

## Author Interview Questions on *Demigods and Monsters*

**RICK RIORDAN**

**Q: The Percy Jackson series could be accused of being pretty negative about school. For one thing, Percy is always getting kicked out of it. For another, teachers seem pretty clueless (like the gym teacher "watching" the student-cannibal dodge ball game). But you used to be a teacher! What's up with that?**

A: Mythology is always bigger than life, so all the problems in Percy's school life are magnified too. If I wrote that Percy's school was great, all his teachers were kind, and he got along with all his classmates, that would be pretty boring. Besides, I don't think any kid who has ever been in middle school would find it realistic. School is full of troubles! I know that firsthand as a teacher. It's not too much of a stretch to think that your teachers are monsters. If the cafeteria food and homework don't kill you, the Furies might.

**Q: How did you come up with all the idiosyncrasies for the gods? Were you in cahoots with a Muse?**

A: The personalities of the gods have always seemed real to me. It was no stretch at all to image Hermes in a jogging outfit or Poseidon in a Tommy Bahama shirt. The gods have always been very human, just on a bigger scale. I think that's why they're so fascinating. Making them modern is one of my favorite things to do.

**Q: Which god would you most like to hang out with for a day?**

A: Apollo would be pretty cool. He has the sweetest ride and attracts all kinds of attention. He's easy-going, friendly and can even tell your future. I'd just have to convince him not to spout bad haiku every few minutes.

**Q: Is there a Percy Jackson character you're most like? Or most unlike?**

A: I'd like to say I'm brave like Percy. Unfortunately, I'm most like Grover. If the monsters invaded, I'd be hiding under a shrub, nervously chewing on a tin can.

**Q: Do you have any favorite mythical creatures?**

A: I like them all, but you can't go wrong with Medusa. Turning people to stone with your eyes—that's just very cool. And the snakes for hair—I don't know who thought of that idea first, but it's inspired.

**Q: Sally Jackson is pretty much the best mom ever (Sarah Beth Durst in *Demigods and Monsters* thinks so too). Is she based on anybody you know?**

A: Well, I have pretty much the best mom ever, so Sally is probably based loosely on her. It's funny. Once an adult reader asked me why Sally was such a weak character. This mom thought I was being anti-feminist, and I just stared at her, dumbfounded. I don't see Sally as weak at all. My whole life has been guided by strong women—my mom, my wife. My agents and editors have all been women. I think Sally does the best she can with some very difficult situations, and she tries to support Percy even though he's got some major problems. You could do a lot worse for a parent than Sally Jackson.

**Q: Speaking of Sally Jackson—where did you come up with the whole blue foods thing?**

A: That's based on my own life. When I get nervous, I eat orange food. I have no idea why. Once my wife and I were driving through Toronto, and I was nervous because it was my first trip outside the U.S., driving in another country. We stopped for a snack. I got back in the car and noticed I was eating Cheetos, an orange, and a Nehi orange soda. I picked them subconsciously, but immediately I realized I must be very freaked out. Besides, blue food is pretty rare. It must be a delicacy!

**Q: In *Demigods and Monsters*, Ellen Steiber speculates on the reason why Dionysus was put in charge of Camp Half-Blood. Why did you pick Dionysus to be the camp director?**

A: I like surprises and contradictions. I like putting a character in a very unlikely situation. It makes for interesting reading. But honestly, I didn't think about it. I just did it. The whole Dionysus thing just sprang to mind as I was telling my son the story for the first time. Maybe it was the Muses at work. Or maybe I'd been drinking too much Diet Coke.

**Q: You mention in your introduction to *Demigods and Monsters* that your son was really the inspiration for the Percy Jackson series. What does he think about how popular they've gotten? Does he ever try to take credit?**

A: My older son Haley was the inspiration, though both he and Patrick, his younger brother, have taken full credit for the series since then! They are of two minds about the series' popularity. They think it's great and exciting, but at the same time, they wish the story was still their own. They don't like dad traveling as much as I do. Both my sons are very private and modest. They get embarrassed if people ask them about their dad or give them a lot of attention. They've been asked to do interviews, and they just have no interest in limelight, which is fine by me. When Haley heard about the movie of *Lightning Thief*, his first comment was, "I know what you're going to ask, Dad, and I DO NOT want to be Percy in the movie!" That makes him the only adolescent boy I've ever met who doesn't want the job.

**Q: Was there an essay or idea in Demigods and Monsters that surprised you the most?**

A: What surprised me was the variety of ideas! So many fresh and original takes on the series, it really amazed me. I loved the idea of monsters going into retail, and the analysis of the Oracle's prophecies. I thought the grading system for parents was right on target, though it made me a little self-conscious as a parent!

## ROSEMARY CLEMENT-MOORE

**Q: Your essay in *Demigods and Monsters* is about what it takes to recognize monsters in the Percy Jackson series. In *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, we're reminded that there are some mortals, like Rachel Elizabeth Dare (and Percy's mom, a little), who can see through the Mist and recognize monsters instantly, rather than learning how to do so through training. Do you think one is more important than the other?**

A: With Percy's mother, I figured that either Poseidon magically gave her that ability, or once she knew about the stuff beyond the Mist, the Mist didn't work on her like it does on normal people. I think that most people are much more likely to deny the evidence of their eyes when their brain can come up with a logical, rational explanation. But maybe some people are more willing to believe, making them less susceptible to the Mist.

And if that's true, then there's something about Rachel that accepts the supernatural, no matter what modern logic tells her. I don't know if it's more important than training, but I think it's pretty special, almost like a superpower, even though she is (or appears to be) completely human.

**Q: If you were a half-blood, who do you think your Olympian parent would be?**

A: Athena. She's always been my favorite. Smart and strong, stubborn, quick-tempered, artistic in a practical kind of way. (She not only invented architecture, but also weaving and sewing.) I'm not sure I'm wise, but I'm definitely a font of useless (and useful) facts and information. Kind of like the Internet. (Which I'm sure Athena invented, though Dionysus might have had a hand in some of the content.)

**SARAH BETH DURST**

**Q: Your essay in *Demigods and Monsters* was about how the gods in the series (among others) measure up as parents. If one of your parents was a Greek god or goddess, who do you think it would be?**

A: Oh, my, it's so hard to choose! My mom has the wisdom of Athena and the beauty of Aphrodite, and my dad has the work ethic of Hephaestus, the brilliance of Hermes, and the beneficence of Apollo. They also both have Internet access and know how to Google me.

**Q: Do you have a favorite character from the Percy Jackson series?**

A: Sally Jackson, Percy's mom. Unlike most parents in fantasy novels, she isn't clueless, and she doesn't disapprove of her son's unusual extracurricular activities. Since her pint-sized hero doesn't have his driver's license yet, she chauffeurs him to his battles, much like my mom drove me endlessly to theatre practice, piano lessons, and ballet lessons (see above note about beached manatee, if you want to know how good I was).

**SOPHIE MASSON**

**Q: In your essay for *Demigods and Monsters*, you talk about having nightmares as a child of the Medusa, and how you defeated them. What do you think is the scariest monster in Greek myth? Still Medusa, or has that changed?**

A: I think Medusa is still the scariest of all of them, because in a way I feel sorry for her-and yet it's fatal to feel sorry for Medusa! It seems such a terrible fate and yet you can't afford to pity her, or you're stone dead.

**Q: If you were a half-blood, which Greek god do you think you'd be the daughter of?**

A: Hermes-- I always liked him in the myths, and he gets to travel a lot!

**Q: Stories based on Greek myth seem to be really popular lately. Any ideas on why that is?**

A: They are really strong, powerful stories with great characters and adventures, lots of extraordinary creatures, magic, and some very full-on gods and goddesses! Plus they still have a lot to tell us about life, people, and the world.