

Why Make a Map When You Have a Map?

An Honors Thesis (ENG 444)

by

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Abstract

There is often the approach that literature and maps are two separate entities; however, they are more integrated than they first appear. When writing in the Young Adult genre, authors face a decision: they can choose to use a pre-existing map to base their story on, or they can create their own. Understanding the connections between a map and a literary piece will lead the reader to a deeper understanding of the texts and the author's intentions when writing the text. To fully grasp the role a map plays in a work of literature, the reader must also look at the character's interaction with the map. This paper will take a closer look at the relationship between maps and three YA novels: *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and *Percy Jackson*. What roles do maps play in these texts, and what impact do they have on both the characters and the readers. While on a surface level it may seem as though the author made their literary decisions simply for convenience, their decisions have a deeper impact on their text.

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Process Analysis Statement

For one of my English capstones, I enrolled in ENG 444 with Dr. Molly Ferguson. Her section focused on maps; how they influenced literature, how literature influenced them, and everything in between. We read texts such as, *Translations*, *White Tiger*, *Unfathomable Cities*, and more where we broke down and analyzed how maps connected to the text. At the end of the semester, we were assigned a 15-20-page paper, which is how the idea of this paper was created.

I was in middle school when I first read *The Hunger Games*, and at that point in time I was only interested in the romance between Katniss and Peeta. When my father read the book (on my recommendation), he responded that the book(s) terrified him, and I never understood how or why until I started this research project. Previously, I understood that the districts were divided, but never the why or the how. Why did they remain divided? How was the Capitol able to keep them this way? And if I am being honest, middle school me did not care too much.

Since I did not care for much outside of the plot, I did not stop to think about how country of Panem was broken down. When creating a mental image of the country, I just lined them up as 1,2,3,4...etc. As I discussed my ideas with other classmates, I learned that several people had the same approach. Because we approached the text this way, we were unable to fully grasp the impact the map had towards the story. It was the district's location in accordance to the Capitol that determined how much they prospered in the story. At the end of the semester, for my ENG 444 class, we were asked to create a map of any sort to print out and discuss during our finals. During my research I had discovered that Suzanne Collins had never made an official map, and that all of the maps of Panem were created by fans. I proceeded to take my new knowledge of *The Hunger Games* and a handful of the maps that others had made, and I created my own map of Panem. I was now able to look at the map and see how the districts related to

each other in terms of location and distance which just solidified everything that I had written about in my paper. It was no longer just a vague map concept that I was analyzing.

Following a similar theme as *The Hunger Games* is *Divergent*. Again, when I read this book, I paid very little attention to the geographical location of the setting. However, *Divergent* focused more on how people divided the land and not how land divided the people. I think that *Percy Jackson* was the most challenging to write for this paper. Where as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are specifically dystopian/ utopian texts, *Percy Jackson* is simply a YA novel. But, the characters in *Percy Jackson* have a strong interaction with maps and mapping. I had to find a way to show that mapping connection between the three text and since I started with the dystopian genre it was a bit of a shift in thinking.

The first step to writing this paper was to find interviews with the authors of my selected texts. Through these, I was given insight as to what messages the authors were trying to give or express. However, these interviews did not explain how they did this. After looking at some scholarly articles about the dystopian and young adult genre, I then conducted a close reading of each text where I discovered ideas and themes that I had previously ignored. I never thought much about maps or texts until this past year, because the plot of the story was always more interesting. By stopping and taking time to analyze what roles maps play in these texts, I was able to find hidden messages and deeper meanings in these YA novels. I was starting to think YA novels were only meant as a source of entertainment for children and teens, but now I know they are much more complex than that.

Why Make a Map When You Have a Map?

There is often the approach that literature and maps are two separate entities; however, they are more integrated than they first appear. When writing in the Young Adult genre, authors face a decision: they can choose to use a pre-existing map to base their story on, or they can create their own. Understanding the connections between a map and a literary piece will lead the reader to a deeper understanding of the texts and the author's intentions when writing the text. However, it is not enough to simply look at a map's connection to a literary piece. To fully grasp the role a map plays in a work of literature, the reader must also look at the character's interaction with the map. This paper will take a closer look at the relationship between maps and three YA novels: *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and *Percy Jackson*. What roles do maps play in these texts, and what impact do they have on both the characters and the readers? While on a surface level it may seem as though the author made their literary decisions simply for convenience, their decisions have a deeper impact on their text.

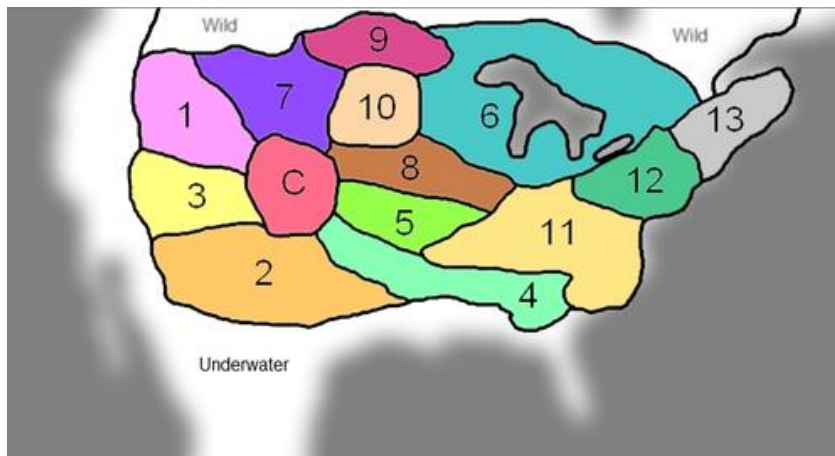
In his article "The Value of Fear: Toward Rhetorical Model of Dystopia," author Rob McAlear discusses how fear is the main motive responsible for the reader's ability to comprehend the author's intended message. What defines the dystopian genre is the call to political or social change. However, if the reader is unable to engage with a text, the probability of them drawing those conclusions, or hearing the call to action, are slim. It is the readers' fear that connects them to a dystopian novel. "Therefore, it behooves dystopian writers to base their hellish societies on concepts that will make the most readers simultaneously feel personally threatened and empowered to resist" (McAlear). In the *Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins is able to accomplish this through two ways: the mapping of Panem, and the main character, Katniss Everdeen. Panem is a futuristic version of North America after some great catastrophe. Collins

never states when the catastrophe occurs nor what causes it. The vague timeline and the known location make the threats found in the novel more imminent, and thus invoking fear into the readers. The reader is forced to grapple with the fact that this is a potential future for them. They could find themselves in a world very much like Panem.

The dystopian genre may explore social and political topics, but it still depends on the reader's ability to connect to the text. Suzanne Collins mentions in an interview that her inspiration for *The Hunger Games* came to her one night as she was surfing through various TV channels. She was seeing different reality TV shows where people were competing to win a million dollars or they were trying to win *The Bachelor*, but then she would switch the channel and there would be footage from the Iraq war. These vastly different materials fused together to create *The Hunger Games*, a dystopian piece placed in futuristic North America where children are forced to fight other children on a nationally broadcasted television show. One of Suzanne Collins' fears when writing her novel was that people were becoming numb and desensitized to the war; that it was becoming too easy for people to switch from news footage of a warzone and instead watch the mind-numbing episodes of reality TV. One of her goals when writing this novel was to have her readers start questioning what they are watching on TV and what messages they are receiving through that. Melissa Ames states in her article, "These kinds of text 'mirror and criticize reality, forcing readers to consider reality, ironically at the same time as they are escaping from it'". By writing *The Hunger Games*, Collins was forcing her audience to face problems that are happening in reality (the desensitization of war and social issues, and a societal obsession with entertainment).

Suzanne Collins never made an official map for *The Hunger Games*. There are small hints throughout the novel as to what section is where, but it is never clearly stated. This

encourages her audiences and fans to have a more active participation when reading the text. They will closely analyze small details found throughout the novel, such as the specific roles of each district to work on determining where they are in relations to one another. After looking at a collection of fan-made maps, a common thread appeared in the geographical locations of the districts.



In each map, the Capitol is located near the west coast and District 12 is near the east coast. The wealthiest districts: Districts 1, 2 and 3, are all located near the capitol. This could be due to the unique industries of each district, but it could also be due to the district's proximity to the Capitol, which is the power house of the entire country of Panem. Throughout *The Hunger*

Games trilogy, tributes (the children chosen to participate in the games) from District 1 and District 2 are often referred to as the Capitol's Darlings. They are the districts that have the closest ties to the capitol and will typically have victors from the Hunger Games (which only adds to their wealth). District 1 is fabric and textiles. They are in charge of making the fabrics which are then sold to the people in the Capitol who make luxurious clothing out of said materials. District 2 supplies the Capitol with peacekeepers and weapons. They are also the district responsible for the train system used to travel across Panem. District 11 and District 12 are located farthest from the Capitol and are considered the more impoverished districts. District 11 is where the Capitol's produce is grown. All produce is shipped directly to the capital, yet it is still one of the poorer districts right behind District 12. District 12 is primarily in charge of coal mining.

Even within the novel, there is a vague understanding of the exact locations of all the districts. The Capitol is viewed as a vague far away land and district thirteen in the wasteland that is located next to district twelve. It is all very much connected to the characters' understanding of the various districts. Even Katniss, the main character, did not fully understand the relations between each district and their location to one another; "In the distance, I see the lights of another district. 7? 10? I don't know" (Collins 53). Then again, the education that people received about Panem was severely lacking. "In school, they tell us the Capitol was built in a place once called the Rockies. District 12 was in a region known as Appalachia" (Collins 41). In District 12, their education system mainly focused on coal mining, because that is what their district did, and that industry was assigned to that district by the Capitol. There were also brief history lessons about Panem, but they ended up being a worn-out lecture as to why the

districts owed the Capitol, so on and so forth. People were not taught anything outside of what was deemed necessary, and it was that way for each district across Panem.

A character's geographical location determined the type of education they received, and thus influenced how they viewed areas outside of their district. Their location also influenced how much a character cared about the education they received as well. Katniss was in a poor district, where it was not uncommon for a person or families to slowly starve to death. She was less focused on why she should be grateful for what the Capitol does and was more concerned with how she would feed herself, her sister, and her mother. "You see an elderly person, you want to congratulate them on their longevity, ask the secret of survival. A plump person in envid, because they aren't scraping by like the majority of us" (Collins 125). Children from districts closer to the Capitol did not have this concern for food or survival. They also had better relations with the Capitol, so while they would be able to focus more on what they were learning, they would have less of a reason to question what they were taught.

The division between the districts and the lack of knowledge of the districts are a common theme carried throughout the novel. The actual hunger games were meant as a way to keep the districts divided. "It's to the Capitol's advantage to have us divided among ourselves" (Collins 14). If the people and districts remain divided and view each other as an enemy, then there will be a lower risk of them uniting and organizing another uprising. The people living in the districts then think of each other in vague terms of districts and the different industries of each district. This lack of knowledge or understanding of the different districts is reflected later in the novel when Effie does not fully comprehend what it is that the workers actually do in District 12. Effie thinks she is clever for calling Katniss and Peeta pearls, but she does not realize that pearls would have come from district four. Katniss analyzes that Effie might have meant to

say they were like diamonds, but again that would have been a reference to another district (Collins 74). Effie does not know this, but the people in the capital really do not know, nor do they care.

Most of the citizens in Panem gained most of their knowledge of the different districts based on what they have seen on the national television, which would be the games. “For the opening ceremonies, you’re supposed to wear something that suggests your district’s principal industry. District 11, agriculture. District 4, fishing. District 3, factories” (Collins 66). The opening ceremonies were the only time that people across Panem concerned themselves with the other districts. It was also when people were reminded about the specific roles of each district, but in a very generalized way. Basically, the tributes were dressed as caricatures of their home. And, while caricatures are based in truth, they only highlight certain aspects and greatly exaggerate the characteristics that they chose to focus on. This was the only representation that each district ever gave or received about each other. It is also worth noting that the fashion designers (always from the Capitol) in charge of creating these outfits used to represent the individual districts, only know as much about the districts based on what they have seen on television.

The opening ceremony also places more importance on the District, rather than on the person. “Since baggy minor’s jumpsuits are not particularly becoming, our tributes usually ended up in skimpy outfits and hats with headlamps. One year, our tributes were stark naked and covered in black powder to represent coal dust” (Collins 66). There was no concern for the tributes’ desire for physical privacy. Their bodies were used as objects to represent their Districts. By being forced to advertise their home districts, the tributes were also dehumanized in a sense. It also diverted the audience’s focus from the child once again to the district. They had

more interest in seeing how the districts were represented, that the people that were forced to do the representing. The tributes' own identities were overshadowed by the requirement to represent their districts and the methods used to accomplish that.

Throughout all of this (the education, the games, the opening ceremonies) there is a clear idealization that the citizens of Panem hold of our/my district, the Capitol, and everyone else. The Capitol has worked to create this separation through a lacking education system and the various poverty level throughout Panem. "Dystopian narratives cannot be disengaged from the broader question of the capacity of human beings toward inhuman treatment, even toward members of their own kind that they construct as Others" (Lenoff 57). The us vs them mentality was created in Panem because the country was divided into separate districts. Individual districts received different treatment based on their proximity to the Capital, which lead to an imbalance among the districts. In some districts, people are struggling to feed themselves and cannot concern themselves about the areas around them, while other districts fare pretty well and are encouraged to hold their status about the other districts, further developing that divide. The people of Panem thought in terms of Districts, and it was the division between the districts that allowed the people to develop that us vs them mentality.

While Suzanne Collins used a futuristic map of North America to create tension in her story, Victoria Roth took a different approach to mapping and the Young Adult genre in her novel *Divergent*. *The Hunger Games* focused on the division between people based on their location within Panem; whereas *Divergent* focuses on the division of people based on their personality traits rather than where they live.

When asked what was the message or main theme of her novel, Victoria Roth responded, "What I was exploring in *Divergent* is human nature and the ways in which it warps our best

intentions and, on the flip side, how people sometimes rise to do good acts in the midst of chaos”(Goodreads). In *Divergent*, Victoria Roth has divided the characters into five official sections. There is Abnegation (they value selflessness), Amity (they are always peaceful and happy), Candor (they always tell the truth), Erudite (they pride themselves on their intelligence), and Dauntless (they are the people who value bravery). These characteristics are in direct contrast to the mapping decisions that Roth made in her novel. These factions divide the people into categories, but unlike *The Hunger Games*, Roth’s map has the people living together in one area. Roth said that she based her story in Chicago because it is where she lives, and because of the train system in Chicago. While she may have had simple reasoning behind her setting choice, the self-contained area is one reason there was a friction between the different characters throughout the novel.

In *Divergent* the different factions are spread out through the city of Chicago, and the only time the people interact with those outside of their faction is when they leave their headquarters and go into the city for school, work, or various errands and activities. And while the different factions were around each other, they did not necessarily interact with each other. This led to an ignorance of the other factions. “I guess we’re going to Dauntless headquarters, but I don’t know where that is” (Roth 52). Even though Tris had been going to school with kids who were in Dauntless, and she would see them jump off the train, or walking around town, she did not know much about them, because they were not part of her faction.

If a character chose to switch from one faction to another, they were expected to cut off all contact with their old faction. This included parents and siblings; the new faction was now their family. During the initiation time period, the initiates are focused on adapting to their new faction. ” Eric didn’t tell us we couldn’t visit people in factions other than the ones we came

from” (Roth 347). While it was not clearly stated that the initiates of a faction could not interact there was an agreement among all of the factions that this would be the case. Later in the book, Tris, the main character, left the Dauntless compound and went to visit her brother in another faction. As a result, she crossed an unspoken barrier, broke the implied rule that was upheld by each faction. Tris even goes as far as to ask, “Aren’t you going to reprimand me for abandoning my faction and seeking out my brother” (Roth 357). Tris expected to receive some sort of lecture or punishment for her actions. Tris crossed an unspoken boundary by crossing into a headquarter that was not part of her faction. After the choosing ceremonies, Tris and the others had to move to their new faction. During this initiation period, they learn not only how to act like people in their faction, but they also learned how to think like the people in their new faction.

By being relocated and separated from their old factions, they are completely submerged in the culture of their new faction. Up until this point, the initiates had had some interactions with people from other factions. They were exposed to other opinions and ideas, but the initiation period is a time where they are isolated from that. Instead, they lived and breathed the way of their faction. They had to learn to suppress what they had been taught by their old faction. They are not necessarily brainwashed to think a certain way, but because they are only surrounded by one way of thinking, because of where they live, they learn to not question what they are taught. Instead they learn to adapt, and then they learn to view the other factions as abnormal in their way of thinking. “The Dauntless compound sounds like home now” (Roth 355). When Tris went to visit her brother, she felt out of place in the Erudite compound, because she had adapted to living as a Dauntless. The Dauntless compound felt like home, felt safe, because there she was surrounded my people who thought and acted like her. Or at least the way she was taught to think and act.

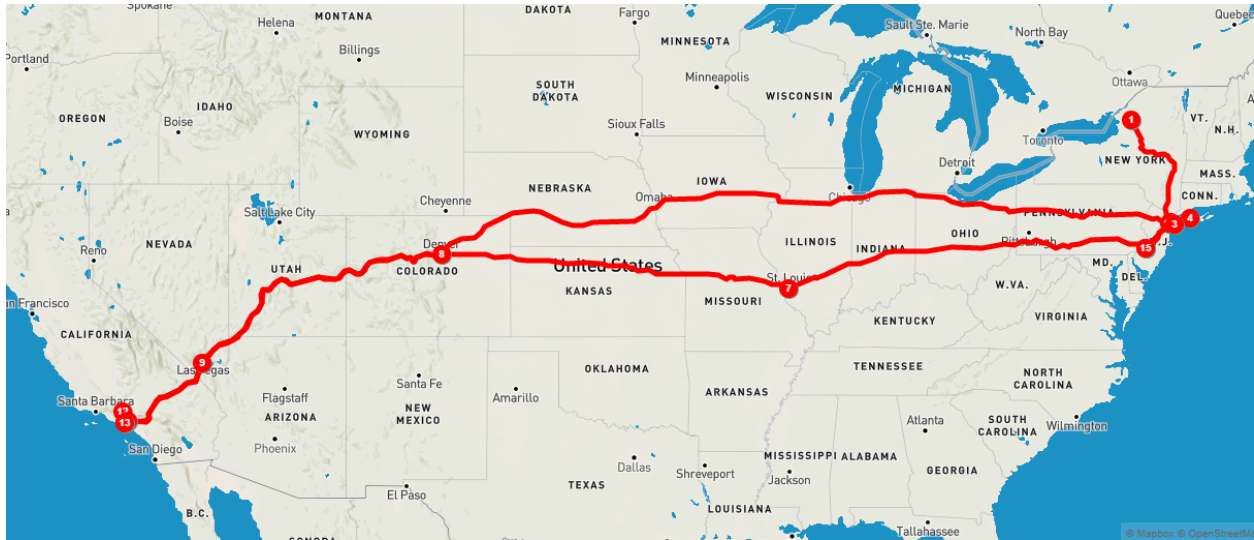
The map(s) used in a novel, or the locations that a character visits within the novel have an impact on the character's development throughout the story. In an interview, Roth states, "I've never thought of those two things—world building and character development—as being opposed to each other. The world affects the character. The character gives you ideas about the world. The more you weave those two things together, the better they will both be" (Goodreads). While writing, the author will reveal things about the world. The character's reaction towards and event will signal to the reader whether or not something is positive or negative in the world that the author is building; in turn, the world will then impact the character. The state of the world, be it futuristic high-tech society or a dilapidated dystopian realm on the verge of collapsing, will impact the character's personality and how they will act or react in different situations. Which then in turns circles back to the idea that the character's attitude will then guide or influence the reader's interpretation. The greater the balance between world building and character development, the greater the impact on the reader.

What makes the Dystopian genre effective is that it is a warped reality of the reader's everyday life. "Dystopian Literature is a genre of fictional writing used to explore social and political structures in 'a dark, nightmare world.' The term *dystopia* is defined as 'a society characterized by poverty, squalor or oppression and the theme is most commonly used in science fiction and speculative fiction genres'" (Questia). The dystopian genre is just an altered reality, but in a negative way (typically involving a corrupt government). Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* focus on this idea of division among the people based on region or ideals, and the conflicts that occur because of that division. In *The Hunger Games*, people are living in poverty; it is that poverty that lead to the first uprising that ultimately resulted in the creation of the hunger games. The Capitol created the games as another way to keep the districts divided to

prevent another possible uprising. *Divergent* is less nightmarish, but it contains factions attempting to suppress other factions due to a warped ideology created by a failing government system.

While the Percy Jackson series is not classified as a dystopian genre, it is still dependent on the reader's reaction and interaction to the texts. The novel takes place in the United States, and several key events happen at various locations across the country; there is the entrance to the underworld located in California and of course the Empire State Building is a marker for the entrance to Olympus. These are locations that most readers can easily identify.

Rick Riordan has a reason behind his mapping decisions. His decisions, in part, are connected to his two sons. "Riordan was motivated to invent something to encourage his son to read" (Mugijatna 81). He wanted them to be able to connect to the reading, and what better way to do that than to use landmarks and maps that they would be familiar with. In school, his son would have been learning the states, filling them in on a blank map. Riordan's sons would have also been learning about different landmarks and buildings as well, so it would make sense to have the story take place in the United States. While his sons may have originally influenced the creation of the series, Riordan's interest in the development of Western civilization further influenced his literary mapping decisions. "I think you have to know Greek myths to understand where our modern culture comes from" (Mugijatna 81). English literature already has heavy ties with Greek mythology.



When looking at a map that marks everywhere that Percy and his friends travel (17drakeo), one can see that their path makes what can loosely be called a circle. It is a circle in the sense that he starts and ends his journey in the same area or location. In the case of this novel, it begins and ends in the state of New York. This map reflects that of a circular narrative (a writing style that is common within hero stories). With a circular narrative, the hero ends up in the same place that they have begun, but due to their adventures, they have changed in some way. Within *The Lightning Thief*, every place that Percy goes is important in shaping him in some way, shape, or form.

Percy's journey starts in Manhattan, New York when his class goes on a field trip to Metropolitan Museum of fine Arts. For Percy, this was his first encounter with monsters that were only supposed to exist in Greek mythology. On the field trip one of Percy's teachers, Mr. Brunner, asks Percy to interpret a painting for the class. Mr. Brunner was testing Percy, trying to see how much Percy knew, but at this point, Percy does not know that he is a demigod and thus subject to more danger than the average New Yorker. Flash forward a few weeks, and Percy is studying for a Latin test. "There was no way that I was going to remember the difference

between Chiron and Charon, or Polydictes and Polydeuces” (Riordan 18). Little did Percy know that by the end of his quest he would know a lot more about Greek mythology than just the difference between similar sounding words. The first location is the point when the reader is just getting to know who Percy is as a character. A lot happens in New York, and it sets the foundation for Percy’s character to start growing from.

After it was revealed that Percy was a demigod, his mother sent him to Camp Half-blood where he would start learning more about his past and how the Greek gods and mystical monsters are all connected. While Camp Half-blood was only a van’s drive outside of the city, it was still technically in New York. This slight location change still reflects the development of Percy’s character. He learns that the gods of Olympus are real and still living among the people, and he learns more about his family history, but he still does not understand what all of that will mean for him. While it was great to for Percy to learn the truth about his father and everything that that entails, the most important thing for Percy was that camp was the first place where he felt like he belonged, and that he could possibly be more than just a mess-up/ failure of a student.

It is not until Percy and his group leave New York on a quest that they run into their first of many monsters/ challenges. Unlike other times, this is the first time they had faced a monster without anyone there to help save them. At Aunt Em’s garden, the monster that Percy and the others run into a monster that looked human. At this location, Percy loses a little bit more of his ignorance about the mythological world. He learns that there are monsters, but they may disguise themselves a normal human in order to deceive and capture those who are unprepared. Up until this point he had trusted anyone that looked human.

A fourth of the way through their quest, Percy, Annabeth, and Grover make a detour to a waterpark in Denver Colorado, half way across the country. They are asked to collect Ares’

shield and return it to them, but as they were completing this side quest, they ended up getting captured by a trap that was set for Ares by another god. Up until this point, the gods were some aloof divine being. They were supposed to be these ideal personas, but instead they were setting traps and tricking one another. They were also willing to stoop low enough to use people to carry out their dirty work.

By the end of the book, Percy, Grover and Annabeth return to New York with Zeus's lightning bolt, but they are no longer the same characters that they were at the beginning of the novel. After being attacked by monsters and threatened and entrapped by various gods, Percy learned that not all divine beings are trustworthy. Percy also had a better understanding of his past and that lead to him developing more confidence in himself and his actions. However, those character developments would not have occurred had he stayed at Camp Half-blood where it was safe.

Other authors have based their writing on or around Greek Mythology, but Riordan was able to write in a way that pulled his readers into his story. "Riordan isn't the first to use Greek myths in children's literature. But he may be the smoothest, streamlining the complex genealogies and explaining the finer points through action and dialogue. No long digressions or lectures slow down the tale" (Hamilton). Riordan did not take a typical approach to using Greek mythology in his novel, but his approach made the content more accessible to his readers. By blending together Greek mythology and modern-day United States, Riordan gave his readers a tangible way to connect to and understand the mythology. The reader would see locations, like the empire state building and would be able to identify where that was. Better yet, when the locations from the book were mentioned in the reader's personal life, they will think of Greek mythology. By blending Greek mythology with modern and know locations, Riordan opened up

a two-way connection for his readers, so that they remain in the reader's mind long after they finished the book.

However, some readers are not enthralled by the blend of mythology and reality. "These stories [*Harry Potter*, *Wizard of Oz*...etc] have a way of getting me to believe their realities within the confines of their stories. But for some reason, I was frequently drawn out of the story in *Thief* and just couldn't accept its premises" (Mugiatana 78). Books like *Harry Potter* start in the modern world, but they quickly transition into realms that are not wholly present in the real world. They are still confined by the rules of the real world. Rick Riordan's books are a blend of Greek Mythology and present-day America. While the reader(s) may feel pulled out of the text, the *Percy Jackson* series exists to blend reality and mythology; to not exist in one realm or the other like *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games*.

While at first glance, it may seem as though maps and literature have little to no connections or relation to one another, they actually have a far greater impact on one another. In *The Hunger Games*, the map is the driving force of conflict. Where a person lives in Panem determined what kind of life they would live and thus impacting how they think and act. When analyzing the map in *The Hunger Games*, the readers are able to discern a far deeper meaning from the novel than the originally would by focusing on the plot of the novel alone. They can also see another approach to mapping when reading *Divergent*. In *Divergent*, the conflict is caused despite the fact that the characters are all living in the same location. It is the close factions being contained in one city that emphasizes the power struggle between them. And finally, in *Percy Jackson*, the reader is able to see that by tracking a character's journey, they are also able to mark and track a character's development. The authors of YA novels may not have made their mapping decisions with any expectation or grand plan of it having an impact on the

novel, but the maps that they choose play a big role in how their readers connect to their novels.

Mapping and literature are two separate entities that affect and enhance one another.

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