

Rebekah Hildebrant

November 22, 2016

Dear Rick Riordan,

Early in my education and up until the fifth grade, I didn't meet benchmark expectations for reading. In fact, I was more than a couple grade levels behind my fellow classmates. Mr. Y, my principal for second grade, was so concerned with my inability to read that I was often called out of class to take multiple tests that he was convinced would unlock the mystery of why I was unable to read. These tests included dyslexia test, vision tests, hearing tests, and others, all of which I passed with high scores. The last test I took was with a reading specialist and the results were shocking for my teachers. In the tester's own words, "It just isn't clicking in her brain yet." This meant that it would take longer for me to learn to read than other students.

At the beginning of third grade, I moved an hour away to a new elementary school where I continued to fall further and further behind in reading. Needless to say, when I reached the fifth grade I wasn't reading anywhere near the level my peers were, let alone at a fifth grade level. Fortunately for me, my fifth grade teacher, Ms. G, was a reading specialist. Every afternoon we would meet in the bright corner of the classroom, next to the window at the green kidney shaped table and practice perfecting our reading. With the help of this wonderful teacher, I was soon able to read at my grade level. It was my good fortune that Ms. G agreed to teach sixth grade the following year and with her continued support and guidance, I was reading at a college level by the time I left elementary school.

One of the first books I was able to read on my own was *The Lightning Thief* and I have read every book in the series and others since. Not only is this book special to me because it was one of the first books I could read on my own, but because I connected with the character Percy. As you know, Percy could not read well either, in fact, his teachers believed he had dyslexia. For Percy, the letters and words did not make sense to him, but this was because he was born to read Greek not English. Once Percy arrived at Camp Half Blood, he was told that everyone there was dyslexic because they too were born to read Greek. Suddenly Percy was a part of a community of kids just like him. In my case, I didn't have that community of other kids who were unable to read, but when I immersed myself in *The Lightning Thief*, as if I were part of Camp Half Blood, I shared the struggle of Percy and the others and finally felt as if I had people to relate to.

All of a sudden I wasn't the girl who didn't know how to read. As I experienced and pictured the book in my mind, I became one of the kids at Camp Half Blood, fighting Greek monsters and going on quests. I know it's cliché to say it, but the characters in your book felt like family. I could relate to Percy and Annabeth, and many others in following books, in a way that I could not relate to my own classmates and siblings.

All of the kids at Camp Half Blood knew that being dyslexic in English meant that they just had to try harder than others to be able to read. Like the kids of Camp Half Blood, I too had to try harder than most of my peers to perfect my reading. Although I connected with Percy through his trouble with reading, I also connected to the battles he, Annabeth, and Grover had to go through.

When I was in middle school, I had a monstrous eighth grade teacher. At the beginning of my eighth grade year there were thirteen kids in my class (we were a small charter school) but by the end of the year there were only seven kids left, including myself. This teacher was not just a bad teacher in general, she was mean. One of our main assignments for the year was a research paper in American Psychological Association (APA) format. My teacher, Ms. L, did not teach us what APA format was or how to do it and as a result I wrote an amazing research paper without any citations and promptly received an F on the paper as many of my peers did as well. As a result of this mass failure, Ms. L gave us a second chance to rewrite the paper, again without any instruction on how to write a paper in APA format; and told me that if I did not get a better grade on this paper, I would have to repeat the eighth grade. I then went home in tears at the fact that I got an F on my paper and my parents and I researched how to cite in APA format. I did the corrections, turned in the paper, and I earned a ninety-eight percent on it. This was not the only battle I had to fight with this teacher, believe me there were many, but I managed to fight through it.

From then on I viewed Ms. L as a monster. In my battle-maddened eyes, Ms. L loomed over us with her serpent hair and cold eyes, looking at us as if she wanted to turn us to stone and talking down to every one of us. My only problem was that I had to deal with the monster for another semester and the only thing to do was fight through it. Like Annabeth and Percy, fighting through Tartarus in *The House of Hades*, I fought through the eighth grade. Annabeth and Percy fighting through Tartarus gave me the courage to trudge on, if they could make it through Tartarus fighting multiple monsters, I could fight one monster and survive the latter part of my eighth grade year.

Your books not only gave me the confidence I needed for my reading, but gave me the self assurance that I could make it through eighth grade with the ability to defeat Ms. L. As a result, I became confident in my reading and fought through the latter years of my middle school education with the highest grades in my class. I am now in an accelerated high school and am excelling in all of my subjects, especially English, thanks to the help of Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Hildebrant