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Adaptation and Cultural Study of Mythology: Exploration of Riordan's Literature

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ADAPTATION AND CULTURE STUDY OF MYTHOLOGY: EXPLORATION OF
RIORDAN'S LITERATURE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Breanna Martin
August 2021

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation theory is the idea that an author is taking an older text and retelling the stories in a different and often more contemporary way so that newer audiences can experience them in a different setting. Cultural studies theory is where a certain culture is studied to understand what aspects are valued within that dominant culture. This idea is used within this project, then deepened by analysis of Riordan's conception of the transmission of myths of ancient civilizations and empires to contemporary dominant world powers and civilizations like the United States. One of the most common methods of adaptation is found in young adult literature. This can be applied to the novels *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* and *The Kane Chronicles: The Red Pyramid* by Rick Riordan. Greek and Egyptian myth adaptations can be found in abundance throughout these series; Riordan uses these adaptations as vehicles for exploring the personal odysseys of his young adult protagonists. This project will examine how Riordan adapts well-known Greek and Egyptian myths as well as lesser-known myths to explore contemporary situations. It will show how Riordan adjusts these myths to fit contemporary times and express social and psychological predicaments. Some authors such as Alexander Leighton and Sylvie Geerts have dealt with adaptation theory and its process. They have investigated adaptation in children and young adult literature while examining cultural values since young adult literature often tries to express values and morals to its young readers. This

project helps others to understand the uses of adaptations and how they can be employed in other young adult literature so that young readers can experience texts that they may never have encountered before, yet in a way that is connected to them.

Keywords: Adaptation, Cultural Studies, *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, *The Kane Chronicles: The Red Pyramid*, Societal ideals, Rick Riordan

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband, Matthew Martin, who gave me tremendous amounts of encouragement and believed in me. Thank you for all you have done for me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

We, as a society, are surrounded by works such as movies, video games, and literature that have been retold from their original iteration. Like the movies *Thor*, *The Mummy*, *Lord of the Rings*, and almost any produced by Disney, they were not the original telling of those stories. Much of our entertainment comes from tales that have been passed down throughout history. Adaptations makes up most of what we experience and more often than not we are not even aware they had a previous form. We consume this entertainment daily without thought, yet when one does stop to consider the source of their favorite movie or story, they learn that those works have transformed over time being reimagined in each new culture that has absorbed it.

The ability to create and enjoy adaptations is amazing for more than just entertainment purposes. Each adaptation presents a part of the culture it is being adapted into. Cultural representation is an important part of adaptation and what it does to the main elements that make up the story. While adaptations change within each telling to reflect societal ideals of the current culture, there are some aspects of the tale that must stay the same for it to have the same impact. To fully understand how adaptations can impact society and explore what that

impact has done, there needs to be an exploration and discussion of the usage of adaptation within a dominate culture, such as American society.

In this book I am going to be discussing the theories of adaptation and cultural studies in relation to ancient mythology in young adult (YA) literature with a focus on a specific author: Rick Riordan. I will be looking at how mythology is functioning in Riordans two books, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* and *The Kane Chronicles: The Red Pyramid*, dealing with the introduction of ancient texts to a younger generation in a way that has them seeing how myths can represent modern societal ideals. This discussion will lead to the examination of how those societal ideals relate to adolescents' lives showing how Riordan's work fits myths within contemporary culture. To begin with, let us look at adaptation theory. For some, adaptation is more of a scientific term regarding how species change to fit into their surroundings for survival. This understanding is not all that different from the literary theory of adaptation, except substitute species for literary texts. Adaptation theory in its basic form is simply taking an original story and changing some of the aspects to have it fit into a different context so some of the original meaning may survive in a new time. This can be seen most within entertainment where novels are adapted into movies and certain elements change to fit into the popular culture.

Now, there is a variety of work done on adaptation theory, however it is the work by Linda Hutcheon in her book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, that has influenced this project heavily. In her work, she focuses on the uses of adapting

movies, video games, plays, and literature. She explains that adaptation has a place in storytelling because it keeps them relevant to society. Adapting myths and tales helps keep stories connected to contemporary times while still highlighting core values. She takes time to stress the differences of adaptation from other genres, “Like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called, ‘sources’. Unlike parodies, however, adaptation usually openly announce this relationship.” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn, 3), the idea that adaptation announces their ‘sources’ is something that I will stick to throughout this work. Hutcheon claims, “Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication.” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn, 7) and she looks at why authors do adaptation in the first place, what is the motivation and why do audiences love adaptations so much? These are some of the defining questions that carry her work, and she explores possible answers that fuel my exploration into mythology adaptation in YA fiction.

Coinciding with adaptation theory within this book is cultural studies theory. Cultural studies theory is just as it sounds, it investigates and studies culture of a certain society. There are two uses of this theory that will come into play here, the first is using cultural studies to look back at the culture that the source myths originated in. Secondly, will be using it as Robert Parker explains it, “cultural studies scholars shifted the study of popular culture from the study of how its fans are dupes of the broader cultural hegemony to studying how they use popular culture to speak back to and perhaps even resist or begin to resist

the expectations of dominant ideologies, such as consumerism, sexism, racism, capitalism, class elitism and so on.” (Parker, 276), which means that I will apply this theory to the myths Riordan uses to show how they fit into the lives and culture of his readers thus claiming that adaptation is used to present certain values that have stayed important no matter the culture or time.

I will be using both theories to analyze and explore ancient myth adaptation from two ancient cultures that are the cornerstones of Rick Riordan’s two novels. Both novels revolve around myths from different ancient civilizations: Greek, and Egyptian. Published in 2005, Riordan’s first novel about Percy Jackson tells of an adventure that Percy goes on after he learns he is the son of Poseidon and experiences Greek stories and monsters. The second novel, *The Red Pyramid*, deals with the siblings, Carter and Sadie that are thrown into a story of Egyptian mythology of gods and creation.

All these works and theories will combine in my book and help further my investigation and analysis of how the adaptation of ancient mythology into popular culture turns myths into literature that YA readers can connect to. By showing how centuries old ideas fit in a society they are familiar with, I will be taking what these authors and others have said and fill in the gaps they have left behind. They all say something new and different about adaptation or culture in literature, but there are places that need to be explored. By using two novels about different ancient cultures and myths that take place in the twenty-first century, it will be possible to understand what is being done in YA literature and

how that helps readers become more immersed into the text. I will analyze how experiences of cultural ideals from both the past and present will be introduced from stories they may never have encountered otherwise. The connections with modern culture will help show young adult readers that ancient myths can be used to express values still relevant in contemporary times.

CHAPTER TWO

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE AND GREEK MYTHS

Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief

Ancient myths have been adapted into new retellings for many generations representing dominant culture at the time of their adaptations. Adapting old texts into new literature is an excellent way to expose younger generations to material they may never have encountered in their everyday lives. This can be seen in Rick Riordan's young adult novel *Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*. In Riordan's books, mythology introduces ancient stories to a younger generation in a way that has them seeing how myths can represent modern societal ideals. The main protagonist is a young boy named Percy Jackson whose father is Poseidon, god of the sea. Percy goes on a quest in the book and meets many mythical creatures. By using contemporary landmarks and by changing elements within myths to reflect societal ideals, Riordan provides his young audience with ideas and examples that ancient mythology has a place within contemporary culture.

Through adaptation Riordan expands on Greek myths and changes them to fit the modern world in a way that his reads can relate to. Alexander Leighton makes the claim that if adaptation is done correctly then there will be a backlash against both the author and the subject which he is writing about. In Leighton's "Re-discovering Mythology: Adaptation and Appropriation in the *Percy Jackson*

and the Olympians Saga” he discusses how Riordan uses his series to introduce certain Greek myths to a new generation. By adapting these myths successfully, Riordan takes unfamiliar classical works and makes them available for a contemporary audience. Yet, Riordan’s books do more than just make mythology accessible to young readers. Anne Morey and Claudia Nelson explain in, “A God Buys Us Cheeseburgers: Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson Series and America’s Culture Wars”, that Riordan retells the myths and connects them to American values. Morey and Nelson explain that Riordan makes modern improvements on the old ways within his series and that his adaptation choices blend classical Greek heritage with concepts from American culture. For these authors, the importance of Riordan’s work is about how high culture and classical tradition may be successfully transmitted to the masses. They observe that the way Riordan has made the myths fit into his novels for young adults have made it possible for those young adults to experience texts they may never have seen before. While most adaptations scholars who focus on Riordan’s use of Greek mythology tend to concern themselves with how well the adaptation is done and how it transmits Greek mythology to new audiences, my focus is on how Riordan’s adaptation choices provide chances and examples for young readers to see how mythology represents cultural ideals. By transforming key characters and locations in creative new ways, Riordan’s novel allows readers to immerse themselves into an adventure that takes place in a familiar culture while showing how values from the past can be seen in the present. By immersing themselves

within the novel, they are able to equate their journey in life with the steps Percy takes within his quest. YA readers can see ideals such as power, entertainment, and trust of elders were instilled within audiences from thousands of years ago thus giving them the chance to decide what ideals are meant to be kept.

Divine Parents, Demi-god myths and Character Disabilities

Adapting and expanding Greek myths is not the only move Riordan makes within his story. His focus on mythology and popular culture includes minority characters that create a mirror for some of his YA audience. In the case of Percy Jackson, he is one of the few literary characters with a learning disability. With the inclusion of a main character who has learning disabilities, Riordan's work provides representation of a disabled minority for his audience. In chapter six, "The Agency of Demigods and Godlings in the Mythic World of Rick Riordan" of *All in the Family*, Michele D. Castleman claims, "Some readers may feel valued and encouraged reading about powerful protagonists diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD, demonstrating how these popular fantasy series contribute to newly nuanced and more positive interpretations of these diagnoses" (153). The inclusion of disability characters creates a powerful narrative readers can relate too. Riordan uses Percy to show that not all disabilities can be outwardly seen. While Percy initially sees his dyslexia and ADHD as defects and weaknesses, his adventure ultimately reveals that his weakness is actually a special gift. Percy allows readers that identify with him to escape any negative feelings they may have regarding their disabilities by reading about a young boy who while different

from the regular population can still thrive and become a hero. Castleman states, “For Percy and other protagonists, attributes of ADHD and dyslexia [are] symptoms tied to their familial connection to an ancient god or goddess . . .” (153). Meaning that Percy’s learning disabilities signs of his divine parentage. Percy faces mythical adventures in which he has to save the world while embracing his gifts and that causes him to find his place in his new reality.

The presence of a main character with learning disabilities is of vital importance to young readers. Jen Scott Curwood’s article “Redefining Normal: A Critical Analysis of (Dis)ability in Young Adult Literature” discusses how critical literary theory can influence the way literature is analyzed regarding the understanding of concepts dealing with normalcy and disability. Her approach is to look at literature that deals directly with disabilities within the main characters. Then explore how those disabilities effect their lives changing how the story is told. She observes the history of disabled characters, “While most representations of disability in classic literature are negative or restrictive, others are intended to elicit the audience’s sentimentality and pity” (Curwood 17). Curwood argues that representations of disabilities in YA literature can be a corrective to negative representations, “Reading young adult literature can be a powerful way for students to develop literacy skills and reflect on their own experiences” (Curwood 16). Curwood’s work sheds light on how Riordan’s representation of Percy performs some of this corrective work.

Percy Jackson grew up thinking there was something wrong with himself, but the course of his adventure reveals that those very differences will keep him alive in his new reality. Percy finds himself at camp half-blood, where he learns he is the son of an Olympian god and he is more powerful and special than he ever imagined. Of his ADHA he learns, “you’re impulsive, can’t sit still in the classroom. That’s your battlefield reflexes.” (Riordan 88). His body’s natural reflexes will help him focus on more than one thing so he can stay alive in battle. Of his dyslexia he learns, “your [his] mind is hard-wired for ancient Greek”(Riordan 88). These revelations mark a turning point where Riordan takes the negative views of disabilities and transforms them to present Percy’s learning disabilities as a positive force that he needs to learn from. Riordan takes both of Percy’s apparent learning disabilities and changes how they are viewed by making them key assets in his life as a hero. He is conscious of how his readers will view Percy and the negative stigmas that comes from having learning disabilities, so Riordan takes those stigmas and flips them, so they are signs of who Percy is.

Transforming these views challenges preconceived notions his readers may have about people with disabilities. As stated by Curwood, “Finding *sameness* helps readers understand others’ lived experiences and it builds a sense of shared humanity. Uncovering *differences* allows readers to interrogate social constructions related to normalcy and disability” (Curwood 19). In other words, when readers can see connections between themselves and characters,

they are able to understand what that character is going through. For readers who are different than the characters they read about they are opened to new experiences and perspectives allowing them to examine received social constructions and labels, such as disability, through new eyes and learn to sympathize with other plights. Riordan encapsulates this idea from Curwood with the way he presents Percy as a character with disabilities who is still the same as many of Riordan's readers even if their minds work differently from the way Percy's does.

Percy, along with his readers, finds out he is the son of the god Poseidon, King of the seas. Whereas initially his unknown paternity seems to be a social stigma and disadvantage, it ends up creating the possibility for divinity. Percy's adventure begins when he learns that Zeus, god of thunder and king of all the gods, wants him dead because he thinks that Percy stole his most powerful weapon, the lightning bolt. So, Percy's divine paternity from Poseidon ends up entangling him in less desirable family relationships as well. To punish Percy for allegedly stealing Zeus's lightning bolt, Zeus has Hades, the god of the dead, hold his mother captive in the Underworld. Percy is given a quest to go and find the lost weapon to stop a war amongst the gods and save his mother. He leaves on his quest with his friend Grover, who we learn is a satyr, and another camper named Annabeth Chase, a daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. As they venture to the Underworld to try and take back the bolt from Hades, whom they think stole it, Riordan maps the ancient Greek mythological locations onto

modern America, such as making the Empire State Building represent Mount Olympus. Deadly situations that involve facing off with ancient monsters like Medusa are set in in a Gnome emporium, and unknown evil forces such as the Lotus Eaters who have taken to trapping young adults in a sleek hotel. Ancient gods that are not as helpful as Percy has hoped which cause obstacles that almost stop Percy from finding the lightning bolt and halting World War III.

Once in the Underworld, Percy and his companions realize that they were tricked by the real thief and it was not Hades, but Ares, god of war, working in consort with a supposed friend from camp, Luke, a son of Hermes, god of messages. When they realize they have been tricked, they make the decision to leave Percy's mother in the Underworld so they can return the bolt to Zeus. They do return the bolt, but only after Percy fights with the god of war and convinces the gods not to kill him for being dangerous. Leaving the bolt in the capable hands of the gods and returning to camp, Percy seems to have saved the day, and the gods are no longer on the brink of war, however, that security does not last. For Luke comes back one last time in the novel, to explain his hatred of the gods and why he must follow through with his plan. This ending sets the stage for sequels. Riordan plays on his readers' emotional connection to Percy's narrative and unique experiences by placing him in relatable situations that are made nigh impossible because of the emergence of gods and monsters. For Percy to even begin to figure out how to save his mother and the world he must be introduced to his new reality.

Chiron, a centaur who is known for training heroes such as the original Perseus and Achilles, introduces the notion that the gods move from place to place depending on where western civilization is strongest. He explains, "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"(Riordan, 72). After this, Chiron goes onto explain that the immortal gods never die, but they move as they follow the flame of Western Civilization, and they are even the source of it. Because of this they are in the United States which is now the center of the Western Civilization.

Riordan uses this explanation to set up a narrative framework for the rest of the book series on how since the gods and Western Civilization are linked. At this moment in the story Riordan explains how the gods are present in modern day America and how they are still connected in everyday life even if most people do not believe in them anymore. Leighton explains, "not only is the setting contemporary, however. Many of the values, outcomes, and associated morality of the Greek myths are revisited and given new perspectives, reflecting more closely perhaps the morals, values and attitudes of the contemporary culture"(Leighton 63) Riordan draws in his readers with the ideas that places they see as normal, such as the Empire State Building and with values they know as being expressed through Greek myths. Having the gods and the entirety of the Greek mythological world move to America is a form of adaptation in the basic sense because he is taking the idea of the mythical world and having that world

itself adapt to its new surrounding and then adapting it to the American culture. These myths add layers to the culture of America connecting it with previous great civilizations. For Riordan's work it means that he is peeling back layers to show that Greek culture and myths were always prevalent in American society, they had just not been revealed. He gives them that voice by presenting these adapted myths to a younger generation that has a wider perspective and willingness to explore in the form of an adventure novel with a protagonist they can relate too.

Riordan presents the demi-god myth in the form of a young boy to intrigue his readers that young people have more to offer than society may say. Just like the lives and stories of Hercules and Achilles, Percy is not meant to be regular person, his entrance into camp half-blood has already change his reality to the fantastical. As stated in *Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical world of the Greeks and Romans*,

In some cases, god and goddess mated with human beings, producing offspring who were exceptional in one way or another. Such persons were common in earlier times when the gods spent more time on earth and were closer to us. These persons and their peers, heroes, went on great expeditions, engaged in seemingly impossible quests, fought in great wars like those at Thebes and Troy, established important cities, begot noble children, founded prominent families. They rid the world of many

monstrous beings, making it safe and habitable. They benefited the rest of us by civilizing deeds. (Hansen 93)

Once Percy learns he is not a mortal, his world is never the same because he is suddenly supposed to be this great hero that can save the world. He is taken from a place he knows, to a world that he never knew existed thus creating an identity crisis of epic proportions. This life altering situation for Percy resonates with adolescents because they too are finding their way in a world they do not know how to navigate. Feeling like they do not know the right way through their new young adult life, they can sympathize with Percy.

Riordan's entire book and subsequently the entire series revolves around this one myth. He has adapted the mythical idea of the demi-god and created one of his own. Percy is not strong like Hercules nor invincible like Achilles, but he is a representation of his audience. This representation harkens back to Percy's disabilities. While there is no information on past demi-gods having learning disabilities nor would they have even known what they were back then. Incorporating the contemporary understanding of disabilities within a character shows that Riordan is making a protagonist that is separate from what other mainstream characters are like. Percy may have this great destiny, but he is not without obstacles, some of which like ADHD and dyslexia, are not outside forces, but what Percy has to deal with internally. Riordan creates this connection between his readers and his protagonist where he gives them a young hero who is scared out of his mind and does not want the responsibility

that has now been thrust upon his way. Percy Jackson is a New Yorker that must face a stranger and more dangerous journey than he ever encountered in his home state.

Adaptation of locations and Places

Easing his readers into the mythological narrative, Riordan introduces the myths about the home of the gods by integrating that location into a setting his audience is familiar with presenting it as a link from the past to the present. This link is Riordan's way of showing how strong American culture has become thus critiquing the dominant Western discourse by presenting landmarks as the seats of power, power which is starting a new World War. Riordan shows this by where Olympus is said to be now that it is in America, "Empire State Building, special elevator to the six hundredth floor." (Riordan, 99). Having Mount Olympus, the seat of the gods, be placed in one of the most well-known American landmarks expresses the connection to contemporary times because Riordan has chosen a landmark that young readers are familiar with and know about in some capacity or another. Leighton states, "this movement brings the events of the narrative closer to the audience's frame of reference in temporal, geographical and cultural terms" (Leighton 63). Meaning the Empire State Building is one of the most well-known buildings in America and has even been called the eighth wonder of the world, making this the seat of Olympian power helps centralize the idea that America is the focus of the modern world and the gods and all other aspects of ancient Greek culture has now changed in ways to fit into that focus. He presents

this location as the seats of power to show how America is viewed by both citizens and others to be such a strong culture it has now earned the right to house ancient deities.

Riordan's focus on America's power is where he makes the connection between ancient myths and cultural ideals. With his link of the Empire State Building and Olympus, he has started his presentation on power that flows from the past to the present. Continuing with this expression of power is how Zeus is presented, "The supreme god of the Greek pantheon...god of the sky"(Dixon-Kennedy 325), he has the most power of all the gods and makes his home on the Mount Olympus where he rules over mankind. Whenever he is depicted in other adaptations, Zeus is shown wearing a long Greek tunic and a wreath of olive leaves, which for the times was the sign of a king or high lord. In Riordan's novel Zeus adapts a new appearance that matches what a powerful business man would wear, "Zeus, the Lord of the Gods, wore a dark blue pinstriped suit...he had a well-trimmed beard, marbled gray and black like a storm cloud"(Riordan 339) he exudes power of both ancient and modern times. In this time, Zeus adapts the look of a well to do businessman that many people would associate with power. In many stories, Zeus is shown to be paranoid about losing his power over the other gods, Riordan shows a physical manifestation in the way he presents Zeus. He uses clothing to adapt the most powerful look he can. For his readers, they can see how important the idea of power has been throughout time expressing the idea, "Riordan's appropriation of mythological stories and hero

tales re-create a new mythology. . . he thus reveals not only the ideologies of a time in the past, but the ideologies of the present in which the adaptation was written” (Leighton 65). In other words, the way values Riordan is concentrating on within his characters shows how these values have prevailed in culture after culture. Power and the desire it create to gather more within people is not easy to ignore and even the figures who are seen to be above others have failed to quell their hunger for it. Riordan’s characterization of Zeus is a manifestation of modern societies need to have power over others and they are never going to be happy with the power they do have. By using this metaphor, Riordan is presenting his readers with the chance to see for themselves that the desire for power is never satisfied. Zeus shows the readers that power and the path to power is not the way to happiness as is presented in society.

Adapting Mythological Monsters

It can be seen through analysis and exploration how these myths are being changed to fit into popular culture. To start with let us look at the idea of the monsters, Riordan talks about how the monsters from ancient Greece are still around to cause chaos. To enhance his adaptations of the monsters he brings in the idea that, “Monsters don’t die Percy. They can be killed. But they don’t die” (Riordan 86). This idea that monsters do not stay dead after being defeated is not from original Greek myths. In the original myths once the monsters were destroyed, they were gone and stayed that way. However, out of necessity of the book and its content Riordan needed to come up with an idea

that made it possible for him to bring in old monsters and have them be incorporated in a modern way, so it was more believable for the audience.

Riordan's decision to have many of his characters immortal in some form or another, introduces the idea that while people can fight hard in their lives, there will always be another obstacle, "Riordan insists in his 'Teacher's Guide to *The Lightning Thief*' that the monsters are symbolic" (Morey and Nelson 241).

Monsters and gods that get into a hero's life represents the problems that everyday adolescents face with growing up and entering the world. They are presented with problems that they did not know existed and even once they get past it, there are more to take its place. While this sounds depressing, there is a motivational aspect to what Riordan presents, because while his monsters keep coming back, so do the heroes. Heroes are there to fight and keep going even when things get difficult. This metaphor gives his readers hope, that while they are encountering issues, they can overcome them and make it to the other side.

Mythical creatures are a staple in ancient quests, so Riordan has done the same for his, he takes tales of creatures and inserts them into a contemporary world showing how these monsters have adapted to cultural norms and twisted them into creating the persona of everyday people. For example, the first monster that Percy Jackson and his friends run into during their quest is one that has been told about throughout history and is referenced in many stories. It is the formidable and terrifying, Medusa. This myth is probably one of the most well-known tales to come out of the Greek mythos world. There are varying

descriptions about what she supposedly looked like and how she came to be what she was, however the most common myth states, “Medusa lay with Poseidon in one of the temples sacred to Athene, and in revenge Athene altered their [Medusa and her sisters] appearance, turning them into winged monsters with brazen claws and serpent hair, so hideous that a single glance had the power to petrify human flesh to stone” (Dixon-Kennedy 201) the ancient hero known for killing Medusa is Perseus, a son of Zeus, by using the reflection from a polished shield and beheading her.

It is in this encounter that the reader can see how Riordan incorporates contemporary ideas into a meeting with a creature of nightmare. Riordan’s use of monsters in his novel of course fits with the plot of the story, but there is more to it. When he makes his monsters adapt to contemporary times, it shows that dominate culture is hard to resist and to survive one must change to fit in. It also connects to his readers showing that while people may seem like they are the societal ideals, there is more going on underneath that may make them out to be a monster. For Percy’s first major monster encounter this idea is represented literally. When Medusa is first introduced it is not clear if she is dangerous; she is shown as a woman running her own business on the side of the road, “Aunty Em’s Garden Gnome Emporium”(Riordan 171) and she invites the heroes in for food and a place to rest, in all normal accounts she seems like a nice older woman who just wants to help. Her physical appearance is also used as a way to throw off the readers, “Then the door creaked open, and standing in front of us

was a tall Middle Eastern woman- at least, I assumed she was Middle Eastern, because she wore a long black gown that covered everything but her hands, and her head was completely veiled”(Riordan 172). Without knowing who she is, the readers just like the characters could assume she was just a grandmother persona wanting to help. Both Percy and the readers are young and, in many ways, to trusting of things they do not know. Percy is just entering this world where he is learning to not blindly follow adults. This shows that while society says that adults are to be respected and obeyed, there are situations that children must think before listening. The introduction of Medusa embodies that idea that while society may try and enforce the notion that adults know best, children should not trust and follow blindly for it leads to dangerous situations.

Impressing upon his idea of distrust is the way Riordan presents Medusas physical appearance to reflect her mysterious and unsure motives. For example, the clothes that Medusa is wearing work in two ways. First is that they are effective in hiding her eyes and her hair, which is how she turns people to stone. Hiding those attributes make it easier for her to trick people to let their guard down so she can then turn them into stone later one when it is convenient, which helps situate her into her mythological narrative. Second, they are working in the way of showing how Riordan is adapting the myth and making it more contemporary. She, herself, is the myth, however, to fit better into this world so she can continue to terrorize others. Medusa must conform in ways that hide who she is. She hides how she looks for the obvious reason that if she did not cover

her eyes and hair then she would petrify everyone she came across and that would not make for the best statues. Yet, she is placed into these clothes for more than just convenience, in an unfortunate analysis of this characterization, it seems she is meant to represent the middle eastern woman that should not be trusted. Using the vestige of people who in 2005 were not thought of in the best light plays into the stereotypes that people in middle eastern garb can be dangerous. This representation as a Middle Eastern woman plays into the distrust because while it is unfortunate, at the time of publication Middle Eastern people were looked upon with a suspicious air. Children pick up on more than adults realize and so children at that time would also associate Medusa's clothing to symbolize a need to be careful. This is presented when Percy trust Medusa and she ends up trying to kill them. While it is an unfortunate way to look at characterization within YA literature it is not something that can be overlooked because society expressed distrust to certain ethnicities and Riordan uses that within his exploration of Medusa.

It is not only her clothing options that change due to the adaptations that Riordan employs, but her identity has also shifted to encompass the societal idea that to be respectable, one must have a job. Even though the figure of Medusa is mythical, Riordan crafted a new image of her as a businesswoman. Percy brings this up when she has fed them trying to start a conversation, he mentions that she sells gnomes and she replies, "Oh, yes, 'Aunty Em said.'" "And animals. And people. Anything for the garden. Custom orders. Statuary is very popular, you

know”(Riordan 175) she then goes onto say, “You notice some of my creations do not turn out well. They are marred. They do not sell. The face is the hardest to get right. Always the face”(Riordan 176). Not only is Riordan displaying his humor in this moment, having Medusa selling statues because people are petrified of her, in both senses of the word. It is not just his humor that is in play here, it is the notion that a creature like Medusa owns and run a business that is doing well, despite certain marred faces. He takes a creature like Medusa and almost seems to remove her from the myth, so she fits into the everyday American lifestyle of having a job and just making a living by playing to her strengths. These changes in appearance keep the mystery of who this figure is. It is a common trope that the more mysterious something appears the more tension it rises, that tension then translates to fear. So, with the mystery of her appearance heavily focused on, it causes Percy to fear her once he makes the connection that something is not right. Within his new life, Percy has learned that not everything is what it seems and when something is being hidden there is normally something wrong. This sentiment can be seen for many young adults.

As this visit goes on, Medusa tells the heroes her story while painting herself as the unfortunate victim. To some this way seem just like the sad tale of an older Middle Eastern woman and how she is finding a way to survive in America, which many can understand. Yet, to others who know the myths of Medusa, this starts to connect the dots about who she is. Even if the readers do not know at this point that she is not human, they are gaining valuable

information about a very popular myth. The story that Medusa weaves is one like the myth that was quoted above, except since she is telling it from her perspective, explaining that it is the vengeful goddess who is to blame for her life. Riordan is making clear that every perspective is different and there are two versions to every story. No one is ever the villain in their own story. This gives his readers essential information for the upcoming incidents and makes the readers think about how different perspectives change the narrative. He takes the time to explore the myth from two separate perspectives, one from the demi-gods and one from the mythical creature. While it can be assumed that the story the demi-gods know should be taken as the “real” tale, it is important to understand that like all myths they change throughout time and details are shifted to mirror core values of the time. These two conflicting narratives express Riordan’s desire to show how time and culture changes the understanding of myths within the context of who is viewed as the villain and the victim.

Percy’s defeat of Medusa harkens back to the original myth showing the modern interjections of the adapted myth. However, Percy does mention, “Something told me that in the myth Medusa has been asleep”(Riordan 180), yet the one he chooses to tell does and this helps draw parallels between the original Perseus and Percy. The fact that Riordan has Percy fight against Medusa in the first place is an adaptation of the myth; he could have chosen many other monsters to introduce as his first, yet he goes with one that fought against the namesake of his hero and has a connection to Poseidon. He is adapting the myth

into contemporary times, as well as almost showing his readers what the original myth would have looked like. Doing this means he shows readers that while these myths are thousands of years old and have gone through many adaptations, the core value of the myth does not change meaning powerful cultures tend to follow the same values and ideals throughout time. Even the death of Medusa is the same; Percy wins by beheading her, the only difference is that he does not use a bronze shield, he uses a reflecting ball found in Medusa's garden. The method of Medusa's downfall is about the same as the original, however the materials that are used are more modern. The hero defeats the monster and is one step closer to saving the world is a trope that most authors cling to when writing an adventure tale and Riordan is no exception. Ending his retelling of the Medusa myth in the same manner that the original ends is his way of showing how myths can be adapted, but there are some fundamental elements to a legend that cannot be changed as to not lose the importance of the hero's journey.

The Hazards and Temptations of the Lotus Eaters

Riordan employs a myth that embodies the incessant need for entertainment by presenting the Lotus Eaters as a contemporary hotel and casino on the Las Vegas strip. For this myth he goes all the way back to Odysseus and his trip in *The Odyssey*, the Lotus-eaters. There are not many myths that surround the Lotus-eaters, it seems they originate and stay in their original story with the only hero that ever faces them, Odysseus, until Riordan

revives them. For the original myth Odysseus says “Lotus-eaters, people who eat the lotus, mellow fruit and flower....Lotus-eaters who had no notion of killing....they simply gave them the lotus to taste instead....their only wish to linger there with the Lotus-eaters”(Fagles 214). Riordan brings the Lotus-eaters into his story, but he adapts them to modern surroundings just as well as Medusa. As stated by Morey and Nelson, “Riordan is clearly offering not a retelling of the traditional myths in modern language but an effort to continue within today’s world the tradition represented by ancient tales” (Morey and Nelson 235), meaning that Riordan has changed the setting and method of entrapment by the Lotus eaters, however the concept has been kept the same by showing that Lotus eaters main goal is to cause their victims to forget the outside world and waste away. To show this, he takes the Lotus eaters and drops them into the middle of the most entertainment obsessed places in America. Las Vegas is known by many, not just those who visit it, as a place where anything can happen, there are no rules and people are free of inhibitions. For adolescents who desire more freedom this place seems like heaven because they would be able to do what they want. Bring in these creatures within this setting helps readers see that while entertainment is fun and a huge part of dominate culture, there are draw backs to not experiences the real world. It is a goal of capitalism to ensnare consumers so when the consumer is made aware of their reliance upon entertainment changes can occur.

Riordan moved the Lotus-eater island to a place in “Western Civilization” that is known for warping people’s sense and making them lose track of time and who they are, Las Vegas. Percy found himself “standing in front of the Lotus Hotel and Casino. The entrance was a huge neon flower, the petals lighting up and blinking...spilling out air conditioning that smelled like flowers-lotus blossoms”(Riordan 258) they are entranced to come inside and relax. Just like with Odysseus, they can leave when they want, if they can find the desire to, and unlike most of Odysseus’s, crew they make it out. The Lotus-eaters ensnare their victims in ways most believe harmless, by having people lose their sense of self and the desire to really live. They are an escape from reality, just like the entire idea of Las Vegas. Las Vegas is a place people go where they can forget about reality and focus on gaining money and enjoying entertainment. Riordan chooses another well-known creation of and location in American culture to emphasize how prevalent and immersed Greek ideas have become. His audience would most likely never have stepped foot into a casino before, however, by using video games, huge televisions, indoor amusement park rides, and all you can eat and/or drink Riordan creates a desire within his readers to have the same experiences. Once this desire is felt the readers can then start to understand how hard it would be to leave such a place when the outside world does not seem as inviting.

Entertainment is a foundation of popular culture in American and many other countries. Young adults are always looking for something to engage with

and Riordan shows his understanding of his readers by presenting the Lotus eaters myth within the confines of one of the most entertainment-obsessed places. Riordan presents that fun in the most kid friendly way possible by converting a hotel and casino into a heaven for children with everything they could ever desire from amazing food to video games that are meant to capture their attention indefinitely. With these video games, Riordan is making another critique of modern society by showing how wrapped up kids are becoming in their hunt for full time entertainment, as shown by Percy's comment, "I started talking to people, and I found it wasn't easy. They were glued to the TV screens, or the video game, or their food, or whatever. I found a guy who told me it was 1985. Another guy told me it was 1993. They all claimed they hadn't been here very long, a few days, a few weeks at most. They didn't really know and they didn't care." (Riordan 262). As has been present since phones became hand-held and kids become addicted to the next best form of entertainment, real-life can see the kids just as out of touch with what is going on because they are wrapped up in entertainment.

Now, Riordan changes the normal idea of what a hotel and casino is like, not only being run by mythical creatures who do want people to waste their lives, his hotel and casino is aimed towards children. The influence the Lotus-eaters have over the characters mirrors readers temptation for entertainment. Instead of having Percy eat flowers, Riordan adapts to make the air smell like lotus blossom. He does not entice them by having them relax on a beach, they are

given every game imaginable, and they want for nothing. He adapts the myth to show modern children all their hearts desire. Most young adults crave entertainment, they are always connected to their cell phones, video games and television shows have become a way to escape from their reality. Because of capitalism the cultural desire to have the next best thing that has been produced is hard wired into their brains. This hotel feeds into that compulsion to have the coolest technology because it plays into the temptations young adults deal with every day. It shows that the American values of money and entertainment are not just for adults, that children can fall prey to them as well. The Lotus Hotel and Casino is used to represent the distractions of life that children will experience and that they can be lost in its haze if they do not keep in mind the values that do matter and important things, they hold dear.

Descent into the Underworld

Riordan's location for the Underworld and its entrance connects to another major contemporary setting that his readers are familiar with thus creating a link between them and the location that Percy is traveling too. Percy's journey to the Underworld is the moment where he realizes that while saving his mother was his personal quest. The greater quest is meant to save the world thus representing Percy's transition from adolescent boy to a demi-god hero who puts the needs of the world before himself. They must enter the underworld thus presenting adaptations of many myths compounded into a few chapters. First, is the idea of traveling to the underworld, there are multiple myths that have heroes

going to the underworld to gain knowledge like Odysseus or retrieve someone they love, and, in the end, they fail like Orpheus. By comparing Percy's personal motivations for his trip to the Underworld, his journey tells the myth that has the clearest link is that of Orpheus and his journey to the underworld to save the woman he loves and in the end he fails. This is re-lived by Percy, who goes to the underworld to confront Hades, the Lord of the Dead, about stealing the lightning bolt of Zeus, however while he is there, he wishes to save his mother who has been taken from him and held hostage by Hades.

In the end, Percy's journey ends the same as Orpheus's and he fails to save what matters most to him. Riordan adapts the well-known trip to the underworld and reworks it so that his readers can feel more connected to Percy. Instead of a lost wife, it is a lost mother, and this connects to his readers because his intended audience is middle school aged young adults, and they are more likely to understand the desire to save their parent than a dead spouse they do not have. They can relate to Percy, and this makes the sting of his failure a more pronounced one, it is felt by all not just Percy. Riordan's usage of the Underworld and Orpheus myths shows his YA audience that while they may be separate by thousands of years the core values of importance in any cultures are similar. Percy's plight is easy to sympathize with because the loss of one's mother is difficult to deal with, but to have that decision on their own shoulders causes a more pressing weight. Seeing these emotions and situations from Percy's perspective connects his readers to the narrator by showing that while Percy is

becoming a hero through his quest, he is still a young boy who is trying to do the best he can.

For this myth, Percy does not find the same entrance to the underworld as those from ancient times. In ancient myths “the death realm is reached in one of several ways. Some persons simply appear there following their death as if the transferal of the self from this world to that is somehow automatic...In later sources we hear of the ferryman Charon, who for a fee transports the newly dead across the stream that separates the realms of the living from the dead.”(Hansen 23). For Percy and his friends they experience an adaptation of the old ideas of the underworld with the modern changes, “The entrance to the Underworld is in Los Angeles”(Riordan 147) which connects to how the gods follow the flame of Western civilization. It being in Los Angeles also has a darker connotation when thinking about connecting to actors and actresses that have had both their careers die, but also themselves. Even though Percy seems to be re-living the same quest that Orpheus undertook, specific details have been changed to represent the society it is not taking place in. Meaning that while the readers are experiencing some of the same details they would come across in the original myth, they are going to find changes that relate more to the lives they know. With the entrance to set in Los Angeles there is reference to another great city of America that is known for certain values and stereotypes.

Knowing that the underworld was there was not all that was needed, the heroes needed to find the actual entrance, which is another adaptation that

Riordan has made to make it clear that the mythological has infiltrated the regular world. "Looking at gold letters etched in black marble: DOA RECORDING STUDIOS"(Riordan 283) the entrance to the underworld is a recording studio, which is a place that is very common in Los Angeles and would blend in perfectly to the modern world. When thinking about stereotypes and values that Riordan can play off of Los Angeles is known for being money and power driven. Some of the richest and most powerful people live in Los Angeles, this plays into the fact that the Underworld is full of riches and Hades, just like many citizens of LA, craves more power than he has. The studio being the entrance brings the myth to life and portrays Riordan adapting his myths to the surroundings that his readers would be used too. Even the name of the studio will stick out to the readers because most people today know that DOA stands for dead on arrival, which seems to be Riordans way of humor where he adds little elements to his adapted myths to add more validity and to get the reader understanding the myths more with humor as a mediator. The adaptations the occur are the way the entrance is presented, with the modern twist of being a recording studio, however the old myth is still present when they meet Charon, who still ferries them away on his boat across the stream that separates the living and the dead. The pattern Riordan has with taking key details from myths and keeping them intact for his adaptations show that he wants to make sure his audience understands what the original myths were about. He does not want to take away the validity or importance from the original. What he wants to do is make it clear that those

details still have value within today's society and that even thousands of years later there are elements that can be seen in many cultures that connect to a larger whole.

Adapting Greek Gods

Keeping with the desire to show his young readers how ancient myths can function within contemporary society, Riordan's adaptations include the Greek Pantheon. Showing that the greatest mythical figures are not immune to the changes that occur when an ancient culture is appropriated by the modern power. Ares is a god that fit within the American culture without much adaptation to his divine personality. It is stated that Ares is, "One of the 12 great Olympian deities, the god of war. He was, however, not a popular god with the Greeks...as they disliked purposeless war...his name is thought to be possibly derive from the root meaning scream or the Greek word for revenge"(Dixon-Kennedy 43) him being disliked is shown in many myths and in the way he is portrayed. He is known for causing more problems than fixing them, "He was murderous and cowardly at the same time, inciting strife and hatred. A stain upon the world, and a bloody one at that"(Napoli and Balit 102), these descriptions do not change much from Ares personality in Riordan's novel. Riordan choses to adapt more of Ares outside persona to modern culture than how he acts as a god. This decision was made because Ares's personality was one that fit within the context of American society. His longing for power and the advantages that come from it are not foreign concepts to war today. Riordan's readers are young; however,

they are not naïve thus meaning they understand the difficulties that come with war and will be able to see that Ares is those ideals personified.

Riordan chooses to adapt more of Ares outside persona to modern culture than how he acts as a god. In the book, when Percy and his friends meet the god of war, it is clear how well Ares has taken to the American culture, “The motorcycle’s headlights glared red...a shotgun holster riveted to either side, complete with shotguns... He was dressed in a red muscle shirt...black jeans...black leather duster...a hunting knife strapped to his thigh”(Riordan 224-225) everything about his appearance is meant to intimidate and to cause fear. Ares plays off fear, fear can start wars, and he has learned to adapt to the American way of causing fear, intimidation, and threats. It also represents that he has power, maybe not in the way that Zeus does, but fear creates its own type of power and Ares plays into it.

Fear and intimidation are two original aspects of Ares that Riordan pulls from while adapting them to his surroundings to make them more affective. So, it is not only his outward appearance that shows power, he has a way to change what those around in feel, “I couldn’t see his eyes behind his red shades, but bad feelings started boiling in my stomach. Anger, resentment, bitterness”(Riordan 225) another play on power, not only can he intimidate, but he can literally change others moods. His ability to create such strong negative emotions is explained through Percy’s experience meaning that the readers are told what feelings come to the surface for him. At this time in the novel, most readers

would be feeling a connection to Percy and feel invested in the quest emotionally so they too will be feeling their emotions change and become effected just by reading what is being done to Percy. Riordan uses this tactic to remind the readers what this quest means to Percy making the readers feel empathy towards him thus connecting readers to the character. War at the time of this novel publication was not foreign to his readers. They may not have been completely aware of what was going on politically, however having the war god dress like a stereotypical biker brings attention to it. Riordan changes Ares's attire to fit into a stereotype that is known for being dangerous and deadly, someone to be wary of and avoid if possible. It shows to his readers that this god is not someone to mess with, even if they do not know how dangerous Ares was in the ancient myths, the way that he is presented in this story makes it clear that he is going to cause trouble. Riordan has Ares adapt his appearance to the modern times, it expresses the way Ares fits into the modern world so well. He seems to be made for his clothing and weapons. There was no need to adapt Ares's personality to show popular culture because even back in ancient Greece Ares was already the embodiment of all the negative values that many countries who hold power and money have.

Poseidon is the god with the most connection to Percy and his adaptation presents the idea that Riordan does not change much of who Poseidon was in the original myths, he just chooses the parts of his personality he wants to highlight. When the readers find out who Percy's father is it is after Percy found

himself healed by a small creek, “By the time I looked up, the sign was already fading, but I could still make out the hologram of green light, spinning and gleaming. A three-tipped spear: a trident.”(Riordan 126) and goes on to proclaim, ‘Poseidon’ “said Chiron” “Earthshaker, Stormbringer, Father of Horses. Hail, Perseus Jackson, Son of the Sea God.” (Riordan 126). Riordan introduction to Poseidon is more in-depth than most of the other gods because Poseidon is the father of his main protagonist who will in time become the great hero of the entire series. Riordan makes sure that his readers are clear of who Poseidon is and how powerful he can be. As stated, “The god of salt water and freshwater, invoked especially before sea voyages.” (Dixon-Kennedy 259) and

He found joy in the buoyancy of diving whales, he found beautiful rhythm in the undulating wake of eels, he found humor in the scuttling of crabs...Cyclopes gave Zeus the thunderbolt and Hades the Helmet that made him invisible and Poseidon the trident. It worked, that trident. It worked splendidly. Poseidon struck it on the ground and the earth shook...rivers overflowed their banks...And Zeus appointed Poseidon ruler of the seas. (Napoli and Balit 42-43).

As he did with Ares, Riordan did not change much of his representation of Poseidon or his powers.

Riordan keeps Poseidon’s personality relatively the same as is mentioned in other myths. In some he is seen as vengeful and every changing as the sea itself. However, in others he reflects the mood of sunny summer day at the beach

with clam waves and a gentle current. He is seen as more levelheaded than his brother and not as power hungry. These qualities have been picked up by Riordan when meeting Poseidon for the first time, which is sensible because he is the father of our hero and making him seem as paranoid or wrathful as some others do not work in Riordan's favor. He wants to hint that Poseidon is the best father he has been allowed to be. Because Poseidon has not been around for all of Percy's life up until it was absolutely necessary, readers are left with a negative impression of him, which is understandable and should not be ignored. However, Riordan makes it clear that the decision to stay away was not made by Poseidon and he regrets not being there for his son. This moment is important for Poseidon's character because it takes him away from the harsh light of absentee father and shows he did not have a choice. Presenting Poseidon in a more pleasant light reflects well upon Percy and makes him more likeable. Riordan shows his thoughts on Poseidon's laid-back nature by the attire,

He reminded me of a beachcomber from Key West. He wore leather sandals, khaki Bermuda shorts, and a Tommy Bahama shirt with coconuts and parrots all over it. His skin was deeply tanned, his hands scarred like an old-time fisherman's...But his eyes, sea green like mine, were surrounded by sun-crinkles that told me he smiled a lot, too. His throne was a deep-sea fisherman's chair. It was the simple swiveling kind, with a black leather seat and a built-in holster for a fishing pole. (Riordan 340)

Riordan shows that Poseidon is an easy-going deity, “he smiled a lot, too”, as he was back in ancient Greece, unless riled. Poseidon needs to be easy going and laid back because he must present an image of being approachable even for a god. Riordan wants his readers to understand the complexities of Poseidon and Percy relationship, not to discount the years of being absent, but show that he is not really a bad guy.

What is adapted regarding Poseidon is as shown above, his clothes and even his throne on Mount Olympus. Yet, Poseidon’s clothes and throne show that even the god of the sea is not immune to adaptation. Just like the sea, he is ever changing, and, in this version, he is seen as almost a beach bum type. Or perhaps a rich man who has retired to Florida to enjoy his life fighting. This adaptation lets the readers feel more connected to this god, the sea is mysterious and not easy to understand. Riordan does not want that for his character, he wants his audience to feel calm when thinking of his Poseidon. This helps connect the great god of the sea as the father of our funny, silly new hero.

Throughout the novel, we do not see Poseidon interacting with Percy as some of the other gods do, yet his power is present within his son, which makes Percy the demi-god hero he is. During the quest that Percy and his friends take, there are moments that Percy comes into his own and harnesses the powers within that flow from his divine parent. As mentioned before, when it is first discovered who his parent his, Percy was just healed by the water in a small creek. That event, coupled with one later where Percy falls from the St. Louis

arch into the Mississippi river, “But my impact with the water hadn’t hurt.” (Riordan 212), shows that when Percy interacts with water, Poseidon’s domain, it protects him and, in some cases, heals him. Another instance of Percy having more than the regular set of demi-god powers, is when he challenges Ares to a duel. Even though Percy is a demi-god, he does not have the power to face a god, let alone the god of war, yet he does it. Yet, he does not win through his own prowess, he must channel his father by standing in the ocean. While Percy is a great hero on his own, it is the powers that are bestowed upon him from his godly parent that turn him into the demi-god hero like those famed in ancient myths. The reminder of Percy’s power and connection to his father makes their interaction later in the story was real. It takes Percy out of the realm of young boy who is fumbling through his life and put into perspective that his young boy who was kicked out of multiple schools and sold contraband candy out of his dorm room is a descendant of ancient gods that is, much like the readers, trying to find where he belongs in a place that he was not ready to face.

Larger Thematic Myth Wrap Up

All the myth adaptations that have been discussed previously brings us back to the discussion of the biggest adaption that Riordan is doing. He has harnessed the idea of the Greek hero and adapted it into the story of a twelve-year-old boy from New York that does not think he can pass middle school, let alone save the world. While Riordan utilizes many myths in his story and adapts them into popular culture, they are all encompassed inside the larger thematic

myth that is the foundation of the entire novel. Demi-god mythology is one of the most widespread mythical concepts from ancient Greece that has been adapted in many different forms, most commonly movies. While each adaptation differs, there are some characteristics that remain the same: each hero must face certain death by way of monsters and world-saving quests. Without those ingredients there would be no demi-god hero and mythology would be sorely missing one of the most captivating factors. These ingredients of demi-god life are used in Riordan's recipe for this book when he creates his own demi-god hero of Percy Jackson. The creation of this character is the biggest version of mythical adaptation that Riordan uses while having all the other mythical aspects be support for the larger theme.

Adapting the demi-god myth within his protagonist was a well-crafted move that blended seamlessly into his plot that the implications could be overlooked. Readers see Percy as the main character who lives in modern day New York and seems to be an average kid that has his whole world turned upside down. Yet, with the knowledge of ancient Greek myths, it can be seen for what it is, a modern adaptation of the tales of mighty heroes. The entire life of Percy, being twelve, a New Yorker, going to school and hating it, sarcastic personality and the technology involved changes how the readers see demi-gods. They are taken out of the shadows of the past and brought into the modern light where it can be shown how ancient myths of heroes that fight for the good of the world can be turned into young kids who just want to do the right thing.

Riordan takes the myths of the famous war heroes that have done great deeds and has adapted those qualities to someone his readers can connect with in a world they can understand. What Riordan is doing is important because it gives his readers insight into the values that dominate culture favor. It presents them with situations that equate to experiences in everyday life they may have to go through. Being able to think of Percy's journey, while fictional, gives readers motivation to face their ever-changing world and know that they can be heroes in their own ways no matter the obstacles in their paths.

Chapter Conclusion

Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief is an excellent example of adaptation in young adult literature. Riordan does his job well with how he joins the older text with his new idea. He presents Percy as a character and myth come to life in a way that speaks to his readers and brings them into a new literary world. He employs the positive aspects of adaptation and culture studies to immerse his readers into texts they previously had no knowledge of and does it in a way that is enticing and thrilling. Riordan represents Percy has a character with learning disabilities then he tears down the stigma that comes with them by showing Percy as someone who embraces his disabilities as apart of himself. Riordan reaches to a minority audience that do not often see themselves represented in literature and he does it in a way that encourages his readers to be themselves. He uses Greek mythology and popular culture to express the idea that ancient texts still have a place in the modern world, and they can be

learned from. Older texts can be used in modern ways help immerse readers into a new experience. The Percy Jackson series is his most popular series and they have been getting more notoriety throughout the years, so much so that Riordan has produced multiple series covering more Greek mythology, along with other mythologies that deserve the recognition that was afforded to this one. Riordan takes the moves he used to spin this fantastic tale into gold and applies them to more ancient mythologies that young adult audiences have not experienced.

CHAPTER THREE

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE AND EGYPTIAN MYTHS

The Red Pyramid

Riordan's mythical adaptation in the Percy Jackson series was just the beginning. He did not stop at Greek mythology, but he delved into another ancient civilization that has deep roots in many modern cultures. Ancient Egyptian culture and mythology has planted its roots in many civilizations and has exerted its influence. This can be seen from architecture, like the Washington Monument, which is in the shape of an Egyptian obelisk, to popular movies such as *The Mummy* (1999). Even American money carries the image of a pyramid on the back of the dollar bill. Riordan creates another fantastic, adventurous, and mesmerizing story for his young adult readers to sink into, *The Red Pyramid*. In this novel, he introduces ancient Egyptian mythology to his young audience in a way that shows them how myths can span cultures while presenting these myths as connections between historical and contemporary.

As seems to be a theme in Riordan's novels, this story is an adapted greater myth with minor myths within it to help support and advance the main one. *The Red Pyramid* weaves the Magician and Osiris myths together to create the fantastical adventure. The built upon myth for this novel deals with the idea of people in ancient Egypt being able to host gods. In the old stories it was mostly Pharaohs who had that ability because they were thought to be the chosen ones.

In Riordan's story people capable of hosting gods are called magicians. The myth held up by the first is the tale of Osiris, the once king of the gods then god of the underworld, being captured by Set, god of chaos, who wishes to become king of the gods and rule the world. Horus, son of Osiris and Isis, Falcon god and future king, and Isis, wife of Osiris and goddess of magic, face off against Set to save Osiris and the world. Horus is a warrior while Isis has control over amazing magic; when their forces are combined, they are supposed to be enough to stop Set. As with the ancient mythological adaptation in *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*, I will go into more details and analysis of these adaptations after the exploration of the many myths encompassed within the greater mythical theme, so that it can show how the minor myths build up the larger ones and how they lend themselves into making the main myths grander. Riordan shows what values and ideals were considered important in ancient myths and how those play into his characters experiences in contemporary times by presenting myths that have themes that connect to their culture. To connect to his readers, Riordan uses myths to introduce myths to his audience by showing how certain societal ideals are universal.

Exploration of some existing scholarship will help explain my focus for this project. My main focus is to explore and analyze how myths are functioning within Riordan's novels showing young readers that ancient mythologies can represent societal and cultural ideals. The article, "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children" by Shelia Murnaghan

focuses on adaptation in YA and children's literature. Her article deals with different adaptations of classic works for children. She explores what connections can be found between children's literature and popular literature of the time. She goes in depth into works by the American nineteenth-century author, Nathaniel Hawthorne and then compares those adapted myths with more modern counterparts showing that the function of the adaptations has changed. Murnaghan situates her argument on the focus of adults retelling myths for younger audiences and how they entertain the readers as well as educate them on the classical traditions that are found within the myths. This scholarship is important because it shows what arguments are being made in the field of YA literature thus leading to the opportunity to apply it to specific works from the YA genre, like Rick Riordan's.

Some scholarship deals directly with Riordan's work, *The Red Pyramid*. In the article, "Pyramids in America: Rewriting The 'Egypt of the West' in Rick Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles Series*" by Heather Cyr, she makes an argument about Riordan's uses of the monuments and what that means for his story. She claims that Riordan's use of American landmarks helps show his readers the cultural power America. Riordan uses architecture that has Egyptian roots planted firmly in American soil to explore the connection between cultures. Applying these arguments to this project helps progress the claims being made because it shows how myths can connect with young readers by presenting ancient texts in a manner, they are familiar with.

Young adult audiences are malleable and willing to change their opinions when presented with opposing viewpoints, which is what Riordan plays upon. *The Red Pyramid* is written for the intended audience of middle-school aged readers. It is meant to entertain with adventure and witty sarcasm, while presenting new ideas and old mythological cultural values to a new generation. Murnaghan says, "As the natural audience of classical myth, children stand for popular audiences in the sense that they stand for everyone, representing humanity in general, not yet molded by particular historical circumstances" (343). This fits well with Riordan's view on YA fiction as his character age and audience age is always within the adolescent range. He exploited these notions with exposing his audience to different perspectives and lessons because they still hold the ability to grow from them. As with Percy Jackson, the protagonists are young, just like the audience: Carter Kane is fourteen and his sister, Sadie Kane, is twelve. They start their journey at the British Museum, where their father takes them to look at an ancient artifact, the Rosetta Stone. Their father, famed archaeologist Julius Kane, travels the world with Carter to important archaeological sites, while his daughter Sadie lives in London with her grandparents after Julius lost custody of her after her mother died. Their trip to the museum makes it clear that Carter and Sadie are not close, and they do not understand each other. Once at the museum, Julius causes an explosion, and they see a large humanoid shape form out of sand speaking to their father stating, "Now let the story be told anew. And this time you shall *never* rise"

(Riordan 26). The readers later learn, along with our main protagonists, that the shape was that of Set, the ancient Egyptian god of Chaos.

Events after this are a whirlwind for both the characters and readers, as Carter and Sadie are taken away from London by their Uncle Amos because their father was captured by Set. They learn that Egyptian culture, religion, and mythology persists into modern times. The biggest revelation is that there are magicians, including their father and their Uncle. They will have to become magicians to stop Set and free their father. They learn that there is a magical society called the House of Life that controls all magicians like a secret government. The magicians do not like the Kanes because they are powerful and have been found guilty of consorting with the gods. This is illegal because the gods were thought to have brought down Egyptian civilization by their petty wars. However, as the story progresses, the Kane siblings figure out that they are being helped by certain gods, like Thoth, Anubis, Bast, and the others are Horus and Isis. Horus and Isis are not there in person, but in the minds of the siblings, Horus for Carter, and Isis for Sadie. This development leads to the knowledge that the Kanes are descendants from the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs; this makes them twice as powerful because they can host the presence of a god within them, but only if they are within total agreement with the gods' thoughts and actions or else, they could go insane.

They embark on a quest to find Set in Arizona where he is building an enormous pyramid to destroy modern civilization and become King of all things.

After many trials and near-death experiences where, ancient myths come to life and they interact with ancient deities, they reach the red pyramid, and they face off against Set. They defeat him, but not by destroying him. Rather, they figure out his true name, which gives them ultimate power over him and force him to go back into the Daut, the Otherworld. They learn to merge with Horus and Isis and know that the gods must come back for the world to be in balance again. This leaves the story open to a larger plot of dealing with the snake Apophis, who is evil and chaos incarnate, trying to escape his prison in the following novels.

Mixed Raced Minority Exploration

Just as Riordan framed Percy Jackson's exploration of Greek mythology as a discovery of his supposed disadvantages as gifts, so too in *The Red Pyramid*, does the adventure of his main characters Carter and Sadie becomes a way of exploring a challenging family situation. Bereaved by the death of their mother, living separately in different countries in the custody of different relatives, and also divided by the experience of being classified in different racial groups, brother and sister Carter and Sadie barely seem related. Before diving into an analysis of Riordan's use of Egyptian mythology, there must be an exploration of the multiracial minority that Riordan presents within his characters. This will be done by looking at the article "Stories of Multiracial Experiences in Literature for Children, Ages 9-14" by Amina Chaudhri and William H. Teale. They study an analysis of Children's literature that consisted of multiracial characters. They wanted to understand why and how multiracial characters were represented. This

study analyzed ninety books that included representations of multiracial characters. They divided the books into groups that fit how the characters were presented within the story. There were instances where they found that the literature did not represent the multiracial characters in a way that could make children associate with the character. However, on the brighter side, there were findings that there has been the emergence of more literature that casts multiracial characters in a light that encourages both the characters and the readers to accept who they are and understand that no matter what society tells them they are important.

Riordan produced a novel that lives on the brighter side of the research done by Chaudhri and Teale. *The Red Pyramid* has mixed-raced siblings as the main characters, and they represent two ends of the spectrum of multiracial literature. Sadie is said to have light skin like her mother, and she has blue eyes. Even though she shares the same parents as Carter, he is dark skinned and looks distinctly African American. Riordan created these two binaries to show how multiracial people's identities are often shaped by others' perceptions. Sadie does not experience the problems that Carter does; she lives her life without worry about how she will be perceived. Carter Kane offers insights into prejudices against multiracial minority children who are perceived as black. As stated by Chaudhri and Teale, "In fiction, the way authors and character's name racial reality contributes to a reader's identity construction and is part of that discourse. Literature plays a key role in telling the counter stories, adding to the

diversity of human experience. Children's books that include mixed race characters have the potential to add to the diversity in that they may interrupt the focus on (assumed) monoracial identity" (Chaudhri and Teale 378). With these two forms of multiracial characters, Riordan is showing that outside perceptions can be misleading. There are more to people than preconceived notions especially amongst those already a minority.

Multiracial Family

The saying 'families come in all shapes and sizes' can be applied to the Kane family because it is made up of differing family members thus making it difficult to know what it truly going on. The main characters of this novel, Carter and Sadie Kane are within the age range of the intended audience which connects the readers into the story because it makes the feelings and backstories of the characters more real. The adolescent audience can put themselves into the shoes of the Kane siblings because the readers are being represented in them. The Kanes are a mixed-race family, however from the outside perspective one might not know because only Julius and Carter have darker skin. Sadie has lighter skin tones from her mother. Riordan has chosen a demographic that not many people see pictured; they are siblings but no one can tell because they do not look alike, " He [Julius] has dark brown skin like mine, piercing brown eyes" (Riordan 3) and "You would never guess she's my [Carter] sister. First, she'd been living in England so long, she has a British accent. Second, she takes after our mom, who was white, so Sadie's skin is much lighter

than mine. She has straight caramel-colored hair...her eyes are blue” (Riordan 7). Castleman mentions, “The protagonists’ choices and interactions with their family members draw attention to their cultural and gender identities” (151), looking at the example given, it can be seen that while Carter mentions others might not think Sadie is his sister, he also has trouble relating to her as a sister. The lack of interaction between them, different appearances and accents, causes him to not feel a part of the same family, their cultural identities are not the same thus making him question if they can be called a family. While Sadie is perceived as white, she is still a mixed-raced character and represents the faction of the multiracial minority that does not look as though they are a part of a separate culture. This can cause confusion about the siblings’ identity and can be seen within Riordan’s novel because he does not spend time with Sadie’s identity like he does with Carter.

Riordan connects to minority readers through Carter and the experiences he shares while going through their story. Riordan splits the story’s point of view between Carter and Sadie so at times the information and thoughts expressed are skewed by who is narrating at that moment in time. Explained by Castleman, “In the Kane Chronicles series, Carter occasionally reflects on the racial discrimination he encounters that his sister does not due to phenotype.” (156). When Carter is the narrator, readers see through the perspective of the young African American boy who has different experiences and understanding of the world than his sister, or even Percy. Carter’s father coaches him about how to

present and comport himself in a world that tends to perceive him as threatening: “I was ten. We were on our way to the airport in Athens, and it was like 112 degrees outside, and I was complaining that I wanted to wear shorts and a t-shirt...My dad put his hand on my shoulder. ‘Carter, you’re getting older. You’re an African American man. People will judge you more harshly, and so you must always look impeccable.’” (Riordan 67). Carter’s understanding of discrimination against minority children is also shown when the Kanes are running from a monster, and they must enter an airport. Carter goes onto express his views on how it feels to be an African American man, “I always get a little edgy around police, I remember when I was like seven or eight and still a cute little kid, it wasn’t a problem; but as soon as I hit eleven, I started to get the Look, like *What’s that kids doing here? Is he going to steal something?* I mean it’s ridiculous, but it’s a fact...I knew the cop was going to follow me, and I knew I had to act calm and walk like I had a purpose...”(Riordan 262). These examples reflect on Castleman’s claim that “As these teens [protagonists] seek to satisfy their own needs and desires and explore their growing powers and autonomy, they also find themselves in conflict with societal expectations and prophesied actions they are expected to fulfill” (151), in other words, young adults have to modify who they are and want to be by the constraints set upon them by society. Societal constraints play with peoples psyches thus creating a personal image of themselves they have to contend with and possibly even fight against, especially for those of a younger age. This fight can be seen in those moments from

Carter's perspective that show that while he is trying to find himself, he cannot escape the preconceived social notions about him. With these moments, Riordan is able to create a connection from ancient mythology to self-exploration because he shows that Carter is on a quest to find himself before he knew about his destiny. This connects to the stories of Horus finding himself as he fights against Set. Until Horus knows himself and feels at peace with who he is, he is not able to manifest his powers. The same can be said for Carter; until Carter knows who he is and feels comfortable with it, he is not able to unlock his true powers or merge with Horus. Carter is not able to be who he really is and must work through obstacles, just like Horus, is a strong representation of minorities and a way to shed some light on how adolescents need to navigate between social messages and constructions of who they are and their own evolving self-discovery and maturation. Riordan uses his character of Carter to explore experiences and struggles of a mixed-race child who moves between worlds divided by race, education, and nationality.

By bringing up the suspicion and fear that follows African Americans around, even young children, he is bringing the unfairness of it all to the forefront of his readers and they then are presented with something that they may not have given much thought too. His intended audience is young adults, yet who better to show the injustice of the world to than those who will grow to have the power to change it. Expressing those moments from Carter's perspective gives them a different meaning than if told from Sadie's. While Sadie is also a mixed-

raced character, she does not experience the same discrimination that Carter does. The prejudice and skepticism that Carter is subjected to shows his minority readers that there are characters who know what they are going through as Chaudhri and Teale claim, "...literature has the ability to provide readers with mirrors in which they see themselves, and windows through which readers can learn about the experiences of others" (Chaudhri and Teale 379). Even Riordan's readers that do not identify as a minority can learn from Carter's experiences and see how the world is viewed by others and how the world views those that are Other.

Larger Thematic Plot

Riordan highlights key elements that are always found within the original mythologies. This novel wraps up by Carter and Sadie facing off against Set in an epic battle that ends when Sadie calls out Set's true name and makes him swear, he will return to the Daut and not cause any problems. The original tale of Set murdering his brother, Osiris, to take the throne then being avenged by Osiris's son Horus who defeats Set and then becomes the king of the gods himself is a foundational myth of Ancient Egypt. This myth has been told in many variations with many different components added or taken out depending on the time period. However, there are always a few constant pieces. It is always Osiris who is murdered by Set and he always does it for the throne. Set always succeeds in taking out his brother, but he must always go up against Horus who

comes to avenge his father. Horus, with the help of his mother Isis, always wins and sends Set away.

Set coming back, repeatedly throughout Egyptian mythological history with the same goal plays into the myth that Riordan has adapted for his book. *The Red Pyramid* is an adaptation of the myth above, a retelling of the epic fight between Set, Horus, and Isis. Set is himself in this retelling, he is not really adapted much except for his clothing options that will be analyzed later. Carter plays the part of Horus; he has Horus inside his head giving him advice and aiding in combat, so in a sense it is still Horus fighting Set. Yet, Horus is inside the head of a fourteen-year-old African American who was born in the twenty-first century. The same goes for Isis who is inside Sadie's head, she is still helping Horus, however she is doing it while aiding Sadie with magic. Sadie's connection to Isis is interesting because of the dynamic of a mother and a daughter. Isis is a mother who will do anything for her child, Horus. While Sadie is a daughter who has never had a mother. These two characters coming together plays into a mother-child relationship, but not for each other. Isis does not try to mother Sadie nor does Sadie try to replace her mother with Isis. They understand that the other is trying to help a family member already, that is their common ground. They come together to help Carter/Horus because they each care for a part of the whole. The outcome of this adaptation is the same, they defeat Set and save Osiris, it is the journey that was taken that held the adapted portions. Starting with having young adults being vessels for the gods, they are modern characters

set up to deal with ancient ideas, but young characters are important within novels such as these. As stated by Castleman, "Hope is associated with young protagonists because they represent both the future and the opportunity to make new and better choices" (164), this can be seen when Carter and Sadie learn to merge with their deities. They learn not to follow the path laid before them because they know that just because it was done in the past does not mean it should be repeated. Riordan gives his all his characters the options to make new choices when dealing with all the myths that were adapted by showing his characters, and readers, that while a solution may have worked in the past, there are new ways to go about things. While all the supporting myths are important with helping Riordan's, readers see how even some of the lesser-known myths hold a place within society, this larger thematic myth helps bring the entire Egyptian mythical work into focus. Understanding the base myth of Set, Horus, and Isis means understanding the mythical world as a whole because that myth is so central to ancient Egyptian mythology. Presenting this myth within a contemporary time shows the lasting relevance of mythology and how far certain tales will come to be retold. It is also an excellent example of how well ancient texts can be adapted into modern culture.

The other major foundational adaptation was Pharaohs being able to host the gods. In many stories that come from ancient Egypt about the great Pharaohs of old, there can be found mention that they were the personification of the gods. They held the gods power within them or in some cases were the gods

reincarnated. Ideas such as this were only said for those Pharaohs that were held in great regard and long rule. The proof of these claims on how ancient Egyptians viewed some of their rulers can be seen on the walls of the mighty pyramids. When looking at the carvings of the old kings, they are sometimes presented with the head of certain animals. This was done to represent their connection to a certain god to show how that ruler was a chosen one. These ideas are what fueled Riordan's thoughts for the Kane family. They are meant to be powerful and what better way than to have them allied with the gods.

Riordan's connection works because it brings the myth of kings hosting gods into his stories and makes his characters stronger. The connection with the gods and magicians Riordan makes for his main characters is a major example of how integrated mythology is within American culture. The lives of two normal teenagers, who could be any of his audience, are forever changed when they find out they are the blood of the pharaohs and have gods living in their heads. This example presents his readers with the idea that mythology is everywhere and even if people do not know it is there does not mean they are not affected by it in some way. Cultures are shaped by the stories they have that exemplify the core values that are found to be the most important. Because of this is it necessary to see how interconnected all cultures can be, which is what Riordan strives for.

Magicians and How Far the Influence has Spread

Riordan adaptation of the Egyptian myth of the magician for his story presents the idea of a powerful human that does not rely upon the will of the gods. The ancient Egyptian notion of the magician is an old construct; it held that magicians tended to fade into the shadows to not upstage the pharaohs. Not all magicians were pharaohs nor vice versa. However, many powerful pharaohs, such as King Tut and Ramses III, were considered both. When it was said they were the personification of a god, it was meant literally. In *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddess, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt*, Geraldine Pinch explains that; “Ancient Egyptian heroes were usually magicians rather than warriors. Deities such as Isis and Thoth were presented as powerful magicians...” (Pinch 161). Magicians were pivotal figures in ancient Egyptian mythology and allying with pharaohs would make them even more powerful. The Kane sibling’s status as magicians makes them incredible and dangerous to those around them. In addition to being magicians, they are also descended from the bloodline of the pharaohs which is why they can house gods in the first place, only the most powerful of souls can do such things.

Learning they are magicians leads to the understanding, for the reader, that ancient Egyptian culture did not disappear over time but was absorbed by others. To begin their learning process, they must be introduced to the idea that there are magicians all around the world. Now magicians in the ancient Egyptian sense may be found everywhere. They learn that magicians are more

widespread than anyone thought because they have their own districts around the world, and they encompass people of many different cultures. As uncle Amos teaches them, “Nome, n-o-m-e. As in a district, a region. The term is from ancient times when Egypt was divided into forty-two provinces. Today, the system is a little different. We’ve gone global. The world is divided into three hundred and sixty nomes. Egypt, of course, is the First. Greater New York is the twenty-first” (Riordan 52). The lineage of Egypt is not as contained as it once was, as the world populations grew and people discovered new places, the magic and power were dispersed.

This dispersal is what caused the modernization and adaptation of ancient Egyptian magic. The time difference plays into how magic is used for the Kanes, The powers of magicians and magic were bound to change because of the way magic is used to fit into the world around it and each world is conscripted by the society that creates it. The siblings’ Uncle Amos, for example, explains to them that they have the ability to blend into their surroundings in order to hide their magic from mortals. Uncle Amos explains further how the antiquity and influence of Egypt dwarfs later civilizations:

A legacy that powerful [Egypt] does not disappear. Nest to the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans were babies. Our very modern nations like Great Britain and America? Blinks of an eye. The very oldest root of civilization, at least of Western civilization, is Egypt. Look at the Pyramid on the dollar bill. Look at the Washington Monument- the world’s largest Egyptian obelisk.

Egypt is still very much alive. And so, unfortunately, are her gods (Riordan 72).

Riordan implies that great civilizations such as Egypt cannot fade from existence because there will always be influence from them within the next great civilizations. While ancient kingdoms and empires may fall, they leave behind rich cultural inheritances. This is important to understand because it shows how cultures leak into others thus creating a mix of ideas and traditions thus explaining how ancient myths can find footholds in contemporary time. As with most of the mythology Riordan uses, he does not change the overarching theme of each myth when he adapts them only certain details that need to change to fit into contemporary times. He shows how rich and complex mythological worlds such as those produced in ancient Egyptian civilization may continue to engage the imagination and experiences of modern people.

Adapting Egyptian Architecture and Artifacts

To show how much Egyptian culture has influenced American society, Riordan includes certain landmarks within his novels that share a connection to ancient Egypt. Commenting on the significance of the Washington Monument for Riordan, Cyr claims, "On one level, Riordan's use of American landmarks signal that new stories using old myths have just as much power as the originals and that renewal is inevitable." (Cyr 134). This plays into Riordan's goal of adapting mythology and cultural ideas and artifacts within his story because he uses the Washington Monument as center point within the adventure. As Carter and Sadie

are on their quest and running from enemies, they jump into a portal in Egypt to America. However, Sadie did not specify where in America, “So you got the default portal for the U.S.-the largest single source of Egyptian power in North America...The biggest obelisk ever constructed ‘she said.’ The Washington Monument”(Riordan 239). Using this national landmark works the same way as having the Empire State Building represent Olympus does: it is a focal point of America and plays into the notion that America is the new center of civilizations. He uses another well-known landmark to connect with his readers, since many know about the monument’s connection to American history and so they feel a sense of national pride when they can recognize and see it represented in stories.

Another claim made by Cyr is, “On another [level], Riordan’s particular settings assert America’s power as the inheritor of ancient myths, suggesting that the American landscape is an appropriate tableau upon which to enact Ancient Egyptian stories”(Cyr 134). He also uses these symbolic locations to suggest that they may serve as a species of time travel machine or portal into other worlds and civilizations. Riordan does not invent the Washington Monument as an obelisk, for it was designed that way; however, it was a choice to adapt that landmark into more than it was intended to be. Cyr states, “in *The Red Pyramid*, the Washington Monument plays a major role, suggesting that Riordan’s Ancient Egyptian-inspired texts are more eager to make clear-and less metaphorical-connections between the Ancient Egyptians past and the contemporary

American present”(Cyr 137). In other words, he adapts the landmark into a portal that is powered by ancient Egyptian magic, first because it has ties to Egyptian culture, and also because it helps tie that ancient culture to the present. Cultural power and heritage is a focus for Riordan. He takes symbols of American heritage and uses that symbolic power to express the ideas of strength that come from important landmarks. Like with the Empire State building, the Washington Monument plays a key factor in American history and pride. Using these landmarks expresses how power translates over time. The desire and need for power do not disappear, they transform to fit into the dominate culture. Readers are able to see that American history is thought of with pride and honor thus equating them to power. Riordan makes the connection that being American makes one powerful. The Washington Monument is not the only obelisk in major cities around the world. There are obelisks in Rome and Paris, showing that Ancient Egyptian culture has integrated in powerful civilizations around the world. Riordan focuses on Americans because that is the center of the story, but the importance of the obelisks can be seen around the world.

Another ancient artifact that Riordan adapted to fit into its surroundings was the boat that Carter and Sadie sail on after their encounter with the god Thoth. They are to take this boat into the afterlife sailing through the different houses of the Daut to try and find the house of Osiris. The Daut is said to be a land that is traversed by gods and the dead to enter the underworld which is ruled by the god-king Osiris. They are sailing the path that ancient pharaohs

took to enter the afterlife. This part of their quest explores the Kane family's connection to the bloodline of the pharaohs. To save the world, Carter and Sadie must embrace what makes them powerful and take the path their ancestors took thousands of years ago. It also lays the foundation for the myth of Ra, the Sun god, who used to sail the *daut* every day to raise the sun, which is a theme in the second novel. Their transportation is an important connection to the myth of the Sun, also to ancient Egyptian culture because, "Boats were one of the most important forms of transport in Ancient Egypt...so it is natural to see them in Egyptian myths...In the Pyramid Texts, the deceased kings' voyages to the horizon on a raft or skiff made from reeds"(Pinch 122). Usage of boats was expected in Egyptian culture because the most prominent resource for Egyptian life was the Nile. Riordan does not skip this fact; he is aware of how important water travel and boats were to Ancient Egyptians, however he does not give Carter and Sadie a regular, common raft. They are the bloodlines of Pharaohs and though the deceased kings left to the 'horizon' in rafts and reed skiffs, more prominent rulers had groups of larger boats at their disposal. This is the case for the Kanes as well, their boat for traversing the *Daut*, Egyptian afterlife or in some cases the 'horizon', is fit to serve the descendants of Pharaohs, but with a modern twist, "Churning towards the shore was an old-fashioned paddlewheel steamboat with smoke billowing from its stack" (Riordan 318). While a steamboat is not considered as modern as say a sleek yacht or speedboat, it is still more contemporary than a raft or reeds. However, considering where Riordan locates

the boat, in the south on the Mississippi river, the usage of a steamboat fits the surroundings. The outside is a bit old; the inside fits the lavish décor that one would expect for a royal line. There were plush carpets, beautiful panels and a dining room set to serve kings. Riordan took the idea of the ancient reed skiffs or rafts that were used to ferry the deceased kings to the afterlife and changed it to be less grim and something someone would see on a river today. It is another way to connect to the power of the ancients. Having the boat that Carter and Sadie use look like an old-fashioned steamboat while connecting to Egyptian myths presents the idea that over time things change and evolve, but there is no way to forget where they came from. For his readers this is a useful notion because it causes them to think about things, they take for granted every day and realize those objects have complex symbolism and history. Innovation is what keeps ideas alive, but all new ideas harken back to the original where there is an ability to learn and improve.

Egyptian Deity Adaptation

Riordan's aim to show how myths can be relevant regarding society today is shown when he presents ancient gods fitting into popular culture. They are being presented in a combination of the ancient and modern that is a representation of the past culture finding ways to appropriate within the present. First, let us look at the god Thoth, "Thoth was the god of wisdom and secret knowledge who invented writing and the different languages of humanity. As a lunar deity, Thoth was the deputy of the sun god, Ra. He mediated between the

Two Fighters, Horus and Seth [Set]... Thoth could be shown as a 'beautiful' baboon or as an ibis-headed man" (Pinch 209). In *The Red Pyramid*, Thoth is sought out by Carter and Sadie because they need help figuring out how to find Set's true name. There are only so many ways to find out someone's true name, not much is recorded about the subject because in Ancient Egypt the topic was taboo and considered too dangerous to discuss. Because of this Carter and Sadie seek out the god of secret knowledge in hope that he will take up his mantle as the mediator of Horus and Set once more. Since Thoth was the god who helped found the House of Life, the Magical Guild that all the magicians belong to, he was not locked away in the Daut like the other gods. He was seen as less dangerous and more beneficial, which means he was able to adapt and change with the modernization of time. Riordan shows this by placing Thoth in a University where he parades around as a young Professor researching modern technology.

Riordan implies that since Thoth was given the chance to experience his surroundings change, he has embraced the cultural adaptations that come with it. The Kane siblings find Thoth in Memphis, Tennessee, which is reminiscent of Memphis, Egypt that was around in the time of the gods. Placing Thoth in a location with a connection like that shows that the gods are still reaching for what they are familiar with. The location in which they find him fits into the criteria of a wisdom god, "If I know Thoth, he'll be at the center of learning. A library, perhaps, or a cache of books in a magician's tomb." (Riordan 281), then to show how

adapted Thoth has become they find, “The University of Memphis, perhaps?”(Riordan 281). They find the god of knowledge at a University because where else in modern times would one expect a person who lives for knowledge and learning to be except at a place that is meant to bring about higher understanding and the intake of knowledge. They find Thoth in an office,

...crammed with bookshelves. Worktables overflowed with weird bits and bobs-chemistry sets, half-assembled computers, stuffed animals with electrical wires sticking out of their heads. The room smelled strongly of cooked beef, but with a smokier, tangier scent than I’d [Sadie] ever smelled. Strangest of all, right in front of us, half dozen longnecked birds-ibises- sat behind desks like receptionists, typing on laptop computers with their beaks...A lanky man in his twenty stood up, electric guitar in hand. He had an unruly mane of blond hair like Khufu’s [their baboon friend], and he wore a strained white lab coat over faded jeans and a black T-shirt (Riordan 286-287).

We also learn that Thoth has become intrigued by aspects of southern African American culture such as blues music and smoked BBQ meat. He exclaims that he just realized they were not in Memphis, Egypt, however that does not dampen his spirits because he has been able to adapt incredibly well to his new surroundings.

Thoth was never locked away in the Daut, he could stay connected to the world, so he was able to learn with it. Because of this, he has adapted to his

surroundings by the way he dresses, what he eats, and the way he does and writes his research, even his new home is a way for him to connect to modern times. His clothing choice shows that he has paid attention to and adapted the look of a young professor that is still in his youth. He is wearing clothes that would be found on a college campus today and that helps him blend in. The blues music and newfound love of smoked BBQ is an appreciation of the culture around him. In Tennessee, and most of the south, BBQ is a staple of meals and Thoth is observant enough that and he has a great appreciation for it. Thoth's appearance, academic interests, and location adaptation shows Riordan's readers that a lover of knowledge can look like anyone. Looking at these adaptations show that certain aspects of adaptation do not change. The need to explore adaptations of such things is present because these are common changes that are made thus showing that while authors can adapt anything they wish, there are commonalities that certain authors follow. His youthful appearance and passions present readers with the image of an ancient god blending into a modern world flawlessly.

The biggest adaptation is how Thoth is conducting his research and what he is using for it. Thoth has taken an interest in modern technology. Not only does he have spare and broken parts on his workbench, which means he has been studying them and trying to figure out how they work, his secretary ibises are using laptops to transcribe his findings. The usage of technology to further his learning experience is a great adaptation of how much reading and research

Thoth used to do in ancient myths. He was the god of medicine as well as language and that lead him to focus mostly on books and exploration of new things, when he was not trying to keep the peace between Horus and Set. Thousands of years later, Riordan has kept Thoth's fascination of creating new things by showing how well he has adapted to modern technology. He has adapted so well that even his pet animals are using them. Having Thoth play around with computers demonstrates to Riordan's readers that just as the Olympians have done, so have the Egyptians learned to fit into their new world. They have embraced what is being offered and changed. Thoth seems like the eccentric uncle that everyone loves. This representation is meant to show that the desire for progress is not a modern thought. Furthering the progress of technology, food, music, and language started with the gods and Riordan is adapting those concepts showing that progress is never done and must be continuously worked for. Thoth is a great example showing that progress and innovation have a beginning, like with ancient deities, but they must be continued by mortals. Riordan's presentation on Thoth shows that the seeking knowledge is a value of society that spans centuries. Audiences seeing this ideal represented in an ancient deity expresses the notion of a consistent tradition of knowledge and progress always going forward.

Another god that has embraced the flame of the West and taken what it has to offer is Anubis. Along with Horus and Isis, Anubis is one of the most well-known Egyptian deities, "Anubis was the terrifying canine god who presided over

the mummification of bodies and guarded burials. He was usually shown as a seated black jackal or as a man with the head of a jackal or wild dog. Anubis helped to judge the dead, and he and his army of messengers were charged with punishing those who violated tombs or offended the gods” (Pinch 104). He is present in this novel because the Kanes must travel and deal with the land of the dead. However, when he is seen for the first-time during Sadie’s narrative chapters, he is seen a little differently. Sadie observes, “I turned and saw a good-looking boy of about sixteen, dressed in black robes. His complexion was pale, but he had lovely brown eyes like the man on the throne. His black hair was long and tousled-rather wild, but it worked for me” (Riordan 172). From this short passage and quick glimpse, we see from Sadie, it is not made clear who the young boy is, because Sadie herself does not know; his description is of another character that close to the readers age range while his clothing shows he has connections to the gods.

From the passage above, it can be understood that boy is a deity and later it is seen how he has adapted to Western civilization. He looks young, the age of group of the protagonists and readers, it is a good catalyst to start the connection between the god of mummification and the young audience. Most often, because of the details surrounding the gods of death -- Hades, Anubis, and Thanatos -- they are stereotyped as evil or disgusting beings that should not be interacted with. Yet Riordan challenges that idea with his version of Anubis. He adapts the main concept of Anubis but changes the personality and outside appearance to

appeal to his readers and to Sadie. Making this choice, Riordan is able to show that not all perceptions or stereotypes need to be adhered to. He shows that while multiple ancient texts present a character in a certain light does not mean it must stay that way. Adaptation can be used to create a complex story for characters that have been pushed into a simple box. This can be seen when Anubis is introduced fully,

A jackal, I realized, with a golden collar around its neck. Then it morphed into a young man, and my heart almost stopped. He was the boy from my dreams, quite literally...In person, if possible, Anubis was even more drop-dead gorgeous...he had a pale complexion, tousled black hair, and rich brown eyes like melted chocolate. He was dressed in black jeans, combat boots (like mine!), a ripped T-shirt, and a black leather jacket that suited him quite nicely. He was long and lean like a jackal. His ears, like a jackal's, stuck out a bit (which I found cute), and he wore a gold chain around his neck (Riordan 352).

The description here is much more in depth than the first glimpse of Anubis and gives a better look into how this god has adapted. Even though Anubis does not visit the world above and interact with it like Thoth, he is still influenced by it.

Riordan chooses to present a character that fits in with his protagonists and audience for two reasons. First, it is part of the story line to make Anubis somewhere near Sadie's age. She finds herself attracted to him and later there is some flirting between the two. Most young adult literature deals with romance in

some form and Riordan's stories are no exception. He inserts romance during quests and makes the relationships work as though they are real teenage relationships. They cause confusion and heart ache; they represent relationships that his readers may have gone through or may go through. Having Sadie crush on an attractive boy is a connection to his readers lives and makes her a good representation of young adult relationship culture. Making the crush be a god has the readers seeing the impossibility that Sadie is facing. This resonates with adolescents because they are just entering the world of crushes and they may also feel as though their crush is impossible. Second reason is the connection Anubis has directly to popular culture by way of his attire. Like Thoth, that modern culture has intergraded into their lives. Even for one who does not interact with mortals or everyday life, Anubis has adapted the clothing of a regular mortal boy so he can be seen as something other than what death gods normally are. Anubis is not the first god Riordan has characterized as being seen or presented themselves as younger. Riordan uses the image of a young adult for his gods to create a connection between the past and the present when thinking of time.

The Egyptian god Set is one central to the novel, Set. Set or Seth depending on the myth does not change much. He is one constant that can be found within Egyptian mythology, "Seth, the tumultuous god who was the enemy of his brother, Osiris, and the rival of Horus, was one of the five children of Nut and Geb...Seth acts as a catalyst in Egyptian myth..." (Pinch 191). Another

description stated by Lemming, “Seth, like so many tricksters, was amoral and was driven by Iago-like pure evil, jealousy, and greed” (Leeming et al. 351).

Riordan makes these characteristics the foundations for his character. He sticks to the mythological preference that Set is bad and he does not change from his ways as he tries to steal the throne from his brother and then nephew. Riordan keeps him true to theme, the way he changes the god is first appearance, which is to be expected since Riordan does this for most every divine character.

Set’s appearance changes throughout the novel the longer he is exposed to the modern world. The first time we are told of his appearance is right after he was freed from his thousand-year long captivity within the Rosetta Stone. After his escape, he is described as, “...the fiery outline of a man.” (Riordan 24), then, “He turned, and for one terrible moment, his face appeared in the flames...it was as if someone superimposed two different faces on top of each other-one almost human, with pale skin, cruel, angular features, and glowing red eyes, the other like an animal with dark fur and sharp fangs. Worse than a dog or a wolf or a lion-some animal I’d never seen before” (Riordan 27). The first sighting of Set, before anyone knows who he is, is the purest form, he is seen as he was when he was first captured over a thousand years ago, he is the ancient version of himself that is meant to cause fear and chaos to whomever looks upon him. Yet, that is not how he appears every time he is seen, his appearance and attire change the longer he is exposed to modern times. Set adapts to his new surroundings by

changing how he looks as he becomes familiar with the modern world. The ability to adapt is necessary to survive.

Going from the anthropomorphic version of Set that is introduced, his transformation happens about halfway through the novel detailing the changes that Set has embraced. After Set has had time to explore the new world and make plans to destroy all those he wishes, he also gets a twenty-first century makeover,

The other was a burly man in red combat fatigues...He has Set's voice, but he looked completely different than he had in my last vision. He wasn't a slimy black thing, and he wasn't on fire-except for the scary mixture of hatred and amusement burning in his eyes. He had a thick body like a linebacker's, with meaty hands and a brutish face. His short bristly hair and trimmed goatee were as red as his combat fatigues. (Riordan 274)

Set identifies with a military persona, which makes sense considering he sees himself as a great leader. The fatigues suggest a strong general who is in command yet Set wearing them is a perversion of what they stand for. For Set does not protect others, except himself; he does not stand for freedom, but for servitude and control. Set's usage of the fatigues is a representation of how the power and responsibility that comes from this attire can be perverted. It shows that while Army or Military fatigues are meant to stand for positivity, there are those that can abuse the power. His entire body seems to be adapted for this new persona. Halfway through the story, and Set has learned enough about

popular culture to know that military fatigues are good for combat, and they are worn by those that lead others. They are seen as heroes and that is what Set believes himself to be, he is rewriting his narrative and he paints himself in the vestige of those who serve others. He is playing off the feelings seeing those fatigues cause. Using Sets appearance as a physical form of adaptation tells readers that Set's personality does not need to change to fit into modern society. His warmongering, much like Ares, is a trait that is valued in contemporary times thus showing that if someone changes how they appear on the outside into someone worthy of respect, like military personnel, there negative traits can be overlooked and, in some cases, appreciated.

Chapter Conclusion

The Red Pyramid is another mesmerizing fantasy tale that exemplifies adaptation of ancient mythology into modern popular culture. Riordan is able to reanimate ancient Egyptian stories in the lives of Carter and Sadie Kane. The diverse cultural aspects that are seen through the eyes of a minority character adds to the magic that is being produced. Egyptian mythology is not as widespread in popular culture as Greek or even Roman, however even though it may not be seen, the influences of a great civilization can be found when one really looks. It is these influences that give Riordan that advantages in his novels, he can find what is already there and blend it into the modern time. His usage of mixed raced families and diversity is a tool to immerse his readers into the story because they can see themselves in the characters. He takes previous thoughts

about the usage of mythology and expands them to show that with the use of adaptation there is way to use connect with his young readers. He takes ideas that come from thousands of years ago and revamps them into tales that blend within popular culture. Riordan's use of ancient Egyptian mythology in his Young Adult novel is a way for him to expose his readers to literature they may not have experienced before and shows that even though society has progressed further than many thought possible, American society and culture would not be what it is today with the foundation that comes from ancient civilizations.

CHAPTER FOUR

WRAPPING THINGS UP

Conclusion

Each chapter began with an explanation of the challenges the protagonists, Percy, Carter, and Sadie, go through in both mythical and everyday sense. Their adventures tested them in a new world, having them explore new abilities. However, it was not just powers and mythological components they delved into, but their sense of self and figuring out who they are. Since these protagonists are middle school to high school age groups, they are trying to find their place in the world and feel comfortable with what they are learning about themselves. For Percy, he began his journey as a troubled kid with mental disabilities who is just trying to get through school and be there for his mother. He does not place much value in himself and his sarcastic commentary throughout the novel can be seen as a way to hide his insecurities within himself and his frightening new world. With the help of facing off against Medusa, facing his fear of having to leave his loved one in the Underworld and going toe to toe with Ares, Percy is able to take these experiences and build himself off of them. Leading to the end of this adventure which shows a Percy that can stand on his own two feet, taking claim of his destiny while embracing what makes him different. He knows the importance of family and friends. It is alright to lean on

others when it is needed, but he has to be ready to face challenges alone. His confidence has risen, so much so he faces off against a god. Percy has an entire series to learn and grow more, yet he has learned more about himself embracing change and adversity.

Carter and Sadie, much like Percy, end their first tale in place of better understanding than when they started. Even though they are siblings, at the beginning of their story they feel very estranged from one another and not related. The complications of having a mixed-race heritage and being raised in different countries by different adults makes them feel like strangers to one another. They end with accepting the other as they are, knowing that their first impressions did not hold true. They had to learn about themselves and each other by figuring out how to harness their new powers and compromising with gods. Carter learned that Sadie was not always as confident as she appeared, while Sadie learned Carter did not live the life, she thought he did. She thought Carter had a great relationship with their father and had fun adventures travelling with him. She learned that Carter tried to be perfect to fit into who his father wanted him to be, he did not have the freedom Sadie did. Through their challenges, they start to see that what is on the surface cannot be believed. In the rest of the series, they continue to grow and learn from each other. Having these protagonists grow as they did shows that life is full of adversity, but when facing it, people come out stronger in the end, which seems to be a good message for YA readers.

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