



MASTER'S THESIS

Myths revisited: A literary analysis of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* with a focus on gender.

Tilbake til mytene: En litterær analyse av *Percy Jackson* serien med fokus på kjønn.

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“For Mythology is the handmaid of literature ; and literature is one of the best allies of virtue and promoters of happiness.”

- Thomas Bulfinch, 1856, p. 3

Preface

I would never have been able to finish this thesis without help from those around me, and I therefore find it important to give them a proper thanks.

Thank you to my supervisor, Zoltan. You have guided and inspired me since the beginning of this project. I always left our meetings feeling motivated, knowing what the next step is. You have helped me make sense of the thoughts inside my head and giving me the tools to structure them into paragraphs.

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Abstract: Myths revisited

This thesis examines how five characters in the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan are depicted, with a focus on both gender and Greek mythology. The analyses aim to find out how Riordan portrays his characters regarding gender stereotypes, and how he has adapted Greek mythological figures to fit into a narrative in the 21st century. Gender equality and gender roles are subjects that are discussed across the globe, and I, therefore, found it important to find out how gender representation is in such a popular book series for children. The Percy Jackson books take place in a world where Greek mythology is real, and it was therefore appealing to include that aspect in the research. Based on the goals for this thesis, the over-arching research question is: *How are female characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in the Greek myths?*

Using literary analysis as a method, I analyse how the five characters are portrayed and compare them to each other. By using gender theory and discussing women's role in Ancient Greek society, the analyses and discussion can provide a broader view of the representation shown in Riordan's books.

The findings show that Riordan subverts the stereotypical gender norms with his characters and not letting their gender limit them. The three characters created by him all exhibit stereotypical feminine or masculine traits, with no traits being seen as more negative than the other. Riordan follows the tradition of retelling myth with his adaptation of Medusa and Circe, adapting them to fit into a modern narrative while also keeping older versions in his story.

Abstrakt: Tilbake til mytene

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker hvordan fem karakterer i Percy Jackson serien av Rick Riordan er framstilt med fokus på både kjønn og gresk mytologi. Formålet med analysen er å finne ut av hvordan Riordan framstiller karakterene sine med tanke på kjønn-stereotyper, og hvordan han har adaptert figurer fra gresk mytologi slik at de passer inn til en historie som er satt det 21. århundre. Likestilling og kjønnsroller er temaer som blir diskutert over hele verden, og derfor syntes jeg det var viktig å finne ut hvordan kjønnsrepresentasjonen er i en så populær barnebok-serie. Percy Jackson bøkene er satt til en verden der gresk mytologi er ekte, og det var derfor interessant å inkludere det aspektet i forskningen. Basert på målene for oppgaven ble problemstillingen for oppgaven: *Hvordan er kvinnelige karakterer framstilt i Rick Riordans Percy Jackson serie, sett i lys av framstillingen deres i greske myter?*

Det er litterær analyse som blir brukt som metode i denne oppgaven, og jeg analyserer hvordan de fem karakterene er fremstilt og sammenligner de mot hverandre. Ved å bruke kjønnsteori og å legge frem kvinnens rolle i antikkens Hellas kan analysene og drøftingen gi et bredere perspektiv på representasjonen som vises i Riordans bøker.

Funnene i oppgaven viser at Riordan bryter med de stereotypiske kjønnsnormene med sine karakterer, og lar ikke karakterenes kjønn begrense de på noen måte. De tre karakterene som er skapt av ham viser alle trekk som er stereotypisk sett på som feminine eller maskuline, uten at noen av trekkene blir sett på som mer negative enn de andre. Riordan er en del av tradisjonen om gjenfortelling av myter med sine versjoner av Medusa og Circe. Han tilpasser de slik at de passer inn i hans moderne perspektiv samtidig som han inkluderer eldre versjoner av mytene.

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1. Introduction

The Percy Jackson series is currently on the New York Times best sellers list in children's series and have been on this list for 620 weeks - as of the end of April 2022 (The New York Times, 2022). Having such a large group of readers means that Riordan's stories reach many different children and have the opportunity to influence their lives. Riordan started as a teacher where he taught children about the Greek myths, and the conception of the Percy Jackson series came when telling his son bedtime stories about these myths. He made up new characters and a new story, and as he continued telling them to his son, the idea of the book took shape (An Interview with Rick, n.d.).

In Ancient Greece, there was a big difference in how society treated men and women. They were not considered equal but treated as two completely different categories (McClure, 2009, p.1). This is evident when looking at the Greek myths, as they reflect the society they come from. Rick Riordan based his books in the Percy Jackson series on Greek mythology and therefore also based them on myths that depict men and women having different roles in society. Does Riordan depict the Greek myths in a particular light with his books, and can he influence the reader's relationship with mythology? These are questions I want to answer with this thesis.

In addition to this, I want to research how gender stereotypes are portrayed in these books by Riordan. As they can influence the readers at a young age, I find it important to analyse how Riordan depicts different genders and if there are any apparent differences in how male and female characters are portrayed. This is why I will be analysing two female and one male character that he has created, in addition to two mythological characters that he uses in his stories.

Based on this, this thesis will research how Riordan deconstructs these gendered roles women play in the Greek stories and compare that to the classic mythological stories. To research this, I formulated the following overarching research question: *How are female characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in the Greek myths?*

1.1 Research questions

In order to narrow down this thesis, I developed three sub-research questions that will guide this project. These questions focus on what this thesis will explore and the goals of my thesis more concretely. The sub-questions are as follows:

1. How are Annabeth and Clarisse portrayed in the *Percy Jackson* series?
2. How do female mythological figures get portrayed by Rick Riordan?
3. How does Rick Riordan depict the female Greek monsters, and are there any gendered implications of this?

With these questions, the *Percy Jackson* series is put clearly in focus, and Greek mythology and gender representation are the aspects to be analysed in the books.

The first question focuses on two female demigods, Annabeth Chase and Clarisse La Rue, and my analysis will focus on these two characters throughout the book series. Both are prominent characters that significantly influence Percy, the protagonist of the series. As both Annabeth and Clarisse are presented in relation to Percy, I will also carry out an analysis of his character as a male demigod, to compare his representation to that of Annabeth and Clarisse. With the second question, I have selected two specific female mythological figures that are present in Riordan's books and analyse how they are portrayed compared to the Greek myths. I aim to find specific instances of differences – or similarities – in how they are portrayed and how Riordan possibly deconstructs the gender roles.

1.2 Parameters of the thesis

In the case of Greek myths, there is no such thing as an original version because they were orally transmitted throughout generations, and different people have written down different versions. Therefore, I will not refer to any "originals", but rather call them Greek myths. To find reliable sources for these myths, I will use *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* by Robin Hard (2004) and *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (3rd edition)* edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (1999) that also include different versions of the myths and their sources.

To understand the Greek myths and their gender representation, I find it necessary to briefly discuss gender representation in Ancient Greece, as this is where the myths originated. This will be presented in the theory chapter of the thesis and will be used in my analysis of the characters. As for the role of women in Ancient Greece, I will use two main sources: *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* by Matthew Dillon and the article *Sexuality and Gender* by Laura McClure.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis will be structured in the following way: first, I will present the primary literature, namely the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan. The presentation will be followed by the theory chapter, in which I will explain the theories used and develop the framework for my project. In chapter 4, I will present my analysis of the different characters. The analyses will focus on Annabeth, Clarisse, Percy, Greek mythological figures, and monsters. This will be followed by a chapter where I will discuss the findings in the light of the theories outlined in Chapter 3. I will conclude the thesis with all of my findings in the final chapter.

2. Presentation of primary literature

The primary literature used for this thesis is the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan, which consists of five books published from 2005 to 2009. In the series, we follow the protagonist Percy Jackson from age 12 to 16, which he turns late in the last book. Each book takes place over one year, following Percy on new adventures and quests. Percy is a son of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, and he is therefore half-blood, also called demigod in the books. He attends a camp called Camp Half-Blood during the summer and goes to school in New York during the school year. On his adventures, Percy is joined by his friends, including another demigod called Annabeth, a satyr named Grover, and a cyclops called Tyson. Percy and his friends must battle evil monsters, demigods and gods who want to overrule and ultimately destroy the world on these journeys.

2.1 *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*

The Lightning Thief is the first book in the series following Percy Jackson and was published in 2005. This book is where we are introduced to 12-year-old Percy and follow him from when he first learns who his father is. He gets sent to Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for demigods, to learn how to survive in the outside world where Greek monsters want to attack him. His best friend Grover accompanies him to the camp, where Percy discovers that Grover is a satyr, half human and half goat. He also learns that Chiron, a teacher from his school, is a centaur who teaches at Camp Half-Blood and has trained many demigods throughout history. When arriving at camp, Percy meets Annabeth, a daughter of Athena. He learns that the Greek myths are real, and their power has moved to the US, where they now reside. The Greek gods have children with mortals, who in turn become demigods. Clarisse, a daughter of Ares, is introduced as the camp's bully, and Percy immediately dislikes her. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover venture out on a quest across the US to retrieve Zeus' lightning bolt, which Percy has been falsely accused of stealing. During their quest, they face many challenges, especially from monsters trying to kill them. They are able to retrieve the lightning bolt and discover that it was Luke, a fellow camper and demigod, who had stolen it and betrayed both the camp and the gods. Luke has turned to Kronos, a mighty and evil Titan who wants to overthrow Olympus and rule the world in chaos.

2.2 *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*

The second book of the series, *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*, was published in 2006. One year has passed since the previous book, and we follow Percy as he returns to Camp Half-Blood for the summer. During the school year, he meets Tyson who turns out to be a young Cyclops and a fellow son of Poseidon. Percy learns that Grover has been captured by the Cyclops Polyphemus and is being held captive on his island in the Sea of Monsters. Percy and Annabeth ask for a quest so they can leave the camp, but Clarisse is granted the quest instead. Her quest is to fetch the Golden Fleece as the camp's borders are failing, and the Fleece can restore them. The tree protecting the camp and its borders has been poisoned, and the Fleece can heal the tree. Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson sneak out of the camp to save Grover and end up travelling with Clarisse for parts of their journey. In the Sea of Monsters they meet famous monsters from *The Odyssey*: Charybdis and Scylla, Circe, the Sirens and Polyphemus. Finding Clarisse captured in Polyphemus' cave with Grover, the five of them work together to complete the quest and return to camp. Clarisse travels alone from Miami to the camp with the Golden Fleece in order to cure the poisoned tree. After returning to the camp, they lay the Golden Fleece on the poisoned tree, and Thalia – a daughter of Zeus – is resurrected from the tree. Grover is given a quest from the old satyrs to find the lost god Pan.

2.3 *Percy Jackson and the Titan's Curse*

The Titan's Curse is the third book in the Percy Jackson series and was published in 2007. In contrast to the two previous books, this book does not start at the beginning of summer. It starts in winter, with Percy, Annabeth, and Thalia going to a boarding school to retrieve two half-bloods – Bianca and Nico di Angelo – and bring the siblings to the camp. Their retrieval does not end well as monsters intercept them. The goddess Artemis and her hunters arrive and help them, but Annabeth gets captured by the enemy. Percy has dreams of Annabeth being in danger and wants to find and rescue her. However, he is not a part of the team sent out on the quest, as the hunters refuse to travel with boys. Percy sneaks out of camp, meets up with the team, and then travels with them for the remainder of their journey. Bianca dies in a fight on their journey, and the rest must travel on without her. At Hoover Dam, Percy meets a mortal girl named Rachel Dare, who can see through the mist, which hides

monsters and other magical things from ordinary mortals. After fighting against the Titan Atlas, an ally of Kronos, at Mount Tamalpais in San Francisco, they return to Olympus where Artemis convinces her fellow gods to fight against the Titans. At the end of the book, it is revealed that Nico is a son of Hades, a secret Percy only shares with Annabeth and Grover after Nico runs away.

2.4 Percy Jackson and The Battle of the Labyrinth

In 2008, the fourth book in the Percy Jackson series was published; *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. It is Annabeth's turn to get a quest in this book, and she takes the lead in guiding Percy, Tyson, and Grover through Daedalus' labyrinth. The camp has gotten a new sword master named Quintus, who has brought along his hellhound-pet called Mrs. O'Leary. During their travels through the Labyrinth the team gets separated, with Grover and Tyson searching for the god Pan whilst Annabeth and Percy continuing to look for Daedalus' workshop. In an explosion at Hephaestus' workshop, Percy ends up at Calypso's Island, where he stays while he heals from his injuries. Percy and Annabeth enlist Rachel to help them navigate the Labyrinth against Annabeth's wishes. They also reunite with Nico after finding him in the Labyrinth, and after finding Daedalus, they must return to camp to prepare for battle. During the battle, Daedalus shows up at camp and announces that he is ready to end his life, which will destroy the Labyrinth as it is tied to his life force, saving the camp.

2.5 Percy Jackson and The Last Olympian

The Last Olympian is the fifth and final book in the Percy Jackson series, and it was published in 2009. The plot is focused on the upcoming final battle between the gods and the Titans, with the camp working to prepare themselves and fight against their enemies. Percy goes with Beckendorf, a fellow camper, to destroy *The Princess Andromeda*, the ship that their enemies are using as a base and to travel to Manhattan. Beckendorf dies during this mission, and Percy must bring the bad news back to the camp. Percy decides that he must bathe in the River Styx to become invincible, something Luke did before Kronos entered his body, to prepare for the upcoming battle. Gathering their forces in Manhattan, the campers and the Hunters of Artemis fight to protect the city and the entrance to Mount

Olympus, located in the Empire State Building. The Battle of Manhattan is the final battle, named after where it takes place, and Percy and his allies manage to hold their ground. In order to end the war they have to defeat Kronos, and it ends with Percy and Annabeth having to fight him in Olympus. Luke manages to gain control over his body long enough to stab himself with his blade, killing himself and Kronos and ending the war. After their victory, Percy is offered immortality by the gods, but he declines, asking instead that they claim all their demigod children when they are thirteen or reach the camp. Rachel travels to camp, and when Percy, Annabeth and Nico arrive, she has already taken the spirit of the Oracle, becoming the camp's new Oracle. Percy and Annabeth decide to make their relationship official, and they are looking forward to the following summer.

3. Theory

This chapter will introduce the different theories used in this thesis. I will go through different concepts relevant to my own research, including literary analysis, gender, women in Ancient Greece, gender and mythology, and the changing of myths. As my thesis aims to analyse the characters regarding gender, a significant portion of this chapter is dedicated to theory about gender. The sub-chapter on literary analysis is included as that is the method I will be using throughout all the analyses. The sub-chapters on women in Ancient Greece, gender and mythology, and mythology revisited are included to provide a context when discussing my findings.

3.1 Literary analysis

The method I will use in the thesis is literary analysis, and using Robert Dale Parker's book *How to Interpret Literature* (2015) as my source for this method and its. There are many ways to interpret literature, and different eras of analysing literature have focused on different aspects of texts. I will be combining concepts from two different schools of thoughts, namely new criticism and structuralism. By combining these aspects from different schools, I am better able to utilise my analyses to reach my goal with them. I want to analyse the characters in the Percy Jackson books and discuss my findings in different contexts. For this reason, the concepts I will be using in my analyses are close reading and intertextuality.

Close reading is a key concept in new criticism, as they find this is the best method to use to develop interpretation (Parker, 2015, p. 16). According to the new critics, close reading is a "detailed, careful attention to evidence from the text itself, to the words on the page" (p. 16). Therefore, the text itself, not other factors that exist outside of the text, is essential when doing close reading. By using close reading, I can interpret the characters using only the Percy Jackson books, without having to consider their behaviour or traits in other contexts. Because close reading solely focuses on the text itself, it limits the interpretation seen on a broader scale, which is why I am choosing to combine it with another concept from literary criticism and analysis.

The second concept I will use in my analyses comes from structuralism, and structuralists often call it intertextuality (Parker, 2015, p. 54). Intertextuality means seeing a text in relation to other texts, not just on its own (p. 54). Structuralism differs from new criticism in that structuralism is “about understanding concepts through their relation to other concepts” (p. 44). For structuralists, the goal is not to interpret a single text, but instead, “the goal is to describe or interpret the larger system” (p. 51). By using structuralist ideas in my analyses and discussion, I am able to interpret the characters on a grander scale. This gives me the ability to look at their traits and characteristics in different contexts that exist outside of the main text, granting greater freedom to discuss the findings in relation to each other and other theory. With these concepts ingrained in my analyses, I will be able to look at the text by itself and in relation to other relevant contexts.

3.2 Gender

This project aims to provide a gender-oriented analysis of the characters in the Percy Jackson books. Therefore, it is important to clarify my use of some key concepts, such as gender roles, masculinity and femininity, and the notion of gender itself. This section will problematise these fundamental notions, which will all be central to my analyses later in the project.

A general definition in the *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* describes gender role as “[a] set of behaviour patterns, attitudes, and personality characteristics stereotypically perceived as masculine or feminine within a culture” (Colman 2015). The *Oxford Dictionary of Gender Studies* reveals further aspects of the term: “The phrase gender roles describes norms of behaviour and attitudes in a given culture attributed to people on the basis of their sex to which people are expected to conform” (2017). When analysing the characters, one aspect of the analyses will include looking at how they fit into their respective gender roles. To make use of this aspect properly, I will also need to explore masculinity and femininity and how the characters’ cultures view these notions. The analyses and discussion will include how the characters either conform or break from their expected gender roles.

We are taught how to act by our parents and peers from childhood. Many of our roles and behaviours are based on our “identification with a particular sex” (Kortenhaus & Demarest, *Gender Role Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An Update*, 1993, p. 219). This happens through what Kortenhaus and Demarest call the “socialization process” (p. 219), where children learn what behaviour is and is not acceptable from the different sexes. Many children’s gender identity is heavily influenced and shaped by how their society views gender roles (p. 220). This process contributes to upholding gender roles in different societies, as children are taught their part from an early age, and therefore how to act and behave according to the expectations of their society. The views different societies have on gender roles “often take the form of oversimplified gender role stereotypes” (p. 220), with stereotypical behaviours fitting to the different genders.

When children encounter gender roles and learn how to behave through literature from an early age, I believe that it is important to be aware of how gender roles are represented in children’s literature. Kortenhaus and Demarest further state that “the characters portrayed in children’s literature mold a child’s conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicate how males and females are supposed to act” (p. 220). As children’s literature has a vital role in how children learn to act and what is – and is not – acceptable in their society, I find it especially interesting when authors have characters who remove themselves from the typical gendered stereotypes of their gender. By having children exposed to a variety of different characters, and especially those who break with gendered stereotypes, they have a greater chance of not feeling stuck in those stereotypes. When children see characters that exhibit a mixture of both traditionally feminine and masculine traits, they learn that this is acceptable for them to do as well.

In their research, Kortenhaus and Demarest found that “males typically are portrayed as competent and achievement oriented” (p. 220), while “images of females [...] are limited in what they do, and less competent in their ability to accomplish things” (p. 220-221). These findings clearly indicate that there is a difference in how gender is represented in the analysed literary texts, with males and masculine traits being portrayed more positively than female and feminine traits. The characteristics that “our society” (p. 220) find most desirable are traits like competence, instrumentation and achievement motivation, all of

which are traits that are typically associated with masculinity (Deaux, 1976, as cited in Kortenhaus and Demarest, 1993, p. 220). On the other hand, the less desirable traits like nurturant, dependent, and submissive are seen as less desirable and ascribed to females (Dino, Barnett, & Howard, 1984 and Hemreich, 1980, as cited in Kortenhaus and Demarest, 1993, p. 220). This raises the question of why masculine traits are seen as more desirable than feminine ones. Before addressing this question, however, I will explore what masculinity and femininity are.

How do we define what is masculine and what is feminine? R. W. Connell argues that “the concept is [...] inherently relational” (2005, p. 68), meaning that you cannot define one without the other. He goes further, explaining that:

‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (p. 71)

This highlights the difficulty in defining terms such as masculinity and femininity in different contexts and shows how intertwined they are in performance and sexes. Using the definitions given by Cambridge Dictionary is a good starting point when unfolding these terms. *Femininity* is defined as “the fact or quality of having characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for a woman” (‘femininity’, n.d.), whilst *masculinity* is defined as “the characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for men” (‘masculinity’, n.d.). These definitions are easily read and understood, but it also shows that exactly what is considered masculine and feminine is subject to change over time and space. They are dependent on gender and their relational performance, and how gender is viewed. The World Health Organization defines gender as such:

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as

relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. (n.d.)

As a social construct, rather than something non-negotiable, gender characteristics are based on what different societies think they should be. It is a culmination of many things, and there are many ways of looking at it. One way to see it is that gender is something we *do* instead of something we are, an idea that I will examine further in the following paragraph.

An important aspect of the analyses of my chosen characters is how they perform their gender. In her essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, Judith Butler states that “gender is [...] an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988, p. 519). This means that gender is something you *do*, rather than something you *are*. This, in turn, suggest that different actions and acts carry gendered meanings and connotations, where some appear masculine while others feminine. She argues that the acts that gender the body “are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (p. 523), meaning that these connotations are dynamic and are dependent on the society surrounding them. As Butler further explains: “gender performances [...] are governed by [...] social conventions” (p. 527). Therefore, different acts can have different connotations in different societies and cultures. Because of this, it is important to find what is seen as masculine and feminine in the US in the 21st century, which is the setting of the Percy Jackson books. I will go further into this later in this chapter when I introduce Evans and Davies’ research. As previously mentioned, gender is a social construct, and Butler agrees that gender is not something we are born with: “Gender reality [...] is real only to the extent that it is performed” (p. 527). The society surrounding us determines whether our performance conforms to or contests the expectation related to one’s sex, and this expectation “is based upon the perception of sex” (p. 528). As our society becomes a determining factor in how we act gender, it is important to examine in context with the society surrounding the characters I will be analysing. The social conventions in Ancient Greece and America in the 21st century are vastly different. This difference is an important aspect when looking at how the characters perform their gender within their own societies.

Butler thus argues that gender is not something that we are born with, but rather something we learn to do through cultural relations (1988, p. 526). Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman support this notion in their text "Doing Gender": "Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (1987, p. 126). They go further into this argument, claiming that "[g]ender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category" (p. 127) and that a person's sex category is relevant in almost any situation and is always under evaluation (p. 145). Therefore, one's performance of gender is always subject to scrutiny and analysis, especially if it does not conform to the societal ideal and stereotype of their sex category. We get placed in a certain sex category based on how we apply the criteria belonging to that category. West and Zimmerman go on to explain that "categorization is established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays that proclaims one's membership in one or the other category" (p. 127). A person's sex and sex category may not always align, but our sex category often stands as a representative of how other people perceive our sex (p. 127).

As explained earlier, the different genders and how they are viewed in our society carry certain connotations. Carrie Paechter focuses on identity and childhood in her research, particularly on what it means to be "a gendered, embodied child" (Nottingham Trent University, n.d.). When talking about the difference between masculine and feminine, she is able to sum it up tidily by stating, "[...] in practice, masculinity becomes 'what men and boys do', and femininity the Other of that" (Paechter, 2006, p. 2). She points out that while masculinity can confer cultural power and guarantee patriarchy, femininity does not have the same advantage (p. 7). Instead, she claims that femininities tend to be "[c]onstructed as a variety of negations of the masculine" (p. 7), meaning that femininity is what masculinity is not. That masculinity can confer cultural power is something we can see throughout history in patriarchal societies, including Ancient Greece, where power and money followed the men of the family and not the women. Paechter goes on to say that in their dualistic relation, femininity is subordinate to masculinity (p. 7). This dualistic relation has consequences on how societies view masculinity and femininity, as "[t]he dualistic relation between masculinity and femininity [...] positions both extreme and normative femininity as

without power” (p. 11). As a result of this dualistic relation, Paechter states that it can be seen as empowering to distance oneself from stereotypical femininity (p. 9), as adopting masculinity and masculine traits is a claiming of power. This is because “[h]egemonic masculinity [...] confers considerable power, [...] standing as an ideal type against which various ways of ‘doing man’ can be constructed and performed” (p. 5). Being in a hegemonic position also means being in a position of power and that this power is unchallenged (p. 8). As Paechter previously stated, femininity is what masculinity is not, it is lacking in this power, and hyperfemininity is “a powerless position” (p. 8), being the opposite of hegemonic masculinity. With this view of masculinity and femininity, a female exhibiting stereotypical masculine traits can be seen as a way to claim power symbolically.

One aspect of my analyses will be aided by using some traits and definitions by Evans and Davies in 2000. In their study of children’s books in 2000, they made a table of stereotypical masculine and feminine traits called Definitions of Personality Traits as Used in Basal Reading Group series (shown in table 1), where they have eight traits for both, followed by a description. When making their table with traits and definitions, they used *Guidelines* by Richardson (1983) and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). When they used it for their study, they simply checked off when a character exhibited the different traits, but this is not how I will be using it for my thesis. Evans and Davies’ traits and definitions will only be a tool to help me define what stereotypical masculine and feminine traits are characteristic of the characters. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was created by Sandra L. Bem and “founded on a conception of the sex-typed person as someone who has internalized society’s sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women” (1974, p. 155). Bem characterised traits as masculine, feminine, or neutral based on a study with equal amounts of male and female participants, where they were asked to decide who the traits were most desirable for. “A characteristic was qualified as masculine if it was judged to be more desirable in American society for a man than for a woman” (p. 155-156), and the other way around for feminine traits (p. 156). Though Bem’s study only consisted of 100 participants, 50 male and 50 female, they provide representation and give insight into how the different traits are seen as gendered. Therefore, I have decided to use it as I find that these traits are still considered stereotypical masculine and feminine, and they also tie in with gender roles in myths. Using The Gender Personality Traits as Used in Basal Reading Group Series (Evans

& Davies, 2000) will be helpful to put Butler’s notion of gender is performativity into practice and see how the different characters perform their own gender. However, it is important to state that the following table will not be used as a prescriptive typology for my analysis.

Table 1: Evans and Davies’ Gender Personality Traits and Definitions, 2000

Personality Traits	Definition
<i>Masculine traits</i>	
Adventurous	Actively exploring the environment, be it real or imaginary
Aggressive	Actions and motives with intent to hurt or frighten; imparts hostile feelings
Argumentative	Belligerent; verbally disagreeable with another
Assertive	Taking charge of a situation, making plans and issuing instructions
Competitive	Challenging to win over another physically or intellectually
Decisive	Quick to consider options/situation and make up mind
Risk-taker	Willing to take a chance on personal safety or reputation to achieve a goal
Self-reliant	Can accomplish tasks or handle situations alone with confidence
<i>Feminine Traits</i>	
Affectionate	Openly expressing warm feelings; hugging, touching, holding
Emotionally expressive	Allowing feelings to show, including temper tantrums, crying, expressive or laughing
Impetuous	Quick to act without thinking of the consequences; impulsive
Nurturing	Actively caring and aiding another’s development, be it physically or emotionally
Panicky	Reacting to situation with hysteria; crying, shouting, running
Passive	Following another’s lead and not being active in a situation
Tender	Handling someone with gentle sensitivity and consideration
Understanding	Being able to see and comprehend a situation from another person’s perspective; showing empathy

The aspects of gender and gender performativity that I have presented and examined in this chapter are vital when analysing Riordan’s characters and seeing how they perform their gender. Especially with characters like Annabeth and Clarisse, who both inhabit several of

what Evans and Davies have defined as stereotypically masculine traits. Does Riordan break traditional gender roles with his version of the mythological figures, and if so, how does he do it?

3.3 Women in Ancient Greece

To truly delve into the myths and understand them, one must also understand the society that created those myths. Many of the myths we know today appeared long before what we usually think of as Ancient Greece, and specifically Athens. Because these myths are so old, there is little datable evidence available to see what the culture that cultivated these myths was like. This is also why the myths do not have one original version, there was never a single authoritative version of the different myths (Doherty, 2001, p. 10). In this section, I will focus on the culture in the city of Athens in the classical era, as this is the period that has the most surviving evidence. Athenian society had a patriarchal structure, where the estate and wealth followed the male bloodline. There were laws in place to govern inheritance in families. Despite the patriarchal society, inheritance was not exclusive to the male line, though males were prioritised over females in the right to inherit (Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomery, & Shapiro, 1995, p. 80). The patriarchal views of the society surrounding them meant there was a separation in what work men and women did, as a “proper Athenian wife” should ideally spend most of her time indoors (Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomery, & Shapiro, 1995, p. 69). According to Fantham et al., this was so that the wife did not encounter men who were not close relatives, as they would be seen as a “potential threat to her chastity and the legitimacy of the family’s heir” (Women in the Classical World: Image and Text, 1995, p. 103). Women and girls had little say in who they were to marry, as this was something the men in charge of them, often their father or another male relative. When a girl was married, her family had to pay her new husband a dowry, which would be returned in the event of a divorce. This dowry, however, meant that the girls sometimes married men within their own paternal family, often uncles, as this kept their dowries within the family (Doherty, 2001, pp. 24-25). The men were also typically a lot older than the girls, often 15 years older or more (Dillon, 2001, p. 159). With all these factors combined, there was clearly an unbalanced distribution of power in classical

Athenian society. Women had little control over their own lives, being mostly confined to their own houses.

3.4 Gender and mythology

In *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*, Lillian Doherty writes that the stories in myths follow patterns based on conflicts from frameworks that the audience is familiar with (2001, p. 10). Following this logic means that these myths reflected the patriarchal hierarchy prominent in the ancient cultures, where money and power followed the men in families. According to Doherty, some of this patriarchal hierarchy is still largely intact today, with women on average earning less than men, and there are disproportionately many men in the highest-level jobs (Doherty, 2001, p. 31). Using Doherty's own argument, newer versions of the myths should still have these frameworks. However, she also points out the contrasts between the cultures and that women are now more independent than in ancient times. She writes about how marriage has changed and that it is now a "personal choice for both parties; divorce and cohabitation without marriage are common" (p. 30), and these changes can be seen in the myths. This has caused modern retellings of the myth of Hades and Persephone to change, and now it includes "a mutual attachment" between the two, and this attachment having existed before or after the abduction takes place (Doherty, 2001, p. 30). These changes can be attributed to the changes in society, and therefore the relationship between Hades and Persephone has changed as well. In some versions, Persephone willingly joins Hades because she wants to be with him, mirroring the norm that marriage now is seen as two people who respect and love each other. In other versions, the relationship between the pair blossoms as they get to know one another, and Persephone enjoys her time with Hades.

3.5 Mythology revisited

As stated earlier, there is no myth that only has one version, as they have been changed and edited throughout history when being told. Myths being rewritten and retold in modern times is just a continuation of how they were told in ancient practice (Doherty, 2001, p. 10). Many myths have been written down as time passed, there can also be clear differences in these written versions. In addition to the ones written down, there must be countless

versions that were told and retold orally and lost to time. The myth of Scylla – or Skylla – is a good example of different versions being written down, with different spellings of her name. In the *Odyssey* by Homer, Scylla's mother is called Crataüs. However, both Hesiod and Acusilaus identify Scylla's mother as Hecate, a goddess of witchcraft in the underworld (Hornblower & Spawforth, 1999, p. 1374). Later authors also elaborate on Scylla's backstory, giving her a life as a human woman before being turned into a monster. One version tells the story of a love affair between Scylla and Poseidon, which causes Amphitrite – Poseidon's wife – to sprinkle herbs in Scylla's bathing water, transforming her into a monster (Hornblower & Spawforth, 1999, p. 1374). In Ovid's version of the myth, her transformation story is different. Here, a sea god named Glaukos fell in love with Scylla, and the enchantress Circe was in love with Glaukos. So, when Glaukos asked Circe for help in enamouring Skylla, Circe turned her into a monster instead, using her herbs and magical spells (Hard, 2004, p. 497). Myths are constantly changing and being altered to be relevant to the times they are told. In that way, by changing parts of myths in his books, Riordan is keeping the tradition of myths alive. They are adapted to fit the world he has built in the Percy Jackson books, which combines modern, Western civilization with Greek mythology. Altering the myths is essential to keep them alive, and it is what makes them relevant to people alive today. Doherty writes that both ancient and modern retellers of myths "have freely altered motives of characters, the sequence of narrative events, and the point(s) of view from which they are told" (2001, p. 19), which is what Riordan also does in his books.

4. Analysis and comparison

In the following chapter, I will be analysing the chosen characters from the Percy Jackson series; three of Riordan's original characters, and two characters he has taken from the Greek myths to use in his own telling of their stories. The analyses will not be in chronological order, but rather structured after relevant themes or traits that each character exhibits. In the sub-chapters about Medusa and Circe, I also include a comparison of Riordan's version and older tellings of their myths.

4.1 Annabeth Chase

Annabeth Chase is a daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and camper at Camp Half-Blood. She is introduced in *The Lightning Thief* and can be seen as the female protagonist of the series, as well as Percy's sidekick. I see her as a second protagonist of the series instead of just a sidekick because of her impact on the story and how prevalent she is throughout the series. Besides a portion of *The Titan's Curse*, Annabeth is side-by-side with Percy, not only as a follower but also to guide him and help him. Many times, it is Annabeth that acts as the leader of the group, not Percy, and her role is therefore more important than that of just a sidekick that is there to help the protagonist of the story.

When Percy first sees Annabeth, he does not get a good look at her, only that she is "a pretty girl, her blonde hair curled like Cinderella's" (2005, p. 57), giving the impression that she looks like a Disney princess. Later, when Percy sees Annabeth again, and more properly, she is described as having a deep tan and curly blonde hair, being taller and more athletic looking than him. Her eyes "were a startling grey, like storm clouds; pretty, but intimidating, too, as if she were analysing the best way to take me down in a fight" (2005, p. 63-64).

Annabeth's calculating side is shown through her eyes from their first encounter, hinting at her parentage and attributes. Annabeth is a complex and dynamic character, having several sides of her character shown throughout the books. She is 12 in the first book and turns 16 during *The Last Olympian*, and she grows up and changes during this time. After years of fighting and disliking each other, Annabeth becomes friends with Clarisse, showing evident growth in both of them as characters.

From our first meeting with her, she is evidently proud of her heritage from Athena and the wisdom that follows with that. Several times she points out that wisdom is one of her greatest strengths, and she also shows it through her actions and planning. In Percy's first game of Capture the Flag, Annabeth takes charge of the team, issuing orders to the others and having a plan on what to do, though she is only 12 and there are other campers with more experience than her. This ultimately leads to their team winning the game, and Annabeth repeatedly states that "Athena always has a plan" (2005, p. 119) when talking about the game. She is the first person to realise that Percy is a son of Poseidon after seeing how water positively affects him and gives him powers (p. 124). Annabeth understands his parentage before Percy and Poseidon claims him as his son.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Annabeth is finally put in charge of her own quest, not having been the leader of one before. Though this is the first quest where she is in charge, there is no doubt in the others that she is the right one to do it. She is seen as wise and knowledgeable by the other campers, a reputation she has earned by her actions throughout her years at the camp. When she is granted the quest to enter the Labyrinth "nobody cheered. I mean, we all liked Annabeth, we wanted her to have a quest, but this one seemed insanely dangerous" (2008, p. 71). This shows that Annabeth is well liked by most of the campers, who all think that she deserves her own quest, but it is because they like her that they are worried as well. She is so well known for her brain and memory that people react when she claims not to remember something, such as when she pretends to not remember the last line of her prophecy for the quest. Chiron raises an eyebrow in response: "Annabeth was known for her memory. She never forgot something she had heard" (p. 72). Annabeth is known for all of these attributes, making her a respectable leader to many of her fellow campers, who are willing to listen to her. Because of this, Percy is grateful when she steps up and speaks in his favour at times. In *The Sea of Monsters*, he wants to encourage the campers to ask for a quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece when: "Annabeth stepped in and reminded everybody what the Fleece could do. It sounded more convincing coming from her" (2006, p. 86). Annabeth uses her position to help her friends and to help the camp, not for egotistical reasons.

Annabeth's intelligence gives her an advantage in leadership, being quick to come up with plans for herself and her friends. Her friends at camp know this about her and look to her for plans when needed. They are confident that she is capable of handling herself and therefore helping them as well: "If anybody could think of a plan to get them out of there, Annabeth could" (2006, p. 230). During the Battle of Manhattan in the last book, Annabeth acts as Percy's right-hand man, helping him delegate the campers and giving out orders. She takes charge of her cabin and tells them what to do, which they obey without any questions (2009, p. 158). Later in the battle, all the cabins are fighting alongside each other, and Annabeth leads her cabin in an assault against the enemies, a role that comes naturally to both her and her siblings (p. 230).

While Annabeth is often seen as a natural leader by others, she does not desire to relish in the glory by herself. She values working together with others to overcome obstacles and wants her allies to share in the glory she receives. When Clarisse wants Annabeth to take the quest to go to the Labyrinth, Annabeth does not feel like she is the only one deserving of the quest, telling Clarisse: "You've done as much as I have, Clarisse. [...] You should go, too" (2008, p. 66). Annabeth does not only extend this courtesy to her fellow demigods but also to others who have helped her when needed, and she feels they deserve praise for what they have done. After winning the chariot race at camp being held after they retrieved the Fleece to camp, she makes herself heard to the crowd gathering around: "We couldn't have done it without somebody else! We couldn't have won this race or got the Fleece or saved Grover or anything! We owe our lives to Tyson" (2006, p. 255). Even though she disliked Tyson when they first met because he was a Cyclops, she has gotten to know him and respects him as much as she respects any other demigod.

Annabeth accompanies Percy on all his quests and adventures in the series, starting with his first quest in *The Lightning Thief*. On this first quest, she almost acts as a walking encyclopaedia to tell Percy about mythology and answer the question he has. This can be attributed to two things; the first is that she is a daughter of Athena. As Annabeth takes such pride in her wisdom, she has learnt all she can about the myths to understand the world she lives in fully. The other reason is that she has lived in this world longer than Percy. Though they are the same age, Annabeth was introduced to the world of demigods and

Greek gods when she was much younger, whereas Percy has just learnt that this is all real. She, therefore, has more experience than him and much more training from the camp. However, she also helps him with matters that are not mythological. One example of this is when they must jump from a boat that is about to crash, and they have to time their jumps precisely. Annabeth takes charge of Percy and tells him she uses “simple physics” to figure out the best time to jump. As Annabeth times their jumps just right, Percy realises “Annabeth was right. If we’d jumped when I thought we should’ve, we would’ve crashed into the gates. She got us maximum lift” (2005, p. 240).

Annabeth’s knowledge of mythology helps her and Percy, as she knows what to do, and especially what not to do. When they are sailing in the Sea of Monsters – the mythological sea where Odysseus sailed in *the Odyssey* – they encounter several of the same monsters that Odysseus did. Annabeth has read and learned about *The Odyssey*, which is helpful as their travels greatly mirror Odysseus’ travel. When they encounter the sirens, Annabeth is desperate to know what they will show her with their magic, giving her more wisdom about herself. Her chase to gain more knowledge does not come as a surprise to Percy, as he is used to Annabeth pursuing knowledge in different ways: “if she could struggle through Ancient Greek architecture books and enjoy documentaries on the History Channel, I guessed the Sirens would appeal to her, too” (2006, p. 184). To keep herself and Percy safe, she uses Odysseus’ experience with them, stuffing Percy’s ear full of wax so that he cannot hear the siren’s song and be affected by the magic, whilst also tying her up so she can listen, but is unable go anywhere. During her encounter with the sirens in *The Sea of Monsters* she learns that her fatal flaw is hubris: “Hubris means deadly pride, Percy. Thinking you can do things better than anyone else . . . even the gods” (p. 191). In *The Lightning Thief*, Annabeth suspects that it might be the titan Kronos stirring up trouble and not Hades, as they initially believed. When Percy describes his dream and a voice coming from a pit “Annabeth’s eyes widened” (2005, p. 267), implying she knows that Kronos is in this pit, not Hades as Percy thinks. However, she does not want to believe this is the case and persuades herself that it “has to be Hades” (p. 267). When they later enter the Underworld to find Hades and are almost dragged into Tartarus, her suspicion is confirmed, though she is “too scared to share it” (p. 306) with Percy and Grover.

When reaching the island where the Cyclops Polyphemus has his lair, Annabeth again uses Odysseus' experience to their advantage. When trying to find a way into Polyphemus' cave, Annabeth remembers how Odysseus escapes from the cave. Using the Cyclops' sheep, she tells Percy to hang beneath a sheep's belly, as he will go in unseen this way. Annabeth combines this with taunting Polyphemus in the same way Odysseus did. In *the Odyssey*, Odysseus calls himself "nobody", so that when the Cyclops calls for help, he tells the other cyclops'; "Nobody's killing me now by fraud and not by force!" (Homer, 1996, p. 19).

Annabeth has devised this plan to defeat Polyphemus because she knows they are outmatched in a physical fight. She tells Percy, "We can't beat him by force, so we'll have to use trickery." (Riordan, 2006, p. 200), knowing that strategy is an important aspect when dealing with enemies.

Annabeth's ingenuity is shown repeatedly, with her finding solutions to problems that arise. When Annabeth, Percy and Grover are in the Underworld in *The Lightning Thief*, they must get past Cerberus – the three-headed dog – who is guarding the entrance to Hades. To trick Cerberus into letting them in even though they are still alive, Annabeth uses a "red rubber ball the size of a grapefruit" (2005, p. 295). By using this ball, Annabeth is able to establish a connection with Cerberus, making the giant dog sit and listen to her. She reveals to the others that she has experience training dogs, going to an obedience school with her dog when she was little (p. 297). Annabeth can use the knowledge she has attained earlier in life in new situations and to understand what might work in the world of monsters and gods. Her knowledge of mythology alerts her to danger when she, Percy and Grover meet Medusa in her lair in *The Lightning Thief*. When listening to "Aunty Em's" – Medusa's cover name – Annabeth understands the connection with the myths and knows that they must leave as they are in danger. When leaving is not an option anymore, Annabeth can use her knowledge to defeat Medusa. Annabeth knows that this is not something she can do, as Medusa hates her for being a daughter of Athena, but Annabeth can help Percy, telling him to only look at her through reflections if he wants to avoid being turned into stone. Annabeth is the one who has the plan on how to get from Las Vegas to Los Angeles quickly, making sure they can complete their quest on time. She does not use something mythological but simply hires them a taxi with a driver that drives them towards the Santa Monica pier.

When Annabeth is planning her quest in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, she knows that this is not something she can do independently. She is dependent on her friends for help and does not feel any shame in asking for it from her fellow campers: “I have to go in. I’ll find the workshop and stop Luke. And . . . I need help.’ She turned to me. ‘Will you come?’” (2008, p. 72). She does not see it as a weakness that she needs help from her friends, knowing that everyone has different strengths. The ease Annabeth feels at asking her friends for help does not include mortals, especially those that she does not like or respect. Both Chiron and Percy have to talk Annabeth into accepting help from Rachel Dare, and Annabeth does not agree easily.

‘But this is *my* quest,’ Annabeth said. ‘I need to lead it.’

Chiron looked uncomfortable. ‘My dear, it is your quest. But you need help.’

‘And *this* is supposed to help? Please! It’s wrong. It’s cowardly. It’s –’

‘Hard to admit we need a mortal’s help,’ I said. ‘But it’s true.’

Annabeth glared at me. ‘You are the single most *annoying* person I have ever met!’ And she stormed out of the room. (p. 216-217)

Annabeth does not want to accept that she needs help from a mortal, feeling like that will mean the quest is not hers to lead anymore, something that is very important to her. This causes her to act out against her friends and not wanting to admit that they are right about this. Even after Annabeth accepts the fact that they need Rachel’s help to guide them in the Labyrinth she has a hard time listening to what Rachel has to say and treating her with respect: “Rachel narrowed her eyes at Annabeth. ‘You need my help?’ / Annabeth stirred her straw in her smoothie. ‘Yeah,’ she said sullenly. ‘Maybe.” (p. 234). Even though Annabeth has agreed to get help from Rachel, she still openly shows her reluctance to listen to a mortal. Despite her dislike of Rachel, Annabeth does as Rachel tells her to, knowing that Rachel is helping them, and Annabeth trusts friends enough to believe they made the right choice: “Annabeth didn’t look happy about it, but she ran along with the rest of us” (p. 255).

Annabeth's pride in her wisdom and logical thinking is an essential attribute of her as a character. Her appreciation and reliance on logic cause Annabeth to react when things do not appear to be logical. Whilst Annabeth, Percy, and Tyson are traversing the Labyrinth, she becomes visibly agitated (2008, p. 126). This is because the Labyrinth does not make any logical sense in the way it is shaped and how it changes, despite Annabeth's wishes for it to be logical. Annabeth relies on the knowledge she has acquired through reading to aid her in her quest in the Labyrinth, despite the Labyrinth being unpredictable and hard to understand:

'I've been studying architecture for years,' she said. 'I know Daedalus's Labyrinth better than anybody.'

'From reading about it.'

'Well, yes.'

'That's not enough.'

'It has to be!' (p. 65)

Annabeth knows that the information she has gathered from reading about the mystical Labyrinth might not be enough to understand it entirely, but she convinces herself that it is enough.

The idea of not knowing something is aggravating to Annabeth, wanting to know the answers to everything. Therefore, when the goddess Hera does not give her a specific answer to her question, Annabeth becomes irritated:

'But that's not fair,' Annabeth said. 'You're not telling us what it is!'

Hera shook her head. 'Getting something and having the wits to use it . . . those are two different things. I'm sure your mother, Athena, would agree.' (2008, p. 101)

Though Annabeth takes pride in her wisdom, it can fail her at times and not let her think of things from different perspectives, causing her to get stuck. This is what happens in this

encounter with Hera; Annabeth is so focused on getting the answer to her questions that she does not make an effort to thoroughly think about the meaning of what Hera is telling her. Annabeth's pride in her wisdom can also cause her to become overconfident in her abilities, underestimating what lies before her. When Annabeth, Percy, and Tyson encounter the Sphinx in the Labyrinth, Annabeth does not see the monster as a real obstacle. She is sure that she knows how to get past as she has read about the Sphinx and knows the riddle that it asks in the myths. However, this hubris causes her to not anticipate the fact that the Sphinx has changed its way of determining the worth of its opponents. Annabeth's faith in herself causes others to believe in her as well, thinking that Annabeth knows what she is doing:

Annabeth grabbed my arm. 'I've got this,' she whispered. 'I know what she's going to ask.'

I didn't argue too hard. I didn't want Annabeth getting devoured by a monster, but I figured if the Sphinx were going to ask riddles, Annabeth was the best one of us to try. (2008, p. 172)

The overconfidence Annabeth possesses when challenging the Sphinx backfires, as the monster has changed its ways. Instead of asking a riddle, it now asks about "a bunch of dumb, random facts" (p. 174), which Annabeth takes as an insult to her knowledge. Her pride gets in Annabeth's way, not allowing her to simply answer the questions and start arguing instead: "I'm a child of Athena,' she insisted. 'And this is an insult to my intelligence. I won't answer these questions" (p. 174). By refusing to answer the questions asked by the Sphinx, she puts herself and the others in danger as the Sphinx attacks them for refusing to partake in her tests.

Annabeth marvels at Daedalus' wisdom and inventions, wanting to learn from him to gain more knowledge herself. When she finally reaches his workshop in the Labyrinth she admires his architectural sketches, exclaiming "He's a genius. Look at the curves on this building!" (2008, p. 263). Daedalus is a person she looks up to, wanting to be as clever and wise as he is. Therefore, she is agitated when she meets him and he does not live up to her expectations. Where Annabeth is selfless, Daedalus is selfish, a trait she heavily dislikes.

Instead of treating him like a superior, she confronts him: “You’re going to let Luke destroy our camp, kill hundreds of demigods and then attack Olympus? You’re going to bring down the entire world so you can get what you want?” (p. 269). Annabeth believes in using wisdom and knowledge for good, and that it should be used to create something better for everyone.

‘I used to respect you. You were my hero! You – you built amazing things. You solved problems. Now . . . I don’t know what you are. Children of Athena are supposed to be wise, not just clever. Maybe you are just a machine. You should have died two thousand years ago.’ (p. 269)

Annabeth emphasises the importance of being a good person and using knowledge for good, as well as the difference between wisdom and cleverness. While Annabeth is in a constant search for more knowledge and wisdom, it is so she can create something for the good of others and not just herself. Her selflessness is reflected in many of the choices she makes throughout the series and is such an important aspect of her character that her friends know how she would feel if they acted selfishly. In *The Titan’s Curse*, Percy knows that Annabeth will never forgive him if he saves her but not Olympus (2007, p. 217), as she thinks the greater good is more important than herself.

While Annabeth often has a cool head, thinking clearly and logically, she is also an emotional girl. After tricking Cerberus into letting her and the others pass into Hades, she is visibly emotional when listening to Cerberus’ whines after they have left him; “I pretended not to see Annabeth wipe a tear from her cheek as she listened to the mournful keening of Cerberus in the distance, longing for his new friend” (2005, p. 299). Annabeth does not consider being emotional a weakness, it is just a part of who she is. She is empathic to other people and creatures, wanting to see the good in everyone.

Annabeth cares deeply about her friends and she is unafraid to show them her feelings, knowing that they will not think any lesser of her because of her emotions. She wants her friends to stay close to her so she does not have to be afraid of losing them. Therefore, when Chiron is leaving camp in *The Sea of Monsters*, Annabeth gets visibly sad when she is

told this news. She is seen “trying hard not to cry” (2006, p. 51) but failing as a “Chiron brushe[s] a tear from her cheek” (p. 51), showing her sadness about Chiron leaving and her desire to keep him close. The thought of losing friends is enough to make her upset, knowing that there is a real possibility for it to happen. When Annabeth tells Percy the last line of the prophecy for her quest in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, she gets emotional: “*And lose a love to worse than death.*” Annabeth had tears in her eyes. “That was the last line, Percy. Are you happy now?” (2008, p. 331). Her fear of the prophecy is evident, and that fear is combined with the sadness of the meaning behind it, enhancing her emotions at the thought of losing a friend.

Throughout the series, and especially in *The Last Olympian*, Annabeth experiences the loss of many fellow campers. Every loss affects her, and she is never shy or ashamed of her sadness and openly cries about the losses she experiences. When Percy tells the news of Beckendorf’s death on the *Princess Andromeda*, Annabeth “wipe[s] a tear from her cheek. ‘I’m glad you’re not dead, Seaweed Brain’” (2009, p. 41), showing her sadness at the loss of a camper, but her gratitude that she did not lose Percy as well. Later, during the Battle of Manhattan, Silena dies after being attacked by a drakon. Though Annabeth does not cry any tears, she still does not hide her feelings in her expression. Annabeth’s face is described as having a chalky colour and looking “like somebody had just yanked the world out from under her feet” (p. 279), clearly showing the distress on her face for everyone to see.

Annabeth not being ashamed of her feelings allows her to reach out to her friends for comfort, knowing that she will get support from them. After Percy rescues her from the sirens in *The Sea of Monsters*, Annabeth is disturbed and saddened by what she has seen. Instead of trying to hide this from Percy, she shows her feelings: “She started to sob – I mean horrible, heartbroken sobbing. She put her head on my shoulder and I held her” (2006, p. 189). There are more instances of Annabeth reaching out to Percy for comfort, knowing that he can give it to her. When she is given the quest to go into the Labyrinth in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, she decides to bring three friends with her, instead of the standard of two. This causes her concern as she worries about her friends’ safety, and her worry manifests as sadness. When discussing this with Percy, Annabeth looks for comfort in his closeness: “She blinked back tears and put out her arms” (2008, p. 76). The physical

closeness of her friends gives Annabeth comfort, and as she knows this will make her feel better, she does not hesitate to reach out for it.

Losing friends has a significant impact on Annabeth as she is fiercely protective of them, not wanting anything bad to happen to them. This causes the thought of losing them to distress her and make her emotional. When Percy is thought to be dead in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Annabeth is understandably distraught and sad. She is described as looking “terrible. Her eyes were puffy from crying” (2008, p. 215), clearly showing no effort to hide her sadness or the fact that she has been crying. When she sees that Percy has returned safely, this sadness is turned into relief, which then manifests itself as anger towards Percy for letting her believe he was gone:

‘WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?’ Annabeth interrupted, showing aside the other campers. I thought she was going to punch me, but instead she hugged me so fiercely she nearly cracked my ribs.

[...]

‘I’m sorry,’ I said. ‘I got lost.’

‘LOST?’ She yelled. ‘Two weeks, Percy? Where in the world –’ (p. 215)

Annabeth’s anger stems from her fear of losing her friends and the pain that brings her, making her act out when those feelings are shown to be unnecessary. She is not afraid to show her sadness of losing a close friend in front of the other campers, and therefore she is not trying to hide her sadness either, instead showing them that it is okay to be sad.

The sadness Annabeth feels from losing a friend is not exclusive to losing them to death but also when losing them to the enemy. When Luke becomes their enemy, she feels betrayed by someone who used to be close to her and go whom she has an attachment. It therefore makes her sad when she sees what Luke is doing and how he is acting, and how far he has gone in his mission to defeat Annabeth and her friends. After seeing Kronos taking over Luke’s body in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Annabeth is visibly upset and not trying to hide it from Rachel, Nico, and Percy as they escape: “Annabeth had been crying the entire time

we'd been running. Now she collapsed and put her head between her knees. Her sobs echoed in the tunnel" (2008, p. 290). Luke is someone who has been important to Annabeth as she has grown up at the camp, and it is therefore understandable that she feels sadness at the loss of him. The loss of Luke is repeatedly causing Annabeth pain, and the pain does not seem to lessen over time. Annabeth's pain is brought up again after talking to Hermes – Luke's dad – at Olympus. Instead of pushing it down and trying to hide it, she "sat at the foot of her mother's throne and cried" (p. 147). By choosing to sit by her mother's throne, Annabeth is looking for comfort in her family and the ones she cares about, whilst also knowing that Percy is in the room with her, bringing her greater comfort.

When Daedalus decides to join the good side in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, he decides to sacrifice himself to save Annabeth and the others. This makes Annabeth sad, as she values his wisdom and knows that this will be lost when he is gone, and he has shown himself to be an ally to them in the end. Yet again, Annabeth does not attempt to hide her sadness from either Daedalus or her friends: "Annabeth had tears in her eyes" (2008, p. 317).

Sadness is not the only reason Annabeth cries throughout the series, as tears can be caused by other things such as relief or happiness as well. An example of this happening is when Thalia's tree is healed at the end of *The Sea of Monsters*, where Annabeth sees her old friend Thalia resurrected and alive again. Percy sees Annabeth's eyes "streaming with tears" (2006, p. 264), with Annabeth making no effort to hold back the tears in her shock of what is happening. Thalia coming back is not the only instance where we see Annabeth emotional for reasons other than sadness. After reconnecting with her dad in *The Titan's Curse*, Annabeth is offered a home in San Francisco with her family, meaning she does not have to stay at camp all year. This offer of being kept safe by her dad, and their newfound closeness, causes Annabeth to become emotional: "her eyes were red as she turned away" (2007, p. 264), showing that this new chance with her family is important to her.

Annabeth is always willing to help her friends, but she also realises that she is not always needed. When they are playing Capture the Flag in *The Lightning Thief*, she plans to run and help Percy when he is fighting Clarisse and some of her campers. However, Annabeth realised Percy did not need the help and decided to let him win the fight for himself (2005,

p. 123). Her loyalty to her friends also makes Annabeth protective of them, not wanting anyone or anything to hurt them. She stands up for her friends in different situations, sometimes even getting physical against mortals. This is seen when she meets one of Percy's bullies at his school and she stands up for him: "Annabeth punched him in the nose and knocked him flat. 'And *you*,' she told him, 'lay off my friend'" (2006, p. 21).

With the protectiveness she feels for her friends, she is willing to go to great lengths to stay with them and help keep them safe. It is vital for Annabeth to keep the promises she makes, so after she has promised Chiron that she will keep Percy safe, she will go with him wherever he goes: "I promised I'd keep you from danger. I can only do that by coming with you!" (2006, p. 102). Annabeth never wants to leave her friends if she can help them, proving her loyalty by going after them. After Tyson and Grover have gone to find Pan in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Annabeth never considers leaving them behind: "We have to find them,' Annabeth insisted. 'They're our friends'" (2008, p. 293). Leaving a friend behind is never a choice for Annabeth, who is always looking out for her friends' safety and well-being. Her feelings of loyalty do not always make Annabeth happy, but that does not mean that she will stop sticking with her friends: "That's what I do,' she said miserably. 'I help my friends'" (2009, p. 270). Even though she is upset with Percy in this instance, that does not stop her from staying loyal to him.

Annabeth is fiercely loyal to her friends, sticking by their side through thick and thin, and often prioritises friendship over family. When discussing the possibility of a war between the gods in *The Lightning Thief*, Annabeth clearly states that she will not necessarily side with her mum in the battle. She tells Percy: "I don't know what my mom will do. I just know I'll fight next to you" (2005, p. 251). When Percy questions her on why she would do that, she simply answers: "Because you're my friend, Seaweed Brain. Any more stupid questions?" (p. 251), illustrating her loyalty to friends over family. In Annabeth's mind, it is obvious that she will fight alongside her friends as she would never want to fight against them. In *The Titan's Curse*, she even speaks up against her mother, who dislikes her friends, despite her mother being a powerful god (2007, p. 272). When it comes to her friends, Annabeth is willing to bend boundaries and do whatever it takes, disregarding others' expectations of her.

When facing decisions and trouble, Annabeth is willing to sacrifice herself for her friends. She does not mind dying if it means that her friends are saved, and she also thinks that she has the best chance of winning fights. Annabeth, Percy and Grover are all willing to sacrifice themselves for the others, but Annabeth says: "I'll cover you. I plan to go down fighting" (2005, p. 316), showing that she never gives up and will always fight until the very end.

Friendship consists of both light and heavy moments, and friends can joke and have fun even in the direst situations. After releasing trapped animals in Las Vegas, Grover places a satyr's sanctuary on them, meaning that the animals will be safe until they reach the wild.

'Why can't you place a blessing like that on us?' I asked.

'It only works on wild animals.'

'So it would only affect Percy,' Annabeth reasoned.

'Hey!' I protested.

'Kidding,' she said. 'Come on. Let's get out of this filthy truck.' (2005, p. 257)

Annabeth is usually a serious character; joking does not come as easily to her as others. She cares deeply about her friends and wants to make sure they are all right. When Grover is leaving to search for Pan, she repeatedly asks him if he has what he needs, to which he replies, "Jeez, Annabeth. [...] You sound like an old mama goat" (p. 357), empathising how much she cares about her friends.

Luke, a demi-god who turns to the bad side and betrays Annabeth, Percy, and the camp, has known Annabeth since she was 7. He brought her to the camp, and they have a strong connection. A connection that Annabeth does not let go of, even after he is actively fighting against them. While her heart is in the right place, this causes Annabeth to make unwise decisions where she puts both herself and others in danger. In *The Titan's Curse*, Luke uses her emotional connection to lure her into a trap. Because she is so desperate to save him,

she willingly takes the weight of the world on her shoulder, the place where Atlas usually is, though this will kill her:

Then the darkness above Luke began to crumble, like a cavern roof in an earthquake. Huge chunks of black rock began falling. Annabeth rushed in just as a crack appeared, and the whole ceiling dropped. She held it somehow – tons of rock. She kept it from collapsing on her and Luke just with her own strength. It was impossible. She shouldn't have been able to do that. (2007, p. 68)

It is her deep connection and belief that Luke can turn back to the good side that makes her make this sacrifice for him. Even after Luke has tricked her and her friends several times, she never gives up hope, thinking that the Luke she knew is still in there. When Annabeth, Percy and Rachel meet Luke and his minions in the Labyrinth, Annabeth still refuses to give up hope, telling Percy: "There was something wrong with him. He looked . . . nervous. He told his monsters to spare me. He wanted to tell me something" (2008, p. 257). Annabeth grasps to the hope that Luke will come back to them until the very end when they are fighting against him in *The Last Olympian*. She wants to stay loyal to her old friend even though he is against them, as loyalty is important to Annabeth.

Despite Annabeth's deep hope that Luke still can be saved, her patience with him is not unlimited. When Luke/Kronos attacks Chiron in *The Last Olympian*, Annabeth has had enough and charges at him. The attack on her mentor is what drives her over the edge, and in her anger, she is willing to attack the most powerful titan by herself, being blinded by her rage. She has no more regard for if the Luke she knew is there anymore, charging him with her knife and trying to stab him by his collarbone (2009, p. 295). In her anger, she screams "I HATE you!" (p. 295) with tears streaming down her face, out of both anger and sadness at the true loss of her friend.

At the end of the Battle of Manhattan, Luke/Kronos is defeated, which is only possible by Luke dying. Luke turns to the good side at the end, dealing the killing blow to himself to end the war. As he lies dying by Annabeth and Percy, Annabeth does not hold back her sadness of repeatedly losing a friend, this final time losing him to death. She has clear tears in her

eyes as she talks with Luke, and her voice trembles as she speaks with him (p. 316). She gives him support and speaks positively towards him, not wanting him to feel bad before he dies. She “wipe[s] her tears away (p. 317) as they talk, comforting him until the very end.

Like many other demigods, Annabeth can be stubborn and stuck in her own ways. After fighting the furies in *the Lightning Thief*, she is insistent that she could have handled it without Percy’s help. She thinks that it would have gone better if he had not interfered, though it was clear that she did need help. However, she can understand that she cannot do everything. Because of this, she appreciates the help and tells Percy as much, voicing her gratefulness. This stubbornness could be caused by something else, namely her insecurity about if she is actually good out in the real world, as she has only trained at camp. She opens up to Percy, telling him “the real world is where the monsters are. That’s where you learn whether you’re any good or not” (2005, p. 170). By opening up about this topic, Annabeth is putting herself in a vulnerable position, but also one where she can be reassured by Percy, helping her feel better.

Annabeth’s stubbornness can cause trouble for her and others at times, with her refusing to back down from what she believes. Even when she is in the company of gods she can let her stubbornness get the better of her, not treating the gods with the respect they expect from demigods. This becomes evident when they are talking with Hera after having gone through the Labyrinth and completed their quest:

‘Annabeth, my dear, surely you see how I’ve helped. I would welcome a sacrifice for my efforts.’

Annabeth stood as still as a statue. She could’ve said thank you. She could’ve promised to throw some barbecue on the brazier for Hera and forget the whole thing. But she clenched her jaw stubbornly. She looked just the way she had when she’d faced the Sphinx – like she wasn’t going to accept an easy answer, even if it got her in trouble. (2008, p. 332)

Despite knowing that her attitude can give her serious repercussions, Annabeth continues to stand her ground, letting her pride get the best of her.

Annabeth's stubbornness is not unknown to her friends, as it is a characteristic they have seen in her several times. This is clear in *The Last Olympian* when Percy knows that she is too stubborn to not follow him into battle, despite her being injured (2009, p. 226).

Although she is stubborn to a fault, Annabeth is also capable of admitting that she is wrong. After disagreeing with Percy throughout the series, she finally admits that Percy was right about Luke and that there is no more hope for him (p. 283). It is hard for her to admit this, she is not looking at Percy or anyone else whilst doing so, but she still wants him to know that she was wrong.

Annabeth is a year-round camper, meaning she lives there the entire year and not just during summer. This is because she is too stubborn to contact her dad after feeling rejected by him. However, after talking to Percy about it, she listens to his advice, takes up contact with her father, and becomes a summer camper instead.

Though Annabeth is a brave character, she also has her fears. As stated earlier, one of these fears is losing friends because her friends are extremely important to her. In addition to not being ashamed of sadness, Annabeth is not afraid to show her fear to her friends either. She does not feel like she has to pretend never to get frightened and knows that her fear does not make her weak. After Annabeth gets the prophecy for her quest in the Labyrinth, she is notably scared when returning from the Oracle: "I couldn't tell if she was trying to warn me, or if the look in her eyes was just plain fear" (2008, p. 71). She knows that the quest she has gotten is a dangerous one, but that does not stop her from doing it. The Labyrinth is a place that scares her, which is evident the first time she and Percy enter it. The first time they fall into the Labyrinth is by accident during a fight with giant scorpions, but Annabeth quickly realises where they are, and the idea clearly scares her: "The faint glow of the blade was just enough to illuminate Annabeth's frightened face and the mossy stone walls on either side of us" (p. 56). Despite her fear of being in the Labyrinth, Annabeth is able to think clearly and gets both her and Percy safely out of the Labyrinth and back to camp. She gains comfort

knowing that she is with Percy, feeling safer when friends surround her than when she is alone.

Annabeth is not afraid to explicitly admit that she is afraid. When talking to Percy about the big prophecy, she tells him: "I read this when I was ten years old, and I still have nightmares about it" (2009, p. 45). She knows that most of her fears are legitimate, and though she is scared, it does not stop her. In *The Last Olympian*, they are up against a frightening enemy and all the campers must put their fears away to fight against Kronos and his army. When Hermes tells Annabeth that she has to initiate plant twenty-three, Annabeth is visibly scared: "Annabeth's face paled. Obviously, she knew what it meant, and she didn't like it" (p. 145). Nevertheless, no matter how scared she becomes because of this, she follows orders and does her job, not letting her fear impact her in a significant way.

However scared Annabeth might be, she can usually conquer her fear and do what she must. The notable exception to this is Annabeth's fear of spiders, which she has due to her heritage from Athena. In the myths, Athena turned Arachne into a spider after being challenged to a weaving contest, which in turn made Arachne's descendants dislike Athena and her children: "Arachne's children have been taking revenge on the children of Athena ever since. If there's a spider within a mile of me, it'll find me. I hate the creepy little things" (2005, p. 247). Annabeth's fear of spiders is the one thing that will make her completely lose her head and not think rationally anymore. The first time she meets spiders in *The Lightning Thief* she has a big reaction, surprising Percy with how scared she becomes: "I'd never seen her like this before. She fell backwards in terror" (p. 236). Her fear of spiders makes her lose control, not being able to help her friends or herself: "she was too paralysed to do much more than scream" (p. 237). Annabeth is not one to become frantic when faced with dangerous monsters and scary situations, but spiders are the one thing that causes her to become hysterical.

From this analysis, it is clear that Annabeth is a character that exhibits many different traits. She is a capable character who is not dependent on other people but still acknowledges that she also needs help sometimes, and that needing help is not negative. She expresses her

emotions without fear of being shamed by the ones around her and is fiercely protective and loyal to her friends.

4.2 Clarisse La Rue

Clarisse is introduced to the reader as a typical big bully who reminds Percy of another bully he has encountered. Clarisse is a daughter of Ares and the leader of the Ares cabin at camp Half-Blood when we first meet her. She stands out among the other Ares campers, being louder, tougher, and bigger. Percy describes her as “[t]he loudest [...] girl maybe thirteen or fourteen. She wore a size XXXL Camp Half-Blood T-shirt under a camouflage jacket. She zeroed in on me and gave me an evil sneer” (The Lightning Thief, 2005, p. 81). Her role as a bully is further seen when she seeks out Percy again and tells him, “We got an initiation ceremony for newbies, Prissy.” (2005, p. 89). This initiation ceremony involves taking the new camper to the bathroom and dunking their heads in the toilet, a classic bullying tactic that we can see in series and books taking place in schools and camps.

Clarisse never gives the impression that she cares about her appearance and is not much of a “girly” girl. She cares about proving herself, being tough and protecting the ones she cares about. Clarisse looks tough and has “stringy brown hair” (2008, p. 27) that she usually does not style. Her style emphasises her toughness, with her preferring to wear camouflage jackets and having her hair tied back with a “camouflage bandana” (p. 27). She is later described as looking “as big and beefy as a rugby player” (2009, p. 41), further building on her persona as a fierce warrior who is never afraid of getting into a fight.

Clarisse can come off as tough and nonchalant, only caring about fighting with others. However, she is loyal to her friends and her home, wanting to keep them safe. In *The Sea of Monsters*, when it is revealed that they will have races at camp, Clarisse is one of those who protest it, as she feels the focus should be on protecting the camp (2006, p. 60). Keeping her home safe is more important to her than participating in a race with the other campers. By being focused on protecting the camp, Clarisse can hide behind her loyalty when no other campers from her cabin join her on her quest to fetch the Golden Fleece, telling Percy: “I let them stay behind. To protect camp” (p. 144). Despite the fact that she is on her quest alone,

she is confident in her ability to complete it successfully, claiming that she does not need help from anyone else (p. 144).

In *The Sea of Monsters*, Clarisse gets sent on a quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece to save the camp, much to Percy and Annabeth's dismay. Clarisse goes on her quest alone, though she ends up travelling with Percy and Annabeth for parts of it. As a daughter of Ares, she is given a ship to command, filled with undead Confederate soldiers to aid her. Her first encounter with Percy and Annabeth outside of camp ends with her rescuing them from a Hydra they were fighting. Though she dislikes them, she is still loyal to other campers and demigods. Clarisse is not happy to see them, but that does not mean that she will betray that loyalty: "Losers," she sneered. "But I suppose I have to rescue you. Come aboard." (2006, p. 141). This loyalty that she has to them comes up several times, as seen when they are escaping Polyphemus' Island. After a struggle where Annabeth ends up getting hurt, Clarisse and Percy attack the Cyclops together, with Clarisse charging again and again, demonstrating her braveness and capabilities in battle. Once they are fleeing the island, Clarisse takes care of Annabeth, ensuring they both get to safety. Clarisse assesses the damage to Annabeth and carries her toward the ship without any discussion: "Clarisse picked up Annabeth like a sack of flour and lugged her down to the beach" (p. 212).

Clarisse is the head of the Ares cabin, meaning that her other siblings listen to her orders and follow her commands. This is a role that comes naturally to her, and though she can be reckless in battle, she is also good at tactics that will give her allies the best chance to win. Her cabinmates instinctively listen to her in battle, never hesitating to follow her orders. When fighting in the battle at the entrance of the Labyrinth, Clarisse is clearly in charge of her team: "Clarisse barked a single order: 'Lock shields!'" (2008, p. 307). Her mind works quickly during battle, knowing what they should do to win without losing many of their own.

Though Clarisse is not as knowledgeable as Annabeth, she is still clearly well versed in the Greek myths, as she knew this was her only way of getting into the Sea of Monsters and weighed which dangers would be worse. When Clarisse's plan inevitably fails and they must fight against Charybdis, she naturally takes complete charge of the ship and tells the crew what they must do. They all follow her command, and she trusts that others are able to do

what they tell her they can. When she learns that Tyson, Percy's paternal half-brother who is also on the ship, is a Cyclops and immune to fire, she immediately lets him go to the boiler room to fix the engine (2006, p. 153). Though Clarisse is stubborn, she is not entirely unreasonable. When it is clear that the ship will explode, she follows Annabeth's order without resistance, showing a level of respect for Annabeth's wisdom and planning (p. 156).

Making her father, Ares, proud is one of the reasons she is as tough as she is. The importance of her father's approval is evident in a conversation she has with Ares, where Ares is yelling at her. During this conversation, we can also see that Clarisse is clearly scared of her father, with her voice trembling whilst saying that she will succeed and make him proud and flinching when his image raises his fist (2006, p. 148). It is clear that Clarisse is desperate to prove herself and her worth, with Ares not approving of her. Ares suggests that he should have given the quest to one of his sons instead (p. 148), clearly thinking that his sons are more competent than she is. Her desperation to prove herself to her father pays off in the end when she gets recognition from him after the Battle of Manhattan in *The Last Olympian*. Due to her skills in battle and her ferocity when attacking the enemy, she has been granted the blessing of Ares by her father, a blessing few people ever get. When they eventually meet in Olympus after the war is won, Ares' pride in his daughter is evident:

The god of war ruffled her hair and pounded her on the back, calling her the best warrior he'd ever seen. 'That drakon-slaying? THAT'S what I'm talking about!'

She looked pretty overwhelmed. All she could do was nod and blink, like she was afraid he'd start hitting her, but eventually she began to smile. (2009, p. 322)

Clarisse is clearly overwhelmed by this support from her father, causing it to take a moment before she understands what is really happening. However, by her smiling, it is evident that she is happy that she made her father proud. She achieved what she has worked for throughout the series. Her skill in battle has proven how good she is at fighting, the thing that Ares values more than everything.

In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Clarisse is the first to say that Annabeth should lead the quest to explore the Labyrinth (2008, p. 66). When Annabeth then voices that Clarisse should join her, Clarisse makes it clear that she is never putting a foot in the Labyrinth again, as it terrifies her. Instead of being ashamed of fearing the labyrinth as another camper mocks her, she tells him that he does not “understand anything, punk” (p. 66) and reiterates that she is never going back down there.

As a daughter of Ares, Clarisse flourishes in battles and fights and is prone to starting unnecessary ones. When captured by the Cyclops Polyphemus, she has no hesitation in going up against him by herself. She continuously taunts him, yelling, “Challenge me! [...] Give me back my sword and I’ll fight you!” (2006, p. 196), calling him a “big idiot” (p. 197) and “overgrown pile of dung” (p. 198). She is not afraid of him when fighting against Polyphemus after Percy has set her free. She is a skilled fighter and knows what she is doing, making her a challenging opponent, even to someone much bigger than her: “She charged the Cyclops again and again. He pounded the ground, stomped at her, grabbed at her, but she was too quick” (p. 207).

Though Clarisse is naturally gifted in fighting because of her heritage, her skill in battle is not purely based on this gift; it is also a skill she practices and works on outside of battle. She can channel her emotions when she is practising, letting out frustration and anger that has been built up inside her. This is a clear coping mechanism for her when her feelings are overwhelming, as we can see after Chris keeps getting worse despite her efforts:

Clarisse paced a circle around the arena. When she came to the nearest dummy, she attacked viciously, chopping its head off with a single blow and driving her sword through its guts. She pulled the sword out and kept walking.

[...]

She picked up a javelin and threw it across the arena. It nailed a dummy straight between the eyeholes of its helmet. (2008, p. 221)

Clarisse's skill is evident even when practising against a dummy in the training arena at camp. It is also apparent to Percy that she is doing this to let out her own feelings of frustration at the situation, trying to use it for something productive instead of letting it consume her completely. By doing it this way, she is able to hone her own fighting skills whilst also making sure her anger is not displaced towards her fellow campers.

Clarisse never hides her dislike of Percy, but she is not always mean towards him. Despite their dislike of each other, she sees him as an ally because they are both fighting on the same side. They both want to protect the camp, and she is therefore willing to work with him as a team at times. She is also able to be thankful towards him, however reluctantly it may be, as Percy saves her Polyphemus captures her in *The Sea of Monsters*: "She glared at [Percy] for a moment, then looked at the ground and mumbled, 'Thanks'" (2006, p. 204). They fight against the Cyclops together, Clarisse refusing to let Percy fight the Cyclops alone. Though this is not only through a sense of loyalty, Clarisse also has the need to prove herself as capable and will never say no to a good fight. She does not feel the need to be the one in charge of the attack, however, and has no problem with going along with Percy's plan of attack (p. 205), or even falling back from fighting when he tells her to, so they can get away from the island (p. 207).

Clarisse's sense of loyalty is seen in that she never wants to leave someone on her team behind, even if that person is Percy. After getting the Fleece from Polyphemus and escaping to their ship, Clarisse does not want to leave before everyone is back on the ship, calling back to Percy: "Come on!" (2006, p. 214). Despite their differences, Clarisse and Percy learn to respect and trust each other. Once they have gotten safely out of the Sea of Monsters, Percy tells Clarisse to travel back to camp with the Fleece by herself. However, she has a hard time believing him: "I could see her mind working – suspicious at first, wondering what trick I was playing, then finally deciding I meant what I said. She jumped in the cab. 'You can count on me. I won't fail'" (p. 223). This bond as allies strengthens as time goes on, making it easier for them to trust each other and work together. In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Percy and Annabeth disappear into the Labyrinth for a few hours, making their fellow campers go looking for them: "We made our way around the rocks and ran into Clarisse and a bunch of other campers carrying torches. / 'Where have you two been?' Clarisse demanded. 'We've

been looking forever” (2008, p. 57). Though Clarisse is not explicit about her worry about them, her intensity in searching for them shows that she really wanted to find them after they disappeared. This worry she has for them manifests itself as irritation, almost blaming them for wasting their time, while she is actually relieved to see that they are okay.

Despite her tough exterior, Clarisse is gentle and caring with the people she really cares about and is close to. It is in *The Battle of the Labyrinth* that this side of her is seen as she cares for fellow camper Chris Rodriguez, whom Clarisse has saved after being “driven completely insane” (2008, p. 46) in the Labyrinth. She brought him to a safe place and tried to nurse him back to health, eventually bringing him with her to camp. The gentleness she has with Chris comes as a surprise to Percy, having never seen this side of her before. Clarisse talks calmly to Chris, trying to get him to calm down and remember who and where he is: “Clarisse’s voice sounded gentle but really sad. I never knew Clarisse could sound that way. ‘My name is Clarisse. Remember. Please” (p. 69). Throughout this interaction between Clarisse and Chris, Clarisse keeps calm though it is clear that his state makes her emotional: “Chris,’ Clarisse pleaded. It sounded like she was close to tears. ‘You have to get better. Please. Mr D will be back soon. He’s an expert in madness. Just hang on” (p. 70).

When Clarisse feels safe with her friends, she is able to let down her guard and stop acting tough. She is genuinely caring with the ones she cares about and is not afraid to show it. After Chris is cured of his insanity by Dionysus, she can stop being his caretaker and can be herself with him: “I watched Clarisse and Chris singing a stupid campfire song together, holding hands in the darkness, where they thought nobody could see them” (2008, p. 328). This shows that Clarisse is capable of being affectionate and warm to those closest to her, she is just selective and careful about who she lets get this close to her.

One of her closest friends in *The Last Olympian* is a fellow camper Silena, a daughter of Aphrodite. Though they seem unlikely friends with their different heritage, Clarisse cares deeply about Silena and their friendship: “Clarisse had decided she was Silena’s personal bodyguard” (2009, p. 41). Clarisse is protective of Silena, not wanting anything bad to happen to her and supporting her however she can when it is needed. When Percy brings them the bad news that Beckendorf, Silena’s boyfriend, has died on their mission, Clarisse is

the one to comfort her and lead her away from the crowd that has gathered: "Come on, girl [...] Let's get to the Big House. I'll make you some hot chocolate" (p. 41). Clarisse shows her gentle side towards her friend, not caring what anyone else might think of her actions, only about the feelings of her friend who is in pain. Even during a fight amongst the senior counsellors where Clarisse feels the Apollo cabin has disrespected her cabin, she thinks about Silena and her feelings, turning to her and apologising for the fight: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get into this when you've just lost . . . anyway, I apologize. To *you*. Nobody else" (p. 47). Though her pride has been wounded, she does not want that to affect her close friend.

Clarisse is also deeply protective of those she cares about, not letting anyone disrespect or mistreat them. The first instance we see of this is when Percy asks about Chris, but Clarisse wants to protect him and keep him safe and therefore glares at Percy to stop him from asking questions (2008, p. 63). We can also see this when she is talking about Chris after he has become worse: "She had called Chris a hero, like he had never gone over to the Titans' side" (p. 221). Even if her friends turn to the enemy, Clarisse looks beyond that after they return to the good side. It is vital to her that they are not remembered for their but rather for the helpful actions they did before or after. She does not want others to disrespect them by calling attention to their mistakes, being adamant about just talking about the good they did. She is vengeful against those who hurt her friends, wanting them to pay for what they did.

Her focus on remembering friends in a positive light comes into play when Silena dies during the Battle of Manhattan. It is revealed that Silena was Kronos' spy at camp, feeding him information about their plans and strategies. Clarisse disregards Silena's betrayal of the camp, not seeing it as important because Silena turned back to their side. It is because of Silena that the Ares cabin joins the battle against Kronos, and Silena dies fighting against the enemy. Because of this, Clarisse does not want her to be remembered as a villain, telling the campers around her: "She was a hero, understand? A hero" (2009, p. 279). She is adamant that no one speaks negatively about her late friend, feeling that it would be disrespectful to do so, and Clarisse does not tolerate disrespect towards her friends

Though not always, sadness often manifests itself as frustration or anger in Clarisse. With the ones that are close to her, she is not afraid to show a more vulnerable side. Even if other people surround her, Clarisse is not ashamed to show her sadness when something bad happens, especially not to her friends. As she chases Silena from camp and arrives at the scene of battle, Clarisse's distress is visible on her features: "A girl's voice, shaken with grief, cried, 'NO! Curse you, WHY?'" (2009, p. 275). Leaning down over her injured friend, Clarisse has a face that is blotchy with tears (p. 275), showing no indication of feeling shame about showing that she has cried. She is more focused on Silena, who has been badly hurt by the drakon she was fighting, holding her in her arms and not wanting her friend to be hurt. Surrounded by people she loves, Clarisse has no problem showing her sadness and anger at her friend's passing, but she also lets herself be comforted; "Clarisse held her and wept. Chris put a hand on her shoulder" (p. 279).

Pride is important to Clarisse and something she puts very high. Throughout the series, we are shown how prideful she is, and she does not tolerate disrespect towards herself, her cabin, or her father, and her desire to make her father proud. When Percy beats Ares in a fight in *The Lightning Thief*, he is greeted by her and her cabinmates giving him "poisonous looks" (2005, p. 355), giving Percy the impression that they would never forgive someone beating their father in a fight. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Annabeth suggests combining forces and helping Clarisse on her quest, which Clarisse refuses, saying, "This is *my* quest, smart girl! Finally *I* get to be the hero, and you two will *not* steal my chance." (2006, p. 143). To Clarisse, this is them trying to steal her spotlight and her chance to give herself and her cabin a win and the gratitude of the camp. Her pride is something that acts to her detriment at times as well, as it combines with her stubbornness, making it hard for her to listen to someone else. When her ship, the *CSS Birmingham*, is about to enter the Sea of Monsters, she plans to stick close to Charybdis and avoid Scylla (alternative spelling; Skylla). Both Annabeth and Percy object to her plan, thinking it is way too dangerous. Annabeth suggests another way in altogether, whilst Percy suggests sticking close to Scylla's side of the entrance. She dismisses what they both say, telling Annabeth to "[w]atch and learn, Wise Girl" (p. 150). Even after everyone has returned to camp and Clarisse gets the glory of successfully completing her quest, she has not forgotten that Percy has hurt her pride before: "Clarisse shoved be from behind and whispered in my ear, 'Just because you were

cool one time Jackson, don't think you're off the hook with Ares. I'm still waiting for the right opportunity to pulverize you" (p. 243). Despite their experiences together, her pride has been hurt, and she is not one to forget that easily. It takes a lot for Clarisse to forgive someone for disrespecting her family, as she tends to hold on to grudges.

Clarisse is a dynamic character, growing and changing as the series continues, but her pride is constant. Her pride in *The Last Olympian* is a significant disadvantage to the other campers who are going to fight against Kronos and his armies. Clarisse, and the others in her cabin, feel disrespected because of an argument with the Apollo cabin, resulting in them deciding not to join the rest of the camp in Manhattan. They refuse to fight alongside the others: "All of you can fight this war without Ares. Until I get satisfaction, no one in my cabin is lifting a finger to help. Have fun dying" (2009, p. 47). Her pride has been deeply wounded, and she knows that this will negatively affect her fellow campers, but her pride has been hurt too badly to ignore. Even an apology that is given later is not enough, as Clarisse feels as though it has come too late to heal the wound, putting the other campers in a difficult situation: "She said it was too late. We'd insulted her honour for the last time or some stupid thing" (p. 172). Percy also tries to call in a favour she owes him after he saved her from the Cyclops' cave in *The Sea of Monsters*, but even that does not convince her: "She clenched her jaw. 'Any other favour, Percy. Not this. The Ares cabin has been dissed too many times'" (2009, p. 70).

The consequence of this is dire for the rest of the camp, who now must fight a giant army without help from the children of Ares, the god of war. His children are powerful allies to have in battles, as they are naturally gifted in that arena. It is only through trickery that they eventually join their fellow campers, with Silena leading the Ares cabin to the battle under the guise of being Clarisse. As Clarisse arrives at the battle, having followed after when her cabin left, she sees that her friend is badly hurt by the drakon they were fighting. Her loyalty kicks in, being enraged that something hurt her friend:

The real Clarisse looked up at the drakon. Her face was filled with absolute hate. I'd seen a look that intense only once before. Her father Ares had worn the same expression when I'd fought him in

single combat.

‘YOU WANT DEATH?’ Clarisse screamed at the drakon. ‘WELL, COME ON!’

She grabbed her spear from the fallen girl. With no armour or shield, she charged the drakon. (2009, p. 276)

Clarisse is so focused on revenge that she single-handedly slays the drakon with no damage to herself. However, she does not spend any time gloating or celebrating that she brought down the monster by herself, as she runs straight back to her friend to see how she is doing.

It is after Silena’s death that Clarisse’s capabilities are fully unleashed, as she vows to take revenge on Kronos for making this happen. She resolutely tells her fellow campers that “Kronos is going to pay” (2009, p. 279) whilst picking up a sword and getting ready to fight. Her strength is evident when fighting her enemies, as she destroyed every monster she met, and “[e]ven without her armour or spear, she was a demon” (p. 279). During the battle, Clarisse is given the blessing of Ares from her father. Her father granting her this blessing shows that he is proud of her and what she is doing, and makes her practically invincible while it lasts, so she can continue fighting: “For the moment, Clarisse was as invincible as I was. The enemy threw spears and arrows, but nothing hit her. / ‘I AM CLARISSE, DRAKON-SLAYER!’ she yelled. ‘I will kill you ALL! Where is Kronos? Bring him out! Is he a coward?’” (p. 280). Being granted the blessing of Ares further fuels her vengeance, wanting to annihilate the enemy for what they have done to the people she cares about.

Clarisse repeatedly shows her bravery when faced with trouble, and she dislikes cowardice, thinking less of people running away from fights. When the campers are attacked by Stymphalian birds in *The Sea of Monsters*, she is the first to draw her sword and charge at the birds attacking her home (2006, p. 79). She also gets mad at Annabeth and Percy, thinking they are running away from the fight and not helping the camp, yelling at them: “The fight is here, cowards!” (p. 79). Clarisse clearly sees it as cowardly to run away from fights instead of standing one’s ground, which is why she always charges into battle instead of running away. She wants to show people that she is brave but also how capable she is when she is fighting.

In this analysis, it is evident that Clarisse is a complex character with many aspects to her. While she is quick to anger and is seen as a bully at first glance, she contains many layers, as any human does. She does not let her guard down easily, but once she does, she shows a tender and gentler side towards her friends, not letting anyone disrespect either them or herself. She is stubborn to a fault because of her pride, but that feeling of pride also gives her motivation to succeed.

4.3 Percy Jackson

Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon, is the protagonist and narrator in the Percy Jackson series. In *The Lightning Thief* he is 12 years old and he turns 16 at the end of *The Last Olympian*.

Family, especially his mother, is the most important aspect of Percy's life. Even before we, the readers, first meet her, we get a glimpse of their relationship. Percy describes her as "the best person in the world" (2005, p. 29), showing how highly he thinks of her and how much he loves her. When he first arrives at camp and drinks nectar for the first time, it tastes like his mother's homemade cookies (p. 60), which brings him a feeling of peace and of home. Thoughts of family and his mother brings Percy peace and happiness when he needs it, comforting him:

I thought about my mom, but I had good thoughts: her smile, the bedtime stories she would read me when I was a kid, the way she would tell me not to let the bedbugs bite.

When I closed my eyes, I fell asleep instantly. (p. 106)

With family being so crucial to Percy, he wants his friends to have a good relationship with their families as well. He is the one urging Annabeth to reconnect with her father, giving him a second chance. Percy tells her that she "shouldn't give up" (p. 251) on her family, causing her to reach out to her father and re-establishing a relationship with him.

Percy's love for his mother is the only reason he ventures out on his quest in *The Lightning Thief*, it is not because of a want or need to do the right thing: "The truth was, I didn't care

about retrieving Zeus's lightning bolt, or saving the world, or even helping my father out of trouble. [...] All I cared about was my mom" (2005, p. 159). This feeling of loyalty towards his loved ones overpowers other important feelings and leads us towards his fatal flaw and how that affects his decisions.

Percy is a good friend to have, but he is loyal to a fault. In *The Titan's Curse*, Athena tells him that his fatal flaw is personal loyalty: "You do not know when it is time to cut your losses. To save a friend, you would sacrifice the world" (2007, p. 281). Throughout the series, Percy puts his friends above all else, risking a lot to go save them and not thinking much about the consequences of his actions. This aspect of his personality steers many of Percy's actions, and they affect other people as well, and not always positively. He can often become so focused on helping and saving his friends that he forgets to consider other people and their feelings, focusing solely on his need to help his friends.

Percy sneaks out of the camp in *The Sea of Monsters* to save Grover, his best friend. His loyalty to his friend is the main thing that is fuelling him on this quest. He sees the situation from Clarisse's point of view and shows empathy and understanding of what she might be feeling. Percy ends up giving Clarisse the Fleece and money so she can fly to camp, giving her a chance to finish her quest on her own.

One instance stands out in stark contrast to how Percy usually acts. In *The Titan's Curse*, when the enemy captures Annabeth, Percy has the opportunity to ask Nereus – a sea god with great wisdom and prophetic abilities – a question to help Percy with his quest. The most important thing to Percy is Annabeth and how to save her and he desperately wants to use his one question to ask about her: "A voice inside me was screaming *Ask about Annabeth!* That's what I cared about most" (2007, p. 217). However, instead of acting on this instinct, Percy knows that Annabeth would be mad if he saved her, when he could be saving the world. Percy's decision to not ask Nereus about Annabeth is still a selfish decision where he puts his friendship first, as he knows that their friendship would be ruined if he did so: "I imagined what Annabeth might say. She would never forgive me if I saved her and didn't save Olympus" (p. 217). As previously mentioned, it is not Percy fighting against his fatal flaw of personal loyalty that makes him do this. Rather, it is Annabeth's selflessness

that forces him to make this decision to save their friendship, proving once again how important that is to him.

Percy is fiercely protective of his friends, wanting to do anything in his power to help them and keep them safe. When Percy realises that he is missing a pearl to bring both him, his mother, and his friends up from the Underworld in *The Lightning Thief*, he refuses to let his friends sacrifice themselves for him. Both Grover and Annabeth are willing to stay there so Percy can leave with his mother, but he will not let them do this: “They had done nothing but save me, over and over, and now they wanted to sacrifice their lives for my mom” (2005, p. 317). Percy values their loyalty and friendship and acknowledges that he would not have made it this far without them, but he also knows that this is something he cannot let them do for him. He also realises that he cannot sacrifice himself, no matter how much he wants to, as it would hurt his mother too much:

I turned and faced my mother. I desperately wanted to sacrifice myself and use the last pearl on her, but I knew what she would say. She would never allow it. I had to get the bolt back to Olympus and tell Zeus the truth. I had to stop the war. She would never forgive me if I saved her instead. (p. 317)

His mother’s selflessness makes Percy use the last pearl on himself instead of saving her, which is also what happened with Annabeth when she needed help in *The Titan’s Curse*. Percy’s need to protect his friends and family also makes him vengeful, wanting to get revenge on those that hurt the ones he loves. After being betrayed by Luke and learning that he wants to take down the gods and help the titan Kronos rise, Percy immediately wants to go after him, telling Chiron, “I have to go after him” (2005, p. 371). Chiron has to convince him to stay, as Percy is not ready and has to heal properly and be better trained first. Percy must trust that others can do this better than himself and not think that he is the only one who can stop Luke and his plan.

Percy is influenced and makes decisions based on his anger throughout the series. As readers, we see that he has trouble controlling his anger at times, getting Percy into tricky situations. Often, Percy’s anger stems from his protectiveness over his friends. The first

instance of this is seen as early as page 3 of *The Lightning Thief* when Grover has to physically pull Percy back to keep him from getting in trouble and hurting Nancy Bobofit, the school bully. The first instance we see Percy really lose his temper is when Nancy is bullying Grover yet again:

I tried to stay cool. [...] But I was so mad my mind went blank. A wave roared in my ears.

I don't remember touching her, but the next thing I knew, Nancy was sitting on her butt in the fountain, screaming, 'Percy pushed me!'
(2005, p. 9)

Percy's anger causes him to make rash and impulsive decisions because he is not in control of his emotions or himself. When he feels this anger, he is often helped by his friends, who calm him down or make him stop doing something stupid. Grover is repeatedly pulling Percy away from rash decisions and acting out on his anger. As previously mentioned, Grover stops Percy from acting out against his bully, but that is not the only instance where he stops Percy. When Percy sees a TV in a store window negatively describing him, Grover as to pull him away from the window before Percy "could punch a hole in the appliance-store window" (2005, p. 275). Percy's first reaction when getting angry is often becoming physical, violent, and aggressive. When Percy realises that Gabe – his mother's boyfriend – has been violent towards his mother, his instinct is to be violent toward Gabe:

[Gabe] raised his hand, and my mother flinched.

For the first time, I realized something. Gabe had hit my mother. I didn't know when, or how much. But I was sure he'd done it. Maybe it had been going on for years, when I wasn't around.

A balloon of anger started expanding in my chest. I came towards Gabe, instinctively taking my pen out of my pocket. (p. 348-349)

Percy's love for his mother also causes him to be highly protective of her and wanting her to be happy and safe. This, in turn, causes him to want to remove the things that hurt his mother, which in this instance is Gabe. Percy is clearly willing to kill for his mother as he

pulls out his pen – which turns into a sword when clicked – and moves towards Gabe. Percy is “itching to uncap Riptide” (p. 349) but knows that even if he does so, the blade cannot hurt mortals, only monsters and demigods. He ends up having to be pulled away by his mother while he is still trembling with rage, unable to control himself. This anger and protectiveness affect him greatly as he is not always in control, but he is able to be calmed down by others.

As Percy gets older and experiences more, he also understands more about himself and his emotions, including his anger. He knows that he has a hard time controlling his anger and that it can make him impulsive. When witnessing Grover being yelled at by an elder satyr, he admires Grover’s ability to stay calm, thinking that “[h]e sounded a lot calmer than I would if I’d been insulted like that” (2008, p. 320). Knowing that he can be impulsive and make rash decisions when angry helps Percy be aware of it, making it easier for him to control it. This advantage does not stop him from acting impulsive in some situations, especially not when he is angry on behalf of his friends. In a later confrontation with the same elder satyr Percy “grabbed him by the shirt, which seriously wasn’t like me, but the stupid old goat was making me mad” (2009, p. 75). Here, Percy reflects that it is unlike him to act like this, but through the earlier examples, we see that that is not entirely true. Percy shows that he has a tendency to become physical when angry. However, this reflection can also show Percy’s growth and that he now has more control over his anger and therefore does not often become physical when angry anymore. This control over his anger does not include vengefulness when someone has hurt someone he loves or attacked a place near his heart. Percy has realised that there is a spy amongst the campers who have given information to the enemy, making the camp suffer. Percy swears to himself that if he finds the spy who caused a fellow camper, Beckendorf, to die, he will “give him to Mrs O’Leary as a chew toy” (2009, p. 186). So even though Percy is not a big fan of violence, especially against fellow demigods, this does not include those who have betrayed him and caused his friends to die.

There are times when Percy can control his anger as well, showing that he does have the ability to control his emotions. This typically happens when Percy is aware that the other part wants him to lose control of his temper, as this would benefit them. When Percy meets Ares, Percy is aware of how his anger affects him and why he feels that way:

“I wanted to punch this guy, but somehow, I knew he was waiting for that. Ares’s power was causing my anger. He’d love it if I attacked. I didn’t want to give him the satisfaction” (2005, p. 227). Percy’s motivation for not acting on his temper in this instance can be attributed to another kind of anger, anger that is not violent. As stated above, Percy’s anger often comes from his protectiveness over his friends, wanting to keep them safe and not get hurt. When Tyson is bullied at school, Percy has to “try really, really hard not to punch Sloan in the face” (2006, p. 13). His violent tendencies surface when these situations occur, but this time he can control his actions, not letting his anger get the better of him. Percy gets better at controlling his anger as time goes by, learning how not to act on all of his feelings. It can be challenging for Percy to let go of his anger, making the feeling grow stronger inside him. After returning to camp and seeing that enemies have poisoned Thalia’s tree, he thinks back to Luke and his betrayal: “The longer I sat there, the angrier I got” (2006, p. 67). This anger stems from the camp, a place that is close to him, being hurt, and him not being allowed to get revenge and feeling helpless.

In *The Last Olympian*, Percy feels betrayed by Nico in the Underworld. He resists acting on the anger he feels from this betrayal, stating that “I resisted the urge to strangle Nico. They’d only stop me. I’d have to wait for my revenge” (2009, p. 111). The cause for Percy’s ability to control his temper is not because he does not want to hurt Nico but because he knows that he the Furies will stop him if he attempts to do so. Percy is a vengeful character, wanting revenge on the people who wrong him or his friends and family, but is controlled enough in the moment to know that he must wait to get it. Percy does learn that it is good not to act rash when trying to get revenge, as he realises that Nico did not betray him and wants to help him. After successfully bathing in the River Styx and becoming invulnerable on almost his entire body, he and Nico are confronted by Hades and his zombie soldiers. Instead of running away, Percy sees that his dog, Mrs O’Leary, is hurt by the soldiers and gets extremely angry. He then charges Hades’ entire army, which Percy knows is the “stupidest thing [he has] ever done” (p. 127). He knows that this is a rash and impulsive decision coming from his anger, but that is not enough to stop him, and he attacks.

While Percy’s anger can cause him to make stupid decisions, it can also give him more energy and motivation to win in fights or do what must be done. Anger often overshadows

his fear, invigorating him and providing strength. When the Minotaur attacks Percy's mother, "anger replaced [his] fear. Newfound strength burned in my limbs" (2005, p. 53), giving him the strength he needs to win the fight. When meeting with Hades in the underworld, Percy is accused of stealing Zeus' lightning bolt and Hades' helmet of darkness. Hades threatens to unleash the dead on the world, killing Percy and making him lead the army. While this is something that would be scary to many people, Percy is more focused on the accusations: "I probably should have been terrified. The strange thing was, I felt offended. Nothing gets me angrier than being accused of something I didn't do" (2005, p. 313). Percy realizes that he should be scared of the threat, but that anger is a stronger feeling for him, overpowering the fear. When fighting the Minotaur again in *The Last Olympian*, Percy sees that the monster is wearing "necklaces taken from defeated demigods" (2009, p. 174). His anger surges through him, giving him strength and motivation to defeat the monster. He "was so mad [he] imagined my eyes glowing just like the Minotaur's" (p. 174), making him focused, and he is able to use his anger to his advantage and win the fight.

Percy has clear morals that he follows throughout his life and that he will not stray away from, although they sometimes make things more difficult for him. He will do what he believes is right no matter what and thinks lesser of people who will not do the same. The first instance of this is seen in a confrontation between him and Luke in *The Sea of Monsters*, where Percy calls Luke out for being a coward: "You call it guts? Betraying your friends? Endangering the whole camp?" (2006, p. 227). Percy does not want innocent people to get hurt and will go out of his way to make sure this does not happen. When he meets the Chimera in *The Lightning Thief* he leads the monster away from the other people around them, knowing that he cannot let them get hurt in the ensuing fight (2005, p. 208). Percy not wanting to hurt innocents gives him a dilemma when fighting against demigods who have turned to the enemy, as he has to try not to hurt them when they are actively trying to hurt him. Percy's first experience with this dilemma is in *The Battle of the Labyrinth* where he is forced to fight against Ethan Nakamura, a demigod who has gone over to Kronos' side. They are ordered to battle to the death, but Percy dislikes the situation; "It didn't seem right. I didn't want to fight to entertain a bunch of monsters, but Ethan Nakamura wasn't giving me much choice" (2008, p. 248). When Percy eventually knocks

Ethan to the ground and is told to kill him, he refuses and sheathes his sword instead. Throughout the fight against Kronos, Percy actively tries to help and save demigods who have gone to the other side. When he and Beckendorf are blowing up the *Princess Andromeda* in *The Last Olympian*, Percy warns them, which risks their own mission, to give them a chance to escape:

No way was I going to hurt him. I didn't need a weapon for this. I stepped inside his strike and grabbed his wrist, slamming it against the wall. His sword clattered out of his hands.

Then I did something I hadn't planned on. It was probably stupid. It definitely jeopardized our mission, but I couldn't help it.

'If you want to live,' I told him, 'get off this ship *now*. Tell the other demigods.' (2009, p. 14)

Percy strongly believes that everyone deserves a chance, and it is partly because of this belief that he continues to save demigods whenever he can. He feels sorry for them, believing them to be "brainwashed – trained to hate the gods" (2009, p. 14), and by saving them, he can help them see the truth and join their side instead. Even in the midst of battle amongst enemy monsters and demigods, Percy actively tries not to kill any demigods.

I tried to wound his men, not kill. That slowed me down, but these weren't monsters. They were demigods who'd fallen under Kronos's spell. I couldn't see faces under their battle helmets, but some of them had probably been my friends. (2009, p. 177)

By not fighting to kill all his enemies, Percy is giving himself a great disadvantage, but his morals are so strong that he refuses to do anything else. He cannot see them as monsters because he is empathic to their situation and truly believes that they are not all bad and can be turned to the right side again.

These strong morals that Percy has do not only include not hurting innocents, but also helping them as much as he can, including animals and other sea creatures. We first see this

in *The Lightning Thief* when they travel to Las Vegas by hitching a ride with an animal transportation lorry. They all notice how badly the animals have it inside their cages and do their best to help them, giving them their correct foods and filling their water bowls (2005, p. 146). In unison, they decide to free the animals, knowing that the animals will be safe with Grover's sanctuary blessing until they reach the wild. In *The Titan's Curse*, we learn that Percy spends a lot of his free time helping different sea creatures in trouble. The pegasus Blackjack comes to get Percy to help these creatures, as Percy caused the distraction that gave Blackjack the chance to escape Luke's ship where he was captured:

I groaned. Anytime I was anywhere near the beach, the hippocampi would ask me to help them with their problems. And they had a lot of problems. Beached whales, porpoises caught in fishing nets, mermaids with hangnails – they'd call me to come underwater and help. (2007, p. 105)

Although Percy may not like being asked all of these favours, he still follows through and does help whenever he can. He always agrees to help them, knowing that it is the right thing to do. Following his morals of helping whenever he can also benefit Percy at times, showing that being kind has benefits. When Percy has to clean out a stable of flesh-eating horses in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, he plans on using a river to clean it out as Hercules did in the myth. However, when he gets to the river, Percy is met by a river naiad who does not want him to use her river, as it will be polluted for a long time afterwards. Percy tries to talk her into letting him use it but quickly realises something:

She looked like she was ready for a fight. Her fists were balled; but I thought I heard a little quaver in her voice. Suddenly I realized that, despite her angry attitude, she was afraid of me. She probably thought I was going to fight her for control of the river, and she was worried she would lose.

The thought made me sad. I felt like a bully, a son of Poseidon throwing his weight around. (2008, p. 143)

Having been bullied a lot throughout his life, Percy does not want to be a bully to someone else. He dislikes the feeling of intimidating others and chooses to back down instead, as he does not want to hurt the naiad or her river. Being thankful that Percy backs down, the naiad offers him some advice, which then helps Percy clean the stables. She tells him: “You’re not so different from me, demigod. Even when I’m out of the water, the water is within me” (p. 144), advice which sticks with Percy and helps him remember his powers even when he thinks water is far away and feel helpless. By being kind instead of intimidating, both Percy and the naiad get a positive outcome from their meeting, and Percy even gets help from her, though not in the way he first expected.

Percy learns to become confident in his abilities as a fighter, using the aspects he is good at to his advantage. This also leads to him becoming over-confident at times, believing he can fight against those more powerful than him. One instance of this is when he challenges Ares to a fight, wanting the god of war to fight him himself instead of using other means:

I turned back to Ares. ‘Are you going to fight me now?’ I asked. ‘Or are you going to hide behind another pet pig?’

Ares’s face was purple with rage. ‘Watch it, kid. I could turn you into –

‘A cockroach,’ I said. ‘Or a tapeworm. Yeah, I’m sure. That’d save you from getting your godly hide whipped, wouldn’t it?’ (2005, p. 325)

Percy’s confidence in himself causes him to antagonise Ares, making him angry enough to accept the challenge. Annabeth tries to persuade Percy to not go through with it, but she must accept that he is too stubborn to listen to sense. Percy uses what he has learned from Annabeth and other campers to strategize how to win, knowing that he cannot win against a god using only strength. The use of tactics gives Percy the chance to win in this fight, strategically using his strengths to gain an advantage over Ares.

As Percy is the narrator of the series, we often get an insight into how he is feeling, and he is not afraid to show his feelings to his friends. He describes himself as sad several times

throughout the series, but he never says that he is outright crying, even though he describes other people as doing so.

After having left the Underworld and his mother, Annabeth tries to talk to him about it, but he pretends not to hear her: “If I talked about my mother, I was going to start crying like a little kid” (2005, p. 321). It is unclear why he is hesitant to show his feelings and cry at this moment, there are several reasons that could be the case. He could feel embarrassed if he cries, or maybe Percy thinks that he does not have the time, as they must continue on with their quest. Whatever the reason may be, he chooses to keep this feeling of sadness inside himself. This does not mean that he thinks of crying as a weakness, as he never describes someone else crying as something negative.

Friends leaving him repeatedly makes Percy sad, as he wants to keep his friends close to him. When Grover leaves to search for the god Pan, Percy finds it hard to say goodbye as Grover is his best friend. Percy’s need to have his friends close to him causes him sadness even though he knows they are still friends. When Tyson leaves camp to help Poseidon under the ocean, Percy “couldn’t help feeling sad” (2006, p. 261) even though he knows Tyson will be having a great time, and they will see each other again.

Percy is not afraid to describe his feelings of sadness to the readers through narration, often feeling them deeply and thoroughly. After thinking that Tyson has died in the explosion of the *CSS Birmingham*, Percy feels hopeless: “The last thing I remembered was sinking in a burning sea, knowing that Tyson was gone forever, and wishing I were able to drown” (2006, p. 157). By describing his feelings in this way, it is evident that Percy has feelings of deep anguish with the loss of his brother, yet again establishing the importance of family for him.

It is not only the loss of close friends that makes Percy feel sadness; losing any fellow campers makes him sad. After the battle is finished in *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, Percy notes that “[t]here were too many goodbyes. That night was the first time I actually saw camp burial shrouds used on bodies, and it was not something I want to see again” (2008, p. 319). Percy notes that the brother of one of the deceased campers “trie[s] to say a few

words, but he choke[s] up” (p. 319), but there is no mention of Percy crying or choking up himself. He does not focus much on his own emotions and feelings, other than the fact that he does not want to see anything like this again. Even after losing Beckendorf at the beginning of *The Last Olympian*, a fellow camper and a friend of Percy, his focus is not on his own feelings. Instead, he thinks about the life Beckendorf had ahead of him and the surrealness of him really being gone. “I knew in my gut he was dead. He’s sacrificed himself to take out the *Princess Andromeda*, and I had abandoned him” (2009, p. 26) Percy thinks to himself, feeling more guilt for not being able to save him than sadness. There are no mentions of tears or crying until Percy returns to camp where he tells the news to the other campers, including Beckendorf’s girlfriend.

Though Percy does not openly cry, he does not hide his feelings. When fellow camper Connor sees Percy returning after Beckendorf’s death, Percy clearly shows his sadness on his face. As soon as Connor sees Percy’s expression, he knows something terrible has happened (2009, p. 38), meaning that Percy is not hiding his emotions. Percy later describes losing Beckendorf as “the worst” (p. 41), and that “it felt like someone had stolen the anchor for the entire camp” (p. 41), showing that this loss has had a big impact on him. It is clear that Percy cares deeply about all his friends and fellow campers, and he feels the loss of every single one. When smelling a flower that reminds him of camp, Percy says that he feels calmed down, but that it also makes him sad because of the reminder of all the friends he has lost (p. 96).

When the battle starts in New York, Percy is protective and does not want his allies to get hurt. After getting help from a camper, Michael Yew, Percy turns to say thank you when he realises that Michael is gone:

I turned to thank Michael Yew, but the words died in my throat. Five metres away, a bow lay in the street. Its owner was nowhere to be seen.

‘No!’ I searched the wreckage on my side of the bridge. I stared down at the river. Nothing.

I yelled in anger and frustration. (2009, p. 180)

Percy's sadness can often turn into anger and frustration instead of just sadness, but it still affects Percy greatly. He often becomes desperate to look for them, forcing himself to find some hope he can cling to. Sometimes, however, he knows that there is no hope, like he knew with Beckendorf. Percy also knows there is no hope with Luke after winning over him in battle and defeating Luke/Kronos. Though Luke has been Percy's enemy for several years, his death still deeply affects Percy. There is no mention of actual tears coming from Percy, but it is evident that he is sad: "We need a shroud," I announced, my voice cracking. 'A shroud for the son of Hermes" (p. 318). His voice cracking is a clear sign that he is either close to tears or already crying, though it is not explicitly stated that he is. He also does not try to hide this fact from his friends or the Olympian gods who arrive, as he is not ashamed of feeling this way.

As we have seen previously, family is one of the most important things to Percy, and he is protective of his family. It is when he is with his mum that he has two moments where it is clear that he is close to crying, though not always out of sadness. In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy returns home to his mother's apartment after finishing his quest. When she sees him, she crushes him with a hug as she cries, and Percy admits that "[his] eyes were a little misty, too. I was shaking, I was so relieved to see her" (2005, p. 347). The relief of seeing his mum back from the Underworld is so great that he is shaking and has tears in his eyes, the closest we ever get to a description of him openly crying. In *The Last Olympian*, Percy sees his mom and her boyfriend sleeping in a car in New York during the battle, and Percy becomes desperate.

'I can't leave them here!' I sounded a little crazy. I pounded on the windshield. 'I have to move them. I have to –'

[...]

My hands trembled. After all I'd been through over the last few days, I felt so stupid and weak, but the sight of my parents made me want to break down.' (2009, p. 254)

This is one of the instances where Percy is most likely closest to crying, describing himself as wanting to break down. There are more physical signs of his sadness in this situation, with his hands trembling and that he “sound[s] a little crazy” (p. 254) when trying to get them to safety. He is not trying to hide his feelings or desperation, but rather turns to Annabeth and Chiron for help and guidance, knowing that they can help him and that he does not have to do this alone.

Percy does not see himself as a great leader, but nevertheless, he acts as a leader throughout the series. By not thinking of himself as the perfect leader, he tends to listen to others and take their advice and input seriously, knowing that others are more knowledgeable than him in different aspects. Percy is not scared of relying on others for help, as he knows that they are stronger together and that he cannot be the best at everything. From his arrival at Camp Half-blood, Percy starts to look to Annabeth for her plans, knowing that she is good at coming up with them. He does not question her when she shares her plans, often knowing that her plans are the best way to do things. These qualities in Percy make it easy for others to see him as a leader and look to him when needed. Annabeth and Grover quickly look to Percy to lead them when they are unsure of something, and him naturally stepping up to the position.

Despite Percy’s reluctance to see himself as a leader, he naturally steps up to the part when needed, especially when his friends are in danger. When metallic spiders attack him and Annabeth in *The Lightning Thief*, he takes charge of finding a way to get them to safety, knowing that Annabeth is too scared to do anything. However, when Annabeth has gathered herself, he easily lets her take over, knowing that she is better at this than he is. Percy’s instinct to realise when something is wrong helps him take the lead in getting out of different situations, such as when he, Annabeth and Grover are visiting the Lotus-eaters’ lair in *The Lightning Thief*. Annabeth and Grover are blissfully unaware of what is happening, but Percy senses something: “I’m not sure when I first realized something was wrong” (2005, p. 261). His instinct after realising this is to get all of them out of the lair so they can return to the quest, forcing Annabeth out of her trance by using her fear of spiders to clear her head (p. 263).

By relying on others and listening to them, Percy learns from them. When Percy, Annabeth and Grover meet Medusa in *The Lightning Thief*, he reveals that he has a strategy ready for when they meet adults, something he has learned from Annabeth, as it seems weird having three 12-year-olds running around by themselves. As he becomes closer friends with Annabeth, Percy also learns to rely on her more and looks to her when he needs advice. If there is something he is struggling with his first thought is: "I needed Annabeth's advice" (2008, p. 68), knowing that she can help him. Percy's instinct is to trust Annabeth and what she says, knowing that she is wise and has experience, and therefore not questioning what she says or her plans. Though things might seem impossible to Percy, if Annabeth says that how it works, he does not disbelieve her as "[s]he probably knew what she was talking about" (2008, p. 104).

Percy's leadership skills shine through in *The Last Olympian* during the battles. It is Percy who organises the fighting, ordering the different cabins to different points where they are needed. The campers naturally look to him as a leader and listen to what he has to say, but are not afraid to share their own opinions, as they know he will listen to them. Percy has a strategy of how they are going to defend New York, delegating tasks to the campers who are best suited to them, and letting them defend their position however works best for them. When a daughter of Aphrodite talks about stopping at Fifth Avenue to accessorise and put on perfume, he sternly tells them, "No delays [...] Well ... the perfume thing, if you think it'll work" (2009, p. 157), clearly trusting them to make the best decision and using what they know. Percy is very intent on keeping everyone's morale up, feeling that he therefore cannot show his own fear or feelings: "They all looked at me, waiting for a decision. I couldn't afford to show how panicked I felt, even if things seemed hopeless" (p. 192). He takes his responsibility seriously and continuously tries to cheer everyone up so they do not lose hope, even if he has lost it himself. He knows the power a strong leader can have and tries to live up to that to the best of his ability.

Percy is never ashamed of admitting that he is scared, knowing that fear is not a sign of weakness. From the beginning of the first book, Percy unashamedly describes his feelings of fear when seeing Mrs. Dodds as a Fury for the first time: "My knees were jelly. My hands were shaking so bad I almost dropped the sword. [...] Absolute terror ran through my body"

(2005, p. 13). Percy is not trying to hide the fact that he is scared; instead just describing to the reader what he is feeling with no shame. In *The Last Olympian*, Percy fights the Minotaur for a second time, after defeating it in *The Lightning Thief*. Even after all these years and all the experiences he has had, he is still terrified of this monster:

On the way to the bridge, a knot formed in the pit of my stomach. The Minotaur was one of the first monsters I'd ever defeated. Four years ago he'd nearly killed my mother on Half-Blood Hill. I still had nightmares about that. (2009, p. 169)

Again, Percy does not show any signs of seeing this as a weakness, as it is a legitimate thing to fear. But once again, he is able not to let his fear get the best of him and defeats the Minotaur for a second time. It seems that Percy has an upper limit on how scared he is able to be before he stops registering more fear. When talking to Dionysus about how the world would be if Kronos won over the gods, Percy realises "[m]aybe I should've been terrified, but, honestly, I was already about as scared as I could get" (p. 253). Percy acknowledges the gravity of the situation and how bad it would be but also knows that he has reached his limit on fear and can therefore not add more fear on top of what he is already feeling.

It is not only when faced with immediate danger that Percy gets scared. When he sees the Oracle at camp for the first time he is scared, though he never uses those words. Instead, he says that it gave him "chills up [his] back" (2005, p. 140). He fights this fear to get his prophecy but also uses humour to lessen the situation in his mind. The Oracle's voice enters Percy's head and speaks to him:

I am the spirit of Delphi, speaker of the prophecies of Phoebus Apollo, slayer of the mighty Python. Approach, seeker, and ask.

I wanted to say, *No thanks, wrong door, just looking for the bathroom.*
But I forced myself to take a deep breath. (p. 140)

Here, Percy clearly must overcome his own fear and want to leave the situation and is able to do so. By using humour he defuses the tension and fear for himself, allowing him to calm down and continue forward to the Oracle.

It is through his fear that Percy can show how brave he is, constantly fighting against his fear to do what needs to be done. When flying from L.A to New York in *The Lightning Thief*, he is openly scared for the duration of the entire flight: “Takeoff was a nightmare. Every spot of turbulence was scarier than a Greek monster. I didn’t unclench my hands from the armrests until we touched down safely at La Guardia” (2005, p. 335). No matter how scared Percy is of flying, he still goes through with it because he knows that flying is the only option. There are other times when Percy must fight hard against his fear to do what he sees as the only option. In *The Battle of The Labyrinth*, he finds Kronos’ fortress, and though Kronos terrifies Percy, he feels he must enter the fortress in order to learn more about his enemy. “I didn’t want to get anywhere close to that horrible black mausoleum, but I knew what I had to do. I had to stop Kronos from rising” (2008, p. 284). By seeing the thought process behind Percy’s actions, we are able to understand them better and get a good insight into Percy’s feelings. He does not let feelings of fear get in the way, instead he fights through them.

Percy sees his friends as brave, even braver than him in many aspects. Because of this, he also has a great respect for their fear, knowing that fear is not a weakness. This is clear in his relationship with Annabeth when in *The Lightning Thief* she has a thought that she is “too scared to share” (2005, p. 306), which in turn is “enough to terrify [Percy]” (p. 306). Being surrounded by friends gives Percy strength and he finds it easier to suppress his fear, though he is still able to feel it. Thinking back on his first trip to the Underworld, Percy knows that “only Annabeth and Grover’s company had given [him] the courage to keep going” (2009, p. 107). When Beckendorf summons Percy to blow up the *Princess Andromeda* he thinks: “A lump formed in my throat. I’d known this was coming. We’d been planning it for weeks, but I’d half hoped it would never happen” (2009, p. 5), telling the readers how he feels the fear in his body. He never dismisses his fear as useless, knowing that he usually has a good reason to be scared as he is in danger. Percy fears Kronos’ blade, a fear that makes sense considering that it is a dangerous weapon which could kill him, but still fights against Kronos: “Just looking at the [sword] made my knees turn to Jell-O. Bust before I could change my mind I charged” (p. 16).

Percy is a character with many different traits, as seen in this analysis. He is a complex character that shows a range of emotions throughout the series but never thinking of his feelings as a weakness. He is extremely loyal to his friends, willing to go to great lengths to keep them safe and happy. Though he is a brave character, he is not afraid to show that he is scared at times as well, knowing that weakness does not make him weak.

4.4 Monsters

4.4.1 Medusa

Our introduction to Medusa in Riordan's version in *The Lightning Thief* starts with neon signs and the smell of greasy food, where the neon sign reads "Aunty Em's Garden Gnome Emporium". Riordan has taken one version of the myth and expanded it, adapting Medusa to fit into the 21st century. She has a hatred for Athena and all her children because Athena turned her into a monster after finding out that Medusa and Poseidon would meet up in her temple. As punishment, Medusa and her two sisters were turned into the three gorgons. Medusa tells her own story a little bit different to our heroes. She explains that "a bad woman was jealous" (Riordan, 2005, p. 176) of her because of her boyfriend and wanted to break them apart. This woman caused a terrible accident, and Medusa's sisters had to share her bad fortune until they passed on. Our heroes are lured in by the smell of junk food, a smell so good that all they can think about is food, and therefore do not realise the danger. When they meet Medusa, she does not give off a threatening vibe, but rather the opposite. Percy "imagined she was a grandmother who had once been a beautiful lady" (p. 172). She is described as a Middle Eastern looking woman with a slight Middle Eastern sounding accent. She wears a long black gown "that covered everything but her hands" (p. 172), which were well manicured. Her head is covered by a black veil, also covering her face. However, her appearance changes once she is uncovered and shows who she really is. Her hands become "gnarled and warty, with sharp bronze talons for fingernails" (p. 179), and the snakes around her head can clearly be seen without the veil on. Her face is never properly described, but it is clear that she is hideous. Percy looks at her reflection through a glass ball, and he thinks, "[s]urely it wasn't really *that* ugly" (p. 183), thinking the glass ball distorts it and makes it look worse. Though it is not explained how this happens, Medusa is also able to put a trance on Percy, making him sleepy and wanting to obey her. It also

appears that this trance is broken once people realise who she is, as they are then able to fight her. Percy cuts her head off, and whilst the rest of her disintegrates, her head becomes a spoil of war and retains the power to petrify anyone looking directly at it.

In *Theogony* by Hesiod, Medusa is one of three Gorgon sisters (Hard, 2004, p. 59). They are placed in different geographical locations in different versions, but most agree that they lived “in or beyond the Ocean” (p. 60). The appearance of the gorgons is not described by Hesiod, though they have regularly been pictured as hideous monsters, with snakes as hair, large teeth and sometimes even tusks, like those of wild boars (p. 60). They were said to be so hideous that a person who looked at them would turn into stone. Medusa is the most famous of the three gorgons, mainly because of Perseus and his story. Perseus was ordered to go on a quest to fetch Medusa’s head and beheaded her while she was sleeping, taking her head with him. After her death, her head still had the power to turn people into stone. It is also said that her blood had special powers after her death, and Athena collected some of her blood and gave it away. Blood from the left side of her body was said to be a deadly poison used to kill people, whilst blood from the right side of her body could be used as a cure for disease, and even raise people from the dead (Hard, p. 61). In *Metamorphoses*, the blood dripping from Medusa’s head during Perseus’ travels is attributed to the creation of snakes in Libya: “As he flew over / The Libyan sands, drops from the Gorgon’s head / Fell bloody on the ground, and earth received them / Turning them into vipers” (Ovid, l. 618-621). When Medusa was killed, she was pregnant with Poseidon’s children, who then sprung from her neck when she was beheaded. The children were Chryser and Pegasos, with Pegasos being the famous, mythical winged horse.

So, why would Poseidon want to sleep with this monster with looks so hideous and horrific that people turned into stone when looking at her? It is suggested that she had exceptional beauty before being turned into a monster. According to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Medusa was a beautiful woman with many suitors, and her hair was the most beautiful part of her (l.794-796). There is a general consensus that Athena transformed Medusa from a beautiful woman to this hideous gorgon, but there are various reasons as to why she did this. In *Metamorphoses*, she does this as punishment, as Medusa and Poseidon (Neptune in *Metamorphoses*) slept together in a temple dedicated to her. “As it deserved, [Athena]

changed her hair to serpents” (Ovid, l.800) when she saw this disrespect to her happen. In *Theogony*, “Dark-maned Poseidon lay with one of these [gorgons], Medousa, / on a soft meadow strewn with spring flowers” (Hesiod, l.278-279), though it is not mentioned why Athena then turned her into a monster. Other versions tell that Athena transformed Medusa to protect her from greedy and violent men, making her a monster so they would not lust after her. In these tellings of the myth, Poseidon rapes Medusa in Athena’s temple, and to prevent it from happening again, Athena transforms her. Whether Medusa was a willing participant with Poseidon is not consistent, as it can depend on different translations of the same text. In *Metamorphoses: The New, Annotated Edition*, which is translated by Rolfe Humphries, they write “The sovereign of the sea [Poseidon] is said to have deflowered her in the Temple of Minerva [Athena]” (Ovid, 1893, l.797-798), whereas another translation phrases it differently: “One day Neptune [Poseidon] / Found her and raped her, in Minerva’s [Athena’s] temple” (Ovid, 2018, l.797-798).

As described, there are several different versions of Medusa’s myth, all of which can be interpreted in different aspects. Riordan’s retelling of her myth is clearly adapted to a modern world whilst still being a continuation of the older myths he has based his version on.

As the monsters in the Percy Jackson books are the same monsters as in the myths, Riordan has chosen versions of these myths to be their background. The monsters in his universe cannot die, so when they are slain by the heroes they get sent to Tartarus and eventually reappear in the mortal world. The only way for monsters to truly be killed is if they are forgotten, as it is implied Medusa’s sisters were when she says they have passed on. By implementing this, Medusa still has her origin story where she was killed by Perseus, Percy’s namesake, while also being included in his story. Our first meeting with her shows how her story has been modernised in this retelling. Her lair has been transformed from a hidden cave to a roadside business, luring people in with signs and the smell of food. Comparing this to older versions, she can be viewed more as an active predator than a victim. She invites people in with her caring persona and business, instead of being hidden away in a cave where many of her victims have sought her out to kill her.

Riordan has chosen to base his retelling on the version where Medusa and Poseidon were in a relationship, as told by Annabeth to Percy: "They decided to meet in my mother's temple. That's why Athena turned her into a monster" (2005, p. 185). We can assume that Athena turned Medusa into a monster as revenge for disrespecting her temple. It also explains why Medusa wants to kill Annabeth but preserve Percy as a statue. As Annabeth continues, "[s]he's still sweet on your dad" (p. 185), explaining to both the Percy and the reader that Medusa wanted to be in a relationship with Poseidon and therefore does not want to kill his children, as they remind her of him.

One questionable aspect of this version of the myth is why does Athena only punish Medusa and not Poseidon? Annabeth is clear in her perspective where she blames Poseidon for "this monster" (Riordan, 2005, p. 185). If this is the case, that this is Poseidon's fault, we can repeat the question, why was only Medusa punished? Two people were involved in disrespecting Athena's temple, but only the female part was punished. Turned into a monster so hideous that looking at her face turned you into stone, and then being killed by a hero when she was hiding away far away from people. But Poseidon was a fellow god, and one with an arguably higher status and more powers than Athena, so it is possible that Athena simply was unable to punish him because of this. It is easy to see Medusa as a victim in older retellings of the myths: a beautiful maiden who roused the attention of a powerful god who in turn raped her in a temple to Athena. After having this happen to her, she is further punished by Athena, who blames her for this happening. She is then hunted as a feared monster while hiding away with her sisters, not going out and seeking people to kill. You could also argue that Athena transformed her for Medusa's own protection, taking away her beauty so that men would not be tempted by her. In that case, Athena is trying to help her, but Medusa is still hunted as a monster. This version of Medusa is in stark contrast to the Medusa we meet in *The Lightning Thief* where she has become a vicious monster, actively trying to lure in victims to turn into stone. She hides who she is with her clothing and sweet demeanour until it is too late for her victims, and they are turned into statues. Even with the name she goes by, Aunty Em, gives off a non-threatening aura to people who are passing by. People will visit under the guise that they are entering a garden gnome statuary owned by a caring woman, but underneath her clothing lies a vicious monster looking for her next victim.

There are clearly both differences and similarities with Riordan's retelling of Medusa. He has chosen one version of her myth as her background in his version and continues to build upon this. She is a more one-dimensional monster who only exists to ensnare her victims in her lair in the modern world. She has more agency over her actions, which can also be interpreted as her being more empowered and doing what she wants.

4.4.2 Circe

We meet Circe in the second book in the Percy Jackson series, *The Sea of Monsters*, when Percy and Annabeth have arrived in the Sea of Monsters and find Circe's island. Her island is described as having "a small mountain in the centre, a dazzling white collection of buildings, a beach dotted with palm trees and a harbour filled with a strange assortment of boats" (Riordan, 2006, p. 161). However, it is not revealed immediately that Circe lives on this island, neither to the readers nor Percy and Annabeth. As Percy and Annabeth arrive at the island, they are met by a woman working for Circe; she is named Hylla and acting as a receptionist. She is described as looking like a flight attendant with a "blue business suit, perfect makeup, hair pulled back in a ponytail" (p. 162). By welcoming people who come to her island like this, Circe gives them an aura of professionalism and calm, making them feel comfortable. This makes it easier for visitors to let their guard down and makes them more vulnerable to Circe's magic and tricks.

While her island is filled with luxury and opulence in *The Sea of Monsters*, Circe also cleverly hides her identity as the well-known mythical figure. Instead of going by her actual name, she calls herself C.C. This causes her true identity to be hidden from Percy and Annabeth until Annabeth hears her story and realises who the spa owner actually is. Circe's island represents itself as a spa, welcoming visitors to relax and enjoy themselves. This is further reinforced by her attendant, Hylla, that meets with the visitors as they arrive at the island, meeting them with a clipboard and asking if they have been at this spa before. It seems as if Circe's magic encapsulates the island affecting visitors as soon as they step foot on her land. The first hint of this is that Percy forgets about his defences as they wander further into the island, letting his guard down (p. 163). As they come closer to Circe herself, the magic seems

to strengthen, affecting both Percy and Annabeth. It is unclear how this magic works, as it is never explained. Still, it is clear that Circe has an impact on Percy's feelings: "We introduced ourselves to C.C. She looked over me with a twinge of disapproval, as if I'd failed some kind of test. Immediately, I felt bad. For some reason, I really wanted to please this lady" (p. 165). Using her magic to make her visitors want to please her makes it easier for Circe to transform them into what she wants, especially the boys and men.

Circe is described as a beautiful woman with "long dark hair [that] was braided with threads of gold" (p. 164). Her glamorous looks are reinforced by her "piercing green eyes" (p. 164) and the silky black dress she wears. Circe's appearance, combined with her spellbinding voice, offers the illusion of safety when near her. With her magic, Circe can manipulate her visitors into doing what she wants, and she represents herself as an authority, a person who knows how to help them become better. She feeds on their insecurities, not by being mean or rude, but by highlighting how she can make them even better, offering solutions that only she has. Her voice has magical abilities, most likely being capable of charmspeak, which causes visitors to fall into a trance and obey her wishes. By using this ability, she is able to make visitors forget the reason they came, making them want to stay on the island and never leave.

The introduction of Circe in *The Sea of Monsters* and *The Odyssey* mirror each other, with several similarities. When Percy and Odysseus first see Circe, she sings as she is weaving on her loom. It seems that her voice has magical properties; in *the Odyssey*, it is described as "spellbinding" (Homer, p. 37), whilst it is said that "[h]er voice seemed to lift me off the steps and carry me towards her" (Riordan, p. 164) in *The Sea of Monsters*. The tapestry she is weaving is of such high quality that it seems magical, or "a shimmering glory only goddesses can weave" (Homer, p. 37). Her weaving skill is also apparent in Riordan's book, and Percy sees it as so good that it seemed three-dimensional, the scene so lifelike "that [Percy] could see the water moving and clouds drifting across a fabric sky" (Riordan, p. 164).

Circe's connection to animals and nature is evident from the moment Percy and Annabeth step foot on her island, from the environment to how she dresses. Her silky black dress is described as having "shapes that seemed to move in the fabric: animal shadows, black upon

black, like deer running through a forest at night” (p. 164). The space around her buildings is surrounded by tame animals living on the island, something that is mentioned both in *The Sea of Monsters*: “We passed all kinds of tame animals. A sea turtle napped in a stack of beach towels” (Riordan, p. 163) and *The Odyssey*:

Mountain wolves and lions were roaming round the grounds – she’d bewitched them herself, she gave them magic drugs. But they wouldn’t attack my men; they just came pawing up around them, fawning, swishing their long tails – eager as hounds that fawn around their master, coming home from a feast, who always brings back scraps to calm them down. (Homer, p. 36)

In Homer’s description, all the tame animals have been bewitched by Circe, so they are not dangerous to her or visitors. In both tellings of Circe’s myth, the animals are not men changed into animals, but animals that are under Circe’s spell to be tame. Men visiting her island are turned into pigs and kept in her pigsties, or into guinea pigs and kept in a cage. Riordan has modernised and updated Circe in his version, changing aspects of her character but using older myths as her backstory. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Circe acknowledges that she used to turn men into pigs but decided to turn them into guinea pigs after a while as they require less keep: “Guinea pigs are much more convenient!” (p. 169).

Circe has clear justifications for her actions in her mind, not believing that she is doing anything wrong. She tells Percy “Men are pigs” (p. 169), showing an apparent dislike against all men with such a generalisation. Circe clearly believes that she is simply physically transforming men into what they truly are on the inside, as she is repeatedly talking about how she allows them to unlock their “true self” (p. 169). She uses trickery to get men and boys to take her magical potion, using a magical mirror where they can see their ideal version of themselves. Percy sees himself in this mirror, describing it as “a reflection, but not a reflection [...] It was me, without the faults” (p. 167). Circe never explicitly states that this is the true self that she will turn them into, only talking about how she will turn them into their perfect versions of themselves. And this is no lie, as she sees their perfect versions as pigs.

Although Circe proclaims how women should have power, these statements contradict her earlier actions from myths. In Ovid's telling of Circe, she harms other women because of jealousy over a man. In this version, she is in love with Glaukos, who, in turn, is in love with a woman named Skylla. When Glaukos comes to Circe for help to win over Skylla, she chooses to curse the woman instead of helping. By sprinkling herbs and chanting magical spells over Skylla's bath water, Circe turns her into the monster who, in Riordan's telling, protects the entrance to the sea of monsters from her cave (Hard, 2004, p. 297). Riordan's Circe does not include any mentions of this happening; instead, he presents her as someone who wants to help other women get power.

Circe does not only want men to become their true selves, she also wants her female visitors to do so as well. However, their transformation does not include being turned into animals or something else but is about unlocking their inner potential to become great. Circe wants to give Annabeth a full image consultation after changing Percy into a guinea pig, telling Annabeth: "My dear, you are lovely. Really! But you're not showing off yourself or your talents at all. So much wasted potential! [...] We can improve anyone here at the spa" (p. 165). According to Circe, the way to unlock your true self does not only include improving upon your talents and using them, but also a changing of your appearance. This is evident when Annabeth returns after being shown around by Hylla, who has given her a physical makeover:

[Annabeth] was wearing a sleeveless silk dress like C.C.'s, only white.
Her blonde hair newly washed and combed and braided with gold.
Worst of all, she was wearing makeup, which I never thought
Annabeth would be caught dead in. I mean, she looked good. Really
good. (p. 170)

This makeover of Annabeth shows that Circe sees femininity as something powerful, giving Annabeth a stereotypical feminine look in contrast to what she had before. By changing her hairstyle, applying makeup, and changing her into a dress, Circe plays into the stereotype that women have to be beautiful and that these changes make them beautiful.

It is not through appearance alone that Circe wants to reclaim power of men, but also through talents, and especially magic. Circe has an extensive library that contains knowledge of all kinds, in her own words: “The best knowledge of the past three millennia. Anything you want to study, anything you want to be, my dear” (p. 171). She believes that magic is the best way for women to gain control and power, with the goal of overpowering men. Circe dismisses Annabeth’s wish to become an architect, not thinking that being a great architect is enough to gain power. Instead, she wants to teach Annabeth the ways of magic, making her into a sorceress like herself:

‘You my dear, have the makings of a sorceress. Like me.’

[...]

‘My mother is Hecate, the goddess of magic. I know a daughter of Athena when I see one. We are not so different, you and I. We both seek knowledge. We both admire greatness. Neither of us needs to stand in the shadow of men.’ (p. 171)

Through her words to Annabeth, it is clear that Circe firmly believes that magic empowers women. She feels that women have been overshadowed by men for far too long and is working to change that, doing what she believes is right.

Circe is immortal, meaning that she has lived for millennia. She was alive during the ancient period in Greece, as that is where she originated. Her grudge against men has clearly been built up over a long period of time, though she disliked men even in ancient times, as seen in *The Odyssey*. In Ancient Greece, women did not have the same power as they have today, as they often had to listen to the male leader of their household. There were strict rules to what was deemed appropriate for women to do, and they had limited freedom. These factors result in Circe feeling justified in her work to fight against men and patriarchal views, feeling that it is women’s time to rule the world instead of men.

Riordan has taken aspects from older versions of the Circe myths and incorporated them into his own telling of the myth. Based on previous tellings, he has built a new character that can be seen as more easily relatable to a modern reader while preserving older elements.

5. Discussion

This thesis aimed to provide a gender-oriented analysis of the characters in the Percy Jackson series. In this chapter, I will use my findings from the analyses to discuss the implications of these and compare the different characters to each other. During this chapter, I will be answering the three sub-questions that I mentioned in my introduction using the findings and theory:

1. How are Annabeth and Clarisse portrayed in the Percy Jackson series?
2. How do female mythological figures get portrayed by Rick Riordan?
3. How does Rick Riordan depict the female Greek monsters, and are there any gendered implications of this?

As well as answering these three questions, I will also be answering the overarching research question: *How are female characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in Greek myths?* While analysing the characters, I always had these questions in my mind, wanting to find the answers. As the sub-questions require separate discussions and answers, I will be doing so in their own sub-chapters, followed by a sub-chapter on the overarching research questions.

Before diving into the first sub-question, there are some aspects that I want to discuss. In the Percy Jackson books by Riordan, demigods act as a bridge between the mythological and the real world. By using young characters such as Percy, Annabeth, and Clarisse, Riordan makes it easier for young readers to enter the mythological world. Riordan makes it easier for his readers to enter his world full of Greek myths, retelling the myths in such a way that they are more accessible and understandable for his readers.

5.1 How are Annabeth and Clarisse portrayed in the Percy Jackson series?

Judith Butler argues that gender is something we do, that we enact our gender through our actions. This thought implies that specific actions are gendered, and what actions imply what gender varies in different societies and cultures. As demigods are part of both modern Western society and the society in the Greek myths, their actions can have two different meanings in the two societies. During my analyses of Clarisse, Annabeth, and Percy, no

distinct traits that were treated as either masculine or feminine. Characters of all genders carry both masculine and feminine traits, and they all exhibit a great variety of traits and actions that they do throughout the series.

As presented in chapter 3.2 Gender, some traits are typically seen as more masculine and more feminine. These traits help reinforce gender roles in societies, guiding how the different genders should behave to follow norms. I introduced a table from Evans and Davies' studies with different traits, a description of the traits, and whether they are stereotypically seen as masculine and feminine. In my analyses of Annabeth, Clarisse, and Percy, it is evident that Riordan has limited himself to giving his characters traits that are stereotypical of their gender. All three characters exhibit various traits that are seen as masculine and feminine in table 1, all having an assortment of both masculine and feminine traits.

All three characters exhibit assertive, self-reliant, emotionally expressive, and understanding traits. They exhibit them in varying degrees, but these traits make up their respective personalities. There is no distinguished difference between the two female characters and Percy; the only male character analysed in this thesis. This variation in traits differs from what Kortenhaus and Demarest found in their research, where they found that male characters were often portrayed as more competent than female characters (1993, p. 220). Annabeth, Clarisse, and Percy are all competent characters and work towards their goals. They are not reliant on other people, though they choose to work with their friends because they want to and because they know they have different strengths. Annabeth and Clarisse are both portrayed as natural leaders over their respective cabins, a trait that fits Evans and Davies' stereotypical masculine trait *assertive*.

Annabeth and Clarisse are seen as being more open about their crying than Percy is, a characteristic that fits under the stereotypical feminine trait *emotionally expressive* in Evans and Davies' table. Despite this overrepresentation of crying in the female characters, crying is not seen as a weakness by any characters. Not portraying this stereotypical feminine trait in a negative light is a stark contrast to Paechter statements, which includes that femininity has less power than masculinity. Though there are no explicit examples of Percy crying

throughout the series, this does not mean that he is not an emotionally expressive character. Percy does not close off his feelings or hide them from others, he just expresses them in other ways. He may never explicitly cry in any of the books, but he does show it through facial expressions, body language, and by talking. As the narrator of the book, we gain a deeper insight into Percy's emotional life than of the other characters, with Riordan using his thoughts to describe his sadness in more detail than he can with the other characters.

Riordan does not conform to the typical stereotypes with his characters, giving them all masculine and feminine traits. The most aggressive character in my analyses have not been Percy, though he is the only male. It is Clarisse, who is portrayed as an excessively aggressive character at times, often using violence and fighting instead of words. Percy acts as a contrast to this, being one who dislikes violence and aggressiveness. Though he can be aggressive at times, it is clear that this is a trait that he does not like and wants to change.

Annabeth and Clarisse subvert the findings made by Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) saying that female characters are more passive and does not do as much as male characters (p. 220-221). Riordan's female characters are as capable as their male counterparts, if not even more. Percy repeatedly looks to Annabeth for help and guidance, showing that she is often seen as the more able of the two. Riordan never puts feminine traits in a negative light and does not portray femininity as something that holds less power than masculinity. The only character who suggests that males are more competent than females is Ares, when he questions whether Clarisse is capable of succeeding in her quest. However, Ares is a god and is therefore immortal, meaning that he was also alive in Ancient Greece and presumably got this notion from earlier times, as no other character states that this is what they believe.

5.2 How do female mythological figures get portrayed by Rick Riordan?

In the Percy Jackson series, Riordan continues the tradition of retelling myths and changing them to fit into his own time and society. He builds upon older stories of Medusa and Circe and develops their character to fit into his own narrative. Doherty states that the tradition of retelling myths includes altering the "motives of characters" (2001, p. 19), something that

is seen in Riordan's telling of Medusa and Circe. Riordan has taken their old stories and built upon them, transitioning them to characters that are modernised and more easily available for his younger audience.

Riordan's Circe explicitly contradicts Paechter statement that femininity cannot give power. Where Paechter claims that hyperfemininity is a position with no power (2006, p. 9), Circe uses femininity to give herself and other women power. Instead of distancing herself from feminine stereotypes, Circe embraces them sees them as powerful. When Circe wants to help Annabeth unleash her true self she gives her a stereotypical feminine makeover, showing that this empowers women instead of diminishing their abilities.

Circe's motivation is fuelled by her view of femininity as powerful. She yearns to take power away from men and giving it to women, thinking that men have been in power for far too long. Circe is a fierce opponent of the notion that women should be subservient to men and listen to them as leaders. As her myth stems from Ancient Greece, her character comes from a time where men had much more power over women than they do in the US in the 21st century, and this is clearly reflected in her hatred against all men. This anger against men has made Riordan's Circe a vengeful character looking to take down what she views as her oppressors. In some ways, Circe can be seen as an extreme feminist, having tipped over from the side of fighting for equality to fighting for men to be suppressed by women. With all public discussions about gender equality and feminism in the world from the 2000's until today, Riordan has successfully modernised her has an extremist with a clear view of how she things the world should be. While Circe's surroundings might not be as modernised as Riordan's retelling of Medusa, this is easily explained by the fact that Circe lives on a secluded island in the Sea of Monsters. She is not a part of modern society in the way other monsters are, so the outwards appearance of her lair has not had the same need to be modernised to fit into society.

Riordan has chosen to portray Medusa in a more violent light than she is in the myths, turning her into an active predator. While Medusa tries to portray herself as a victim to Percy and Annabeth, Riordan's narrative clearly shows that this is a way for Medusa to gain sympathy from her victims before turning them into stone. She uses a guise of an innocent,

older woman to gain trust from the people coming to her lair, literally hiding her identity beneath her clothing which covers her body and head.

Medusa's lair has been moved from a remote grotto to a roadside location, with neon-signs and the smell of greasy food being used to bring people in. Riordan bases his Medusa on a myth where she was in a relationship with Poseidon, and as punishment for disrespecting Athena by using her temple, Medusa is turned into the monster she is today. In Riordan's narrative, Medusa is never portrayed as a victim, except in her own telling of her story. It is presented as a fair punishment to be turned into a monster by Athena, as neither Percy nor Annabeth gives any inclination of them seeing this is an unjust punishment.

Instead of using his retellings of Circe and Medusa as a chance to humanise and redeems them, Riordan vilifies them as minor antagonists and enemies of the protagonist in his story. Despite this, he has given both characters more agency and motive in their own stories and made their myths more available to a modern audience, furthering the tradition of the Greek myths.

5.3 How does Rick Riordan depict the female Greek monsters and are there any gendered implications of this?

Medusa and Circe are the only villains analysed in this thesis, and therefore I will not include Riordan's portrayal of other female monsters in this discussion. However, through his depiction of Medusa he shows a tendency on how he portrays other female monsters as well. In *The Lightning Thief*, Medusa is portrayed as a vicious and evil monster who seeks out her victims by luring them inside her lair before she kills them. Instead of acting out of a sense of self-preservation, she has a never-ending blood lust and is actively looking for victims to add to her personal collection.

The monstrosity of Medusa is reflected in both appearance and her actions. Her appearance is never properly described, but through Percy and his thoughts it clear that she is a hideous creature. So hideous that Percy has trouble believing it, thinking that the image he sees is distorted in some ways. Her hands are the only part of her body that is described, with them

being stereotypically monstrous. Her fingernails are talons, and the rest of her hands are covered in warts. It is implied that the rest of her also looks as hideous, though this is easily attributed to Riordan having based her on earlier myths. After all, in those myths it is their hideous appearance that grants Medusa and her sisters the ability to turn people into stone.

In contrast to Medusa, Circe is described as a beautiful enchantress living on a tropical island. Circe is surrounded by beauty on her island, giving her visitors a feeling of tranquillity and peace of mind. She is not as violent in her methods, not looking to kill even those who have wronged her, instead turning them into animals. There is a large contrast in how Riordan portrays these two characters, with Medusa being a more obvious villain in all of the senses. This contrast is also visible in how they are defeated by Percy and Annabeth, with Medusa having her head sliced off, but Circe still living on her island.

There are some implications of how Riordan has depicted Medusa in his story. She is turned into a jealous and vengeful monster, constantly seeking out new victims and never satisfying her thirst for revenge or blood. Despite millennia having passed, she is still clearly in love with Poseidon, though this love is not enough to stop her from wanting to turn his children into statues. She successfully hides the true monsters that lies beneath until it is too late for her victims to escape, when she unleashes her powers upon them.

5.4 How are female mythological characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in Greek myths?

By answering the previous sub-questions, it is clear that Riordan's characters are often portrayed in a different light than how they are in myth. Medusa has been turned into a villain without any sympathy, wanting to expand her collection of statues by luring in more victims. Circe's motives have been expanded upon, making her more extreme in her ideas and ideology, whilst also showing her motivation for doing so. She is not portrayed as evil to everyone she meets, only to men.

Annabeth, Clarisse, and Percy are characters that Riordan has created himself, as they are not based on older myths. However, these characters are children of Greek gods and

mortals, and are seen as powerful people. There are no indications throughout the series that demigods are treated differently based on their gender, it their abilities that are important. All three characters embodies traits that are traditionally seen as feminine and masculine, and it is never implied that one set of traits are better than the other. It is the mixture of all of these traits that make these characters who they are, and both their masculine and feminine traits are seen as strengths.

There is a clear difference in Riordan's general portrayal of female characters and Ancient Greece, as the expectations of women were much different. The patriarchal structure seen in ancient Athenian society is not present in Riordan's story. The godly parents of demigods are not limited to male ones, the female gods also have children with mortals, therefore these demigods are given their power through their maternal line. The gender of the gods is not a determining factor on how they, or their children, are treated. At Camp Half-Blood, all demigods are seen as equals, regardless of if their godly parent is male or female, or if the demigod is male or female.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed five characters from Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series with my research question in mind: *How are female characters depicted in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series in the light of their portrayal in Greek myths?* Four out of five characters analysed have been female, with one male character to have a comparison and to see if there are any distinct differences. The analyses of the three demigods have focused mainly on their traits and abilities and how these are portrayed throughout the books. The analyses of the two mythological characters have included a comparison of older versions of the myths, looking at the different choices Riordan made when retelling their myths in his own work.

The most important finding was that Riordan has consistently subverted the stereotypical portrayal of male and female characters. In many situations, the female demigods are portrayed as more competent than the male ones, often being the leaders of their groups or cabins. While it is still often seen as a weakness to cry in today's society, Riordan contradicts that by showing strong, capable characters who also cry at times. Showing sadness or crying is never seen as a sign of weakness by other characters in his books, regardless of who is doing the crying. Male and female demigods are all portrayed as equal throughout the series, and he shows the reader that one does not have to fit into a feminine or masculine stereotype.

Another important finding is how Riordan has continued the tradition of retelling myths to modern societies. He has adapted the old versions of Medusa and Circe to fit into a narrative taking place in the 21st century, making it more accessible for younger readers to understand and take an interest in. By making the myths accessible to his readers, he opens the door for further adaptations and retellings of myths. Though Riordan's adaptations of Medusa and Circe are not entirely unproblematic, he has skilfully made them fit into a modern world, even though they are ancient characters.

To end this master thesis, I would like to open for further discussions and research on how characters are portrayed in retellings of myths. I chose to focus on five characters in Riordan's books, but there are countless other characters or books to choose from. I would also suggest researching gender representation in children's literature and what effect that has on young readers, as this was not something I could do in this thesis. Books as popular as the Percy Jackson books reach so many children and, therefore, affect many lives. By having characters that are not defined by gender roles, they can show children that they do not have to fit into a stereotype, and it is important to understand how literature can affect people at such a young age.

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