

ISSN: 0976-8165

The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Vol. 7, Issue- 2 [April 2016]

7th Year of Open Access

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite



www.the-criterion.com

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Reiterating the Myths: A Review of Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson Series

Reviewed by:

Parvathy N

Integrated M.A English-2014

Amrita School of Arts and Sciences, Kochi;

Amrita Viswa Vidyapeetham

Amrita University

A long time ago mythology was something that was treated with respect. Something that grown-up people turned to, to instill values into their children. They were encouraged to read the mythologies to learn more about how and where their culture emerged and was supposed to answer most of their whys. In India we had all our mythological stories compiled into five or six texts, like Ramayana or Mahabharata. But the Greek and Roman texts they were supposed to read were much too complex for their simple minds, and might not have even made sense as to why Calypso was exiled off to a no-man's land for helping her evil titan father. They read on though, for those myths were sacred and important. But the situation of 21st century is very different.

All literature is now global; all literature is a literature of globalization."

- Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman

With lives and lifestyles, literature also graduated to a new stratum. Writers like P C Cast, Rick Riordan walked into the sacred lands, and gave a new lease of life to the weary Gods, Goddesses and their minions. They zapped the Gods from their tunics to pin striped suits. But unlike the old much heard mythology, these writers did not only glorify the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Gods, but they gave power, in Godly words, to mere mortals. P C Cast in her

Goddess Summoning Series brought the Greek and Roman Gods and Goddesses into the mesmerizing Oklahoma 'kingdom'. The famous Olympians were all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed enjoying every bit in a place where they were forgotten. They made human friends, fell in love with them, felt humanly emotions. The humans were the heroes of Cast's stories-the independent, confident humans.

While Cast dealt with adults, the San Franciscan sixth grade teacher Rick Riordan Jr recapitulated the Greek, Roman, and Norse myths for children. He weaved into his stories, the demigods, not the very famous Hercules or Odysseus or Achilles, but the ADHD/dyslexic son of the sea God Poseidon, Percy Jackson from Manhattan. All along his Percy Jackson and Heroes of Olympus series, he popped into the story more and more Godly offspring's, mostly teenagers, totally angry with their Godly parents for abandoning them and making them possible meals to numerous monsters. Riordan did not miss any stories or any mythical characters or even monsters in his adventures. But he did not make them complex or boring for he aimed for teen-readers. Though fates and prophecies are given due respect and seats in the adventure, the heroes make their lives more interesting by creating more problems themselves but solving it themselves as well. He globalized the myths packing it with adventure, advice and most importantly new information.

The twelve great Gods of the Greeks were known as the Olympians. Together were several minor Gods, they presided over every aspect of human life. Sometimes they came into the mortal world, had children with mortals who grew up to be great heroes. But their power and influence began dying with time even in arts and literature. As suits replace tunics, Avengers replaced the Olympians. But responding to Riordan's call, the Gods woke and zapped themselves into the new civilization. Now the Gods of Olympus are alive and well in the 21st Century! They still fall

in love with mortals and have children who are half-God, half-human, like the heroes of the old Greek myths.

The Gods are comfortably settled in the six hundredth floor of the empire state building, New York. In the old days, Zeus ruled over his unruly family of Olympians while they bickered and fought and got jealous of each other. Now he can be found dressed in pinstriped suit, neatly trimmed grey beard, though he still continues with his old job description. His brother Poseidon walks the beaches of Florida, occasionally stopping to chat with fishermen or take pictures for tourists in Hawaiian shirt, shorts and flip flops. Hermes the God of Roadways, Travelers, Merchants and Thieves, is a hard person to find, because he's always on the run. When he's not delivering messages for the Gods, he's running a telecommunications company, an express delivery service, and every other type of business you can imagine that involves travel. The patron Goddess of love, Aphrodite can often be found shopping on Fifth Avenue or trying on new clothes during Fashion Week in New York. She loves parties, and can't get enough of gossip. Such goes the lives of the very powerful and scary Olympians.

Riordan had spun the tale so tactically, including the best ingredients to capture the interest of his readers. Which child will ignore a story where the war God rides a Harley Davidson and the Goddess of rainbow runs a grocery store?

Riordan gives prime importance to the story of the demigods, but he also succeeded in including the most important stories and characters from the mythology. In between the demigods' quest to stop an arising Titan, he effectively weaves in the story of Gaia, the earth Goddess and her husband's Ouranos and Tartarus. Unbeknownst to us, we walk among monsters who scour the Earth hoping to find the children of Gods before the Gods do in order to eliminate their

competition. We meet the half human half horse Centaurs, half human half goat-Satyrs, One eyed Cyclops, Long destroyed Titans, Vampires and so many other illuminating monsters- all of them nowhere else but in the vastly populated New York

The best aspect of the literature of the new millennium is that they do not bore the readers with outrightly bringing in morals. Rick Riordan has also followed the method. But his writings were not just trash adventures, he taught children what they knew through what they did not. He teaches the importance to friendship, team work, facing our weaknesses without even hinting that he wants his readers to follow them. Though it did not stop the readers from being inspired .The idea of children thinking of disorders like ADHD/dyslexia as unique strengths rather than weaknesses is one of the best counsel. These are things that set them apart from everyone else and make them special. Percy struggles with his disorder—he’s been kicked out of numerous boarding schools before landing at Camp Half-Blood—but he doesn’t use the disorder as an excuse. He clearly wants to be good, and finally in this new world, he is able to not only fit in but excel. Nature is also a huge part of Riordan’s adventures. Through the disappearance of Pan the God of the wilds, he portrays the real and sad condition of nature today. The care and concern of a middle school teacher could be seen throughout the narrative.

Percy Jackson series on the baseline is a modern reiteration of a myth. He does not use English, Greek or Roman but converses to his teen-readers in their language- humour, sarcasm and satire.

“Hercules, huh? Percy frowned. “That guy was like the Starbucks of Ancient Greece. Everywhere you turn, there he is”

-Rick Riordan, the Mark of Athena

Riordan has remolded the ancient and complex mythology to the most basic level. He narrated the entire lore including the modern men. This relatability that the readers have found in his works is one of the prime reasons of his work's popularity. The magic and mystery he had entwined into his books are even more exceptional than the original stories and the classics.

"It seemed to me I was living in an insane asylum of my own making. I went about with all these fantastic figures: centaurs, nymphs, satyrs, Gods and Goddesses, as though they were patients and I was analyzing them. I read a Greek or Negro myth as if a lunatic were telling me his anamnesis."

— C.G. Jung (*Analytical Psychology*)

Bibliography

- <http://www.rickRiordan.com/home>
- Riordan, Rick. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief. New York: Hyperion Books 05
- Riordan, Rick. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Sea of Monsters. New York: Hyperion Books 06
- Riordan, Rick. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Titan's Curse. New York: Hyperion Books 07
- Riordan, Rick. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Battle of the Labyrinth. New York: Hyperion Books 08
- Riordan, Rick. Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Last Olympian. New York: Hyperion Books 09