

Chapter II

Breaking the Mould: Examining Structural Evolution

Narratives are burdened with the strong possibility of capturing the interests and attention of readers that depends upon the narrative's relatability, aesthetics, and structure, which if breached, that leads to narrative ambiguity. Structure aids in the interpretation, analysis, and appreciation of the purpose, style, and genre of narratives; it is often formulaic and invariably warranted with internal consistency of a narrative, that includes originality of plot, subject matter, capacity to incite wonder, and vivid setting. It also covers the characters, their journeys, goals, and transformations which intrinsically shape narratives into a coherent whole.

Conventional structures deal with the hero's journey or quest for tangible material pursuits like precious objects, hidden treasures, gold, fortune, people, or the acquisition of intangible pursuits such as knowledge, power, spiritual enlightenment or inner peace by solving conflicts for a greater good as seen in the select novels of Rick Riordan's Greek mythological retelling PJO – TLT, TSoM, TTC, TBoL, and TLO. As an adaptation of Greek mythical tales, the select novels are infused with a coalescence of Greek myths which “. . . disperse into molecules that conglomerate with each other in reminiscent but new ways – something that is allusive but transformed” due to the reshaping of plot, setting, characters, actions, and events, enabling readers to appreciate the adaptability and flexibility of the original myths (Gupta 98). Linda Hutcheon in the essay “Historiographic Metafiction” (1989), writes that “. . . familiar *stories* . . . get adapted – not only because they *are* familiar, but because they *should be* familiar” and that they are “. . . old story in new guises, and puts flesh on old bones” (334). Readers, who are familiar with the myths, recognise

the familiarity and derivation of archetypes in the select novels, despite their cultural and historical context.

The structure of a narrative consists of a beginning, middle, and an end. Theorists have developed specific structural models, each one, more or less elaborate in classification, namely Gustav Freytag's 'Freytag's Pyramid', Northrop Frye's criticism of myth, John Gardner's 'Fichtean Curve', Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory of equilibrium, Vladimir Propp's narrative structure, Joseph Campbell's journey of the hero called the "monomyth", John Clute's structure of fantasy, and Christopher Vogler's 'Mythic Structure', and character functions put forth by Propp, Vogler, and Algirdas Julien Greimas called the actantial model.

Freytag's Pyramid, a five-part 'dramatic structure' developed by the German philosopher Gustav Freytag in 1863 is one of the most popular and oldest plot structures that is used to analyse a narrative. It is classified as 'exposition' or 'the beginning' in which readers learn the background information of the story regarding the setting and character; 'rising action' is a form of problem or crisis, which becomes apparent and it eventually heightens; 'climax' is the turning point with the highest level of tension; 'falling action' is where the characters solve their problems or crises; and 'resolution' or 'denouement' is the closure of events that transpire.

In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), the Canadian literary critic, Northrop Frye argues that all genres of literature have been derived from the myth of the hero's life. Frye offers his own heroic pattern, about which Robert A. Segal writes in the book *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (2015) that it consists of four broad stages, ". . . the birth, triumph, isolation, and defeat of the hero", associated with the yearly cycle of the seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, each representing the literary genres, comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire or irony respectively (81).

Spring is linked to comedy, symbolising birth and renewal, where the hero often experiences revival and the defeat of chaos. Summer corresponds to romance, representing triumph and the culmination of life, typically marked by joyous events such as marriage. Autumn aligns with tragedy, indicating isolation and the impending death or downfall of the hero, highlighting themes of sacrifice and loss. Finally, winter is associated with satire, reflecting defeat and disillusionment, where the hero's journey culminates in chaos and a critique of societal norms.

John Gardner, in the book *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (1983), introduces the tripartite structural model 'Fichtean Curve', attributed to the German philosopher John Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), which is used to write the plot of a novel (179). It consists of 'rising action' which increases the tension of the tale and involves character development, worldbuilding, and backstory that progresses to a 'climax', the highest level of tension, without a turning point as in most models, in which the hero typically triumphs, leading to 'resolution', where the unresolved issues are resolved.

Tzvetan Todorov, in the essay "The 2 Principles of Narrative" (1971), asserts that all narratives have a basic structure with five basic elements – 'equilibrium', the initial state of balance or stability in the narrative world; 'disequilibrium', the introduction of an event or conflict that disrupts the balance, creating a state of tension or uncertainty; 'recognition', the moment when characters realise the nature of the conflict and begin to understand its causes; 'resolution', solving of conflicts and the restoration of balance to the narrative world; and 'return to equilibrium', the return of the narrative world to a state of balance or stability, with a new understanding of the events that have come to pass (39).

Vladimir Propp, in the book *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), contends that

every folktale figure has an important purpose in the story and that the plot of any narrative can be boiled down to seven key performers – ‘hero’, ‘false hero’, ‘donor or provider’, ‘villain’, ‘helper’, ‘princess’, and ‘father’. The ‘hero’ “. . . directly suffers from the action of the villain . . . In the course of the action the hero is the person who is supplied with a magical agent (a magical helper), and who makes use of it or is served by it” (Propp 50). The ‘hero’ takes credit for the hero’s victory. The ‘villain’ may be “. . . a dragon, a devil, bandits, a witch, or a stepmother. . .” who harms and disturbs a happy family (27). The ‘donor or provider’ is a magical agent who aids the hero in his/her quest to defeat the villain. The ‘helper’ helps to remove the misfortunes of the hero’s life and rescues the hero from danger. The ‘princess’ is saved by the hero, as her protective ‘father’ is often the one who sends the hero to rescue his daughter from torments and the quest ends with the princess marrying the hero. The ‘despatcher’ directs the hero to solve the central problem. Regardless of the number of characters in a story, the archetypes interact in predictable ways.

Propp further claims that the interplay of the characters and their thirty-one functions are essential to weave the narrative plot. ‘Absentation’ is the absence of the hero or his family member(s), who is either dead or goes away for work. ‘Interdiction’ takes the form of a restriction on the hero or a request not to indulge in a particular activity in relation to the absentation. ‘Violation’ of the interdiction disrupts the balance in the hero’s world as it often leads to the entry of the villain. In the next stage, ‘reconnaissance’, the villain attempts to gain crucial knowledge about the object of the quest either directly or through other personages. It is followed by ‘delivery’ during which the victims grant the villain the information he/she seeks through ‘trickery’ to possess the victim’s belongings. The hero gives the villain the object of desire with ‘complicity’ which the villain accomplishes through harm or ‘villainy or lack’ of a

bride, magical agents, wondrous objects, or money for a seeker who might call for help, to obtain the object for which the quest might be undertaken, the stage of 'mediation', wherein the hero recognises the lack of object and the hero willingly begins 'counteraction', which is the rectification of the situation with the seeker's permission to go on the mission, leaving for which is termed as 'departure'.

The hero's will is tested during the journey by a 'donor or provider' who gives the hero a series of tasks and at the end of it the donor helps the hero for his assistance. The hero agrees to the donor's demands in the stage called 'hero's reaction', and is rewarded with objects of aid or is directed to a magical agent called the 'receipt of a magic agent' who helps the hero in his/her journey. In the next stage, 'spatial transference', the hero is given the location of the object of search, the hero undergoes a series of trials to obtain the object which result in a 'struggle' or combat with the villain, and if he/she is scarred, it is termed as 'branding'. The hero attains 'victory' in the battle, and in the next stage, 'liquidation', the initial misfortunes are reversed as the object of quest is obtained, captives are freed, spells are broken, and it is 'return' when the hero is back home. It is 'pursuit' when the hero comes across misfortunes which are followed by 'rescue' when a new magical agent saves the hero.

The hero arrives in disguise either at home or in another country where he is 'unrecognised' and comes across a false hero who puts forth 'unfounded claims'. The hero is once again assigned with 'difficult task' for which he finds 'solution', leading to his 'recognition' which leads to the 'exposure' of the false hero. In the end, either the hero undergoes a physical 'transfiguration' as a result of the magic of a helper or he is given a new role like that of a prince who lives in a palace. Finally, 'punishment' is the stage when the villain is punished and the hero ascends the throne after his 'wedding' with the princess.

Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), introduces the theory, Hero's Journey or monomyth, a universal narrative pattern which consists of seventeen stages, adapted and modified by Christopher Vogler in 1992. The monomyth describes the journey of a hero from the ordinary world to a new, transformed reality. Campbell writes that "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). The journey begins with 'separation' from the known world and is followed by 'initiation' where the inciting incident and turning point occur. The protagonists experience midpoint crises before the action shifts to the climax, concludes with 'return' to their world, making it a circular model (Masschelein and Geest 184).

The first part of the Hero's Journey, 'separation', is subdivided into five stages – 'the call to adventure' that represents an interruption of the hero's ordinary life; 'refusal of the call', the hero's initial refusal of the call to adventure, either because he fears the unknown or because he lacks confidence in himself; in 'meeting the mentor', the mentor figures provide the hero with guidance, support, and bestows special gifts that would be of help to him on his journey; in 'crossing the first threshold', the hero leaves the familiar world and crosses into the unknown realm of adventure; and when the hero undertakes the journey into the realm of the unknown, he is in the 'belly of the whale' from where there is no return.

The second part of the Hero's Journey, 'initiation', consists of six stages. During 'the road of trials' the hero faces a series of trials and obstacles on his journey that tests his courage and determination; 'meeting with the goddess' is when the hero befriends a helper or ally; the 'woman temptress' is a woman who tempts the hero to

abandon the quest; during ‘atonement’, the hero comes face to face with incidents that lead him to the current moment in life; ‘apotheosis’ refers to the hero’s recognition of the villain’s power during their encounter, which serves as a pivotal moment, enabling the hero to strategise and progress towards success; and ‘the ultimate boon’ marks the accomplishment of the hero’s quest.

The third part of the Hero’s Journey, ‘return’ comprises seven stages beginning with ‘the return’, where the hero returns to the ordinary world and shares the gifts he receives during the quest with others. In ‘the magic flight’, the hero is again pursued by enemies to disrupt his journey. In ‘rescue from without’, the hero receives help from an ally to return home safely. In ‘the crossing of the threshold’, the hero is back in the ordinary world. In ‘master of the worlds’, the hero is aware of the two worlds and having survived the adventurous one, he is equipped to survive in both. In ‘freedom to live’, the hero evolves into a better man and lives freely, having achieved his final task.

John Clute, a critic and the co-editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* (1997), describes the structure of fantasy in Tolkienean terms. According to Clute, fantasy novels have protagonists who persist through trials and tribulations and emerge victorious with a ‘happy ending’, which is the essence of Tolkien’s concept of eucatastrophe. Clute defines fantasy as “. . . the story of an earned passage from BONDAGE – via a central of what has been revealed and of what is about to happen, and which may involve a profound METAMORPHOSIS of protagonist or world (or both) – into the EUCATASTROPHE, where marriages may occur, just governance fertilize the barren LAND, and there is a HEALING” (Sandner 314). The capitalised words suggest the narrative mechanisms of fantasy, where the initial stage of ‘bondage’ or reality is interrupted by ‘wrongness’ due to the anarchy of the ‘dark lord’

or the parody of 'just governance'. It results in 'thinning' of the secondary world which is suggested through a loss of 'magic', death of 'gods', blockage of 'metamorphosis', or the ignorance of the self or history of 'secondary world' and the eventual perpetuation into 'labyrinth' or darkness. Eventually, through the protagonist's 'recognition', the secondary world undergoes 'metamorphosis' and ends in 'healing' (Latham 71).

Christopher Vogler attempts a comparative study of mythic structures, in the book *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* (1992) and improvises Campbell's Hero's Journey into a linear pattern with twelve stages in three acts. Act I consists of the 'ordinary world' from where the hero starts his journey; 'the call to adventure' is when the hero is introduced to a challenge that he is to solve; 'refusal of the call' is when the hero is reluctant to accept the challenge due to the dangers involved; 'meeting the mentor' prepares the hero for the journey ahead; and 'first threshold' is when the hero leaves home and undertakes the adventure. Act II involves 'tests, allies, enemies', the confrontations that the hero must overcome; 'approach to the inmost cave' is the hero's preparation for the ultimate challenge; and 'ordeal' is the hero's battle with the villain. Act III consists of 'reward' that is bestowed upon the hero after his victory in the battle; 'the road back' is the hero's venture back home; 'resurrection' features the last ordeal that the hero needs to overcome during his return; and the 'return with the elixir' is the moment where the hero returns with his reward (Masschelein and Geest 185).

Vogler also narrows down Campbell's character roles as a 'hero', the protagonist; 'mentor' is the one who assists the hero in his quest; 'shadow' is an enemy; 'threshold guardian' is either a friendly or an evil character who stops the hero from continuing his journey by throwing obstacles in his path; 'ally' helps the hero

achieve his goal with the necessary objects of aid and knowledge; ‘trickster’ adds humour to the story; ‘heralds’ incite the point of change in the plot; and ‘shapeshifter’ is someone who oscillates between being an ally or an enemy (Vogler 26). Ika Willis, in “Amateur Mythographies: Fan Fiction and the Myth of Myth” (2016), cites Vogler, noting that the universal patterns of the hero myths are “. . . all basically the same story,’ which ‘springs from a universal source in the collective unconscious” (qtd. in T. Willis 3). The structures are varied with more inclusions or more stages in some stories which do not only reflect cultural differences, but also “. . . common biological and psychological backgrounds” (Hokanson and Fraher 29).

The French semiotician Algirdas Julien Greimas, in the book *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory* (1987), emphasises the importance of the semantic content that provides the underlying meaning of a narrative by arguing that the motivation and desires of characters and events drive the themes and actions of the narrative. Greimas classifies narrative structures as semiotic systems, the narrative discourse and the actantial model that outlines the fundamental roles or ‘actants’ in a narrative, including the ‘subject/object’, ‘helper/opponent’, ‘sender/receiver’, and ‘power’ (Greimas and Porter 9-16). The subject desires an object; the helper assists the subject in acquiring the object, but the opponent obstructs it; the sender incites the action while the receiver benefits from it; and the power play between the actants determines the subject’s accomplishment of the desired task (Duvall 192).

Archetypes of the popular structural models align with the plot structure of the select novels in PJO which is a pastiche of the genres, mythical retelling, mythical fantasy, and coming-of-age. Rick Riordan taps the wealth of narrative forms, plots, motifs, images, mythological archetypes, and stereotypes of the mythical tradition, and refashions Greek myths to suit the sensibilities of contemporary readers in the select

novels of the light-hearted retelling (Makinen 13). He reinterprets Greek myths using parody, allusion, interrelation, and expansion of its rich tapestry in the select novels, employing Gerard Genette's postmodern concept of 'metatextuality' to draw the attention of readers to the process of its own creation, an approach which turns the text into an artefact, making the story the centre of focus. Old tales undergo a metamorphic transformation in the select novels through the debunking of the omnipotence of conventional structural models and the subversion of the age-old authority of myths.

The fantastical elements of classical Greek mythology are blended with the essence of the modern world in the novels using the postmodern technique of magical realism to create an immersive world filled with magic, adventure, and wonder, which enrich the plot. Fantasy in the novels is referred to as fictional reality in which the magical and supernatural elements of the books are modernised and presented as a normal part of everyday life to fit in with readers' reality. Riordan incorporates authentic voices that add complexity to the narrative and allow the exploration of deeper themes like friendship, familial bonds, togetherness, and camaraderie. Fictional reality and readers' reality are blurred through subversion of the conventional plot structures and character functions which discredit the structural models and mythical narratives by reordering and merging stages both across the models as well as within certain models, omitting, repeating, as well as newly interpreting different stages in plot and character archetypes, still maintaining the three-part structure with a beginning, middle, and an end.

The progression of the plot of the select novels deviates from the original myths and an analysis of the plot structure of the novels gives readers a chance to understand the similarities and differences between the novels and conventional plot structures. Riordan challenges the conventional monomythic structure through a

subversion of the myths with a new plot, setting, events, characters, and themes, the factors which Suman Gupta in *Re-reading Harry Potter* (2003) points out are “. . . repetitively closed and yet progressively open” as they unfold through the elaboration and progression of plot in each of the select novels (94).

The division of the narrative in several volumes is a subversion as the story is presented in five separate parts suggesting a serialised format rather than a single cohesive narrative. Riordan briefly summarises the plot, characters, and premise of the storyline in each volume to assist readers who may randomly read any of the volumes or are yet to read the prequels, without having to miss much of the action from the preceding volume, the result of which is, “Past explanations are repeated and expanded as the reader progresses through subsequent volumes . . . naturally as that happens what was initially simple becomes more complex, the previously naïve gradually grows sophisticated” (Gupta 96). Gupta terms the process “elaboration” in which each of the select novels:

. . . leaves space for progressive development . . . by leaving questions unanswered, by deferring information, by suggesting that time passes with each subsequent volume and the actions in one may have consequences in the next . . . both repeating and progressively delineating a finite number of situations and themes by adding by ever greater degrees of complexity in their relationships . . . each elaboration leads to a series of consequences that mark progress. This occurs in matters of detail as well as in the unfolding of the overarching repetitive/developing plots . . . (94-95)

In the central theme of the select novels, the protagonist Percy Jackson’s destiny to save the world remains the same, but the narration disrupts the structural progression

of the plot of conventional myths.

The plot structure begins in the first instalment TLT, with Freytag's 'exposition or the beginning' or Frye's 'birth' or Gardner's 'rising action' or Todorov's 'equilibrium' or Propp's 'absentation' or Campbell's 'the call to adventure' or Clute's 'bondage' or Vogler's 'ordinary world', all of which are collectively referred to as exposition in the study, after which the middle part commences, spanning the next three sequels – TSoM, TTC, and TBoL. In each volume, multiple characters embark on numerous adventurous quests that feature the journeys of several characters who strive to emerge victorious despite the challenges they face which includes the acknowledgement of their previous transgressions and coming to terms with the ghosts of past, aiding their metamorphosis. The characters are held together by the hope for a better future that acts as the driving force to try and succeed in further fights for survival in each of the volumes until the plot enters Freytag's 'falling action' or Frye's 'triumph' Gardner's 'climax' or Todorov's 'resolution' or Propp's 'liquidation' or Campbell's 'the ultimate boon' or Clute's 'metamorphosis' or Vogler's 'reward' – hereafter collectively termed as falling action throughout the thesis. The final resolution is deferred until the final stand, referred to as Propp's 'struggle' and Vogler's 'ordeal', mentioned as the last stand henceforth in the present study, and ends with the hero's final 'victory' as identified by Propp. The subsequent stages of Todorov's 'return to equilibrium' or Clute's 'land' or 'healing', unified as return to equilibrium henceforth in the thesis, followed by Campbell's 'freedom to live' occur at the end of the fifth instalment TLO, leaving the hero's journey as non-conclusive in TLT, TSoM, TTC, and TBoL.

An extensive insight into the motivation and purpose of the narrative of the select novels is gained through characterisation, an essential aspect of a narrative that

elaborates on characters' functions, behaviours, attitudes, and ambitions. Riordan approaches his mythical revision indicating the willingness to step away from the constraints of the traditional tales and reshape the stories more radically, just as the characters reshape their own stories. A postmodern examination of the mythical past and present fictional reality of the newly created characters in the novels reveals that they are strong characters who control their own destiny by severing intertextual ties and forging their own paths to a more meaningful conclusion (Doughty 135).

Postmodern characters are realistic and multidimensional with multiple intersecting characteristic traits, distinguished by blurred identities or grey shades, instead of the traditional black-and-white archetypes, making it difficult to identify distinct roles and relationships. The characterisation of the gods, monsters, heroes, and other mythical figures of Greek mythology in the select novels are examined for subversion from the original narratives. The notion invites readers to re-examine the conventional wisdom of grand narratives and view the world realistically.

Gods in the novels are depicted as fallible unlike their conventional mythological representations that portray them as infallible, omnipotent, and omniscient. The godly characters are essential for the development of character arcs in the narrative as they are multifaceted; they manipulate and influence other characters in the novels. They often manifest positive and negative traits, depending on their moods and intentions, and function as unpredictable 'donors or providers', 'helpers' or formidable 'enemies', 'allies', and 'mentors' who help or hinder the quests of heroes. They possess their own realm and unique powers, but are megalomaniacal, proud, quarrelsome, vengeful, impulsive, shapeshifters, and biased. They are powerful symbols that embody the length and breadth of human experience, transcending their roles as mere characters in an old story.

Monsters, like other mortal and immortal characters are depicted as capable of showing emotions where some are painted in black, some are in white and others in grey. Riordan develops the characters of major heroes in the novels through a juxtaposition of the journey of characters in them with the journeys of the mythical heroes like Theseus, Perseus, Odysseus, Hercules, and Achilles, but with a modern twist. The author highlights the heroic deeds and the failures of both the mythical heroes and the characters in the select novels. Gone are the typecast mythological heroes who, as Joyce Carol says, do not assist “. . . the growth, development, and evolution of human personality”, but depict the truth, rendering the cultural conditions for children and adults (252). The author is mindful in tailoring characters to the young readers, and “. . . asserts the value of metamorphosis as a means of adapting to a changing world . . . to fit into modern ways; such flexibility . . . metatextually embodied in the series’ desire to create anew rather than merely to recapitulate the old, is represented as crucial to the saving of Western society” (Morey and Nelson 236). It makes the novels more meaningful to the contemporary multicultural readers.

Riordan’s motivation is “. . . to create a modern version of the hero’s journey that [is] inclusive and reflected the variety of America today” (Riordan, Publishers Weekly). He makes old stories more accessible to the modern audience with a realistic, believable, and inclusive unconventional creation of neurodiverse heroes in the select novels, which is a break from stereotypes and a subversion of the traditional hyper-masculine behaviour of the mythical heroes. Kellynn Gates in “Harry Potter and the Evolving Hero Archetype” (2009) writes that “As the world shrinks due to globalisation, we gain a more universal view of the hero, or heroes, as the case maybe” and that a hero “. . . is more than common, realistic and human, makes it easier for us all to be heroes” (1-5). Greimas refers to the hero as the ‘subject’ in his model, but like

Propp and Vogler's models, Percy is referred to as the 'hero'.

Riordan creates the young characters in the novels by following the traditional bildungsroman template of adventure stories. He extensively borrows many of the literary tropes of young adult literature like the search for identity and sense of self, which are viewed as Enlightenment constructions within the postmodernist theory, as asserted by Janis Dawson in the essay "'Beneath Their Cheerful Bunny Faces, His Slippers Had Steel Toe Caps': Traction Cities, Postmodernisms, and Coming of Age in Philip Reeve's 'Mortal Engines' and 'Predator's Gold'" (2007) (Montgomery and Watson 390). Percy and other characters attain self-realisation by resisting authority and challenging the standards of their society, which mirror the postmodern concept of incredulity towards metanarratives. The concept highlights the relevance of multiple perspectives that traverse the boundary of traditional interpretations, and pluralises concepts as good or evil and right or wrong. In essence, the novels provide a holistic picture of unbiased portrayal of characters and their journey through deconstruction and reconstruction of the progression of traditional plot structural models and character functions.

The major structural frameworks that govern the classical plot structures and character archetypes as put forth by Freytag, Frye, Gardner, Todorov, Propp, Campbell, Clute, Vogler, and Greimas, and the postmodern concepts of intertextuality by Kristeva and incredulity towards metanarratives by Lyotard, map the theoretical framework necessary for the analysis of the current chapter. The analysis examines the ways in which the select novels, as a postmodern mythological fantasy, aligns with, deviates from, and ultimately subverts the traditional patterns to understand the mythological reconfiguration by Riordan to engage the sensibilities of contemporary readers through a playfully serious narrative, guided by the research objectives in the

“Introduction”.

The narrative of select novels begins with the first book in the series, TLT. It brings forth the voice of a troubled, twelve-year-old child, Perseus (Percy) Jackson, a demigod, the offspring of a mortal Sally Jackson and the Greek god Poseidon, who is below average in academics due to dyslexia and ADHD and struggles with the ordeals of his day-to-day life in the mortal world of Manhattan which he compensates with his adventurous life in the Greek mythological world that is hidden within modern-day America. The initial grounding of the novel occurs during the exposition of the novel which comprises of the introduction of characters, development of the narrative world, and the surprise elements that determine the course of the story. During the exposition of TLT, the identity of Percy’s father is not revealed, but it is clear that he is an absent father – ‘absentation’, according to Propp. Percy leads a normal life in Manhattan, where only his mother Sally knows his true identity as that of a demigod. To shield him from the dangers associated with his lineage, as demigods emit a strong scent that attracts monsters, Sally refrains from divulging details that might spark her son’s curiosity about his own extraordinary nature. In an effort to mask Percy’s scent, Sally marries the unhygienic and foul-smelling Gabe Ugliano, whom Percy calls Smelly Gabe whose overpowering stench helps to obscure Percy’s scent from monsters. Sally also sends Percy to boarding schools, distancing him from the threats he is subjected to in his hometown, to provide him a semblance of a normal life, which prevents him from staying with his mother as he desires, representing a significant restriction in his life, that reflects Propp’s stage of ‘interdiction’. Despite his mother’s attempts to keep him safe and secure, Percy feels unsafe and insecure, and similar to Propp’s stage of ‘violation’, his demigod powers unknowingly surface, causing him to experience strange events:

During third grade, a man in a black trench coat had stalked [Percy] on the playground. When the teachers threatened to call the police, he went away growling, but no one believed [him] when [he] told them that under his broad-brimmed hat, the man only had one eye, right in the middle of his head. Before that—a really early memory. [Percy] was in preschool, and a teacher accidentally put [him] down for a nap in a cot that a snake had slithered into. [His] mom screamed when she came to pick [him] up and found [him] playing with a limp, scaly rope [he had] somehow managed to strangle to death with [his] meaty toddler hands. In every single school, something creepy had happened, something unsafe, and [he] was forced to move. (Riordan, TLT 40)

Percy has been to six schools in the last six years due to the unfortunate incidents and currently studies in Yancy Academy, a “. . . private school for troubled kids” (4). He feels isolated and alienated among his peers and teachers due to his dyslexia and ADHD and is written off as a “mental-case” and “lazy” by one of his teachers (17). Percy does not realise that his ADHD gives him increased battlefield reflexes and dyslexia allows him to read ancient Greek. As a result, Percy internalises his drawbacks, develops a low self-esteem, and struggles to accept compliments, even from his favourite teacher Mr. Brunner, the legendary Greek mythical character Chiron in disguise, when he expresses that he expects the best from Percy, while Percy thinks that Brunner “[pushes him] so hard” (6).

The normalcy of Percy’s life is disrupted or violated, causing ‘disequilibrium’, similar to Propp’s model, when he is taken on a field trip to a museum from school. During the trip, one of Percy’s classmates, a girl named Nancy Bobofit, bullies his “crippled” best friend Grover Underwood, and Percy reacts by accidentally

pushing the girl into a fountain and “. . . the water... grabbed her”, indicating that Percy is not an ordinary boy but a powerful being with control over water (Riordan, TLT 7). Alecto, one of the three Furies, Greek goddesses of vengeance from the Underworld, disguised as Percy’s algebra teacher Mrs Dodds, who chaperones Percy’s class on the trip watches the development, isolates Percy from everyone and to his astonishment, morphs into her true self and tries to attack him. Percy defeats the Fury with the help of Chiron who comes to his rescue with a ballpoint pen that magically transforms into a sword (12-13). Chiron acts as Percy’s ‘helper’ (Propp and Greimas’s archetype) or ‘mentor’ or ‘ally’ (Vogler’s archetypes), similar to Campbell and Vogler’s stage of ‘meeting the mentor’ by protecting Percy in the hour of need. According to Propp’s model, the ‘helper’ appears after the hero’s separation from the primary world, and Campbell’s monomyth and Vogler’s mythic structure indicates that the ‘hero’ meets the ‘mentor’ or ‘meeting the mentor’ (grouped and subsequently mentioned as mentor in the study) after the stage of the hero’s ‘refusal of the call’ where the mentor incites the hero into a new world of adventure by illustrating the need for the hero’s quest. Chiron makes an appearance in the novels before the main conflict is revealed which results in the rearrangement of the characters and their functions as listed in the structural models, and it is a subversion in the novels.

In the aftermath of the strange occurrence during the field trip, everyone including Brunner and Grover pretend that Mrs. Dodds does not exist and that she is only a figment of Percy’s imagination, but Percy is not convinced (Reeder 188). Percy’s certainty of the bizarre experience aligns with Todorov’s definition of the ‘fantastic’ in *The Poetics of Prose and The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) which states that “. . . the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a

natural and a supernatural explanation” (33). Thus, Dodds is a ‘herald’ (Vogler’s archetype) who changes the trajectory of Percy’s reality.

Percy’s hesitation increases when he hears the sound of hoofs clapping inside Brunner’s room and sees the shadow of a horse which confuses him. He is agitated to find out that Brunner has secret conversations about him with Grover. When Percy and Grover are heading home on a bus for their summer vacation, they witness the Fates, three Greek goddesses of destiny, disguised as old ladies, spinning yarn and cutting it looking at Percy, and Grover fears that it signifies Percy’s impending death, which seems unreasonable to Percy (Angelo 273). It lends a foreboding tone to the novel, reiterates the strangeness of events that surround Percy which hint at the potential change that Percy is about to experience in terms of his identity and reality in the novel.

Percy reaches home and his mother takes him for a vacation to a beach in Montauk, where Grover suddenly appears revealing that he is a satyr disguised as a disabled boy to protect Percy from monster attacks, as per Chiron’s orders. Grover functions as a ‘trickster’ (Vogler) and plays a comical role in the novels who bleats when anxious and consumes inedible objects like tin cans, wax paper, pinochle cards, furniture, shirt, silverware, and napkins among other things when hungry. He warns Percy that he is in danger and that he must relocate to Camp Half-Blood, a safe haven for demigods. Percy is forced on the journey, accompanied by Grover and his mother, into a new world. Mary D. Reding in “Harry Potter’s heroics: Crossing the thresholds of home, away, and the spaces in-between” (2016) writes that “. . . the dichotomy of home versus otherworld creates the structural variance necessary for a hero to move from the known to the unknown” (11).

Percy’s departure from home aligns with the stage of ‘departure’ in Propp’s model, ‘crossing the first threshold’ in Campbell’s model, and ‘first threshold’ in

Vogler's model, which is a recurrent stage in the select novels, henceforth identified as 'crossing the first threshold' in the study. The stage occurs in each of the five select novels as Percy moves back and forth the mortal and the mythical realm, numerous times in the narrative, which is a subversion of the structural models where it occurs only once.

On the way to Camp Half-Blood, Percy is pursued by the Minotaur, a creature from Greek mythology with the head of a bull and the body of a man that tries to stop him from entering the camp's borders. As it fails to capture Percy, the Minotaur grabs Percy's mother instead and uses its fist to crush her into a ball of light, after which she magically vanishes. Enraged by the incident, Percy attacks the Minotaur, extracts one of its horns, and stabs it, causing it to ". . . disintegrate . . . like crumbling sand" (Riordan, TLT 55). The event is an intertextual reference to the Greek mythological tale of the hero Theseus, who is aided by Ariadne, the princess of Crete, to defeat the Minotaur, the same way that Percy does, to relieve the populace of its terror ("Theseus and the Minotaur").

In TLT, following the killing of the Minotaur, Percy faints and awakens at Camp Half-Blood. Percy's magical journey begins after he crosses the threshold ('crossing the first threshold') of the mortal world into camp's border or 'departure' into the mythological world from his reality of living in the mortal world of Manhattan to the hybrid world of mythical reality, which serves as the trajectory that propels Percy into a new reality.

Percy, upon reaching Camp Half-Blood, meets Dionysus, also called as Mr. D at the Camp, who is the god of fertility, serving as the Director of the camp since he has been exiled there by his father Zeus, the King of gods and the god of sky, as punishment for chasing a nymph. Mr. D is rude to all demigods and openly expresses

his contempt for them, which is an intertextual reference to the abandonment of Ariadne by Theseus, who abandons her after he succeeds in killing the Minotaur with her help, causing her heartbreak, but the god who finds her in the state, falls in love with her and makes her his immortal wife.

Percy who dismisses his previous encounters with the mythological characters, Alecto and the Minotaur, as illusions, realises through his meeting with Dionysus that the tales from Greek mythology are true. It is reconfirmed by Chiron when he informs Percy about the existence of the Greek gods on Mount Olympus, situated on top of the Empire State Building in America which is currently the most prosperous nation in the world (Riordan, TLT 36-37). Percy learns more about the mythological world from Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare, who informs Percy that he is a demigod whose father's identity remains undisclosed. Annabeth opens Percy's eye to the fact that all demigods have dyslexia and ADHD with the same powers that they entail, transforming what are identified as flaws in the mortal world into strengths in the mythical world. She is a fiercely independent and highly ambitious girl who is wise beyond her age and knowledgeable in matters of both mortal and Greek worlds. Annabeth is mockingly called "princess" by her fellow campers, and like Propp's 'princess' archetype, she becomes Percy's love interest in the novels, but it is a subversion of Campbell's stage of 'meeting with the goddess' as they do not instantly confess their love for each other (42-44). Another subversion related to the stage is that unlike Propp's model, 'wedding' of the hero with the 'princess' does not occur in the narrative, as Annabeth and Percy are only sixteen years old at the end of TLO and are not of marriageable age.

Percy realises that he has combat skills when Luke Castellan, son of Hermes the messenger god and the patron of messengers, medicine, travellers, merchants, and

thieves, trains Percy in swordfight, functioning as a mentor (Riordan, TLT 101). Luke shows his affection for Percy by stealing toiletries for him from the camp store, indicating that he is a wolf in sheep's skin and a character that conforms to Propp's 'villain', Vogler's 'shadow', or Greimas's 'opponent', cumulatively denoted as villain(s) in the study, as he steals the weapon of Zeus, the lightning bolt, the elixir or Greimas's 'object' of quest in TLT and blames Percy for it.

Clarisse La Rue, who bullies Percy in the camp, is another villainous character and the daughter of Ares, the god of war. She makes Percy undergo an "initiation ceremony" as she tries to drown his head in the toilet, making her a villain in the eyes of Percy (Riordan, TLT 89). She further attacks Percy with her spear and injures him during a game as revenge, but he is healed by the water from the nearby creek that he falls into, indicating that he is the son of Poseidon due to his apparent power over water. Eventually, a hologram of a trident, the weapon of Poseidon, appears on top of Percy's head, signifying that Poseidon has claimed him as his son. Percy realises that he has the ability to breathe underwater, draw strength from water, and control aquatic creatures under Poseidon's command, indicating that he possesses superhuman abilities like mythical heroes.

The realisation of Percy's identity as a demigod marks the beginning of Percy's self-acceptance and self-discovery by settling the conflict between his dual personas as a mortal and his metamorphosis as a demigod. It results in Percy's reluctance to accept the sudden shift which is similar to Propp and Campbell's stage, 'refusal of the call', as Percy's new-found identity contrasts with the life that he is used to in the mortal world. The conflict of the novel is revealed when Chiron tells Percy that Zeus suspects him to be the lightning thief and that he accuses Poseidon to have ordered the theft in order to challenge the throne of Zeus. Chiron, functioning as

Greimas's sender, which appears only once in the novels, convinces Percy that he must embark on a quest to recover the lightning bolt, failing which, a war would erupt between Zeus and Poseidon and the "Western civilization [would turn] into a battleground so big it will make the Trojan War look like a water-balloon fight", rendering Camp Half-Blood and the civilisation at large as the beneficiaries of the quest or the 'receiver' as Greimas calls it (Riordan, TLT 138).

The burden of restoring the lightning bolt to fulfil the 'lack', a stage in Propp's model, suggests that Percy is an archetypal 'hero', who according to the standard formulaic pattern of the ancient myths has a predestined destiny to fulfil. Each quest in the novels is undertaken to find a lacking object. Restoration of the lightning bolt, the elixir or 'object' in TLT is one of the four subplots in the novels and the conflicts in them heighten the unpredictability and suspense of the plot, subverting the structure of ancient myths.

The elixir or 'object' and the 'subject(s)' who go in search of it are different in each novel. Chiron acts not only as a mentor but also an 'ally' who assists Percy with the right advice, knowledge, and ensures to keep his moral compass intact to succeed in all of Percy's missions. Chiron plays the role of a 'despatcher' who incites Percy into the quest, making him realise that he has a huge role to play in the world. He suggests the location of the lightning bolt, termed as 'spatial transference' in Propp's model, expressing suspicion that Hades, the god of the Underworld, may have stolen the bolt to instigate a war between Zeus and Poseidon, as revenge for treating him like an outcast. It reflects the hunger of the gods for more power and their rivalry with each other with utter disregard for the repercussions of their actions.

Percy does not express interest to go on the quest, *au contraire* Propp's stage of 'mediation', and is forced to accept his fate to undertake the 'counteraction' as he

hopes to save his mother during his quest to retrieve the bolt, which is a subplot in the novel. Mythology dictates that every hero must seek the Oracle's blessings in the form of a prophecy foretold which serves an indicator of success or failure of the quest and offers guidance regarding expectations during the quest. In TLT and the sequels, the Oracle functions as a mentor, providing insights that assist the demigods during their journey (Riordan 140).

Each novel is driven by quest-driven plots that are preceded by a set of five prophecies, intricately spun into the narrative, functioning as mininarratives within the overarching grand narrative of the select novels. The prophecies in the novels are delivered in cryptic language and the characters are to apply them to their quests to decipher their meanings, unravel mysteries, and advance in their journey. An analysis of the quests and prophecies helps to gain insight into the conflicts in the plot of TLT and its four sequels.

The first prophecy of the select novels is revealed to Percy before he sets out on his first quest to retrieve the master bolt with Annabeth and Grover as quest partners. The prophecy says:

You shall go west and face the god who has turned.

You shall find what was stolen and see it safely returned.

You shall be betrayed by one who calls you a friend.

And you shall fail to save what matters most at the end. (Riordan, TLT 141)

The quest is an authentic example of Percy's 'call to adventure' with 'receipt of a magical agent' as Propp terms them, henceforth referred to as gifts in the study, bestowed upon him before the departure to the quest. Chiron gives the trio ambrosia and nectar for healing in case they are hurt. He gives Percy the sword Anaklusmos,

Greek for riptide, the same sword that Hercules uses during his labours, saying that it is a gift from his father Poseidon, rendering him as an affectionate father and a ‘helper’/ ‘ally’ of his son. Luke too acts as a ‘helper’ by gifting Percy a replica of the flying shoes of Hermes that Percy gives to Grover, and Annabeth carries her Yankees cap of invisibility, a gift from her mother Athena.

The plot develops into a stage where Percy’s quest is made clear and the road to success is laden with obstacles like monsters, gods, other mythical figures or other characters, identified as ‘the road of trials’ by Campbell and ‘tests, allies and enemies’ by Vogler, collectively referred to as trials henceforth in the analysis, which contributes to the ‘rising action’ as identified by Freytag. Percy enters Campbell’s stage of ‘belly of the whale’, a common stage throughout the novels, which states that there is no return once the hero undertakes the journey.

Percy receives assistance during the journey from his quest mates, Annabeth and Grover, who have equally significant roles to play, especially Annabeth, the brain behind planning quests in the select novels. The trio begin their journey and overcome the Furies that try to disrupt the demigods’ journey, functioning as villainous characters. They escape and accidentally enter the gorgon Medusa’s lair as it is under the disguise of Aunty Em’s Garden Gnome Emporium in New Jersey. Medusa is a Greek mythological monster, often depicted as a monstrous creature with snakes as hair and the power to turn people into stone with her gaze. One of the most famous works that features Medusa is Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1987), an epic poem that explores various transformations in Greek and Roman mythology. The once beautiful maiden Medusa, engages in a sexual encounter with Poseidon inside Athena’s temple, desecrating the sacred space, which angers the goddess, who as punishment, transforms Medusa into a Gorgon.

In TLT, the encounter of the quest team with Medusa corresponds to Campbell's stage of 'woman temptress' as she entices them to look into her eyes with her sweet voice and pleasing manners to turn them into statues of stone, but Percy avoids her petrifying gaze and beheads her using the reflection on a gazing ball as per Annabeth's advice, her first function as a 'helper'/'ally' in the novels. In an intertextual reference to the original myth, the legendary hero Perseus receives guidance from Athena and Hermes, who instruct him to seek the Grey sisters, a trio of elderly women named Tempest, Wasp, and Anger, who collectively possess a single eye and tooth, and assist Perseus in determining the whereabouts of Medusa. The mythical hero, Perseus uses the gift from Athena, the reflection of the bronze shield, to avoid direct eye contact with Medusa and beheads her using a harpe, a sickle-like sword, which is a gift by Hermes. Perseus hands over the head to Athena, who affixes it on her bronze shield, the Aegis.

The hurdles Percy goes through during the quest in TLT makes him angry and impertinent against the gods who engage in their petty rivalry while young demigods like him and his friends undertake dangerous journeys, risking their lives. Percy challenges the age-old authority of the gods, expressing his disregard toward the decisions they take, which is similar to Lyotard's concept incredulity towards the metanarrative of the supremacy of the gods and their divine authority. Percy's rebellious streak and teenage angst is traced throughout the novels and it distinguishes him from the mythical heroes. Instead of giving Medusa's head to Athena, Percy sends it to Mount Olympus using the delivery service run by Hermes, which is a modernisation of the function of the messenger god, who delivers messages and material objects among mythical beings in Greek mythology.

Percy, in the next trial, survives the attack of the mythological monsters

Chimera, “the mother of all monsters”, a creature with the heads of a lion in the forepart, goat in the middle, and a dragon on the behind, disguised as an old woman and Echidna, with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a snake, disguised as a Chihuahua (Riordan, TLT 55). He is once again rescued by Annabeth who, being a strategic thinker, instructs him to jump into the ocean nearby where he cannot be harmed. Once they escape from the creatures, Ares appears as a ‘donor or provider’, as in Propp’s model, and promises to reveal important information to the trio in return for a favour to retrieve the shield of Ares and a scarf that he and the goddess of love Aphrodite leave behind, as they flee during their date in an abandoned water park in Colorado, realising that Aphrodite’s husband Hephaestus, the Greek god of artisans, masonry, blacksmiths, forges, and the art of sculpture, has planned to catch them red-handed, having an affair. It prompts Propp’s stage ‘hero’s reaction’ when Percy attempts to accomplish the assignment with Annabeth, and in the process, they get trapped in the ride that Hephaestus loads with a golden net to trap Ares and Aphrodite. Hephaestus also plants mechanical spiders to scare Aphrodite but when they crawl over Annabeth, revealing her fear of spiders (arachnophobia), showing that demigods have phobias despite being powerful, and Grover douses the spiders with water and helps Annabeth and Percy to escape. Annabeth’s phobia alludes to the mythical story of Arachne, a maiden turned into a giant spider by Athena and the monster haunts the children of the goddess ever since. The adventure emphasises the pettiness of the gods who indulge in entertainment, personal rivalry, and vengeance even during perilous times. The novels discredit metanarratives, a fundamental aspect of postmodern discourse by dispelling the permanence of fairness, justice, honour, and truth associated with the Greek gods and the unwavering confidence mortals have in them.

Percy succeeds in the mission, and in return, Ares gives the trio a backpack

full of fresh clothes, money and snacks. As promised, he also reveals the information that Percy's mother is held hostage by Hades in the Underworld, which indicates 'villainy' of the god of the Underworld, making him a villain. Ares fulfils his function as 'donor or provider' (as identified by Propp) by directing the trio to a truck to Los Angeles (LA) that would get them closer to their journey to the Underworld.

Percy, Annabeth, and Grover reach the Lotus Casino in Las Vegas, an intertextual reference to the Island of the Lotus Eaters in Homer's *Odyssey* in which the mythical hero, Odysseus reaches the island when his ship is steered off course by the wind. His crew consume the lotus flowers on the island that induces forgetfulness, causing them to forget about their journey, but Odysseus resists the temptation to eat the flower, drags them back to the ship, and escapes with them. Percy, Annabeth and Grover get lured into the Casino with addictive computer games, unlimited gaming cards, food, and luxury amenities, designed to make them never want to leave, but Percy who realises the trap tell his friends and they escape. They reach an ocean where another 'helper', a Nereid, appears to aid the trio in the journey with three magical pearls, which if crushed under the foot would transport them back from the Underworld and a warning, not to trust every gift he receives, which he is not able to understand. The Nereid informs Percy that "the gods . . . can work by indirect influence only", which is why his father, Poseidon refrains from meeting him (Riordan, TLT 272).

The trio continues the journey and comes across the giant, Procrustes at Crusty's Waterbed Palace in LA, who forces passers-by to lie on his six feet cot, either stretching their bodies or chopping off protruding parts to make them fit the length of the cot. The giant traps Annabeth and Grover, but Percy recognises the trap, forces Procrustes to lie down on a bed, cuts off head, frees his friends, and resumes the

journey. The incident is another intertextual reference to the encounter of the mythical hero Theseus with Procrustes during which the hero kills the giant in a similar fashion.

The journey takes the group to the Death on Arrival (DOA) recording studios in LA, an entrance to the Underworld. Once they enter the studio, they are taken across the river Lethe by Charon, who ferries souls across to the land of the dead and acts as a 'threshold guardian' of the Underworld. Luke plans to drag Percy into Tartarus, the Underworld prison, which is in the form of a pit, by making him wear a pair of winged shoes that he charms, especially for this purpose, but the plan is shattered as Grover wears them. He is spared as the shoes are a loose fit for his hooves and they fall off as a result, hinting that Luke is an opposing archetype in the select novels, but the trio is ignorant of the deception.

Percy, Annabeth, and Grover are to go past Cerberus, the giant three-headed hellhound or watchdog/ 'threshold guardian' of the Underworld, before they reach the palace of Hades, when Annabeth, who serves as a strategic 'helper' distracts the hellhound by playing ball with it, allowing them to sneak past the dog into the palace. Torunn Bygstad in *Rick Riordan's Myth-Based Novels as a Gateway to Legitimizing Fan Fiction* (2019) writes that "... the reader should not be too surprised at Annabeth's choice of distraction because of Riordan's continuous and successful incorporation of modern solutions for most of Percy's obstacles in ways that seem natural for the situations in the twenty-first century" (54).

Percy and Grover reach the palace of Hades, where a turning point occurs as the god accuses Percy of stealing his weapon, the helm of Darkness, which enables the wearer to turn invisible and at the same time, terrorise enemies. Percy suddenly realises that the backpack that Ares gifts the trio grows heavy and when he takes a look, he is shocked to see the lightning bolt inside. Hades asks Percy to surrender both his helm

and the bolt of Zeus, in exchange of his mother. Percy realises the war god, who functions as a ‘shapeshifter’, has tricked him by gifting the bag, planted with the lightning bolt, knowing that Percy will carry it into the Underworld, making him “the god who has turned” from the prophecy (Riordan, TLT 141). Once Percy realises that he is sabotaged, he focuses on escaping the Underworld with his friends and decides to come back for his mother later, as they have only three pearls, one for each of them to escape. It marks the fulfilment of Campbell’s stage of ‘atonement’ where Percy “. . . gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes, and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment” and does not stray from the path throughout the narrative (Campbell 205). The hero abandons his personal mission to save his mother – “And you shall fail to save what matters most at the end” from the prophecy – and chooses to prioritise the greater need which showcases the metamorphosis of a blissfully ignorant young boy to a hero who shoulders the responsibility of his world (Riordan, TLT 141).

Percy’s choice negates Propp’s stage of ‘complicity’ as the young hero does not hand over the bolt to Hades, instead Percy expresses blunt disregard for Hades, who believes without proof that Percy is the lightning thief and sends his Furies to attack Percy. His journey as the ‘hero’ is incomplete even after the recovery of the stolen bolt, as he is required to return it to Zeus, for which he has to venture back, called ‘return’ by Propp, ‘return’ by Campbell, and ‘the road back’ by Vogler, henceforth cited as the return throughout the thesis. The ‘rising action’ tenses when Ares appears to the demigods after their escape from the Underworld and confesses that it was his idea to trick Percy into carrying the lightning bolt into Hades’s realm to make him look like the real thief. He reveals that he uses a hero to steal the lord of the

Underworld's helm, as the archvillain or Clute's 'dark lord', Kronos, the Titan King, banished to Tartarus, who gains strength to reawaken, promising him power in exchange for his 'complicity'. Ares exhibits his excitement at bloodshed and is thrilled at the prospect of the biggest war that is about to break out as is foretold in the prophecy and displays his impulsive and childish behaviour.

Percy is infuriated by the conduct of the gods and challenges him for a duel, where the winner can take the lightning bolt and the helm. Percy defeats Ares by slashing the god's ankle with his sword and wins the weapons. The duel resembles Propp's stage of 'struggle' and Vogler's 'ordeal', hereafter collectively mentioned as the last stand, between the 'hero' and the 'dark lord', but it better suits the essence of Propp's 'pursuit', Campbell's 'the magic flight', and Vogler's 'resurrection', henceforth referred to as pursuit in the study, which is a subversion of the stages as it usually occur after the last stand takes place in the novel, during the trio's return to Camp Half-Blood. When Percy wins, the humiliated Ares disappears with a permanent curse, saying that the demigod's sword will fail Percy when he needs it the most, which is a classic example of 'branding' though it is not a physical scar. Propp identifies long term scars that a hero endures in a fight as 'branding' and Percy experiences the aftermath of the curse in the third novel, TTC. 'Branding' in the select novels is a subversion as it conventionally occurs at the end of the hero's journey, during the last stand, which occurs multiple times in the select novels. The last stand with the 'dark lord' is reserved for the last novel in the narrative, TLO.

TLO enters falling action, in a quintessentially similar essence that the theorists have conveyed, after Percy the hero, with the end of the duel, rectifies fault of Ares and hands over the helm to Alecto the Fury, who witnesses the duel, realises the truth, and leaves Percy unharmed. The trio makes their journey to Olympus and

Percy returns the lightning bolt to Zeus, who is still unwilling to admit that he blamed an innocent boy for a crime that he did not commit, averting World War III with the fulfilment of the quest. Thus “what was stolen” is “safely returned” (Riordan, TLT 141).

The return of Percy, Annabeth, and Grover to the mythical world/Camp Half-Blood does not involve Propp’s stage, ‘unrecognised’ where the ‘hero’ is not recognised upon his return. Percy does not bring back the ‘object’, called ‘return with the elixir’ by Vogler, which occurs in its literal meaning only in the sequel, TBoL. In TLT, the terms, ‘object’ and ‘return with the elixir’ are subverted, as the ‘object’ is not necessarily a material object or trophy as the conventional structural models suggest; instead, Percy learns the truth about himself, the society, and the nature of human existence.

The novel enters Freytag’s ‘denouement’ and Gardner’s ‘resolution’, unified as denouement in the thesis, which records the aftermath of the quest. Hades sends Percy’s mother back to her home in Manhattan. Annabeth and Percy become best friends and their bond is strengthened by the challenges they face together. Annabeth realises the value of family during the quest and decides to reconcile with her estranged father. Grover’s role in the quest fulfils his lifelong dream of earning an official license to search for the god of the Wild, Pan, whose disappearance millennia ago, results in the destruction of wilderness, and satyrs consider it an honour to be able to set out on search for the god. The trio return to Camp Half-Blood, which is a subversion as it is a dual return, first to the mythological world, Camp Half-Blood, and then to the mortal one, unlike the structural models where it occurs only once.

The narrative springs a major conflict and climactic turn when Luke confesses his crimes, establishing him as the ‘shapeshifter’ and a major villain, revealing to Percy

that he is the one that calls him “friend” from the prophecy and betrays him. He admits that he is an ally of the ‘dark lord’ Kronos, who attempts to reawaken as the result of a prophecy foretold seventy years prior to Percy’s birth. The prophecy says that:

*A half-blood of the eldest gods . . .
 Shall reach sixteen against all odds...
 And see the world in endless sleep,
 The hero’s soul, cursed blade shall reap.
 A single choice shall end his days.
 Olympus to preserve or raze. (Riordan, TLT 55)*

As a result, the Big Three, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades pledge not to have any more offsprings from their union with mortals until it is broken by Poseidon when he fathers Percy.

Luke sides with Kronos thinking that he can bring justice to demigods like him who are neglected by their godly parents. When Luke realises that Percy, as a child of the elder god, has the potential stated in the Great Prophecy, he attempts to either destroy or ally with Percy to ensure that the scheme of Kronos works out without complications. The incident brings to light, the major ‘trickery’ (Propp’s stage) and ‘power’ play (Greimas’s stage) of the villains, Ares, Luke, and Kronos, which recurs in the narrative.

Kronos tries to manipulate the prophecy to his advantage using Luke and Ares, similar to Propp’s stage of ‘reconnaissance’, in which the ‘dark lord’ seeks to fulfil his motive through external assistance. It is a stage that occurs throughout the novels which is not only performed by the ‘dark lord’ but also by multiple villains, which makes it a subversion of the stage. Propp’s stage of ‘delivery’ is also subverted in the novel as Percy is the ‘object’ that the ‘dark lord’ seeks and not information or material

objects as the stage originally suggests. Another subversion in the novels pertains to the villain archetype, who in classical myths, are revealed by ‘despatchers’, but in the novels, Percy explores the good and bad around him through a confrontation of multiple villainous characters before Luke leads him to Kronos, the brain of the operation. Luke’s pretention to be a good person during the beginning, makes it seem as if he is the ‘false hero’ of the narrative, as he does not make any ‘unfounded claim’ for the hero’s achievements. As a result, he is liberated from the archetype, negating the need for Propp’s stages of ‘difficult task’, ‘solution’, ‘recognition’, and ‘exposure’.

The stage of pursuit recurs during the climactic incident when Luke, enraged over his failed plan, seeks to kill Percy, by summoning a scorpion that stings him and as the poison starts to affect him, he becomes unconscious. Similar to Propp’s ‘rescue’ and Campbell’s ‘rescue from without’, grouped and denoted as rescue hereafter, Percy is rescued by friends/ ‘helper(s)’/ ‘allies’. Argus, the hundred-eyed Greek mythological character who is portrayed as the head of security at Camp Half-Blood, and Annabeth, find Percy and takes him to Chiron who heals him. The incidents culminate in Percy and the other characters recognising (Todorov and Clute’s stage of ‘recognition’ referred to using the same term henceforth) the larger conflict that Luke is an ally of Kronos who attempts to bring his agenda into fruition.

Percy returns to the ‘ordinary world’, symbolised by Campbell’s stage of ‘the crossing of the threshold’, rendering him ‘master of the [two] worlds’, and the stages recur in the select novels. The postmodern hero, Percy constantly moves back and forth between the fantasy world of mythology and the real world of mortals, spending the summer vacation in Camp Half-Blood and the rest of the time in school in the mortal world, indicating the dual life of real children between vacation and school.

The second return of Percy entails a second denouement, a recurrent stage in the select novels. Percy returns home to find a package from Olympus that contains Medusa's head, which his mother Sally uses to turn Percy's abusive stepfather Gabe into stone and escapes her abusive marriage. She sells the stone sculpture, buys an apartment, joins school, and moves on in life, which represents subversion in the novels as the stage grants the characters only temporary peace in each of the novels selected, including the fifth instalment, TLO that concludes the narrative. Since the narrative is yet to conclude, Percy's encounter with the 'dark lord', termed as 'apotheosis' by Campbell, occurs only in the fourth novel of the narrative, TBoL. The final stand and Propp's stage of 'punishment' of the 'dark lord' is deferred until TLO. Other conventional stages that are reserved for TLO are Todorov's 'return to equilibrium' or Clute's 'land' and 'healing', and Campbell's 'freedom to live'. The plot of TLT comes to an end, setting the stage for the sequel, TSoM.

The exposition of TSoM begins with Percy experiencing a vision in the form of a nightmare, about Grover through an "empathy link" or an emotional link that connects them both. Grover is trapped on the island of the mythical Cyclops, Polyphemus, and the son of Poseidon, located in the Sea of monsters, re-envisioned as the modern-day Bermuda triangle. Grover, like many other satyrs who go in search of Pan, has been led astray, as the island is lush with vegetation due to the Golden Fleece, a mythical artefact with miraculous healing abilities is significant as it the elixir or 'object' of quest in the novel, makes him believe that it must be due to the presence of Pan, while Polyphemus preys on those who arrive.

The 'exposition' continues with Percy's life at his school in the mortal world, where he encounters cannibalistic Laistrygonian giants, disguised as students, pretending to play dodgeball with Percy and his friend Tyson, another heroic figure.

The giants use explosive fireballs to hit the duo and eventually set the whole school on fire. The incident is an intertextual reference to the encounter of Odysseus with the Laistrygonian giants, who devour several of his men, but Odysseus escapes the island (“Laistrygones”). In contrast, in TSoM, Percy and Tyson escape the giants with the help of Annabeth, who casually comes to meet Percy at the school and the trio use the Grey Sisters’ taxi, in which they escape to Camp Half-Blood.

During the ride to Camp Half-Blood, the Grey Sisters reveal the sea coordinates to locate Grover, fulfilling the stage of ‘spatial transference’ in the novel. Percy is unable to decipher the meaning behind the numbers, leaving him uncertain about their significance. In an intertextual reference to Greek mythological tales, the Grey Sisters, also guide the legendary hero Perseus in locating Medusa (“Graiiai”). In TSoM, before going on the quest, Percy arrives in Camp Half-Blood with Annabeth and Tyson, indicating the hero’s return to the mythical world and emphasising the repetition of ‘crossing the first threshold’.

In Camp Half-Blood, Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson encounter fire-breathing Colchis bulls, with heat emanating from their bronze bodies, which escape from one of the forges of Hephaestus, their creator. The encounter with the bulls is an intertextual reference to the tale of the mythical hero Jason, who yokes the bulls to plough the fields of the land of King Aetes of Colchis, in exchange for the Golden Fleece (“Medea”). Jason manages to accomplish the task using a magic potion given to him by Medea, the sorceress and Princess of Colchis, to resist the bulls’ fire (Riordan, TSoM 86-87). As opposed to the original myth, in TSoM, it is not the protagonist Percy, who is heroic, but Tyson who stops the bulls from attacking the camp. Tyson is able to accomplish the brave act as he is a young Cyclops, a mythological creature immune to fire, born from the union of nature spirits and gods,

especially Poseidon. When Poseidon claims Tyson as his son, Percy is ashamed to be associated with the Cyclops as he is mocked for having a “monster” (60), who is considered scary, monstrous, and an abomination due to their large bodies and single eyes on their foreheads (Hesiod 7). Everyone at camp including animals like pegasi make fun of Tyson’s appearance and are frightened of him. Tyson, unlike the monstrous Cyclops Polyphemus, is portrayed as a timid and under-confident boy, affectionate to those who are kind to him like Percy. Annabeth, despite her courageous demeanour, is terrified of Cyclopes as Tyson reminds her of the traumatic past when she, at the age of seven, was hunted by the monsters. Fleeing to Camp Half-Blood with Luke Castellan and Thalia Grace, the daughter of Zeus, Annabeth witnesses Thalia perish while battling the monsters in an attempt to save her friends. As a token of admiration for her valour, Zeus transforms Thalia into a pine tree which safeguards the borders of the camp from external threats until it is poisoned by Luke, revealed at a later stage, making the camp prone to attacks of monsters like the Colchis bulls, which forms the central conflict of the novel.

The unfortunate incident of poisoning of the tree angers Zeus, who impulsively fires Chiron as the Activities Director from Camp Half-Blood and appoints the vengeful Greek mythological figure, Tantalus, from the Underworld for the same post. According to Greek mythology, the gods invite Tantalus, the king of Tantalus, to a feast on Mount Olympus. The king expresses to the gods, his desire to bring nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods, to his subjects in the mortal realm in order to win their adoration. However, Tantalus’s request is denied by the gods and he is humiliated by his people. In retaliation, Tantalus hosts a feast at his palace for the gods and feeds them with a meal that includes his own son. Zeus is furious with Tantalus for his deed and sends him to the Fields of Punishment in the Underworld,

where he is forced to endure perpetual hunger and thirst, making him vengeful, which manifests in everything he does (“Tantalus”).

Tantalus disregards the need to find a cure for Thalia’s tree and organises a brutally lethal game of chariot racing for the demigods, during which they are unexpectedly attacked by the monstrous Stymphalian birds. The skilled and clever Annabeth confuses the birds using Chiron’s music stereo and directs demigods from the Apollo cabin to shoot the birds down with arrows. The episode is an allusion to one of the labours of Hercules where he makes use of brass bells that Athena gives him to scare the birds and then shoots them with his bow and arrows (“Hercules’ Sixth Labor: The Stymphalian Birds”).

The continuous attacks of the Colchis bulls and the Stymphalian birds lead to the conclusion that the Camp will not be freed unless Thalia’s tree is saved with the Golden Fleece, a cure located in Polyphemus Island. Tantalus reluctantly decides to send Clarisse on the quest for the Fleece, marking Freytag’s ‘rising action’ in TSoM. The prophecy that aids Clarisse in the quest says:

*You shall sail the iron ship with warriors of bone,
 You shall find what you seek and make it your own,
 But despair for your life entombed within the stone,
 And fail without friends, to fly home alone.* (Riordan, TSoM 234)

The choice to send Clarisse on the quest results in the subversion of Propp’s stage, ‘counteraction’, as it is transferred from the conventional ‘hero’ to another character in TSoM. The novel does not adhere to Propp’s stage of ‘mediation’, as Percy’s request to go on the quest is denied, but he, Annabeth, and Tyson opt to travel separately without permission, which indicates that despite being the protagonist, he is neither portrayed as the sole hero or the ultimate saviour, whose voice is privileged

above others, nor entrusted with the responsibility of saving the world like the mythical heroes. Riordan challenges the monomythic hero archetype, highlighting that everyone is a hero in their own unique way, an approach that breaks the monotony of ancient myths, painting a holistic picture of other characters, imbuing them with as much complexity as Percy.

The journey of Clarisse as a strong warrior begins when she exhibits the determination to accomplish the quest and makes the decision to go out on the mission alone in order to showcase her prowess. Initially charged with a reputation for being aggressive and tough, in TSoM, she is depicted in a heroic light with unwavering resolve to prove herself and save the demigods in the camp, despite their scepticism towards her. The portrayal of Clarisse challenges the conventional roles of villains, elevating her to the status of ‘helper’ and ally’ in the narrative, a transformation that presents another subversion in the novels. Clarisse departs on the journey with a gift from her father, Ares, which is a warship, the Confederate State Ship (CSS) Birmingham, from the Civil War, to aid the quest, which is the “iron ship with warriors of bone” mentioned in the prophecy (Riordan, TSoM 234). Ares warns that she must succeed and overshadow Percy or incur his wrath, which pressurises her. Hermes appears as a ‘helper’ to Percy and friends, equipping them with gifts like a thermos flask, multivitamins, “. . . clothes, toiletries, camp rations, a Ziploc bag full of cash, a leather pouch full of golden drachmas. He’d even managed to pack Tyson’s oilcloth with his tools and metal bits, and Annabeth’s cap of invisibility” (115). He functions as a ‘donor or provider’, aiding the group with the hope that Annabeth can persuade Luke to renounce his allegiance to Kronos, the ‘hero’s reaction’ he expects from the quest team, for which he directs them to Luke’s ship.

The trio face several trials that begin when Luke attempts to capture

them, proving that he is beyond redemption. Their continued voyage after escaping the ship is similar to the labours of the mythical hero, Hercules, who slays and burns the stump of Hydra, the large five-headed snake in Greek mythology, to stop them from regenerating (“Hercules’ Second Labor: The Lernean Hydra”). In TSoM, the decapitation of the Hydra is subverted when Clarisse kills it using the cannon fires of her ship and saves Percy, Annabeth, and Tyson from the monster, an action that exhibits her resourcefulness, courage, and loyalty to her friends.

Percy, Annabeth, Tyson, and Clarisse face, Scylla and Charybdis, the sea monsters from Greek mythology, who inhabit the opposite sides of a strait as featured in the voyages of Jason and the Argonauts and Odysseus. Scylla is depicted as a multi-headed creature that snatches sailors from their ships, while Charybdis is described as a whirlpool, capable of swallowing entire ships. Jason and the Argonauts, steer the ship vigorously through the strait where the monsters dwell, managing to escape with minimal damage to the vessel, whereas Odysseus sails towards Scylla, knowing he will lose six men but preserving the rest of his crew and his ship which would have been entirely destroyed if Charybdis had caught it. In TSoM, Percy and his friends steer their ship through the strait like Jason, but the engine of their ship begins to overheat and is on the verge of exploding. Percy harnesses his control over the ocean to prevent the ship from capsizing, and Tyson leverages his immunity to heat and fire, as well as his expertise with machinery to repair the engine. However, the ship explodes and Tyson and Clarisse are lost in the blast, but Percy and Annabeth survive and escape on a boat using the gift from Hermes, the wind stored in the thermos flask, to propel it. The incident is a subversion of a similar account in *Odyssey* where the wind god, Aeolus, gifts the mythical hero with wind in a leather bag to ensure a safe return. The crew on the ship, suspect that the bag contains treasure and open it, letting

the winds escape and causing a storm that leads them to Circe's Island, where the sorceress invites them for a feast and using her magic, turns them into swines as punishment for the intrusion ("Parada"). Odysseus resists the magic by consuming a magic herb given to him by Hermes and persuades her to turn the crew back to their original form in exchange of staying with her for a year.

The trial of Odysseus on Circe's Island is subverted in TSoM, where Circe turns Percy into a hamster rather than a swine, imprisoning him in a cage where he finds others like him. Circe functions as a 'woman temptress' who attempts to entice Annabeth into staying on the island to become a sorceress like her, but Annabeth resists the temptation, opens the cage, frees Percy and the other prisoners, and uses Hermes's gift, the magic multivitamins, to return them to their original forms. Once transformed, the prisoners, who turn out to be pirates, express their gratitude by lending their ship, Queen Anne's Revenge, to the demigods, facilitating their escape, which is an act of help.

Percy and Annabeth continue their initial journey to Polyphemus's Island and on their way, come across Sirens, the half-bird, half-woman creatures from Greek mythology that serve as a trial in the novel. They look like:

. . . a flock of vultures the size of people—with dirty black plumage, gay talons, and wrinkled pink necks. Now imagine human heads on top of those necks . . . but the human heads keep changing. . . They smiled reassuringly, inviting me forward. But no matter what shape they took, their mouths were greasy and caked with remnants of old meals. Like vultures, they'd been eating with their faces... (Riordan, TSoM 195)

Their songs are irresistibly sweet and ". . . their voices enchanted sailors and lured them to their death. . . Sirens sing the truth about what you desire. They tell you things

about yourself you didn't even realise. That's what's so enchanting. If you survive . . . you become wiser" (192).

Annabeth turns the trial into an opportunity to listen to the Sirens' song and learn about her fatal flaw, in the hope that their music may reveal the same. To prevent herself from drowning in temptation, she asks Percy to tie her to the foremast of their ship; meanwhile, Percy uses candle wax as earplugs to shield himself as they navigate towards their way to Polyphemus's Island. The episode is an intertextual reference to *Odyssey* in which Circe instructs Odysseus to block the ears of his crew with wax to make them deaf to the song of the Sirens and avoid the danger the song poses ("Athena").

In TSoM, the narrative shifts back to Clarisse, who reaches Polyphemus's Island, and is closer to retrieving the Golden Fleece. Desperate and fearful of losing to Percy, she taunts the Cyclops, only to be captured and imprisoned in his cave. This makes the lines, "You shall find what you seek and make it on your own, But despair for your life entombed within stone", true (Riordan, TSoM 234). Percy and Annabeth arrive shortly after, and Annabeth distracts Polyphemus by turning invisible using her cap of invisibility, claiming to be "Nobody", an intertextual reference to the encounter of Odysseus with the Cyclops to drawing him away from the cave. The distraction allows Percy to sneak into the cave, clinging onto the underside of the belly of his sheep to free Grover and Clarisse.

Clarisse grabs the Golden Fleece from the tree where it is hung and is about to escape with Percy, Annabeth and Grover, when Polyphemus realises Annabeth's trickery and attacks them, but Percy pokes the Cyclops in his eye to escape. Tyson survives the explosion and arrives just in time, with hippocampi, the mythical sea creatures with the upper body of a horse and the lower body of a fish, that he befriends,

proving once again as an ‘ally’ and ‘helper’, rescues his friends and they sail on the backs of the hippocampi, and the team effort aids them in succeeding in their quest. The incident alludes to the mythical tale of Odysseus who poses as “Nobody” with Polyphemus, stabs the Cyclops in the eye, and escapes by holding onto the belly of the monster’s sheep (Boston). The return voyage of the hero is made difficult by Poseidon, who sends multiple storms as revenge for hurting his son Polyphemus, but in the novel, the demigods sail back without any difficulty till Florida, the immediate next shore (Riordan, TSoM 212). Percy senses Clarisse’s fear of failing to take back the Fleece by herself and facing the wrath of her father Ares, which urges him to hand her the Fleece, asking her to return to Camp Half-Blood with it on her own, fulfilling the prophecy as she flies home alone without friends.

The novel enters the stage of pursuit when Percy, Annabeth, Grover, and Tyson are confronted by Luke and his army, seeking to seize the Golden Fleece from them. Luke confesses his ‘trickery’ during the pursuit, saying that he poisoned Thalia’s tree to obtain the Golden Fleece from the demigods once they find it for the ‘dark lord’, Kronos, marking the stage of ‘reconnaissance’ in the novel and subverting the original one, as it occurs later than it does in Propp’s model. To prove Luke’s evil intentions, Percy sends an Iris message, equivalent of a video call using rainbow by offering a golden drachma to Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, revealing Luke’s confession to Dionysus at Camp Half-Blood. The confession ends in a conflict between Luke’s army who nearly overpowers Percy, Annabeth, Grover, and Tyson, but Chiron arrives with his centaur friends, rescues them, and takes them back to Camp Half-Blood, fulfilling the stage of return.

The exposure of Luke’s ploy convinces Dionysus that Chiron is not to be blamed for the poisoning of Thalia’s tree, and Chiron is reinstated as the Activities

Director at Camp Half-Blood, which constitutes the novel's falling action. All members of the quest team return to the camp during the denouement of the novel. Clarisse places the Fleece on Thalia's tree after which it rejuvenates, fulfilling her heroic journey. Tyson is recognised for his craftsmanship by Poseidon, who summons him to his kingdom to work at the forges of the Cyclopes for an internship, which Tyson regards as a great opportunity to learn as well as work with those like himself. Percy realises the goodness of Tyson's heart and whole-heartedly accepts him as his brother. Percy is worried about his return to the mortal school Meriwether Prep as he fears that the school administration will hold him responsible for the fire damage caused during the encounter with the Laistrygonian giants in the exposition of the novel. He is surprised to learn that the administration is convinced that a furnace explosion caused the school fire and that Percy is not to be blamed, making it Percy's first time attending the same school for two consecutive years.

TSoM, similar to the prequel TLT, does not end with falling action, rather springs a new conflict at the demigods, with no room for 'healing' as the Fleece resurrects Thalia. Thalia's resurrection is a subversion of Propp's stage of 'delivery' as the demigods, victims of Kronos ploy, unintentionally bring his plans into fruition, despite their resistance to 'complicity' when Luke demands the Fleece. It becomes clear to everyone at Camp Half-Blood that Kronos has tricked them ('trickery') into the situation to get another chance to use the child of Zeus and turn the Prophecy to his advantage, laying the foundation of the third book, TTC.

TTC brings to the forefront, strong female characters like Thalia, whose resurrection is highlighted in the prequel, and two new characters, Bianca di Angelo and Zoe Nightshade. All three characters are developed with an impressive display of power and are introduced in the novel's exposition where Percy's mother escorts him,

Thalia, and Annabeth to Westover Hall to fetch Grover Underwood who calls them for backup on his mission to rescue two half-blood siblings, Nico and Bianca di Angelo. Taking the duo safely to Camp Half-Blood is a subplot that constitutes the 'rising action' of the novel.

The rescue of Nico and Bianca is a challenge as they are under the surveillance of a Greek mythological monster, mantichore, with the head of man, body of a lion, and tail of a scorpion, disguised as the Vice Principal of the school and an ally of Kronos, who tries to attack Percy, Grover, Annabeth, and Thalia. To fight the monster, Percy uses his shield and sword, Thalia uses her spear and shield, Aegis (a modern shield that springs out of a bracelet), Annabeth attacks it with her knife, and Grover uses his magical reed pipe to summon plants that creep on the mantichore to rein him. The team is no match for the powerful monster which tries to overpower them, when Artemis the virgin goddess of the moon and hunt, arrives with her warriors, the Huntresses, and their lieutenant, Zoe Nightshade, searching for a powerful, ancient monster. They understand that the demigods and Grover are under trouble from the mantichore and function 'helper(s)' shooting arrows at it, but it manages to escape, taking Annabeth with it. Artemis is convinced by the events that unfolded that the mantichore must be sent by the ancient creature that she is hunting. Impressed by what the huntresses do, Bianca decides to join them and pledges allegiance to Artemis, becoming an eternal maiden.

The plot thickens when Artemis declares that she will venture alone to hunt the ancient monster afterwards and summons her twin brother Apollo, the sun god, god of music, poetry, and healing to take the Huntresses and the others to Camp Half-Blood, soon after which Zoe gets a dream vision that Artemis is kidnapped and held captive, which calls for an adventure. Zoe takes 'counteraction' to locate Artemis and

remedy the 'lack' and as a result, the prophecy is revealed, which says:

Five shall go west to the goddess in chains,

One shall be lost in the land without rain,

The bane of Olympus shows us the trail,

Campers and Hunters combined prevail,

The titan's curse must one withstand,

And one shall perish by a parent's hand. (Riordan, TTC 89)

She chooses Bianca, Thalia, and Grover as her quest mates and avoids Percy. Similar to the prequel, Percy's 'mediation', expressing interest to go on the quest with the hope to rescue Annabeth, is not encouraged, but he wears Annabeth's cap of invisibility and stealthily joins the quest team to rescue her, which is a subplot in the novel as the lines in the prophecy, "five shall go west to the goddess in chains" and "Campers and Hunters combined prevail" are fulfilled (89). Before they depart, Bianca's brother Nico, worried for his sister's safety, assigns Percy the responsibility of safeguarding her.

The refusal of Zoe to take Percy on the quest springs from her grudge against the mythical hero Hercules, which she associates with all heroes. According to Greek mythology, born to the Titan Atlas and the ocean nymph Pleione, Zoe is one of the Hesperides, the nymphs of sunset, who guard the trees of the apples of immortality along with the hundred-headed dragon, Ladon. Zoe helps Hercules in his eleventh labour to steal three apples of immortality by giving him her hair clip that turns into a sword, allowing him to slay Ladon, after which Hercules abandons her and she is exiled by her family, owing to the treacherous act. She joins the Hunters of Artemis and becomes their lieutenant and like their patron goddess thinks that it is worthless for girls to grow up without ambition, only to fall in love with boys and forget

themselves. The goddess accepts only young girls as her Hunters like Zoe or Bianca who “. . . forswear romantic love forever . . . never grow up, never get married. To be a maiden eternally” (Riordan, TTC 41). Once Percy learns of Zoe’s terrible fate, he sympathises with her and retracts his admiration for Hercules, the hero he once idolised. Subsequently, the quest team and Percy leave for the quest, marking the heroes’ ‘call to adventure’, but like in the prequels, they do not receive gifts before they begin the quest, they acquire them during the journey.

The first trial that the quest team encounters is the Greek mythological creature, Nemean Lion, a huge lion with golden fur that is impervious to attacks with mortal weapons. It is an allusion to the first labour of Hercules, during which he kills the lion, skins its pelt using its own claw, and wears it as an armour around his head (“Hercules’ First Labor: The Nemean Lion”). In TTC, Percy and Zoe, function as each other’s ‘helper(s)’ to kill the lion. Once the lion dies, it sheds its skin and the pelt transforms into a bulletproof fur coat, another subversion of the original myth. Impressed with Percy’s help, Zoe realises that not all heroes are bad and urges him to take the coat as a spoil of war.

Percy, Zoe, Bianca, and Grover continue the journey, while being chased by indestructible skeletal warriors, sent by the manticore, who seek to hinder their quest, that Bianca manages to kill, even though they cannot be killed again. Her ability to kill the warriors indicates that she is the daughter of Hades, the remaining of the three Elder Gods, rendering her and Nico, as the children of the Great Prophecy, another turning point in the narrative, which remains unknown to the rest of the team.

The team is helped by the goddess Aphrodite, and the gods, Pan, Apollo, and Zeus, who function as magical agents or ‘helper(s)’. Aphrodite leads them to the next destination, the Junkyard of Gods in Arizona, where Hephaestus dumps his defective

pieces of innovation, like defective, weapons, tools, and automatons. The goddess warns them not to take anything from the Junkyard and tells Percy that she takes a special interest in him as she understands his desire to save Annabeth, confessing that it is she who helped him escape undetected from the camp. She also functions as a ‘woman temptress’ and tries to derail Percy from the quest by telling him that his love life with Annabeth will be difficult. It increases Percy’s anxiety about Annabeth, but he notices that the goddess is self-obsessed and cares only about people falling in love, looking pretty, and the drama from her manipulations like the instigation of love between the Trojan prince, Paris, with a married woman Helen, who is the most beautiful mortal woman, leading to Helen’s abduction and the subsequent Trojan war. Ironically, for a goddess of love, Aphrodite is more excited about heartbreaks and tells Percy that she wishes that all her daughters “. . . could break the heart of a boy as nice as [him]” (Riordan, TTC 187).

In the quest, further help is provided by Pan who sends the quest team a “gift of the Wild” in the form of the Erythmanian Boar, a giant wild creature from Greek mythology, to help them reach Arizona. It is an allusion to the fourth labour of Hercules, of capturing the Erythmanian boar, where he captures the creature in chains after driving it into a pile of snow. In the novel, Grover suspects that the boar is a gift from the god of the Wild, while Percy observes its remarkable speed and subdues it similar to Hercules, after which he, Thalia, Bianca, Zoe, and Grover ride on the back of the creature to the Junkyard of Gods in Arizona. Once the quest team enter the Junkyard, the first part of the prophecy, “one shall be lost in a land without rain”, comes true as Bianca, ignoring the warning of Aphrodite, steals a figurine for the Mythomagic game that her brother Nico plays. The stealth accidentally awakens a defective prototype of the automaton Talos, which Hephaestus creates for Minos, the

king of Crete, to guard the island from intruders, an allusion to the Greek myth. Realising her mistake, Bianca tries to switch off the automaton but is killed in the process.

Zoe, Percy, Thalia, and Grover continue their journey, during which they receive assistance from Apollo who appears as a 'helper' in the form of a homeless man to help them locate his beloved sister Artemis, as gods cannot directly meddle in the quest of the heroes. Percy on Apollo's instruction finds the sea god Nereus, who discloses that Artemis is on Mount Tamalpais near San Francisco, fulfilling the stage of 'spatial transference' in the novel. It is another allusion to the labours of Hercules, as he too seeks Nereus for the location of the apples of Hesperides. In TTC, Percy, Zoe, Thalia, and Grover sail across the sea on a boat with naiads acting as 'helper(s)' to help them steer the boat faster and reach Hoover Dam, where Percy runs into a mortal girl with the name Rachel Elizabeth Dare, who can see through the supernatural force Mist, that hides the supernatural from mortals and functions as a 'helper' to help Percy hide in the bathroom from the skeletal warriors that still pursue them. Thalia prays for the help of her father, Zeus, who, out of affection for his daughter, functions as a 'helper' by bringing the guardian bronze statues at the dam to life to save the quest team from the attack and they carry the demigods closer to their desired destination, Mount Tamalpais in San Francisco. On their way, they come across an Ophiotaurus, a creature that is half-cow and half-serpent, which if killed and its entrails acquired, grants the killer insurmountable amounts of power – "the bane of Olympus" (Riordan, TTC 89). Concerned about the potential dangers the death of the creature might pose if it falls into the hands of Luke and his army, the quest team resolves to protect the creature, deciding that Olympus is the safest place for it. The team decides to entrust Grover with the task of taking the Ophiotaurus safely to Olympus and to ensure safe

passage, Percy offers his lion's coat to his father Poseidon, as sacrifice.

Percy, Thalia, and Zoe meet Annabeth's father, Dr. Chase and borrow his car, which unfortunately explodes due to lightning. The trio continues their ascent until they reach the Garden of Hesperides where Zoe distracts the dragon Ladon to help Percy and Thalia to proceed to the location where Artemis is held captive, but Ladon detects Zoe's ruse and injures her with its poisonous claws.

The novel enters 'climax' when Percy and Thalia realise that the kidnapped Annabeth had found Luke struggling under the weight of the sky. When she attempts to help him, Luke deceives her, leaving her to bear the burden alone and the immense strain turns her hair grey, an example of 'branding' (Riordan, TTC 175). The moment serves as an intertextual reference to the tale of Atlas, the Titan god of constellations, who was condemned by Zeus to hold the sky as punishment for leading the Titans in the war against the Olympians, called Titanomachy. Artemis frees Annabeth when she arrives as a mortal cannot survive the overwhelming weight of the sky for long. The vengeful Atlas allies with Kronos with the wish to see Zeus destroyed and the kidnaps of Annabeth and Artemis orchestrated by Atlas and Luke is evident of their acts of 'villainy' to fulfil the grand plan of Kronos. Luke anticipates that Camp Half-Blood would send Thalia on the quest, with the scheme that he can manipulate the daughter of Zeus, to join him in helping Kronos to rise from Tartarus and overthrow the Olympians, which is 'reconnaissance' in the novel. Thus, the quest team which consists of a child each of the Elder Gods, unknowingly walk towards the trap laid by Kronos, fulfilling the stages of 'delivery', but not 'complicity', as they manage to escape.

Percy fights Atlas to rescue Artemis and Annabeth and the curse that Ares places on Percy in TLT is invoked in the novel as he feels the war curse of the war god

when he experiences the sword getting heavy in his hands. In the ensuing battle, Thalia and Luke engage in a fight with each other and he falls into a chasm. Percy frees Artemis of the weight of the sky – “the Titan’s curse must one withstand” – from which he too gets branded with a streak of grey hair that matches Annabeth’s (Riordan, TTC 89, 199). Artemis battles the Titan god and forces him to continue his destiny of supporting the sky, before which, he manages to kill Zoe, fulfilling the last part of the prophecy, “one shall perish by a parent’s hand” (89). It is evident that Zoe, knowing her fate, deliberately walks into her death by leading the quest, as her last act of help for the demigods, and her patroness Artemis honours her by transforming her into a constellation. The conflict ends when Luke’s army charges at them and Annabeth’s father Dr. Chase arrives as a ‘helper’ and bravely aids them in escaping from Mount Tamalpais as he blasts monsters with his flaming machine guns filled with celestial bronze bullets. It is a metaphor to show parents’ support of their children during a crisis. The ‘climax’ comes to an end and the plot enters the stage falling action as Artemis, the elixir or ‘object’ of the novel is saved and she takes the demigods on her chariot to Mount Olympus where the gods hold council to discuss the awakening of Kronos and the ways in which he can be tackled. In the novel, the return of the heroes is not interfered by pursuit, eliminating the need for the following stage of rescue.

The plot shifts to denouement in Olympus where the Olympians debate whether the children of the Great Prophecy, Percy, Thalia, and the Ophiotaurus, an extra threat to their existence, should be executed or not, out of concern that they could be the means by which Olympus is destroyed. Majority of the Olympians vote against it, no harm befalls them, but the events that transpired prompt the Olympians to prepare for combat with Kronos. As for the quest team, Thalia joins the Hunters and is made lieutenant after Zoe’s death. Percy returns to Camp with Annabeth and Grover,

and Percy, in private, breaks the news of Bianca's death to Nico, who blames Percy for her death and says that he can feel Bianca waiting to be evaluated in the fields of Asphodel in the Underworld, and storms out of the Camp. The incident is a revelation to Percy that Nico is a son of Hades, which sets the stage for a dramatic turning point in the narrative as the discovery raises the possibility that the Great Prophecy could also apply to Nico. To prevent the 'dark lord' from going after the young Nico, Percy decides to take the prophecy upon himself and returns home for the holidays, denoting yet another subverted dual return, which lays the stage for the sequel, TBoL.

The exposition of TBoL opens with Percy attending a freshman orientation session at Goode High School, where his mother's boyfriend Paul Blofis is a teacher. In the school, Percy coincidentally runs into Rachel Elizabeth Dare, the girl with the ability to see through mist that Percy previously meets at the Hoover Dam in the prequel, TTC. The novel enters 'rising action' when both Percy and Rachel are attacked by Empousai, the servants of Hecate, who are shape-shifting, bloodsucking she-demons, disguised as beautiful high school cheerleader bullies and the first villain figures in the novel. In their attempt to flee from the Empousai, Percy and Rachel meet Annabeth outside the school and Percy returns to Camp Half-Blood with Annabeth while Rachel returns home. Upon their return to the camp, Percy learns that Clarisse has recently undertaken a covert mission to scout the mythical maze Labyrinth for signs of invasion routes into the camp by Luke's army, which is the conflict of the novel. The invasion plan, an act of 'reconnaissance', is aimed at eliminating the demigods in order to prevent them from defending the Olympians in battle with Kronos. To succeed, Luke needs Ariadne's string (elixir or 'object' of 'lack'), a navigational tool that allows safe passage through the Labyrinth ('spatial transference'). It is believed to be in the possession of Daedalus, the architect of the

maze and the son of Athena, who is believed to be hiding within the labyrinth for millennia. ‘Delivery’ and ‘complicity’ do not occur in the novel as it is subverted in the prequels with Luke possessing the elixir or ‘object’ without the help of Percy and his friends.

The ‘rising action’ of the novel begins when Percy and Annabeth realise that there is an entrance into the Labyrinth as they see three giant scorpions enter the camp. Having discovered the route that Luke might follow for the infiltration, the demigods decide to venture on a quest into the Labyrinth to obtain Ariadne’s string before Luke does, to foil his wicked plan. The choice of the person who leads the quest in TBoL is a subversion of the structural models similar to that of TSoM and TTC. The quest is offered to Annabeth, giving her responsibility of ‘counteraction’ and she chooses Percy, Grover, and Tyson as her companions. The prophecy that aids the demigods as revealed to Annabeth is:

*You shall dwell in the darkness of the endless maze,
The dead, the traitor, and the lost one raise,
You shall rise or fall by the ghost king’s hand,
The child of Athena’s final stand,
Destroy with a hero’s final breath,
And lose a love to worse than death.* (Riordan, TBoL 73-74)

Riordan carves a greater role for Annabeth in TBoL with her own journey where she takes on multi-dimensional roles of a friend, mentor, ‘helper’, and an ‘ally’ in the novel. It emphasises the portrayal of Annabeth as the female lead of the novels as she is a character whose journey is traced along with that of Percy throughout the novels.

The quest team begins their ‘call to adventure’ into the “the darkness of the

endless maze”, the Labyrinth, without ‘receipt of a magic agent’, and the trials begin (Riordan, TBoL 73-74). In the first trial, they come across inside the Labyrinth, the two-faced Roman god, Janus, the god of doorways, beginnings, endings, and choices, who asks Annabeth to choose the door that she would take in the journey (100). She is directed by the wife of Zeus, Queen of gods and the goddess of marriage, Hera, who appears as a ‘helper’, provides them with food, and leads them safely to Alcatraz, where they come across one of the Hekatonkheires (hundred-handed Cyclopes) named Briares who is imprisoned in the Labyrinth by the terrifying mythical monster Kampe. Tyson takes pity on Briares and frees him, while Kampe chases them, but they escape and encounter a Sphinx, the mythical creature with the head of a woman and the body of a lion that acts as a ‘threshold guardian’, that refuses to let them pass, unless they answer its questions. The encounter is a subversion of the myths in which the Sphinx typically asks riddles, but in TBoL the Sphinx asks Annabeth simple questions which she being the daughter of Athena, finds insulting and refuses to answer; instead, chooses to battle with the creature and escapes with her friends (184).

The quest team reaches Triple G Ranch, owned by the three-bodied giant Geryon, who promises safe passage for the demigods through the ranch, where they see Nico. He plans to resurrect his dead sister, Bianca, for which he seeks the guidance of the ghost King, Minos, a ‘shapeshifter’ and the vengeful king of Crete, who after his death becomes one of the Judges of the Dead in the Underworld. Minos, however, has a hidden agenda of sacrificing Daedalus, his sworn enemy, believed to be hiding in the Labyrinth to facilitate his own resurrection in exchange for the soul of Daedalus. He pretends to help Nico, leading him into the Labyrinth to sell him to Luke in exchange for the whereabouts of Daedalus.

The conflict Minos has with Daedalus is rooted in a series of events that

intertwine betrayal, revenge, and the consequences of punishment. According to the Greek myth, Minos seeks to prove his legitimacy for his rule over Crete, which is crucial for maintaining his authority, by asking Poseidon for a sign that comes in the form of a magnificent white bull. Minos does not sacrifice the bull as promised, which is an act of betrayal that angers Poseidon, leading to a curse on Pasiphaë, the wife of Minos to fall in love with the bull. Daedalus constructs a wooden cow for Pasiphaë within which she hides, to satisfy her unnatural desire that results in the birth of the Minotaur, a creature that poses a significant threat to people of Crete. Minos as the King of Crete summons Daedalus to build an elaborate Labyrinth to contain it.

Theseus desires to kill the Minotaur and gets the help of Daedalus, who provides the princess Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, with a thread (“Ariadne’s String”) to help Theseus navigate the Labyrinth, after which the princess elopes with the hero. Minos discovers the involvement of Daedalus in the victory of Theseus and feels betrayed and imprisons Daedalus and his son Icarus as punishment. Daedalus in prison, devises a plan to escape using wings made from feathers and wax and despite warnings not to fly too high or too low, Icarus disobeys his father and flies too close to the sun, resulting in his death, while Daedalus escapes to King Cocalus of Sicily.

Angered by the escape of Daedalus and the betrayal of his own daughter, Minos pursues Daedalus to Sicily, determined not to lose the invaluable skills of the craftsman, which he views as essential for maintaining his power. Minos demands that King Cocalus to return Daedalus to him, but Cocalus does not heed to the request of his guest and devises a plan to protect Daedalus, but is tricked into revealing the mythical craftsman’s presence, only to be killed in his bath by the daughters of Cocalus, who pour boiling water on him.

Unaware of the scheme of Minos, Nico attempts to summon Bianca’s ghost in

order to resurrect her, but it is the ghost of Theseus that appears (Nico raises the dead as told in the prophecy), serving as a ‘helper’ and cautions Nico, saying that “The Labyrinth is treacherous. There is only one thing that saw me through: the love of a mortal girl. The string was only part of the answer. It was the princess who guided me” (Riordan, TBoL 88). The ghost of Bianca appears and convinces Nico to end his plan and not to behold grudge against Percy as her death is not Percy’s fault. In a turn of events, Geryon is also a ‘shapeshifter’, who plans to sell the demigods to Luke. Percy strikes a deal with Geryon saying that if before sunset, he cleans the stables where the giant rears the red cattle of the god Apollo and some carnivorous horses, the demigods should be set free. Percy uses sea shells that produce saltwater springs that dissolve the dirt in Geryon’s ranch and succeeds in the challenge, but Geryon refuses to free the demigods and orders Eurytion, the son of Ares, and Geryon’s immortal herdsman to kill the quest team. Eurytion refuses to abide to Geryon, as he is tired of doing the same thing for millennia and says, “You keep sending me out to do your dirty work. You pick fights for no good reason, and I’m tired of dying for you. You want to fight the kid, do it yourself” (156-157). In the ensuing conflict, Percy kills Geryon by piercing an arrow at his three hearts at once and escapes with his friends except Nico, who refuses to leave because he prefers solitude with the belief that as a child of Hades, he is viewed as an outcast, and that even the dead respect him only out of fear (“Hercules’ Tenth Labor: The Cattle of Geryon”). The trial is a subversion of the labours of Hercules which is cleaning the stables of Augeas and stealing the cattle of the giant Geryon that are combined with Percy’s trials. Augeas is not a character in TBoL and stealing Geryon’s cattle is not a part of Percy’s trials. Hercules reroutes two rivers through the stables to flush out the dirt.

The quest team, in their further journey, is assisted by Eurytion who functions

as a 'helper' by guiding them to the forge of Hephaestus in the Labyrinth with the hope that the god will lead them to Daedalus. During the journey, Grover senses the presence of Pan and the four decide to split. Annabeth and Percy go in search of the forge and Tyson accompanies Grover's quest for Pan, a subplot in the novel. When the demigods find Hephaestus, who functions as a 'donor or provider' and promises to help the demigods by revealing the location of Daedalus if they help the god find the invaders of his forges on Mount St. Helens.

Percy and Annabeth fulfil the 'hero's reaction' as they go to the mountain and find that it harbours sea demons called telekhines. Percy tries to fight the creatures single handedly, but the volcano in the mountain explodes and he is blown away to Ogygia, the island where Calypso, the daughter of Atlas, is imprisoned by the gods as punishment for supporting the Titans in the Titanomachy, the first war of the Titan's against the Olympians. Calypso is cursed to fall in love with heroes who cannot stay with her, but if the heroes wish to leave the island, they must win her love, which makes her a friendly 'threshold guardian' in the novel.

Percy's encounter with Calypso is an allusion to the rendezvous of Odysseus, who is washed onto the shores of Ogygia during his voyage. In the myth, Calypso functions as a 'woman temptress' who keeps Odysseus against his will in the island for seven years before Hermes, on behalf of Athena and Zeus, asks Calypso to set the hero free ("Calypso"). The episode is subverted in TBoL where Calypso is not portrayed as a typical 'woman temptress' who keeps Percy on the island against his will and he falls in love with her, but is taken back by Hephaestus to work on his forgotten quest.

The disappearance of Percy makes everyone think that he has perished in the volcanic eruption, until he unravels his experiences to everyone at Camp Half-Blood.

Percy and Annabeth make another attempt to enter into the Labyrinth, with Rachel who has the gift to see through Mist, which would enable them to navigate the Labyrinth more easily. Unfortunately, they are captured by Luke's army, who force Percy to participate in an arena, owned by Anteus, the son of Poseidon and Gaia, the primordial goddess of earth and the mother of both the Titans and the Olympians. Percy and his team, in order to be freed has to kill his opponent – a demigod named Ethan Nakamura, the son of Nemesis, who is the goddess of balance – but Percy takes pity on him and lets him free and he later joins Kronos's army, making him the “traitor” of the prophecy. Anteus, insulted by Percy's act fights him, but Percy manages to decapitate him by lifting him off the ground to disempower Anteus and manages to make a swift escape using the Stygian ice whistle given to him by the camp sword instructor Quintus ('helper') before entering the Labyrinth, to summon his pet hellhound, Mrs. O'Leary. In the myth, Hercules executes Anteus in the same manner.

The quest team finally reach the workshop of Daedalus in the Labyrinth where they discover that Quintus, the Camp sword instructor, is the fifth (Quintus is Greek for fifth) automaton body of Daedalus, who continues to exist by transferring his memories into it. The 'rising action' tenses when Daedalus reveals that Ariadne's string, the elixir or 'object' of desire, has already been handed over to Luke.

The novel takes a climactic turn ('climax') when Minos arrives with Nico and Luke's army to the workshop of Daedalus. Nico realises the ploy of Minos and banishes him to the Underworld, while Luke's minions attacks Daedalus for fraternising with his enemies. Percy, Annabeth, Rachel, and Nico use the situation to their advantage and in order to escape, they fly out the window of the workshop using wax wings, the invention of Daedalus – “You shall rise or fall by the ghost king's hand” where Nico is the ghost king as he can summon the dead and they escape

because the idea to escape is Nico's (Riordan, TBoL 73). On their way, they come across a sarcophagus with Luke inside it, holding a scythe, the weapon of Kronos. Percy realises that Kronos, in an attempt to attain immortality and rise to unparalleled power, has possessed Luke's body – "And lose a love to worse than death" (Riordan, TBoL 74). Thus, in the structural models, the 'hero' comes face to face with the 'dark lord' as Percy, similar to the hero in Campbell's stage of 'apotheosis', witnesses the power of Kronos, which is to slow time.

Percy, Annabeth, Rachel, and Nico manage to escape from the workshop of Daedalus and awaken Grover and Tyson, lying unconscious on the ground. The six of them resume their journey and locate Pan in New Mexico's Carlsband Caverns in the Labyrinth where the god has been hiding out of sight as he no longer desires to live, which brings the subplot of Grover's search for Pan to an end, making Pan the "lost one" of the prophecy. Pan asks Grover to spread the word that the god of Wild is dead and remind people to conserve what is left of the wilderness. The quest team return to Camp Half-Blood and find that it is under the attack of Luke's army, which is an incident that mirrors the stage of pursuit. They overcome the attack as a result of team effort, in contrast to the stage of rescue by external agents, rendering it as a subversion of the structural models.

In the climactic conflict, Daedalus escapes from Luke and joins the fight, but the enemies are driven away by Grover's horrible cry which is similar to that of Pan's cry during the Titanomachy, leading the novel to falling action. It results in the fulfilment of the prophecy that drives the novels as Daedalus decides to give up his life – "the child of Athena's final stand", and in the process he destroys the Labyrinth which is tied to his life force – "destroy with hero's final breath" (Riordan, TBoL 73). During the 'denouement', before giving up his life, Daedalus passes on his laptop filled

with the knowledge of his inventions to Annabeth, who happily receives it as she hopes to forge a path for herself as an architect and build structures for the gods in Olympus (74). Tyson takes Briares to the forges of the Cyclopes, under the sea. Hera appears before Percy and Annabeth, expecting gratitude for her assistance, yet the demigods accuse her of complicating their journey through the Labyrinth with challenges like Geryon's ranch, which delays their quest. They criticise her for not allowing Nico to escape, attributing it to his lineage from an outcast god, which they believe led to their confrontation with Geryon. Although Hera aids the quest team by clearing their path to Mount Tamalpais in the prequel, the act does little to compensate for the numerous difficulties they faced along the way, proving that she is more of a hindrance than a help. The disrespect of Percy and Annabeth turns the goddess spiteful and she takes revenge on Annabeth during the final volume, TLO. In the end of TBoL, Annabeth stays at Camp Half-Blood and Percy returns home to the 'ordinary world'.

In the fifth and the final novel in the narrative, TLO, Percy is sixteen-years-old as the Great Prophecy foretells – "A half-blood of the eldest gods . . . Shall reach sixteen against all odds..." (Riordan, TLT 55). The conflict that drives the plot of TLO is the struggle between the Titans and the Olympians who join the demigods to defend Olympus from Kronos, leading Titan Army and Typhon, the father of all monsters with the power to crush the Olympians. Manhattan city in the 'climax' of the novels is a dark, treacherous environment as opposed to the normalcy that the city stood for, during the 'exposition' in TLT. In the 'exposition' of the novel, Percy is seen spending time with Rachel when Charles Beckendorf, son of Hephaestus, takes Percy on a mission to try and explode Luke's ship that harbours Kronos army of monsters without being noticed by anyone onboard. It marks the 'call of adventure' of the hero in the novel (the final one in the larger plot) as it is evident that he is determined for the last

stand with the 'dark lord' and restore the 'lack' of peace. The novel does not feature the stage of 'mediation' as the 'hero' Percy, assumes 'counteraction' and he has already traversed the road of trials in the first four instalments. Additionally, considering the lack of an elixir or 'object' of desire in the novel, it does not involve 'spatial transference' as the novel does not feature any reward but a battle between good and evil, where good triumphs.

The novel has a progressive plot style in which the central climax where each scene of rising action builds on the suspense is followed by denouement that swiftly leads to return of equilibrium (Lukens 118). The mission is sabotaged when Luke, possessed by Kronos, is tipped off with the information regarding the explosion by a spy at Camp Half-Blood, Silena Beauregard, daughter of Aphrodite and the girlfriend of Charles Beckendorf, mirroring Propp's stages of 'delivery' and 'complicity' to Kronos, who promises to spare the life of Beckendorf in return for her service. However, Kronos captures Percy and Beckendorf, who manages to explode the ship and sacrifices his life to give Percy a window to escape.

Percy returns to Camp Half-Blood, delivers the news of Beckendorf's death and urges everyone to work unitedly. The narrative enters Vogler's stage of 'approach to the inmost cave', when Percy, to heighten his chance of success and make himself vulnerable during the last stand with the 'dark lord' Kronos, takes Nico's advice to take a dip in the river Styx in the Underworld, same as Luke. It is an allusion to Achilles's acquisition of unbeatable prowess in the battlefield. In Greek mythology, the mother of Achilles, Thetis who is a Nereid or sea nymph, dips him in the River Styx to render him invulnerable in battles (Lee and Jacobs). Percy gets his mother, Sally's blessing before bathing in the river, as it is a significant part of the process. Sally, who understands the larger role that her son has to play in life, blesses him, and

asks him to intimate her after the battle that he is safe. The demigods make their way to the Underworld, where Hades captures Percy (the 'trickery'/'villainy' of Hades) who reveals that his plan to use Nico to trap Percy and make Nico the child of the Great Prophecy, an action driven by the desire for power and resentment over his children being treated as outcasts by other gods and demigods.

Nico aids Percy in escaping the prison and guides him to the Styx, where the ghost of Achilles appears and warns Percy about the perils of bathing in the river and that if he survives the bath, his combat skills would surpass those of mortals, but it will also increase his weaknesses like pride and arrogance. Percy takes the dip and undergoes a 'transfiguration' that makes him extremely powerful, and the stage is a subversion of Propp's model as it appears towards the end of the model and in the middle.

Percy, during the last stand, the god of sleep, Morpheus, sees that the mortal world is in endless sleep, as said in the Great Prophecy by casting a spell on the city to prevent mortals from hindering the battle. Percy fights innumerable monsters on his own, before the final confrontation with Kronos, while Thalia with the Hunters and Tyson with the army of Cyclopes come to help. Grover plays on his reed pipes, calling out to the trees and roots to help the monsters, by pulling them down to the ground with the help of other satyrs. Dryads/tree nymphs pelt seeds and nuts and do their part. Nico summons an army of the dead. Annabeth activates the automatons of Daedalus, situated all around Manhattan to fight alongside the demigods to have more warriors fighting by their side. Annabeth also saves Percy from getting stabbed by Ethan Nakamura, an act that confirms her love for him. Everyone shows a united front in the battle, except the vengeful Hera, who acts childishly, causing her statue to crash down on Annabeth as revenge, but Thalia saves her.

The plot reaches a turning point when Silena Beauregard, the best friend of Clarisse, wears her war helmet, impersonating her, and rallies the Ares cabin, who are initially reluctant to join the battle, to strengthen the number of demigod warriors battling the enemy. Unfortunately, she is killed by drakon, a giant serpent-like mythical creature and when Silena's helmet is removed, it is revealed to everyone that it is not Clarisse but Silena who dies. In her fist, a miniature of the weapon of Kronos, the scythe is found, indicating that she was a spy of Kronos. Clarisse avenges the death of Silena by single-handedly slaying the drakon, which is a heroic act.

The plot thickens when Percy, Annabeth, Grover, and Thalia make their way to Mount Olympus for the last stand. During the 'climax' Kronos, with Luke's spirit within him, marches into the throne room of the Olympians, and Annabeth tries to convince Luke's conscience to end the battle. His affection for Annabeth brings his conscience back for a brief moment when he stabs himself to death with Annabeth's knife – "the hero's soul, cursed blade shall reap" – and the knife was given to him by Percy, thereby killing Kronos and fulfilling the Great Prophecy – "a single choice shall end his days, Olympus to preserve or raze" (Riordan, TLO 55). The incident refers back to the three old ladies snipping yarn in TLT, as Percy realises that the Fates were hinting at Luke's death and not Percy's, as he and Grover initially think. The difference between the two primary villains, is evident as Luke gets redeemed in the end, but the 'dark lord' Kronos who is purely evil is defeated, which is the 'punishment'. The demigods and the Olympians emerge victorious, which is a subversion of Propp's stage falling action as it is a collective win and not Percy's individual achievement. Riordan manifests fearlessness, creativity, friendship, self-acceptance, togetherness, and the instrumental role the factors play, in saving Olympus. During the denouement, Zeus helps Percy to send a blue flare to his mother indicating that he is safe, from the

top of Empire State Building. Percy is empathetic of Luke and feels that he should be cremated with the proper respect that a hero deserves, instead of being treated as a traitor. The council of Olympians convene to discuss the aftermath of the war and bestow the ultimate rewards. Grover is made a member of the Council of Cloven Elders as he succeeds in finding Pan and helping the demigods to vanquish the enemy. Annabeth dreams of being an architect and displays her passion for operating the inventions of Daedalus and is assigned the task of renovating Olympus after the damage it endures in the battle. Artemis requests Hades to give Elysium, the afterlife, to the Huntresses who perish in battle, as a return for their bravery. Tyson is promoted by Zeus as a general in the army of Olympus for his services.

Percy is offered the reward of immortality for leading the demigods into battle to save Olympus, that he refuses, which is an unconventional turn in contrast to the archetypal ending of the structural models, as he chooses to lead a normal life. Percy also urges the gods, to recognise all the minor gods, claim all demigods and not to leave out the children of Hades and the peaceful Titans like Calypso he pardoned to ensure that no evil forces can manipulate the gods or their children to turn against each other in future. He asks the gods to vow on the Styx, a lethally binding promise, to make them more diligent in keeping their word. The larger plot, falling action challenges the traditional idea of the hero's solitary journey by highlighting the importance of teamwork, sense of community, and relationships.

The plot culminates with return of the characters to Camp Half-Blood and enters return to equilibrium where they care for the injured and bury the deceased. Everyone congratulates Nico on his bravery and the way he fought in the battle. Grover sends satyrs across the world to ensure that the demigods arrive safely at Camp Half-Blood and new cabins are built to accommodate the newcomers. The relationship of

Percy and Annabeth takes a natural course throughout the novels and culminates in TLO. They are teenagers, who are not of marriageable age, and so their story does not conclude with a 'wedding' as opposed to Propp's model. Annabeth's 'father' unlike the conventional ones does not trouble her union with Percy, but her mother Athena is portrayed as an intimidating figure who doesn't approve of their relationship. Percy continues in Goode High School and Annabeth gets permission from her father to attend a boarding school in New York for convenience of overseeing the work at Olympus. Finally, the Oracle makes a new prophecy, which indicates that the narrative only grants a temporary happy ending or 'return to equilibrium' during their 'freedom to live' without the threat from Kronos.

The structural models undergo changes with the change in times. Even though the plot structure and character functions are subverted, the structural models still form a predictable formula to determine the plot progression of the select novels. While fantasy often relies on established tropes and conventions, scholars like Brian Attebery caution against equating formula with a lack of creativity. In *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992), Attebery argues that authors can utilise the familiar elements as a springboard for innovation, subverting expectations, and crafting unique narratives within established frameworks. Rather than viewing formulae as limitations, they can be seen as flexible tools that allow authors to engage with tradition, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of the genre.

The plot structure of the select novels may seem like a mimicked form of the Greek myths as they “. . . contain verisimilarly conceived characters, events, and settings, it is not intended to be judged primarily on its faithfulness to experience but rather on its effectiveness in conveying a sense of a radically altered or augmented world” (Attebery 29). The novels are the combined effort of Riordan's invention and

the traditional mythical structure, expanding its boundaries to narratological significance. It might seem difficult to shed the influence of conventionality, but the characterisation and deviation of the plot from the characterisation in the novels is a harbinger of the texture of the forever changing fantasy genre, an eclectic genre under evolution, bringing it one more step closer to readers' reality with the subverted structure (Bhaktin, "Epic").

The journey that Percy undertakes in the course of the novels changes him, and it results in his maturation and the loss of his innocence, as he adapts to his new identity undergoing new experiences. In the beginning of the narrative, Percy displays impulsiveness with outbursts of teenage angst but later evolves into a mature young man. His maturation occurs in a realistic timeline, shown through the bildungsroman style, a significant element which is associated with coming-of-age novels. Throughout his time at Camp Half-Blood, Percy has to overcome social, emotional and magical problems. He experiences friendship, enmity, romantic relationship, anxiety, and grief. Percy's heroism in the battle between good and evil aids in understanding the dark side of life about isolation, deceit, violence, greed, hatred, survival, the struggle for power, superiority, divinity, and immortality. Like humans, the characters are not exempted from emotions, fighting and sabotaging each other for personal gains. It also reinforces the fact that despite being powerful, gods and demigods too have to overcome the natural course of life. Demigods in the novels are those equipped to handle the immensity of their situations, but the outcome becomes all the more impressive knowing that young children provide solutions.

The comparison between the traditional structural models and the select works highlights deliberate deviations from the models. The plot structure of the select novels thrive on subversion, multiplicity, and hybridity. The conventional plot structural

models echo in Riordan's works but they are not strictly followed, thus placing the works within a larger discourse of narrative experimentation and structural play. The select novels reflect a modernised myth that critically engages with the traditional structures, aligning them with contemporary cultural paradigms that evolve with the expectations of contemporary readers and socio-cultural demands. The narrative is a meaningful exploration of identity, morality, and social belonging that fantastically embeds the phase of young readers growing up, mirroring adolescent struggles, taking on new challenges, and learning to resolve them through emotional resilience within their agency that ultimately results in the overall transformation in their personalities.

The subversion of characters links directly to the postmodern element of incredulity towards metanarratives. The humanisation of the gods and presentation of monsters with emotional variance, creates moral ambiguity that invites readers to question the traditional binaries of divine/human, good/evil, and hero/villain, with emphasis on the postmodern elements of multiplicity and fluid identity. The analysis brings into light, the shifting of gender roles, by bringing in male and female heroes and the reinvention of the archetype of mythical heroism by dismantling the myth of the solitary hero by including marginalised characters as co-heroes, portraying them as flawed, ambiguous, and collaborative, thereby redefining the notion of power through adaptability, and logic that resonates with the postmodern notion that truth and identity are constructed overtime.

The bildungsroman frame further demonstrates the heroic growth as emotionally textured and it also decentralises masculine, archetypal mythic structures. The intertextual thread adopted by Riordan to revisit mythical heroes like Theseus, Perseus, Odysseus, Hercules, and Achilles functions as homage and a layered narrative strategy to anchor readers within familiar mythological landscapes while

simultaneously subverting the familiar structures and archetypes contributing to the role of literature in bridging fantasy and readers' reality. The approach contributes to the construction and representation of myths in relation to cultural trends wherein ancient narratives are filtered through modern sensibilities and altered world views. Therefore, the analysis of plot structural models and character archetypes reveals that children's fantasy literature can be as complex and culturally reflective as mainstream literary fiction.

The analysis partially meets the objective – bridging of fantasy and reality, due to the portrayal of Percy as a flawed but relatable teenager. The chapter mainly deals with comparison of plot structural models and character archetypes, mapping the journey of the hero and contrasting it with Riordan's deviation that portrays postmodern storytelling, fulfilling the objective – redesigning traditional storytelling methods. The analysis validates the literary value of the select novels, drawing upon universal human experiences of the hero, in particular, treating children's fantasy as worthy of structural and theoretical analysis, justifying the objective – relieving fantasy literature of its secondary status. The chapter shows that myths are not blindly mimicked but deconstructed and reconstructed via a re-imagination of mythological plot and character arcs, thus influencing cultural attitudes, rendering myths as tools of relevance and transformation, thereby achieving the objective – construction and representation of myths in contemporary children's fantasy literature in accordance with the society's current intellectual, social, and cultural trends. Objective to analyse the positive impacts of the fictional reality in the select novels on the social reality of readers is better met in the chapters – “Unravelling the Magic: Exploring Narrative Techniques” and “Crossing the Limbo: Bridging Fantasy, Reality, and Readers of All Age Groups”.