The Lightning Thief: Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book One

**OVERVIEW**

Percy Jackson is a good kid, but he can’t seem to focus on his schoolwork or control his temper. And lately, being away at boarding school is only getting worse — Percy could have sworn his pre-algebra teacher turned into a monster and tried to kill him. When Percy’s mom finds out, she knows it’s time that he knew the truth about where he came from, and that he go to the one place he’ll be safe. She sends Percy to Camp Half Blood, a summer camp for demigods (on Long Island), where he learns that the father he never knew is Poseidon, God of the Sea. Soon a mystery unfolds and together with his friends — one a satyr and the other the demigod daughter of Athena — Percy sets out on a quest across the United States to reach the gates of the Underworld (located in a recording studio in Hollywood) and prevent a catastrophic war between the gods.

**SUGGESTED GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS**

- Character Traits Worksheet
- Major Events Summary
- Venn Diagram
- Analysis of a Symbol
- KWL Chart

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

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.

**VOCABULARY**

- **Incinerate (verb):** to reduce to ashes
- **Vaporize (verb):** to turn into gas
- **Pulverize (verb):** to break down into dust or powder
- **Douse (verb):** to wet thoroughly
- **Wisp (adj.):** thin and weak
- **Ambrosia (noun):** the food and drink of the gods
- **Shard (noun):** a broken piece of a brittle artifact
- **Amphitheater (noun):** a large oval theater with tiered seats
- **Eon (noun):** the longest unit of geological time

**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED**

- Greek Mythology and the 12 Olympian Gods (see Thirteen Olympian Gods)
- What is a quest?
  - A quest is a long or arduous search for something
  - Complete a KWL Chart in order to determine student's level of understanding of a quest before the book.

**WRITING PROMPTS**

- Compare and Contrast the quest of the main character of Percy Jackson to the quest in the legend of Perseus in Greek mythology
- What is a hero’s journey? Describe how Percy’s quest relates to another important quest in history or literature.
Percy says, “Mr. Brunner expected me to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact I had dyslexia 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?

Percy has both dyslexia and ADHD. This makes things difficult for him at school. Describe a time when you have felt challenged by an assignment or school activity. Were you able to overcome it? Why or why not?

LITERARY DEVICES

Symbolism
• The lightning bolt of Zeus represents his individual power. Percy comes across many symbols in this book that represent his powers. What are these?
• The concept of games in this story is used to symbolize the violence, battle, and concept of a loser and winner in the hero’s quest.

Simile
“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.” (p.96)

Imagery
“Later in the evening, when the sparks from the campfire were curling into a starry sky, the conch horn blew again, and we all filed back to our cabins.” p. 106

Setting
Percy takes the reader on a quest from New York to Los Angeles, and all the points between the 2. The story takes place in the sky, the sea, and the underground.