

The Lightning Thief



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RICK RIORDAN

Riordan was born in San Antonio, Texas. Growing up, he was an avid writer of short stories. Despite this, he attended college first for music and then to be an English and history teacher. Following graduation, Riordan taught middle school English and history for more than a decade before writing and publishing *Big Red Tequila*, an adult crime novel and the first in his *Tres Navarre* series. Though the *Tres Navarre* series has been successful and has won awards, the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series made Riordan a household name. *The Lightning Thief* began as a bedtime story for Riordan's son, who had just been diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia. With his son's encouragement, Riordan took the next year to write *The Lightning Thief*, and when it was accepted by a publisher, Riordan agreed to write the next four in the series. To keep up with his deadlines for both series, Riordan quit teaching, though he hopes that through his books, he can do more to inspire kids to read—particularly about mythology—than he could as a teacher. He and his wife live in Boston.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Lightning Thief centers on fictionalized versions of the gods that were central to Ancient Greek religion and myth. Some elements of the polytheistic Greek religion have roots going back to the Bronze Age, but worship of the 12 gods that are now known as the Olympians (including Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, and Ares) solidified in the Archaic period, with the establishment of the Greek city-states like Athens and Sparta. During this time, the Greeks began to build stone temples for the gods. In 146 B.C.E., when the Roman Republic conquered Greece, the Romans adopted the Greek gods and gave them new names, as well as adopted Greek architectural styles. Despite the rise of Christianity and the later move to criminalize paganism in 381 C.E., the influence of Greek mythology, architecture, and culture persists today. As Chiron points out in the novel, the style of architecture used in Greek temples has influenced building practices throughout the Western world—many U.S. state capital buildings, as well as the White House and federal government buildings, are modeled after the Greek style, while even Christian churches and cathedrals exhibit Greek elements. It's also impossible to understate the literary mark that the Greeks and their belief system left on the world. Some scholars propose that the Greek myths, along with the Bible and the works of Shakespeare, are the most influential literary and cultural works of the Western world.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series of five books (as well as Riordan's other novels and series that take place in the same world) are part of a huge body of literature concerning the Greek gods and the myths surrounding them. Very early works include the epic poems the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* by Homer, which were passed down orally for generations before being written down; the oldest manuscripts date to the 10th century B.C.E. Stories, plays, and legends concerning the Greek gods and heroes have provided inspiration for a number of classic novels, from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (which draws loosely on the tragic play *Medea*) to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is based on the *Odyssey*. Perhaps more similar to *The Lightning Thief*, however, is Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, which imagines Norse and other ancient gods from belief systems around the world fighting for supremacy against new gods in modern America. There are also a number of young adult novels that draw from Greek myths, including the verse novel *Bull* by David Elliott and *Vengeance Bound* by Justina Ireland. Many young adult novels, including *The Lightning Thief*, follow the classic hero's journey format in which a young hero completes a quest of some sort to battle monsters and accomplish their goal. The legend of Percy's namesake, Perseus, also follows this format.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Lightning Thief
- **When Written:** 2004
- **When Published:** 2005
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Fantasy
- **Setting:** Modern-day New York City and other major U.S. cities
- **Climax:** Percy bests Ares during their battle on the beach.
- **Antagonist:** Ares and his children; Kronos; monsters
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Thanks, Mom. Riordan received his first rejection note from the *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* when he was 14 years old. His mom saved the note and unearthed it when Riordan finally got published as an adult.

Birthday Buddies. Riordan and his wife share the same birthday.



PLOT SUMMARY

Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson warns the reader that if they recognize themselves in the story to follow, they should stop reading: being a demigod is rough. His story begins with a school field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Percy has ADHD and dyslexia, and he's gotten expelled from six schools already. He tries hard to be good because he admires his Latin teacher, Mr. Brunner, but the evil math teacher Mrs. Dodds ruins everything. She takes Percy into the museum alone and transforms into a monstrous creature. Mr. Brunner appears and tosses Percy a **pen** that turns into a sword, and Percy slays Mrs. Dodds. Everything goes back to normal—but other students believe that someone named Mrs. Kerr is the math teacher. Only Percy's best friend, Grover, seems aware that Mrs. Dodds was real, but he won't confirm this. Percy's grades slip, and he gets expelled at the end of the year.

As Percy and Grover ride the Greyhound bus home, the bus breaks down. Percy and Grover see a roadside fruit stand where three old ladies are knitting and cutting thread. This freaks Grover out, so he asks to walk Percy to his apartment. Percy ditches Grover, evades Smelly Gabe (Mom's horrendous husband), and waits for Mom. Mom announces that she and Percy are going to Montauk for the weekend without Gabe. The vacation starts out normal—they talk about Percy's father, who left when Mom was pregnant—but a hurricane rolls in. Grover shows up, but he has the lower body of a goat and says that "he" is after them. Mom tries to drive Percy to a summer camp where he'll be safe, but lightning strikes the car and a Minotaur attacks them. Percy and Mom try to get Grover, who's injured, past a huge pine tree, but the Minotaur snatches Mom and she dissolves. Percy manages to slay the Minotaur before passing out. When he wakes, Grover takes Percy to meet Mr. D, the camp director. Mr. D is with Mr. Brunner, but Mr. Brunner says that isn't his real name—he's the centaur Chiron. Mr. D reveals that he's Dionysus, the god of wine. Chiron explains that the Greek gods are real; Mount Olympus is in New York City. Chiron and a girl named Annabeth take Percy on a tour of Camp Half-Blood, where the campers are all demigods (children of one god parent and one mortal parent). At the Hermes cabin, Percy meets his counselor, Luke. Later, one of Ares's daughters, Clarisse, tries to shove Percy's face in a toilet, but he somehow makes the water shoot back into her face. Percy is shocked to discover that his father is one of the Greek gods—but his father might never claim him. Until Percy's father steps up, he'll have to stay in the Hermes cabin. Annabeth and Percy discuss what's going on. The weather seems like the gods are fighting, and it's been this way since the winter solstice. Annabeth believes that something was stolen, and she desperately wants to go on a quest to find it.

Percy falls into a routine at camp, but he focuses on the possibility that Mom is imprisoned in the Underworld. He also

begins to understand why some kids, like Luke, resent their immortal parents. Several odd things happen: Percy performs a tricky sword maneuver after dumping water on himself, and he's exceptionally good at canoeing. One afternoon, Grover shares that his assignment to protect Percy isn't over yet. He also tells Percy why there are no children of Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades at camp: they promised after World War II to not father more children. Zeus messed up 17 years ago and had a daughter named Thalia, but monsters killed her. Later, the camp plays capture the flag. Percy has to stand guard by a stream. Clarisse and other Ares kids accost Percy, but when he falls into the water, he feels strong. As he fights them, his team wins. Immediately after, a hellhound attempts to kill Percy, and a trident appears above Percy's head: this means that his father is Poseidon.

The next morning, after a nightmare of two men fighting, Percy receives a quest. Chiron shares that Poseidon and Zeus are fighting, as Zeus's thunderbolt is missing—and he believes Percy took it. Percy speaks to the Oracle, which says that Percy will go west to face a god who turned, that he'll find and return what was stolen, that a friend will betray him, and that he'll fail at what matters most. Chiron says that Percy must journey to Los Angeles and the Underworld because Hades has the thunderbolt. Percy is thrilled because this means he can rescue Mom. Grover and Annabeth offer to go too. Before Percy leaves, Luke gives him a pair of winged shoes that Percy passes on to Grover; flying is dangerous for Percy since Zeus hates him. Chiron gives Percy his pen, which transforms into a sword called Riptide. On the way to the bus, Annabeth insists that she and Percy can't be friends because Poseidon and Annabeth's mother, Athena, are rivals. On the bus, the Furies attack and ask where "it" is. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover manage to escape the bus and hike until they reach a business called Auntie Em's Garden Gnome Emporium. Grover insists that he smells monsters, but Annabeth and Percy are too intent on the smell of burgers. Auntie Em, the owner, is dressed in a long gown and veil that covers her face. She makes them food. As Percy grows sleepy, Auntie Em asks to take their photo. Percy agrees, but he realizes that Auntie Em is actually Medusa—her garden statues are petrified people. Percy slays Medusa and ships her head to Mount Olympus.

That night, Grover confides in Percy that he wants to be a searcher and spend his life searching for the god Pan. They discuss that the Furies are looking for an object, not Percy, but Percy doesn't care—he just wants to save Mom. Percy dreams of a voice in a terrible pit that tries to use Percy to drag itself out. The next morning, they secure train tickets to Denver. On a layover in St. Louis, Annabeth insists on visiting the Gateway Arch. Percy thinks it feels wrong, but he rides the elevator up to the top with a woman and her Chihuahua. After Grover and Annabeth head back down, the woman turns into Echidna and the Chihuahua turns into the Chimera. Percy dives off the

monument into the Mississippi River, where he receives a message: he must go to Santa Monica beach before going into the Underworld, and he mustn't trust the gifts.

The trio arrives in Denver with seven days to complete their quest. They decide to call Half-Blood Hill via an Iris message. Percy speaks to Luke about his dreams and his concerns that he's on the wrong track, but Luke insists that Hades stole the bolt and mentions something odd about no one turning into a pine tree. After this, the kids go to a diner, where a huge biker walks in and offers to pay for their meal. The man is Ares, the god of war. He needs Percy to do him a favor and fetch his shield from a waterpark in exchange for transport to L.A. Percy only agrees when Ares says he has information on Mom. At the waterpark, Percy is shocked to discover that Ares is dating Aphrodite even though she's married to Hephaestus. Percy discovers Ares's shield in a ride, but as he touches the shield, cameras appear to broadcast live to Mount Olympus. Percy manages to procure water and save himself and Annabeth. He's incensed that Ares tricked them, but he accepts Ares' offer of a backpack with food and clothes. Ares also shares that Mom isn't dead.

Percy, Annabeth, and Grover get into a truck transporting three abused zoo animals. Percy shares what Luke said about the pine tree, and Grover and Annabeth elaborate: Grover was Thalia's keeper, and Luke and Annabeth joined them on their way to Camp Half-Blood. Monsters attacked, and Thalia sacrificed herself—but Zeus turned her into the pine tree at the top of Half-Blood Hill. After Grover falls asleep, Percy asks if Athena and Poseidon will fight each other again, like they did in the Trojan War. Annabeth says that no matter what, she's fighting alongside Percy. Percy has another dream about the voice in the pit, and he recognizes a second voice. The next day, Percy lets the animals go in Vegas and the kids enter a hotel. They play games until Percy meets kids who've been hypnotized and stuck in the hotel for decades. When Percy drags Annabeth and Grover out, they discover they have one day to complete their quest and that Percy no longer remembers his dream. They get a taxi to L.A., where Percy wades out into the ocean. A sea spirit, Nereid, gives Percy three pearls to smash if he needs help.

On their way to the recording studio obscuring the Underworld, the trio gets caught by a man named Crusty—the monster Procrustes, who stretches or cuts people to fit on six-foot-long mattresses. In the lobby for the Underworld, Mr. Charon refuses to take Percy to the Underworld, but he agrees when Percy promises to tell Hades to give Mr. Charon a raise. Annabeth gets them past Cerberus, the three-headed dog, by playing ball with him. Percy leads his friends straight to Hades's palace, but Grover's shoes sprout wings and carry him away, straight toward the pit from Percy's dreams. They escape because the shoes fit poorly around Grover's hooves. Finally, they enter the palace. Hades is incensed about what that Percy

did, while Percy asks for the bolt back and begs Hades to not start a war. Hades insists that he doesn't want a war—he has too many dead people already. He admits that his magical object, the helm of darkness, is missing. He believes Percy has the helm and the bolt, so he conjures Mom and threatens to kill her if Percy doesn't hand the objects over. Percy discovers the bolt in the backpack that Ares gave him. Annabeth and Grover offer to stay in the Underworld in Mom's place, but Percy knows that Mom wouldn't forgive him if he allowed that. He gives his friends the pearls, and the three of them escape through the ocean. On the beach, Ares reveals that he set Percy up with the bolt: he wants a war, and he also has the helm. Percy challenges Ares to a fight. He believes he can win because he suspects that the being in the pit is controlling Ares. Percy injures Ares, and a dark force passing through ends the fight. Reporters and police at the scene "rescue" Percy and raise money to fly them back to New York, while the Furies take Hades's helm back to him.

Percy goes alone to the Empire State Building. When he reaches the throne room in Olympus, he bows to Poseidon. Poseidon seems distant, which Percy thinks is the most honest reaction. Percy returns Zeus's thunderbolt and tells Zeus everything, including his suspicions about what's in the pit in the Underworld. Zeus disappears. Poseidon confirms that Kronos, his and Zeus's father, lives in the pit, and he tries to convince Percy that Kronos is powerless. He tells Percy that Mom is home now. As Percy leaves, Poseidon praises Percy. Percy then reunites with Mom. Gabe seems even crueler than ever, and Percy realizes that he's been hitting Mom. In his bedroom, Percy finds the box containing Medusa's head. He tells Mom what's in the box and returns to camp, feeling as though he belongs. He bids Grover goodbye when Grover leaves to search, and he's thrilled when he learns that Mom sold her first sculpture (the petrified Gabe) and is using the money to pay for college. She offers to let Percy live at home to attend school.

The last morning of camp rolls around, and Percy hasn't decided what to do. He agrees to go find monsters with Luke. In the woods, however, Luke reveals that he's a double agent: he's working for Kronos, and he stole the bolt and the helm. He sets a pit scorpion on Percy. Percy manages to defeat the scorpion, after which he goes to the farmhouse. Chiron convinces him that he can't do anything about Luke or Kronos now, but he does say that Percy will be a great hero. Percy decides to go home for the year when Annabeth shares that she's going to try to live at home with her dad. Percy promises Poseidon that he'll return next summer.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Percy Jackson – Percy is the 12-year-old protagonist of the novel. Percy struggles with ADHD, dyslexia, and getting into trouble, so he's been expelled every year since he started school. Because of this, at the start of the novel, the only bright spots in Percy's life are his new friend Grover and his strong relationship with Mom; he feels like a failure in many other ways. This begins to change when, after a year of seeing and experiencing odd things, the Minotaur interrupts Mom and Percy's trip to the coast and seems to kill her. Percy winds up at Camp Half-Blood and discovers that his ADHD and dyslexia aren't problems like he thought they were; they're normal for kids who are demigods, or the children of one Greek god and one mortal parent. Percy's dad, whom he thought died, is the Greek god Poseidon, who later claims him. Because of Percy's parentage, the centaur Chiron decides to send Percy on a quest. Along with Grover and Annabeth, a daughter of Athena, Percy journeys west from New York to retrieve Zeus's stolen thunderbolt from Hades. Along the journey, Percy shows himself to be impulsive, overly-trusting, and occasionally rash. He discovers that he's a skilled swordsman with **Riptide**, a sword that Poseidon left for him, and he begins to rethink his thoughts on Poseidon. While Percy continues to feel abandoned by Poseidon and to focus more on rescuing Mom from the Underworld, Percy gradually becomes more accepting of his dad. When, in the Underworld, Percy discovers that the god Ares tricked him by planting the thunderbolt with Percy, Percy takes it upon himself to figure out what happened. An honorable person, Percy insists on carrying the bolt back to Zeus himself, even if it means taking the risk of flying and risking Zeus's wrath. Completing his quest and meeting Poseidon along with Zeus helps Percy feel more secure with who he is and with his family situation—especially since Hades agrees to return Mom. Ultimately, Percy feels as though he has friends and support for the first time, and he feels at home in his new world of the gods.

Grover – Grover is a young satyr tasked with looking out for Percy at Yancy Academy. Grover is in his early 20s, but he has the maturity level of a middle school student since satyrs only grow half as fast as humans do. He often wears a “rasta-style” cap to cover his horns when his curly hair isn't enough, and while they're at Yancy, Percy believes that Grover is a normal kid with a muscle disorder that prevents him from running. He later discovers that this is part of Grover's disguise. Additionally, Grover must fit his cloven hooves into human shoes using Styrofoam and his shoes are liable to come off if he runs. Percy believes that Grover is a normal kid up until the Minotaur attacks and Grover reveals that he's a mythical creature who's been sent to protect Percy from monsters. Grover's personality reflects Percy's initial read on the kind of person Grover is: Grover is capable of being brave when he has to be, but he's generally disinterested in conflict and considers himself a failure. This is because, five years before the novel begins, Grover's first keeper assignment went horribly: he was

assigned to protect Thalia, Zeus's demigod daughter, but he failed to do so. He did manage to save Luke and Annabeth instead, but the Council of Cloven Elders failed Grover on his assignment anyway. Grover has to live with the guilt and the knowledge that he's the reason Thalia is dead, even though Percy and Annabeth insist that Grover did the right thing. Grover agrees to go on Percy's quest in part so that he can prove himself to the Council—he desperately wants to become a searcher so he can go look for the god Pan, and he must complete a keeper's assignment first. However, Grover also goes because his friendship with Percy is genuine and strong. For much of the novel, Grover acts as a voice of reason and as someone who can interpret Percy's conflicted emotions. He doesn't always know exactly what's going on, but he's always more than ready to help his friends when they need it. After the quest, Grover earns his searcher's license and leaves to look for Pan.

Mom/Sally Jackson – Percy's mom is a beautiful woman with long brown hair and sparkling blue eyes. Her story is tragic: her parents died when she was little, the uncle who raised her was distant, and his death kept her from finishing high school or attending college. Mom had a brief fling with Percy's dad, but they never got married—instead, she married Percy's stepfather, Smelly Gabe, when Percy was little. Mom is extremely kind and generous, so Percy doesn't understand why she puts up with Gabe, who's cruel to her. Mom works in a candy shop and makes sure to bring home blue candy whenever possible as an inside joke between her and Percy. She adores Percy and never makes him feel bad for getting expelled. Early in the story, the Minotaur seemingly kills Mom in its attempt to kill Percy, but Percy later discovers that Mom is being held in the Underworld by the god Hades. Percy adores his mother above all else, so although he agrees to go on the quest to help Poseidon, he secretly hopes that he'll be able to save Mom. However, once Percy reaches the Underworld and comes face to face with Mom, who's frozen, Percy realizes that he won't be able to do this: he doesn't have the tools to save Mom as well as his friends Annabeth and Grover. Knowing that Mom would be furious if she knew Percy turned over a friend and let the gods go to war on her behalf, Percy agrees to leave her behind. When Percy returns to New York, he learns that Hades returned Mom home as well, after receiving his helm. Once Percy reunites with Mom, he makes a shocking and horrific discovery: Gabe isn't just cruel, he's physically abusive. Mom insists that she's trying to leave, but she needs to do it on her own terms and not let Percy get rid of Gabe for her. Percy leaves her Medusa's head to petrify Gabe. Mom eventually does, and she uses the money from the sale of her “first sculpture” (Gabe) to pay for her first term of college.

Luke – Luke is an older teen at Camp Half-Blood. His father, Hermes, claimed Luke, so Luke is now the leader of the Hermes cabin. Though Luke seems genuinely interested in taking care

of the many younger kids who wind up in his cabin, he's also generally disillusioned with camp and life as a young demigod. He feels abandoned by Hermes and never mentions his mother, but he seems to have few connections to blood family members and struggles because of this. Luke ended up at Camp Half-Blood with Thalia and young Annabeth, and Annabeth has had a crush on Luke ever since. He's also quite handsome and skilled with a sword. His skills earned him a quest several years ago. Though this means that many campers revere and admire Luke, Luke thinks little of his quest—he repeated Hercules's quest to steal a golden apple from the Garden of the Hesperides, and the experience got him nothing but a pat on the back as far as he's concerned. Though Luke becomes a caring mentor to Percy during Percy's time at camp and even gives Percy a seemingly useful parting gift of winged tennis shoes, Percy later discovers that Luke is a double agent. Luke's loneliness, angst, and disillusionment with gods and with his father made Luke a prime target for the imprisoned Titan Kronos, who seeks to rise to power again and overthrow the gods. In Luke's opinion, the gods have done nothing but condemn him to a life of loneliness, danger, and sorrow as a pawn, so he feels he has every reason to overthrow them. Percy discovers this when Luke makes an attempt to kill him with a poisonous pit scorpion on the last day before summer campers leave. Luke's betrayal hits everyone hard, but Percy and Annabeth vow to track down Luke when they return to camp next summer.

Annabeth Chase – Annabeth is one of Percy's best friends and a daughter of the goddess Athena. Annabeth is blonde, Percy's age, and has been at Camp Half-Blood since she was seven. Like many demigods, she struggles with feeling abandoned; she explains that Athena left her with her dad, a professor, but that her dad was uninterested in having children and his new wife hates Annabeth. Because of this, Annabeth chooses to stay at Camp Half-Blood year-round, though she does wear her dad's class ring on her camp necklace. As a daughter of Athena, Annabeth is smart and bookish, but she also struggles to sit still, like most half-bloods do. She wants to be an architect and build monuments to the gods in the long term, but in the short term, she desperately wants to go on a quest and prove herself. Annabeth is upset when Poseidon turns out to be Percy's father, as she believes that as Athena's daughter, she must hold the same rivalries as her mom does (and therefore can't be friends with Percy, as Athena and Poseidon are rivals). Over the course of the friends' quest, however, Annabeth begins to reevaluate this and tamp down on some of her rude behavior. She eventually pledges that if the gods go to war, she'll fight with Percy and Grover, no matter what side her mom is on. A skilled strategist, Annabeth comes up with a variety of the trio's plans, most notably the plan to treat Cerberus like a normal dog in order to gain access to the Underworld. Cerberus's heartbreaking and dog-like reaction shows Annabeth and Percy that even monsters need love and attention, and this has a

profound effect on Annabeth emotionally. Once their quest is complete, Annabeth shares with Percy that she's taken his advice to make up with her dad to heart and is going to go home for the school year. This gives Percy the strength to also decide to go home, and their friendship gives him something to look forward to for the following summer.

Chiron/Mr. Brunner – Mr. Brunner is Percy's mentor. Mr. Brunner is first Percy's Latin teacher at Yancy Academy. He's in a wheelchair, owns a number of Greek battle replicas that he uses for study games, and takes a special interest in Percy that Percy doesn't quite understand. However, Mr. Brunner is the only teacher whom Percy cares about impressing. Once Percy ends up at Camp Half-Blood, he discovers that Mr. Brunner was just a disguise—Mr. Brunner is actually Chiron, the mythical centaur who trained classical Greek heroes like Theseus and Hercules. When in his Mr. Brunner form, which he often takes so he fits in buildings, Chiron's horse body folds up into the wheelchair. Chiron is calm and kind, but he's also exacting and he demands a high level of performance from his mentees. He also seems to know more than he lets on; Percy suspects that Chiron has heard a prophecy from the Oracle that mentions him, Annabeth, and Kronos, but Chiron is forbidden from talking explicitly about it. Instead, he contents himself with doing what he can to prepare Percy for his quest, including by passing on Poseidon's sword, **Riptide**. Chiron is unable to provide assistance during Percy's quest, but he helps Percy interpret events after his return. He warns Percy that Percy must wait and rack up training hours if he wishes to take on Kronos and Luke, since he's not in a place yet to successfully face them. Despite Percy's admiration for and trust of Chiron, he chooses to go against what he thinks Chiron wants and goes home for the school year.

Smelly Gabe – Gabe is Mom's husband and Percy's stepfather. Percy calls him Smelly Gabe because he reeks, in addition to being crass, cruel, and ugly. Though Gabe works as a manager for an appliance shop, he never goes to work and instead stays home and plays poker all day. The apartment is covered in his beer cans and dirty laundry, and he often steals money from Percy in order to gamble. Gabe is rude and demanding; he insists that Mom feed him when and what he wants, and he does everything he can to control her financially. Mom clearly hates Gabe, so Percy cannot figure out why she stays with him. Grover later explains that Mom had good reason to stay: Gabe's smell is so pungently human that it covered up Percy's obvious half-blood scent. Gabe is likely the reason Percy survived as long as he did. Once Percy heads off on his quest and begins making headlines for potentially being unhinged and kidnapping Mom, Gabe latches onto the excuse to publicly hate Percy, and he offers reward money for information leading to Percy's capture. In retaliation, when the media "discovers" that Percy was supposedly kidnapped by Ares, Percy offers TV viewers free appliances from Gabe's store as a mark of Gabe's

gratitude. Once Percy and Mom get home, Percy discovers that Gabe has been physically abusing Mom. He leaves Mom Medusa's head to turn Gabe into stone, and Mom uses the resulting statue to pay for her first term of college.

Ares – Ares is the god of war. When Percy meets him, Ares takes the form of a larger-than-life biker, with a leather jacket, loud motorcycle, and dark sunglasses. When he removes his sunglasses, his eyes are infernos. Ares is menacing and intimidating; he frightens several mortals when he joins Percy, Annabeth, and Grover in a Denver diner. This is partly because, as a god, Ares naturally emanates power and danger, but it's also because he's a power-hungry and self-important individual. Though copping an attitude is a major risk for Percy to take, Ares fortunately finds Percy's sass and attitude charming. Ares sends the trio on a brief quest to an abandoned waterpark to fetch his magical shield, which he forgot there after a date with Aphrodite. It's clear that Ares knew about Hephaestus's trick—installing cameras and filling the pool with mechanical spiders—and so he sent the kids on purpose to save himself the embarrassment. Though Ares follows through on his promise to secure the trio's passage to Los Angeles in exchange for his shield, unbeknownst to Percy, Ares also plants a backpack that secretly contains Zeus's thunderbolt with the trio. As Percy later discovers, this is because Ares is being controlled by Kronos and, on Kronos's orders, is trying to incite war between Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. There are a number of Ares's children at Camp Half-Blood: they're all hulking, loud, and violent.

Hades – Hades is the god of the Underworld. He's about 10 feet tall and exudes power. He's lithe and pale, and he wears black silk robes embroidered with pained faces. Hades's face reminds Percy of those of dictators like Hitler. Despite his evil looks and the fact that he's the lord of the Underworld, Hades also struggles with very human problems: he runs the Underworld singlehandedly, and so he's the one to deal with the increase in deaths resulting from Earth's growing population. This causes traffic jams, staffing issues, and money problems, all of which annoy Hades to no end. He also feels overlooked by the other gods and so doesn't say anything when his magical object, the helm of darkness, goes missing—but he believes that Percy has it. Though Hades is unwilling to change his stance and continues to insist that Percy is the one trying to frame him and start a war, he does show himself to be honorable when he returns Mom as promised after Percy gets Hades's helm back from Ares. Percy also realizes that Hades probably feels understandably bitter since he's only allowed in Olympus once per year, during the winter solstice.

Zeus – Zeus is the all-powerful god of the sky. After killing and imprisoning his father, the Titan Kronos, many millennia ago, Zeus assumed his role as king of the gods. His magical object is a giant thunderbolt. Zeus appears only briefly in the novel, and when he does, he takes the form of a giant, handsome man with

dark hair, a salt and pepper beard, and a pinstripe suit. He treats Percy coldly and with little regard; Percy's "reward" for returning the stolen thunderbolt is simply to walk away unscathed from his audience with Zeus. Zeus also appears symbolically in one of Percy's dreams as an eagle. Like Poseidon, Zeus took a vow to have no more children after World War II, but he still has an honorary cabin at Camp Half-Blood. Percy's quest to retrieve Zeus's thunderbolt is a mission to prevent a potential World War III, which would be fought between Zeus and his brothers, Poseidon and Hades. Zeus's humanity and fallibility begins to show through when Percy discovers that Zeus wrongfully suspected Hades and was willing to go to war on unfounded suspicions.

Medusa/Aunty Em – Medusa is a monster with snakes for hair; she can turn people who look her in the eye to stone. To pass in the mortal world, she poses as Aunty Em, a woman who wears a veil, which conveniently covers her face and snakes. She runs a small hamburger joint and sculpture garden a few miles outside of New York City. However, Percy, Annabeth, and Grover quickly discover that this isn't as innocent of an endeavor as it might seem at first—Medusa's food is laced with a sedative, and she appears to regularly take sedated patrons into her sculpture garden for a "photo." The photo, they realize, petrifies the sitter into stone; her sculptures are all of petrified patrons. Percy manages to behead Medusa and he ships her head to Mount Olympus. After Percy completes his quest, he returns home to Mom's house to find the box containing Medusa's head waiting for him. Mom uses the head to petrify Smelly Gabe and sell the resulting sculpture for enough money to pay for her first term of college.

Poseidon – Poseidon is the Greek god of the sea, and he's Percy's father. Poseidon can change his size, but he looks like a tanned fisherman in Bermuda shorts and a patterned shirt. One of the Big Three, Poseidon, along with his brothers Zeus and Hades, agrees to stop fathering demigod children after World War II. However, Poseidon broke this promise by falling in love with Mom and fathering Percy. Percy has mixed feelings about Poseidon for the entirety of the novel. Before Percy knows who his father is, he resents Poseidon for not claiming him; after Poseidon does claim him, Percy resents him for not doing so sooner and for not providing more support. When Percy does meet Poseidon, however, he decides that the god's reaction is the best possible one: Poseidon seems unsure of how to engage with Percy, which seems to be an honest response. He does, however, say outright that he's proud of Percy, which helps Percy start coming to terms with his parentage.

Thalia – Thalia is a young demigod who, eight years before the novel begins, began making her way to Camp Half-Blood with Grover as her keeper. Disaster struck, however, when Thalia, Grover, Luke, and Annabeth—who joined the group after running away from home—were attacked on Half-Blood Hill. Though Grover's instructions were to only rescue Thalia, he

followed Thalia's orders and saved Luke and Annabeth, leaving Thalia as a sacrifice. Thalia then took the form of a huge pine tree on the top of the hill. Thalia suffered this fate because she is Zeus's daughter, and Zeus broke his vow to stop fathering children after World War II. Thalia and the tree stand as reminders of how dangerous the mortal world outside of Camp Half-Blood is for demigods, especially those children of the Big Three.

Dionysus/Mr. D – Dionysus is the Greek god of wine and harvest; in the present, he goes by Mr. D and runs Camp Half-Blood as punishment for unspecified transgressions he committed. Part of his punishment includes having to stay sober, which makes Mr. D even more cantankerous and surly than he might be otherwise. Since running a summer camp for kids is the last thing Mr. D wants to do, he does the bare minimum and leaves as much of the actual caretaking and nurturing to others, like Chiron. Instead, Mr. D settles for rude, curt, and cursory announcements, and he spends as much time as possible playing games. Campers cultivate and sell strawberries to raise the money needed to run the camp, and these berries are prolific thanks to Mr. D's ability to help the harvest.

The Minotaur – The Minotaur is a horrendous monster with the huge head of a bull. It attacks Percy and Mom when Mom attempts to drive Percy and Grover to Camp Half-Blood. Percy realizes that the Minotaur doesn't see well; it navigates by smell. Knowing this, however, isn't enough for Percy to emerge entirely victorious from his battle with the monster. At first, Percy believes that the Minotaur killed Mom—but in reality, Hades takes her to the Underworld. The Minotaur's violence also severely injures Grover. Percy manages to rip off one of the Minotaur's horns and then kill it. Later, at Camp Half-Blood, Percy learns that it's impossible to slay monsters for good—he slayed the same Minotaur that the Ancient Greek hero Theseus did.

Hermes – Hermes is the messenger god; he never appears in person in the novel. Hermes's cabin is the most populated one at Camp Half-Blood because Hermes is accepting of everyone. Therefore, until a demigod's parent claims them, new or unclaimed campers remain in Hermes's cabin until they discover where they actually belong. Luke, a camp counselor, knows that he's one of Hermes's children, but he openly resents his father. Like most gods, Hermes is distant and cares little for his children—though he does give Luke a pair of winged tennis shoes. This sense of neglect is part of what propels Luke toward betraying the gods in favor of helping Kronos.

Annabeth's Dad – Annabeth's dad is a professor at West Point who had a brief relationship with the goddess Athena. His only memento from his time with Athena is a class ring, which he sends to Annabeth one year. He never really wanted a child, so he was upset when Annabeth showed up on his doorstep. After

remarrying, he went along with his wife's dislike and distrust of Annabeth, which has severely damaged his relationship with his daughter. Annabeth believes that her father doesn't care about her at all. At the end of the novel, however, Annabeth takes Percy's advice to heart: she writes an apology to her dad and she agrees to try living at home for the school year.

Mrs. Dodds – Mrs. Dodds is a Fury who poses as a math teacher at Yancy Academy for part of the school year. She torments Percy every chance she gets by assigning him detention and failing him on tests. She later assumes her monstrous appearance during a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and she attempts to attack Percy—but Percy instinctively slays her with Mr. Brunner's help (Mr. Brunner tosses Percy the pen that turns into Poseidon's **Riptide** sword). Being a monster, Mrs. Dodds isn't dead after this: she comes alive again, and along with the other two Furies, she torments Percy several more times over the course of his quest.

Mr. Charon – Mr. Charon is a ghoul who admits spirits to the Underworld and ferries them across the River Styx—but only if they can pay or if he's feeling generous. Aboveground, Mr. Charon takes the form of a well-dressed man; down in the Underworld, he wears dark, billowy robes. He's a vain being and he's recently discovered Italian suits, which means he eats through his paycheck quickly. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover convince Mr. Charon to ferry them across the River Styx because they promise to mention to Hades that Mr. Charon deserves a raise.

The Furies/The Kindly Ones – The Furies are a group of three monsters who work for Hades. They assume the form of winged, fanged, leathery creatures, though they sometimes take more human forms (often of old women). Individuals at Camp Half-Blood often refer to them as The Kindly Ones so as to not attract them, as naming a monster can summon it. Though the Furies terrify Percy at first, when he returns Hades's helmet to the Furies, Percy sees that the Furies are just doing their job—somehow, they don't seem quite as monstrous anymore.

Clarisse – Clarisse is a hulking bully and one of Ares's daughters at Camp Half-Blood. She attends camp year-round. Clarisse uses an electrified spear that Ares gave her in battle. Clarisse and the other Ares kids make it a point to haze new arrivals, but Percy's unexpected ability to fight back makes him a target later during capture the flag. As a bully and as an antagonist, Clarisse is more annoying than genuinely dangerous for Percy. He thinks of Clarisse mostly as unintelligent, brutish, and overly interested in embodying all of Ares's undesirable qualities.

Kronos – Kronos is the Titan father of a number of gods and goddesses, most notably Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. Kronos ate his children, but they all escaped. Then, Zeus cut Kronos into pieces and imprisoned him in Tartarus, a hellish pit in the

Underworld. Though the gods generally seem to believe that Kronos is old news and not worth worrying about, Percy's dreams—and his realization that Kronos is controlling both Ares and Luke through their dreams—suggest that Kronos is trying to rise and take over again.

Hephaestus – Hephaestus is the god of fire and blacksmiths. He never appears in the novel in person, but Percy has to deal with him regardless—Hephaestus's wife, Aphrodite, is in a relationship with Ares, and Hephaestus sets up a trap at a Denver amusement park designed to embarrass the lovers on Mount Olympus television. Thanks to Ares's trick on Percy, Percy and Annabeth end up walking into and dealing with the trap.

Procrustes/Crusty – Procrustes is a monster who runs a waterbed store in Los Angeles. This isn't a benign endeavor, however—anyone who tries out a bed finds themselves chained to it, and if prospective purchasers aren't exactly six feet tall, Procrustes either cuts them shorter or stretches them. Percy is able to flatter Procrustes, trick him into getting on a bed, and then shorten the monster to fit.

Cerberus – Cerberus is the three-headed dog that guards the gates of the Underworld. Percy recognizes Cerberus as a Rottweiler, but he's significantly larger than a normal dog—he's big enough to sit on spirits crossing into the Underworld and crush them. Though Cerberus looks terrifying and aggressive, Annabeth's attempts to play with him reveal that Cerberus is lonely and enjoys playing fetch with red rubber balls.

Aphrodite – Aphrodite is the goddess of love. She doesn't appear in person in the novel, but there are many of her children at Camp Half-Blood. They're all exceedingly vain, spend their time gazing at their reflections, and possess suitcase-size makeup cases. Though Aphrodite is married to Hephaestus, she loves Ares and spends more time with him going on dates in secluded locations.

The Old Ladies/The Fates – The Fates are three women who control the lives of everyone, from birth all the way to death. When Percy sees them, they take the form of three old women knitting humongous socks by the roadside. Percy sees them cut one of their strands of yarn, with freaks Grover out—this gesture means that someone is going to die.

Pan – Pan is the god of the wild and of shepherds and flocks. Like satyrs, Pan has the lower half and horns of a goat, but he's not technically a satyr. He went missing several thousand years ago. In the present, satyrs can earn their searcher's licenses that allow them to dedicate their lives to searching for Pan.

The Chimera/The Chihuahua – The Chimera is Echidna's son. It's a tall monster with the head of a lion complete with a bloody mane, the hooves and body of a goat, and a serpent as a tail. It masquerades in the mortal world as a Chihuahua, and in both of its forms, it wears a rhinestone collar and a dog tag.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Oracle – The Oracle is an entity that resides in the top floor of the house at Camp Half-Blood. Though the Oracle is an object rather than a living being, it takes the form of a shriveled mummy in a dress and dispenses cryptic prophecies when it sees fit.

Athena – Athena is a warrior goddess who has a rivalry with Poseidon. There are several of Athena's children at Camp Half-Blood; Annabeth is one of them. They're all extremely intelligent, good at puzzles and strategy, and are fierce warriors. Athena never appears directly in the novel.

Uncle Ferdinand – Uncle Ferdinand is one of Grover's uncles. Uncle Ferdinand was a searcher and, like all searchers, never returned after leaving to look for Pan. Grover discovers a statue of Uncle Ferdinand in Medusa's sculpture garden.

Gladiola – Gladiola is a pink poodle who ran away from home but who offers himself to Percy, Grover, and Annabeth so they can collect the reward money for returning him. Though Gladiola never speaks to Percy, he can speak to Grover.

Arachne – Arachne is a mortal woman who was a skilled weaver. Arachne had a feud with Athena, and after she hanged herself, Athena turned her into a spider. Now, Arachne's children take revenge on Athena's children, all whom—including Annabeth—are afraid of spiders because of this.

Darrin – Darrin is a boy whom Percy meets at the hotel in Las Vegas. They play several arcade games together, but then Darrin reveals that he thinks it's 1977—he's been imprisoned in the hotel for decades.

Echidna – Echidna is the Mother of Monsters—specifically, she's the mother of the Chimera. Echidna has a forked tongue and reptilian features. She and the Chimera attack Percy on the observation deck of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis.

Nancy Bobofit – Nancy is a bully at Yancy Academy who makes a point to pick on Percy more than anyone else. She's one of Mrs. Dodds's favorite students.

Eddie – Eddie is the super of Mom's apartment building. He often plays poker with Smelly Gabe, but he seems sympathetic toward Percy.

Argus – Argus is the security guard at Camp Half-Blood. He has eyes all over his body, which allows him to keep an eye out for danger as he ferries demigods around.

Persephone – Persephone is a goddess, and she's Hades's wife. Persephone doesn't appear in the novel, but Percy takes note of her throne and her pomegranate grove in the Underworld.

Mrs. Kerr – Mrs. Kerr is the math teacher who replaces Mrs. Dodds after Percy slays her.

Nereid – Nereid is a water nymph who brings messages to Percy.

TERMS

Ambrosia – Ambrosia is the magical healing drink of the gods. It's also healing for demigods in limited quantities, but it's fatal to mortals. Even for demigods, too much of it is poisonous. Ambrosia tastes like the drinker's favorite food, so **Percy's** tastes like **Mom's** blue chocolate chip cookies.

The Big Three – The Big Three is the collective term for the sons of **Kronos**: the gods **Zeus**, **Poseidon**, and **Hades**. After World War II, the Big Three swore on the River Styx to have no more demigod children.

Demigod/Half-Blood – A demigod, or “half-blood,” is a person who has one mortal human parent and one parent who's a god or goddess. Though demigods aren't entirely divine—they're still mortal—they're not entirely human, either. In normal school settings, demigods are often dyslexic and struggle with ADHD, but both of these learning disabilities simply reflect that they don't fit in in the mortal world. The dyslexia exists because demigods are hardwired to read ancient Greek, and ADHD really just means that they see everything and so have quick reflexes. Many young demigods don't live long lives, as monsters are attracted to them and often kill them. The terms demigod and half-blood are used interchangeably in *The Lightning Thief*, though half-blood is more of a slang term.

Iris Message – An Iris message is a video message sent via rainbows with help from Iris, the goddess of the rainbow and a messenger for the gods.

Keeper – A keeper is a young satyr disguised as a human who guards and protects demigods still living in the mortal world.

Mist – The mist is a strange haze that appears whenever magical occurrences happen around mortals, or when undisguised monsters or gods appear around mortals. It obscures the magical elements and makes mortals see what they think they should see. Demigods, monsters, and gods see Mist, but it doesn't obscure anything for them.

Monster – Monsters, such as **Medusa**, the **Minotaur**, and the **Furies**, are mythical creatures that either torment or serve the gods and often torment demigods and mortals. Many of them serve **Hades**, the god of the Underworld. Slaying one or more monsters is often a major feature of heroes' journeys. Like gods, monsters cannot truly die; they reincarnate and can be slayed again. They cannot enter Camp Half-Blood unless they're summoned.

Mount Olympus – Mount Olympus is the palace where all the gods' and goddesses' powers converge. Though the palace first existed on the eponymous Mount Olympus in Greece, in the world of *The Lightning Thief* it has moved over the centuries as the epicenter of Western civilization has moved. In the novel, it's on the 600th floor of the Empire State Building. The palace itself is surrounded by a bustling city of mythical beings.

Satyr – A satyr is a mythical being with the lower body of a goat, as well as goat horns, and a human upper body. Satyrs mature at half the rate humans do. Young satyrs often disguise themselves as humans and act as keepers to young demigods, while some older satyrs choose to earn a searcher's license so they can search for **Pan**.

Searcher – Searchers are satyrs who have earned their searcher's license. This allows them to dedicate their lives to searching for the god **Pan**, who disappeared several thousand years ago.

Tartarus – Tartarus is a hellish pit in the Underworld where **Zeus** imprisoned **Kronos**.

Titan – Titans are the first type of Greek gods and the parents of the first Olympian gods, most notably **Zeus**, **Poseidon**, and **Hades**. **Kronos** and the other Titans were imprisoned in Tartarus after the Olympians overthrew them.

The Underworld – The Underworld is the underground land where the afterlife is located; the god **Hades** rules over it. The Underworld is where Hades's palace (modeled after the aboveground one on Mount Olympus) is located. To get to the Underworld, a soul must cross the River Styx and pass through the gates guarded by **Cerberus**. There are several different places within the Underworld where a soul can go depending on how virtuous of a life the person lived. The entrance to the Underworld is through a recording studio building in Los Angeles.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



IDENTITY, HEROISM, AND NORMALCY

The Lightning Thief introduces readers to 12-year-old Percy Jackson. Percy is a troubled kid—he wants to be good and do well in school, but he struggles with dyslexia and ADHD, and he has a knack for getting into major trouble at every opportunity. Percy's sixth-grade year is shaping up to be much the same as previous years—except that once summer vacation starts, Percy discovers why he has such a hard time in school: he's actually a demigod, or the son of a Greek god and a human mother, and his learning disabilities are typical for demigods and aren't disabilities at all. As Percy settles in at Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp on Long Island for young demigods, and later embarks on a quest, he and his friends must examine the ways in which they're seemingly normal and the ways in which they're not, depending on the circumstances. Through this, *The*

Lightning Thief shows that normalcy has more to do with how one adapts to their circumstances than anything else—and that as people become more secure in their identities, no matter how normal or abnormal, they're then able to go on and behave in heroic ways.

The Percy that readers meet at the start of the novel feels as far from normal and heroic as possible. His ADHD means that he struggles to pay attention in classes, while his dyslexia means that he does poorly on every test he takes. Teachers sigh at Percy and assign him detention after detention, which culminates in Percy's expulsion from Yancy Academy at the end of the year. This isn't unexpected for Percy, as the same thing has happened to him every year for the last several years. The only upside to this year is that Percy managed to make it all the way through the school year before getting expelled. On the whole, Percy feels lost, unmotivated, and as though he's never going to succeed at anything but causing trouble.

However, when the Minotaur attacks Percy and Mom during their trip to the coast, supposedly killing Mom and injuring Percy's best friend, Grover, Percy crosses onto the land owned by Camp Half-Blood and learns the truth of his birth: that he's a demigod. Over the course of the next few weeks, as Percy settles in at camp and begins to train, he discovers that he only did so poorly in the mortal world because he's not a normal mortal. Percy's dyslexia is actually the product of being hardwired to read ancient Greek, while his ADHD is a useful feature that allows him to notice more things than most people, making him a better fighter in combat. Learning these things helps Percy put past experiences into context. For instance, he suddenly understands why he feels like he kept seeing things that nobody else could—he really *was* seeing these things, since monsters have been after him for a year. Learning about himself also helps Percy understand that normalcy is relative. In the mortal world, Percy is an anomaly and is set up to fail. In the world of the gods, however, all of those seemingly negative qualities mean that he's the perfect candidate for a hero's quest.

Once Percy discovers that his father is Poseidon, the god of the sea, he's assigned to one such quest: to recover Zeus's thunderbolt, which was stolen during the gods' Winter Solstice meeting and is supposedly sitting in the Underworld with Hades, Zeus and Poseidon's underappreciated and jealous brother. By embarking upon this quest, Percy takes on the role of a classic Greek hero. However, Percy doesn't necessarily see himself as a hero. In his mind, he may not be entirely normal—he's a demigod, after all, and the only son of Poseidon at Camp Half-Blood—but he views himself as more of a normal 12-year-old boy than as a hero akin to Greek gods like Heracles, Perseus, or Jason. The idea that he's a hero never quite settles with Percy. It's this very sense of apathy and discomfort in regards to the idea of being a hero that ultimately allows Percy to be heroic, and it also enables Percy to truly

accept that all of the things that caused him to struggle in the mortal world are actually assets. Percy may exhibit normal 12-year-old behavior by falling prey to Medusa's sedative-laced hamburgers and talking back to Ares, the god of war, but his quick reflexes (the result of ADHD) mean that he's able to successfully fend off Ares in a swordfight and to complete his quest.

Even after successfully completing his quest, returning Zeus's thunderbolt, and meeting Poseidon for the first time, Percy still doesn't feel entirely like a hero. He is, after all, staring down a new school in the mortal world for the next year, as well as the guarantee that monsters will continue to pursue him while he's not in the safe space created at Camp Half-Blood. However, Percy nevertheless leaves camp with the important understanding that he's not just a horrible kid destined for a life of failure. Rather, even if he might not yet entirely think of himself as a hero, when he embraces the things that make him different from his mortal peers, Percy can do great things and even save the world.



FAMILY

Family is a somewhat difficult subject for Percy and his demigod friends, as well as for the actual gods in the story. Every character, no matter how divine or mortal they might be, has a difficult relationship with at least one family member: Percy hates his stepdad, Smelly Gabe, and he resents his father at times; his friend Annabeth has a rocky relationship with her dad and stepmom; and the sibling relationships between the gods Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades are fraught at best. Though familial relationships in the novel are overwhelmingly tense and marred by feelings of jealousy, abandonment, or distrust, *The Lightning Thief* nevertheless shows that love, kindness, and honesty are what hold families together—no matter how convoluted or seemingly broken families may be.

Up until Percy discovers that he's a demigod, his father's absence doesn't meaningfully bother him or impact his life. This is mostly because Percy has a loving, strong, and supportive relationship with his mom, despite her seeming bad taste in romantic partners. Mom is so kind, loving, and supportive of Percy that the absence of other family members simply isn't worth worrying about; he has all the support he thinks he needs. Once Percy arrives at Camp Half-Blood, however, he discovers that he's in the minority when it comes to having loving family at home, and when it comes to not experiencing a sense of abandonment in regards to the demigods' divine parents. Luke, who's the god Hermes's son and the head counselor in the Hermes cabin, never mentions his mortal mother—but he's openly bitter about the fact that Hermes has expressed little or no interest in him. This state of affairs isn't at all abnormal at Camp Half-Blood: most gods, it seems, spend little time worrying about the children they've had with

mortals. And yet, being gods and goddesses, the divine parents of the demigods nevertheless demand piety and reverence from their half-blood children—even those they've never met. Percy learns quickly that it's not a good idea to say anything bad about the gods or his growing frustrations with his dad. At first, Percy doesn't know who his dad is and so must wait for a sign, a waiting period that's understandably frustrating and heartbreaking. Then, when Poseidon finally does claim Percy, Percy thinks of Poseidon as nothing more than a powerful, demanding presence, not like how Percy believes a dad should be. In other words, young demigods have little power to advocate for better treatment or more attention from their divine parents—and trying to advocate for oneself could feasibly result in punishment from the gods.

Although anger and difficulties among family members are most evident in the young demigods at Camp Half-Blood, Percy also takes great care to note that the demigods aren't the only ones dealing with a traumatizing family history. Most notably, Percy must deal with the aftermath of the Titan Kronos's attempts to eat his children, including Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. This event happened thousands of years ago, and the gods were successful in undermining their father's efforts—and yet, the effects of Kronos's actions reverberate even in Percy's present, as Kronos attempts to regain power and free himself from his Underworld prison. Meanwhile, in the Underworld, Hades chafes under the rules insisting that he can only join his brothers in Olympus during the winter solstice meeting. Like any seemingly forgotten and misunderstood brother, Hades longs to prove himself and earn the respect from his brothers that he's never had. And unfortunately for all the gods, fractured, unhappy, or jealous relationships among family members is the norm, not an anomaly—and Hades's sadness and unhappiness are proof that in difficult family situations like these, everyone suffers.

Despite the prevalence of these dysfunctional family situations and the implication that such messiness and unhappiness isn't going to change any time soon, the novel nevertheless suggests that on a more individual level, it is possible to improve one's relationships to family members. Improvement happens, the novel suggests, when people are willing to be honest, apologize, and commit to their own improvement. Because Percy has such a strong relationship with Mom, he's in a unique situation to be able to advise Annabeth in regards to her rocky relationship with her dad and her dad's wife, who despises Annabeth for putting the other children in the family in danger. Because of this, Annabeth has been a year-round camper at Camp Half-Blood since she was seven years old. However, Percy is able to convince Annabeth that it's worth it to try to improve things with her dad—he's the parent with a better chance of being involved in Annabeth's life, after all. Annabeth takes Percy's advice to heart and apologizes to her dad for her past bad behavior—and fortunately, her dad is willing to accept the

apology and commit to having Annabeth home for the school year.

Even more cathartically for Percy, he finally gets to meet Poseidon when he returns Zeus's thunderbolt to him. Importantly, as Percy enters the throne room and greets his father for the first time, he notes that Poseidon looks distant and unreadable. In Percy's opinion, this is far better than an upfront apology or a proclamation of fatherly love—neither he nor Poseidon, Percy realizes, are sure how they feel about their relationship to each other. Distance, Percy believes, is the most honest reaction they could give each other, as it leaves room for them to build a better relationship in the future. Through this, *The Lightning Thief* makes it clear that when it comes to family, honesty—even if the honest answer to how one feels about a familial relationship is “I don't know”—is far superior to meaningless displays of affection. This may not give people or gods the loving, close relationships they desire, but it nevertheless gives individuals the room to find out who they are within a family and work to improve their relationships with other family members.



FRIENDSHIP AND BELONGING

Making friends isn't something that comes easily to Percy. Having changed schools every year for the last several years, it's been difficult for him to make any lasting friends—especially when he appears to be such a troublemaker at school, and therefore a liability to be around anyway. This begins to change at the beginning of the school year when Percy meets Grover, a kind and caring worrywart—who later, Percy discovers, is a satyr (a mythical half-goat, half-human creature) sent to protect him. Later, after Percy learns that he himself is a demigod, he makes himself at home at Camp Half-Blood and then embarks on a quest with Grover and his new friend Annabeth. Finally, Percy feels as though he belongs—all because, for the first time, he's around kids like him and around friends who will always be there for him. Through this, Percy discovers that friends can fill in where one's family might fall short, and in doing so, provide a person a sense of belonging they might not be able to find otherwise. Many of the young demigods at Camp Half-Blood don't have perfect, functional families to provide support and encouragement. By virtue of having one divine parent (who, in almost all cases, is absent from the child's life), many of the demigods were raised by either a single parent or a parent who remarried, oftentimes to someone who was less than thrilled about the monsters that continually hunt half-bloods and thus endanger the entire family. Because of this, most demigods arrive at Camp Half-Blood feeling alone in the world; Percy is no exception to this. However, Percy soon discovers that Camp Half-Blood was designed to fill in the gaps left by these absent or disinterested family members by giving demigods an opportunity, often for the first time, to make friends with others

like them. Though there are definitely divisions and rivalries among different cabins at camp (demigods with the same divine parent are put into the same cabin, and rivalries between the gods replicate among their children), all the campers nevertheless share many similarities that bring them together. They're all in grave danger when they leave camp, and they all understand that camp is likely the only place where they can feel safe, respected, and a part of a community. On a grand scale, then, Camp Half-Blood seeks to fill in the gaps left by the demigods' fractured families by offering them friendship and camaraderie with other kids like them. The friendships and the mentoring relationships that arise out of this setup are some of the most meaningful and positive in the novel—and in Percy's case in particular, his friendships with Annabeth and Grover make his quest to recover Zeus's thunderbolt possible.

The friendships between Annabeth, Grover, and Percy, though ultimately strong, don't begin through conventional means. Though Grover poses as a normal sixth grader at Yancy, he's actually a satyr on a mission to protect Percy from monsters. However, just because it's Grover's job to protect Percy doesn't mean that the boys' friendship isn't real. Annabeth, on the other hand, is friendly toward Percy until she realizes that his father is Poseidon. At this point, she begins to taunt him, since Poseidon and Annabeth's mother, Athena, have a rivalry—this, in Annabeth's opinion, means that she can't be friends with Percy. As the three set out on their quest, however, they all do their best to put these unconventional beginnings behind them and treat each other like genuine friends. They're able to do this primarily because despite the factors that might make them think they shouldn't be genuine friends, the affection they have for each other is real. And because of this affection and the desire to see each other succeed, both individually and in terms of the quest, all three behave in ways that will help the others succeed.

Percy, for instance, makes a point to do everything he can to help Grover succeed in his job of protecting him. Grover is on his second protection mission; his last one ended in failure and he must pass this one in order to reach his goal of obtaining his Searcher's license so he can go look for the god Pan, who disappeared several millennia ago. Percy knows how much this means to Grover, and so he does everything in his power to help Grover be brave and complete his mission. Then, since Percy hasn't spent much time at Camp Half-Blood and so doesn't believe as fully in replicating their parents' rivalries, he also does everything he can to convince Annabeth that they should indeed work together and treat each other with respect. Ultimately, Annabeth comes to agree with Percy: even if their parents are rivals, she and Percy should still be able to work together toward a common goal, both for the sake of the goal and because they genuinely enjoy each other's company.

Though Percy, Annabeth, and Grover all part ways at the end of the novel so that Percy and Annabeth can return to school and

Grover can begin searching for Pan with his new license, it's exactly because of the strength of the kids' friendship that they feel safe and comfortable separating. Percy only chooses to go home when he learns that Annabeth decided to patch things up with her dad and head home for the school year, and a full school year at Camp Half-Blood without Annabeth and Grover is understandably unappealing to Percy. However, their separation offers one of the novel's greatest lessons: that though friends might separate for a time, they can do so knowing that they can return to their friendship another time and receive the same kind of care, compassion, and sense of belonging as they did before.



GODLINESS VS. HUMANITY

Though *The Lightning Thief* by its very nature concerns gods, Riordan nevertheless goes to great lengths to humanize (and add a humorous aspect to) every god, goddess, and mythical being in the novel. From Medusa's roadside fast food restaurant and sculpture garden to Dionysus's obvious displeasure at being forced to run Camp Half-Blood and remain sober, all the gods and monsters read as distinctly human—just with magical abilities and a great deal of power. By humanizing the gods in this way, the novel is able to make the case that it's extremely important to recognize a person's (or a god's) humanity, offer them respect, and treat them kindly. It also shows that while gods may have outsize powers, in important ways, they're not so different from the mortals who worship them. This in turn begins to explain why the stories of Greek gods and goddesses are so relatable, and why these stories have persisted for millennia.

Percy first begins learning about the Greek gods and goddesses in school. In school, the gods and goddesses are just characters in stories to Percy, and so they seem fundamentally unknowable. This has to do with the fact that as far as Percy is concerned, the gods and goddesses are entirely fictional. It also stems from the fact that in the stories, the gods and goddesses are mere archetypes, not necessarily fully fleshed-out individuals. Because of this, it's a major shock for Percy when he stumbles upon Camp Half-Blood and learns that the Greek gods he thought were just stories aren't just alive and well; Mount Olympus has traveled from place to place as the epicenter of Western civilization has moved over the years. Though it started in Greece, it later traveled to Rome and in Percy's present day, Mount Olympus is on the 600th floor of the Empire State Building in New York. By tying Greek mythology to Western civilization as a whole, the novel makes the case that even if this particular polytheistic belief system no longer holds sway as *religion* in the present day, it nevertheless is alive and well in terms of culture. Chiron, a centaur who posed as Percy's Latin teacher at Yancy, insists that the Greek-style architecture that crops up all over the Western world is a testament to the staying power of these stories. In other words,

even if one doesn't believe in the gods themselves, the gods' sway over Western culture is impossible to ignore.

Percy, however, must come to terms with the fact that the gods he thought were just characters are actually real beings with thoughts, feelings, rivalries, and alliances all their own. While he initially follows his friends at Camp Half-Blood as being as reverent as possible of the gods and goddesses, his quest helps him to see that the gods aren't just beings to be revered—in important ways, they seem almost human and thus can (and in some cases, should) be treated or thought of just like any other person. This is most telling when Percy, Grover, and Annabeth enter the Underworld. They feel wildly unprepared to take on Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the gates of the Underworld—but they soon discover that the stories about Cerberus didn't exactly get his personality right. He may be a fearsome beast, but he also loves rubber balls and clearly doesn't get enough playtime or exercise. By playing with Cerberus, they learn that he's not just a terrifying monster—he's a dog, first and foremost, and he might not be so mean if someone were to give him the attention he wants. The same thing happens when Percy meets Hades: Percy can tell that while Hades might be the keeper of the Underworld and is therefore thought of as an evil deity, he's not all that bad. He simply yearns for recognition from his brothers Zeus and Poseidon, and in an ideal world, he'd like to get out of the Underworld now and then—a desire that Percy can understand entirely. Most importantly, Hades follows through on his promise to return Percy's Mom to him when Percy returns Hades's helmet, something that solidifies Percy's conception of Hades as a decent, if somewhat scary, guy.

Through these experiences, Percy doesn't begin to view the gods as any less powerful or important, but he does begin to recognize the necessity of not seeing them just as otherworldly, divine beings. They may be that, but they're also parents learning how to be parents, lovers figuring out how to see each other behind their spouses' backs, and siblings constantly negotiating their relationships to each other. Through this, the novel makes the case that even the most terrifying and powerful entities are, at the end of the day, human—and should be treated as such: with respect, dignity, and compassion.

disguise as a pen—Percy has several warring facets of his identity. Just as the sword can masquerade as a normal capped pen, Percy has gone through life for years believing that he's a normal kid. And yet, just as the pen grows into the magnificent sword when uncapped, Percy, too, grows into a hero and begins to embody the connotations of his real name, Perseus, when he finally discovers who and what he is: a demigod. That the sword came from Poseidon also drives home Percy's divine parentage and his potential for greatness, another aspect of Percy's identity that he struggles to come terms with.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Puffin Books edition of *The Lightning Thief* published in 2005.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☝ I have moments like that a lot, when my brain falls asleep or something, and the next thing I know I've missed something, as if a puzzle piece fell out of the universe and left me staring at the blank place behind it. The school counselor told me this was part of the ADHD, my brain misinterpreting things.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), The Furies/The Kindly Ones, Mrs. Dodds

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

As Percy watches his math teacher, Mrs. Dodds, climb the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and seemingly skip entire flights of stairs, he explains that he often visually misses things—like Mrs. Dodds taking each step—due to his ADHD. At this point, Percy's ADHD feels like a curse—he has no idea that he's actually a demigod (half-god, half-human) and that his ADHD is just part of his true identity. In the world of the novel, demigod kids have ADHD because they're children of Greek gods, and so they're naturally attuned to combat and notice everything around them. However, Percy doesn't know he's a demigod, and so he struggles to function normally or successfully in the mortal world because of his ADHD—he goes through life feeling like he's missing things. This speaks to how out of place Percy feels in the mortal world, just because he's not set up to successfully function in it.

In reality, unbeknownst to Percy, Mrs. Dodds is one of the Furies (a trio of mythical monsters), so it's not due to Percy's lapse of attention that she skips entire flights of stairs—she really is able to do this. Percy is seeing what's actually



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



ANAKLUSMOS/RIPTIDE/THE PEN

The disguised sword that Percy's father, the Greek god Poseidon, leaves for him is a symbol for Percy himself. Like the sword—which is variably referred to by its Greek name, Anaklusmos; its English name, Riptide; and its

happening, but because he believes he has ADHD and misses things, he questions his reality. This shows how damaging it can be to a person's self-esteem when they go through life believing that something that's a normal part of them isn't actually normal: Percy feels unsuccessful and bad about himself, all because he's missing the real context behind his ADHD.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ “I wish he could see you, Percy. He would be so proud.”

I wondered how she could say that. What was so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D+ report card, kicked out of school for the sixth time in six years.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson, Mom/Sally Jackson (speaker), Poseidon

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

When Mom tells Percy that his dad would be proud of him, Percy has no idea how this could be since he struggles so much in school and is, in his own mind, a total failure. This speaks to the fact that not having important information about who and what he is seriously damages Percy's self-esteem. Practically speaking, mortal school probably isn't all that useful for Percy, since Percy isn't a regular kid—his father is the Greek god Poseidon, meaning that Percy is actually a demigod and a hero. Percy's life will therefore be centered on fighting monsters rather than earning a degree and starting a career, which suggests that Percy's struggles in school aren't due to any kind of personal failure or character flaw—rather, he's trying to conform to a life path that simply doesn't fit. What Mom likely knows, however, is that Percy will be a great demigod when he's able to embody that aspect of his identity. Percy just doesn't yet know that he can be successful, if only he applies himself in a realm where his supposed failures are actually talents and useful skills.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☝ “Will Grover be okay?” I asked Chiron.

Chiron nodded, though he looked a bit troubled. “Old Dionysus isn't really mad. He just hates his job. He's been...ah, grounded, I guess you would say, and he can't stand waiting another century before he's allowed to go back to Olympus.”

Related Characters: Chiron/Mr. Brunner, Percy Jackson (speaker), Grover, Dionysus/Mr. D

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

As Mr. D leads Grover away for an uncomfortable chat about his subpar performance on his keeper assignment, Chiron explains to Percy why Mr. D is so cantankerous and unhappy: Mr. D committed some kind of transgression, and now his punishment is to run Camp Half-Blood. Though the novel never elaborates on what exactly Mr. D did to deserve punishment, the thought of a powerful god like Dionysus being grounded is funny. Through this humor, Riordan begins to humanize the gods, which shows Percy (and the reader) that though the gods may be powerful figures, they nevertheless possess distinctly human qualities. They make mistakes, receive punishments, and hate their jobs—just like many humans do.

This is shocking for Percy, mostly because up until this point, the gods have existed in his mind as archetypes devoid of real personalities or quirks. This moment forces Percy to recognize the humanity of the gods and to understand that he must treat them like gods, with respect and reverence, but he must also think of them as though they're human. Like humans, they're multifaceted and complicated, and it's reductive—and, Percy discovers, impossible—to think of the gods as one-note individuals.

☝ “You mean the Greek gods are here? Like...in *America*?”

“Well, certainly. The gods move with the heart of the West.”

“The what?”

“Come now, Percy. What you call ‘Western civilization.’ Do you think it's just an abstract concept? No, it's a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years. The gods are part of it.”

Related Characters: Chiron/Mr. Brunner, Percy Jackson (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Chiron explains to Percy that the Greek gods have, over the years, moved with the “heart of the West” to inhabit the

epicenter of Western civilization, which in the novel is New York City. Further, Chiron suggests that the gods aren't necessarily just deities who control everything—they're a collective consciousness and a cultural force that's impossible to ignore. This continues to complicate Percy's view of the gods. He's never had any reason to think of them as anything other than archetypal, mythical figures—but now, he has to go even further than just understanding that the gods are real people with thoughts, feelings, desires, and sometimes with punishments. He also has to reckon with the fact that, whether he realizes it or not, the religious and mythical narratives of the Greek gods have fundamentally shaped Western civilization. This, the novel overwhelmingly suggests, is why Greek mythology has maintained its popularity throughout the millennia—and why it's possible to see elements of Greek language, myths, and architecture everywhere. Though the novel may be a work of fiction, Chiron is, in this sense, correct that the mythology Riordan draws from forms the basis of Western culture.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ “The letters float off the page when you read, right? That's because your mind is hardwired for ancient Greek. And the ADHD—you're impulsive, can't sit still in the classroom. That's your battlefield reflexes. In a real fight, they'd keep you alive. As for the attention problems, that's because you see too much, Percy, not too little. Your senses are better than a regular mortal's.”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase (speaker), Percy Jackson

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

During Percy's tour of Camp Half-Blood with Annabeth, Annabeth snappily insists that Percy has to be a half-blood (demigod) because of his ADHD and his dyslexia. This is a major revelation for Percy, who has gone through life believing that there's something wrong with him because he struggles to read and can't sit still. Now, Annabeth is essentially telling him that not only is there nothing wrong with him, but those things he thought were wrong are actually assets. This helps Percy begin to understand that normalcy is relative—while he may stick out and struggle to be successful in the mortal world, in the world of the divine, he actually has a lot going for him. His ADHD means he's

able to fight effectively, and his dyslexia is rooted in his innate ability to read ancient Greek, both of which are skills Percy is going to need if he expects to survive and be a proper hero. The understanding that these are qualities that heroes possess is something especially difficult for Percy to grasp, given that he's never seen any heroes who seem to have these flaws. Now that Percy is around other kids who are just like him in these ways, he can begin to come to terms with his identity and feel more at home in his new world.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☝ “That's the only way to know for sure: your father has to send you a sign claiming you as his son. Sometimes it happens.”
“You mean sometimes it doesn't?”

Annabeth ran her palm along the rail. “The gods are busy. They have a lot of kids and don't always...Well, sometimes they don't care about us, Percy. They ignore us.”

Related Characters: Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase (speaker), Mom/Sally Jackson, Poseidon

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 96

Explanation and Analysis

One afternoon at Camp Half-Blood, Annabeth explains that Percy won't move out of the Hermes cabin until and unless his father, whichever god he is, claims Percy—but that might never happen. Annabeth makes it very clear that, unfortunately, demigod children are often the last thing on their divine parents' minds. They don't have the time or the inclination to deal with possibly dozens of half-blood children, all of whom want attention but all of whom are also, strategically speaking, probably unimportant to their parent.

This begins to show why Camp Half-Blood is so important to the demigod children: it gives them a place where they can be normal and learn how to protect themselves, but more importantly, it allows the kids to connect with one another and bond over this shared experience of having generally disinterested families. Instead of pining for relationships with their parents, demigods can instead form chosen families with one another and give one another the support and kindness they crave.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ Just when I'd started to feel accepted, to feel like I had a home in cabin eleven and I might be a normal kid—or as normal as you can be when you're a half-blood—I'd been separated out as if I had some rare disease.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Poseidon

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

At Camp Half-Blood, Percy is miserable in the Poseidon cabin all by himself, especially since he was just starting to feel like he fit in with the Hermes kids and with the rest of the campers. His reaction shows how easy it is for someone's perception of what's normal to change. Percy knows that he's not a normal human, but Camp Half-Blood has helped him achieve a sense of normalcy that he's never had before. He shares so many life experiences with the campers that it's easy to make friends, something that was never easy for Percy in the mortal world.

However, part of the reason that kids are avoiding Percy so much has to do with the fact that as a forbidden child of Poseidon, Percy is an anomaly and possibly a liability. He represents Poseidon's failure to stay in line and follow through with not fathering any children, so it's possible that others in the divine world will want to lash out at Percy. In this sense, the other campers are punishing Percy for Poseidon's very human mistake of falling in love and fathering a child when he shouldn't have.

☝☝ I felt so relieved I wanted to cry, though I didn't think that would be very heroic. Grover was the only friend I'd ever had for longer than a few months. I wasn't sure what good a satyr could do against the forces of the dead, but I felt better knowing he'd be with me.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Chiron/Mr. Brunner, Grover

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

When Percy receives his quest, Grover bravely offers to go along. This is very touching for Percy, especially since he hasn't been able to make or keep many friends as a result of

changing schools so often. The fact that Grover's loyalty is so moving for Percy speaks to how powerful of a force friendship is, and how necessary it is for someone like Percy. Grover helps Percy understand and believe that he's loved, accepted, and wanted—things he's never felt before. This is, importantly, not affected by the fact that it was Grover's job to protect Percy before they were friends. They can still be close, loyal friends to each other, even if their friendship didn't begin conventionally.

Percy also begins to question what it means to be a hero here: his thought that crying wouldn't be heroic suggests that he still thinks of heroes as a monolithic group of people who show no emotion and do great things. Percy clearly isn't like that, and yet he's still a hero per the Greek definition of the word. This begins to show the reader, if not Percy, that heroes are people too, which means that they can experience difficult or touching emotions like this.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ “Remind me again—why do you hate me so much?”

“I don't hate you.”

“Could've fooled me.”

[...] “Look...we're just not supposed to get along, okay? Our parents are rivals.”

“Why?”

She sighed. “How many reasons do you want? One time my mom caught Poseidon with his girlfriend in Athena's temple, which is *hugely* disrespectful. Another time, Athena and Poseidon competed to be the patron saint for the city of Athens. Your dad created some stupid saltwater spring for his gift. My mom created the olive tree. The people saw that her gift was better, so they named the city after her.”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase, Percy Jackson (speaker), Grover, Athena, Poseidon

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

While Percy, Annabeth, and Grover travel to the Greyhound station, Annabeth grudgingly explains why she's been so cold to Percy since they discovered that Poseidon is his father. Essentially, Annabeth believes that she has to mirror everything her mother does—and since Athena has a grudge against Poseidon, Annabeth feels like she has to

make that grudge her own. Importantly, however, Annabeth didn't behave so coldly to Percy before Percy's parentage came out. There did seem to be genuine interest and possibly friendly affection between them, which makes it very clear that no matter what Annabeth thinks, it is indeed possible to be friends with someone whom Athena is supposed to hate. As Annabeth continues along the quest, she'll begin to question this belief and eventually realize that friendship—as well as making her own decisions about who she likes and spends time with—are far more important than upholding one of her mother's ancient grudges. What matters to friendships is how friends behave, not who their parents are or what they're supposed to do, and Percy shows himself to be a loyal friend time and again.

“You should be grateful, Percy. Your stepfather smells so repulsively human he could mask the presence of any demigod. As soon as I took a whiff inside his Camaro, I knew: Gabe has been covering your scent for years. If you hadn't lived with him every summer, you probably would've been found by monsters a long time ago. Your mom stayed with him to protect you. She was a smart lady. She must've loved you a lot to put up with that guy—if that makes you feel any better.”

Related Characters: Grover (speaker), Smelly Gabe, Mom/Sally Jackson, Percy Jackson

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

During the wait for the Greyhound bus, Grover shares with Percy that Mom likely stayed with Smelly Gabe despite his terrible behavior because she knew he'd cover Percy's scent and keep him safe from monsters. Even though Percy doesn't find this particularly helpful or comforting in the moment, it does speak to the intensity of Mom's love for Percy. Percy is well aware of how repulsive of a person Gabe is, so this makes it clear to him that Mom was willing to do almost anything to keep him safe. Though Percy had already been mulling over trying to rescue Mom from the Underworld before hearing this, learning the extent of her devotion to him likely spurs him to make this more of his central plan. He must repay Mom's loyalty to him, in part because they're family and she's all Percy really has, and in part because Mom has already sacrificed so much for Percy—first her independent life, and now, possibly, her life.

Chapter 13 Quotes

“I appeared on my father's doorstep, in a golden cradle [...] You'd think my dad would remember that as a miracle, right? Like, maybe he'd take some digital photos or something. But he always talked about my arrival as if it were the most inconvenient thing that had ever happened to him. When I was five he got married and totally forgot about Athena. He got a 'regular' mortal wife, and had two 'regular' mortal kids, and tried to pretend I didn't exist.”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase (speaker), Percy Jackson, Athena, Annabeth's Dad

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 200

Explanation and Analysis

Annabeth explains how she came to live with her dad as a baby and how he treated her after her arrival. She, like many half-blood (demigod) kids, doesn't have a great home life—most demigod children are ignored by their divine parent. However, unlike someone like Percy who has a mortal mother who adores him, Annabeth is neglected by both of her parents. Though Athena did give Annabeth a baseball cap that allows her to turn invisible, Athena appears to have had little to do with Annabeth's life. Instead, Annabeth's dad was the one in charge of raising her. His callousness and disinterest in his daughter makes Annabeth feel as though she barely has a family, since she receives so little support from her dad or her stepmom.

Though Annabeth is quick to vilify her dad and point out his flaws and mistakes, she conspicuously never says anything bad about Athena or betrays any sense of resentment for her mother. This suggests that even though Annabeth has a far more nuanced understanding of the gods and how human they can be in some ways, she also doesn't necessarily think of her mom in the same way. Athena is, for Annabeth, still an archetypal figure on a pedestal—not necessarily a parent with whom Annabeth has every right to be upset.

“Can't we work together a little?” I pleaded. “I mean, didn't Athena and Poseidon ever cooperate?”

Annabeth had to think about it. “I guess...the chariot,” she said tentatively. “My mom invented it, but Poseidon created horses out of the crests of waves. So they had to work together to make it complete.”

“Then we can cooperate, too. Right?”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase, Percy Jackson (speaker), Athena, Poseidon

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

When Percy begs yet again for Annabeth to cooperate with him and temper her bad attitude, Annabeth does come up with one time when Annabeth's mom and Percy's dad (the goddess Athena and the god Poseidon) also cooperated. Percy's initial question about their parents' history shows that he fully understands how Annabeth thinks about the situation: he understands that Annabeth believes she must do and think everything that Athena does, even if doing so doesn't necessarily serve her. This can even mean rejecting a person who, under other circumstances, could be a great friend. By asking Annabeth to think more critically about their parents' relationship, Percy forces Annabeth to consider that their parents' feud might not be as black and white as Annabeth thinks it is. They might hate each other, but they also did cooperate, once, to make the chariot—something beautiful and useful. Annabeth can take this information, digest it, and begin to understand that she *can* actually be friends with Percy, and that she's not necessarily betraying her mother by being his friend.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ “So if the gods fight,” I said, “will things line up the way they did with the Trojan War? Will it be Athena versus Poseidon?”

She put her head against the backpack Ares had given us, and closed her eyes. “I don't know what my mom will do. I just know I'll fight next to you.”

“Why?”

“Because you're my friend, Seaweed Brain. Any more stupid questions?”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase, Percy Jackson (speaker), Ares, Poseidon, Athena

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 251

Explanation and Analysis

In the semi-truck on the way to Las Vegas, Percy asks Annabeth what will happen if war comes—and specifically, if their parents will be on opposite sides. Annabeth insists that

whatever happens, she's fighting with Percy. This reflects Annabeth's transformation from believing that she had to mimic everything about Athena, including by hating the same people Athena does, to understanding that she has the power to make her own decisions about who her friends are and how she treats them. In essence, Annabeth shows that she now understands that genuine friendships are far more important than loyalty to her parent, especially when Athena has been an absent parent at best.

More broadly, this reflects the role that friendship plays among half-blood (demigod) kids in the novel. Where many kids' parents are absent or outright neglectful, friendships between half-bloods can fill in the gaps and provide genuine support and kindness. Friendship and chosen family, in this case, means far more than blood relationships do.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☝☝ I looked at them both, and felt really grateful. Only a few minutes before, I'd almost gotten them stretched to death on deluxe water beds, and now they were trying to be brave for my sake, trying to make me feel better.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Procrustes/Crusty, Grover, Annabeth Chase

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 284

Explanation and Analysis

Annabeth and Grover do their best to feign hope about their prospects in the Underworld, something that Percy finds touching and comforting. This speaks to the strength and the power of the trio's friendship now that they've gone through so much together. Where Annabeth might've once said something snarky and rude, and where Grover may have been far less willing to feign bravery for Percy's sake, their close and trusting relationships with one another mean that they understand the power of saying things to make one another feel better, no matter how far-fetched what they say might be.

This is a major difference for Percy, who has struggled to make friends throughout his life due to switching schools so much and being such a troublemaker. Camp Half-Blood has done its job: Percy now feels like he has people he can rely on without question to always have his back. Grover and Annabeth might not be family, but they can provide a similar kind of support and help Percy feel okay about continuing

on with this quest.

☝ I thought maybe Annabeth and I both had the right idea. Even here in the Underworld, everybody—even monsters—needed a little attention once in a while.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Cerberus, Annabeth Chase

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 298

Explanation and Analysis

Following Cerberus’s surprisingly dog-like and heartbreaking reaction to Annabeth playing with him, both Percy and Annabeth realize that even horrific monsters aren’t always as horrific as they might seem. They, like anyone else, need love, attention—and in the case of a dog like Cerberus, exercise and training. This realization continues Percy’s process of discovering that the Greek gods and monsters aren’t just one-dimensional figures, and specifically that the monsters aren’t wholly evil. Indeed, thinking them only as evil, dangerous beings would mean that Annabeth would deny herself a relationship with a creature that Percy goes on to describe as a friend.

This goes to show that friends can come in all shapes and sizes, as well as from all different places—even those that seem entirely unlikely. However, in order to make and maintain these friendships, individuals must be willing to put aside their preconceived notions about others and accept people as they are. In this case, Annabeth and Percy must accept Cerberus as friend material and as a dog first, and as a scary monster second—and indeed, they must understand that he’s only a scary monster because he’s neglected.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☝ Immediately I knew that’s where I wanted to go when I died.

“That’s what it’s all about,” Annabeth said, like she was reading my thoughts. That’s the place for heroes.”

But I thought of how few people there were in Elysium, how tiny it was compared to the Fields of Asphodel or even the Fields of Punishment. So few people did good in their lives. It was depressing.

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase, Percy Jackson (speaker), Grover

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 302

Explanation and Analysis

As Percy, Annabeth, and Grover travel through the Underworld, they get a look at the Fields of Asphodel (where the majority of people go when they die), the Fields of Punishment (where bad people face eternal torture), and Elysium (a paradise for people who led good, virtuous lives). This forces Percy to confront the fact that most people in the world aren’t particularly good or virtuous. As Percy does this, he continues to complicate his understanding of humanity, godliness, good, and bad. Now, it’s not enough to divide beings up into multifaceted humans and one-dimensional gods—he must understand that not only is everyone multifaceted, but that many humans don’t even make good use of their capacity to do good in the world.

Though Percy doesn’t say so directly, seeing Elysium likely influences how he goes on to think about friendship and family. His close relationships with Annabeth and Grover make him understand just how important friendship is and how being a good friend to someone can make the person in question a better, more virtuous person. Thus, Percy can help ensure he ends up in Elysium by being a good friend and a loyal family member.

☝ “More security ghouls,” he moaned. “Traffic problems at the judgment pavilion. Double overtime for the staff. I used to be a rich god, Percy Jackson. I control all the precious metals under the earth. But my expenses!”

[...]

“Problems everywhere, and I’ve got to handle all of them personally. The commute time alone from the palace to the gates is enough to drive me insane! And the dead just keep arriving.”

Related Characters: Hades (speaker), Poseidon, Zeus, Annabeth Chase, Grover, Percy Jackson

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 311-12

Explanation and Analysis

When Percy suggests that Hades would benefit from a war with Zeus and Poseidon—it would expand the Kingdom of the Dead substantially—Hades makes it inarguably clear that this isn't the case because war would make his life far more difficult. Hades's complaints humanize him and his role as the Lord of the Underworld. He makes it clear that ruling over the Underworld isn't just about lounging on his throne in fancy clothes and being powerful; rather, the Underworld runs like any other fast-growing municipality, with traffic issues, staffing questions, and a budget to balance. In Percy's mind, this begins to transform Hades from a brooding, dangerous, and powerful god into something far more human: a mayor or a king of sorts with pressing issues threatening his domain and making his work difficult.

Hearing the Lord of the Underworld complain like this also suggests that not many individuals in the immortal world listen to Hades. He acts as though he seldom gets to expound on his problems at length, and he could really benefit from doing so. Though neither he nor Percy say so outright, this is likely an effect of Hades's poor relationship with his siblings on Olympus—no one takes Hades especially seriously or thinks very well of him, so there's no one to listen to him except a couple of 12-year-olds.

“I felt like my heart was being ripped in two. They had both been with me through so much. [...] I had spent thousands of miles worried that I'd be betrayed by a friend, but these friends would never do that. They had done nothing but save me, over and over, and now they wanted to sacrifice their lives for my mom.”

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Hades, Mom/Sally Jackson, Annabeth Chase, Grover

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 317

Explanation and Analysis

Hades notes that Percy has a choice: Percy only has three magical pearls that will help him escape from the Underworld, and he has four people to choose from to save (himself, Grover, Annabeth, and Mom). Grover and Annabeth demonstrate their loyalty to Percy by arguing over which of them will stay behind and allow Mom to go free, something that Percy realizes is proof of how strong his friendship with them is. In this instance, Percy internalizes the fact that he can't always take what the Oracle says at face value—or at least, what he *thinks* it's

saying. Earlier in the story, the Oracle predicted that a friend would betray him, and so Percy has spent the entire journey west wondering what Annabeth and Grover will do to betray him. In this moment, however, he realizes he can truly trust his friends to be there for him, no matter what the Oracle says. This helps Percy feel even more secure in who and what he is, and in his eventual decision to leave Mom and rescue his friends.

Chapter 20 Quotes

“Hades will be mad at both Zeus and Poseidon, because he doesn't know who took this. Pretty soon, we got a nice little three-way slugfest going on.”

“But they're your family!” Annabeth protested.

Ares shrugged. “Best kind of war. Always the bloodiest. Nothing like watching your relatives fight, I always say.”

Related Characters: Annabeth Chase, Ares (speaker), Hades, Poseidon, Zeus, Grover, Percy Jackson

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 322

Explanation and Analysis

Once Percy, Annabeth, and Grover escape from the Underworld and meet back up with Ares, Ares shares his entire plan to start a war through thievery with the trio. Shockingly for Annabeth, he insists that inciting war between family members is the best kind of war. That Ares feels this way certainly reflects his identity as the god of war—it's in his nature and in his best interests to create war wherever and whenever he can. However, this is also rooted in the questionable familial relationships among the gods more generally. As Zeus's son, Ares is in the second generation of the Olympian gods, but this doesn't mean that he's not right in the thick of all the familial drama and intrigue that began when Kronos, his grandfather, ate his aunts and uncles. The following war was extremely violent, and that violence hasn't entirely stopped just because that particular war is over. Rather, the gods are still distrustful of one another and seem far more interested in conflict than in cooperation—a mindset that Ares embodies entirely.

“My senses were working overtime. I now understood what Annabeth had said about ADHD keeping you alive in battle. I was wide awake, noticing every little detail.”

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Ares, Annabeth Chase

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 328

Explanation and Analysis

During his battle with Ares, Percy begins to truly understand that his ADHD isn't a learning disability at all, at least in the immortal realm—his ability to focus on many different things at once is what's keeping him alive, and it's ultimately what allows him to triumph over Ares. This is a major turning point for Percy, as this is the moment in which he begins to change how he thinks about himself. While for much of the quest Percy has struggled with feeling like he doesn't fit in well in either the mortal world or the divine world, he now has proof that he *does* actually belong in the world of the Greek gods. Further, the things that make life difficult for him in the mortal world are actually the very things that make it so he can survive in this new world. As Percy comes to terms with this, it becomes easier for him to think of himself as a hero. His thinking begins to shift from thinking of himself as a kid with learning disabilities to someone with the skills and abilities to take his place among other Greek heroes like Perseus and Hercules.

☞ The middle Fury, the one who had been Mrs. Dodds, stepped forward. Her fangs were bared, but for once she didn't look threatening. She looked more disappointed, as if she'd been planning to have me for supper, but had decided I might give her indigestion.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Hades, Ares, Mrs. Dodds, The Furies/The Kindly Ones

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 331

Explanation and Analysis

When the Furies confront Percy to take the helm of darkness back to Hades, Percy realizes that they're not as scary as he once thought. Specifically, he recognizes the humanity and the decision making process of the Furies. At this point, they stop being one-dimensional monsters who are terrifying and lethal. Instead, they begin to look more like beings just trying to do their job—to serve Hades and do

his bidding—and ones who are fundamentally honorable when push comes to shove. They're not, for instance, trying to attack Percy here just because he's a demigod; instead, they understand that he's keeping his word to return Hades's helm and so they, too, must behave honorably. As Percy continues to learn that the monsters and gods that populate his new world are fundamentally human, just like he is, he'll be able to go on and treat them with more respect, kindness, and empathy—and understand that while they may be enemies on paper, they're just doing their jobs when they act as such.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☞ I realize Hades must've built his palace to resemble this one. He wasn't welcomed in Olympus except on the winter solstice, so he'd built his own Olympus underground. Despite my bad experience with him, I felt a little sorry for the guy. To be banished from this place seemed really unfair. It would make anybody bitter.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Hades

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 339

Explanation and Analysis

Walking through Olympus, Percy recognizes that Hades based his own palace in the Underworld off of the aboveground Olympus, probably because he's jealous and bitter about only being allowed in Olympus once per year. It's extremely important that Percy has this revelation, as it shows that he's truly beginning to humanize the gods as complex, flawed individuals. Most importantly, however, is that Percy can think of Hades in such an empathetic way when Hades was so horrible to Percy in the Underworld. This speaks to Percy's development and to all the things he's learned over the course of the novel. While he began the novel believing that the Greek gods were just mythical characters, he now understands that though they may be deserving of all the respect and piety that goes along with being gods, it's also very important to recognize the ways in which the gods are human just like Percy is. Further, the societal structures of the gods can be just as unfair and nonsensical as those in the human world, something that further humanizes the gods and shows that they're not infallible. Like humans, they do things that are unfair, rude, and cruel at times.

☝ I got the feeling Poseidon really didn't know what to think of me. He didn't know whether he was happy to have me as a son or not. In a strange way, I was glad that Poseidon was so distant. If he'd tried to apologize, or told me he loved me, or even smiled, it would've felt fake. Like a human dad, making some lame excuse for not being around. I could live with that. After all, I wasn't sure about him yet, either.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Poseidon

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 342

Explanation and Analysis

When Percy and his father, Poseidon, finally meet, Percy finds that Poseidon's noncommittal and unemotional reaction is the best he could've hoped for—it seems the most honest reaction. With this, Percy discovers that when it comes to family (and particularly difficult family relationships), honesty and openness are truly the best policy. Percy comes into this meeting already harboring complicated emotions about his relationship with Poseidon, but Poseidon's reaction makes these emotions feel far more acceptable and normal than Percy thought they were. In other words, what Percy discovers here is that it's normal to have conflicted feelings about an absent father who just so happens to be a god—and his father probably feels the same way about Percy. Through this, Percy also has the opportunity to further humanize Poseidon and begin to think of how he might be as a father, not just as a god with outsize control over Percy's life.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☝ I moved back into cabin three, but it didn't feel so lonely anymore. I had my friends to train with during the day. At night, I lay awake and listened to the sea, knowing my father was out there. Maybe he wasn't quite sure about me yet, maybe he hadn't even wanted me born, but he was watching. And so far, he was proud of what I'd done.

Related Characters: Percy Jackson (speaker), Grover, Annabeth Chase, Poseidon

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 355

Explanation and Analysis

Percy's return to Camp Half-Blood goes extremely well; for

the first time in his life, he feels loved, accepted, and as though he has a place in the world. Importantly, this is primarily because Percy has found friendship (with Annabeth and Grover) and a sense of family by finally meeting Poseidon. When it comes to Poseidon, Percy fully recognizes that their relationship might not be the classic, close relationship between father and son. In fact, there are many questions surrounding their relationship and how strong it can ever be—but the simple fact that Percy has met Poseidon and had the opportunity to see for himself what his father is like makes the relationship far easier to handle. By extension, this helps Percy feel more secure among the campers at Camp Half-Blood, and specifically with his friends. Even though Poseidon falls short in a variety of ways when it comes to providing support, Percy's friends can take up that slack and be there for him. In this sense, friendship can fill in where one's family falls short.

☝ “That’s not an easy quest,” I said. “Hercules did it.”
“Exactly,” Luke said. “Where’s the glory in repeating what others have done? [...] and when I came back, all I got was pity. I wanted to pull Olympus down stone by stone right then, but I bided my time. I began to dream of Kronos.”

Related Characters: Luke, Percy Jackson (speaker), Kronos, Hermes

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 366

Explanation and Analysis

When Luke tells Percy about his quest two years ago and admits that he's a double agent working for Kronos, he lays out exactly how and why he turned to Kronos for support. Part of this has to do with how abandoned Luke feels by his father, the god Hermes. The quest was Hermes's idea—it's common for demigods' parents to come up with their quests—and since it's just a repeat of Hercules's quest, Luke takes this as a signal that Hermes doesn't care enough about him to give him a quest that would allow him to stand out and flourish. It is, in Luke's mind, yet another indicator that Hermes doesn't care about him and has no interest in putting in the effort to think about who Luke really is and assign a quest that would play to his strengths.

Unlike Hermes, Kronos is able to convince Luke that there is a way to achieve glory: by taking down the gods whom Luke believes have failed him, and by installing Kronos as king of everything. Though it's up for debate how much Kronos

actually cares about Luke—given what others have said about Kronos, it's likely he's simply brainwashing Luke and will discard Luke as soon as Luke is no longer useful—the fact remains that at this point, Kronos is providing the kind of support and praise that Luke isn't getting elsewhere. This

clearly demonstrates the damage that can be done when parents don't show care and love for their children: their children, feeling neglected, become liable to turn elsewhere, even if the person (or god) they turn to doesn't actually have their best interests at heart.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Percy admits that he didn't want to be a half-blood. He warns the reader that if they recognize themselves in the story to follow, they should stop reading immediately—danger is right around the corner. Percy introduces himself: he's 12 years old and a boarding student at Yancy Academy, a school for troubled kids. Though Percy has always been "troubled," things get really bad on the trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at ancient Greek and Roman stuff. Percy has high hopes, since Mr. Brunner, the cool Latin teacher, is leading the trip. Percy seems to always get in trouble on field trips, but he vows to be good. He ignores Nancy Bobofit's bullying—she throws sandwich bits at Grover, Percy's best friend.

Mr. Brunner leads the class through the galleries. They stop at a stele (a grave marker), and Percy tries to listen to Mr. Brunner's explanation, but kids talking make it hard to hear. The evil math teacher, Mrs. Dodds, gives Percy a look whenever he tells a kid to shut up. She's hated Percy since she arrived midway through the year, and Percy suspects she's not human. Nancy continues to talk and finally, Percy tells her loudly to stop. Everyone laughs, and Mr. Brunner asks Percy to explain the pictures on the stele. Percy explains that it's the Titan Kronos eating his kids, but someone hid baby Zeus and when Zeus grew up, he tricked Kronos into vomiting up the other children. Then there was a fight and the gods won.

When Nancy mumbles loudly that none of this applies to real life, Mr. Brunner asks Percy to explain why it *does* matter. Percy doesn't know. Disappointed, Mr. Brunner finishes the story of what happened: Zeus and the other gods defeated Kronos, sliced him up, and threw him into Tartarus in the Underworld. Then, Mr. Brunner sends everyone outside for lunch but calls Percy back. Mr. Brunner insists that Percy must learn why all of this is important for real life. Percy wants to be angry about how hard Mr. Brunner pushes him, since Percy has dyslexia and ADHD and struggles to memorize and spell. Percy mumbles that he'll try harder.

Though Percy calls himself "troubled," he nevertheless wants to fit in. While fitting in could mean a number of different things for different people, for Percy, it means wanting to do well in school—and, he shares later, wanting to have friends. This suggests that at this point, Percy feels like he's fighting an uphill battle just to get through the day without feeling totally alone—and he doesn't understand at this early stage that this is because he's not entirely human.



Here, Percy shows that he's not a bad student. He clearly pays attention in Mr. Brunner's class and wants to do well, but the other kids and even some of the teachers at Yancy make it hard for him. This suggests that it's not Percy's fault that he's not doing well—in a variety of ways, he's been set up to fail. Though the story of Kronos eating his children seems like just a story for Percy at this point, it's important background information for the reader. It introduces the idea that the Greek gods don't have an entirely healthy family dynamic.



Even if Percy chafes under Mr. Brunner's pressure, Mr. Brunner's desire for Percy to do well nevertheless is good for Percy, since it makes him feel as though someone believes in him. Though it's unclear at this point why, exactly, Mr. Brunner is eager to convince Percy that Greek, this has important implications for all readers. Greek mythology and culture has influenced Western culture in major ways. While the stories themselves may be entertainment now, they nevertheless are important to understanding Western culture.



Outside, there's a big storm brewing—Percy figures it's global warming. He gladly gives Grover his apple and thinks longingly of Mom, who lives close by. As Mr. Brunner parks his wheelchair and starts eating, Nancy walks by and dumps her lunch in Grover's lap. Percy tries to control his temper but somehow—he doesn't remember how—Nancy ends up in the fountain. Mrs. Dodds appears immediately, and kids whisper that the water grabbed Nancy. Mrs. Dodds asks Percy to come with her. Grover tries to insist that *he* pushed Nancy, but Mrs. Dodds just smirks. Percy turns to Grover and when he looks back, Mrs. Dodds is at the top of the stairs. Percy figures this is just part of his ADHD; lapses like this happen often.

Mrs. Dodds leads Percy to an empty Greek and Roman gallery. She makes a weird noise and tells Percy that he's giving them problems. With an evil look, she says that they've found him out—and if he confesses, he'll suffer less. Percy has no idea what she's talking about. Then, Mrs. Dodds transforms into a shriveled hag with bat wings, fangs, and glowing eyes. Mr. Brunner appears and throws Percy a **pen**, which turns into a bronze sword. As Mrs. Dodds flies at Percy, he swings the sword and Mrs. Dodds dissolves into powder. Percy finds himself alone, holding a pen. He heads outside. Nancy hisses that she hopes Mrs. Kerr was awful to Percy—but Percy thinks that they don't even have a teacher by this name. Confused, Percy asks Grover where Mrs. Dodds went, but Grover claims he doesn't know who Mrs. Dodds is. Mr. Brunner asks for his pen back and, when Percy asks, says there's no Mrs. Dodds at Yancy.

CHAPTER 2

Percy is used to weird experiences, but he's disturbed that everyone at Yancy is convinced that Mrs. Kerr has been there since Christmas, when their last teacher left. They look at Percy oddly if he mentions Mrs. Dodds, but Grover can never convincingly tell Percy that Mrs. Dodds wasn't real. The odd weather persists, and Percy begins to feel cranky most of the time. His grades slip, and finally, the headmaster sends Mom a letter saying that Percy can't come back next year. Percy doesn't care; he wants to go home and live with Mom. As finals approach, Percy only studies for Latin. He wants to please Mr. Brunner.

It's worth taking Percy's narration with a grain of salt, given that he's an unreliable narrator because he filters everything that happens through his very biased point of view. However, the way he tries to justify what he does and doesn't see is noteworthy. Although there's clearly something odd going on, as Mrs. Dodds seems to climb an entire flight of stairs in the blink of an eye, Percy believes that this kind of occurrence is his ADHD playing tricks on him.



Something incredibly bizarre has clearly happened—and yet, everyone in Percy's life insists that it didn't. This makes Percy feel even more like he doesn't fit in at Yancy Academy or in the real world. Especially when Grover, Percy's best friend, doesn't validate Percy's experience, it makes Percy feel even more alone and abnormal. As far as Percy is concerned, he's going crazy—and given that he's already struggling in school, it's likely that this self-doubt will have even further negative effects on his ability to function at Yancy.



Because Mr. Brunner believes in Percy's ability to do well, Percy feels compelled to try his best for him. The other teachers seem to think of Percy as a lost cause, and so Percy treats their classes in kind. This suggests that if teachers expect students to learn, they have to believe in them and offer them encouragement and support. Grover's odd behavior continues to make Percy feel even worse, suggesting that good friends need to validate each other's experiences.



The night before his final, Percy gets so frustrated that he decides to ask for help. However, as he approaches Mr. Brunner's office, he hears Grover telling Mr. Brunner that he's worried about Percy. Grover mentions a "Kindly One" at school, a summer solstice deadline, Mist, and a failure on Grover's part. Mr. Brunner reassures Grover and says that they just need to keep Percy alive until fall. At this, Percy drops his textbook. He hides in a classroom when he sees the shadow of something big with a bow coming out of Mr. Brunner's office, and he hears a clapping sound in the hallway. Mr. Brunner calls to Grover that it's nothing, and he sends Grover away. Percy slips back to his dorm, where he finds Grover studying for his exam.

After the Latin exam the next day, Mr. Brunner calls Percy aside and says that it's for the best that Percy leaves Yancy. Percy is mortified and hurt; he feels like Mr. Brunner is saying that he can't handle school. Mr. Brunner insists that he doesn't mean it like that—Percy just isn't normal. Even more embarrassed, Percy runs away. Percy packs his bags and joins Grover on the Greyhound to Manhattan. Grover seems nervous and fidgety. Finally, Percy asks if Grover is looking for Kindly Ones and admits that he eavesdropped. Grover insists that he was just concerned that Percy was hallucinating about demonic math teachers. Percy informs Grover that he's a horrible liar and accepts Grover's proffered business card with the address for his summer home. Percy shrinks: he didn't realize Grover was wealthy.

Grover tells Percy to call if he needs him and admits that it's his job to protect Percy. Percy stares; he's been defending Grover from bullies all year. As Percy asks what he's getting protection from, the bus grinds and smokes. The driver pulls over and everyone files out. Across the highway is a fruit stand manned by three old ladies knitting a massive pair of socks. They seem to be looking at Percy. Grover turns white and tries to lead Percy back onto the bus, but not before Percy sees one woman cut the yarn.

The bus roars back to life and resumes its journey. Grover looks ill and asks Percy what he saw. Percy says he saw one lady cut the yarn. He can tell this is a big deal. Grover says the woman "cut the cord," crosses himself with an odd gesture, and moans that this can't be happening. He says that "they" never get past sixth grade. Grover asks to walk Percy home from the bus station, and Percy asks if someone is going to die. Grover doesn't answer.

This unsettling experience makes it even more clear to Percy that it's not just him who's not normal—Grover and Mr. Brunner are also involved in some sort of mysterious quest to keep him alive. However, this event makes Percy want to trust Grover and Mr. Brunner less. It doesn't have the desired effect, since it makes Percy feel even more alone and abnormal. This suggests that honesty is the best policy.



While Percy has, up to this point, thought of Mr. Brunner as a beloved if odd mentor, this experience makes him question that entirely. Though Mr. Brunner means well, this illustrates that not telling the truth can make people less trusting. Grover also makes Percy feel like maybe he was just hallucinating, something that makes Percy question his own sanity and trust himself even less. Then, discovering that Grover has a summer home makes Percy think that they don't have that much in common—and so Percy shouldn't trust Grover either.



When Grover has such an odd reaction to seeing this, it drives home for Percy that something weird is happening—but because Grover doesn't share what's going on, Percy has no way of understanding what's happening. Instead, this raises even more questions for Percy about Grover's errant, bizarre behavior—and makes Percy even less willing to trust Grover.



Through this experience, Percy begins to gather evidence that he's not normal—and neither is Grover. This helps Percy decide that even if it seems odd, he should trust his lived experience and what he thinks he sees. As he learns to trust himself, he starts to become more secure in who he is.



CHAPTER 3

Percy is so freaked out that he ditches Grover when Grover stops to use the restroom. He gets in a taxi and heads for Mom's apartment. Percy tells the reader that his mom has had rotten luck: her parents died when she was five, so an uncaring uncle raised her. She wanted to be a novelist and raised money for college, but her uncle got sick and she had to leave school to care for him. When he died, Percy's mom had no money, family, or diploma. The best thing that happened to her was meeting Percy's dad. They never married, and after a while, he set sail and never came back. Mom got her diploma, raised Percy on her own, and eventually married Gabe, a "world-class jerk" who stinks. Gabe and makes Mom's life hell—Percy calls him "Smelly Gabe."

As soon as Percy gets in the door, Gabe asks Percy for money. This is normal—Gabe never goes to work at his appliance store and he takes money from Percy for his poker games. Eddie, the super of the apartment building, tries to stand up for Percy, but Percy hands over a few bills and goes into his room. It stinks, since Gabe uses it as a "study" during the year. Percy experiences a moment of panic as he remembers Grover's fear. Percy feels like something is looking for him, but his fears melt as Mom gets home and enters Percy's room. They sit on the bed, pick through the bag of candy she brought home from work, and talk about Percy's last few days at school. She's not concerned that Percy was expelled. Percy thinks that his mom is too good for Gabe, who's yelling for some bean dip.

As Percy tells Mom about his year, he thinks of the museum incident. Mom asks if something happened that scared him, but Percy doesn't want to tell her about Mrs. Dodds or the old ladies and risk sounding stupid. Mom purses her lips, but then she announces that they're going to Montauk for three nights as soon as she changes clothes. Percy is thrilled; Gabe has forbidden them from going in the past. Gabe appears and menacingly says that he wants his bean dip. Mom offers to make Gabe seven-layer dip, and when Percy apologizes for interrupting the poker game, Gabe agrees that they can go. Percy doesn't know why Mom puts up with Gabe.

The fact that Mom was able to move past the neglect she experienced as a child and do better for Percy suggests that in some circumstances, it is possible to not perpetuate unhealthy family dynamics. This will likely be an important lesson for Percy to learn as well, since his father is absent and he clearly has a negative relationship with his stepfather.



Percy is caught between fearing that Grover is onto something and trusting his mom that everything is normal. The fact that Percy feels such a sense of relief around Mom speaks to the strength of their relationship. No one at school is able to make Percy feel safe, sane, and successful—yet Mom is easily able to make Percy feel all of these things. For Percy, then, his bond with Mom is the one relationship that makes him feel like he might have a chance in the world—something that helps him get through the day.



Mom's questions suggest that she's at least somewhat aware that Percy might be experiencing odd things at school. This simple fact helps Percy to begin taking his experiences and Grover's fears seriously, since he trusts and loves Mom more than anyone else. Meanwhile, Gabe's controlling behavior toward Mom indicates that Mom hasn't entirely escaped the trauma of her past negative relationships.



An hour later, Gabe watches Percy load bags into Gabe's Camaro. Percy is so angry that he makes the same gesture Grover made on the bus and then a shoving motion, which makes the door slam on Gabe and sends him flying up the stairs. Percy and Mom get to Montauk around sunset. They've been coming here for years, and Percy knows it's where Mom met Percy's dad. They go through their usual routine of feeding the seagulls and eating blue candy. When it gets dark, they make a fire, and Percy asks about his dad. Mom says that he'd be proud of Percy, which Percy doesn't quite get. She reminds Percy that she and his father were only together for a summer, even though Percy thinks he remembers his dad.

Percy feels suddenly angry at his dad for not marrying Mom and relegating them to Smelly Gabe. He asks Mom if she's going to send him away again. Mom sighs and says it's for Percy's own good—it'll keep him safe. Percy flashes on all the scary and unsafe things that have happened to him at every school. He knows he should mention the old ladies and Mrs. Dodds, but he suspects it'll end their trip. Mom says that Percy's dad wants Percy to attend a summer camp, but she can't stand the idea. Percy is aghast that his dad has opinions about a summer camp, of all things. Mom says that if Percy goes, they'll have to say goodbye for good.

That night, Percy dreams that a white horse and a golden eagle are fighting on the beach. A monstrous voice laughs underground and goads the fighting animals. Percy tries to stop the fight, but he wakes with a start to discover that a hurricane is blowing in. Percy can also hear an odd roar. Mom hears pounding on the door and throws it open to reveal Grover—but he doesn't look right. Mom scolds Percy for not telling her what happened at school, and Grover curses in ancient Greek. He says that "it" is right behind him. Percy is in shock, and he mutters something about the old ladies and Mrs. Dodds. Mom grabs her keys and tells the boys to get in the car. Percy stares at Grover. His bottom half is shaggy, and his feet are cloven hooves.

The family tradition of going to Montauk helps Percy connect with Mom, as well as with the memory of his dad. In this sense, traditions like these can help people like Percy make sense of how they fit within their family. Mom's insistence that Percy's dad would be proud is strange to Percy, only because Percy thinks of himself as a failure. However, it seems that Mom knows something about Percy's father (and perhaps about Percy himself) that Percy doesn't know.



Though Mom and Percy's relationship is warm, caring, and positive, it still can't entirely make up for the sense of abandonment that Percy feels when it comes to his dad. It also doesn't make sense to Percy why Mom wants to send him away for his safety—in his experience, weird or unsafe things happen no matter where he goes. Mom's foreboding comment that she and Percy will be separated forever if he goes to the camp adds to the sense of mystery surrounding Percy and his father.



Percy's strange dream invokes images from Greek mythology: the golden eagle is the god Zeus's messenger, and the white horse is reminiscent of the god Poseidon's son Pegasus. This is significant, given that the reader knows that Percy is a demigod. The dream seems to be a premonition of sorts that situates Percy as someone who is more than mortal—and Grover's odd appearance confirms this.



CHAPTER 4

Mom zooms along in the car, and whenever lightning illuminates the sky, Percy stares at Grover's lower half. He asks if Grover and Mom know each other. Grover says they've never met, but Mom was aware that he was watching Percy. Grover assures Percy that their friendship is real, however. Percy is shocked to learn that Grover is a satyr, like in Mr. Brunner's myths. Grover insists that nothing Percy has seen is a myth, but the less Percy knew, the fewer monsters he'd attract. He explains that they tried to use Mist to obscure what was going on, but Percy is starting to realize what he is. They hear the bellowing noise again. Percy asks who's after him, and Grover says that it's the Lord of the Dead and some bloodthirsty minions. Mom scolds Grover.

Percy thinks he could never come up with a dream this weird on his own. Mom says that they're going to the summer camp she mentioned because Percy is in danger. Incredulously, Percy asks if they're going because some old ladies cut yarn, but Grover says that the ladies they saw were the Fates—and they only appear when someone is about to die. The boys argue about whether Grover means Percy in particular or any person, but a quick swerve makes them stop. Percy tries to make sense of what's happening, but just as he thinks of the **sword** Mr. Brunner tossed him, the car swerves into a ditch. Lightning rips open the roof. Percy and Mom are fine, but Grover is motionless and bleeding.

Percy looks back and sees a huge man walking toward them. The man seems to be holding a fuzzy blanket over his head, and his raised hands look like horns. Mom tells Percy to get out of the car and points out a big tree at the top of a nearby hill. She says it's the property line; Percy must run to the farmhouse on the other side. Percy realizes that Mom isn't coming with him. When he looks back, he also realizes that the man doesn't have a blanket over his head—the big, fuzzy, horned mass is his head. Percy refuses to leave Grover, so Mom finally agrees to help, and the three start up the hill. Percy looks back and gets a good look at the monster. He starts to say that it's the Minotaur, but Mom shushes him and says that names have power.

Though Grover's explanation makes logical, objective sense, the fact remains that being in the dark for so long makes Percy less willing to trust Mom, Grover, and his own perception of the odd things he sees. Grover's insistence that their friendship is real makes it clear that friendships can begin in all manner of unconventional ways—though Percy also has to be willing to trust that Grover is telling the truth if their friendship is to continue. Meanwhile, the idea that Percy isn't seeing things allows Percy to begin trusting himself, rather than questioning everything he sees. This helps him to feel more secure in who he is.



Even though Percy feels understandably unwilling to trust Mom and Grover's insistence that strange and terrible things are happening, it's worth considering that Mom and Grover are doing everything in their power to protect Percy. This speaks to the power of friends and of family to protect loved ones—and to work together to protect, support, and guide individuals.



Because Percy doesn't know what he's seeing (and has been taught that he shouldn't believe what he's seeing), it's natural for him to make up something that makes sense. This is why he initially describes the Minotaur as having a blanket over his head and his hands up—this is the only thing that makes sense to someone who doesn't understand that the Minotaur is real. As Percy learns that the Minotaur and other monsters are indeed real, he simultaneously begins to trust himself more and become more secure in his identity.



The Minotaur sniffs around the car; Mom explains that he goes on scent. The monster roars and tosses the Camaro down the road, where it explodes. Then, he starts up the hill. Mom tells Percy that the Minotaur can't change directions quickly once he's charging, so Percy must leap out of the way sideways. Mom says that she's been selfishly keeping Percy close, and the Minotaur begins to charge up the hill. Percy leaps away, but the Minotaur heads for Mom and Grover. Percy can see the farmhouse on the other side of the hill and knows they won't make it. Mom puts Grover down and starts to back down the hill. She tries to sidestep, but the Minotaur picks her up. Mom dissolves in gold light.

Percy is angry now, not afraid. The Minotaur approaches Grover, so Percy rips off his red jacket and shouts insults at the Minotaur. Instead of dodging the charge, Percy somehow jumps straight up. The Minotaur slams into a pine tree, and Percy lands on his neck. Percy realizes that the Minotaur can only go forward. As it turns for Grover, Percy grabs a horn and rips it off. The Minotaur throws him and then charges, but Percy drives the horn into the monster's side. It dissolves into dust. The rain stops. Percy grabs Grover and starts down the hill, calling for Mom. He collapses on a porch with a girl named Annabeth and a familiar-seeming man.

CHAPTER 5

Percy dreams of hungry, murderous barnyard animals. Once when he wakes, Annabeth is feeding him pudding, and she asks what will happen at the summer solstice and what was stolen. When Percy wakes again, a blond guy with eyes all over his face and hands is there. Finally, Percy wakes up in a deck chair. He's so weak that he can barely lift the drinking glass next to him. Grover is there, looking like a normal human but like he hasn't slept in a week. Reverently, Grover puts a shoebox in Percy's lap: it contains the Minotaur horn. Percy says this out loud, but Grover says it's not a good idea to say that and asks what Percy remembers. Percy asks if Mom is really gone; looking out at the picturesque scenery around him, he thinks that nothing should look beautiful when he's so sad.

Mom's face makes it abundantly clear to Percy that being a part of the divine world will have major consequences for the people he loves. Simply associating with the gods, he learns, makes maintaining relationships with his family exceedingly difficult. In this moment, Mom must also face the consequences of associating with the gods—and of trying to keep her family together in a distinctly mortal way. Trying to get around something that she seems to know was going to happen at some point was, she suggests, futile.



Despite Percy's legitimate concerns about his relationship with Grover, his choice here shows that he's nevertheless a loyal friend. Even though he has no idea what he's doing, he still understands that it's important to protect and stand up for those he considers friends—especially when it seems like all his family is gone. Though Percy thinks he has no idea what he's doing, it's important to note that he's acting instinctively: as a half-blood, he knows how to fight and handle monsters.



Given how little Percy knows, it's easy to think of his half-awake recollections as dreams or nonsensical visions. This again reflects what happens when Percy isn't aware of what he is: nothing that happens to him makes sense in his mind, whether it has to do with his poor performance in school or traumatically losing Mom to a that monster Percy didn't think was real. Percy's sense of grief—something he seems to never have felt for his father—again speaks to the strength and tenderness of his relationship with Mom. Without her, he's lost.



Grover doesn't answer Percy, but he says he's a failure and stomps his foot. His shoe comes off to reveal Styrofoam padding and his cloven hoof. Percy doesn't even care that satyrs and the Minotaur are real—he just doesn't want to have to live with Smelly Gabe. Grover explains that he's a keeper; it was his job to protect Percy and he failed. Grover helps Percy to drink. The drink tastes like Mom's blue chocolate chip cookies, and it makes Percy feel warm and energetic. Grover leads Percy around the porch. On the other side of the farmhouse, Percy sees ancient Greek architecture that looks brand-new. Kids and satyrs in shirts reading "Camp Half-Blood" play volleyball, canoe, shoot targets, and ride horses—some of which have wings.

Ahead on the porch are two men at a card table and Annabeth. Grover murmurs that the man in the Hawaiian shirt is Mr. D, the camp director, and that Annabeth has been at camp longer than anyone else. The other man is Chiron, whom Percy already knows: Percy realizes it's Mr. Brunner. He cries out. Mr. Brunner smiles mischievously at Percy and invites him to take a seat. With a heavy sigh, Mr. D welcomes Percy to Camp Half-Blood. Percy can tell that Mr. D loves alcohol. Mr. Brunner then calls Annabeth forward and formally introduces her. She eyes the Minotaur horn, quips that Percy drools in his sleep, and bounds away. Mr. Brunner asks Percy to call him Chiron. When Percy asks Mr. D what his name stands for, Mr. D haughtily says that names are powerful and shouldn't be used without reason.

Chiron says he's thrilled to see Percy alive and he's glad he didn't waste his time at Yancy. He came specifically to keep an eye on Percy and see if he was ready for Camp Half-Blood. Impatiently, Mr. D tells Grover to sit down for a game of pinochle and asks Percy if he knows how to play. Percy doesn't. As the game begins, Percy begs for someone to tell him what's going on. He says that Mom said nothing except to mention Camp Half-Blood. Chiron states that Percy already knows that satyrs are real, but in addition, the Greek gods are real too. Grover timidly asks for Mr. D's Coke can and eats it as Percy asks if Chiron is referring to God. Chiron says he's referring to the gods of Olympus, not God. Percy lists a few gods' names, and thunder rolls.

This is a lot for Percy to take in, so he focuses on the one thing that he knows might be real: the prospect of having to live with Smelly Gabe, who may now be his only living guardian. Percy is still focused on the workings of the mortal world; his grief means that he's not yet willing or able to really engage with the new divine world around him. To make things even more bizarre for him, though, the camp looks much like a typical summer camp—but the tension between the normal camp things and the Greek architecture suggests it's not normal at all.



Though Percy never says so outright, he likely knows how to identify adults who love alcohol because of his experiences with Smelly Gabe. Though Gabe may be an awful stepparent in a variety of ways, he nevertheless becomes an important example for Percy: Percy's association with Gabe gives Percy a foundation for understanding other adults who share these similar qualities. The gaps between what Percy does know and what he doesn't know makes Percy feel even more unmoored—and Mr. D makes this worse by refusing to tell Percy who he really is.



At Camp Half-Blood, games are a way for the campers and the adults in charge to form relationships with each other. The pretense of a game gives the players something to focus on aside from the fact that Percy is learning all sorts of new and odd things right now. The rolling thunder when Percy lists gods' names gives credence to Mr. D's assertion that names are powerful—and it provides some proof that Chiron is telling the truth. Getting proof in this immediate way helps Percy understand that he can—and should—trust Chiron.



Percy insists that the Greek gods are myths meant to explain things before people had science, but Mr. D scoffs that in 2,000 years, people will think that science is primitive nonsense. He snorts that mortals have no perspective. Percy begins to suspect that Mr. D isn't mortal. Chiron asks Percy to imagine never dying, and Percy catches his meaning—it might be a drag to never die, whether people believed in you or not. Percy insists that he still doesn't believe in gods, which incenses Mr. D. Grumbling, Mr. D waves his hand, and a goblet of wine appears on the table. Chiron reminds Mr. D of his “restrictions.” Mr. D shouts an apology to the sky, which thunders, and he turns his wine into Coke. Chiron explains that Mr. D offended his father. Mr. D says that Father keeps punishing him, first with Prohibition and now with running camp.

With a roll of his eyes, Mr. D tells Percy that his father is Zeus. Percy says that Mr. D is Dionysus and disbelievingly asks if Mr. D is really a god. Mr. D looks Percy in the eye and shows him visions of grape vines choking “unbelievers.” Mr. D announces that he won the game, but Chiron plays a hand and insists that he won. Unsurprised, Mr. D leads Grover away to talk about his subpar performance at his job. Chiron assures Percy that Grover will be fine and explains that Dionysus isn't mad, he just hates his job and being effectively grounded from Olympus. Percy is shocked to hear that there's really a palace on Mount Olympus.

Chiron explains that Mount Olympus is really just a spot where the gods' powers are strongest; it used to be on Mount Olympus proper but moves with the gods. America is now the “heart of the West,” so the gods are here. Noting Percy's disbelief, Chiron says that Western civilization isn't an abstract concept—it's a collective consciousness and it's moved all over Europe as the epicenter of the West moves. He says that one can track their movements through Greek-style architecture and art. Chiron uses “we” to talk about the gods, like Percy is included. Percy asks who he is. Chiron replies that they'll talk about it later and then stands up from his wheelchair. The wheelchair isn't really a chair—it's a big box, and a huge horse's body unfurls out of it. Chiron's torso is where the neck should be.

Up until this point, the Greek gods and goddesses have just been one-dimensional characters to Percy. They've never existed in his mind as real people, with thoughts, feelings, and relationships all their own. However, Mr. D's ability to summon thunder and turn his wine into Coke suggests that he, in fact, is one of these gods. In addition, Mr. D's cantankerous nature and the fact that he's being punished by his father challenges what Percy thinks he knows about the gods—in some ways, Mr. D seems like a normal person with relatively mundane problems. This passage serves as a quick introduction to the politics between the gods, something that Percy will have to pay close attention to as his journey continues.



Mr. D may look like a gruff, unhappy alcoholic, but it's impossible for Percy to ignore that Mr. D is, nevertheless, the god Dionysus. Percy must now hold these two versions of Dionysus in his head and work to combine them, ultimately ending up with a more nuanced understanding of who this being is. Chiron adds even more nuance to Mr. D's character when he insists that Mr. D hates his job and is grounded, characteristics that read as distinctly human.



What Chiron says about the Greek influence on Western civilization holds some truth, despite this book being a work of fiction. Greek-style architecture abounds in Europe and North America, and Greek myths and heroes have been favored subjects of artists throughout history. Through this, the novel proposes that even if the Greek gods aren't religious icons anymore, they're nevertheless worth learning about—their stories have influenced the way the world works and thinks in many major ways.



CHAPTER 6

Chiron takes Percy on a tour of the camp. Campers point at Percy and stare. Percy looks back at the farmhouse and realizes it's massive; he sees an attic curtain move and feels he's being watched. Chiron assures him that there's nothing living up there and he leads Percy to the strawberry fields, which the camp grows to pay their expenses. Mr. D is forbidden from growing grapes, but he can affect all fruit-bearing plants. Percy flashes on Grover and asks again if Grover will get in trouble. With a sigh, Chiron says that Grover has big dreams but is a late bloomer, and his performance with Percy won't look good to the Council of Cloven Elders. Chiron mentions the "fate" of Mom, and Percy asks if the Underworld is real too. Chiron says it is, but then he changes the subject.

Chiron shows Percy the woods, asks him if he has a sword and shield for capture the flag on Friday night, and then points at the other sporting arenas. The mess hall is an outdoor pavilion with white Grecian columns. There's no roof, but Chiron gives Percy an odd look when Percy asks what they do if it rains. Then they see the cabins: there are 12 arranged in a U, with two at the bottom of the U. They all look different. Looking at the two head cabins, Percy realizes that each cabin represents a god or goddess. The head two, representing Zeus and Hera, and two others are empty—but all the rest are full of campers. A huge girl from a red cabin sneers at Percy. When Percy asks, Chiron confirms that he's the Chiron from the stories and that he's been a teacher for 3,000 years.

Chiron leads Percy to Annabeth, who's on the porch of cabin number 11. Percy can't figure out what she's reading, but then he realizes the book is in Greek. The cabin is old, worn, and overflowing with campers. The campers all bow to Chiron and then he gallops away. Annabeth introduces Percy to the cabin as "undetermined," and a kind-looking blond boy with an unsettling scar on his face named Luke greets Percy. Annabeth blushes and says that Luke will be Percy's counselor for now in the Hermes cabin. Luke explains that Percy will be here until he's determined. Percy doesn't understand this. Annabeth drags Percy outside and tells him he has to do better—most kids at camp wish they could've fought the Minotaur.

Again, the revelation that Mr. D can't grow grapes anymore speaks to the political and controlling nature of the gods' relationships. Percy's concern for Grover suggests that even if Percy was shocked that it's Grover's job to protect him, Grover is right: their friendship is genuine. Learning more about what Grover wants out of life and what life as a satyr entails allows Percy to gain empathy for his friend, and eventually to figure out how to best support him.



Though Percy's question about inclement weather makes perfect sense for a mortal camp, Chiron's odd look suggests that Camp Half-Blood doesn't work like that. This is one of the many things that shows Percy how different this place is and how different life is as a half-blood. Despite sharing his half-blood status with the other kids, the girl who sneers at him makes it clear that there are still rivalries and tension among campers.



Annabeth wants Percy to understand that he's already special at camp, since he fought the Minotaur—but he's acting like a normal kid, something that's unbecoming of how cool he is in the eyes of the other campers. Essentially, Annabeth is trying to make Percy see that he's already a hero, even though he hasn't formally gone on a quest yet. Percy, on the other hand, doesn't feel like a hero—he feels more like a normal kid who can barely function in the mortal world, let alone in the divine world where nothing makes sense to him.



Percy is doubtful that he actually fought *the* Minotaur from myth, but Annabeth explains that monsters don't have souls, so they can't really die. She confirms that Mrs. Dodds, a Fury, isn't dead. Annoyed, Percy asks why he has to stay in the Hermes cabin when there are plenty of empty bunks elsewhere, but Annabeth insists that one's cabin depends on who one's parent is. Percy says his mom is Sally Jackson. Annabeth insists that she's referring to Percy's dad, whom she says isn't dead. She shocks Percy when she asks if Percy has been kicked out of schools and diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. She says that the dyslexia means he's hardwired for ancient Greek, and the ADHD is just quick battle reflexes. Most kids here have gone through the same thing. She says that Percy is definitely a half-blood, since the ambrosia he drank didn't kill him.

The huge girl, Clarisse—one of Ares's daughters—saunters over with some friends and tells Percy that they have an initiation ceremony for newbies. Percy knows he has to earn his reputation, so he refuses Annabeth's help. Clarisse picks him up by his neck and shoves him into the bathroom. She starts to bend Percy's head over one of the toilet bowls, but Percy feels an odd sensation in his stomach. Water blasts out of the toilet and straight into Clarisse's face. Other toilets explode and spray her friends right out of the bathroom. The sensation in Percy's stomach lessens and he sees that the bathroom—and Annabeth—are soaked, but he's dry. Outside, Percy and Clarisse exchange insults, and Annabeth says she wants Percy on her team for capture the flag.

CHAPTER 7

The rest of the camp seems to know about the bathroom incident right away. Annabeth shows Percy a few more places and then flatly says that she needs to go train. Percy apologizes for getting her wet—he realizes that it was his fault, even if he's not sure how he did it. Annabeth says that Percy needs to talk to the Oracle. Confused, Percy stares into the lake and sees two teen girls sitting at the bottom. They wave, but Annabeth warns Percy that they're "naiads." Percy says he wants to go home, but Annabeth insists that this is the only place he's safe since he's only half human. Annabeth says that Percy's dad is one of the Olympians. It's a common situation; the gods haven't changed much in the last few thousand years. Annabeth tells Percy the correct term for what he is: demigod.

As far as Percy is concerned, life in the divine world of the gods should work the same way it does in the mortal world; thus, the Minotaur should be dead. It isn't, however—it seems to reincarnate and exist so that heroes like Percy can prove themselves throughout the ages. This another way the novel insists that the Greek stories have staying power. Within the world of the novel, the stories aren't all that stick around—the creatures themselves continue to exist and they bring those stories to life.



Now that Percy is at Camp Half-Blood and is starting to understand who and what he is, he doesn't try to explain away what happens. He might not understand how he makes the water shoot out of the toilets, but he no longer blames his ADHD for making him see things or miss things. In other words, Percy is already getting more comfortable with who and what he is. Clarisse's bullying behavior also makes him more comfortable, as this is something he's dealt with many times in his everyday life. In this sense, not much changes from the mortal world to the demigod camp—bullies still exist.



At this point, Percy doesn't feel like he belongs here. He feels far more comfortable in the mortal world, where he may struggle in school and get in trouble a lot, but where he knows how things work. Here, he knows nothing about himself, the politics of the godly world, or even his own family situation. However, other things about camp do work exactly like they do in the mortal world: gossip spreads, girls flirt, and people (or gods) have children. Though the similarities are uncomfortable for Percy now, they make the case that life in the divine world isn't as different as he fears it might be.



Percy asks who Annabeth's dad is. She tenses and says that her dad is a professor at West Point. Percy is shocked that Annabeth's dad is human, but Annabeth says that her mom is Athena. They argue about whether Mom knows who Percy's dad is, but Annabeth says that the only way to know for sure is if Percy's dad sends a sign—but the gods are busy, and sometimes they don't care about their demigod kids. Percy thinks of the sullen demigod kids in the Hermes cabin, and the unwanted kids at Yancy. Annabeth explains that some campers just stay for the summer if their parents aren't too powerful, but others stay year-round since they attract monsters. Most demigods end up here or get killed; monsters can't get in the camp unless they're summoned, and the camp looks like a strawberry farm to mortals.

Percy asks Annabeth if she's a year-rounder. In response, Annabeth pulls a leather necklace with five clay beads on it from under her shirt and explains that every August, campers get beads for surviving another year. She's been here since she was seven, but she won't explain why. Percy asks if he could just leave. Annabeth says he could, but campers really only leave if they're granted a quest. She starts to say something about what happened last time; Percy can tell it wasn't good. Percy asks what Annabeth was talking about when she mentioned the summer solstice. He shares what he overheard Chiron and Grover talking about, and Annabeth says that she knows something is wrong but she doesn't know what. She took a field trip to Olympus during the winter solstice, and afterwards, the weather got weird like the gods were fighting. She thinks something was stolen.

Annabeth says that if whatever is missing isn't returned by the summer solstice, there will be trouble—and she was hoping, since Athena can work with any god but Ares and Poseidon, that she and Percy could work together. She mutters that she's not too young for a quest. Percy leaves Annabeth and returns to the Hermes cabin.

Luke offers Percy toiletries and a sleeping bag. When Percy insists he doesn't belong here since he doesn't believe in gods, Luke bitterly says it doesn't get easier. Percy asks if Luke's dad is Hermes. Luke shares little, except that he met Hermes once. Luke assures Percy that the campers all take care of one another and then explains Annabeth's odd behavior: Luke was the last one to go on a quest, and it went badly, so Chiron canceled quests for everyone else. Annabeth desperately wants to go, so she pestered Chiron until he shared that Annabeth is foretold to go on a quest when somebody special arrives. Luke thinks this is nonsense.

Once Annabeth makes it clear that the gods are, on the whole, absent and disaffected parents, Percy starts to understand—he knows mortal kids whose parents are absent, and he knows how to deal with them. This helps him learn how he needs to conduct himself at Camp Half-Blood, as he starts to understand how the kids here have all gone through life. The idea that life in the mortal world is dangerous for demigods, however, makes it clear that life for demigods is very different than it is for mortals. Percy will have to adjust his behavior, even as much remains the same.



Even though Annabeth is a bit closed off and curt with Percy, this reads as a simple aspect of her personality. Despite her prickliness, she and Percy do seem open with each other and as though their relationship could grow into a genuine friendship. This moment of friendship makes it clear that it's possible for anyone to be friends—if they decide that's what they want and treat people as individuals worthy of their time and attention. Percy also shows that he knows how to be a respectful friend, as he doesn't push Annabeth to reveal more than she wants to.



Annabeth believes that there's no use in being a demigod if she can't go on a quest and prove herself as a hero. This is a major part of her identity. However, she also shows here that she holds major biases: she won't work with any kids of Ares or Poseidon, seemingly for no reason.



In Percy's mind, Luke's behavior makes perfect sense: he's just like any other kid whose father is absent. He's also the one whom people like Annabeth blame for not being able to go on their own quests, so it's clear that there's a lot of negative pressure on Luke. Though he acts as a kind mentor figure to Percy here, this pressure is important mind because it makes Luke vulnerable to being manipulated by others.



Percy follows his cabin to the mess hall with the hundred campers, a few dozen satyrs, and some wood nymphs and naiads. Every cabin sits at a different table. The Hermes table is so crowded that Percy barely fits. They all toast the gods, and then wood nymphs carry out platters of food. Luke tells Percy to tell his glass what he wants to drink. Percy asks for blue Cherry Coke and drinks a toast to Mom, whom he's sure is imprisoned in the Underworld. Before Percy can take a bite, he notices everyone else getting up. Luke leads Percy to the fire pit and says that they're giving burnt offerings to the gods. Percy thinks this is weird, but he silently prays for his dad to claim him. After dinner, Mr. D introduces Percy and releases everyone to the campfire.

Even though there are probably many kids like Luke at camp who feel abandoned by their divine parents, it's telling that all campers must still show their piety by offering food to the gods. The kids are in a tough place: their parents are individuals who demand worship, but a relationship based on worship isn't necessarily what the kids want. Though this leads to a general sense of disillusionment with family, it does, on the upside, push the campers together—it forces them to find a chosen family in lieu of their parents.



CHAPTER 8

Percy soon falls into a routine: Annabeth teaches Percy to read Greek in the mornings, and then Percy tries outdoor activities. He's not particularly good at anything but canoeing, which isn't a heroic skill. Campers watch him for some clue of who his dad is, which gets old, but Percy decides that he likes camp. He tries not to think about Mom, but he decides that if the gods are real, there must be a way to bring her back. He also begins to understand Luke's resentment of Hermes. Percy wonders why his dad can't just conjure a phone and call.

Again, the social aspects of camp are a lot like those in the mortal world, so in many ways, it's easy for Percy to feel like he belongs at Camp Half-Blood. Gossip, conjecture, and camp activities like canoeing are normal parts of both the mortal and the divine world. Being here, however, forces Percy to confront the fact that his dad is absent—and clearly absent by choice.



The Hermes cabin meets Luke for a sword-fighting lesson. Percy does okay, but none of the blades feel right. Luke divides everyone into pairs and takes Percy; other campers warn Percy that Luke is the best swordsman in the last 300 years. They're right: Percy is sweating by the time Luke calls a break. When Percy sees Luke pour water on his head, he does the same. It makes Percy feel strong. Then, Luke calls Percy up to help demonstrate a disarming technique. He demonstrates slowly, and then they spar in real time. Percy finds that sparring feels easy—but soon, the sword starts to get heavy again. Percy attempts the maneuver and succeeds. When they try again, Percy feels weak and doesn't stand a chance.

That Percy feels stronger in the water (during canoeing and when he dumps the water on himself) is a clue as to who his father is—and a clue as to the kind of person and demigod Percy is. Even if these things don't make sense to Percy at this point, he is still learning a lot about himself and is therefore becoming more comfortable with his identity. Further, that Percy's father isn't immediately obvious allows Percy to make more friends without getting too involved in camp politics.



On Friday, Percy and Grover sit by the lake. Percy asks how Grover's conversation with Mr. D went. Grover turns yellow but says it went fine. Percy says that Chiron mentioned Grover's big career plans, and he asks if Grover got the credit for his keeper's assignment. Grover sadly says that Mr. D decided that this assignment isn't over yet; if Percy were to get a quest he'd have to go too—but the chances of a quest are slim. Percy assures Grover that he would take him along if he got a quest, and then they discuss the gods and the cabins. Grover explains that Artemis and Hera have honorary cabins while Hades has no cabin, being the god of the Underworld. Grover says that after World War II, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades—the Big Three—swore on the River Styx that they wouldn't father any more heroes.

Grover says that Zeus messed up and had a daughter named Thalia 17 years ago. Children of Big Three attract more monsters anyway, but Thalia was also cursed because of Zeus's broken promise. Hades let monsters out of Tartarus to torment her, and Thalia's keeper couldn't keep her safe—at the top of the hill above camp, Thalia told her keeper to take the other two half-bloods traveling with them to safety while she held off the monsters. She died in this battle, and Zeus turned her into the pine tree in the valley beneath the hill. Percy feels hollow; Thalia's story makes his victory over the Minotaur seem small. He asks if heroes have gone on quests to the Underworld, but Grover becomes suspicious. Percy changes the subject and asks if satyrs always guard demigods. Grover explains that they try to identify kids of the Big Three, but he tells himself that Percy can't be the son of anyone powerful.

After dinner, it's time for capture the flag. Annabeth carries in a huge, gray banner, while Clarisse presents a red one. Percy finds Luke and asks whose side they're on. Luke says that tonight, they're allied with Athena, along with the Apollo cabin. Ares has the other cabins. Chiron announces the rules, and battle equipment suddenly appears on the tables. Luke helps Percy find a shield and helmet, and then Percy follows his team into the woods. He tries to ask Annabeth what the plan is, but she only says that Percy's job is to stay away from Clarisse's spear and to stand on guard duty by the creek. Percy feels like an idiot and like the game will be awful when he sees a teammate run past him—he'll miss all the fun as a guard.

Taking interest in Grover's career path allows Percy to demonstrate that he's a kind and caring friend—he wants Grover to do well, and he wants to do what he can to help Grover do well. Grover can repay the favor by helping Percy understand how the divine world of the gods works. He makes it clear that it's extremely important to honor the gods, even in ways that might seem silly—but it's still important to show gods respect and reverence.



The simple fact that the gods "mess up" and father children in spite of their promise shows that in important ways, the gods are very human. However, their mistakes have far more intense consequences than a human making the same mistake might: any child of the Big Three is going to be a target for the other two gods. This also speaks to the politics and the fraught relationships between the three divine brothers—Hades, in particular, is clearly very interested in getting revenge on his brothers.



Even if Percy doesn't entirely understand how capture the flag works at Camp Half-Blood, he is, like most others at camp, very interested in proving himself—something that comes along with being a demigod. In this way, Percy isn't so different from anyone else at camp, even if he still feels somewhat lost and out of place. Further, Percy sees his role as a guard as a product of being low in the pecking order at camp, which makes him feel like the others aren't his friends.



Percy hears a terrifying animal noise; then, four Ares warriors and Clarisse leap out. They surround Percy, and Clarisse stabs at him with her spear. Percy protects himself with his shield, but he realizes that her spear is electrified. The Ares warriors kick Percy to the ground and insist that they don't care about the flag—they care about Percy, since he humiliated them. They spar, and then one guy pushes Percy into the creek. Percy thinks he'll die, but instead, the water seems to wake him up. He stands, fights off Clarisse's friends, and then snaps Clarisse's spear and hits her in the face. Luke races past with the Ares flag, which turns silver once Luke crosses the creek.

Percy hears Annabeth congratulate him, but he can't see her. Annabeth removes a Yankees baseball cap. Angry, Percy says that Annabeth set him up as a diversion. With a shrug, Annabeth says that she would've helped if Percy needed it. She then asks what happened to his arm. Percy spits that it's a sword cut, but Annabeth notices the cut healing. She tells Percy to step out of the water, which makes Percy feel exhausted. Annabeth starts to mutter, but Percy hears the howl again, and a huge black hound appears. Annabeth tries to defend Percy, but the creature leaps at him. It falls dead from a dozen arrows. Everyone ignores Luke and the Athena team's victory. Chiron trots up and says that someone must've summoned the hellhound, and Annabeth tells Percy to get in the water. The creek heals Percy's wounds, and a trident appears above his head—at this, Annabeth and Chiron inform Percy that his father is Poseidon.

CHAPTER 9

The next morning, Percy moves to cabin three. He gets to choose his own activities, but he's miserable. He feels like he's been singled out just as he was starting to fit in. Many kids seem afraid of him. He has one-on-one sword lessons with Luke, and Annabeth seems irritable and annoyed during their Greek lessons. One night, Percy discovers a mortal newspaper in his cabin that's open to an article about Percy and Mom's disappearance. It suggests that Percy may be to blame, and someone circled the tip line number. That night, Percy has another horrendous dream. He watches two muscular men fighting and knows he must stop them, but a storm blows him back. One man tells the other to "give it back," and Percy can hear an evil voice underground telling him to come down.

The Ares kids' violence and desire for revenge reads as very childish—but this is the sort of thing the gods themselves do. A desire for revenge, in other words, is a universal experience. Even if Percy doesn't understand this, or understand why the water has a positive effect on him, he does take the information he has and use it to his advantage by staying in the stream so that he can best Clarisse. This suggests that Percy can piece together some parts of his identity, even without all the information.



As the hellhound and Percy take the spotlight, Luke and his victory fall out of it—suggesting that whether Percy knows it or not, a rivalry may be brewing between him and Luke. It's also significant that many campers and adults shot at the hellhound to protect Percy, as it suggests that the community at Camp Half-Blood is robust and intent on protecting its own. Annabeth's attempt to protect Percy in particular suggest that she already considers him a friend, something that's complicated now that she knows Poseidon is his father.



Being a child of a Big Three god means that Percy is no longer just another child of an absent god—he's both a curiosity and a liability. Because he's not supposed to exist, the bullying ramps up, and kids do everything they can to make Percy feel unwelcome. Annabeth's sudden shift to being curt and rude suggests that she takes it seriously that she can't be friends with Poseidon's kids. Her insistence shuts her off from what could be a valuable friendship.



Percy falls into darkness in the dream, and he wakes up. It's early morning. There's a storm brewing outside, and Grover appears, insisting that Mr. D wants to see Percy. Percy is sure he's going to be punished for being Poseidon's son. Grover insists that the storm will pass around them, but Percy notices the other campers watching the storm uneasily. Mr. D and Chiron are playing pinochle. Mr. D insults Poseidon, spits that he'd love to either burn Percy or turn him into a dolphin, but instead, Percy must be gone by the time he gets back from the emergency meeting on Olympus. He disappears. Chiron invites Percy and Grover to sit, and then asks Percy what he thought of the hellhound. He says that Percy will see far worse before he's done with his quest.

Percy asks what the quest is, but Chiron says that the details are fuzzy. Percy suggests that Poseidon and Zeus are fighting over something stolen. Percy shares what he's picked up from Annabeth and says he's been having weird dreams. Grover is thrilled, but Chiron insists that Percy must talk to the Oracle first. He confirms that Poseidon and Zeus are fighting, this time over Zeus's missing master thunderbolt—which Zeus believes that Percy stole. He has good reason to believe this: Poseidon has done things like this before, he just claimed Percy as his son, and Percy was in New York over the holidays when the winter solstice meeting took place. Percy insists that Zeus is crazy, which makes the clouds roll over camp.

Percy is adamant that this is nonsense and asks if Poseidon really had someone steal the master bolt. Chiron sighs that stealing isn't Poseidon's style, but he's too proud to convince Zeus he didn't do it. Thus, Zeus wants his bolt by the summer solstice in 10 days, and Poseidon wants an apology by the same time. The world will be at war if no one finds the bolt, and Percy will be the first one Zeus strikes down. It starts to rain, and Percy feels as though Zeus is punishing the camp because of him. Chiron says that if Percy fetches the bolt, it'd be a great peace offering. Before he can tell Percy where he thinks the bolt is, though, Percy must accept the quest and consult the Oracle. Chiron sends Percy to the attic.

Percy's identity as Poseidon's son makes him a target. In this case, figuring out who he is and answering important questions about himself isn't a good thing—it sets Percy up for failure and feeling bad about himself. Mr. D's willingness to be so openly cruel to a child reflects the difficult relationships between the gods. In his mind, Percy is nothing more than a proxy for Poseidon himself, and so it's no big deal to behave this way. This illustrates how the gods think of their half-blood children: as proxies and tools, not necessarily as people.



Percy and the reader are well aware that Percy didn't steal Zeus's master thunderbolt; he didn't even know he was a demigod at the time it was stolen. This should, in theory, be obvious, and so Zeus's unwillingness to consider this illustrates his own fallibility. Zeus is more interested in blaming the easiest target than he is in getting at the truth, a shortcoming that reads as distinctly human—and yet, once again, Percy cannot say anything bad about the gods without consequences.



While Zeus jumps to conclusions, Poseidon is overly prideful. All gods and goddesses, this suggests, have some sort of major character fault that keeps them from thinking rationally and making rational, well-thought-out decisions. That Percy can see how irrational the gods are being puts him in a unique position to fix things. Though he's just a demigod, he may have the power to help the gods see the errors of their ways—and help them become better people in the process.



Percy climbs into the attic, which is filled with “Greek hero junk” and pickled parts of monsters. Most gruesome is a shriveled female mummy in a tie-dyed sundress and beaded necklaces. She sits up, and green mist pours from her mouth. In his head, Percy hears the mummy introduce herself as the spirit of Delphi and ask him to approach. He forces himself to calm down—he understands that the mummy is just a receptacle for ancient, inhuman power and asks what his destiny is. The mist forms into Smelly Gabe and his friends. Gabe says that Percy will go west to face “the god who has turned.” One guy says that Percy will find and return what was stolen, another says that a friend will betray Percy, and Eddie says that Percy will fail to save what matters most. The image dissolves. The Oracle doesn’t elaborate.

Percy returns to Chiron and Grover, but he only relays the Oracle’s first line. Chiron says knowingly that the Oracle’s words have double meanings, so Percy shouldn’t dwell on them. Then, Chiron walks Percy through what he must do: the thunderbolt must be in the Underworld with Hades. Terrified, Grover tries to insist that the bolt could be elsewhere, but Percy finds that he’s excited, not afraid—especially if Mom is in the Underworld too. Percy does feel awful about needing to take Grover with him, since he knows he’ll fail, according to the Oracle. He asks why they can’t just tell Zeus or Poseidon that Hades has the bolt, but Chiron explains that the gods can’t go into the Underworld, while heroes can go anywhere and challenge anyone—this is why the gods operate through humans. Percy says that he’s being used, and he feels simultaneously resentful, happy, and angry.

Percy lists all the things he has to do and then turns to Grover. He says he can’t ask Grover to go, but Grover says that he’ll go to repay Percy for saving his life. Percy is relieved enough to cry; Grover is his oldest friend. He asks Chiron where they should go. Chiron says that the Underworld is always in the west—now, it’s in Los Angeles. Percy suggests they take a plane, but Grover shrieks and Chiron points out that in the air, Percy is in Zeus’s territory—he’d die. Chiron says that Percy can take two companions, and that Annabeth has already volunteered. Annabeth becomes visible, stuffs her Yankees cap away, and says she’s going.

When Percy understands the true nature of the Oracle, it shows that some elements of the divine world are easy to understand. They may not make total sense, but because Percy is naturally a part of this world, he instinctively understands how they work. That Gabe and his poker buddies are the forms to relay Percy’s destiny suggests that Percy’s quest is a game as much as anything else—and Percy might be a pawn, not necessarily a player in control. This shows that the gods like to play with and control others, something that Percy will have to come to terms with as he learns more about this world.



Here, Percy receives confirmation that he’s a pawn and not necessarily a thinking player: the gods need humans, and demigods to do their dirty work for them. Further, Chiron also confirms that rational, open communication doesn’t necessarily work the way Percy thinks it should when dealing with divine conflicts like this. What does work are games, deceit, trickery, and heroics. While it’s possible to find instances like this in the mortal world too, this makes Percy feel very out of his element. He knows that open communication works, so it’s a shock to hear that it won’t apply to this situation.



While Grover agrees to go more out of affection for and loyalty to Percy than anything else, Annabeth goes because she wants the opportunity to prove herself and be a hero. Annabeth’s mindset will clearly have to change over the course of the quest if the trio hopes to be successful—unlike the gods, Annabeth can’t be selfish. She’s a demigod, meaning she’s not infallible, so she must extend herself to the others and rely on their friendship in turn.



CHAPTER 10

The camp lends Percy mortal money and gold drachmas. Annabeth packs her cap (a birthday gift from Athena) and a knife, while Grover fills his backpack with scrap metal and apples to eat. He also brings reed pipes, but he can only play two songs. At Thalia's pine tree, Chiron meets the trio and introduces Argus, the head of security with eyes all over his body. Luke races up the hill to give Percy a pair of tennis shoes, which he says were a gift from Hermes. When he says "maia," they sprout wings. Percy is touched—he thought Luke might resent him for getting so much attention. Luke hugs everyone and leaves, and Percy teases Annabeth for blushing.

Percy confirms with Chiron that being in the air is a bad idea—he'd be in Zeus's territory—so he gives the winged shoes to Grover. Grover is thrilled, but he promptly falls, and the shoes drag him down the hill. Alone with Percy, Chiron laments that Percy needs more training, but then he excitedly offers Percy his **pen**. He explains that it's a gift from Poseidon; he's been keeping it safe. Percy uncaps the pen and it transforms into a sword. Chiron says the sword is named *Anaklusmos*, or *Riptide*. Percy can only use it against monsters, and it won't hurt mortals since it's made of celestial bronze. Chiron then shares that the pen will always return to Percy's pocket and tells him that *Mist* will obscure him from mortals when he uses *Riptide*. Now, the quest feels real.

Percy asks if there was a time before the gods, and what it was like. Chiron isn't old enough to remember, but he says that Kronos, the lord of the Titans, called his reign the Golden Age—but he didn't care for humans. Humans only began to flourish under Zeus, after Prometheus brought them fire. Percy asks if the gods are really immune to death. Chiron points out that the Titans are immortal, but they're locked up now in torturous prisons. Hopefully, the gods won't suffer such a fate. Chiron tells Percy to relax and prevent the hugest war in human history. Percy gets in the car. On the way to the station, he asks Annabeth why she hates him. She insists that their parents are rivals and refuses to say more. Argus drops the trio at the Greyhound station, where Percy pulls down a flyer with his picture on it.

Percy's reaction to Luke's gesture shows that Percy is acutely aware of how social relationships at camp play out. He understands that he and Luke might be rivals, and so it's a significant gesture for Luke to give Percy such a nice gift. Being so much older, Luke bridges the gap between friend and mentor, which makes Percy even happier to receive this kind of positive attention from Luke.



*Percy seems to have an innate grasp of what he can and can't do as a son of Poseidon than Luke does—the shoes are dangerous for Percy. In this sense, Percy is already at home in the divine world, and *Riptide* helps Percy feel even more connected to Poseidon. It helps him see clearly that Poseidon isn't an entirely absent father—he did want to make sure that Percy had some way to protect himself.*



Chiron's point is that while the gods and the Titans might technically be immortal, it's still possible to overthrow them. This adds a human aspect to the gods, as it makes it clear that even though they're divine, they're not infallible. Percy and Annabeth's conversation in the car is telling, as it makes it clear just how much stock Annabeth puts in following in Athena's footsteps. Even though the fate of the whole world depends on Annabeth cooperating with Percy, it's still more important to her to hate someone just because her mom does.



Percy isn't far from Mom's apartment. Grover explains that as a satyr, he can read Percy's emotions and he knows what Percy is thinking. Grover tells Percy that Mom married Smelly Gabe for Percy's sake—Gabe smells so repulsively human that he can mask Percy's demigod scent. He says that Mom was very smart to do this. Percy feels guilty for not telling Grover and Annabeth the truth that he doesn't care much about helping Poseidon, whom he's starting to resent—he just wants to get Mom back from Hades. They play hacky sack until the bus arrives. Grover sniffs like he smells something, and after they board, Annabeth points out three old ladies getting on the bus. One is Mrs. Dodds. They sit across the front and block the aisle.

Annabeth and Grover look for an exit, but the windows don't open. In the Lincoln Tunnel, Mrs. Dodds and her sisters announce loudly that they need to use the restroom. They walk to the back of the bus. Annabeth gives Percy her cap and tells him to sneak out the front of the bus. Percy grudgingly takes it and sneaks up the aisle past the Furies, but when the Furies get to the back, they transform into their monstrous forms and ask where "it" is. Still invisible, Percy grabs the steering wheel from the distracted bus driver. They struggle for the wheel, exit the highway in New Jersey, and barrel down a rural New Jersey road. Percy pulls the brake, which sends the bus into the trees. All the mortals race off the bus.

Deciding he can't leave his friends, Percy pulls the cap off and hails the Furies. Mrs. Dodds and her sisters crawl toward him, but Percy uncaps **Riptide**. Mrs. Dodds tries to pull Riptide out of Percy's hand with her whip, but Percy manages to hang on as Grover and Annabeth help him wrestle the whips from the monsters. They manage to tie up Mrs. Dodds, and Percy destroys another Fury. When thunder shakes the bus, Annabeth shouts for Percy to get off. Outside, a tourist snaps Percy's picture before he can recap Riptide. Lightning strikes the bus, and they hear Mrs. Dodds wailing inside. The trio plunges into the woods.

CHAPTER 11

Grover is beside himself as Annabeth angrily pulls him and Percy along. After a minute, Annabeth thanks Percy for coming back for her, but she says that if he'd died, she would've lost her only chance to see the outside world. She explains that it doesn't work for her to live with her dad, but Camp Half-Blood is just about *training*. She wants to be in the real world, where the monsters are. Annabeth begins to say that there was something odd on the bus, but Grover shrilly blows on his pipes and says that he can find our route if he can remember a "find path" song. His tune, however, sounds like Hilary Duff. The trio fights through the forest for another mile until Percy smells fried food and sees a neon sign up ahead.

Riptide isn't enough to make Percy feel genuinely loved; he still feels like he's lost the only parent who's ever cared about him. Because Grover can read Percy's emotions, he functions as an interpreter for Percy and for the readers. Here, he helps Percy understand the depths of Mom's love for him—which, regardless of Grover's intent, simply makes Percy more committed to rescuing Mom from the Underworld. After coming to understand all Mom has done for him, it feels even more unthinkable to leave her there to rot.



Though Percy, Annabeth, and Grover don't pick up on it until later, it's telling that the Furies are asking for "it"—that is, an object—and not Percy himself. It suggests that Percy and his friends are missing important information. Annabeth's willingness to lend Percy her cap and essentially sacrifice herself and Grover suggests that even if she acts like she hates Percy, she really doesn't. Though she's trying to embody Athena, she also knows, deep down, that Percy is a genuine friend worth protecting.



Percy, too, understands that he has to stand up for his companions, or he won't be able to call himself a good friend. Throughout the quest, the novel ties these displays of heroics to defending one's friends. This suggests that heroics for heroics' sake is nowhere near as meaningful as acting courageously in order to save a loved one. Further, it implies that friendship itself is the whole point of these quests.



Even if Annabeth is working through her thoughts on friendship, this quest also represents something potentially more important to her: the opportunity to exist in the real world for the first time. Though it may be somewhat normal for Annabeth to be at Camp Half-Blood, she also believes that what's even more normal for her, as a hero, is to fight monsters out in the world. In this sense, Percy is a tool for her as much as he is a friend—and she'll have to figure out how to deal with this intersection as the quest wears on.



Percy bursts out of the trees and sees a roadside curio shop selling lawn ornaments. It smells like fried food, though. He can't read the sign, so Grover translates: Aunty Em's Garden Gnome Emporium. Percy and Annabeth approach, but Grover insists that the place is too weird. He bleats nervously when he sees a statue of a satyr that looks like his Uncle Ferdinand, and he insists he smells monsters. The door opens to reveal a tall woman in a black gown and veil that covers everything but her hands. Percy tells the woman that they're orphans separated from their circus caravan, which seems to affect the woman. She introduces herself as Aunty Em and offers to make them food in the back of the warehouse.

Most of the statues are life size, but Percy is too focused on food to care about Grover's whimpers or that Aunty Em locks the door. In the dining area, Annabeth admits that they don't have money. Aunty Em uses Annabeth's name and says it's okay. She then cooks them a feast of cheeseburgers, shakes, and French fries. Aunty Em sits across from them while they eat, and she assures Grover that he doesn't hear hissing. Sleepy, Percy tries politely to make conversation and asks about the gnome business. His neck tingles like someone is watching him, but there's only a statue of a girl holding an Easter basket behind him. The girl looks startled. Aunty Em says sadly that it's hard to get faces right, and she mentions that she used to have sisters to help her, but now, she's alone.

Percy feels very sad for Aunty Em, but he feels sleepy too. Annabeth jerks Percy back to life and says they must go meet the ringmaster, but Aunty Em asks if they'd sit for a photograph so she can make a new statue. Percy, wanting to be polite to a nice old lady who fed them for free, insists they oblige. Aunty Em leads them outside, arranges them on a bench, and then starts to remove her veil. Grover gasps that the satyr statue is Uncle Ferdinand, and Annabeth shouts to look away. Then, Annabeth makes herself invisible and pushes Grover and Percy to the ground. Percy stays on the ground, dazed, and sees that Aunty Em's hands are gnarled and have talons. He can hear snakes. He looks to the side and sees Aunty Em's reflection in a glass sphere: she's Medusa.

Grover is, importantly, not a normal 12-year-old kid—he's a satyr, and so the draw of fried food isn't as compelling for him as it is for Annabeth and Percy. The fact that Percy and Annabeth are so easily drawn into Aunty Em's shop drives home the idea that even though they may be heroes on a very important quest, they are still hungry 12-year-olds who crave burgers and French fries at times. They, like the gods and monsters, are distinctly human in some ways.



Percy makes it clear that there were a number of red flags as he entered Aunty Em's warehouse—but because he is human and therefore fallible in some ways, he both didn't notice and didn't trust Grover's assessment of danger. Despite this, it's important to realize that Annabeth and Percy are still heroes—and heroes can make mistakes, just like everyone else. By allowing the trio to walk into this trap and get sucked in, the novel makes it clear that anyone and everyone is susceptible to manipulation.



Monsters in disguise, like Medusa and the Furies, know very well how to embody normalcy in order to accomplish their goals. Medusa may be as normal as any other monster in the divine world, but in the mortal world, it's necessary for her to assume the identity of Aunty Em. Mrs. Dodds did the same thing by assuming the math teacher persona. The way that the monsters do this throughout the novel makes it clear that what's normal changes from situation to situation—and it's possible for individuals to pass as normal in a variety of settings.



Percy tries to think of how Medusa died in the Greek myth, but he's too groggy. He thinks that she was asleep when Perseus attacked her. Medusa says that Athena turned her into this cursed creature, and she asks Percy if he really wants to be a pawn of the gods. Grover shouts, flies in with a huge branch, and begins whacking Medusa. Percy runs away and hides. Annabeth appears next to Percy and says that he has to cut Medusa's head off. She gives him another glass sphere, and Percy uncaps **Riptide**. In the sphere, Percy sees Medusa grab Grover's stick, so he yells. Medusa lets him approach and look at her in the sphere before lunging, but Percy slashes up and hears the hiss of a monster disintegrating. He doesn't look when he hears a thud next to his foot.

Annabeth covers the head in the black veil and explains that the head is a spoil of war—but it can still petrify people. Percy congratulates Grover on his bravery, and they carry Medusa's head into the warehouse. They sit around the head for a while, and then Percy asks if they have Athena to thank for Medusa. Irritated, Annabeth says that Medusa was Poseidon's girlfriend and that they met in Athena's temple. Athena turned Medusa into a monster, and Medusa probably wanted to turn Percy into a statue because he looks like Poseidon.

Percy and Annabeth bicker until Grover points out that they have to do something with the head. Percy feels angry about the quest. He finds Medusa's account books, locates the address for the Underworld—it's in an L.A. recording studio—and fills out a packing slip for the Hermes Overnight Express. He sends the head to the gods at Mount Olympus and ignores Grover's warning that he'll look impertinent. Annabeth says that they need a new plan.

CHAPTER 12

Annabeth, Grover, and Percy camp in a clearing where kids have clearly partied; there's garbage everywhere. Percy volunteers to keep watch, but Grover stays up with him. Grover grumbles that he won't find Pan at this rate—this is why he wants his searcher's license. Percy asks about searchers. Grover explains that the god Pan disappeared 2,000 years ago, and though humans believe he's dead, satyrs don't. Brave satyrs pledge to spend their lives searching—and none come back alive. Percy is awed that Grover would pursue such a hopeless dream, but he wonders if his own dreams are just as hopeless. Percy asks what chance they have against Hades.

The friends' individual talents allow them to triumph over Medusa: Grover uses his winged shoes, Annabeth uses her cunning and planning skills, and Percy uses his prowess with Riptide. It's the combination of these three very different talents and skillsets that allows them to emerge successful, which speaks to the power of friendship and working together. If the friends continue to work together as they encounter monsters, they have a better chance of completing the quest and emerging victorious.



Once again, the demigods are the ones who have to deal with the aftermath of their parents' mistakes and relationships—Percy and Annabeth were at risk with Medusa because of something their parents did millennia ago. This shows that even generations after the initial event, families of the gods still have to reckon with the aftereffects. In turn, this makes the familial relationships of the divine even more fraught.



Percy is beginning to understand just how much of a game this is for the gods, and so he makes it clear that he's not willing to just be a pawn. Though sending the head to the gods is risky, it allows Percy to assert his own independence and make it clear that he's his own person, not just Poseidon's son.



Grover wants to be a hero, but in his own way—being a searcher offers him a chance at glory, just like going on this quest offers Percy glory. However, it's important to note that neither boy necessarily thinks of himself as a hero. To them, they're just normal kids who happen to have fallen into abnormal circumstances. This continues to make the point that heroes don't have to look a certain way to be heroic—they can be normal kids and still do great things.



Grover starts to talk about what Annabeth thinks, but Percy snappily says that she must have a plan. Grover asks Percy to believe that she's a good person, since she forgave Grover. Percy realizes that Annabeth must've been Grover's first, disastrous keeper assignment, but Grover refuses to talk about it. He says that on the bus, the Furies were asking for "it," not "him." They were looking for an object, and Percy might not be looking for the right thing. Percy admits that he only agreed to the quest so he could go to the Underworld and rescue Mom; he doesn't care about Poseidon at all. Grover says that no matter what Percy says, he's glad that Poseidon claimed him and he wants attention. Percy insists that Grover is wrong, but falls asleep instantly when Grover suggests that Percy sleep.

Percy dreams that he's standing in a dark cavern at the edge of a gaping pit. There are dead spirits trying to pull Percy back, but Percy looks into the pit: he senses that something huge and evil is trying to leave it. From the bottom, an ancient voice says that Percy should barter with the voice, not the gods. Mom appears over the pit in a pained pose. A force starts to pull on Percy, and the voice asks Percy to help him rise and strike back against the gods. Percy understands that whatever is in the pit isn't pulling him in—it's trying to pull itself out. He wakes with a start. Annabeth points to Grover, who has a dirty pink poodle in his lap. The poodle yaps, and Grover responds to it. Percy is flabbergasted. Grover introduces the poodle as Gladiola.

Percy looks to Annabeth, expecting her to laugh, but she says seriously that she said hello and Percy must too. When Gladiola growls, Percy says hello. Grover explains that Gladiola ran away from his family and doesn't want to go back, but he will to help Grover out—there's a \$200 reward for his return. They buy train tickets with the money. Percy thinks of his dream and of all that might be waiting for him in the west.

CHAPTER 13

Percy, Annabeth, and Grover spend two days on the train, but nothing attacks them. The picture the tourist took in New Jersey of Percy with **Riptide** is in all the papers, so Percy keeps an eye out and tries to lay low. The accompanying article says that Smelly Gabe is offering a cash reward for information as to Percy's whereabouts. One evening, as Grover snores, Annabeth asks who wants Percy's help and shares that he's been talking in his sleep. He describes his dreams of the voice in the pit. Annabeth insists that it doesn't sound like Hades, and it doesn't make sense for Hades to ask Percy to bring the bolt if Hades already has it. When Percy mentions Mom, Annabeth reminds him that he can't barter with Hades. If Hades had her dad, she'd leave him to rot.

Percy tells Grover he's wrong not because Grover is incorrect, but because admitting the truth is uncomfortable. Percy desperately wants to prove himself to Poseidon and make it clear that he's not just a mistake or collateral damage. He's a person, and he'd like to be treated as such. Snapping at Grover, however, is something that Percy feels he can do because of their close friendship. Though it may not be kind, Percy nevertheless feels as though he can behave roughly and still keep Grover as a friend—he knows that Grover will forgive him.



These disturbing dreams indicate to Percy that there's more going on here than a simple quest for a stolen thunderbolt—something else is trying to gain power. This tells Percy that he's probably missing important information, something that puts him at risk of trusting the wrong people or making mistakes with serious consequences. The thing in the pit clearly understands the power of family to motivate Percy, which is why it dangles Mom in front of him.



The way that Grover and Annabeth talk about Gladiola forces Percy to also rethink how he considers animals. He can no longer think of this creature just as a dirty pink poodle—Gladiola clearly has desires and loyalties like everyone else. Percy must, in essence, humanize everyone he meets, even those who aren't human.



Annabeth is beginning to understand that if she wants this quest to be successful, she has to put in some effort to get to know Percy. It's not useful for her to ignore him just because Athena and Poseidon are enemies; Percy's dreams are important, and so it's important for Annabeth and him to discuss and try to interpret them. Moreover, Annabeth has spent far more time in the world of the gods, and so she has a lot more information on what might be going on than Percy does.



Percy is shocked, but Annabeth shares that her dad wasn't thrilled when she showed up in a golden cradle. He married a mortal woman and had two kids, and they pretend that Annabeth doesn't exist. Percy says that Mom married an awful guy to protect him and that maybe Annabeth's dad is doing the same, but Annabeth fingers her necklace and the gold class ring on it. She says that her dad doesn't care about her; her dad and stepmom treat her like a freak, and she ran away at seven years old. Athena guided Annabeth, along with a couple of friends, to Camp Half-Blood.

Eight days before the summer solstice, the train passes through St. Louis. Annabeth twists to look at the Gateway Arch and says she wants to build a great monument to the gods. Percy laughs at the thought of Annabeth being an architect and sitting still, so Annabeth insults Poseidon. Percy asks if they can cooperate at all, pointing out that even Poseidon and Athena cooperated once. The train stops for a layover, so Annabeth insists on riding to the top of the Arch. They meander through the museum; and Percy smells something odd, but Grover insists that underground air always smells like monsters. Still, something feels wrong. Percy asks about Hades's symbol of power, the helm of darkness, which allows him to become darkness and radiate fear. Percy asks if they can know that Hades isn't here now. They can't.

Percy feels even worse when he sees the tiny elevator: he hates confined spaces because of his ADHD. The three get in with a large woman and a Chihuahua, which Percy thinks must be a service dog. They make small talk on the way up, but the woman and dog's eyes look unintelligent and vicious. Up on the observation deck Percy feels even more nervous, so he's thrilled when it's time to go. Annabeth and Grover get in an elevator, and there's no room for Percy, so he insists he'll take the next one. The only people on the deck now one family and the woman with her Chihuahua. The woman smiles, and a forked tongue flicks out. The woman calls the Chihuahua "son" and sighs that it's not a good time. She smiles again and tells Percy that the dog is her son, the Chimera.

Annabeth's story reveals that having a mortal parent is no guarantee that that parent will present or happy to have a child at all. Given how little any of the other campers at Camp Half-Blood talked about their mortal parents, it's possible that many have family situations like this—which means that for these demigods, friendship is the only way to receive care and support.



Both Percy and Annabeth have work to do if they're going to develop a genuine, caring friendship. They don't have the kind of relationship yet where they can laugh at and insult each other, even jokingly, and they need to work hard to avoid that kind of behavior if they want to gain each other's trust. Meanwhile, Grover's insistence that there's nothing amiss here (when in all likelihood, there is a monster around) shows that the friends also need to get better at trusting one another's instincts. Even if one of them doesn't pick up on danger, another is bound to.



That Percy attributes his fear of small, enclosed spaces to his ADHD shows that he hasn't entirely shifted over to thinking about his disorder as something related to being a demigod. When the monsters reveal themselves, it becomes clear that Percy isn't experiencing ADHD-adjacent claustrophobia: he's legitimately sensing monsters and is scared for a valid reason. The woman and the Chihuahua show that they understand the power of friendship, as they wait to get Percy alone, when he's more vulnerable.



As the Chimera barks, it grows until it touches the ceiling and transforms into its monstrous form. The woman introduces herself as Echidna; dumbfounded, Percy asks if that's a kind of anteater. Echidna sets the Chimera on Percy for this insult. Percy knows he has to protect the mortals. He engages the Chimera, which blows a hole in the side of the observation deck with flames. He tries to stab at the lion head, but the snake head tail bites Percy's leg and pulls him off his feet. **Riptide** falls into the Mississippi River below. Percy knows he can't just die—he has to protect the mortals. Echidna taunts Percy that he should jump and prove that he's Poseidon's son. Percy stands at the edge, thinks of his childhood memory of Poseidon visiting him, and jumps. He prays for Poseidon to help him.

Not everything about being a god or a monster is a good thing—Echidna is clearly upset about having an animal named after her, as she feels it takes away some of her power. This makes her seem more human and multifaceted—she has issues in her life beyond parenting her monstrous children and tormenting heroes like Percy. Percy's choice to jump is a major turning point for him. It represents his choice to trust Poseidon and start to think of his father differently—possibly, as someone who can actually help Percy and guide him in times of need.



CHAPTER 14

Percy plummets into the river and sinks into the mud—but he realizes that it didn't hurt, that he's not wet, and that he can't feel the Chimera's poison anymore. He snatches a cigarette lighter out of the muck and lights it. It occurs to Percy that he's also breathing. He imagines a woman's voice like Mom's asking what Percy should say, and Percy thanks Poseidon for saving him. Percy wonders why Poseidon saved him when he's such a poor hero, but **Riptide** appears in front of him. The woman's voice then tells Percy to take the sword. She says that she's just a messenger, not Mom, but Mom's fate isn't hopeless—Percy must go to the beach in Santa Monica before going to the Underworld. Before the woman leaves, she tells Percy not to trust the gifts.

The ability to breathe and light a lighter underwater shows Percy that if he trusts in who he is and who his father is, he can do amazing things—and use these skills to his advantage later, if he needs to. The messenger also makes it clear to Percy that someone is looking out for him, which suggests that Percy has more friends and family out in the world than he might realize. Most importantly, however, she gives him hope that he can do something to help Mom.



Confused, Percy grabs **Riptide**, caps it, and swims for the surface. He passes a news anchor saying that it's not a terrorist attack and that there are survivors. Another newsperson says that they have surveillance footage of a teen boy setting off a “freak explosion.” Grover and Annabeth finally find Percy as a woman from the observation deck passes on a stretcher and points. Percy pulls Annabeth and Grover away and tells them what happened. They hear another reporter mentioning Percy by name as the culprit and showing a photo. They make it back to the train just before it pulls away.

Percy and his friends may be on a quest in the divine world, but they still have to deal with all the issues that go along with being 12-year-old kids on the loose in the mortal world—especially when humans see things like explosions, not swordfights with monsters. In this sense, the novel suggests that Percy and Annabeth will never truly fit in in either world. In both realms, they have to deal with things that tie them uncomfortably to their other world.



CHAPTER 15

Seven days before the solstice, Percy, Grover, and Annabeth arrive in Denver. Annabeth suggests that they try to contact Chiron, so they wander around for hours. Finally, they reach a do-it-yourself car wash and Annabeth explains that they're Iris messaging: the goddess Iris carries messages for gods and sometimes half-bloods. Once Grover creates a misty rainbow, Annabeth tosses a drachma into the rainbow and requests Half-Blood Hill. They can see Luke at the railing. Luke grins but says that Chiron is at the cabins; they're having issues with campers. A big car blasting hip-hop pulls into the next stall, so Annabeth drags Grover away to deal with it.

Alone with Percy, Luke shouts that there have been fights because the campers are taking sides; it's like the Trojan War all over again. Ares is on Poseidon's side. Percy tells Luke everything, even his dreams. Luke insists that Hades stole the bolt using his helm of darkness; only someone invisible could steal it. After a minute of silence, Luke clarifies that he's not accusing Annabeth. He asks if Percy is using the shoes. Percy lies that he is as the water shuts off. As the image cuts out, Luke says to tell Grover that no one will turn into a pine tree. Percy's stomach drops.

Annabeth, Grover, and Percy stop at a diner. As the waitress asks if they can pay, they hear a rumble outside and a huge motorcycle pulls up. The man on it is handsome, wears wraparound sunglasses, and looks somehow familiar. A hot wind blows in as the man enters and everyone in the diner stands. The man waves his hand dismissively, and everyone sits down. When the waitress asks again if the trio can pay, the man says that it's on him. He slides into the booth and Percy immediately feels angry and bitter. The man asks if Percy is "Seaweed's kid." Percy snaps back and ignores Annabeth's warnings. He knows that this is Ares, the god of war. Ares says he has a proposition, and he pays for the meal with gold drachmas.

Annabeth recognizes that they have too many questions to deal with on their own, so it's a natural desire to try to contact Chiron. Introducing Percy to Iris messaging helps Percy better understand how to navigate the divine world, which in turn will help him be a more successful hero. Because of the way Half-Blood Hill encourages campers to form relationships and trust one another, the trio has no issues speaking to Luke—he is, in their mind, just as good as Chiron.



The things that Luke tells Percy suggest that while he may be older and more experienced, he's missing important information—Annabeth has said that gods can't steal one another's items, so Hades couldn't have stolen the bolt. This raises questions about what might be going on with Luke, given that—as far as Percy can tell—Luke is a knowledgeable mentor.



Like Dionysus, the only other proper god Percy has met at this point, Ares reads as distinctly human: he's dressed in a way that allows him to fit into modern society, and he clearly knows how to move through the world and get what he wants. However, he is still a god: the fact that everyone in the diner rises reads as an instinctive respectful reaction. This reminds the reader that though Ares may possess human qualities, he still commands respect and reverence from humans.



Ares says he needs a favor: he left his shield at an abandoned water park while on a date with his girlfriend. He doesn't feel like getting it and he knows that Percy needs an opportunity to prove himself. Percy realizes that Ares's power is making him angry and so he refuses the proposition. Ares says he already knows all about Percy's quest—he's the one who suggested that Hades stole the bolt—and if Percy agrees to help him, he'll arrange transport for them to continue west. Percy refuses again, but he changes his mind when Ares says he has information on Mom. Percy asks what interrupted the date, but Ares cagily says that he'll meet Percy back here when Percy is done. When Percy blinks, Ares is gone—but he knows that the encounter was real. He wonders if Ares really knows anything about Mom.

Percy says that they should forget Ares and go, but Annabeth says that they can't. They head to the waterpark after they eat. It's closed, padlocked, and looks creepy. Percy suggests that it'd be horrible to bring a pretty girl here for a date, but Annabeth warns him to be respectful—Ares's girlfriend is Aphrodite. Grover uses the flying shoes to get over the barbed wire, but Annabeth and Percy climb over. They walk through the empty park, and Annabeth steals clothes for them at a souvenir shop. They discuss Aphrodite and Ares's relationship: Aphrodite's husband is Hephaestus, who's disabled but clever, a combination that Aphrodite doesn't find attractive. Hephaestus spends lots of time trying to embarrass Ares and Aphrodite when they're together, which is why they meet at remote places like this.

They reach the Tunnel of Love ride. The pool is empty, but at the bottom is a boat with Ares's shield in it. Percy says that he's going to go down, and he asks Annabeth to come with him, but she's embarrassed. She follows him down anyway. At the boat, Percy wonders why gods would meet here. Then, he notices mirrors all around—the gods must like staring at themselves. When Percy touches the shield, he feels a strand break: it's a trap. The Cupid statues around the bowl shoot their arrows, creating a net over the bowl, and the slope is too steep to climb back up. Then, the Cupids' heads open to reveal cameras. A loudspeaker booms that they'll be broadcast live to Olympus in one minute as wind-up spiders pour out of the mirrors. Annabeth screams in terror.

Percy is starting to become more cautious about who he trusts. He realizes that Ares isn't someone he should trust—and yet, because Ares is a god, Percy and his friends must do as Ares asks or suffer the consequences. It's important that Ares admits to being the one who suggested that Hades has the master bolt. This suggests that Ares is more involved in all of what's going on than he lets on—and possibly, that he's playing games that no one else is even aware of.



Again, Annabeth reminds Percy that even if the gods may make questionable decisions, they still need respect and reverence. He can't just go around insulting Ares and Aphrodite if he wants to get through the quest without bringing a god's wrath down upon them. In this sense, Percy has to treat the gods like humans with complex romantic relationships. The relationships might not make sense to Percy, but he still has to treat them as though they're legitimate and worth his time.



The revelation that the gods have what amounts to live reality television further humanizes the gods—they, like many humans, love entertainment of this sort. Though Percy clearly isn't the intended victim of this trap, this incident still means that he's going to make a name for himself on Olympus anyway. Through doing this, Percy has the opportunity to show Poseidon what he can do and to make the case that he's worthy of attention.



Percy drags Annabeth to the boat. He kicks the spiders away and then notices the water pipes that would normally provide water for the ride. He tells Grover to turn the ride on. Grover can't make it work, so Percy imagines the ocean. Water explodes out of the pipes just as the cameras click on. The water sweeps away the spiders and spins the boat before it starts down the ride. As they approach the end, Percy sees that it's chained up, so he tells Annabeth to unfasten her seat belt so they can jump. They jump on Annabeth's signal, and Grover catches them in the air. They have too much momentum and crash. The Cupids are still filming. Percy hates dealing with bullies; he says that they have to go talk to Ares.

Once again, Percy, Annabeth, and Grover are an effective team when they work together to solve a problem. As they learn to trust each other, this becomes easier and easier. It's telling that Percy agrees to jump on Annabeth's signal, as it shows that he's learning to trust her—and similarly, Annabeth's willingness to get in the boat with Percy shows that she's also learning to trust him. As they work on building up the foundation of their friendship, they can find more support with each other and worry less about their parents.



CHAPTER 16

Ares is waiting for Percy, Annabeth, and Grover when they at the diner—he says that they looked good on TV. Percy calls Ares a jerk as he hands over the shield, which makes Annabeth and Grover catch their breath. Ares ignores them and points to a semi-truck which reads that it contains wild animals—it'll stop in Vegas and then head to L.A. The god then hands over a backpack filled with clothes, money, and Oreos. Percy starts to refuse it, but Grover interrupts and thanks Ares. Inside the diner, the waitress drags the cook to the window, and the cook snaps a photo of Percy. Even more annoyed, Percy asks Ares for news of Mom. Ares says that Mom is alive and being kept as a hostage to control Percy. He laughs when Percy insists that no one is controlling him.

No matter what Percy says, Ares is right: he convinced Percy to fetch his shield because he offered information on Mom. Clearly, it's not hard to manipulate Percy by offering hopeful tidbits about Mom's whereabouts. Grover's focus on being polite seems to be the way to go here—Ares is menacing and extremely powerful, after all—but Percy has shown himself to have good instincts when it comes to dealing with unexpected turns like this. Grover's unwillingness to trust Percy, then, could have disastrous consequences.



After Ares leaves, Grover points to the diner, where two men whose coveralls match the semi are paying. He leads Percy and Annabeth into the semi—it reeks. Percy uncaps **Riptide** to cast a light. The scene is sad: there's a lion, a zebra, and an antelope, all with the wrong food in their cages. The lion's blankets are soiled, and flies buzz around his eyes. Grover and Percy are ready to beat up the drivers when the truck starts. They switch the food dishes, refill the animals' water, and cut a balloon off the antelope's horn. Percy muses that he has plenty of time to get to L.A. before the solstice, but he's concerned that the gods are toying with him and watching him all the time.

Helping out the animals in the truck shows that Percy is starting to expand the people and beings he cares about to include all animals. This is a major shift from how he treated the poodle Gladiola just a few days ago—now, he recognizes that just as it's important to treat his close human friends well, it's also important to be kind to animal friends. Percy's sense that the gods are watching him is correct; he is, for them, entertainment—a dynamic that makes the gods seem more human.



Annabeth apologizes for freaking out at the water park and admits that she's terrified of spiders. Percy guesses that it's because of Arachne, and Annabeth confirms this. Percy reminds her that they're a team. Annabeth asks if Luke really said nothing in the Iris message. After a minute, Percy relays what Luke said about nobody turning into a pine tree. Grover brays and confirms that he was Thalia's keeper and that the two half-bloods who got safely to camp were Annabeth and Luke. Annabeth and Grover explain that Grover's mission was to just rescue Thalia since Hades was after her, but Grover thought he could save all of them. The Kindly Ones caught up. Both Annabeth and Percy assure Grover that it wasn't his fault, no matter what the Council of Cloven Elders says. Percy says that Grover has the biggest heart and that he'll find Pan, but Grover falls asleep.

Percy asks Annabeth if the bead on her necklace with a pine tree on it was from that first year—it is. Annabeth explains that the counselors paint the most important event of the summer on that year's bead. Percy then asks if the college ring is her dad's. Annabeth takes a shaky breath and says that he sent it to her two years ago with an apology and an invitation to live with him. Annabeth went, but her stepmom was still awful, and so Annabeth returned to Camp Half-Blood in the winter. Percy suggests that she try again. Then, after another bit of silence, Percy asks if the possible coming war will break down like the Trojan War did, with Athena fighting Poseidon. Annabeth says she doesn't know, but she's fighting alongside Percy because they're friends. She falls asleep instantly.

Percy's nightmare begins normally: he's taking a test in a straitjacket. Abnormally, though, Thalia is also there in a straitjacket, and she tells Percy that someone has to get out. Percy decides to go scold Hades, and the straitjacket dissolves. Then, he's back in the dark cavern listening to the monstrous thing in the pit talking to someone else about an exchange. Percy almost recognizes the other voice saying that Percy suspects nothing, referring to the thing in the pit as the "Crooked One," and asking if he couldn't have just delivered what he stole. The thing in the pit notices Percy and shows him a vision of a black marble throne room. Mom is at the foot of a dais. Percy's body withers as the evil laugh booms.

This is a major turning point for the trio's friendship, as Percy finally gets to learn the truth about his friends' history. Learning about what happened to Thalia helps Percy to understand why Grover is so cautious and always wracked with guilt. He didn't just fail the first time—his failure resulted in someone's death. However, both Percy and Annabeth try to convince Grover that it's worth it to focus on what he did do: he saved two other innocent demigods. Trying to make Grover feel better and reframe what happened is a way for Percy and Annabeth to demonstrate their loyalty and their compassion.



For Annabeth, the issue isn't just her dad's lack of interest. The problem is also that he married someone who, like Gabe, is awful to his child. In this sense, Annabeth's father is failing Annabeth by not insisting that she be treated like a real member of the family. Despite her difficult family situation, however, Annabeth does show here that she now understands the importance of friendship. Her loyalty to Athena may also be important, but it's even more crucial for her to stand by her friend—even if Percy isn't someone she's supposed to like.



That Percy feels like he recognizes the other voice around the pit suggests that there may be someone whom he hasn't thought of yet, but who is trying to betray Percy. When Percy doesn't come up with who it is and never suspects anyone at camp, it shows that he very much trusts everyone at Camp Half-Blood to have his back. Under normal circumstances, Percy would be right to do this—but in such a difficult time, Percy's focus on his friendships with other campers means he's liable to miss information.



Grover shakes Percy awake—they have to hide because the drivers are coming to check the animals. One trucker throws a bucket of water in the lion’s face, and the other tells the zebra that he’s going to get sawed in half in a magic show. In his head, Percy hears the zebra beg him to free it. A banging comes from outside, and the trucker disappears. Annabeth takes off her cap, and Grover says that according to the lion, these truckers are smugglers. Percy wonders why he can hear the zebra and not the other animals as the zebra assures Percy he’ll be fine. Percy pulls out **Riptide** and slashes the lock. The zebra leaps over the truckers, who give chase. Percy frees the antelope and the lion too, and then the trio also leaves the truck.

Percy, Annabeth, and Grover wander the streets until they end up in front of the Lotus Hotel and Casino. The doorman smiles warmly and invites them to come inside. Though Percy has learned to be suspicious, he can tell this guy is normal and sympathetic. One look at the lobby—which is filled with a waterslide, a climbing wall, snack bars, and video games—and Percy agrees to enter. A bellhop hands them room and cash cards and seems confused when Percy asks how much is on the cards. Percy leads the way to their room, which has three separate bedrooms and a stocked snack bar. Percy showers and discovers clothes that fit, which seems odd. He throws away the backpack from Ares and thinks that he needs to talk to his friends—but it can wait.

Grover, Percy, and Annabeth head downstairs to play games. Eventually, Percy realizes that something is wrong. At a sharpshooting game, Percy notices a kid named Darrin dressed like he’s an Elvis impersonator’s son. Darrin says that the game is groovy and looks startled when Percy refers to a game as “sick.” When Percy asks what year it is, Darrin says it’s 1977. Percy tries to talk to other people. They all claim they’ve been in the hotel a short time, but they also say it’s 1985 or 1993. Percy wonders how long he’s been here and struggles to remember Mom’s name and their quest. He drags Annabeth away from her game by talking about spiders. They find Grover and drag him away too. Outside, the weather is stormy, and Percy discovers Ares’s backpack. He then discovers that he has one day to complete his quest.

Again, part of being a good friend—even to animals—is doing what one’s friend knows is best. Freeing the animals is a way for Percy to show the animals (as well as anyone else watching) that he’s kind, compassionate, and stands up for fair treatment for everyone. As Percy does this, he displays heroism and he becomes more secure in who he is: a kind, compassionate, and brave person.



Once again, Percy, Annabeth, and Grover read as normal kids here—but ones who are tired and therefore don’t have as strong of defenses as they might otherwise. This hotel is clearly a kid’s paradise with so many games, snacks, and clothes that magically fit the hotel’s newest guests. Interestingly, however, the hotel’s power seems to work on Grover just as well as it does on demigods like Percy and Annabeth. This drives home the similarities among the friends, despite their differing species.



Percy is able to escape the Lotus Hotel because, even though he’s just a demigod kid in many ways, he’s also a far more powerful one than most—and so he has the ability to power through the mind control that the hotel uses. Even as he does this, he tellingly makes it a priority to try to remember both Mom and his friends. This reminds the reader of where Percy’s loyalties lie: with the one family member who has always supported him, and with the friends who have been there for him in Mom’s absence.



CHAPTER 17

Annabeth hails a taxi and asks the driver to take them to L.A. She hands him her LotusCash card, and when the driver swipes it, an infinity symbol comes up. He speeds all the way to L.A. On the drive, Percy shares his dream with Annabeth and Grover, but he can't remember the details—he knows he recognized the invisible voice and that the thing in the pit has a nickname, but that's it. Annabeth's eyes widen at one point, but she insists that it had to have been Hades. She thinks that the thief must've failed to fetch the bolt, which would explain the Furies' behavior on the bus. Percy asks why they're going to the Underworld if he already has the bolt, and Grover suggests that they're going to blackmail Hades for Mom.

Percy tells his friends that the thing in the pit is waiting for two items. Catching Annabeth's look, Percy asks if she knows what's in the pit, but Annabeth refuses to talk about it. Percy feels like he's missing something important and that confronting Hades is the wrong move. Annabeth assures Percy that the answer is still in the Underworld since Percy saw spirits of the dead. At sunset, they arrive at the beach in Santa Monica. Percy walks into the water, discovers he can breathe and see, and jumps when a shark nuzzles his leg. Percy grabs its dorsal fin, and the shark carries him deeper into the ocean.

A beautiful woman rides toward Percy on a giant sea horse. Percy bows to her and says that she's the woman who spoke to him in the Mississippi. She introduces her self as Nereid, a sea spirit who serves in Poseidon's court. Nereid explains that they've been watching Percy for years, but Percy asks why Poseidon isn't helping him more if he's so interested. Nereid reminds him that gods can't show favoritism, but they can help indirectly. This is where she comes in. She gives Percy three pearls and says that only three mortals have gone to the Underworld and made it out alive. If Percy needs help, he should smash a pearl. She adds that what belongs to the sea will return to the sea. Then, she warns him that Hades feeds on doubt, so Percy must trust his judgment.

Now that Percy and Annabeth have come to more of an understanding in terms of how they communicate, it doesn't bother Percy so much that Annabeth clearly knows something and isn't sharing. He understands that at some point, when she's ready, she'll share. This drives home how much their relationship has changed over the last week or so. Percy now understands that Annabeth's silence and sassiness aren't mean—these qualities strategic, and Percy should trust her.



Again, Percy understands that Annabeth probably has a good reason to keep quiet; indeed, though she never says outright, it's likely that she's actually trying to be a good friend and not freak Grover out by voicing her suspicions. In this sense, all three are becoming better friends to each other and figuring out new ways of caring for each other.



Though it's frustrating for Percy that Poseidon hasn't done more and isn't doing more to help now, Nereid asks him to understand that Poseidon has to play by ancient and well-established rules when it comes to dealing with Percy. In other words, his neglect isn't personal—it's just what gods have to do. Though this certainly doesn't make it easier for Percy, it does show him that he's in the same boat as many other demigod kids.



Percy swims to shore and shows Grover and Annabeth the pearls. Annabeth grimaces and insists that all gifts have prices. They take the bus into West Hollywood looking for the entrance to the Underworld, but the driver hasn't heard of DOA Recording Studios. They can't find it anywhere. Percy stops in front of an appliance store to watch Barbara Walters interview Smelly Gabe about Percy and Mom. Gabe fake cries and says that if it weren't for his new girlfriend, he'd be a wreck. The screen cuts to a photo of Percy. Grover hauls Percy away. It starts to get dark, and at an alley, a gang of rich kids circles the trio. Percy instinctively uncaps **Riptide** and swings at the leader, but it passes through his body. Percy shouts for Annabeth and Grover to run.

They race through the city until they come to the only open business in the area: Crusty's Water Bed Palace. They go in, hide behind a bed, and watch the boys run past. A seven-foot-tall, hairless guy with leathery skin and clothes straight out of the 1970s comes up behind them and introduces himself as Crusty. He grumbles about the bad kids outside and then insists that Percy, Annabeth, and Grover look at waterbeds by forcibly leading Percy into the showroom. Crusty shows them a bed with built-in lava lamps that gives massages. Grover leaps on. Crusty says "almost" and then leads Annabeth to another bed and pushes her down. He snaps his fingers, says, "Ergo," and ropes tie down Grover and Annabeth.

Crusty insists he'll let Grover and Annabeth go, but only after he "makes them fit"—the beds are exactly six feet long, so he needs to stretch Annabeth and Grover to make them exactly six feet tall. Percy asks for Crusty's real name: it's Procrustes. Percy recognizes the name; Procrustes is a giant who tried to kill Theseus with excess hospitality. Percy decides to flatter Crusty. He compliments the beds, agrees that Annabeth is inconsiderate, and asks what Crusty does when customers are too tall. Crusty procures a huge axe and says he cuts off any excess. Percy inspects a bed with motion stabilizers and asks if it'll work for a big guy like Crusty. He asks Crusty to show him. Crusty falls for the trap—Percy ties him up and "shortens" him with **Riptide**. He discovers a flier and address for the DOA Recording Studios.

It's interesting that Annabeth takes issue with the pearls but not with the backpack that Ares gave them. This suggests that Annabeth is far more skeptical when it comes to gifts that seem obviously magical in nature; food, clothes, and money aren't gifts she thinks are worthy of her suspicion. That the trio can't find the recording studio that marks the entrance to the Underworld indicates that it's well-hidden—and as demigods, it's a tossup whether Annabeth and Percy will be able to find it without assistance.



It's likely that the gang of boys outside is one of the only reasons that Crusty gets any customers at all, so speaking ill of them is a way for him to try to fit in with his (usually) mortal customers. Now Percy, as the only free member of the trio, will have to figure this one out on his own—he knows he can't leave his friends behind, so he'll have to draw on his own strengths to save them.



Percy discovers that though Crusty might be a monster, he, too, has faults—in this case, he's very susceptible to flattery and insults toward his products. That Percy is able to successfully trick Crusty indicates that over the course of his journey, Percy has learned how to identify and then manipulate people's faults in order to get his way and protect himself. Further, this indicates that Percy's people skills are perhaps more refined than Annabeth's or Grover's—given Annabeth's tendencies, she might have dealt with this situation in a more physical way.



CHAPTER 18

Outside the DOA Recording Studios, both Annabeth and Grover reassure Percy, and Percy feels thankful for their attempts to make him feel better. They enter the lobby, which is gray and filled with people who seem a bit transparent, and approach the security guard's desk. The guard is elegant with dark skin, blond hair, and an Italian suit. Percy reads the guard's nametag and asks if his name is really Chiron. Smoothly and coldly, the guard asks if he looks like a centaur, spells out his name—Charon—and insists on being called Mr. Charon. He asks what they want and how they died. Grover insists they all drowned in the bathtub. Mr. Charon laments that children never die prepared—they'll have to wait for a few centuries before they can afford passage to the Underworld.

Percy pulls out a bag of gold drachmas that he took from Crusty and puts three on the counter. He insists that he's dead, but Mr. Charon hisses that Percy is a half-blood. Percy insists on going to the Underworld and bravely refuses to let Mr. Charon take the money. He says that Hades probably doesn't pay Mr. Charon enough, and Mr. Charon says it's true—Italian suits aren't cheap, and he hasn't had a raise in millennia. Percy piles coins on the counter and offers to mention a raise to Hades. With a sigh, Mr. Charon agrees to take them on the next ferry. He leads them to the elevator, announces to the room of waiting spirits to not change the radio station, and starts the elevator.

Percy feels dizzy. The elevator begins to move forward and the spirits in the elevator are suddenly wearing hooded robes, not modern clothes. Mr. Charon's appearance changes too: his suit turns into black robes and his eyes turn into dark, empty sockets. Percy blinks and they're suddenly on a barge as Mr. Charon poles them across a dark river filled with bones, plastic dolls, and framed diplomas: it's the River Styx. Mr. Charon quips that it's polluted with thousands of years' worth of hopes, dreams, and wishes that didn't come true. Percy starts to feel hopeless. Annabeth grabs his hand, but it isn't weird—they both just need to know that someone else is alive. Percy prays, but he's not sure whom he's praying to.

Just like Echidna, Mr. Charon struggles to get people to take his name seriously. This adds another human element to a supernatural being; it makes the case that while Mr. Charon might be employed by the Lord of the Underworld, he also has issues of his own. One of those issues is also dealing with unprepared children—something that, while gruesome and dark, the novel presents in a humorous manner. Presenting it as an annoying part of Mr. Charon's job suggests that the Underworld runs like any other business; it, too, has human qualities.



Just as with Crusty, Percy is able to use what he identifies as Mr. Charon's weakness—money and a love of expensive Italian suits—in order to get what he wants. Through this, Mr. Charon becomes a living, breathing individual with feelings, desires, and even a preferred radio station. In other words, he transforms from simply being an employee of the Underworld to a multifaceted individual who deserves to be treated as such.



Mr. Charon's aside about what's polluting the River Styx suggests that at least for the divine, all the things that go along with being human pose problems. Unmet hopes and dreams, he implies, are damaging. To a degree, Mr. Charon is right—living a life in which one's dreams never come true is heartbreaking—but it also suggests that on the whole, humans and their issues aren't all that important to the Underworld. Human issues are essentially annoying pollution rather than something worth worrying about or trying to fix.



Mr. Charon steers the barge to the shore of the Underworld. Percy, Grover, and Annabeth follow the spirits to the entrance, which looks like busy airport security. Percy can hear Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the gate, howling—but Percy can't see him. The dead line up in three lines. Two lines are marked "attendant on duty," and one is marked "EZ death." The EZ death line is moving quickly. Annabeth says it goes to the Asphodel Fields; the other lines go to court. Some people are judged to deserve the reward of going to the Fields of Elysium and others get punishment, but most people end up in the Asphodel Fields. Grover motions to one spirit who is being frisked. Percy recognizes him as a televangelist who got caught embezzling. Grover suspects they'll set up eternal torture for him with the Kindly Ones.

Percy catches sight of Cerberus. The dog is mostly invisible, twice the size of an elephant, and has three heads. The dead walk around and under him without fear, but Cerberus looks right at the trio. Percy pulls out a bedpost from one of Crusty's beds, calls to Cerberus, and throws the stick. Cerberus growls. Annabeth pulls out a big ball and tells Cerberus to sit. Cerberus looks stunned, but he sits. Annabeth throws him the ball, tells him to drop it, and shoos Percy and Grover through the EZ death line. Once they're through, Annabeth throws Cerberus the ball again and follows. As they reach the gate, Cerberus moans sadly at Annabeth. The ball is destroyed. She promises to bring him another ball and hurries through the gates. Alarms go off. As both Annabeth and Cerberus cry, Percy thinks that even monsters in the Underworld need attention.

CHAPTER 19

The Asphodel Fields are packed with spirits, but the mood is sad and damp. Percy looks for familiar faces but can't recognize anyone. He does discover that the dead aren't scary—they're just sad. He, Grover, and Annabeth creep along until they reach the judgment pavilion. They can see the Fields of Punishment beyond on the left. On the right is Elysium, and in the middle are the three Isles of the Blest. They're for people who have been reborn three times and reached Elysium each time. Percy knows he wants to go there when he dies, and Annabeth echoes his thoughts. Percy thinks it's depressing that so few people make it there. The trio continues on until they hear the Furies screeching and they see the palace.

Again, the fact that the entrance to the Underworld looks like airport security puts the Underworld in terms that Percy and the reader can understand. In short, it makes the Underworld look like a business or a public place like any other—the public just happens to be dead. Seeing that this place is so mundane helps Percy to understand that the individuals who inhabit it, from Mr. Charon and the Furies to even Hades, might also be just as normal—and therefore, should be treated compassionately, as people first.



Cerberus's behavior is a clincher for Percy: monsters aren't all that monstrous if one treats them like what they are on the inside. Though Cerberus may look monstrous, he's really just a neglected dog who longs for playtime and a friend—his goal isn't to hurt or kill people. The effect this has on Annabeth shows that she, like Percy, understands that Cerberus isn't all that bad. She also recognizes that she's made another friend that, by many metrics, she shouldn't have. This continues to help Annabeth see that she can be friends with anyone, if only she makes the effort to do so.



Here, Percy echoes Mr. Charon when he notes how few people make it to the Isles of the Blest. Humanity, Percy begins to realize, has its fair share of issues—one of them being that not enough people try hard enough to be virtuous and good. For Percy, this emphasizes the importance of being a better hero, friend, and family member. He understands that in order to successfully complete his quest, live his life, and end up in Elysium, he'll need to be a loyal friend and family member.



Grover nervously suggests that they go search Elysium first, but his sneakers suddenly sprout wings and begin to pull him away. Percy and Annabeth race after him into a cavern. The tunnel is dark and cold, and it makes Percy think of blood and murderers. He stops dead when he sees the huge chasm from his dreams, but Annabeth shouts that they have to save Grover. The shoes try to drag Grover into the pit, but fortunately, the shoes don't fit his hooves and one comes off. He manages to grab a rock, and the other shoe comes off too. Percy shushes Grover and Annabeth—he hears a muttering, evil voice coming from the pit. Annabeth, terrified, says that this is the entrance to Tartarus. Percy uncaps **Riptide** and begins to pick out ancient, magic words.

The trio moves away as quickly as they can. They struggle against a cold wind to the end of the tunnel, collapse outside, and hear an outraged cry from the tunnel. Annabeth and Percy exchange a look, but they're both too scared to say what they think is in the tunnel. Percy caps **Riptide** and thinks that after the old, powerful, and evil thing in the chasm, he's almost relieved to confront Hades. The Furies circle the parapets as Percy, Annabeth, and Grover walk through the gates and a courtyard filled with poisonous plants, jewels, and Medusa's statues. They pass a grove of pomegranate trees and Annabeth says they have to keep going. Percy desperately wants to eat the fruit, but he remembers Persephone's story—if they eat Underworld food, they'll never leave.

They enter the palace. Skeleton guards dressed in all manner of military garb guard every door, and Percy realizes that his backpack is suddenly very heavy. Doors swing open to reveal Hades's throne room. Hades, 10 feet tall and dressed in black silk robes, lounges on his throne of bones. He radiates power and makes Percy want to submit, but Percy tells himself to snap out of it. Hades tells Percy that he's very cocky to show up after what he did. Percy ignores this and says he has two requests, wishing that Persephone were here to calm Hades. Gulping, Percy says that war among the gods would be bad, so he needs Zeus's master bolt back. Incensed, Hades accuses Percy of keeping up a pretense after "what he's done." Confused, Percy asks what he did.

The sneakers' behavior suggest to Percy and Annabeth that there's something amiss here—someone is trying to do something evil to them, given what Percy has heard and seen in his dreams. It's telling that now, Annabeth is the one insisting that they have to rescue Grover. She understands that friendship is going to be what gets them through this quest, and now, she's able to encourage Percy to remember that too.



Next to the evil presence in the pit, Hades—whom Percy understands, on some level, is just a being, albeit a powerful one—doesn't seem so bad. This suggests that while it's possible for Percy to see the humanity in the gods and in the monsters, it might be impossible for him (or anyone else, for that matter) to see the humanity in what's in the pit. The thing in the pit is, in this sense, the true enemy and the true "other," as it's the only being in the novel who cannot garner any sympathy or understanding.



Hades and Percy are clearly basing their opinions on different information during this conversation—as far as Percy is concerned, Hades has the bolt; in Hades's mind, Percy has done something else unforgivable. Because neither of them are honest with the other about what they know, they waste precious time posturing. During this time, it also becomes increasingly less likely that Hades and Percy will ever be able or willing to trust the other and share what they know—but then again, they're family (Hades is Percy's uncle), and members of this family don't naturally trust one another.



Hades shouts, asking if Percy thinks he really wants war. Percy carefully says it'd expand the kingdom, but Hades moans that his kingdom is already growing. There's overcrowding and traffic problems, and he has to pay his staff overtime. Percy blurts out that Charon wants a raise, which makes Hades shout that Charon is impossible. Hades doesn't want war, and he doesn't want more dead. When Percy suggests that Hades *did* steal the bolt, Hades stands and says he sees Poseidon's plan: Poseidon made Percy steal the bolt and his own helm of darkness, but Hades found Percy out by sending Mrs. Dodds to Yancy. Confused, Annabeth confirms that Hades's helm is missing. Hades snarls that he hasn't said anything because no one on Olympus will help, and he knows that Percy has the helm, which he orders Percy to hand over.

Percy is angry. Hades says he wants to torture Percy forever, which is why he let the trio enter his kingdom easily. Percy insists that he doesn't have the helm and that he came for the bolt, but Hades shouts that Percy already has the bolt. Percy opens his backpack and sure enough, the bolt is in it. Hades gripes that heroes are all prideful and foolish, and he orders Percy to hand the bolt over and tell him where the helm is. Percy has no idea what's going on, but he realizes that someone tricked him. He says that this is a mistake, but Hades says there is no mistake—he knew that Percy would come for Mom. She'll die if Percy doesn't hand over the bolt. Mom appears frozen in a shower of gold.

Percy thinks of the pearls and pulls them out at Hades's request. Hades points out that there are only three, so either Percy must leave Mom or one of his friends. Annabeth, Grover, and Percy agree that they've been tricked—but they don't know why. They argue about which of them should stay as a sacrifice to save Mom, but Percy can't stand the thought of losing his only friends. He knows that Mom would never let him sacrifice himself, and he knows that he has to take the bolt to Zeus and tell the truth. He thinks of the prophecy saying he'd fail to save what matters most, apologizes to Mom, and promises Hades he'll find his helm. The trio smashes the pearls, and milky spheres encase them and carry them up through the ceiling and into the ocean. Percy helps his friends to shore, where L.A. is on fire.

Again, Hades's problems make him look distinctly like a CEO or a king who singlehandedly runs his municipality or business. It's Hades's job alone to deal with the traffic, staffing issues, and housing problems that come with having lots of new residents all the time. Hades's job description makes it clear that being Lord of the Underworld isn't just lounging on his throne—it's hard work. However, Hades does have weaknesses. He knows that the other gods won't listen to him, so he keeps secrets—and he thinks he knows everything. This sets him up to fail, as he's not being honest and open.



Percy discovers, once again, that the gods are able to manipulate him and prey on his emotions to get what they want. This is, more or less, exactly what Percy did to Crusty and to Chiron, which indicates that this kind of manipulation is widespread throughout the world of the gods. Percy is able to get so angry with Hades and stand up for himself because he doesn't think of himself as a hero and because he recognizes Hades's humanity. In his mind, his anger is justified and shouldn't be punished.



In this moment, Percy learns how loyal his friends really are. Their offers to sacrifice themselves so that Percy can get Mom back are admirable—this speaks to their intense love and compassion for Percy. However, Percy understands that the best way to honor Mom and be a good son is to leave her and make things right in the rest of the world. Being such a compassionate person, Mom would want that more than she'd want to live in a world torn apart by war.



CHAPTER 20

A Coast Guard boat takes Percy, Annabeth, and Grover to shore. On the shore, Percy says they were tricked and that the prophecy was right: the “god who turned” wasn’t Hades. Someone else stole the bolt and the helm and then framed Percy, hoping to frame Poseidon. Grover asks who would want war that badly, and Percy looks ahead to where Ares is standing with his motorcycle. With a grin, Ares admits that he used a hero to steal the bolt and the helm, but he says that Percy was supposed to die in the Underworld to anger Poseidon and leave the bolt there to anger Zeus. Hades is angry, anyway, because he doesn’t know who stole his helm. Ares places a cap on his motorcycle and it turns into an elaborate helmet. Annabeth points out that these gods are family, but Ares says that’s the best kind of war.

Percy accuses Ares of planting the bolt in the backpack he gave the trio in Denver. Ares explains that the backpack is an altered version of the sword’s sheath, enchanted to only accept the sword once Percy got to the Underworld. Percy asks why Ares didn’t just keep the bolt. For a minute, Ares seems to be listening to someone else, and then he says that he didn’t want the trouble. Percy insists that this was all someone else’s idea—whatever’s in the pit is controlling Ares. Ares shrieks that he doesn’t take orders and doesn’t have dreams, but he tries to cover this up by saying that Percy has to die. He conjures an ugly boar, which Percy slays as it charges him. Percy taunts Ares and promises that if he loses, Ares can turn him into anything and take the bolt—but if Percy wins, he gets the bolt and the helm.

Ares pulls out a huge sword. Percy assures Annabeth and Grover that Ares is a coward. Annabeth ties her camp necklace around Percy’s neck, and Grover offers Percy a crushed tin can. Ares steps up and asks what Percy has that he doesn’t. Percy thinks his ego is smaller, and he remembers that according to Annabeth, *all* Ares has is strength. Percy tries to stay in the water and successfully evades Ares’s stabs, but **Riptide** is shorter than Ares’s sword. Percy remembers Luke’s advice to get in closer, but Ares knocks Riptide away and kicks Percy 30 feet away. Annabeth shouts that the cops are here as Percy grabs Riptide. He suddenly understands that his ADHD is keeping him alive: he notices everything around him.

Ares’s willingness to tell the trio his plan allows the friends to realize that they’ve had several things wrong: while Hades may have been awful to them, their real adversary is Ares, not Hades. Ares’s insistence that war among family members is the best is a reflection of how dysfunctional the familial relationships between the gods truly are. For Ares, starting wars with his family is sport—and he doesn’t care who might die as a result of his meddling. Though Ares may have some human qualities, he is fundamentally cruel and uninterested in humanity.



Percy learns the truth about what Nereid meant about not trusting the gifts: she was referring to Ares’s backpack, not necessarily to the pearls. Though Percy would have every right to be extremely angry and blame everything on Ares, he’s also a far more rational person—and so he understands that Ares is a tool in a much larger game, just like he is. Having the upper hand in terms of knowledge gives Percy the strength and the courage to engage Ares in this battle and make this deal.



Unlike Percy, Ares doesn’t have tokens of friendship from people who care about him. Percy is able to succeed in this fight because his friends stand behind him, support him, and show him what he’s fighting for: a better future for them. Additionally, Percy’s realization that his ADHD is a gift is the final turning point in Percy’s understanding of his identity. Now, he truly understands that he doesn’t have a learning disability—he has a natural talent that will keep him alive, as long as he stays in the divine world.



A police officer shouts for Ares and Percy to drop their guns, but Ares sends a wall of flame toward them and blows up their cars. Percy backs into the ocean and wills the tide to stay out. He lures Ares farther and farther out and then releases the tide. Percy leaps over Ares as a wave hits Ares in the face. He stabs **Riptide** into Ares's heel. As Ares steps toward Percy, a cold and heavy presence drops over the beach and makes Percy feel hopeless. Ares stops, tells Percy he's cursed, and disappears. Percy grabs Hades's helm as the Furies drift down and land in front of him. They somehow look nonthreatening and disappointed. Percy tosses Mrs. Dodds the helm and tells her to tell Hades to call off the war. She tells Percy to become a true hero or she'll destroy him.

Percy goes to Grover and Annabeth. He's exhausted and sore, but he asks if they felt the cold dark presence. Grover suggests it was the Furies, but Percy thinks it was stronger than the Furies. Percy and Annabeth exchange a look. They now know what's in the pit. Percy insists they have to get to New York tonight, so they must fly.

CHAPTER 21

The reporters feed Percy, Grover, and Annabeth the story of what happened: Ares is a crazy kidnapper who abducted them and took them across the country. He was on the bus in New Jersey and in Denver, and finally, Percy stole a gun and fought him on the beach. Through tears, Percy says that he wants to see Gabe again and says that Gabe will be so thrilled to have him back that he'll guarantee everyone in L.A. a free major appliance from his store. The police and reporters raise money for the trio's plane tickets. When they reach New York, Percy sends Annabeth and Grover to Half-Blood Hill to tell Chiron the truth. If he dies, he wants to make sure Chiron knows what happened.

Percy takes a taxi to the Empire State Building and asks the guard for the 600th floor and an audience with Zeus. At first the guard acts mortal, but then he says that one needs an appointment to see Zeus. Percy shows the guard the bolt, at which the guard's face pales. He gives Percy a key card to use in the elevator, and Percy takes the elevator up. When he gets out, he's on a narrow walkway in midair. White steps lead to a mountaintop covered in snow, olive trees, and white palaces. Percy walks through Olympus in a daze. As Percy studies the palace, he realizes that Hades's palace resembles it. He feels sorry for Hades—it seems unfair that he's banished from Olympus.

Because Percy is now more comfortable in who he is, he's able to call on all his talents to best Ares. The cold, hopeless presence, however, does call Ares off—and this suggests that it's in this presence's best interest to let Percy win right now. As Percy confronts the Furies for the last time, he also begins to recognize the ways in which they're both human and employees of Hades. It's their job to make his life miserable—but they're not necessarily malicious. They're just doing their job, and they can be honorable about it.



The look between Percy and Annabeth is another reminder that their friendship has reached a new level. Now, they can communicate well without even having to speak to each other—something that will presumably come in handy as they move forward into the next novel in the series.



Even though Percy is a half-blood, he can still easily navigate the mortal world. Part of this has to do with the fact that he's still a child and he understands how these reporters expect an abducted 12-year-old to act. He also knows that it's essential to let the reporters tell whatever story they want. Doing this allows Percy to keep his true identity a secret, as well as to protect the people, places, and creatures he's come to love over the course of his journey.



It's telling that Percy is able to feel sorry for Hades as he walks through Olympus. He can empathize with the fact that Hades only gets to come to Olympus once per year, during the winter solstice, and is otherwise shut out of the community and the family life of Olympus. Percy can understand that more than anything, Hades just wants to be recognized as just as important as his brothers—and his mirror image palace in the Underworld is a way for him to try to make that happen.



Percy enters the massive throne room. The thrones are arranged like the cabins at Camp Half-Blood, with a fire in the middle. Only two gods sit at the end: Zeus in a pinstripe suit, and Poseidon in Bermuda shorts. Percy approaches Poseidon's throne and kneels. Zeus reprimands Percy for not addressing him first, but Poseidon insists that it's fine. Poseidon says he knows he messed up by fathering Percy, but he wants to hear Percy speak. Percy chokes up thinking that he's just a god's mistake. Zeus grumbles but agrees to let Percy speak. Poseidon asks Percy to look up: Poseidon's face is unreadable, and Percy feels like the god doesn't know what to think of him. He's oddly glad about this, since it would feel fake if Poseidon tried to apologize or profess his love. Poseidon tells Percy to tell Zeus his story.

Percy tells the whole story and sets the bolt on the floor. It flies into Zeus's palm, and Zeus mutters that Percy is telling the truth but that this isn't like Ares. Percy interrupts and says that Ares didn't come up with the idea. He describes his dreams and the evil thing that appeared on the beach. Percy says that whatever is in the pit wants to start a war. Zeus asks if Percy is accusing Hades, but Percy says that whatever it is is in Tartarus and is older than the gods. Poseidon and Zeus confer in ancient Greek, and the only word Percy catches is "Father." Zeus stands to go and says that to show his thanks, he'll let Percy live. He warns Percy to not fly again and to be out of the throne room when he returns, and then he disappears in a flash of light.

Poseidon sighs that Zeus should've been the god of theater. Percy awkwardly asks what was in the pit and then answers his own question: Kronos. The name seems to darken the room. Poseidon explains that Zeus cut Kronos into a thousand pieces in the First War and cast the remains into Tartarus, but Titans can't die. Kronos is still alive, conscious, and power-hungry. Percy says that he's healing and coming back, but Poseidon shakes his head. He insists that Kronos sometimes enters humans' dreams to stir up evil, but he can never get out of the pit. When Percy protests, Poseidon says that Zeus closed the discussion. Percy's quest is over.

This is an extremely emotional experience for Percy. In some ways, he gets the best he could ask for—Poseidon clearly doesn't hate him and seems genuinely interested, but also unsure about how he feels. As far as Percy is concerned, this is the most honesty he's gotten from any god since he started on this journey. However, Percy also feels awful when Poseidon refers to Percy simply as a mistake. Percy knows that he's more than that: he's a person; a demigod; and a kid with hopes, dreams, and a story of his own. It's reductive and hurtful to simply be thought of as a mistake.



It's worth commending both Zeus and Poseidon for sitting here, hearing Percy out, and then taking what Percy says seriously. In this moment, they recognize their own faults and they seek to remedy them by listening. Even if Zeus and Poseidon may have used Percy and sent him on what amounted to a wild goose chase, they still recognize that what's going on is serious. Despite the ways in which Zeus shows he's capable of being kind and compassionate, he also feels the need to assert his divinity by threatening Percy.



For Percy, Poseidon's insistence that his work is done here feels like a rejection and a major oversight. Clearly, there are things going wrong in the world. Percy knows this, and Poseidon seems to know it as well, but Zeus's power means that they can't ask any more questions. When Percy has to accept this explanation, he also has to accept that though he may be correct, he doesn't have the power to assert himself—he's just a demigod in a family of powerful gods.



Percy wants to argue, but he grudgingly agrees. Poseidon chuckles at Percy's struggle to be obedient, stands and says that Mom is at home—Hades keeps his word. Percy wants to ask Poseidon to come with him to see Mom, but he realizes that Poseidon could have seen her any time he wanted. Sadly, Poseidon says that Percy will find a package at home and will have to make a choice about his path. He then says that Mom is a queen, but he's still sorry that Percy was born. Percy feels hurt and says he doesn't mind that he's alive, but Poseidon says he might be sorry someday and that it was still a huge mistake. Awkwardly, Percy bows and starts to leave. Poseidon calls him back, says he did well, and says that no matter what, Percy is his son.

On the walk back through Olympus, people stop and look at Percy with gratitude. Some kneel. Percy catches a taxi to Mom's apartment. She envelops him in a hug, cries, and says she terrified Gabe when she appeared in the apartment this morning. She doesn't remember the Minotaur and has spent all day worrying about Percy, but Gabe made her go to work to make up for losing a month's salary. Percy swallows his anger and tells Mom his story. As he gets to the fight with Ares, Gabe shouts and asks if the meatloaf is done yet. Mom says that Gabe will be unhappy after all the calls about free appliances.

Mom and Percy enter the apartment: it's filled with beer cans and dirty laundry. Gabe threatens to call the police and growls at Mom that he had to give back her life insurance money. When Gabe raises his hand, Percy realizes that Gabe has hit Mom; Percy feels his anger expand. Percy pulls out his **pen**, which just makes Gabe laugh. Gabe tells Percy to pack and leave, but Mom drags Percy to his room. Mom assures Percy that everything will be fine once she talks to Gabe, but Percy cuts her off. A package appears on his bed: it's the box he shipped to Mount Olympus a week ago. Percy knows this is the decision Poseidon mentioned.

Percy asks Mom if she wants Gabe to go and points out that he hits her. Mom says she wants Gabe to go, but she's working up her courage to tell him. She says that Percy can't do it for her, though. Looking at the box, Percy knows he *could* solve this—a Greek hero would turn Gabe into a statue—but those stories always end in tragedy. Percy wonders if he has the right to condemn Gabe to the Fields of Punishment.

Percy still struggles to figure out how to deal with the fact that Poseidon didn't want him. This is an understandably devastating thing for him to have to live with, and it's made even worse by the fact that Poseidon also seems to take genuine interest in Percy. This puts Percy in an odd place as he tries to figure out how to have a relationship with his dad, or even just how to think about him. However, Percy is still young and has time to figure this out as the series progresses.



As far as Percy is concerned, many things are back to the way they should be. Mom is safe and sound at home—but now, after his quest, Percy is even more aware of Gabe's controlling nature. Gabe clearly has no empathy, since he forced Mom to go to work and wouldn't allow her to try to track down her missing son. As a hero, Percy begins to feel a sense of responsibility to protect Mom from mean individuals like Gabe.



Ending up with Medusa's head gives Percy an easy way to deal with Gabe, since it will turn Gabe to stone if he looks at it. However, Percy isn't as impulsive as he once was, which is, in part, because he no longer associates his impulsivity with ADHD. Instead, his new understanding of how his brain and body work helps him to control his impulses and make more nuanced, well-thought-out decisions. This decision, then, will illustrate how far Percy has come in terms of growing up and figuring out who he is.



In this moment, Percy realizes that he has the power to define what being a Greek hero means to him. He could go against Mom's wishes and petrify Gabe—but he knows that would end badly. Instead, Percy can make the choice to live a potentially less tragic life by leaving the choice to Mom.



Percy tells Mom that a look inside the box will do away with Gabe, and he insists that she deserves better. Mom says that she can't let Poseidon or Percy take care of her; she has to find her own courage. Percy says he'll leave the box and go back to Half-Blood Hill. At the door, Percy can't believe he's leaving without taking revenge. When Gabe heckles Mom, Percy notices anger in her eyes and thinks that she can do this.

Percy is able to tell Mom that she deserves better in part because he has found a better place. He knows what it's like to fit in somewhere and be accepted warmly, and he wants Mom to have that same experience in her romantic life. Now, he's using what he learned and is passing it on to others.



CHAPTER 22

Annabeth, Percy, and Grover are the first heroes to return alive to Half-Blood Hill since Luke, so they participate in a traditional feast and burn the burial shrouds that the other campers made for them. At the campfire that night, Percy watches Grover's satyr friends admire Grover's searcher's license. Nothing can dampen Percy's spirits; his cabin doesn't feel lonely anymore. He has friends during the day, and he knows that Poseidon is watching and is proud of him. Mom also writes to say that she's doing better: Gabe left mysteriously, and she just sold her first concrete sculpture, *The Poker Player*, which will pay for her first term of college and a new apartment. She writes that she also put a deposit down on a new private school if Percy wants to attend and live at home. Percy doesn't know how to answer.

After completing his quest, Percy feels like a whole new person. He now knows who he is and is comfortable in his various identities. He knows that he can be a half-blood, Poseidon's son, and the son of a wonderful mortal woman all at once—and none of those things makes him less special or important. The book implies that Mom turned Gabe into stone and that he actually is the statue she sold. This represents her recognition that Percy no longer needs the same kind of protection that he has in years past. Now that Percy knows who and what he is, he can take care of himself—so Gabe is no longer needed.



The camp gathers on the Fourth of July for fireworks put on by the Hephaestus cabin. Grover shows up to say goodbye. He looks older since the quest. Percy tries to feel happy for him, but he's sad to lose his oldest friend. Grover hugs Annabeth, claps Percy on the shoulder, and heads off. Percy decides to believe that Grover will be the first searcher to return. The summer passes. Percy gets better at the climbing wall and at plotting for capture the flag. He often thinks of the Oracle and its prophecy, and he can't help but think that it's not over yet—Ares's betrayal doesn't seem like enough, and he let Mom save herself.

Now that Percy understands who he is, what he is, and where he belongs, he's able to have the least stressful summer of his life. He also now understands that while he may not be able to control everything, he does have the choice to support Grover in his quest as a searcher. Choosing to believe that Grover will return is a way for Percy to show his loyalty and maintain their friendship, even in Grover's absence.



On the last night of the summer session, Percy receives his own necklace and bead: the bead is black with a trident to commemorate Percy's parentage and his quest to the Underworld. Everyone cheers, and Percy feels both happy and sad. The other campers feel like his family, but most of them are leaving tomorrow for the school year. The next morning, Percy finds a form letter from Mr. D saying that he has to decide if he's leaving or not by noon. Percy only has a few hours to decide. He thinks the choice should be easy—classrooms are torture—but he's excited by the prospect of living with Mom without Gabe. He remembers Annabeth's insistence that the real world is where the monsters are, and he thinks of Thalia. He wonders if he'll survive until next summer.

Camp Half-Blood has given Percy a place where he feels like he belongs for the first time. In spite of his fractured family situation, this place gives him a number of people in the same boat, all of whom feel like family. Now, Percy has to decide if family is tied to the place (by staying at Camp Half-Blood) or if he can maintain these relationships even if he leaves. He also has to consider whether it's more important to stay in this place where he's safe or whether it's better to be out fighting monsters—that is, if he wants to be a hero or a normal kid.



Percy decides to do some sword practice to clear his head. He finds Luke in the arena, whacking on dummies like his life depends on it. Percy watches in awe and can't figure out how Luke managed to fail his quest. Luke notices Percy and stops. Percy notices that Luke's sword looks odd; Luke explains that it's half celestial bronze and half tempered steel, so he can kill mortals *and* immortals. Percy flashes on Chiron saying that a hero should never harm mortals. With a small smile, Luke says that it's one of a kind and invites Percy to go with him to find something to fight in the woods. Percy thinks he should be relieved that Luke is being so friendly—he's been distant since Percy returned—but he hesitates. Luke pulls out Cokes, which don't exist at camp, and Percy agrees.

There are no monsters around, so Percy and Luke settle in by the creek. They talk about whether Percy misses his quest, and Luke looks suddenly weary, angry, and not handsome. Luke bitterly says that he's been here since he was 14. He trained, got a quest, and then everyone ignored him. Luke tosses his can into the creek, which shocks Percy—the naiads and nymphs will take revenge. Luke says he's leaving and that he brought Percy here to say goodbye. He snaps his fingers, and a scorpion crawls out of a hole in the ground. Percy reaches for his **pen**, but Luke warns him that pit scorpions can jump 15 feet and kill within a minute.

The scorpion fixes its eyes on Percy as it climbs up his leg. Luke asks Percy if he felt the darkness and realized how useless it is to be a pawn for the gods. He insists that Western civilization is a disease; they must burn it down and start over. Percy says that Luke serves Kronos: Kronos got Luke to steal the bolt and the helm, and he speaks to Luke in dreams. Luke points out that Kronos also spoke to Percy and insists that Kronos isn't brainwashing him—Kronos has shown Luke that his talents are being wasted. Luke reveals that his quest was to repeat Hercules's quest to steal a golden apple, and there's no glory in that. He says all he got was his scar and pity. Kronos began visiting his dreams and convinced him to steal the bolt and the helm. It was easy.

That Luke's sword can kill mortals is—and should be—a red flag. Though few have said so explicitly, Chiron and others have implied that nothing the gods or demigods do should harm mortals. Possessing a sword that will kill mortals suggests that Luke is, in fundamental ways, not like Percy, Chiron, and the rest of the campers. There's something dark about him—something that the novel suggests is decidedly not human.



Again, Luke shows that he doesn't belong at Camp Half-Blood anymore when he tosses his can into the creek, a serious transgression at camp. Luke also suggests that even though he completed a quest, he doesn't see himself as a hero—and he doesn't think that being a hero is all that great. Instead, he believes that being a hero is a poor consolation prize for being different.



Here, Luke lays out exactly why he's turning to evil: he feels as though his father doesn't care enough about him to give him a quest that plays to his strengths. In Luke's opinion, all Hermes cares about, is recreating things that have already happened, something that Luke sees as impersonal and offensive. This shows the worst consequences of the fractured families of the gods: the neglectful and absent parents, through their actions, can push their children toward evil.



Percy asks why Luke didn't take the items to Kronos. Luke says that he got overconfident and that Ares caught him, but Kronos helped Luke trick Ares into starting a war between the Big Three. Kronos punished him for this misstep but said that a new hero would arrive who could take the bolt and the helm to Tartarus. Percy says that Luke summoned the hellhound. Luke doesn't deny this—it was intended to convince Chiron to send Percy on a quest. Luke also confirms that the flying shoes were cursed. Percy points out that this is an awful way to repay Thalia for her sacrifice, but Luke shrieks that the gods let Thalia die—and they'll pay for it. Percy and Luke argue over whether Luke is being used or not, but Luke refuses to call off the scorpion.

Luke disappears as the scorpion lunges. Percy smacks at it and then cuts it in half with **Riptide**, but then he sees that the scorpion stung his hand. He starts to feel foggy, but putting his hand in the creek does nothing. Percy knows he has to get back to camp, and he asks nymphs for help. Everything goes black. Percy wakes up with Annabeth, Chiron, and Argus surrounding him. Percy tells Chiron what happened. Annabeth is incensed and says that Luke was never right after his quest. Percy insists that he needs to go after Luke immediately, and he gripes that the gods won't even talk about Kronos. Chiron insists that Percy isn't ready. Percy asks if Chiron's prophecy was about Kronos, Annabeth, and him, but Chiron can't say much except that Percy will be a great hero.

Chiron explains that Kronos wants Percy to lose his mind and become bitter, but Percy must wait and train—and most importantly, decide whether he's staying at camp or going home. Chiron leaves for Olympus to report what happened with Luke, and on his way out, he tells Annabeth that "they" are here. Annabeth helps Percy to the porch. He tells her that he thinks Chiron wants him to stay, but he wants to go home—though he also doesn't want to leave Annabeth here with Clarisse. Annabeth says quietly that she's going home for the year. She took Percy's advice and wrote to her dad, apologized, and asked for another chance. He accepted. She points to four figures high on the hill. Percy smiles, and they agree that next summer, they'll hunt down Luke no matter what. Annabeth joins her family. Percy promises Poseidon that he'll come back next summer.

Even though Luke is undeniably aligned with evil, it's important to note that he's still motivated by love and grief for Thalia. However, rather than viewing Thalia's death as her own choice and as a sacrifice, Luke believes that the gods killed her on purpose. In this sense, Luke doesn't believe that the gods are worth worshipping at all. In his mind, they're all greedy, cruel, and selfish—and so it's okay for him to be just as cruel and evil right back at them.



Luke's betrayal is a huge blow to everyone, as he was an essential figure in camp management and performed much of the caretaking for the campers. Even if he was acting, he undeniably made many campers—including Percy and Annabeth—feel at home at Camp Half-Blood. Though Percy takes issue with how the gods are choosing to handle Luke's betrayal and Kronos's rise, Chiron encourages Percy to understand that sometimes, being a hero means trusting others and waiting for the right time.



Percy was in a unique position to advise Annabeth about her dad. Because of the way their friendship developed (and specifically because Annabeth learned to trust Percy), she took his advice to heart. Now, she's willing to consider the possibility that she can have a relationship with her dad. Annabeth can choose to manage her own behavior and make things better, just as her dad can. Through this, Percy learns an important lesson: that sometimes, friendship has to change and adapts to different circumstances. Ultimately, though, he knows that distance won't hurt their friendship.





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