

# PERCY JACKSON'S JOURNEY TO FIND HIS IDENTITY

Natalia, D.<sup>1</sup> and Djundjung, J. M.<sup>2</sup>

1,2English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

E-mails: dian.nataliaa@yahoo.com; jennymd@peter.petra.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

*Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief* and *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* are two films that are taken from Rick Riordan's famous *Percy Jackson Series*. Percy Jackson series is talking about a sixteen-year-old boy who does not know that he is a demigod and faces problem as a human being. Because he does not know that he is a demigod and faces problem as a human being, he conduct a journey to search his identity. In his journey to search his identity, Percy who has a certain disability as a teenager, can become a hero and save the gods' world. In this paper, I will reveal the way Percy Jackson finds his identity by taking a journey and makes him become a hero in the world of the gods. I will combine the theory of Joseph Campbell, the hero's journey, and the theory of Erik Erikson, the identity crisis, to analyze Percy Jackson's journey to search for his identity. Besides Percy finds his identity in the journey, he also finds himself as a hero.

Keywords: Identity crisis, The hero's journey, Hero

Nowadays, so many fantasy films are released and become popular, for examples like *Harry Potter*, *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Percy Jackson* series. From those four films, I am interested to analyze the film of Percy Jackson because this series is different from other fantasy films. Also, the film has a combination of popular sub-genres between bangsian fantasy, high fantasy, and sword and sorcery. This series is talking about a sixteen-year-old boy who suffers from ADHD, "a group of behavioral symptoms that include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness", and dyslexia, "various reading disorders associated with impairment of the ability to interpret spatial relationships or to integrate auditory and visual information".

Percy Jackson, the son of Poseidon, the god of the seas, and a human being, does not know if he is a demigod. He only knows that he suffers dyslexia and ADHD that makes him looks like an abnormal boy and out of place in any several situations. Later he finds out about his identity as a demigod and becomes a hero and protector in the world of the gods. His journey as an ordinary boy with certain disability to a superhero is a journey that is full of obstacle and courage to find his place and becomes a hero. The issues in Percy Jackson series is how Percy Jackson an ordinary boy with certain disability can find his identity by taking a journey that makes him become a hero. This somehow shows that it is not impossible for an ordinary boy with certain disability to become a hero.

In this paper, I want to analyze in what way Percy Jackson's journey to find his identity shows a journey of a hero, that makes him becomes a new kind of American superhero because of he helps to save the gods in the world of the gods.

I am going to use two concepts to analyze Percy Jackson's journey to find his identity. The first concept is the hero's journey by Joseph Campbell. In Joseph Campbell famous book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, explores about the monomyth which is several basic stages that almost every hero quest goes through. The hero's journey is divided into three main steps. The first main step is departure. Departure is a stage when a person struggles to find his or her identity. In departure stage, there are four steps: the ordinary world, the call to adventure, meeting the mentor, and crossing the threshold. Then, the second main step is initiation. Initiation is a stage when a person tries to gather his courage. In initiation stage, there are three steps: test-allies-enemies, approach to the inmost cave, and the ordeal. Each step in initiation will encourage the person to help him through journey to find. The last main step is return. Return is a stage when a person needs to come back to his or her society with a new wisdom. In return, there are three steps: reward, the road back, and return with elixir.

The second concept is identity crisis by Erik Erikson. In Erikson's theory of psychological development, he talks about the stages of development that mark the growth of human personality. Erikson explains that during the development of human personality, crisis of identity may occur. The

crisis in the development of human personality is not always negative. As what Erikson explained “a crisis is a challenge to ego, a threat but also an opportunity to grow and improve” (Boeree, 1997). Erikson divides the development of human personality into eight stages: infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adult, adulthood, and maturity. In each stage, Erikson says that “we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages” (Boeree, 1997). From those many stages of human personality development, adolescence is the main focus of my paper. Adolescence is a stage that is considered being crucial in human development. “Adolescence begins with puberty and ending around eighteen or twenty years old” (Boeree, 1997). It is the fifth stage of the development. At this age, Erikson thinks that adolescence is engaged in a struggle between ego identity and feelings of confusion. The task during adolescence is to achieve ego identity and avoid role confusion. Ego identity means knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of society. It requires that you take all you have learned about life and yourself and mold it into a unified self-image, one that your community finds meaningful.

In this paper, the concept of Joseph Campbell, the hero’s journey, will be as the frame for the analysis and the concept of Erik Erikson, identity crisis, will be used to analyze the development of Percy Jackson’s search for his identity.

### **PERCY JACKSON’S JOURNEY TO FIND HIS IDENTITY**

In this paper, I will discuss Percy Jackson’s journey to search for his identity. As an ordinary boy with certain disability, Percy Jackson can save the world of the gods and becomes a hero. According to Campbell, a hero has to go through three phases of the hero’s journey, which are departure, initiation, and return. In the first phase on departure I will explain about Percy Jackson experiencing identity confusion, in the second phase on initiation I will explain about his journey to maturity, and in the last phase on return I will explain about his new found identity.

#### **Percy Jackson’s Identity Confusion**

Percy Jackson is confused about himself as he seems to be unable to fit anywhere or to make friends. He suffers from dyslexia and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) that makes him unable to conform to academic expectation. He is not able to follow the lessons at school because every time he read, the writings are always moving into a mess. When in the class he is asked to explain about a subject by Mrs. Doods, his substitute teacher, but he cannot do it.

Mrs. Doods: “Good morning. I’m Mrs. Doods, your substitute English teacher. Would someone please explain what Shakespeare was trying to convey in this line from *Othello*? [pause] Percy Jackson?”

Percy: “I’m sorry, I don’t know.”

Mrs. Doods looks disappointed over Percy’s response and she does not show any sympathy towards Percy’s problem with dyslexia. When Mrs. Doods asks the class the same question, most of the students raise their hands. It shows that most of the students in his class can answer the question easily. Percy is embarrassed by both his inability to answer the question as well as his teacher’s response. Percy cannot explain to others that it is because of his disability and not because he is slow that he cannot answer the question.

Percy not only cannot fit in with his school life, but he also cannot fit in with his family life. He does not like staying home because he is disgusted with Gabe, his stepfather who Percy thinks is rude and disgusting.

Percy: “Why do you stay with that pig? He smells like a sewer. He sleeps till noon every day and he can’t even hold a job. Why do you stay with him?”

Sally: “He’s been good to us, Percy, in ways you don’t understand.”

Percy: “You’re right. I don’t understand. I don’t get it.”

Percy cannot understand his mother’s choice of a husband. He always has an argument with his mother over Gabe. He is disappointed because his mother cannot understand him and also because his mother defends Gabe. At home, he cannot communicate well with his mother and at school he also cannot make friends, so he is always feeling alone.

Percy is helpless about himself as he cannot protect himself when he is attacked by monsters.

Mrs. Doods: “Where is it?”

Percy: “Oh wow. Hey! Hey. How did you get up there?”

Mrs. Doods: "You stole the lightning bolt!"  
Percy: "I don't know what you're talking about!"

He is so helpless that he does not know what he should do to defeat the Minotaur. Then, Grover gives him suggestion, and Percy follows what Grover says. Percy finds that the pen that Mr. Brunner gives him in the Museum is a sword. He is confused what is going on with his life.

At home, Percy cannot communicate well with his mother, at school he also cannot make friends, and he is attacked by the monsters. He is helpless and cannot even protect himself, so he is always feeling alone, except for his friend Grover. He is confused why he cannot fit in anywhere and he does not feel comfortable on the land. He can only feel peace when he is underwater. Percy understands that he cannot spend his whole time underwater although it is the only place that he feels most comfortable.

Percy: "How long was that?"  
Grover: "Seven minutes."  
Percy: "Seven minutes?"  
Grover: "That's crazy, man. That's ridiculous. How do you do it?"  
Percy: "I just like being in water. It's the only one place I can think."

Percy can only concentrate well if he is in the water, but he cannot do it well on the land. He cannot understand why he feels more comfortable and alive when he is underwater. To his friend, Grover, his ability to stay underwater for seven minutes is an achievement. However, on land, Percy feels that he cannot function well, so he feels that he is helplessness and looks like a slow person. Therefore, he will need help from the others if he has problems.

### **Percy Jackson's Journey to Maturity**

Percy Jackson is going through a process to get courage and to understand himself. As a confused teenager, Percy is going through a process in which he has to prove himself as a mature teenager. The confusion that Percy experiences drives him to find the answers to his confusion. The revelation that he is a demigod, gives Percy a sense of self-confidence which is born because of courage. In human world, dyslexia and ADHD is considered as an abnormal disease, but in the gods' world, dyslexia and ADHD is a special gift which can make him powerful. Therefore, after he knows he is a demigod, he gets his sense of self-confidence to accept his dyslexia and ADHD. Percy finds out who he is and who his biological father is when he is in the Camp Half-Blood.

Grover: "So this is Camp Half-Blood."  
Percy: "'Half' meaning what?"  
Grover: "I think you know. 'Half' meaning 'half mortal, half god'. [pause] Look, man, remember all the myths about Greek gods and goddesses? Well, they're not myths. Look, remember what Mr. Brunner said? Sometimes they come down to Earth and they fall in love with mortals? And then they have kids?"  
Percy: "No way."  
Grover: "Yes way. Yep, you're a demigod!"

It is Grover who tells him about his identity as a demigod. For Percy, this explanation is something that he cannot accept. His low self-confidence about himself prevents him from believing Grover's explanation.

Percy: "I think you have the wrong guy, all right? I'm not a hero. I'm a loser. I have dyslexia, ADHD."  
Grover: "And those are your greatest gifts. When you try to read, the words floats off the page, right? That's because your brain is hardwired for Ancient Greek, not English. And your ADHD? You're impulsive, Percy. You can't be still. Those are your natural battle reflexes, man. They kept you alive in your fight. Look, no pitiful loser can defeat a Minotaur. Your blood is special. It's the blood of a god."

Percy does not know if his dyslexia and ADHD is a special gift that makes him powerful. Because he does not know the ability of his disease, so he thinks that disease makes him to be abnormal. In human's life, dyslexia and ADHD is a disability, but for demigods or in gods' life, dyslexia and ADHD are the powerful skills needed to survive in the gods' world.

After he gets a sense of self-confidence, Percy gets a sense of self-awareness on his condition. His self-awareness of his ignorance appears when he knows the truth about himself and he realizes that his mother sacrifice a lot for him.

Percy: "A threat? Who am I threatening?"

Chiron: "Poseidon's brother, Zeus and Hades. That's why your mother married your stepfather. His pungent odor masked the smell of your blood and hid you from anything or anyone the gods would send to kill you."

Percy: "My mother put up with that creep to protect me? I wish I'd known. She sacrificed so much for me. Now she's gone."

Percy regrets on his stupidity because he cannot understand his mother before he knows her sacrifice. His self-awareness on stupidity is a new understanding about his need for survival. So that makes him aware that he is supposed to need Gabe, because Gabe's pungent odor can cover the smell of his blood so that he cannot be found by his enemies.

Percy also gets a sense of flexibility. Percy can accept the opinion and feedback from others. Hence, he finds his allies who can help him to pass the most tests that will him through in his journey.

Percy: "Look, I just found out my mother is still alive. I'm gonna get her back."

Annabeth: "From the Underworld?"

Percy: "Whatever it takes."

Grover: "Look, man, I can't let you do this, okay?"

Percy: "Look, I'm not asking for your permission. I don't need your help. Okay? This is something I have to do on my own."

This conversation only shows who Percy's allies are. Annabeth and Grover want to join him in his journey. However, actually he does not want it. He wants to do the journey by his own.

Annabeth: "That wasn't real. That was just training. Percy, that's all I'll ever done, is train and train and train. I've grown up here. I've only been in the outside world a couple of times. And I've never had the chance to go on an actual quest. Besides, you've won one battle and I've won hundreds. You're gonna need my experience."

Grover: "Good point."

Percy: "You two really want to come?"

Annabeth: "Yes!"

Grover: "Yeah!"

Percy accepts Annabeth's point of view about her experience, because he realizes that he will need her experience in his journey. Because he accepts Annabeth's explanation, it shows he can start to compromise, so his sense of flexibility shown up. As he can start to compromise, it is also can be said that he gets an ability to face and deal with something. Because when he accepts Annabeth's point of view, his ability to face and deal with something appears unintentionally and it shows that he is mature. The sense of flexibility can also be seen when Percy, Grover and Annabeth have a journey which has a lot of tests. The test is defeating the enemies which are monsters, Medusa and Hydra (a multi-headed dragon). To pass the tests, Percy will get help from his allies who is Grover and Annabeth. They help each other and give support when they face the enemies. Percy began to be able to protect himself when dealing with the enemy, even though sometimes he still needs help from his allies. Percy can start to cooperate with his allies. After he starts to cooperate, his sense of flexibility shown up so that he can win from the enemies.

Later on, Percy gets an ability to accept frustration. His ability to accept the frustration makes him can solve problem. The way Percy to solve problem by negotiates with the ferryman.

The Ferryman: "Who are you?"

Percy: "We need to see Hades."

The Ferryman: "The living are not permitted here. Die or come back."

This conversation is showing that the ferryman refuses to lead them to the Underworld. Percy is frustrated because he cannot do anything, then he gets an idea to negotiate with the ferryman after he sees the ferryman refuses the money from Grover.

Percy: "Wait. The drachma. The drachma!"

The Ferryman: "Climb aboard."

Percy gives him drachmas. Drachma is the principal silver coin of ancient Greece. Percy does not need to negotiate too long with the ferryman so he wants lead them to the Underworld. Percy thinks that the ferryman is living in the gods' world. That is why Percy can think to pays him with the drachmas, because in gods' world they use drachma to pay, and money also cannot use in gods' world.

Percy has through a journey, from finds out who is he, knows who is his biological father, meets his true allies, defeats the enemies, through the tests, and solves the problem, Percy stronger and have courage than before he knows his true identity. However, after he finds out his identity, he becomes more powerful in the physical and minds until he can solve problem by himself and defeats the enemies. He also becomes more mature and able to accept the fact that he is a demigod, the son of Poseidon.

### **Percy Jackson's New Found Identity**

Percy Jackson has returned from his journey and finds his new home. Percy will prove that he deserves to be a hero, needed by others, can protect himself, and will get the place that can receive him and make him comfortable. With those several aspects that Percy through, he can find a home where he can be accepted and feel comfortable.

The first indicator that proves Percy to be a hero, is that he is needed by Zeus to create order in Olympus. Zeus needs Percy to help him to keep peace by return the lightning bolt. The lightning bolt is the symbol of Zeus' power. It is the first and most powerful weapon that made for the Olympian gods.

Percy: "My name is Percy Jackson, and I think you might be looking for this."  
Zeus: "Give me the bolt, lightning thief. You're wise to betray your father."  
Percy: "I didn't steal it. And I have no connection to Poseidon."  
Zeus: "But tell me, if you didn't steal it, then who did?"  
Percy: "Luke, son of Hermes. You see, he was angry at you. All of you. He wanted you to destroy yourselves."

Percy returns the lightning bolt to Zeus. Percy has been through a lot of obstacles that give the experience to him. From his experience, he becomes mature and makes him confident, calm and firm when he explains to Zeus about who is the real thief and the reason why the thief steals the lightning bolt. When he comes to returns the lightning bolt, indirectly, he has already helped Olympus cancel the war and keep peace. Without the lightning bolt, Olympus will be ruined in the war between the gods.

The second indicator that Percy proves, he is as a savior for his allies. The way Percy proves that he is needed by his allies as a savior is when he revives his friends who are trapped after eating the lotus flower.

Percy: "Annabeth. Annabeth! What're you doing with that? Don't eat that. Grover! Grover! Wake up! Grover! Come on, we got to go!"  
Grover: "What? Look, Perce, your timing is terrible, okay?"  
Percy: "No, no, no. Wake up!"  
Grover: "Yo, man, you're such a buzz kill."  
Annabeth: "Percy, what's wrong with you? Why are you doing this?"  
Percy: "Both of you need to wake up, now! Look at me. You're in a trance, okay? We're trapped! Listen to me. If you eat the flowers, you're never gonna want to leave. Okay? We're gonna be stuck here forever!"

Percy also eats the lotus flower, but he is the first one who is aware of the trapped. Without Percy's awareness, Annabeth and Grover will not be aware of their situation. They will keep on eat the lotus flower and will be trapped there forever. This incident shows that Percy is the savior for his allies. Also that shows among the three of them, Percy is more sensitive and has a stronger will.

The third indicator that shows Percy to be a hero is that he is able to defeat his enemies by his own strength. On the journey, Percy gets help by his allies when he defeats the enemies. To prove that he can protect himself is he can defeat the enemy without help from his allies. The enemy that Percy defeats is Luke, son of Hermes. Luke is the real lightning thief.

Percy: "Why would you do that?"  
Luke: "To bring Olympus crumbling down."

Percy: "Well, it's too late, 'cause I'm returning the bolt to Zeus right now."  
Luke: "Not before midnight. [fighting] Maybe they were wrong. Maybe you're not son of Poseidon."  
Percy: "Yeah. I think I am the son of Poseidon."

After this conversation, it shows that Percy beat Luke and proves to Luke that he is the son of Poseidon. From the experience that Percy has passed, Percy becomes stronger than before. To beat Luke, Percy does not need help from his allies, Grover and Annabeth. He is not only can defeat Luke by himself by his physic, but also by mental and strategy.

The last indicator that shows Percy has become a hero, he returns to a place that can accept him and make him comfortable. Percy already knows about his true identity. After he passes through many obstacles in his journey, he finds a place that he can fit in and comfortable to stay. However, he should be lived separately with his mother, because his new place is a special place that just for demigod or the descendant of the gods. That place is the Camp Half-Blood. When Percy has just arrived in the Camp Half-Blood he is immediately accepted by the other demigods, Grover, Annabeth and Chiron (or known as Mr. Bruner, his old Latin teacher).

## CONCLUSION

In the beginning, Percy Jackson is a weak and confused teenager with certain disabilities. He is powerless to help himself and others. He also does not understand about his life. However, after all that happens in his life, start from attacks from the monsters until he has journey to find his identity, he changes. He becomes stronger and understands about who he is. His changes make him become a hero, because he can help the gods and the others. As a demigod who at first does not know his identity, and finally find out and get his identity, Percy Jackson can be called as a hero. He can be called as a hero because he has power and through several steps in the hero's journey to find his identity. Now, Percy has lived with his new identity which is a demigod, a son of Poseidon, god of the sea, and lives in the middle of the gods' world and human world which called the Camp Half-Blood. In the Camp Half-Blood, Percy is known as a hero, and because of that he can be a protector for others. Then, at last, by analyzing this *Percy Jackson Series*, I conclude that a hero is made not born to be a hero, but he chooses to be a hero.

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