

The Adventure of the Hero Percy Jackson:  
An Analysis of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series

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篇名:

**The Adventure of the Hero Percy Jackson:  
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*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*  
Series**

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## I. Introduction

Besides being recommended by U.S. president Barack Obama, the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series instantly became the New York Times best-selling series ever since its publication. I read this novel at the age of sixteen, the same age when the main character, Percy, faced the war between Olympians and Titans. Fascinated by the story, I was immediately absorbed in the exciting adventures and the world of mythology.

American mythologist Joseph Campbell (1904. 3. 26 ~ 1987. 10. 30), author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, brought up the idea of “The Adventure of the Hero” in his book. (This is how he introduced it: “英雄神話歷險的標準路徑……英雄自日常生活的世界外出冒險，進入超自然奇蹟的領域；他在那兒遭遇到奇幻的力量，並贏得決定性的勝利；然後英雄從神秘的歷險帶著給予同胞恩賜的力量回來。”) (1) He’s not the first person that brought up the idea, though. In fact, Vladimir Propp had induced similar ideas in the book *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (published in 1928). Anyway, Campbell generalized and demarcated the adventure of a hero into three gradations: departure, initiation and return. Campbell defined a hero as someone “能夠奮戰超越個人及地域的歷史局限，達到普遍有效之常人型態的男人或女人。” (2) Being the hero of Olympus, the conception of “The Adventure of the Hero” suited Percy Jackson, too. In this small thesis I would apply the three main gradations (departure, initiation and return) to Percy’s adventures. And I would also put other notions of Campbell such as “the call to adventure” (歷險的召喚), “the crossing of the first threshold” (跨越第一道門檻), “the belly of the whale” (鯨魚之腹) and “the road of trials” (試煉之路) in use of Percy’s adventures. (3)

In the first part of this thesis, I would introduce the main character of this story – Percy Jackson, And in the second part of this thesis, I would discuss about the adventure of the hero Percy Jackson.

## II. Thesis

### 1. Introducing the Character

#### 1.1. The Background of Percy Jackson.

Growing up in a step family, Percy Jackson, real name Perseus Jackson, was found out to be a demigod at the age of twelve. It was also in that year when Percy first discovered who his real father is – Poseidon, god of the sea, earthshaker, strombringer and father of horses. Before that, since he had never seen his real father, he had always assumed him dead. Percy lived with his mother Sally Jackson and his terrible stepdad Gabe Ugliano (who, Percy nicknamed Smelly Gabe and called him a “world-class jerk”)

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before he entered Camp Half-Blood.

Before he became a camper, Percy was just a plain, troubled ADHD kid with dyslexia. At least, this was how he regarded himself: **“What was so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D<sup>+</sup> report card, kicked out of school for the sixth time in six years.”**(4)

Percy later led the half-bloods through the battle against the Titans when he was sixteen years old.

## 1.2. The Young Hero’s Abnormal School Life.

Before Jackson realized his true identity as a son of Poseidon, his powerful demigod aura had already attracted various monsters, including a Fury. Bad things happened to him on almost every field trip. The worst one took place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan, New York. During this sixth-grade field trip, Jackson’s math teacher Mrs. Dodds revealed her true form as a Kindly One, and Percy vaporized her with a ballpoint pen, ( which is a bronze sword called Riptide) from Mr. Brunner (Chiron). Ever since, **“mythological monsters and the gods of Mount Olympus seem to be walking straight out of the Percy’s Greek mythology textbook and into his life.”**(5)

## 2. The Adventure of the Hero Percy Jackson

In terms of mythologist Joseph Campbell’s famous book *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* , the adventure of a hero can be generalized and demarcated into three gradations—departure, initiation and return.

### 2.1. Departure

#### 2.1.1. The Call to Adventure(歷險的召喚)

After the field trip to the museum, the strange weather continued. Percy described the changes he had: **“I started feeling cranky and irritable most of the time. My grades slipped from Ds to Fs. ... I was sent out into the hallway in almost every class.”**(6) And much more, he had started to nose out his irregular relationship with Greek mythology, **“... Words had started swimming off the page**(The book Percy was studying :*Cambridge Guide to Greek Mythology*), **circling my head, the letters doing one – eighties as if they were riding skateboards.”** (7) Fate is now calling to

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this young hero, leading him into an unknown sphere.

### 2.1.2. The Crossing of the First Threshold(跨越第一道門檻)

Campbell wrote:” 它們(門檻守衛)代表英雄對現有領域或生命視野的局限。在它們之外是黑暗、未知和危險。…而大眾的信念使他有種種理由害怕跨入未開發領域的第一步。”(8)

Crossing the borders of Camp Half-Blood meant crossing the threshold between two worlds. Once he set his foot in Camp Half-Blood, Percy also set his foot in a world he used to call it” **...myths, to explain lightning and the seasons and stuff. They’re what people believed before there was science.**”(9)

### 2.1.3. The Belly of the Whale(鯨魚之腹)

Joseph Campbell wrote about “the belly of the whale” in his book: “神奇門檻通道為進入再生領域轉折點這個概念，是鯨魚之腹這個世界性子宮意象所象徵的意義。” (10)

Being out for two days after fighting the Minotaur, that was how Percy entered the other world. There, he started another way of living, he started his life as a whole different identity from a troubled kid—a hero.

## 2.2. Initiation

The moment Percy set his foot in Camp Half-Blood, he also set his foot in another world. A world that differs from the world we know, a world that Gods exist and monsters never truly die.

### 2.2.1. The Road of Trials(試煉之路)

#### 2.2.1.1. An Itinerary into the Underworld Kingdom

Accused of stealing the lightning bolt, Percy was compelled to take up a quest in order to ferret out the bolt and the real thief. Though Percy thought finding Zeus’s master bolt was the main purpose of this quest, he didn’t realize that the most important part of this quest was the conversion of his relationship with his father and the construction of a

It is probably hard for anyone to accept a father who had abandoned him/her for twelve years, including Percy. **“I felt angry at my father. ... I resented him ... for not having the guts to marry my mom. He’d left us, and now we were stuck with Smelly Gabe.”**(11) So, naturally, he didn’t agree to go on the quest just to help his father. **“I don’t care about the master bolt. I agreed to go to the Underworld so I could bring back my mother. ... I’m not doing it to help my father. He doesn’t care about me. I don’t care about him.”**(12)

But deep inside his heart, he knew Grover was right. **“You’re glad your dad is alive. You feel good that he’s claimed you.”**(13) That’s why he chose to trust his father when facing the Chimera and the six-hundred- and- thirty- feet jump from St. Louis Arch.

We could tell that Percy didn’t have many friends at Yancy Academy from: **“The only person I dreaded saying goodbye to was Grover, ....”**(14) And his interactions with others: **“They went back to their conversation as if I’d never existed.”**(15) Besides, he didn’t take much stock in his friends before the tour to the Underworld. This young hero had been suffering from conjecturing his friends all the way from New York to Los Angeles **“I had spent thousands of miles worried that I’d be betrayed by a friend ...”**(16) In the lands of dead, he finally set himself free by putting his faith in his friends, Grover and Annabeth. **“They had both been with me through so much. ... They had done nothing but save me, over and over ,...”**(17)

When it all seemed that “friends” are the most reliable people in the world, Percy learned his second lesson about a “Friend “ in the magical woods at Camp Half-Blood. He tasted the betrayal of a friend for the first his life. **“He’d (Luke) pretended to be my friend, and the whole time he’d been Kronos’s number-one servant.”**(18) The following years, Percy had a hard time dealing with the problem of Luke, an enemy who was once a friend. He not only had to face Luke as his enemy under different circumstances in the external world but face the internal struggles as Luke was once his friend.

#### 2.2.1.2. Adventures inside the Sea of Monsters

During the trip to the home of the Cyclops, Percy and his friends faced three major challenges.

First: the reunion with his enemy-Luke. Luke tempted both Annabeth and Percy to join the evil Titan Kronos. **“Percy, your mother will never have to work again... You can have power, fame – whatever you want. Annabeth, you can realize your dream of being an architect...”**(19) The words continued to allure the demigods, especially Annabeth.

Second: the troubles at C.C.’s spa and resort. The enticement of Circe enchanted Percy into drinking the mixture that turned men into guinea pig. **“... Her voice seemed to lift me off the steps and carry me toward her. ...”**(20) Luckily, Percy was saved by Annabeth, he almost had to live in a cage for the rest of his life.

Third: the temptation of the Siren Bay. The Sirens used exactly the same idea Luke had used tempting Annabeth. Observing from the sidelines, Percy started to understand how Kronos tempt the half-bloods. So, no matter how his heart struggled, he remained the same till the last moment.

#### 2.2.1.3. A Mission Saving Friends

With his friend Annabeth lost, Percy secretly followed Zoe, Bianca, Thalia and Grover to their quest searching the goddess Artemis, hoping to find Annabeth. He confronted a lot of dangerous monsters and situations. He had close calls coming up against the manticore(Dr.Thorn), the Nemean Lion(only beaten by Hercules before), the skeleton warriors(grown from the tyrannosaurs’ teeth),the Erymanthian Boar, the Talos(in the junkyard of the gods), Ladon the dragon(guarding the garden of twilight and the apples of immortality) and the cutest but also the most dangerous—Bessie, the Ophiotaurus.

Jackson witnessed how strong the temptation of sacrificing the Ophiotaurus was to others.”**Thalia stared at the cow serpent with wonder.”The power to destroy the gods...The power to overthrow**

**Olympus. That's...that's huge." Thalia's expression bothered me. She almost looked...hungry."**(21) Being a child of the Big Three as well, how could Percy stand up against such temptation? His mother told us why in the beginning of story **"I know one thing about you, Percy. Your heart is always in the right place."**(22) Unlike what the wine god Dionysus predicted, Jackson did prove better than other heroes. And Zoe Nightshade approved it. **"You spoke the truth, Percy Jackson. You are nothing like...like Hercules."**(23)

#### 2.2.1.4. The Journey at The Mysterious Underground Maze

Percy's labyrinth journey is also the journey dealing girls' problem. From the beginning of his ninth grade, Percy is faced with lethal enticements—two seriously beautiful cheerleaders who were actually dracaenas. He could barely resist such attraction, just like the way when he saw the goddess of love. **"...my jaw dropped. I forgot my name. I forgot where I was. I forgot how to speak in complete sentences."**(24) He would have been devoured like most male heroes were without the help of Rachel, his best mortal friend.

But the hardest part of the journey was turning down the offer of Calypso. **"You would be immortal on this island. You would never age or die. You could leave the fight to others, Percy Jackson. You could escape your prophecy."**(25) Jackson knew he could stay in Ogygia and disappear from the earth, never facing the future and challenges. But he chose to front his fate and the chilling prophecy instead. And here stands the hero Percy Jackson, who is no longer the little boy that runs away from problems. **"英雄是那些能夠了解，接受並進而克服自己命運挑戰的人。"** (26)

#### 2.2.1.5. The Final War between Two Worlds

After all those years of training and preparing, the final war between Olympians and Titans finally came; worse than anyone could've imagined.

As he was getting ready to face Kronos(Luke) in the final war, deeming himself as the hero whose soul shall be reaped by the cursed blade in the Great Prophecy, Percy seemed to found himself fighting

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against his own fate.

In the end, he realized that the only thing blocking his way was *himself*. It was *him*, who had the choice to give Luke the knife; who had the choice to believe Luke was the hero in the prophecy; who had the choice to believe that Luke was still capable of setting things right.

### 2.3. Return

Giving up immortality meant saying goodbye to the dignity as a hero and becoming a regular guy in the ordinary mortal world. Percy Jackson once again crossed the threshold between the two worlds. Not with a hero's pride, though, he brought hope into the world. For, **“They (all demigods) won't be left out in the world on their own at the mercy of monsters... No unclaimed demigods will be crammed into the Hermes cabin anymore, wondering who their parents are... All children of the gods will be welcome and treated with respect.”**(27)

And of course, Percy could live a comfortable life ever after. **“For once, I didn't look back.”**(28)

## III. Conclusion

Heroes are the masters of two worlds. They brought the views of another world into this world. Just as what Jackson did, he brought the Olympians the sufferings of the mortal world. And he delivered the half-bloods from their miseries at a price of the chance of immortality. This, as once his father Poseidon had said: **“Anyone else must *choose* to take the burden of their own free will. Only a hero, someone with strength, a true heart and great courage, would do such a thing.”**(29)

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Welcome to the beginning of Percy Jackson's new life, a life where Greek mythology intersects modern day, where ADHD is an asset not a disorder, and where dangerous quests are the most sought-after activity. With his best friends Annabeth Chase, intimidating and intelligent daughter of Athena, and Grover Underwood, omnivorous half-man, half-goat, the son of Poseidon solves the mystery of Zeus's stolen lightning bolt, saves Camp Half-Blood by recovering the long-lost Golden Fleece, and frees the goddess Artemis before she's crushed by the weight of the sky. He stands ready to assist when Annabeth Percy Jackson and the Olympians is the second series written by Rick Riordan, (the first being *Tres Navarres*) and the predecessor of *The Heroes of Olympus* series. The series focuses on Greek mythology. Every book follows Percy Jackson's adventures in his point of view. Each book is based on a combination of different Greek heroes' adventures. The series follows the completion of the first Great Prophecy. The second Great Prophecy, later called the Prophecy of Seven is revealed in *The Last Olympian*