



Book Club Set

The Lightning Thief

By Rick Riordan

About the Author

Rick Riordan is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of over twenty novels for young readers, including the Percy Jackson series.

For fifteen years, Rick taught English and history at public and private middle schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Texas. While teaching in San Antonio, Saint Mary's Hall honored him with the school's first Master Teacher Award.

While teaching full time, Riordan began writing mystery novels for grownups. His Tres Navarre series went on to win the top three national awards in the mystery genre – the Edgar, the Anthony and the Shamus. Riordan turned to children's fiction when he started *The Lightning Thief* as a bedtime story for his oldest son.

Today, over 190 million copies of his books are in print worldwide, and rights have been sold into more than 37 countries. Rick and his wife Becky are both executive producers overseeing TV/film adaptations of his works including *Percy Jackson*, *the Kane Chronicles* and *Daughter of the Deep*.

Rick Riordan now writes full-time. He lives in Boston with his wife and two sons.

About the Book



Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is on the most dangerous quest of his life. With the help of a satyr and a daughter of Athena, Percy must journey across the United States to catch a thief who has stolen the original weapon of mass destruction — Zeus' master bolt. Along the way, he must face a host of mythological enemies determined to stop him. Most of all, he must come to terms with a father he has never known, and an Oracle that has warned him of betrayal by a friend.

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Discussion Questions



1. When describing his mother, Percy says, “She’s the best person in the world, which just proves my theory that the best people get the rottenest luck.” How does this apply to Percy’s mom? Is this theory true in life? In the Greek myths?
2. After Percy learns he is a half-blood, he wonders who his own father is. He also learns that some half-bloods never find out. He says, “I thought about some of the kids I’d seen in the Hermes cabin—teenagers who looked sullen and depressed, like they were waiting for a call that would never come. I’d known kids like that at Yancy Academy, shuffled off to boarding school by rich parents who didn’t have the time to deal with them. But gods should behave better.” How would you feel if you were in Percy’s place? Would it be easier to believe your father was dead, or to know that he was alive but not communicating with you?
3. When Percy finally learns the truth that he is the son of Poseidon, are you surprised? What hints are dropped before the revelation? How does Percy’s personality fit/not fit the god Poseidon?
4. When describing the effects of Mist, Chiron says, “Remarkable, really, the lengths humans will go to fit things into their version of reality.” How is this true in the novel? In Greek mythology? In real life?
5. 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?
6. Does Percy seem like a pawn? Why or why not? If you were given Percy’s quest, would you undertake it or would you rebel?
7. In the end of the book, do you sympathize at all with Luke’s feelings of betrayal? How does his story act as a foil (a counterpoint) to Percy’s own?

Author Interview



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. For many years, I taught full-time and wrote a book a year in the Tres Navarre mystery series.

When I sold the Percy Jackson series to Disney Book Group, I realized that I'd now have to write two books a year to keep up with my deadlines - one adult book, and one children's book. I just didn't think I'd be able to keep up that pace 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 author. Hopefully, I'll be able to get more kids interested in reading mythology with my books than I ever did as a teacher.

Where did you get the idea for Percy Jackson?

My son Haley asked me to tell him some bedtime stories about the greek gods and heroes. I had taught Greek myths for many years at the middle school level, so I was glad to comply. When I ran out of myths, he was disappointed and asked me if I could make up something new with the same characters.

I had thought about it for a few minutes. Then I remembered a creative writing project I used to do with my sixth graders - I would let them create their own demigod hero, the son or daughter of any god they wanted, and have them describe a Greek-style quest for that hero. Off the top of my head, I made up Percy Jackson and told Haley all about his quest to recover Zeus' lightning bolt in modern day America. It took about three nights to tell the whole story, and when I was done, Haley told me I should write it out as a book.

I had a lot to do already, but somehow found the time to write the first Percy Jackson book over the next year. I just really enjoyed writing it. The story was such fun, and so different from my adult fiction, that I found myself spending a lot of time on it. Now, I'm sure glad I did!

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

Yes. Once my son heard the manuscript and said it was great, I wanted to be sure it would interest older kids - the middle school ages that I taught. 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, the kids really liked it. They had some good suggestions, too. They helped me pick the best title for the book. They also had some good ideas on how Percy should act if he had ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). One student helped me refine the way Percy's sword, Anaklusmos, worked.

I am very glad I showed the novel to the kids first. After all, that's who it's written for.

Did you know you always wanted to be a writer? How did you get started?

I wrote a lot of short stories when I was younger, and even sent a few in (to get rejected). My very first rejection note was from Isaac Asimov Science Fiction Magazine in 1978. I was never serious about writing in college. I focused most of my creative energy on music, and was lead singer in a folk rock band, if you believe it.

After college, I became a teacher, and was quite happy with the idea of doing that for the rest of my life. However, I read a lot of mystery books in my spare time, and when

my wife and I moved to San Francisco, I started missing Texas. I decided, on a lark, that I would try writing a hard-boiled private eye novel set in my hometown of San Antonio. Ten months later, Big Red Tequila was finished.

The strange thing is, I had a feeling that Big Red Tequila was going to get published. It just felt different than anything else I'd written, because the novel had practically forced me to write it. The idea took me by the throat and wouldn't let me go until the manuscript was done.

I tell aspiring writers that you have to find what you must write. When you find it, you will know, because the subject matter won't let you go. It's not enough to write simply because you think it would be neat to be published. You have to be compelled to write. If you're not, nothing else that you do matters.

For me, that meant getting away from home for a while and learning to appreciate what I knew, before I could follow the old axiom, "Write about what you know." Percy Jackson felt the same way Big Red Tequila did. Percy was a character who just insisted on springing to life.

The lightning thief deals with magic and the Greek gods. Are you worried about Censorship?

These stories are a part of our collective heritage. I certainly don't see the harm in learning mythology. In fact, I think you have to know myths to understand where our modern culture came from. It's part of being an educated member of society.

The Lightning Thief explores Greek Mythology in a modern setting, but it does so as a humorous work of fantasy. I'm certainly not interested in changing or contradicting anyone's religious beliefs.

My goal is to get kids interested in learning more about mythology. If censors want to challenge Percy Jackson on the grounds that it portrays Greek gods as real, they'll have to censor a good portion of the English curriculum in every state. Greek mythology is studied extensively from grades 1-8, not to mention the Iliad and the Odyssey in the upper grades. English literature draws heavily on Greek mythology. It always has - from Chaucer all the way to modern novels. Percy Jackson is part of that tradition. I hope it makes kids want to read - that's the most important thing!

As with any book, I would encourage parents to read Percy Jackson and decide for themselves whether it's right for their children. That takes time, I know, but it's the only way to make an informed decision.

Why did you choose to make Percy Jackson have ADHD and dyslexia?

When I was writing Percy Jackson, my own son was in the process of being tested for learning differences. He was having trouble reading, and some trouble focusing in the classroom. The teachers were wondering about ADHD and Dyslexia. He was frustrated about learning to read, and we had to explain to him that the testing was designed to help the teachers help him, not make him feel bad.

As a teacher, I've worked with lots of kids who have learning differences. I've participated in testing evaluations and made modifications in my classroom. But somehow, it's different when your child is going through the process. Eventually my son was enrolled in the Scottish Rite program, which caters to children with reading difficulties like Dyslexia. This helped a lot, but it wasn't an easy path.

While this was happening, I did a lot of reading about dyslexia and ADHD. I especially liked the books *Keeping a Head in School* and *Driven*. I was surprised to learn that ADHD and dyslexia frequently go together. The books also confirmed something I already knew: that dyslexic/ADHD kids are creative, "outside-the-box" thinkers. They have to be, because they don't see or solve problems the same way

other kids do. In school, unfortunately, they are sometimes written off as lazy, unmotivated, rude or even stupid. They aren't. If they can through their rough school years, they often go on to become very successful adults. Employers love them, because they come up with original, fresh ideas. Making Percy ADHD/dyslexia was my way of honoring the potential of all the kids I've known who have those conditions. It's not a bad thing to be different. Sometimes, it's the mark of being very, very talented. That's what Percy discovers about himself in the Lightning Thief.

As a nice 'happy ending', my son got a masters degree in higher education and now works in the accessibility office of a local university, because he wants to make sure he can help other people with learning differences get the accommodations they need to succeed. I'm very proud of him.

Do you see any of yourself in Percy Jackson?

Percy has my sense of humour. Like him, I was not always a good student in school. Percy is also based on many students I have taught in the past, and partly on my son's own struggle with ADHD/dyslexia.

Why do you think people, and children especially, are so drawn to fantasy stories?

Young readers especially like to escape reality and slip into a fantasy world. It's easier to read about people doing amazing things like casting spells and riding dragons than about people doing mundane things like going to school. Kids already know that life. It's nice to pretend you are someone else once in a while.

Now that you're writing children's series, will you continue to write adult books too?

Right now the children's books are keeping me very busy! Never say never, but I have no immediate plans to return to adult mysteries.

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Other Links and Resources



- Movie trailer Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R86InkfdboA>
- Movie trailer for movie #2 Percy Jackson Sea of Monsters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6aYjbpBm-E>
- Rick Riordan's Reading recommendations: <https://rickriordan.com/resource/ricks-reading-recommendations/>

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DATE: _____

BOOK CLUB: _____

BOOK TITLE: _____

As a group we rated this book:

1	2	3	4	5
Ugh!		It was OK...		Loved it!

Would we recommend this book to other book clubs?

Yes No Undecided

Why/why not?

Our discussion: