

# AN ANALYSIS ON THE MONOMYTH THROUGH RICK RIORDAN'S *PERCY JACKSON THE LIGHTNING THIEF*

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## Abstrak

*Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief* adalah buku pertama dari serial novel *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* yang di tulis oleh Rick Riordan. Kisah cerita Rick Riordan terlahir dari kisah para pahlawan kuno seperti *Hercules and Perseus*, sehingga banyak pola-pola yang berasal dari mythology Yunani yang di gunakan dalam penulisan *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief*. Skripsi ini mendiskusikan tentang sebuah pola perjalanan seorang tokoh utama, Percy Jackson. Dalam Perjalanannya, peneliti menemukan bahwa kisah tersebut memiliki kemiripan dalam pengulangan pola-pola yang umum dengan kisah pahlawan di mythology kuno, kemiripan tersebut terlihat pada susunan pola-pola tentang bagaimana kisah perjalanan Percy di ceritakan. Dengan menggunakan teori Monomyth oleh Joseph Campbell *the Heroes with Thousand Faces*, Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu bagaimana sebuah pengulangan pola-pola umum perjalanan tentang pahlawan teraplikasikan melalui Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief*. Skripsi ini merupakan penelitian berbentuk narrative yang dilakukan secara kualitatif dan didukung oleh analisis data sekunder.

**Kata kunci:** *mythologi, pahlawan, monomyth*

## Abstract

*Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief* is the first book of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* serial novel written by Rick Riordan. Since Rick Riordan's story is born based on the hero of the ancient myth stories like *Hercules* and *Perseus*, many sources of Greek mythologies patterns are used in *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief*. This thesis discusses the journey patterns of the main character, Percy Jackson. During Percy journey, the researcher discovers that the story has similar reenactments of common pattern with the heroes of the ancient myth through the patterns order of how the Percy's journey is told. By using the theory of Monomyth by Joseph Campbell *the Heroes with Thousand Faces*, this study aims to find out how the reenactment of common patterns of Monomyth applied through Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief*. This is a narrative research carried out qualitatively supported by the secondary data analysis.

**Keywords:** *mythology, hero, monomyth*

## Introduction

Fantasy fiction is an imaginative work which has the responsibility of creativity in creating a literary work. Every fantasy fiction has its own heroes.

“The Heroes journey is about growth and passage. The journey requires a separation from the comfortable, known world, and an initiation into a new level of awareness, skill, responsibility, and then a return home as Joseph Campbell said in his theory of Monomyth” (1949:28).

*Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief* is the first book of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* serial novel written by Rick Riordan. He wants to share his fantasy world about Greek mythologies in modern ways which Percy as the hero of his world.

This study discusses about the journey of the main character, Percy Jackson. During his journey, he discovers a world bigger than he has ever imagined. He immediately hands a quest to redeem himself from a crime he has never committed as the thief of Zeus's master bolt. Percy Jackson is helped by his friends, Grover and Annabeth. They must journey across the United States to catch a real thief who has stolen the Zeus' master bolt. Along the way, they must face a lot of Greek mythological creatures.

The researcher is interesting in analyzing Rick Jordan's novel, *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*, because it offers the famous patterns of hero's journey which are similar with the other great story like *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Hunger Games*, *Lord of The Ring*, *Matrix* etc. Archetype in this thesis is reflected through how the author consciously or unconsciously wrote the similar patterns of the hero's journey. Riordan is able to develop a modern wonderful journey based on the

Olympians or the old Greek gods and creatures in his novels, which have similar patterns of journeys with the other stories of the ancient myth heroes like *Perseus* and *Hercules*.

Most of ancient hero stories we know are reenactments of a common pattern. More latterly it has become clear that all literatures are made up of repeated images or patterns that are recognized as archetypes. An archetype is a kind of symbol, character type, or plot pattern that has ever happened throughout literature. This research studies about the pattern and the meaning of hero itself.

## Research and Methodology

Serving this topic, the writer is using inductive method. It is a method which serves the topic from specific to general. The specific topic of Monomyth is introduced firstly.

The data collected in the research are qualitative data. It is a kind of data which are in form of discussion, statement, exploration, information, argument and opinion. Qualitative data are collected in order to explore the discussion and explain it deeply. These are also used to strengthen the hypothesis in the research. The data will be written as quotation, it will be direct quotation and indirect quotation. It is also written in form of paraphrasing.

There are several steps to write this thesis. First, the writer identifies and develops the topic, find the context which have the background information, books as data are needed like *The Hero of Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, the novel of *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan. This research supported by two previous researchs to complete and make the analysis more accurate. The first is *Archetype of the Hero's Journey in Odyssey* by Mohammad Taheri and Ronak Jalaly M.A. The second is *Heroes of Middle-Earth: J. Campbell's Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings* written by Tutta Kesti.

Second, close reading is needed to comprehend the topic to discuss. Then the data are classified and verified based on the theory which is used. Finally, all of the data and information are gathered and analyzed using the theory of Monomyth by Joseph Campbell which is suitable with the topic of the discussion. A theory is used as a tool to find the way of the writer's thought and ideology through the literary work.

After the writer got the whole of data which are taken from the materials in the form of sentences and words, those will be written in the discussion as the quotations to strengthen the explanation. It is also used as the proof of the study. The quotations can be direct which are from experts about the reenactments of hero's journey through Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*, and its archetype characters in the story and the journey's pattern to any hero's fantasy fiction of literature.

### **Result**

The result of this article is to show the Monomyth patterns that are applied on Percy as the hero of the story. Percy follows the three phases of the Hero's Journey - Separation, Initiation and Return. The writer will describe in more detail the categorized event in each of the three phases that Campbell has suggested in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The writer will also leave out those categories that do not occur in the character's story. This is because Campbell himself has remarked that the Hero's Journey is very flexible when it comes to the order of the stages or how many times they occur in the hero's journey (1966: 246).

### **Discussion**

*The Hero with thousand faces* explains a lot about the similar patterns of main character 'hero' in almost every fables, stories, and legend. Because this study concerns with heroes, it is important to define what Campbell himself considers a hero. According to Campbell's

criteria, heroes are the persons who succeed where others would either fail or try, and one more important feature of the hero is that they serve their communities as well as themselves. Campbell also makes a different between the universal hero and fairy tale hero. Universal heroes are the ones who bring a change into the entire world. The fairy-tale heroes are the ones who operate on a smaller scale bringing change into their own communities and conquering their "personal oppressors" (Campbell 1966: 37-38)

The main character that the writer here talking is about the central figure of the story. The story focuses on the actions of this character from first to last, just like the story in Percy Jackson Stories is begun by focusing on Percy and it is ended when Percy returns the Zeus's lightning.

I have mentioned Campbell's conception of a 'hero' and I will give my reason to choose the character Percy as the hero in *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*. This experience makes Percy as a hero. Most of the hero or the first main character is simply known by looking for the title of the story, especially for some movies, or stories that use the hero's name as the title of the story, for example Beowulf, Hamlet, Hercules, Harry Potter. *Percy Jackson : The Lightning Thief* also uses the name of character Percy as the title of the story, so that why we can simply assume that the hero of this Riordan story is Percy Jackson. Percy Jackson is named after the famous Greek hero Perseus by his mother for good luck because his name sake was one of the only heroes who had a happy ending and died in a peaceful death. In addition, Riordan uses the first person narration point of view in Percy Jackson stories to make the readers think that this is the story about Percy himself. "I" in this story prefers to Percy as the first main character of the story.

Having explained the main terms and background for Campbell's theory as well as the story, I am now going to focus on Percy's Hero's Journey. In this section I will analyze the first main character's Hero's Journey Percy Jackson

based on the theory of Monomyth Campbell mentions on *The Hero with Thousand Faces*.

## 1. Separation

**The Common World:** The main character of this story is Percy Jackson, with a best friend Grover Underwood, his mother Sally Jackson. Firstly, he believes he is just a normal teen dealing with everyday problems and high school drama.

**The Call to Adventure:** Percy finds that Zeus thinks he is the lightning thief and it starts when the monster called Furry attacks him at museum. Zeus tells him that if he does not bring the bolt to him by the summer solstice there will be a war of the gods and earth is the battlefield.

**Refusal of the Quest:** Percy does not believe everything what he saw before at the museum, especially since he believes that he is nothing special, having "dyslexia". Later when he accepts the Charon quest, he thinks that the war of gods is not his problem, the only reason why he accepts the quest is because he wants nothing more than to get his mother back.

## 2. Initiation

**Crossing the first threshold:** Percy enters a magical gate that leads him to a Half Blood Camp, where demigods train the powers they have. This camp is also a safe place for them but before Percy passes the Gate, Minotaur chases and tries to kill him.

**Meeting the Mentor:** Percy learns that his teacher Mr. Brunner is a Centaur, his real name is Charon. He gives him a lot of advice and also a magical sword.

**Road of Trials:** Percy with his friends Annabeth and Grover begin their journey to search and return the Zeus's master bolt before the summer solstice. During their quest they encounter three Furies, Medusa, Chimera, Procrustes, and Casino of Lotus eaters. They

work together to conquer what they fear and face.

**Tests and the Supreme Ordeal:** To get his mother back, Percy faces Hades in underworld. Percy found that both he and Hades are tricked by someone else. Percy is confused with the option to save his beloved mother, or to save his friends and finishes the quest. Percy conquers his ego to save his mother. Promising his mother that he will return for her, Percy and his friends escape to the surface, where Percy battles the god Ares for possession of the bolt and the helm.

**Ultimate Boon:** After finishing the quest, Percy has to meet his father, Hades returning Sally back to her apartment unharmed and the world saves from war of gods.

## 3. Return

**Crossing the Return Threshold :** Luke reveals that he is the real thief of Zeus and Hades symbols. Luke does not want Percy to interfere the Kronos again. He summons a pit scorpion to kill Percy. Once Luke leaves, Percy manages to kill the scorpion.

**Master of Two Worlds:** Percy has learned much from his journey and has not only grown physically but mentally as well.

## Conclusion

*Percy Jackson : the Lightning Thief* is the book one of the Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. This story shows many Archetype characteristics of Joseph Campbell's 'The Hero's Journey'. Percy himself is as the courageous and intelligent 'Hero'. He has an 'Allies or sidekicks' that accompany him during his journey, Grover Underwood and Annabeth. Grover is also the 'Trickster' used to make the readers laugh. Charon or Mr. Brunner as 'the Mentor' gives Percy an Anaklamos sword and a lot of advice during Percy's quest. Mrs. Dodds as 'the Herald' accuses Percy as the thief in the beginning of the story. Luke Castellan as the 'Shadow' and also the 'Shapeshifter', he acts

befriend with Percy at Camp as his sword mentor, but he tries to kill Percy at the end of *The Lightning Thief*.

Rick Riordan is consciously or unconsciously uses the Joseph Campbell 'Heroes Journey' theory in his *Percy Jackson: the Lightning Thief*. It is proved by how the Separation - Initiation – Return of Monomyth is applied in his book as the writer mentioned before.

Percy is Poseidon's son, the ruler of the sea. He has the power to control water as he wish, but Percy is not truly born as the hero. The oracle tells Charon about Percy's destiny that he will become a great hero someday, but Percy knows nothing about it. Becoming the hero is a choice. Percy walks as his own choices in his journey. At first, Percy does not accept his hero's quest because of his own ego to get his beloved mother back. The story will have a different ending if Percy decides to save his mother and ignore the quest to save the world. What the writer is going to say is, being the hero is not about saving someone, slaying some monster or having a power to control water. The hero will not save or slay something if he does not dare to challenge his bravery to conquer his fears. Percy is able to save the world and he becomes the universal hero after he decides to leave his mother in underworld. Sally Jackson is everything for Percy, and she is the only thing that Percy is afraid to lose.

Every hero has something that they fear, just like a human being. The heroes journey myth exist in our culture and keep getting updated because we as a human may experience in those two worlds becoming a hero. In the term of the Hero's Journey, any choices we face require us to leave the Common World; a world that is familiar although possibly unpleasant. Any fears or problems we encounter can be symbolized as a dragon that needs to be slain. Any experiences or transformations we have are the treasure we get from the journey.

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