

## ‘Percy Jackson & the Olympians:The Lightning Thief’ Conjures Up a Big Bolt of Bland

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 12, 2010 - 10:00am

- [Alexandra Daddario](#) [2]
- [Brandon T. Jackson](#) [3]
- [Catherine Keener](#) [4]
- [Jake Abel](#) [5]
- [Logan Lerman](#) [6]
- [Movie Review](#) [7]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [8]
- [Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief](#) [9]
- [Pierce Brosnan](#) [10]
- [Rosario Dawson](#) [11]
- [Steve Coogan](#) [12]
- [Uma Thurman](#) [13]



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Oh, those nutty kids today. At one moment they’re regular high schoolers, doing all those post millennium teen rituals, then suddenly they’re demigods in “Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief.”

Logan Lerman is Percy Jackson, a put-upon teenager who has trouble keeping up in class because of dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Besides these difficulties, he has problems at home with his odious stepfather and is constantly defending his sacrificing mother (Catherine Keener).

This sorrowful situation changes rapidly when Percy attends a museum lecture given by his teacher Mr. Brunner (Pierce Brosnan). It seems like the Greek mythology being presented resonates clearly with Percy, especially since he’s able to read ancient Greek etchings. This is followed with one of his other teachers changing into a flying bat creature, and his handicapped best friend Grover (Brandon T. Jackson) suddenly gluing himself to Percy’s side as his “protector,” emerging as a half man, half goat satyr.



The Magical Land of Las Vegas: Brandon T. Jackson as Grover, Alexandra Daddario as Annabeth and Logan Lerman as Percy in ‘Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief’  
Photo credit: © 2010 Fox 2000 Pictures



Percy, as it turns out, is a demigod. Which means he is the half-breed offspring of his human mother and the water god Poseidon. Mr. Brunner is actually Chiron, a half horse/half man Centaur, who runs a school for demigods in a mysterious wooded area. Percy is helped by Grover and his mother to get there, but in that journey his mother is kidnapped by Hades, god of hell.

Percy, even before he is indoctrinated in his new surroundings, also finds out that he is accused of stealing the lighting bolt rod of the head god Zeus. In quick succession, Percy must train as a demigod warrior, figure out his new allies (Grover, Annabeth and Luke), figure out how to clear his name as the lightning thief and solve many clues to enter hell to rescue his mother.

In that quick descriptive there seems to be several movies packed into one, and Percy & the Olympians suffers for it. This film is based on a recent popular book series by Rick Riordan, and in what can probably be expounded upon clearly within the pages is oriented lightning fast on screen. Percy is swooped up, carried away to the half-breed school pursued by strange creatures and doesn't even get a meal break.

And despite a completely different basis for magical powers and placement, comparisons to the "Harry Potter" series are impossible to deny. The main gang is Percy and his best friend Grover, like Harry and Ron, and they have their equality female ally like Hermione, Annabeth. Percy is a half human, half god and goes to a training school to learn of his powers. Sure, nothing like Potter.



That Stoney Stare: Uma Thurman as Medusa in 'Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief'

*Photo credit: © 2010 Fox 2000 Pictures*

But Percy and his pals reside in the United States, which gives the story an opportunity for a weird road trip to Nashville, Las Vegas and eventually New York City (they need to collect magic pearls in order to enter hell. Really.). This is where most of the movie star cameos take place, with Uma Thurman chewing some scenery as the snake-haired Medusa, Steve Coogan doing his rocker persona as Hades and Rosario Dawson as Hades sidekick Persephone. Their appearances, except for Uma's slinky interpretation, are mostly distracting.

The greatest sin of Percy, though, is that there is no time to ponder his fate. Every tragedy, story shift, training session and appearances of strange creatures are reacted to in exactly the same way – complete emotional indifference. The actors are like auctioneers, treating their different challenges like just another bid on a Greek statue. Here's Percy going to school, nope we have to find magical pearls, time to rescue Mom, hey let's go to Vegas. It's like the film has ADHD, with clinical technicians attending to it.

There is one interesting part, and that is the Vegas scene. The heroes become trapped in a pleasure palace (a casino, naturally) and eat lotus flowers in a sort of 1960s-style drug ritual, complete with goofy smiles and trippy surroundings. The straight-laced Percy finds a way to break the spell, much to the consternation of his colleagues and their PG-rated partying. Percy is also a buzz kill.

When a story saps so much energy out of characters, even the special effects don't seem as special. Percy Jackson & the Olympians needs to slow down a bit, and stop to eat the lotus flowers.

*"Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" opens February 12th everywhere and features Logan Lerman, Brandon T. Jackson, Alexandra Daddario, Jake Abel, Pierce Brosnan, Steve Coogan, Rosario Dawson, Uma Thurman, and Catherine Keener, directed by Chris Columbus. Rated "PG." [Click here for interviews with the main cast of Percy & the Olympians.](#) [14]*



[15]

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- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/percy-jackson-the-olympians-the-lightning-thief>
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