

The Role of Friendship in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV Series: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Study of Identity and Emotional Development

Adala Shiva¹, Prayudias Margawati²

^{1, 2} Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Emotional Development;
Friendship;
Identity Formation;
Lacanian Psychoanalysis,
TV Series

Corresponding Author:

Adala Shiva,
adalashiva29@students.unnes.ac.id



Copyright © 2025 ELTALL: English Language Teaching, Applied Linguistic and Literature. ELTALL is licensed under a CC BY-NC 4.0

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of friendship in shaping the psychological development of the main character in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series through the lens of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. The research aims to examine how Percy's relationships, particularly with the main character's friends, contribute to identity formation and emotional growth. This study adopts a qualitative and thematic textual analysis approach, guided by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The data collection involved close reading and repeated viewing of key episodes. By applying Lacan's key concepts, including the Mirror Stage, desire, lack (*manque*), and the triadic orders of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, this study analyzes how the series portrays friendship as a vital medium through which the main character navigates his sense of self and subjectivity. The findings suggest that friendship functions not only as emotional support but also as a reflective structure that drives the main character's evolving identity. The Symbolic becomes central when friendships provide moral language and social recognition, especially through Annabeth's and Grover's dialogue. Moreover, the study reveals that the series subverts conventional heroic narratives by emphasizing psychological depth and emotional dependency, positioning friendship as central to the hero's journey. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how contemporary screen adaptations can integrate psychoanalytic dimensions into character development.

INTRODUCTION

Friendship, defined as a voluntary and reciprocal relationship grounded in trust, affection, and mutual understanding, plays a central role in shaping adolescent identity and emotional growth (Bukowski, Laursen, & Rubin, 2011). During adolescence, friendships function as emotional support systems and reflective spaces for self-discovery, helping young people manage uncertainty, establish values, and develop resilience. Unlike family relationships, which are assigned by birth and social structure, friendships are chosen. This voluntary nature strengthens their importance in promoting self-awareness and emotional regulation during critical stages of development (Brown & Larson, 2009).

In today's adolescent experience, friendship is more than a social interaction; it serves as a meaningful space for identity construction and emotional coping. Teenagers often rely on peer

relationships to process stress, adapt to change, and interpret life events. According to Branje (2022), close friendships play a crucial role during moments of transition, such as school changes, family conflict, or personal distress. Through these relationships, adolescents engage in self-reflection and emotional processing, shaping their sense of self. Identity formation is no longer seen as a linear developmental phase but as a product of ongoing, mutual interaction with peers who function as mirrors for self-perception (Branje et al., 2021).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Jacques Lacan's theory provides a valuable framework for understanding these identity processes. His key concepts, including the *Mirror Stage*, the notion of *lack* (*manque*), and the three orders of the *Imaginary*, the *Symbolic*, and the *Real*, emphasize that identity is constructed through relational encounters, desire, and symbolic recognition (Lacan, 2006; Žižek, 2006; Fink, 2017). Within friendships, individuals face the *Other* and attempt to resolve internal tensions by forming emotional and symbolic attachments.

Lacan's *Mirror Stage* illustrates how identity first emerges through identification with external images—mirrors that reflect a unified but alienated self. In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series (2023), this is evident as the main character sees elements of himself mirrored in his friends, reinforcing a sense of self as he confronts challenges in a mythological world.

Lacan's idea of *desire* as emerging from a fundamental lack also informs how the main character's friendships offer emotional grounding amid his struggle to belong in either the mortal or divine world. These connections symbolize his longing for recognition, stability, and belonging.

Through friendships, he navigates the *Imaginary* (his self-image as a hero), the *Symbolic* (social roles and language within both worlds), and the *Real* (moments of existential confrontation that resist full understanding). Thus, friendship in the series is not merely a narrative device but a structural element in the main character's emotional and psychological development. It facilitates identity construction, supports emotional resilience, and bridges the fragmented dimensions of his subjectivity across Lacan's psychoanalytic orders.

These dynamics are especially apparent in narratives featuring young protagonists. In such stories, friendship not only drives the plot but also provides a psychological framework for coping with emotional challenges, building identity, and understanding one's place in the world (Nikolajeva, 2010). This can be seen in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, the 2023 Disney+ adaptation of Rick Riordan's novel series. The show centers on a twelve-year-old boy who discovers he is the son of Poseidon and embarks on a journey to prevent a war among the gods. He is joined by two loyal companions, Athena's daughter and a satyr guardian, who help him confront both mythological dangers and internal struggles, such as feelings of abandonment and uncertainty about his identity.

Although *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* has been widely studied, previous research has primarily focused on mythological themes and fantasy elements. Scholars such as Paljuši (2022), Leighton (2014), Smit (2020), and Sari (2021) have explored these aspects. Krome (2024) discusses how mythology promotes prosocial behavior in the series, while Meziane (2022) adopts a Jungian perspective to examine character development in *The Lightning Thief* and *The Sea of Monsters*. However, none of these studies have addressed Percy's identity development in the 2023 TV series, nor have they analyzed his emotional growth through a Lacanian lens. This article aims to fill that gap by examining how Percy's friendships contribute to his evolving identity. Hapsari (2023) supports this line of inquiry by showing that emotional development and self-concept are significantly affected by unstable parental relationships, a central issue in Percy's background.

Recent scholarship has increasingly used Lacanian psychoanalysis to interpret literary texts. For instance, Artamevia and Widyaningrum (2024) apply Lacan's ideas to analyze character identity in *Aladdin*, while Prayuda and Merawati (2025) explore identity development in a webtoon narrative. Guo and Ge (2019) and Akbar et al. (2024) focus on Lacanian concepts such as desire, lack, and the unconscious in literary fiction. Cocks (2023) uses psychoanalysis to examine emotional complexity in children's literature. These studies illustrate the theoretical adaptability of Lacanian analysis. However, none of them examine the intersection of identity, friendship, and emotional growth in a TV series targeted at younger audiences. This article investigates how the TV adaptation portrays friendship as a crucial structure for identity development and emotional resilience, using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as a framework. While prior research has emphasized mythology, gender, and classical heroism, the psychological dimensions of friendship remain underexplored. This study offers a new perspective by analyzing how friendships function as both symbolic and emotional frameworks in the identity formation of the protagonist. (Add) In Lacanian terms, friendship can be understood as a relational encounter with the Other, an essential mirror through which the subject negotiates desire and constructs identity. Through identification with friends, the subject confronts both lack and alienation, allowing emotional ties to shape psychic development in complex ways.

Furthermore, by offering a Lacanian reading of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, this paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of work that explores how contemporary TV adaptations of literary works can incorporate psychoanalytic theory to deepen character development. The exploration of identity and emotional development within the context of friendship challenges traditional views of heroism, illustrating the emotional complexity that modern storytelling brings to the forefront of character evolution. The questions of this research are: (1) How does the portrayal of friendship in the TV series contribute to the main character's identity formation, based on Lacan's Mirror Stage?; (2) In what ways do the main character's interactions with his friends in the TV series reflect Lacanian concepts of desire and lack (*manque*)?; (3) How does the TV series represent friendship as a space where the main character navigates the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real orders in Lacanian psychoanalysis?

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research approach using Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine the role of friendship in the psychological development of the main character in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (TV series, Season 1, 2023). The focus is on how the character's friendships contribute to his emotional growth and identity formation. The analysis focuses on his interactions with key friends and how these relationships influence his evolving sense of self.

The primary data consists of selected scenes from the 2023 adaptation, chosen for their emotional significance and relevance to identity formation, inner conflict, and moments of self-reflection. Special attention was given to scenes portraying intimacy, vulnerability, and transformation, where the protagonist's evolving self-concept is shaped through interaction with others. These scenes were repeatedly reviewed to ensure thematic consistency with psychoanalytic concerns. Elements such as dialogue, scene, and broader narrative context were carefully documented to develop a multi-layered understanding of friendship as a psychological structure.

Data were collected through close visual and textual analysis. Dialogue transcripts were created for in-depth interpretation. This iterative process of viewing and analysis aimed to trace how unconscious processes unfold through character relationships and narrative progression.

The analysis is guided by key Lacanian concepts: the Mirror Stage, desire, lack, the Other, and the three registers, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Mirror Stage offers insight into how Percy constructs his identity through interactions with peers who reflect aspects of himself. Desire is examined in relation to Percy's unconscious need for recognition and emotional attachment, often visible in his longing to be seen and affirmed by friends. The concept of lack helps illuminate moments of perceived inadequacy or internal emptiness, which are navigated or temporarily resolved through relational dynamics.

Secondary sources include scholarly literature on Lacanian theory applied to film, television, and literature. These texts offer a critical foundation for applying psychoanalytic concepts to the series. By integrating close scene analysis with Lacanian theory, this methodology offers a nuanced account of how friendship operates not just narratively, but as a symbolic and emotional structure essential to the protagonist's identity formation. This study focuses only on Season 1 of the 2023 adaptation. It does not explore the broader mythological or narrative elements of the series, as the analysis is limited to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyses Percy Jackson's psychological development through his friendships with Annabeth and Grover in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series, Season 1 (2023). Using Lacanian psychoanalysis as the framework, the study explores how these key relationships shape Percy's identity and emotional growth, particularly focusing on the concepts of the Mirror Stage, desire, and the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real registers. The following discussion outlines how these relationships contribute to Percy's self-concept and emotional maturation.

The Mirror Stage and Identity Formation

A deeper application of Lacan's *Mirror Stage* in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2023) reveals how Percy's identity is gradually constructed through key relationships, particularly with Annabeth and Grover, who function as reflective surfaces shaping his self-concept. In Episode 5, Percy's recognition that "He saved me. My dad. I guess I just really never thought that's something he'd do for me," marks a pivotal shift in his self-perception. This moment initiates a Lacanian *mirror stage*, as Percy confronts an idealized image of himself, as the worthy son of Poseidon, an identity that simultaneously empowers and destabilizes him. While the paternal image introduces the fantasy of divine belonging, it is ultimately through his close companions that Percy's identity is emotionally and symbolically reinforced.

Annabeth, in particular, becomes a mirror of Percy's potential and self-worth through her language and actions. In the same episode, she confides in Percy, saying that he has done more for her in a few days than her own father has in a lifetime. This emotional exchange highlights how Annabeth reflects Percy's ideal self, not as a distant god, but as a caring, brave, and selfless friend. Her rationality, strategic thinking, and loyalty give structure to Percy's otherwise chaotic internal landscape, anchoring him within Lacan's Symbolic Order. In essence, Annabeth's validation and expectations act as a symbolic frame, providing the language and moral grounding necessary for Percy to begin stabilizing his fragmented sense of self.

Meanwhile, Grover mirrors Percy's emotional vulnerability and serves as a non-judgmental witness to his internal conflict. For instance, in Episode 2, after Percy angrily tells Grover that his job is "done" because he got him to Camp Half-Blood alive, Grover continues to support him, reflecting unconditional loyalty. Unlike Poseidon, who represents an unattainable ideal (Ideal-I), Grover's presence reminds Percy of his real and incomplete self, the side that doubts, grieves, and hesitates. This mirroring aligns with Lacan's theory that identity is built not just on the idealized reflection but also on the recognition of the fragmented self, mediated through relationships that allow space for emotional disintegration and rebuilding.

This dynamic is further dramatized in Episode 6 during the Lotus Casino sequence, a space that represents the Imaginary register, filled with illusion, timeless pleasure, and identity disintegration. Here, Percy begins to lose touch with reality, but Annabeth disrupts this fantasy by declaring, *"I'm not leaving here without my friend."* Her words pull Percy back into the Symbolic, reasserting emotional reality and shared purpose. In this moment, Annabeth's moral resistance and emotional clarity serve as a mirror not of desire, but of truth, cutting through fantasy to reestablish Percy's place in the world.

According to Lacan (2001), the Mirror Stage is the point at which individuals start forming their identity by seeing themselves reflected in others, particularly those who represent an idealized version of who they aspire to be. In Percy's case, recognizing himself as "the son of a god" represents a confrontation with an ideal that clashes with the fragmented and uncertain aspects of his real self. This reflection both empowers and alienates him, as he struggles to meet the expectations that come with his divine heritage.

This interpretation aligns with Guo and Ge (2019), who suggest that adolescent characters often experience identity development through encounters with figures who reflect idealized versions of themselves. Percy, Annabeth, and Grover provide a stabilizing presence, helping him construct a more secure and positive self-image through their validation and loyalty.

Lacan's Mirror Stage is ultimately a process of ongoing self-pursuit, where the individual is always striving toward an "Ideal-I" that remains out of reach. Percy's internal conflict between his heroic role and his personal insecurities reflects this idea. Prayuda and Merawati (2025) similarly observe that identity, in Lacanian terms, involves a constant tension between the constructed self and the real, incomplete self.

Desire and the Role of the Other

Lacan's concept of desire, which holds that desire stems not from a direct need but from a fundamental sense of lack mediated through the Other, offers valuable insight into Percy Jackson's emotional development in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2023). In this framework, desire is shaped not simply by what one lacks but by how others respond to, distort, or deny those needs. Percy's evolving desire is structured through his contrasting relationships with Grover and Annabeth, who function as different forms of the Lacanian Other: Grover through emotional support, and Annabeth through symbolic identification.

Grover acts as a Real Other, representing emotional safety and unconditional support. He allows Percy to express vulnerability without fear of rejection. This is especially clear in Episode 6, when Grover gently says, *"You guys are my best friends... It's easy to forget what's important when you're alone."* The statement follows a high-stress scene in Las Vegas and is delivered in a quiet, reflective tone that underscores Grover's calming presence. The camera's emphasis on the trio's closeness visually reinforces his stabilizing role. From a Lacanian perspective, Grover does not

offer an idealized reflection but provides a grounding presence that affirms Percy's emotional needs, especially as Percy begins to question the value of divine figures. This comfort is sharply contrasted in Episode 2, when Percy tells Grover, *"Your job was to get me here alive. So your job is done."* Percy's cold tone and physical distance reflect his misplaced frustration, rooted in unmet paternal expectations. Despite this, Grover remains present and empathetic, offering consistent affirmation that helps anchor Percy's fragmented identity.

Annabeth, by contrast, represents both the Imaginary and Symbolic Other. She is a figure of intellect, logic, and control, qualities that Percy admires and strives to internalize. In Episode 5, she tells Percy, *"You've done more for me in the past few days than my father's done in my entire life."* Her statement affirms Percy's emotional significance and offers him a new sense of identity, not as someone defined by absence, but as someone capable of care and impact. The scene is filmed with visual symmetry, suggesting mutual recognition. Here, Percy's desire is shaped by Annabeth's perception of him. He wants to become the person she sees, competent, brave, and emotionally present. Even her earlier teasing in Episode 2, *"You drool when you sleep,"* performs a Lacanian function by disrupting Percy's ego and reminding him that identity is fluid, incomplete, and always dependent on the Other for symbolic meaning.

Hovering over these relationships is the elusive figure of Poseidon, the absent father whose recognition Percy longs for but rarely receives. In Episode 5, Percy admits, *"He saved me. My dad. I guess I just really never thought that's something he'd do for me."* This moment encapsulates the nature of Lacanian desire: a tension between imagined satisfaction and the reality of unfulfilled longing. Poseidon becomes the unattainable object that gives structure to Percy's emotional world. The ocean, associated with Poseidon, functions symbolically as a representation of this ongoing lack: vast, unknowable, and never fully within reach. Percy's yearning for Poseidon's approval drives, but also complicates, his relationships with others.

In Episode 5, their desperate calls for Percy during a crisis, *"He's alive. I know it."* *"Percy!"* highlights the depth of their bond. This unwavering belief in him redefines Percy's emotional desires, shifting them from divine acceptance to mutual recognition and belonging. According to Lacan (2001), desire stems from the subject's relationship with the Other, where emotional needs are shaped and understood. Prayuda and Merawati (2025) note that Lacanian desire is not purely about acquiring something but about the ongoing tension between the subject and the unreachable object of desire.

In the end, Percy's emotional growth reflects a shift from yearning for approval from Poseidon, he begins to value human connection, more layered set of emotional and symbolic needs. Grover offers a form of emotional consistency that reflects Percy's fears and insecurities, while Annabeth presents a mirror of who he aspires to become, intellectually and emotionally mature. Lacan (2001) emphasizes that desire is formed through the Other, those who mediate our needs and validate our existence. Percy's development exemplifies this: his father remains distant, his friends become structuring mirrors, and through these connections, Percy continues to negotiate his sense of self.

The Imaginary and Symbolic Registers

The relationship Percy's relationships with his companions reflect the interplay of Lacan's three registers: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary is based on identification and the illusion of a complete self, which is formed through misrecognition (Lacan, 2001). In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2023), this illusion is repeatedly questioned, especially as Percy

begins to doubt his worth as a hero. In Episode 4, his frustration becomes clear when he says, *"Gotta burn an offering to get a parent's attention... It isn't supposed to work that way."*

This line, delivered as Percy offers a sacrifice to Poseidon, is accompanied by a lingering shot on the flames and Percy's downcast expression. It reflects his emotional disappointment and rejection of the Symbolic Order, the divine system that promises legitimacy but fails to offer a personal connection. Percy's desire for a caring father is rooted in an Imaginary fantasy, but he confronts instead a Symbolic structure that cannot meet that emotional need. The gods' emotional absence begins to unravel the idealized image Percy once held.

This tension is further explored in Episode 7 when Percy confronts Crusty and says, *"Stretching us and twisting us and hacking off pieces to make us seem more like them."* Although the line refers literally to Crusty's physical actions, it also critiques the pressure to conform and the fragmentation of identity. His words highlight the Symbolic register's demand for individuals to conform to fixed roles. As Žižek (2006) notes, maintaining symbolic order often requires people to sacrifice aspects of themselves. Percy rejects this demand, resisting the role of a demigod defined solely by external expectations.

However, Percy's resistance evolves. Through his friendships with Grover and Annabeth, he begins to form new symbolic meanings based on human connection rather than divine validation. In Episode 6, Grover reaffirms their bond, and Percy responds not with words but with visible emotional vulnerability. Grover becomes a steady presence who helps Percy develop a more grounded sense of identity.

This shift continues in Episode 5, when Annabeth reveals her own experience with paternal abandonment: *"He just left one day. My dad. And no matter how good I was, it didn't matter. He didn't want me."* The intimate, low-lit scene underlines her emotional honesty. Annabeth, already situated within the Symbolic through her own confrontation with loss, offers Percy peer-based validation. According to Lacan (2001), entry into the Symbolic depends on recognition by another subject already embedded in that system. Annabeth, having experienced similar rejection, acts as a guide, showing Percy that emotional value can come from mutual understanding rather than divine approval.

In this sense, Percy's friendships become the means through which he redefines the Symbolic Order. He does not passively accept the authority of the gods. Instead, he builds a new symbolic framework rooted in mutual care and emotional truth. As Prayuda and Merawati (2025) argue, young protagonists in myth-based stories often reshape symbolic systems through interpersonal relationships rather than submission. Percy's eventual embrace of his divine identity reflects this process, not surrender, but reconstruction of meaning alongside his peers.

In conclusion, Percy's journey across the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real demonstrates his psychological development as a Lacanian subject. He does not reject the Symbolic altogether but learns to engage with it more consciously. As Fink (1995) explains, the aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis is not to escape the Symbolic, but to live within it with clarity and autonomy. Through his friendships, Percy learns to define himself not by divine expectations, but by relationships grounded in recognition and emotional exchange.

The Real Register and Emotional Development

Percy's emotional development in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2023) is shaped through repeated encounters with the Real, Lacan's concept of what cannot be fully expressed or symbolized. The Real represents experiences that go beyond symbolic representation, resisting

language and rational containment. It emerges through moments of silence, emotional paralysis, and trauma that resist integration into coherent meaning. Many of Percy's most difficult experiences are structured around these encounters with the Real.

A powerful example occurs in Episode 7, when Crusty mocks Percy with the line, *"You won't be the first to fail. You won't save her."* Delivered with a slow, taunting tone, the statement forces Percy to confront his deepest fear: failure and loss. The silence that follows, Percy's clenched fists, his inability to respond. This is not a problem Percy can solve. It is the intrusion of the Real, a confrontation with the inexpressible fear of death and helplessness. Percy's rigid posture and silence demonstrate how language falls short in capturing the intensity of this moment.

Another significant encounter with the Real happens in Episode 8 when Percy meets Poseidon. While this moment fulfills a narrative expectation of father-son recognition, it lacks emotional closure. Poseidon tells him, *"You have a choice, Percy. You don't have to be like me,"* but the interaction is distant and cold. The setting, dimly lit with the sound of distant waves, further underscores the emotional void. Percy's teary eyes and lack of visible emotion suggest unresolved tension. Although Poseidon offers symbolic acknowledgment, the emotional disconnect persists, reinforcing Lacan's idea that the Real cannot be fully absorbed or resolved within the subject's psyche.

By contrast, Percy's connections with Annabeth and Grover serve as stabilizing forces that help him manage the effects of the Real. In Episode 7, while in the Underworld, Annabeth tells Percy, *"I trust your dad. You can do this. I know you can."* Her steady voice and the return of soft background music mark a shift toward emotional balance. The camera lingers on Percy's reaction, emphasizing how her trust provides symbolic reassurance. Rather than denying the fear he feels, her words help restructure it, allowing him to face the chaos without being consumed by it.

Grover also plays a grounding role. In Episode 6, as Percy becomes trapped in the illusion of the Lotus Casino, Grover quietly asserts, *"I'm not leaving without my friend."* The audio isolates his voice, making it the emotional focus of the scene. His calm tone and unwavering loyalty reestablish a connection to reality, disrupting the seductive fantasy. Grover brings Percy back from a symbolic collapse, helping him regain a sense of self. In Lacanian terms, Grover's intervention facilitates a return from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, providing emotional structure when Percy is most vulnerable.

These relationships do not remove the presence of the Real, but they help Percy endure it. His development does not depend on resolving trauma, but on learning to live with uncertainty and loss. As Lacan (2001) argues, the Real is not something to be overcome but something to be endured. Percy grows not by escaping grief, but by finding ways to express and contain it through relationships that acknowledge his pain. The support he receives from Annabeth and Grover allows him to navigate the space between fantasy and impersonal divine authority, fostering emotional resilience and a more stable sense of self.

Challenging Traditional Heroic Narratives

The portrayal of friendship in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series challenges traditional heroic narratives where the hero's journey is often depicted as a solitary quest. Instead, Percy's growth as a hero is deeply tied to his emotional relationships. Unlike classical heroes who often undergo personal transformation through isolated trials, Percy's transformation is shaped by his connection to others. Lacanian psychoanalysis emphasizes the centrality of the Other in the

formation of desire and identity. In Percy's case, his relationships with Annabeth and Grover are not just supportive. They are essential for his emotional and psychological growth.

Through these friendships, Percy understands that heroism is not about achieving individual glory but navigating emotional vulnerabilities and relational dynamics. As Lacan suggests, the subject's desire and sense of self are always mediated by others. Percy's emotional journey is inseparable from his bonds with those around him (Lacan, 2001). This perspective is aligned with Alkurdi's and Majdoubeh's (2021) analysis, which argues that modern characters, particularly in youth-oriented narratives, are increasingly defined by their relationships and the way they navigate personal growth through social connections rather than isolated quests for self-fulfillment.

In summary, this subsection reveals that Percy's heroic arc does not follow the archetype of the solitary individual conquering challenges in isolation. Instead, it illustrates a contemporary model of heroism where emotional connection, mutual dependence, and shared vulnerability are integral to identity formation. In Lacanian terms, the Other is not an obstacle to selfhood but a condition for its possibility, making friendship a constitutive force in Percy's psychological development.

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series through the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, demonstrating that friendship serves as a key structure in the protagonist's emotional and psychological growth. Instead of upholding the image of the solitary hero, the series portrays identity as relational, shaped through meaningful interactions with others who reflect, challenge, and support the self. Percy's relationships with Annabeth and Grover illustrate Lacan's view that the self is formed through the Other, and that desire is deeply rooted in these interpersonal dynamics.

The series goes beyond a typical coming-of-age narrative by redefining heroism as a shared, relational experience. Heroic identity is portrayed as something constructed through mutual vulnerability, emotional recognition, and symbolic exchange, moving away from traditional hero tropes toward a more psychologically grounded representation. This research adds to the growing body of Lacanian literary criticism by showing how its concepts can deepen our understanding of emotional complexity in character relationships, particularly in media for young audiences. It also contributes to children's media studies by emphasizing that depictions of friendship are not just narrative tools but essential portrayals of emotional resilience and identity development. This study focuses only on Season 1 of the 2023 adaptation. It does not explore the broader mythological or narrative elements of the series, as the analysis is limited to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

In summary, this study finds that *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* TV series presents friendship as a central element in emotional development when viewed through a Lacanian framework. The series challenges conventional notions of individual heroism and emphasizes the role of relationships in shaping identity. More broadly, the findings contribute to ongoing discussions in children's media studies by showing how emotional and psychological growth is being portrayed through nuanced character interactions rather than solely through action-driven storytelling. This analysis encourages further exploration of how contemporary children's media engages with psychoanalytic ideas, offering not just entertainment but also meaningful frameworks for understanding identity, emotion, and human connection.

REFERENCES

- Akbar, R., Iskarna, T., & Taum, Y. Y. (2024). The subject of melancholia in Toer's *Bumi Manusia*: Lacan's psychoanalytic study. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.1.1>
- Alkurdi, S., & Majdoubah, A. (2021). Bicultural identity formation in American multicultural young adult literature: A study in Cofer's *Call Me Maria*. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 48(2). <https://archives.ju.edu.jo/index.php/hum/article/view/109314>
- Artamevia, A. (2024). A Psychoanalysis of The Main Characters Aladdin and Jasmine in The Aladdin Movie (2019) A Psychoanalysis Of The Main Characters Aladdin And Jasmine In The Aladdin Movie (2019). 2019, 435–444. <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.743>
- Branje, S. (2022). Adolescent identity development in context. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 45, 101286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.11.006>
- Branje, S., de Moor, E. L., Spitzer, J., & Becht, A. I. (2021). Dynamics of Identity Development in Adolescence: A Decade in Review. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(4), 908–927. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12678>
- Brown, B. B., & Larson, J. (2009). Peer relationships in adolescence. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Contextual influences on adolescent development* (3rd ed., pp. 74–103). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479193.adlpsy002004>
- Bukowski, W. M., Laursen, B., & Rubin, K. H. (Eds.). (2018). *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press. Google Scholar
- Cocks, N. (2023). On the Tolerance of Children's Literature Criticism: Psychoanalysis, Neighborliness, and Pooh. *Humanities (Switzerland)*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/h12030045>
- Fink, B. (2017). *The Lacanian subject: Between language and jouissance*. Princeton University Press. Google Scholar
- Guo, L., & Ge, Z. (2019). A Lacanian Psychoanalysis Interpretation of Jeannette Walls in The Glass Castle. *Saudi Journal of Engineering and Technology Abbreviated Key Title: Saudi J Eng Technol*, 6272, 133–138. <https://www.saudijournals.com/media/articles/SJEAT-44-133-138-c.pdf>
- Hapsari, A. G. S. (2023). *Three orders analysis: The influence of maternal bond to characters' self-identification in J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan* (Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Negeri Semarang).
- Krome, C. (2024). The role of mythology in prosocial behavior in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan. In M. Weigel & L. Hughes (Eds.), *Questing through the Riordanverse: Studying religion with the works of Rick Riordan* (pp. 59–70). Google Scholar
- Lacan, J. (2001). *Écrits: A selection* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003059486>
- Lacan, J., Fink, B., & Grigg, R. (2006). *Écrits: The first complete edition in English* (B. Fink, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company.
- Leighton, A. (2014). Re-discovering mythology: Adaptation and appropriation in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga. *Mousaion*, 32(2), 60–73. <https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC166207>
- Kadwa, M. S., & Alshenqeeti, H. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt>

- Meziane, Y. (2022). *The impact of Greek mythology on Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief and The Sea of Monsters implying the Jungian theory* (Master's thesis University of Biskra). Google Scholar
- Paljuši, M. (2022). *Genres in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson & the Olympians Series*. (Master's thesis, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education). <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:147:152292>
- Prayuda, V. A., & Merawati, F. (2025). Self identity of the main character of Archie the RedCat's *Sri Asih* webtoon: A literature study. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 5(1), 185–195. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i1.2607>
- Riordan, R. (2023). *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* [TV series]. Disney+.
- Smit, J. (2020). How Fantasy Speaks to Adolescent Readers : The Development of Gender Equity , Heroism and Imperfection , and Good and Evil from an Exploration into Rick Riordan ' s Percy Jackson & the Olympians and Heroes of Olympus Series. *Study and Scrunity: Research in Young Adult Literature*, 4(1), 52–76. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5275.2020.4.1.52-76>
- Žižek, S. (2006). *How to read Lacan*. W. W. Norton. Google Scholar