



The Lightning Thief
Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it is necessary to be familiar with the Greek myths in order to enjoy this book?
2. 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?
3. After Percy learns he is a half-blood, he wonders who his own father is. 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?
4. How is Annabeth like her mother? Does anything about Annabeth’s character strike you as *unlike* Athena?
5. 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 or not fit the god Poseidon?
6. Chiron describes Western Civilization as “a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years.” He says the Greek gods are part of this, and move around as different nations become the central power of Western Civilization—Greece, Rome, Germany, France, England, the United States. What do you think of this idea? Is “the West” a clearly identifiable cultural force?
7. 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?
8. As the book progresses, we learn more about Annabeth’s family life, and her unhappy history with her father. How does this compare with Percy’s own family? How does this help the two half-bloods overcome their mutual distrust?
9. Read the modernized description of the underworld in Ch. 18 — What do you think of this portrayal of the afterlife? Do you think believing in paradise and punishment makes people more likely to do good deeds?
10. What do you think of Percy’s decision to leave his mother behind?
11. 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?

About The Author

Rick Riordan is the award-winning, bestselling author of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series and the creator of a new series The 39 Clues. For Rick Riordan (pronounced Ryer'-dan), a bedtime story shared with his oldest son was just the beginning of his journey into the world of children's books.

Already an award-winning author of mysteries for adults, Riordan, a former teacher, was asked by his son Haley to tell him some bedtime stories about the gods and heroes in Greek mythology. "I had taught Greek myths for many years at the middle school level, so I was glad to comply," says Riordan. "When I ran out of myths, (Haley) was disappointed and asked me if I could make up something new with the same characters."

At the time, Haley had just been diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia. Greek mythology was one of the only subjects that interested the then second-grader in school. Motivated by Haley's request, Riordan quickly came up with the character of Percy Jackson and told Haley all about "(Percy's) quest to recover Zeus's lightning bolt in modern-day America," says Riordan. "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."



Despite his busy schedule, Riordan managed to carve some time out of his daily routine to write the first Percy Jackson and the Olympians book, *The Lightning Thief*. And in deference to his son, Riordan chose to give the character of Percy certain attributes that hit close to home.

"Making Percy ADHD and dyslexic was my way of honoring the potential of all the kids I've known who have those conditions," says Riordan. "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*."

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Riordan started writing as a young adult. He wrote short stories, unsuccessfully submitted a few of those stories for publication, and edited his high school newspaper. But he didn't take writing seriously until after he graduated from college and was teaching in San Francisco. While Riordan and his family (wife Becky and sons Haley and Patrick) enjoyed living in California, he was nostalgic for Texas. On an impulse, Riordan decided to try his hand at a mystery novel, which he set in his hometown of San Antonio. Featuring a private-eye/English Ph.D. named Tres Navarre, *Big Red Tequila* was published to rave reviews in 1997. Today, Riordan's Tres Navarre series has won the top three awards for the mystery genre—the Edgar, the Anthony, and the Shamus.

Despite his success in the adult mystery market, writing for children was never far from Riordan's mind.

"Back when I taught middle school and wrote adult mysteries, my students often asked me why I wasn't writing for kids," says Riordan. "I never had a good answer for them. It took me a long time to realize they were right. Kids are the audience I know best."