

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

# The Lightning Thief

Rick Riordan

NOVEL UNITS<sup>™</sup>

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# THE LIGHTNING THIEF

by  
Rick Riordan

## Teacher Guide

Written by  
Linda Herman

### Note

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**Please note:** Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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## Skills and Strategies

### Comprehension

Predicting, plot development,  
cause/effect

### Literary Elements

Story mapping, characterization,  
setting, conflict, theme, point of  
view, figurative language

### Vocabulary

Context clues, definitions,  
homophones, root words,  
target words

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation,  
drama

### Writing

Creative writing, personal  
narrative, dialogue, poetry,  
journalism, myths

### Critical Thinking

Brainstorming, research,  
compare/contrast, analysis,  
evaluation

### Across the Curriculum

Literature—Hero’s Journey,  
Greek mythology, mythical  
creatures; Social Studies—culture,  
history, maps and geography,  
time lines, architecture, family  
relationships, friendship, bullies,  
Olympics; Health—nutrition,  
vegetarianism, phobias; Science—  
holography, archaeology,  
echidnas, earthquakes, tides;  
Math—computation, budgeting;  
Music—appropriate selections;  
Art—design, models, illustration



## Chapters 17–18

Percy has trouble recalling certain details of his last dream due to his time in the Lotus Casino. Annabeth is concerned about the monster in Percy's dreams but insists that it must be Hades. At the beach in Santa Monica, Percy receives three magical pearls from the same woman who appeared to him in the Mississippi, a Nereid, who tells him he must do what his heart tells him or lose everything. Percy rescues Annabeth and Grover from a water bed salesman, Procrustes, the Stretcher. At the water bed store, Percy finds the address for the entrance to the Underworld. They cross the polluted River Styx after bribing Charon, the ferryman for the dead. Mingling among the dead, Percy and Annabeth play fetch with Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog, to gain entrance into the Underworld.

### Vocabulary

infinity  
hurling  
morale  
sheals  
sta  
lunk  
ream  
fugitive  
imperfect  
spheres  
conf  
waded  
portul  
queue  
keening

### Discussion Questions

1. What can you determine from Annabeth's reactions to Percy's dream? (Answers will vary, but students should infer that Annabeth suspects someone other than Hades and is frightened.)
2. What do you think the Nereid means when she tells Percy, "You have gifts you have only begun to know" (p. 272)? What are Percy's gifts? (Answers will vary. Though Percy is inexperienced as a hero, he is relying on his quest. By telling Percy to listen to his heart, the Nereid implies that Percy has wisdom and a strong moral compass. Percy cares for others, has earned the loyalty of his friends, has shown great courage, and is beginning to realize the full extent of his water-based power.)
3. The differences between New York and Los Angeles scare Percy. Los Angeles reminds him of Ares. How do you think someone from Los Angeles would describe New York? Which god would you associate with New York? (Answers will vary. Possible answers could cover familiar versus unfamiliar situations, first impressions, and the ways in which cities are different. A traditional city in the United States and the financial center of the world, New York could be associated with Zeus.)
4. How does Percy get the idea to trick Crusty? (Answers will vary. Suggestions: Percy remembers the story of Procrustes; therefore, he recalls that the gods tricked Procrustes into getting fitted to his famous bed. Percy turns Crusty's "excess" of hospitality against him.)
5. What do you think the "DO" of DO A Reporting Studios stands for? (Answers will vary, but students should infer that DO stands for "Dead on arrival" as the studio is the entrance to the Underworld.)
6. What mistakes do Percy, Grover, and Annabeth make when seeking entrance into the Underworld? How do they convince Charon to let them in? (Annabeth says they want to go to the Underworld which is the opposite of what most people say. Grover chooses an unrealistic "cause of death"—all three of them drowning in a hot tub. Percy misreads Charon's name tag, signifying he is a demigod, and does not smell bad. Percy offers golden drachmas and a promise to request a pay raise for Charon in exchange for passage across the River Styx.)
7. What does the pollution in the River Styx represent? What examples are given in the novel? What else would you expect to see. (The pollution consists of humans' "hopes, dreams, [and] wishes that never came true" [p. 289]. Examples include plastic dolls, crushed carnations, and soggy diplomas. Answers will vary.)

8. Why do so many people choose the “EZ Death” line rather than risk being judged? Do you think it would be better to take the risk of being judged or know that you will spend eternity doing nothing in Asphodel Fields? (*People are afraid to be judged for their actions on Earth. Many people were not especially kind or generous during their lives; instead they merely existed, not living good or bad lives. By choosing Asphodel Fields, one avoids knowing for certain that one has lived an unremarkable life or being punished severely if one has done more harm than good throughout his/her life. Answers will vary.*)
9. Why do you think the author makes Cerberus like a dog? (*Answers will vary, but students should infer that an oversized, playful dog is a reader-friendly example that reinforces one of the story’s main themes, that “...everybody...needs a little heaven once in a while” [p. 298].*)
10. **Prediction:** What will happen when Percy confronts Hades?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Comprehension: Rewrite Percy’s taxi ride from Las Vegas to Santa Monica. Write an entry from the taxi driver’s journal, giving his thoughts on the passengers and their discussions.
2. Art: Create a work of art that shows Percy receiving the pearls from the Nereid.
3. Critical Thinking: Design the “All-New L.A. Area Monsters” (p. 282). Include telephone listings, addresses, and advertisements. You may use monsters from myths, novels, and movies or make up your own.

## Chapter 19-20

The flying shoes almost drag Grover into Tartarus, though it is in Percy’s dreams. Hades accuses Percy of stealing the master bolt and Hades’ own powerful weapon, the helm of darkness. When Zeus’s master bolt is found in Percy’s backpack, Percy realizes he has been tricked. Hades seduces Percy’s mother, tempting Percy to abandon her. However, Percy chooses to continue his quest and uses the three magic pearls to escape with Annabeth and Grover from the beach in Santa Monica. Ares admits to planting the master bolt in the backpack and shows Percy the helm of darkness, though Percy senses another powerful presence is influencing the god of war. By commanding the ocean waves, Percy defeats Ares and asks the Tritons to return the helm to Hades. To retrieve the master bolt before the deadline, Percy risks entering Zeus’s domain and takes refuge in New York.

### Discussion Questions

1. What does Percy mean when he looks at the crowds in the Fields of Asphodel and thinks, “The dead aren’t scary. They’re just sad” (p. 301). (*Answers will vary. Percy expected the dead to look scary instead of confused or angry. He sees the helplessness of these lost souls who will spend eternity in Asphodel. Percy is coming to realize life is precious.*)
2. What can you determine from the scene at Tartarus? (*Answers will vary. The monster in the pit has limited powers. The monster cannot fly, has shoes and a strong, cold wind, yet momentary hesitation as Percy’s sword is unbalanced seems to indicate uncertainty. The wail of outrage shows that the monster was, for some reason, very intent on possessing Annabeth, Grover, and Percy.*)

## Cause and Effect

Directions: Write four events from the story, and then list the effect of each event.

Cause

Effect

A rectangular box with a notch on its right side, intended for writing a cause.A rectangular box with a notch on its left side, intended for writing an effect.A rectangular box with a notch on its right side, intended for writing a cause.A rectangular box with a notch on its left side, intended for writing an effect.A rectangular box with a notch on its right side, intended for writing a cause.A rectangular box with a notch on its left side, intended for writing an effect.A rectangular box with a notch on its right side, intended for writing a cause.A rectangular box with a notch on its left side, intended for writing an effect.

## Character Web

**Directions:** Choose a character from the novel and complete the chart below. Cite evidence from the story as you fill in information.

The diagram is a character web. In the center is a box labeled "Name". Six lines radiate from this central box to six surrounding rectangular boxes. Clockwise from the top-left, the boxes are labeled: "His/Her Statements", "His/Her Beliefs", "His/Her Fears", "Other Actions Toward Him/Her", "How He/She Looks", and "His/Her Thoughts".