

“Some Things Aren’t Meant to Be Controlled”
The Seductive Power of Water in Rick Riordan’s *Heroes of Olympus*

As the son of Poseidon, Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson character derives power from water. Water strengthens him, and he is able to control it and even, at times, summon it. Initially, Riordan presents this power in a positive light. Water is pure, clean, and life-giving. It is a sacred force that seems largely benevolent. As the *Percy Jackson* series progresses (and particularly in its sequel series, *The Heroes of Olympus*), this characterization begins to shift. Percy’s power grows more threatening. He becomes an unstoppable force in *The Final Battle*, because of protection gained from the River Styx. In *The Mark of Athena*, he summons hurricanes and extracts water from the lungs of a drowning friend. He can control the Rivers of the Dead – bodies of water with terrible powers that cause pain, misery, and guilt and can even destroy the human body or mind. His power reaches a zenith in *The House of Hades* when he learns that he can even control poison and bodily fluids, almost choking the goddess Akhlys to death with her own tears. Although Percy could easily lose control of his powers, he is able to restrain himself when Annabeth reminds him that “some things aren’t meant to be controlled.” As with his rejection of the gods’ offer of immortality at the end of the first series, Percy again resists the lure of unchecked power

Through the evolution of Percy’s powers, Riordan demonstrates both the refreshing and the turbulent aspects of water – a force that is both life-giving and threatening. Because Percy’s power can be both benevolent and destructive, Riordan emphasizes the need for heroes to use their power responsibly. Riordan’s books explore this concept of responsible use of power by contrasting the demigods with the Greek gods. Within Riordan’s texts, the Greek gods are selfish and self-indulgent. They use their power however they see fit with no concern for the effect it has on mortals and no clear sense of right and wrong. What separates the heroes, from the gods is self-restraint – a recognition of where to draw the line. For Percy, this sometimes means *not* exercising the full extent of one’s powers. Water is a force that is necessary for life, but one that can be destructive in excess. Through his use of water as symbol of both life and death, Riordan reminds readers of the importance of such balance.