

**“I Am Offered a Quest”: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* as a Tough, Accessible Text and a  
Way to Reach Reluctant Readers**

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

Rachel Lauve

**Thesis Advisor**

Dr. Susanna Benko

**Thesis Advisor Pro Tempore**

Dr. Jeff Spanke

**Ball State University  
Muncie, Indiana**

April 2017

**Expected Date of Graduation**

May 2017

**Abstract**LD  
2489  
24  
2017  
238

Greek mythology and civilization have not stayed confined to just the Mediterranean. As the mythology made its way to the Roman Empire, and as western civilization developed, allusions to mythology have become common in classical works such as Shakespeare's plays to the very names of our planets; even the architecture of Washington, D.C. reflects Greek civilization. Greek mythology has even become steeped in popular literature, as is the case for *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, a middle-grade series written by Rick Riordan that explores what it would be like if the Greek gods themselves moved to western civilization and continued to have demigod children. The series has achieved great commercial success, but is often praised for its seemingly magical ability to turn reluctant readers into avid readers. In this paper, I examine what sets reluctant readers apart from readers who struggle, the idea of text accessibility, and what makes Riordan's series more accessible than the original Greek myths. This paper also explores how the series exists as a "tough text" by Cindy O'Donnell-Allen's criteria for the term and presents multiple strategies that could be used in teaching *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* alongside *The Odyssey*.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Dr. Benko for originally agreeing to advise this project, although she couldn't see it through to the end. She is truly one of the most inspirational professors I've had at Ball State, and I am blessed to have been able to work with her as a student, TA, and advisee during my time here.

I would like to thank Dr. Spanke for stepping in on short notice to advise this project and providing me with some of the most helpful and constructive feedback that I've ever received,

especially considering our time crunch. This all did pass and I appreciate your support so much.

I would like to thank Cassie Grosh, Mysti Pearce, and Emily Mack for beta-reading drafts of this thesis.

I would like to thank two of the most important Rachels in my life, Rachel Hatton and Rachel Wright-Marquez, for helping to keep me sane and for helping me to keep my anxiety and stress in check as I was working on this.

Most importantly, I would like to thank Jacob Lauve for telling me that I needed to read *The Lightning Thief* all those years ago. Percy may not have looked back in *The Last Olympian*, but I look back on this recommendation as honestly life-changing.

---