

The magic of Greek Mythology: A fictional journey in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief*

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the Archetypal theory applied in the novel *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief*. Rick Riordan, an American writer is known for his novels of fantastical elements. *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief* is a novel totally based on mythology. Riordan has used his rare writing techniques and symbols to portray Mythology in his novel. This paper deals with the Greek mythology which happens in the modern world. This fantasy fiction takes us to the modern world filled with mythical elements. The magic of Greek mythology reflects in the contemporary world in this novel. Perseus Jackson, a twelve year old kid narrates the novel, the weird incidents he was experiencing on the way to find his destination. Riordan has signified mythology through narration, symbols, images and character types. Mythology plays a major role in finding his true identity.

Key Words: Magic, Mythology, Greek Mythology, Identity, Bravery, Western Civilization.

Rick Riordan's fantasy fiction, *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief* is entirely based on Archetypal Theory. Archetype is a Greek word, meaning 'original pattern or model'. Archetype criticism argues that archetypes determine the form and function of literary works that a texts meaning is shaped by cultural and psychological myths. Archetypal images and story patterns encourage readers to examine basic beliefs, fears and anxieties. The term was adopted by literary critics from the writings of the psychologist Carl Jung, who formulated a theory of a 'collective unconscious' (Britannica).

Percy Jackson is a twelve year old kid who lives in New York. Whole novel is based on his journey to reach his destination. During his journey, he comes across all the Greek mythical Gods, Monsters, Magical objects, the Oracle and also mythical places. Percy has a chance to see all the Old Greek Mythological creatures in the modern world. Perseus Jackson, the protagonist is the narrator of the fantasy fiction, *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief*. Percy has mentioned that when he was in his third grade, he was stalked by a man who was wearing a black trench coat in the playground. The man left growling, only after the teachers threatened him of calling the police. No one believed when Percy told them that the man had a single eye in the middle of his forehead. In Greek mythology they were called the Cyclops, a race of giants who had a single eye in the middle of the forehead. “During third grade, a man in a black trench coat had stalked me on the playground. When the teachers threatened to call the police, he went away growling, but no one believed me when I told them that under his broad-brimmed hat, the man only had one eye, right in the middle of his head” (40).

Percy Jackson is now in his sixth grade at Yancy Academy which was a special school for troubled kids. Percy had a best friend named Grover, who was crippled. The first and unforgettable monster in Percy’s life was in the shape of a human which Percy never would have imagined. It all happened when Percy and his classmates went on a one day trip to a Metropolitan museum with Mr. Brunner, the Latin teacher and Mrs. Dodds, the Maths teacher. Percy from the beginning knew that Mrs. Dodds hated him but did not know the mystery behind it. Percy gets into trouble with Mrs. Dodds when his personal enemy, Nancy Bobofit was thrown into the fountain. Mrs. Dodds calls him for a talk at the museum and that was when he knew that she was a fury. The Furies, also known as the Erinyes, are spirits of vengeance who serve the underworld God Hades. Brave Percy fights her with the powerful sword pen Riptide and destroys her. Percy would have never believed the proverb that pen was mightier than the sword until it happened in his life. But Percy was sent out of Yancy Academy.

Percy leaves the school and plans to visit his home. Percy was very happy that he was going see his mother after a long time. Percy and Grover were waiting for the bus when they suddenly notice something fishy on the other side of the highway. Percy and Grover see three old ladies who were knitting socks which were in the size of a sweater. According to the Greek mythology, the three old ladies are three fates. “The old lady in the middle took out a huge pair of scissors- gold and silver, long-bladed, like shears. I heard Grover catch his breath” (26). Grover’s heart skipped a beat when he saw a lady snipping the cord. He at once knew what it meant. The snipping of the cord intended that someone was going to die. Percy

couldn't help but notice Grover's pale face. Grover silently gives his address to Percy and departs. Then Percy makes his way to his home.

Percy reaches home and is very much delighted to see his mother. Percy's father was said to be missing before Percy was born. So he and his mother lived alone until she married again for her son's sake. Percy's stepfather was Gabe, who was very smelly. Percy hated him and had to meddle with him only for his mother. His mother Mrs. Sally surprises Percy by telling him that she and Percy alone are going on a trip to Montauk. They pack and go to Montauk. Percy's old childhood memories flash across his mind which gives him nostalgic feelings.

Percy and his mother were sleeping calmly inside the tent. They were suddenly startled by the huge thunder and woke up to see Grover standing in front of them. Mrs. Sally and Grover were talking like they knew each other before. That was when Percy noticed the legs of Grover. There weren't legs in the place where legs should be. Instead of legs there were cloven hooves. Grover was a Satyr, a Greek mythological being that is half goat and half human. He had the upper body of a human and the legs and horns of a goat.

Grover ran for the Camaro – but he wasn't running, exactly. He was trotting, shaking his shaggy hindquarters, and suddenly his story about a muscular disorder in his legs made sense to me. I understand how he could run so fast and still limp when he walked. Because where his feet should be, there were no feet. There were cloven hooves. (43)

Grover warns them of a Minotaur which was searching for Percy. The Minotaur chases them and Percy and his mother run along with Grover. Minotaur was a muscular monster with the body of a man and the head and tail of a bull. The bloodthirsty monster chased them but his sight and hearing was terrible so it searched them through its smell. Percy's mother warns them to jump at the opposite direction when the monster charges. Percy escapes from the monster. But Grover was hit by the monster and he groaned lying in the grass.

The monster now charged at his mother. Sally tried to jump but the monster now knew their plan. The monster was very angry and it grabbed Mrs. Sally by her neck and with an angry roar, and the monster closed his fists around her neck. Percy's mother dissolved before his eyes melting into a simmering golden form. Percy was horrified to see his mother gone like that. He was raged to see the monster who was trying to kill Grover now. With all his

might, Percy kills the monster with the Sword pen, Riptide. The monster disappeared just like Mrs. Dodds disappeared.

Percy wakes up in the Half blood camp. Camp Half-Blood was a Greek demigod training which was located on the Long Island Sound and was directed by the god Dionysus, whom the campers call 'Mr. D'. The attendants of Dionysus were the satyrs, minor gods representing the forces of nature. They were depicted with bodies of animals and had small horns and tails like a goat's. Percy wakes up in the thought that everything would have been a nightmare but to his shock, Grover tells him that whatever happened was real. Percy meets Mr. Brunner in Half Blood camp, who was a centaur. And his real name was Mr. Chiron. In classical mythology, a centaur is a creature with the head, arms, and upper body of a man, and the lower body and legs of a horse. Mr.Chiron was one of the wisest centaurs.

Percy also meets Annabeth, daughter of Great Goddess Athena. Athena was the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, strategic warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill. Percy meets all the half blood kids in the camp. He bumps into Clarisse La Rue, daughter of God Ares. She was hot-tempered, arrogant, big, tall, strong, and she heavily disliked Percy. Percy also meets Luke, who was about nineteen and he looked tall, muscular and handsome. He was the son of God Hermes. He was very friendly towards Percy that he made him feel very comfortable when he was around him. Soon, Mr. Chiron finds out Percy's true mystery behind his birth and about his real father. He was the son of the Sea God Poseidon. He was the brother of God Zeus, the God of Greek Gods.

Mr. Chiron thought that Percy would be safe in the custody of the Half blood camp but monsters smelled Percy there too. Percy now knew why he was being chased by all the monsters. His father was accused of stealing his Brother Zeus's master lightning bolt. And it was said that Poseidon can't do that alone without a human's help. So, Percy was accused of it. Percy goes for the quest to find the lightning bolt and to bring back his mother. Grover and Annabeth accompany him. Luke gives his Flying sneakers to Percy Jackson which was given to him by his father. Magical items are also symbolised as mythical objects which plays a major place in the novel.

Percy was told to consult the Oracle before he goes to find the quest. Oracle is meant for Divine communication which is delivered in response to a petitioner's request and is also the seat of prophecy itself. Percy consults the Oracle and an illusion came out of mist. The mist swirled more thickly and suddenly there were four men sitting around a table playing

card games. Percy could sense that was Smelly Gabe and his friends. Each one of them revealed his destiny. The first destiny was that Percy would go to the west and meet the God who had turned. The second destiny was that Percy would find what was stolen and return it safely. The third destiny was that Percy would be betrayed by the one who calls him as his friend. And the last words of destiny were that Percy would fail to save what matters the most. Percy was confused by these words. He was not sure of what the Oracle had said to him. “I cried, ‘Wait! What do you mean? What friend? What will I fail to save?’” (141). Percy was also given three pearls which would take them to their desired place.

Percy and his companions leave to begin the quest. They get on a bus. Annabeth clamped her hand onto Percy’s knee. Percy was in a horror when he saw an old lady followed by two old ladies get into the bus they were in. Percy could easily recognise that it was Mrs. Dodds. They were the three fury sisters. Annabeth gives her Yankee invisible cap to Percy because she knew that the three furies had come in search of Percy. Percy goes through the exit but he couldn’t go away because he was not a coward to let his friends in the hand of the furies. So he comes back and fights the furies with his friends with the help of the Riptide. Mrs. Dodds had already felt Riptide’s blades over her body. “The furies hesitated. Mrs. Dodds had felt Riptide’s blade before. She obviously didn’t like seeing it again” (165). A thunder suddenly shook the bus leaving it exploded, everyone in the bus escaped, except the furies exploded with the bus. But Percy knew through the angry wail, that the furies weren’t dead.

Percy and his buddies go to Denver where they meet God Ares, the son of Zeus. He was a muscle man wearing red muscle shirt and black jeans. He was completely in modern attire. They had a conversation and Ares bought them food and he gave Percy a backpack which had food and clothes. Ares was so arrogant to Percy that Percy was very angry with him. But he knew that Ares was a powerful God so he did not want to get into trouble. “I wanted to punch this guy, but somehow, I knew he was waiting for that. Ares’s power was causing my anger. He’d love it if I attacked. I didn’t want to give him the satisfaction” (227).

Percy and his friends now started walking. They passed the Monte Carlo and the MGM. They also passed pyramids, a pirate ship and the Statue of Liberty which made Percy homesick. Now they wanted food and water. They were in a dead end, standing in front of the Lotus Hotel and Casino. The hotel would surely remind the readers of ‘Odysseus’. In Greek mythology, one of a tribe encountered by the Greek hero Odysseus on the Libyan coast, after a north wind had driven him and his men from Cape Malea. The local inhabitants, whose distinctive practice is indicated by their name, invited Odysseus' scouts to eat of the

mysterious plant. Those who did so were overcome by a blissful forgetfulness; they had to be dragged back to the ship and chained to the rowing-benches, or they would never have returned to their duties.

Percy, Annabeth and Grover go into the hotel hoping for a good food and nice sleep. They weren't charged of anything. They were simply welcomed inside the hotel. They were given each a green plastic credit card. Then they took the elevator upstairs. It was a suite with three separate bedrooms and a bar with candy, sodas and crisps. There were clothes for them in the closet which fitted them perfectly. They all took shower which made them feel very awesome. Then they took the green plastic Lotus Cash cards to have fun time playing.

Percy and his companions kept on playing several games like the waterslide, snowboarded the artificial ski slope and virtual-reality laser tag and FBI sharpshooter. Percy found it weird when he saw a thirteen year old kid who was wearing costumes like the old Elvis. Percy started looking around. Many looked like they were from 80's. He went on asking kids about the present year. Most of them answered that they were from 80's and 90's. Percy suddenly felt something bad. "Then it occurred to me: how long had I been here? It seemed like only a couple of hours, but was it?" (262).

Everyone playing the games was very much addicted to it. They did not even care about anyone else. Percy went to see his friends, Annabeth and Grover who were very deeply into the games. However Percy helped them out and they soon left the place or they wouldn't escape like the other people. When they came out, Percy ran to see a newspaper. They were in the Lotus Hotel for five days. Then they go in search of the underworld. There they meet Percy Jackson's uncle, Hades, the brother of Poseidon and Zeus.

In mythology, the Greek underworld is an otherworld where souls go after death. The original Greek idea of afterlife is that, at the moment of death, the soul is separated from the corpse, taking on the shape of the former person, and is transported to the entrance of the underworld. God Hades is the ruler of the underworld. There are six main rivers that are visible both in the living world and the underworld. Their names were meant to reflect the emotions associated with death. Percy and his friends meet Hades and also Percy's mother. Percy escapes the underworld with the help of three pearls leaving his mother, when he knew that Hades did not have the lightning bolt and he started demanding things.

Percy takes a good decision by breaking the pearls for him and his friends and had to leave his mother. The prophecy had come true. Percy had to leave his mother in the

underworld in order to save the world. Percy and his friends return to the world. Percy comes to know that Ares was the one who had stolen the lightning bolt and kept it secretly in the backpack he had given to Percy Jackson. With the help of the pearls, Percy and his friends land in the sea which was the part of the prophecy. “What belongs to the sea will always return to the sea” (318).

The real problem begins when Percy and his friends meet Ares. Ares was the culprit but he was not the one who had stolen the helm of darkness and Zeus’s Master lightning bolt. A demigod had helped him in this theft who had come on the Summer Solstice. Percy is outraged at Ares who had cheated him by hiding the lightning bolt into his backpack. Percy was very angry now as he came to know that he was betrayed by Luke who had stolen the lightning bolt and Hades’s helm of darkness and Ares had helped him in this theft. Percy finally returns the Helm of darkness and Lightning bolt. But the novel ends with Luke escaping and Percy recovering from a severe accident Luke had caused. To his goodness, Percy’s mother was back. Percy’s mother was returned to him by the Gods for his bravery and honesty.

Throughout the novel, Percy meets all the Greek mythological creatures and Gods which he sees in the twentieth century modern world. He is not just a roadside kid who comes along the mystical beings but also the Great God Poseidon’s lovely son, Perseus Jackson. He marks his name as brave Perseus Jackson. Greek mythology plays a major role in Percy Jackson’s life. The whole novel stands firmly with the help of Greek mythology which plays a major part in Percy’s life. Percy had true identity only with the help of the mythical features.

Work Cited

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