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GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN THE PERCY JACKSON SERIES BY RICK RIORDAN

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the depiction of characters in the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan, with a focus on both gender and Greek mythology. The analyses aim to find out how Riordan portrays his characters regarding gender stereotypes, and how he has adapted Greek mythological figures to fit into a narrative in the 21st century. It has been identified how The Percy Jackson books take place in a world where Greek mythology is real. By using gender theory and discussing women's role in Ancient Greek society, the analyses and discussion can provide a broader view of the representation shown in Riordan's books.

KEYWORDS

Greek mythology, The Percy Jackson books, mythological figures, gender stereotypes, history, modern, character.

INTRODUCTION

Rick Riordan portrayed his characters regarding gender stereotypes, and he adapted Greek mythological figures to fit into a narrative in the 21st century. Rick Riordan is known for his inclusive and diverse portrayal of characters in his books, particularly in his "Percy Jackson" series and other mythology-

based series. He often subverts traditional gender stereotypes by creating strong, independent female characters and by presenting male characters who are not afraid to show vulnerability or emotions. Additionally, he updates and modernizes the personalities and actions of Greek mythological figures

to make them more relatable to contemporary readers. This approach has been praised for challenging stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive representation of characters in literature. Gender equality and gender roles are subjects that are discussed across the globe, and it has been found out how gender representation is in such a popular book series for children. The Percy Jackson books take place in a world where Greek mythology is real.

How are female characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in the Greek myths?

In Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series, female characters are depicted in a more empowered and nuanced way compared to their traditional portrayals in Greek myths. Here are some key points of comparison:

In the Percy Jackson series, Annabeth is portrayed as a strong, intelligent, and capable demigod who is a skilled warrior and strategist. She is not defined solely by her relationships with male characters but is shown to have her own agency, goals, and ambitions. This contrasts with traditional Greek myths where female characters are often relegated to supporting roles or are defined by their relationships with male characters.

Artemis is depicted as a powerful and independent goddess who leads the Hunters of Artemis, a group of immortal maidens who reject romantic relationships

with men. Artemis is shown as a fierce protector of women and girls, challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This portrayal diverges from some Greek myths where Artemis is depicted primarily in relation to male figures like Apollo or Orion.

Thalia is another strong female character in the series who is a demigod daughter of Zeus and a member of the original trio of heroes along with Percy and Annabeth. Thalia is depicted as brave, loyal, and protective of her friends, showcasing her strength and leadership qualities. Her character challenges gender norms by embodying traditionally masculine traits of courage and resilience.

Hera is portrayed as a complex and multi-dimensional character with her own motivations and struggles. While she is still depicted as the queen of the gods and wife of Zeus, Hera's character is given more depth and agency compared to some traditional Greek myths where she is often portrayed as vengeful or jealous.

Overall, Rick Riordan's portrayal of female characters in the Percy Jackson series offers a more modern and inclusive perspective that empowers women and challenges traditional gender roles found in classical mythology. By giving female characters agency, complexity, and strength, Riordan highlights their importance and contributions to the story beyond stereotypical roles as love interests or damsels in distress.

Here are five characters from Rick Riordan's books who are portrayed in diverse and inclusive ways, and how they compare to each other:

1. Percy Jackson: The main character in the "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" series, Percy is a demigod son of Poseidon. He is portrayed as brave, loyal, and compassionate, challenging traditional notions of masculinity by showing vulnerability and emotional depth. Percy's character is relatable to readers of all genders due to his flaws and struggles.

2. A fellow demigod and Percy's close friend, Annabeth is known for her intelligence, strategic thinking, and leadership skills. She is a strong and independent character who challenges gender stereotypes by excelling in combat and problem-solving. Annabeth's character provides a positive representation of a strong female character who is not defined by traditional gender roles.

3. The protagonist of the "Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard" series, Magnus is a homeless teenager who discovers he is the son of a Norse god. He is portrayed as compassionate, empathetic, and courageous, challenging stereotypes about homeless individuals and showcasing the importance of empathy and understanding. Magnus's character highlights the power of kindness and acceptance.

4. A genderfluid demigod in the "Magnus Chase" series, Alex is known for their wit, bravery, and loyalty.

Alex's character challenges traditional gender norms by fluidly moving between male and female identities and by embracing their true self without apology. Alex's character provides representation for genderfluid individuals and promotes acceptance and understanding of diverse gender identities.

5. In the "Trials of Apollo" series, Apollo is punished by Zeus and transformed into a mortal teenager named Lester Papadopoulos. Through his journey as Lester, Apollo learns humility, empathy, and the value of human connections. Apollo's character development showcases growth, redemption, and the importance of empathy and understanding towards others.

These characters from Rick Riordan's books are diverse, inclusive, and multi-dimensional, each challenging stereotypes and offering positive representations of different identities and experiences. Through their stories, readers can learn valuable lessons about acceptance, diversity, and the power of empathy.

In Ancient Greece, there was a big difference in how society treated men and women. They were not considered equal but treated as two completely different categories. This is evident when looking at the Greek myths, as they reflect the society they come from. Rick Riordan based his books in the Percy Jackson series on Greek mythology and therefore also based them on myths that depict men and women

having different roles in society. Does Riordan depict the Greek myths in a particular light with his books, and can he influence the reader's relationship with mythology?

Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief. The Lightning

Thief is the first book in the series following Percy Jackson and was published in 2005. This book is where we are introduced to 12-year-old Percy and follow him from when he first learns who his father is. He gets sent to Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for demigods, to learn how to survive in the outside world where Greek monsters want to attack him. His best friend Grover accompanies him to the camp, where Percy discovers that Grover is a satyr, half human and half goat. He also learns that Chiron, a teacher from his school, is a centaur who teaches at Camp Half-Blood and has trained many demigods throughout history. When arriving at camp, Percy meets Annabeth, a daughter of Athena. He learns that the Greek myths are real, and their power has moved to the US, where they now reside. The Greek gods have children with mortals, who in turn become demigods. Clarisse, a daughter of Ares, is introduced as the camp's bully, and Percy immediately dislikes her. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover venture out on a quest across the US to retrieve Zeus' lightning bolt, which Percy has been falsely accused of stealing. During their quest, they face many challenges, especially from monsters trying to kill them. They are able to retrieve the lightning bolt and discover that it

was Luke, a fellow camper and demigod, who had stolen it and betrayed both the camp and the gods. Luke has turned to Kronos, a mighty and evil Titan who wants to overthrow Olympus and rule the world in chaos.

Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters. The

second book of the series, Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters, was published in 2006. One year has passed since the previous book, and we follow Percy as he returns to Camp Half-Blood for the summer. During the school year, he meets Tyson who turns out to be a young Cyclops and a fellow son of Poseidon. Percy learns that Grover has been captured by the Cyclops Polyphemus and is being held captive on his island in the Sea of Monsters. Percy and Annabeth ask for a quest so they can leave the camp, but Clarisse is granted the quest instead. Her quest is to fetch the Golden Fleece as the camp's borders are failing, and the Fleece can restore them. The tree protecting the camp and its borders has been poisoned, and the Fleece can heal the tree. Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson sneak out of the camp to save Grover and end up travelling with Clarisse for parts of their journey. In the Sea of Monsters they meet famous monsters from The Odyssey: Charybdis and Scylla, Circe, the Sirens and Polyphemus. Finding Clarisse captured in Polyphemus' cave with Grover, the

five of them work together to complete the quest and return to camp. Clarisse travels alone from Miami to

the camp with the Golden Fleece in order to cure the poisoned tree. After returning to the camp, they lay the Golden Fleece on the poisoned tree, and Thalia – a daughter of Zeus – is resurrected from the tree. Grover is given a quest from the old satyrs to find the lost god Pan.

Percy Jackson and the Titan's Curse. The Titan's Curse is the third book in the Percy Jackson series and was published in 2007. In contrast to the two previous books, this book does not start at the beginning of summer. It starts in winter, with Percy, Annabeth, and Thalia going to a boarding school to retrieve two half-bloods – Bianca and Nico di Angelo – and bring the siblings to the camp. Their retrieval does not end well as monsters intercept them. The goddess Artemis and her hunters arrive and help them, but Annabeth gets captured by the enemy. Percy has dreams of Annabeth being in danger and wants to find and rescue her. However, he is not a part of the team sent out on the quest, as the hunters refuse to travel with boys. Percy sneaks out of camp, meets up with the team, and then travels with them for the remainder of their journey. Bianca dies in a fight on their journey, and the rest must travel on without her. At Hoover Dam, Percy meets a mortal girl named Rachel Dare, who can see through the mist, which hides monsters and other magical things from ordinary mortals. After fighting against the Titan Atlas, an ally of Kronos, at Mount Tamalpais in San Francisco, they return to Olympus where Artemis

convinces her fellow gods to fight against the Titans. At the end of the book, it is revealed that Nico is a son of Hades, a secret Percy only shares with Annabeth and Grover after Nico runs away.

Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth. In 2008, the fourth book in the Percy Jackson series was published; The Battle of the Labyrinth. It is Annabeth's turn to get a quest in this book, and she takes the lead in guiding Percy, Tyson, and Grover through Daedalus' labyrinth. The camp has gotten a new sword master named Quintus, who has brought along his hellhound-pet called Mrs. O'Leary. During their travels through the Labyrinth the team gets separated, with Grover and Tyson searching for the god Pan whilst Annabeth and Percy continuing to look for Daedalus' workshop. In an explosion at Hephaestus' workshop, Percy ends up at Calypso's Island, where he stays while he heals from his injuries. Percy and Annabeth enlist Rachel to help them navigate the Labyrinth against Annabeth's wishes. They also reunite with Nico after finding him in the Labyrinth, and after finding Daedalus, they must return to camp to prepare for battle. During the battle, Daedalus shows up at camp and announces that he is ready to end his life, which will destroy the Labyrinth as it is tied to his life force, saving the camp.

Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian. The Last Olympian is the fifth and final book in the Percy Jackson series, and it was published in 2009. The plot is focused on the upcoming final battle between the

gods and the Titans, with the camp working to prepare themselves and fight against their enemies. Percy goes with Beckendorf, a fellow camper, to destroy The Princess Andromeda, the ship that their enemies are using as a base and to travel to Manhattan. Beckendorf dies during this mission, and Percy must bring the bad news back to the camp. Percy decides that he must bathe in the River Styx to become invincible, something Luke did before Kronos entered his body, to prepare for the upcoming battle. Gathering their forces in Manhattan, the campers and the Hunters of Artemis fight to protect the city and the entrance to Mount Olympus, located in the Empire State Building. The Battle of Manhattan is the final battle, named after where it takes place, and Percy and his allies manage to hold their ground. In order to end the war they have to defeat Kronos, and it ends with Percy and Annabeth having to fight him in Olympus. Luke manages to gain control over his body long enough to stab himself with his blade, killing himself and Kronos and ending the war. After their victory, Percy is offered immortality by the gods, but he declines, asking instead that they claim all their demigod children when they are thirteen or reach the camp. Rachel travels to camp, and when Percy, Annabeth and Nico arrive, she has already taken the spirit of the Oracle, becoming the camp's new Oracle. Percy and Annabeth decide to make their relationship official, and they are looking forward to the following summer.

CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, there is no myth that only has one version, as they have been changed and edited throughout history when being told. Myths being rewritten and retold in modern times is just a continuation of how they were told in ancient practice. Many myths have been written down as time passed, there can also be clear differences in these written versions. In addition to the ones written down, there must be countless versions that were told and retold orally and lost to time. Altering the myths is essential to keep them alive, and it is what makes them relevant to people alive today. Doherty writes that both ancient and modern retellers of myths “have freely altered motives of characters, the sequence of narrative events, and the point(s) of view from which they are told”, which is what Riordan also does in his books.

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