005

A *Child Magazine* Best Book of the Year

A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year

BOOK TWO
THE SEA OF MONSTERS

★ “In a feat worthy of his heroic subjects, Riordan crafts a sequel stronger than his compelling debut.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

A *Child Magazine* Best Book of the Year

BOOK THREE
THE TITAN’S CURSE

★ “This third in the Olympians series makes the Greek myths come alive . . . the contests between the gods will have readers wondering how literature can be this fun.”—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

A *USA Today* National Best Seller

BOOK FOUR
THE BATTLE OF THE LABYRINTH

★ “Look no further for the next Harry Potter; meet Percy Jackson, as legions of fans already have.”—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

BOOK FIVE
THE LAST OLYMPIAN

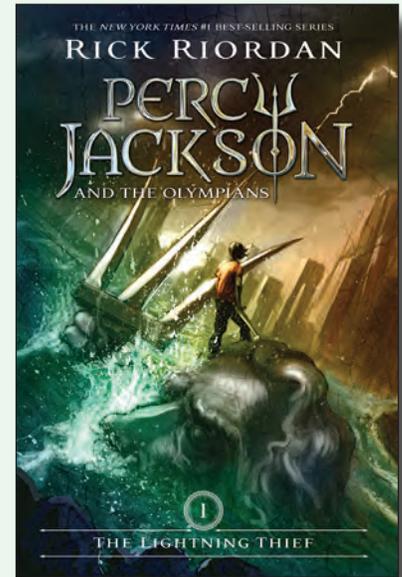
★ [A] winning combination of high-voltage adventure and crackling wit.”
—*Booklist* (starred review)

THE LIGHTNING THIEF

BOOK ONE

ABOUT THE BOOK

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



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

- 1 Percy says, “Mr. Brunner expected me to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact I have dyslexia and attention deficit disorder and I had never made above a C— in my life. No—he didn’t expect me to be *as good*. He expected me to be *better*.” What do you think of Mr. Brunner as a teacher?
- 2 When describing his mother, Percy says, “She’s the best person in the world, which just proves my theory that the best people have the rottenest luck.” How does this apply to Percy’s mom? Is this theory true in life? In the Greek myths?
- 3 Percy gets exasperated with his mother because she puts up with Smelly Gabe, yet he is proud of her because “she did have a rebellious streak, like me.” Do you find Sally Jackson a strong character? Does she stand up for herself? For her son?
- 4 Percy’s first encounter with an Olympian god is Mr. D, Dionysus. Initially, Percy has a hard time believing that Mr. D is immortal. What is your reaction to the way Dionysus is portrayed in the book? The Greek gods have very human traits—would this make them easier or harder to believe in?
- 5 Annabeth is the daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare. Look at some of the myths about Athena, including the stories of Arachne, Medusa, and the founding of Athens. How is Annabeth like her mother? Does anything about Annabeth’s character strike you as *unlike* Athena?
- 6 After Percy learns he is a half-blood, he wonders who his own father is. He also learns that some half-bloods never find out. He says, “I thought about some of the kids I’d seen in the Hermes cabin—teenagers who looked sullen and depressed, as if they were waiting for a call that would never come. I’d known kids like that at Yancy Academy, shuffled off to boarding school by rich parents who didn’t have the time to deal with them. But gods should behave better.” How would you feel if you were in Percy’s place? Would it be easier to believe your father was dead, or to know that he was alive but not communicating with you?

- 7 When Percy finally learns the truth, that he is the son of Poseidon, are you surprised? What hints are dropped before the revelation? How does Percy's personality fit, and not fit, the god Poseidon?
- 8 The Lotus Casino in Las Vegas is a modern-day version of the land of the Lotus Eaters, which Odysseus visited on his way back from Troy. Read the original version from *The Odyssey*. How do the two accounts differ? Is the danger Odysseus faced similar to the danger faced by Percy and his friends? Is society today more dominated by "Lotus Eaters"?
- 9 How does the last line of the prophecy—*you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end*—come true? What do you think of this ending? Did Percy make the right choice? What would you have done in his place?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- 1 *The Gods of Olympus*. Before reading the book, have students write down things they know about Greek mythology. Once they're done, have them work with a partner to compare notes. This works well as a timed activity. Make it a competition to see who can get the most, with their partner, in two to five minutes. Stress that it is okay to be wrong on this activity—students are simply trying to jog their memory as much as possible.
- 2 *Pick an Immortal Parent*. Remind students that the gods frequently had children with mortals. Ask them to research which god or goddess they would most like to be related to. For ideas, visit www.theoi.com. Students should write down their top three choices and explain each one.
- 3 *The Battle with the Titans*. Read an account of the Titanomachy, the war between the gods and Titans, from a Greek mythology book or website. Compare this to the version Percy gives Mr. Brunner in chapter I. Make a list of any differences between the two versions. Make a list of details Percy forgot to include.
- 4 *Character Collage*. This activity can either be done on paper or with digital tools. Ask students to make a list of characters they've met in the book so far. These include: Percy, Grover, Nancy Bobofit, Mrs. Dodds, Mr. Brunner, Smelly Gabe, and Sally Jackson. Have them search and cut out (or copy on a computer) photos of people that they think are close to how these characters would appear.

Paste these onto a large piece of a paper (or into PowerPoint, iMovie, or another digital program). Students should then label each character and find a quote about them from the book—either a description of the character or something they said. This line should be written underneath each character's picture. This activity is good for keeping the characters straight and can be a lot of fun when students start comparing their visualizations of the different characters.

- 5 *Make a Graphic*. A graphic is an illustrated representation of one chapter. You can do this on regular printer paper, or larger art paper. It can be done individually or with a partner. A graphic has the following components:
 - a. A picture in the middle that is a symbol for the chapter. It can be an important object mentioned in the chapter—the bus, for instance, or a pair of scissors.

- b. At least three colors used to color the object. Each color has to represent something, and you must write why you chose that color. For instance, “Red stands for Percy’s anger at being expelled.”
- c. On each corner of the page, pick a quote from the chapter and copy it. The quote can be any one-to-two-line section that you think is significant or tells something revealing about one of the characters. After each quote, explain in a sentence what it means and why you picked it.
- d. Put the title of the chapter and your name at the top.

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

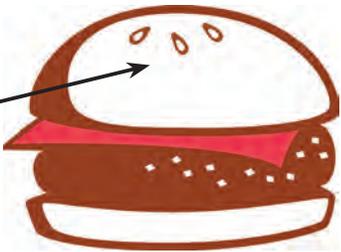
A Sample Graphic *(this is for chapter one; yours will be for another chapter)*

GRAPHIC FOR “I ACCIDENTLY VAPORIZE MY PRE-ALGEBRA TEACHER”

BY I. B. STUDENT

Quote 3

Quote 4



White stands for
Grover’s fear of
Mrs. Dodd

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

Red stands for Percy’s anger at Nancy

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

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

Quote 2

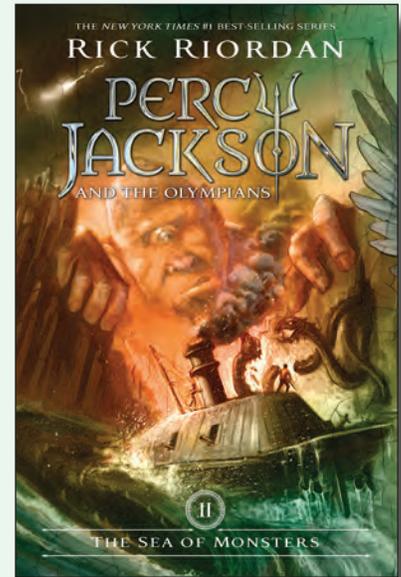
THE SEA OF MONSTERS

BOOK TWO

ABOUT THE BOOK

Percy Jackson's seventh-grade year has been surprisingly quiet. Not a single monster has set foot on his New York prep-school campus. But when an innocent game of dodgeball among Percy and his classmates turns into a death match against an ugly gang of cannibal giants, things get . . . well, ugly. And the unexpected arrival of Percy's friend Annabeth brings more bad news: the magical borders that protect Camp Half-Blood have been poisoned by a mysterious enemy, and unless a cure is found, the only safe haven for demigods will be destroyed.

In this fresh, funny, and action-packed follow-up to *The Lightning Thief*, Percy and his friends must journey into the Sea of Monsters to save their camp. But first, Percy will discover a stunning new secret about his family—one that makes him wonder whether being claimed as Poseidon's son is an honor or a curse.



PRE-READING

Did you read *The Lightning Thief*? Do you remember how it ended? What did Percy learn during his last quest? What do you think he will have to face in this novel? Does the title give you any clues? Do you think he will be successful?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe Percy Jackson. Why must he change schools each year? What problems does he have in his academic life? How do these same qualities help him as a demigod? What are his unique skills and abilities? What are his weaknesses?
- 2 What is Percy's relationship to Grover? Why is he willing to risk everything to rescue him? Would you do the same for a friend? What does this tell us about Percy's character? Do you think he would be as brave if he didn't know who his father was? Why or why not?
- 3 How is Tyson treated at Meriwether Prep? Why? How is he different? Is he treated better at camp? Do his classmates' pre-conceived opinions have any validity? Is this different from any other kind of prejudice? Why or why not? How is his parentage a source of embarrassment for Percy?
- 4 Describe the various battles in the novel. Which one did you find the most exciting? Why? Which monster had the best description? Whose powers impressed you most? Why? Which tools described would you most like to have at your disposal?
- 5 Why is the camp in danger? How had it been protected before? Could the magic be restored? What would need to be done to insure the safety of the half-bloods? Who was a nemesis to the camp? Why? What do they hope to accomplish?

- 6 What is a quest? Why is Clarisse given one instead of Percy? Who helps Percy begin his quest without permission? Why? How do the goals of that god and Percy's conflict? How is the conflict resolved? Who else joins him on his quest? What do they learn from each other?
- 7 Although Tyson has some definite drawbacks to his personality and appearance, he also has special skills and abilities. What are they? How does he overcome what others think of him? Is his finest ability those things he can create with his hands or his loyalty? If you could only have one these which would you choose? How does he surprise everyone in the novel?
- 8 The novel is full of interesting details that bring both characters and settings to life. What details were your favorites? Why? Which mythical creature described in the book would you least like to meet in person? Why? Have you ever heard of any of these creatures before? Were you surprised to learn that they were from Greek mythology?
- 9 What is Chiron's prophecy? Why do the gods not want Percy to know about it? How can knowing the prophecy affect his choices? Would you want to know? Why or why not? How does the prophecy protect him from Kronos and the other gods? Why won't they just kill him and foil the prophecy?
- 10 Who is Luke? What are his plans? What do you think he will try to do in the next novel in the series? Do you think our heroes will be able to stop him? Will Kronos continue to gain power? In the end, who else becomes part of the prophecy? Why?
- 11 Describe the scene where Annabeth and Percy encounter the Sirens. What are they? What do they reveal about someone? What does Annabeth learn about herself? What do you think Percy would learn? What do you think would be revealed to you? What is hubris?
- 12 Does Percy's story encourage you to study the original Greek myths? Why or why not? Why do you think the myths and the characters within them have survived through the millennia? What can writers today still learn from these stories?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Visualizing

While reading a chapter, highlight (or use sticky note flags) words or phrases that really helped you get a picture in your mind of what was happening in the story. In at least two places create predictions of what you think might happen later on in the story, based on what you've just read.

Art

Create a 3D scene from the story. You can use any materials you like, but try to get as many details from the scene incorporated into your art.

Music

Choose classical music that would work as a background to a particular battle scene in the story. In a short journal explain why you picked this piece.

Social Studies

Create a chart which organizes the following information: character's name, child of whom, special powers, tools of choice, goal, and affiliation (Kronos or Olympus).

THE TITAN'S CURSE

BOOK THREE

ABOUT THE BOOK

When Percy Jackson gets an urgent distress call from his friend Grover, he immediately prepares for battle. He knows he will need his powerful demigod allies, Annabeth and Thalia, at his side, his trusty bronze sword, Riptide, and . . . a ride from his mom.

The demigods rush to the rescue, to find that Grover has made an important discovery: two powerful half-bloods whose parentage is unknown. But that's not all that awaits them. The Titan lord Kronos has devised his most treacherous plot yet, and the young heroes have just fallen prey.

They're not the only ones in danger. An ancient monster has arisen—one rumored to be so powerful it could destroy Olympus—and Artemis, the only goddess who might know how to track it, is missing. Now Percy and his friends, along with the Hunters of Artemis, have only a week to find the kidnapped goddess and solve the mystery of the monster she was hunting.

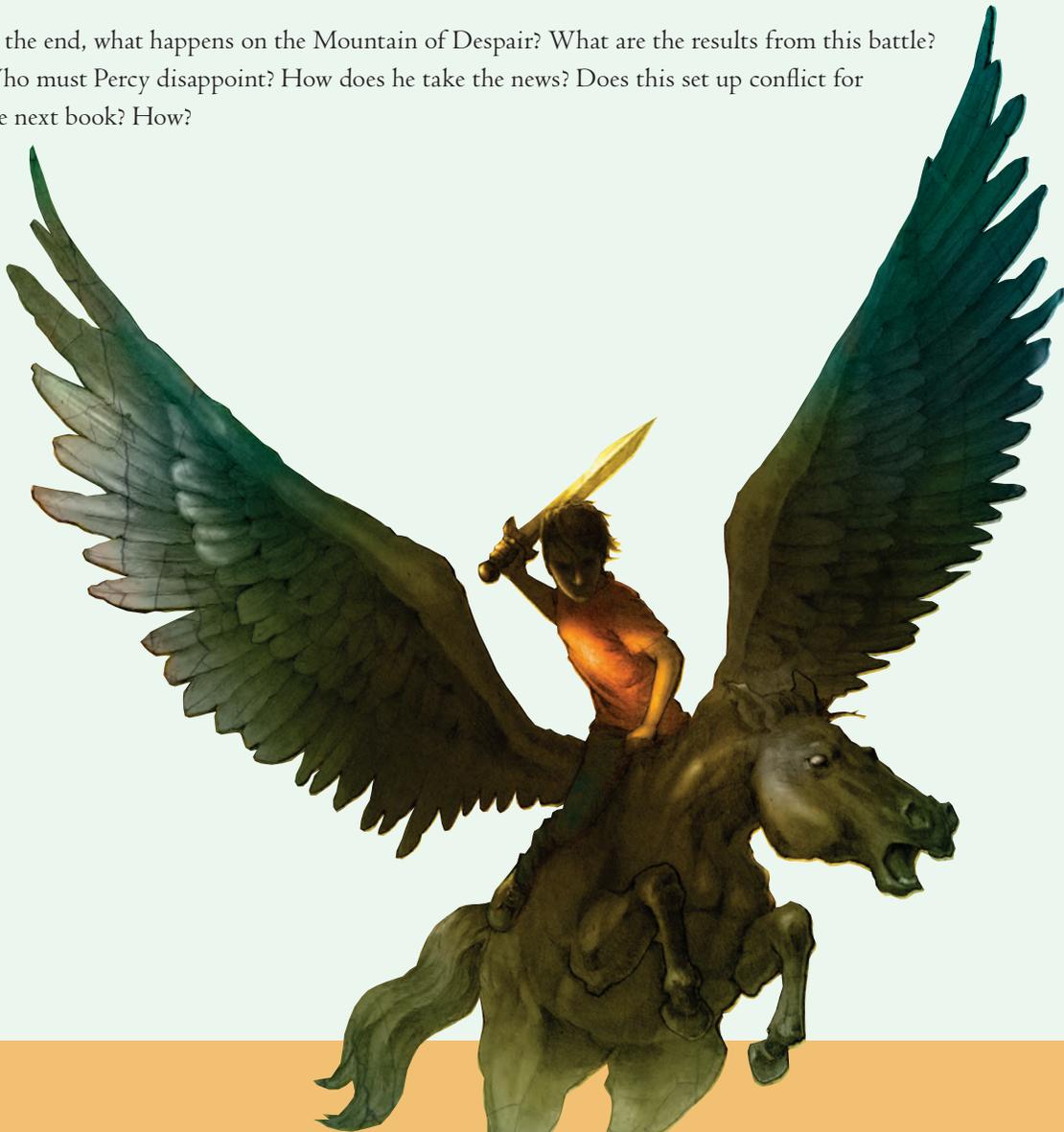
Along the way, they must face their most dangerous challenge yet: the chilling prophecy of *The Titan's Curse*.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Explain how the heroes of the story all come together at the military academy, Westover Hall. What is the result of this episode and how does it set up Percy's quest for the whole novel? Which goddess is involved in the battle?
- 2 Why does Bianca make the choice to become a huntress of Artemis? Do you know anyone who would be willing to make this choice? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this decision?
- 3 Who is in charge of Camp Half-Blood? Why was he sent there? Describe the location and purpose of the camp.
- 4 Why are Percy's nightmares an important aspect of the story? What two things do they reveal? Would you like to receive information this way; would you be able to trust its meaning?
- 5 Explain in your own words the prophecy of the Oracle. Make predictions about who you think will succumb to the threats listed. Do you think the heroes completely understand the prophecy or not?
- 6 How does Percy join the quest? Is he originally supposed to be on it? Why not? What promise does Nico exact from Percy before he leaves on the quest?
- 7 What trap does Artemis fall into because of her weakness? What flaw or weakness would someone be able to exploit in you? Are all people fatally flawed?

- 8 Describe the major events in Washington, D.C. With whom and where do they battle? What is Luke's goal? How does it conflict with Percy's? What reward does Percy take away from this battle?
- 9 Which monsters in the novel are your favorites? Which one would frighten you the most? Why? What types of transportation do the heroes use in this novel? Which one would be your favorite way to get around?
- 10 What happens in the junkyard? Would you be willing to sacrifice your own life to save a friend? How did she make this decision? What brave thing did she do?
- 11 While the Olympians offer guidance and occasionally a cool weapon, they do not get directly involved in the quests of mere mortals. Why? What would happen if the gods and goddesses were involved in these battles?
- 12 How was Thalia tempted by power? Do you think most people could resist ultimate power or not? Why?
- 13 Which heroes in the Greek myths fail to give credit to the women who helped them? Do you think Percy would do something similar? What does he do that proves he is different from the demigods that came before him?
- 14 Who is the General? To whom is he related? How does this relationship prove fateful for one of the quest's heroes? What is the General's burden? What two people carry it for a time?
- 15 In the end, what happens on the Mountain of Despair? What are the results from this battle? Who must Percy disappoint? How does he take the news? Does this set up conflict for the next book? How?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Music

Create an playlist for Percy and his hero friends that will inspire them throughout the book. In a short journal explain why you chose particular songs to represent specific scenes or battles in the story.

Social Studies

Read at least two different versions of a single Greek myth (Persephone and Demeter for example), then, create a Venn diagram to compare the details of the two stories.

Or: Using a map of the United States trace the time progression of the book and mark major events from the plot of *The Titan's Curse*.

Science

Dr. Chase, Annabeth's mortal father, reconfigured celestial bronze into bullets. Research the properties of one element off the periodic table of the elements and then design a weapon for Percy, Thalia, Annabeth, or Grover. What qualities of the element would be best exploited for its use? Would it have any weaknesses?

Or: Many of the Greek myth monsters are combinations of real animals and mythical ones. These combined creatures make ferocious opponents! Design your own Greek myth monster by combining an actual animal with qualities of a mythical beast. Be sure to turn in both your description and an illustration of your beast.

Art

Choose your favorite Olympian and design the perfect home for them. What qualities would be necessary to ensure your god or goddesses ultimate comfort? What requirements would be necessary to meet their massive appetite for wine, say, or their knack for starting trouble? You can use whatever materials you'd like to bring this project to life, but be as detailed as possible.

Language Arts

Create a prediction guide chart as you read *The Titan's Curse*. Each prediction should be based on facts gleaned from the story, your knowledge of story structure, and your understanding of the Greek myths. Use the following headings: Chapter, Major Events, Predictions. On the back write a prediction for the next book in the Percy Jackson series.



THE BATTLE OF THE LABYRINTH

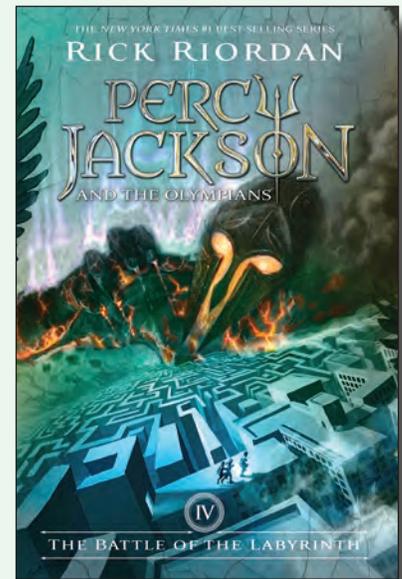
BOOK FOUR

ABOUT THE BOOK

Percy Jackson isn't expecting freshman orientation to be any fun. But when a mysterious mortal acquaintance appears on campus, followed by demon cheerleaders, things quickly move from bad to worse.

In this latest installment of the blockbuster series, time is running out as war between the Olympians and the evil Titan lord Kronos draws near. Even the safe haven of Camp Half-Blood grows more vulnerable by the minute as Kronos's army prepares to invade its once impenetrable borders.

To stop the invasion, Percy and his demigod friends must set out on a quest through the Labyrinth—a sprawling underground world with stunning surprises at every turn. Full of humor and heart-pounding action, this latest book promises to be their most thrilling adventure yet.



PRE-READING

Where did our heroes leave off in *The Titan's Curse*? What would you tell someone about the Percy Jackson series if you wanted to them to check it out?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe what happens at Percy's new school. How does his mom complicate things? Why does he admit his true identity to Rachel?
- 2 Summarize important facts that a reader of the series needs to know in order to understand it. Which details from the Greek myths are your favorites in the story?
- 3 Why do you think Annabeth is so worried about the prophecy? Why is she leading this quest into the Labyrinth? Would you be willing to go? Why or why not?
- 4 What major obstacles (monsters, etc.) do the heroes face inside the Labyrinth? Which is the most frightening to you? Who must they find on their journey? Why?
- 5 How does the setting of this adventure differ from the other Percy Jackson books? Why is setting such an important element to the story? Why do you think Riordan plays with the location of Olympus and other ancient locales? Which setting is your favorite from the Percy Jackson series? Why?
- 6 Why do you think the myth of Icarus and Daedalus is included in the novel? How does it show us what Daedalus is capable of? In the end, does Daedalus change the most or does Percy?

- 7 What offer does Percy make with Geryon? How is he able to complete the task? Why is his mission even harder than Heracles's?
- 8 Grover meets his hero, Pan. How does this meeting go differently than he had planned? What does he learn? Does this part of the story make any connections for you with the environmental movement or being green? How is Grover changed by the experience? When does it come into play?
- 9 Explain what the Labyrinth is, exactly. Why is it so difficult? What tools help to navigate it?
- 10 In chapter ten, the heroes run into the Sphinx who has dropped her traditional riddles for a list of inane facts which Annabeth says are “an insult to her intelligence.” How is Riordan making a commentary on high-stakes testing in public schools with this scene? Is he poking fun?
- 11 Describe how Percy ends up on Ogygia. Who does he meet? Why is it a torture for her to be at that amazing location? Would you stay or go? Why?
- 12 Why does Rachel's help become necessary to guide them through the Labyrinth? What do they run into on the way? How do the heroes escape? Would you trust this invention, or not?
- 13 How does Daedalus try to cheat death? Have there been any other inventions that have the same goal?
- 14 What happens to Camp Half-Blood? Do you think the heroes will face even more challenges with Kronos's army? What do you think will happen in the next story?
- 15 Which book in the series is your favorite so far? Why? What do you think are the qualities of a good series? Which character would you like to eat lunch with and interview for the school newspaper? Why?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Language Arts

Write a letter to Percy Jackson about his adventures. Explain which part of his story is your favorite and why. Think of important questions you'd like to ask him too!

Reading

Read another version of Icarus and Daedalus, or a myth with the Sphinx, and then create a Venn diagram comparing the story featuring these characters in Riordan's books to a more traditional portrait.

Art

Design a wanted poster for one of the villains or monsters in the story. Be sure to include details about their appearance and their last known location!

Science

Study the elements of flight. What does it take to build a contraption that can actually stay aloft? Build the perfect paper airplane based on what you learn, and have a contest to see who can apply that knowledge best.

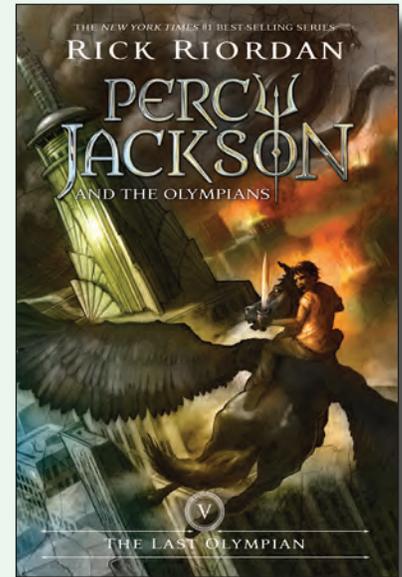
THE LAST OLYMPIAN

BOOK FIVE

ABOUT THE BOOK

All year the half-bloods have been preparing for battle against the Titans, knowing the odds of victory are grim. Kronos's army is stronger than ever, and with every god and half-blood he recruits, the evil Titan's power only grows.

While the Olympians struggle to contain the rampaging monster Typhon, Kronos begins his advance on New York City, where Mount Olympus stands virtually unguarded. Now it's up to Percy Jackson and an army of young demigods to stop the Lord of Time. In this momentous final book in the *New York Times* best-selling Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, the long-awaited prophecy surrounding Percy's sixteenth birthday unfolds. And as the battle for Western civilization rages on the streets of Manhattan, Percy faces a terrifying suspicion that he may be fighting against his own fate.



PRE-READING

Where did our heroes leave off in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*? What would you tell someone about the Percy Jackson series if you wanted them to check it out?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 “All I knew was that I was supposed to make a decision that would decide the fate of the world—but no pressure.” How would you feel about having this prophecy hang over your head? Would you try to avoid decisions or go boldly into them?
- 2 Would you want to visit Poseidon's palace? What would be the best part of being immortal? What would be the worst? What are the challenges and rewards of being a half-blood?
- 3 Discuss the major conflicts Percy faces in the novel. Which ones seem insurmountable? How does he handle the pressure? Where do you think he should focus his skills and resources?
- 4 Why do you think Percy needed to meet Hestia and get his mom's blessing? Percy is putting his trust in Nico, son of Hades. Do you think this is a wise idea? How do you know whom to trust?
- 5 Why does Percy bathe in the River Styx? How does he keep his mortality intact? What is your Achilles heel? Who would you trust with the knowledge of your point of vulnerability? What does this tell us about Percy's relationship with Annabeth?
- 6 Hestia tells Percy that he must understand the family of his enemy if he is to defeat him. Do you agree with this? Why would this be important?

- 7 As Percy prepares for battle with Kronos he takes stock of his assets and weaknesses. What powers, weapons, and creatures (Mrs. O’Leary, perhaps) would you most like to have on your side for a mythic battle for Mount Olympus?
- 8 Describe the battle for the Williamsburg Bridge. Which part was most exciting? How does Annabeth once again prove her loyalty to Percy? Do you have someone in your life that would take the knife for you?
- 9 Why had Hades cursed the Oracle of Delphi? Do you blame him? Why does he not blame Zeus himself? Do you think Percy should tell Nico what happened to his mother, or not?
- 10 Why do you think Prometheus offers Pandora’s *pitbos* to our hero? Do you think Percy would ever open it? Would you be able to leave it closed? What would happen if he did open it?
- 11 What was May Castellan’s fate? If you were given the opportunity to see the future, would you take it? Would you accept a quest from the oracle?
- 12 Dionysus explains to Percy that if Olympus fails . . . “Art, law, wine tastings, music, video games, silk shirts, black velvet paintings—all the things that make life worth living will disappear.” What would be on your list? Why do the gods need humans and heroes?
- 13 Why did Silena Beauregard lead the Ares cabin into battle with the drakon? What was the result? How did she set things right by her willingness to join the fray? How does Clarisse take the discovery?
- 14 Describe Percy’s plan for the final battle between Kronos and the half-bloods. How does Poseidon help? What other gods come to help in the battle? In the end, what is the choice that the prophecy spoke of? Who is the hero?
- 15 How do the Olympians reward Percy, Annabeth, Grover, and the other half-blood heroes for their service? What is the fate of Rachel? Who do you think gets the best reward? Why doesn’t Percy accept his? Would you?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Reading

As you read, create a cause-and-effect graphic organizer based on the choices that characters make along the path to the final battle. Use this as a springboard to your discussions.

Writing

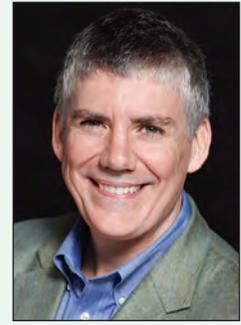
Riordan set up a new quest with Rachel’s first prophecy. Write the first battle the seven half-bloods face.

Art

Draw, paint, or sculpt one of the monsters that Percy and his comrades face during the battle for Mount Olympus based on the description from the book and your excellent imagination.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RICK RIORDAN (www.rickriordan.com) is the author of five *New York Times* #1 best-selling series with millions of copies sold throughout the world: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, the *Kane Chronicles*, the *Heroes of Olympus*, the *Trials of Apollo*, and *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard*. His collections of Greek myths, *Percy Jackson's Greek Gods* and *Percy Jackson's Greek Heroes*, were *New York Times* #1 best sellers as well. His novels for adults include the hugely popular *Tres Navarre* series, winner of the top three awards in the mystery genre. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts, with his wife and two sons.



Michael Frost

A TALK WITH RICK RIORDAN

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

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

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

That was a hard decision. I love teaching. I love working with kids. After I finished the first *Percy Jackson* book, I didn't think I'd be able to keep writing a book a year and do a good job in the classroom, so I made the reluctant decision to leave teaching. The good part is I still get to work with kids as a children's author. Hopefully, I'll be able to get even more kids interested in reading Greek mythology.

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

My nine-year-old son was the first one to hear the story, but I also wanted to be sure it would interest older kids. I picked a few of my sixth, seventh, and eighth graders and asked them if they'd be willing to "test drive" the novel. I was nervous! I'm used to showing my work to adults, but I had no idea if kids would like *Percy*. I finally understood what it must be like for them, turning in an essay to me and waiting to get their grades back! Fortunately for me, the kids loved the book.

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

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

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

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

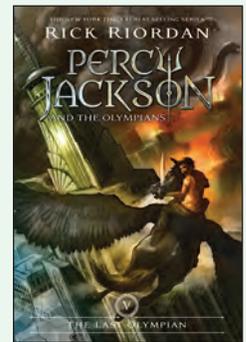
Finally, don't get discouraged! Rejection is a part of writing, and it hurts. The trick is to keep at it. Wallpaper your room with rejection notes, if you want, but don't give up.

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website at tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of guides to children's and YA literature.

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