

SPECIMEN FORMAT FOR THESES OF MONTH

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Branch/ Area:	:	Children’s Fantasy Literature
Sub Subject Heading:	:	---
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Title of the thesis	:	Fantasy and Reality at Crossroads: Exploring Mythical and Mortal Worlds in Select Novels of Rick Riordan
(i) In Roman Script	:	---
(ii) In roman Script	:	---
Nomenclature of Degree:	:	Ph.D in English Literature
Month & Year of Enrolment:	:	July, 2018
Month & Year of Registration:	:	July, 2018
Month &Year of Submission:	:	December, 2025
Month &Year of Award	:	September, 2025
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Abstract within 300 words:

Rick Riordan's children's fantasy adventure, Greek mythological retelling series, Percy Jackson and the Olympians, a major popular fiction sensation, has captured a place in mainstream status in the world of literature. A deep dive into the plot and narrative structures of the first five novels in the series, *The Lightning Thief* (2005), *The Sea of Monsters* (2006), *The Titan's Curse* (2007), *The Battle of the Labyrinth* (2008), and *The Last Olympian* (2008) using the theories of Julia Kristeva's Intertextuality, William H. Gass's Metafiction, Linda Hutcheon's Historiographic Metafiction, Jean Francois Lyotard's Incredulity towards metanarratives, the conventional models – Gustav Freytag's 'Freytag 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 'monomyth' or the Hero's Journey, John Clute's structure of fantasy, and Christopher Vogler's 'Mythic Structure' and character functions as identified by Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell, Christopher Vogler, and A. J. Greimas's concept of actants, help to illuminate the elements of fantasy in the plot of the select novels with the potential to be transcribed into the reality of readers, thereby cementing its significance among readers of all age groups. The realistic themes represented in its mesmerising armoury of fictional, mythical world like social justice, diversity and inclusivity, ecology, dark themes such as the death and loss of loved ones, psychology, emotions, and contemporary concerns of growing up cements its status as a narrative self-portrait and a reviser of grand narrative traditions. The study demonstrates a subversion of the conventional structural and narrative models in the select novels that provide authentic voices which are reflective of true life. It highlights the transformative power of children's fantasy literature, suggesting alternative ways of thinking through aesthetic and social advocacy that instils the message of living with the awareness of one's culture.

i) Major objectives:

The research aims to establish a link between fantasy/fictional reality and readers' reality to:

- i. Investigate the role of literature in bridging the gap between fantasy and reality.
- ii. Evaluate the plot structural changes and narrative strategies that redesign traditional storytelling methods in the select novels.

- iii. Attempt to relieve fantasy literature of its secondary status as it contributes to the continuum of meaning in literature.
- iv. Analyse the positive impacts of the fictional reality in the select novels on the social reality of readers in a less confrontational manner.
- v. Examine the construction and representation of myths in contemporary children's fantasy literature in accordance with the society's current intellectual, social, and cultural trends.

ii) Hypothesis:

The select novels of Rick Riordan uses the blending of fantasy and reality not as escapism but as a critical narrative strategy that addresses contemporary concerns such as identity, diversity, moral ambiguity, and personal agency, making myth relevant to twenty-first-century readers.

iii) Methodology:

The study uses qualitative, interpretative analysis that is based on close reading of the select novels. The employs the nine narrative models to analyse the narrative structures of the select novels. The models are Gustav Freytag's, 'Freytag 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 'monomyth' or the hero's journey, John Clute's structure of fantasy, Christopher Vogler's structural model, and Algirdas Julien Greimas's actantial model. The character archetypes by Vogler, Campbell and Greimas have been used for the analysis. Earlier studies used only one of the nine models for analysis but one model alone cannot capture the spectrum of plot and characters as some models are too minimal, while others are too elaborate. Using the nine models together allows for precise mapping of plot progression in a postmodern framework reflecting Riordan's fragmented, non-linear, and pluralistic narrative design. Concepts of postmodernism have also been used. Julia Kristeva's intertextuality links the select novels with the Greek mythological tales. William H. Gass's metafiction, is a part of intertextuality that aids in emotionally distancing the readers from the text. It is where the text reflects on itself, making readers aware of the process of storytelling. Linda Hutcheon's *Historiographic Metafiction* describes fiction as metafictional and historical to distinguish history from historical fiction, with a

deconstructive approach as a subjective narrative and not as objective truth. Jean Francois Lyotard's incredulity towards metanarratives highlights that metanarratives are characterised by totalising, rigid formulaic narratives, compared to the flexible mininarratives like the select novels that subvert the preexisting patterns. Working definitions used are: Fantasy, or fictional reality, a magical and mythical realm that critiques and comments on real-world concerns; reality, or the readers' reality, represents the social, cultural, psychological, and ethical dimensions of the world they live in; between these two lies limbo — where fantasy and reality intersect, blurring the boundaries between children's and adults' literature. The study follows MLA 9th edition guidelines for all documentation and citations.

iv) Findings:

Contemporary fantasies are rooted in archetypal structure, but they are flexible and adhere to no set pattern, which caters to the realistic expectations of contemporary readers. It rejects the idea of a single “master-key,” echoing Lyotard's “war on totality” and embracing plurality.

Subversion of the authoritative voice of myths, decenters dominating perspectives through reinterpretation, preserving the stories updating the canonical characters. The narration, characters, and culture witness a shift from the Greek myths to the contemporary context that reflects the evolving nature of storytelling and cultural identity. Beneath the simplicity and effortless reading experience lies a layered, dynamic, and legitimate narrative that is not “escapist”. The select novels do not present an idealised world – include realistic themes in a mild fashion. So they are not amateur stories. The narrative is a mirror for the experiences for young readers. Myth, in this context, becomes a tool of narrative therapy, helping readers work through grief, marginalisation, and questions of identity, purpose, and belonging, ultimately turning reading into an empowering and healing process.

Stories can be entertaining, didactic, and serve as tools for social connection and network building. When ideas are presented using simple vocabulary combined with constructive discussions with adults, they aid in acculturation of children. Passing down myths helps preserve cultural heritage and shapes the identity of young readers. Stories nurture social values and empathy, impart moral and ethical lessons, and introduce children to ethical dilemmas of right and wrong. Reading enhances children's ability to imagine and

enriches their literary skills and vocabulary development. Stories foster critical thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and cultivate inquisitiveness in children. Reading is conducive to the emotional well-being of children and contributes to their personality development. Stories and reading activities help build communities where children can engage in meaningful interactions. The narrative creates a dialogic space where ancient Greek myths are reinterpreted, conversing with modernity where myths help preserving cultural memory – a set of stories passed down through history, myths, legends, rituals, and literature. It also creates a Dialogue between the readers and the author.

The study relocates classical Greek mythology into a modern, multicultural, and relatable setting with no grandeur and gruesomeness of the classical Greek myths, making them living, evolving stories rather than distant artefacts. The select works exist as a narrative self-portrait and a reviser of grand narrative traditions. The study demonstrates a subversion of conventional structural and narrative models, providing authentic voices that are reflective of true life. Children's fantasy literature has transformative power, offering alternative ways of thinking, and serving both aesthetic and social advocacy. This literature bridges classical myths with contemporary texts, reflecting cultural evolution and altering historical perceptions as well as totalising notions. It helps readers understand the interaction between modern fantasy literature and classical mythology, narrative structures, mythopoeia, and the importance of character subversion in contemporary literature. Children's fantasy literature offers more than entertainment; it serves as a blueprint for living and thinking, standing as a testament to its transformative power. Acknowledgements in these works, such as the statement "you all have a place in Camp Half-Blood," create a positive and just environment for readers.

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