

**READING RICK RIORDAN'S SEA OF
MONSTERS USING PROPP'S THEORY OF
NARRATOLOGY**

by

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DEDICATION

To my beloved son Mehrad whose patience as a child fills me with surprise, and his interest in mythology encourages me to fulfill my goals.

And to the loving memory of my dear father Mohammad Khaksari who planted the love of literature and myths in me and his wish was always to see my success.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
ABSTRAK	xi
ABSTRACT	xiii

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of the Study	5
1.3	Statement of the Problem	10
1.4	Research Objectives	13
1.5	Research Questions	13
1.6	Significance of the Study	14
1.7	Scope of the Study	15
1.8	Limitations of the Study	16
1.9	Definition of Important Terms	16
1.10	Organisation of the Study	21
1.11	Conclusion	22

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1	Introduction	23
2.2	Section One: Antiquity (Mythology)	23

2.2.1	Interpreting Myth	26
2.2.2	Intertextuality	29
2.2.3	Narratology	32
2.2.4	<i>Morphology of the Folktale</i>	34
2.2.5	Studies Based on Propp's Theory of Narratology (1968)	39
2.3	Section Two: Modernity (Retelling Myths)	42
2.3.1	Children's and Young Adult Literature	44
2.3.1(a)	Elements of Fantasy and Myth	45
2.3.1(b)	Origin, Debates and Present Status	46
2.3.2	Young Adult Literature and Myth	48
2.3.3	Narrative Structure in Myths and Modern Literature	57
2.3.4	Rick Riordan	60
2.3.4(a)	<i>Percy Jackson and the Olympians Pentology (PJOP)</i>	62
2.3.4(b)	Related Studies on <i>PJOP</i> and <i>SOM</i>	63
2.4	Recovering the Status of Myth	65
2.5	Theoretical Framework of the Study	67
2.6	Conclusion	69
 CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY		
3.1	Introduction	70
3.2	Research Design	71
3.3	Samples/Materials	73
3.3.1	The Significance of <i>The Odyssey</i>	74
3.3.2	Rationale for the Selection of <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	76
3.3.3	Determining the Sample Size of the Study	78

3.4	Instruments/Data Collection Tools	78
3.4.1	Sphere of Action of Characters	79
3.4.2	Narrative Functions	81
3.4.3	Auxiliary Elements for Interconnection of Functions	87
3.5	Procedures	89
3.5.1	Identifying the Narrative Functions	90
3.5.2	Analysis of Moves and Sequence of Functions	92
3.5.3	Analysis of Themes and Values	94
3.6	Rater Evaluation	95
3.7	Conclusion	97

CHAPTER FOUR - DATA ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

4.1	Introduction	98
4.2	Textual Analysis	98
4.2.1	Summary of the Story	99
4.2.2	Introducing Characters and Mythical Concepts	103
4.2.3	A Proppian Analysis of <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	106
4.2.4	A Tabulated Summary of the Analysis	159
4.3	The Main Findings of the Study	164
4.3.1	Table Representing the Frequency of the Identified Narrative Functions	164
4.3.2	Findings Based on the Identified Narrative Functions	166
4.3.2(a)	Representation of the Sequence of Functions and Moves	166
4.3.2(b)	Figure Illustrating the Combination of Move Schemes	171
4.3.2(c)	Figure Illustrating the Overall Pattern in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	173

4.3.3	Table Representing Characters Based on Their Spheres of Action	173
4.3.4	Themes and Values Elicited from <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	174
4.4	Conclusion	175

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	176
5.2	Discussion of the Findings	177
5.2.1	Narrative Functions in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	178
5.2.2	The Outcomes of the Narrative Functions	182
5.2.2(a)	The Sequence of Functions in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	182
5.2.2(b)	Move Schemes Observed in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	194
5.2.2(c)	Illustrating the Overall Pattern of <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	197
5.2.3	The Sphere of Action of the Main Characters in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i> in Relation to <i>The Odyssey</i>	200
5.2.4	Themes and Values Explained in Relation to the Episodes and Functions in <i>The Sea of Monsters</i>	207
5.3	Implications of the Study	221
5.3.1	Teaching of Literature	222
5.3.2	Young Adult Literature Authors	223
5.3.3	Syllabus Designers	224
5.3.4	Young Adult Readers	225
5.3.5	Researchers	226
5.4	Recommendations for Further Studies	227
5.5	Conclusion	228

REFERENCES

230

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	The Roles and Distribution of Functions among Dramatis Personae	80
Table 3.2	The Recurring Functions of Folktale and Myth and their Types for Proppian Analysis	82
Table 3.3	Some other Elements of the Tale	87
Table 4.1	Summary of the Textual Analysis	159
Table 4.2	Frequency of the Functions Identified in the Text	165
Table 4.3	The Characters, their Types and Sphere of Action	174

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2.1	Traditional Fantasy vs. Modern Fantasy (Kurkjian, et al., 2006)	45
Figure 2.2	Theoretical Framework of the Study based on Propp's Narratology (1968)	69
Figure 4.1	Combination of Move Schemes in <i>SOM</i>	172
Figure 4.2	The Illustrated Overall Pattern of <i>SOM</i>	173

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>PJOP</i>	<i>Percy Jackson and the Olympians Pentalogy</i>
<i>SOM</i>	<i>The Sea of Monsters</i>
<i>TO</i>	<i>The Odyssey</i>
YA	Young Adult
YAL	Young Adult Literature

**PEMBACAAN “SEA OF MONSTERS” OLEH RICK RIORDAN DENGAN
MENGUNAKAN TEORI NARATOLOGI OLEH PROPP**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini yang bertujuan mengkaji struktur teks mitologi moden secara sistematik untuk mengetahui sama ada teks tersebut sepadan dengan teks klasik dari segi kompleksiti struktur dan nilai-nilai yang diterapkan. Kepentingan literatur remaja kontemporari (young adult literature-YAL) dalam menyampaikan nilai-nilai dan maklumat kesusasteraan kepada pembaca muda, dan teks-teks tersebut menarik minat golongan muda (young adult-YA) lebih daripada teks klasik mencetuskan kajian ini. Maka, struktur novel remaja “*Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*” (SOM) oleh Riordan (2013) dianalisis berdasarkan teori naratologi oleh Propp (1968/2009) yang disampaikan dalam “*Morphology of the Folktale*”. Fungsi watak dan *move scheme* selari dikenal pasti dan *move scheme* Proppian digabungkan dan mengembang menjadi *move scheme* baharu yang mewakili jenis novel wiraan. Corak keseluruhan SOM berdasarkan fungsi yang dikenal pasti juga direka dalam bentuk carta yang boleh membantu perbandingan dan pengilustrasian novel yang lebih panjang. Lingkungan tindakan watak-watak dalam SOM juga dibandingkan dengan watak-watak “*The Odyssey*” dan menunjukkan bahawa lingkungan tindakan watak-watak tersebut tidak begitu serupa dalam kedua-dua teks. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahawa struktur naratif SOM agak sama dengan struktur naratif Propp. Ini menunjukkan dari segi struktur, teks mitologi moden boleh dianggap sebagai bentuk teks wiraan yang selari tanpa mengira kepanjangan dan kekontemporarian. Persamaan ini juga diperhati dalam nilai dan tema yang wujud dalam jalan cerita. Kebanyakan nilai mitologi klasik didapati wujud dalam teks yang dikaji. Ini

menunjukkan literatur remaja masih mengetengah persamaan dengan teks klasik seperti situasi separa dewa. Manakala nilai lain seperti hospitaliti, walaupun dinyatakan dalam jalan cerita, telah kehilangan kerelevanan dan kepentingan kini. Kajian ini boleh membantu mengilustrasi teks panjang dan membandingkan jalan cerita dan pengajaran kesusasteraan, dan boleh memberi manfaat kepada penyelidik, pengarang literatur remaja, pereka sukatan pelajaran, dan pembaca literatur remaja dalam membuat pilihan dan pengendalian teks dan bahan bacaan. Kajian selanjutnya boleh dijalankan mengenai struktur dan elemen terhadap cerita yang serupa, yang dipermudahkan melalui penggunaan hasil kajian ini.

**READING RICK RIORDAN'S SEA OF MONSTERS USING PROPP'S
THEORY OF NARRATOLOGY**

ABSTRACT

Due to the significance of the contemporary young adult literature (YAL) in conveying values and literary information to young readers, and because such texts appeal to young adults (YA) more than the classics, the present research aims to investigate the structure of modern mythology texts systematically to see whether they match the classics in terms of complexity of structure and conveyed values or not. To this end, the structure of YA novel *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters (SOM)* by Riordan (2013) was analysed based on the theory of narratology of Propp (1968/2009) presented in *Morphology of the Folktale*. The functions of the characters and their corresponding sequence and move schemes were identified and the Proppian move schemes were combined and extended into a new move scheme representing a heroic type of novel. The overall pattern of *SOM* based on the identified functions was also designed in the form of a chart which can facilitate the comparison and illustration of longer novels as well. The sphere of action of the characters in *SOM* was also compared to the characters of *The Odyssey* and showed that they are not quite identical in the two texts. The results of the analysis showed that the narrative structure of *SOM* was very close to Propp's narrative structure, which indicates that structurally, modern mythological texts can be considered as forms of heroic texts regardless of their length and contemporariness and compete the classics. This closeness was also observed in the values and themes that appeared in the story. Many of the classical mythology values were observed in the text at hand, which still resonate for YA due to their similar situation to the demigods;

whereas, some other values, such as hospitality, in spite of being mentioned in the story, have lost their applicability and importance in the modern world. The present study can be helpful in illustration of long texts and comparison of stories and teaching of literature, and can benefit researchers, YAL authors, syllabus designers, and YA readers in their choice and handling of texts and reading materials. There can be further studies on the structure and elements of similar stories, simplified through the use of the results of this study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

For young adult literature, a generation is not thirty years, but four or five. Books that last for several generations do so because of inherent qualities, including well-drawn characters, important themes intelligently explored, and richness of language. But they also survive because they are studied by researchers and used in college and school literature classes.

(Hipple, 1992)

1.1 Introduction

The focus of the present study is on the narrative structure of a contemporary young adult novel named *Sea of Monsters* by Rick Riordan (2013). In this novel he has created a new generation of mythology which is worth scholarly study. The rich language and comprehensive retelling of Greek myths, well developed characters and interesting plot and structure, significant themes, which make the novel rival the classics, have made it one of the best-selling books. The story has been depicted from “*The Odyssey*, which is an important source text for modern literature” (van der Molen, Wildeman, Goei, & Hoo, 2017, p. 99). Riordan (2010) explains about the use of classical mythology in his book series saying that: “I feel like an archaeologist – I’m dusting off these things that people have not seen for thousands of years and bringing them into the modern world”.

The present chapter, due to the significance of mythology and because the text under study is a retelling of Greek myths, starts with the definition of mythology and its role and significance in life and literature.

“Why myths? Why should we care about myths? What do they have to do with my life?” (J. Campbell & Moyers, 2011, p. 13). These are some of the most

recurring questions in the study of myths which Joseph Campbell was asked in his book. He answers these questions by stating that interest in a subject does not happen by just being told that the subject is important. He believes mythology will attract a person when it is properly introduced. He continues that people knew mythology and stories because Greek, Biblical, and Latin literature used to be taught as a part of education. Having the stories in their mind, people can find it relevant to some of the things that happen in their own lives. It widens their vision of the events of life. Thus, it is very important, when one is caught by mythology, the rich, deep and enlivening traditions and information are irresistible. Great stories and novels help people to reconcile with the world and attune their lives with reality.

Mythology teaches you what's behind literature and the arts, it teaches you about your own life. It's a great, exciting life-nourishing subject. Mythology has a great deal to do with the stages of life, the initiation ceremonies as you move from childhood to adult responsibilities... (J. Campbell & Moyers, 2011, p. 26).

It can be said that myths are ubiquitous and are embedded in our lives, because they pop up everywhere from cartoons to the works of Shakespeare. However, many people are unaware of allusions to myth in mythic names and words such as 'Trojan' or 'Nike', or expressions, such as 'Herculean task', 'Achilles heel' or the words 'Morphine', 'Panic', 'Echo', 'Narcissism' and many others, whereas those who do know the stories behind each of these expressions are able to elicit their values to change and expand their view of life.

By knowing these stories, even the words become active and vivid, and make readers contemplate on everything they hear and see around them. If they know the value of these stories, they would know the value of myths. Garza (2011) emphasises the connection between students' lives and their understanding of literature. She

believes they are constantly surrounded by literary and mythological thoughts and beliefs and implications remaining from earlier works.

However, it may be observed from various sources, including dictionaries and the internet, that commonly the meaning of the word myth is opposed to reality and fact, “something that people wrongly believe to be true” (Rundell & Fox, 2002, p. 937), or “something that many people believe but that does not exist or is false” (Hornby, 2010). This understanding indicates that something that once was the basis of validating the truth value of things (Eliade, 1980; Honko, 2014), is now something which cannot be believed and is baseless and unreliable. In brief, the truth value of myths, once considered fact, is currently considered fictitious and untrue (Honko, 2014). The motivation for the present study originates from this contradiction, and the current dismissal of the greatness of myths, as stated by Stephens and McCallum (1998) and also by Hollis (1995, p. 8) who remarks, “even the concept of myth has been degraded to the status of falsehood”.

Myths are stories of gods and godlike heroes. They tell of the beginning of the earth and creation, of life and death, and destruction (Honko, 2014). The word myth is taken from the Greek *mythos* (or *muthos*), meaning “utterance” or “something one says”, and it refers to a traditional story that happened in the past and involves the actions of heroes and divine beings, which are transmitted orally, and therefore, gone through changes in each retelling, leading to the emergence of different versions of most myths (Harris & Platzner, 2012).

Thury and Devinney (2005) argue that many people consider myths as false stories told by primitive man in the absence of a better explanation for the world, while the fact is that, even though generations that follow find better “scientific” explanations for them, mythological narratives are often handed down, without being

updated to the scientific findings of the day, due to their importance to the society of the ancient time. Therefore, they do not always reflect the scientific understanding of the societies that tell them. Regardless of their false or outdated science regarding the formation of the cosmos, they reveal the nature and role of human beings in the world, as well as truths about the culture from which they originated, including values and perspectives that can also be understood by the people of other cultures.

Mythology refers either to the study of myths, or to a body or collection of myths (Bolte & Buxton, 1975; Buxton, 2004). From a folkloristic perspective, a myth can be defined as a sacred narrative usually explaining how the world or humankind came to be in its present form, although, in a very broad sense, mythology can refer to any traditional story.

The first written Greek myth was *The Iliad* (760-710 B.C.) by Homer which was written in a rich and beautiful language, and the second was *The Odyssey* written at the end of 8th century B.C. (Hamilton, 2013; Harris & Platzner, 2012). Classical mythology includes the myths of both the Greeks and Romans; albeit, the Romans derived their myths originally from the Greeks, changed names, and adjusted them to their own culture (Doherty, 2015; Hamilton, 2013; King, 2002). For the purposes of the present study, the terms classical mythology, and Greek myths are generally used interchangeably. On the other hand, the term classic refers to “a work of the highest class, and has also been taken to mean a work suitable for study in school classes” (Baldick, 2001, p. 41); therefore, the classics in the present study refer to such works of art, not pertaining to a particular time and place.

1.2 Background of the Study

Mythology has been the basis and source of inspiration for many authors and poets throughout the ages in literature since myths came into being, even before written literature, existing in oral traditions (Miles, 1999). The motifs, themes, symbols, characters, plots, and many other elements of myth have been utilised in the classics by many great authors like Shakespeare in the form of plays, poets like Blake and Milton in their poems, artists, including Da Vinci and Michelangelo in their paintings and sculpture, and many more in various forms throughout the years, and even in pottery designs of ancient times (Segal, 2004). Moreover, the words in daily usage, such as “panic” and the name of the days of the week and so many things in life today, which most people may be unaware of, originate from myths. “Once you know mythology, you see it everywhere” (Riordan, 2009, p. x). Therefore, understanding myths and having a good knowledge of the origins and stories behind them is of great importance especially in the study of literature. Likewise, Graves (1960) cited in Stephens and McCallum (1998) states it is only in the light of Greek mythology that sixteenth to nineteenth century English literature can be properly understood.

Reading mythology is like taking an exciting journey to a mysterious world of gods, heroes, monsters, mysterious places and amazing adventures. Beside its story value, myth can enrich a reader’s understanding of literary works throughout the ages, and take them to a living tradition. The implication is that myth does not only belong to the past, since the same or similar themes and characters used in original myths are still used in today’s culture and literature. Even in the mass media, traces of motifs and characters that belong to the ancient stories can be found (Thury & Devinney, 2005). In this way, authors retrieve benefits and values from classical

mythology as rich sources for contemporary literature and the studies pertaining to such texts come under the domain of intertextuality (Genette, 1982; Lodge, 2012).

Pioneers of intertextuality are Bakhtin as the originator of the idea affecting Saussure and then Julia Kristeva, who was influenced by both Bakhtinian and Saussurean models and theories, created the term intertextuality. Intertextuality, known as a stylistic device (Genette, 1982; Ott & Walter, 2000), refers to the use of words, plots, images, aspects of character, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences taken “from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition” (Allen, 2011, p. 11) in other literary works. This makes the literary author work with two systems, one of “language in general and of the literary system in particular” (Allen, 2011, p. 11). According to the advocates of intertextuality, all literary texts “are woven from the tissues of other texts whether their authors know it or not” (Lodge, 2012, pp. 98-99). Lodge (2012) continues, intertextuality “is entwined in the roots of the English novel ... freely recycling old myths and earlier works of literature to shape, or add resonance to, their presentation of contemporary life” (Lodge, 2012, p. 99). Intertextuality includes revision, translation, allusion, plagiarism, quotation, pastiche, parody etc. (Miola, 2004). Retelling, therefore, which is the concern of the present study, is a kind in the broader domain of intertextuality which utilises revision, allusion, quotation and on the whole the source text (such as *The Odyssey*) as the backbone of the new text (in this study *Sea of Monsters*). Moreover, it cannot be ignored that intertextuality is itself a stylistic device used to study the relationship between two texts when one is influenced by another one or simply to study the text itself.

The importance of classical studies, which may be observed abundantly in the form of retold myths in modern and contemporary literature, has been emphasised by

many scholars for a long time. Hollis (1995, p. 17) mentions the “renewed interest in myth”. Workman (1981, p. 35) states that “figures of mythology continue to parade through the pages of modern literature and film with a vitality which belies their age”. Correia (1982) refers to literature of both antiquity and modern literature, in saying that literature “endlessly redistributes myths” (p.7). Frye (1968) like T. S. Eliot (1888 - 1965) believed that “literature constitutes a universal order, a complete world” (p. 69), by stating that “All themes and characters and stories that you encounter in literature belong to one big interlocking family” (p. 48). In this regard, Guillén and Franzen (1993, p. 238) declare the “persistence of ancient myths” to be the integrating principle.

The importance of the connection of myth to literature is applicable to the genre of Young Adult Literature, or “Juvenile” Literature. Commonly abbreviated as YAL, this is a recently established literary genre referring to the literature written specifically for adolescents in the age range of 12-18 years (Govindarajoo & Mukundan, 2013; Nilsen & Donelson, 2009). However, there is no fixed or definite age range assigned to the “young adult” (YA), as it fluctuates, the widest range being between the ages of 11-22. Due to the highest consensus by most scholars, in the present research, therefore, YA refers to adolescents ageing from 12 to 18.

In YAL, the retelling of myths is a popular form of storytelling. However, the difference is that figures of mythology (gods, heroes, and monsters) are appropriated to create a contemporary mythology. They are contemporary in that they address social issues currently faced by YA in adolescence. In some works the same or similar names are used, whereas in others identification is left to the reader and critic. According to Joosen (2005), such retellings of fairy tales and myths raise the awareness of the children and adolescents, who make the connections with the

original tale, toward the issues and possible interpretations of these texts which they had not noticed before. This experience leads to greater understanding and alertness in their future confrontations with similar stories. Joosen (2005) elucidates the dual function of such an “intertextual connection” (p. 135) in saying that the children’s knowledge of the original story may influence their understanding of the retold story; on the other hand, the retold form invites them to recall and reflect on their earlier readings of the traditional tale and the popular fairy tales.

Emphasising the role of retold myths, Hollis (1995) states that studying myth is an attempt to find out what connects man most deeply with his nature and his place in the universe, or his identity. Based on the psychological classifications of Erikson (1968) cited in Sokol (2009), identity formation which is considered as “the focal point of adolescence” (p. 141) forms one of the most recurrent themes in contemporary YA retold myths. By emphasising the values in myths, for modern society in general and YA in particular, the problems and concerns of YA life can be viewed and dealt differently. The relevance of such works to the problems and concerns in their lives is the basic reason for the interest of YA in reading these stories (Govindarajoo & Mukundan, 2013; Nilsen & Donelson, 2009; Rybakova, Piotrowski, & Harper, 2013). According to P. Campbell (2010) coming of age and shaping an adult identity is the theme of all YA books regardless of the topic, genre and classification they belong to. Besides, Murphy and McDonald (2015, p. 55) “believe that ethics are more effectively expressed in literature when myth is also present”.

To sum up, there is a strong link between myth and YAL that could be harnessed for creating YA interest in the appreciation of literature. According to Santoli and Wagner (2004, p. 65), YAL “can better prepare students for the

appreciation and understanding of classic literature". By realising the value and function of myth, it can be argued that retold myths can familiarise YA with the original myths and motivate them to read the classics, on the one hand, to know the characters and the original stories and adventures better, and on the other, to better understand, appreciate and enjoy literature (Leighton, 2014).

Among the wealth of YAL are novels regarding myths, which utilise mythic stories in a certain way. A specific example is Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* Pentalogy (*PJOP*), written between years 2005-2009. The novels which constitute this pentalogy have consistently been best-sellers over several years (2005-2010). This Pentalogy, which has been selected for the present study, is based on Greek myths and the author greatly relies on the original myths in preparing his updates on classical mythology. Riordan explains in an interview:

I go back and research, say, every reference to the Gorgons, and I find what the classical writers said about them and it's so much richer than you might get in an average Greek mythology text," he said. "I feel like an archaeologist – I'm dusting off these things that people have not seen for thousands of years and bringing them into the modern world. (Riordan, 2010)

Riordan has retold almost all stories and adventures of Greek myths in this pentalogy and put them in a contemporary setting and context that reflects the life of YA, by extensively using a lot of themes, plots and characters from the classics to make a connection between myths and today's society and their relationship and impact on YA. Therefore, in the present study, the structure of the second volume of the pentalogy, *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters* (*SOM*), as well as its embedded themes and values will be studied to find out the complexity level of its structure and see how the pentalogy can convey the values through the narrative structure.

As mentioned earlier, Riordan sees himself as an archeologist bringing antiquity to modernity; in other words he is recovering myths by retelling them and by highlighting the benefits which can be achieved from them. Antiquity refers to the classical myths, in this research *The Odyssey (TO)*, which are fading in the appreciation (Stephens & McCallum, 1998) and teaching of literature despite their importance and impact on contemporary literature which is referred to in the context of modernity in the present study as *PJOP* or *SOM*.

The values that can be recovered by retelling classical myths involve authentication of truth. Based on allegorical approach, myth in the past was equal to fact or anything that could be accepted as truth (Hansen, 2004). Therefore, myth was authentication of truth, also referred to as logos or a centre that gave meaning to human life. On the contrary, in modern society and based on rationalism (Hansen, 2004), myth is attributed to “something that is generally accepted but untrue” (Curcio, 2011, p. 13). In the context of such contrasting and contradictory perspectives between antiquity and modernity, one may consider myth as the point of departure and return. Thus, the general view of this study as the point of departure is in the sense that it is the source of reference, values and truths, and one of return in that it seeks to restore the myths of antiquity to their former position of centrality and grandeur. Therefore, the problem of the lost grandeur and value of mythology is tried to be minimised by emphasising the values and themes embedded in the conflicts and actions of the characters.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

A literary work, including YAL, to be considered a classic has to stand the test of time, i.e. it has to be read by readers of generations beyond its time of writing

(Hipple, 1992). However, contemporary literature, due to being recent, cannot be tested through this criterion. In this regard, as cited earlier, Hipple (1992) believes one of the things that can help the survival of the books is scholarly study while such studies are scarce. Using an objective method of evaluation as a touchstone for testing YA texts can be helpful to find out whether they match the classics or not.

The fact that myths convey information about different cultures cannot be denied. This is also emphasised by Kerr (1995) who believes the practices, concerns and values of any culture are understood and learned better by studying the myths of that society. While adults have the opportunity to read the original texts or direct translations of myths, YA and children mostly read the retold versions or simplified adaptations of those myths. The problem lies in the fact that sometimes the distorted versions of myths formed by adults' personal perception of the values are not basically what the original tellers intended. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how the modern versions convey the values of the original texts while producing their modern versions for YA to preserve the main content and values of the myths (Kerr, 1995). Therefore, there is a need to examine the degree of change between original and depicted characters, plots, themes and values. In the new trend of writing novels for YA and using mythology as source of allusion, the level of adherence to source texts needs consideration. A systematic study of such texts with intertextual features, therefore, may reveal the similarity of the two texts in terms of both values to be conveyed and complexity of structure and plot. Ignoring the significance of such YAL texts widens the gap between YA and classical mythology and consequently the classics.

The present study is an attempt to estimate the complexity of the text of *SOM* based on structure, characters and themes and values to be conveyed, to see whether

this novel matches the classic literature. Since stylistics is the systematic study of form and linguistic features in literary texts, this approach helps in systematising the literary analysis of the text based on the framework proposed by Propp to minimize the subjectivity of the study and to make it applicable by all. Lack of a systematic study to test the complexity of texts which are under the influence of another text (intertextuality) makes it difficult for researchers to decide on the value of such texts (YAL) compared to classic literature.

It is needed to highlight that by narrative structure it is meant the functions performed by the characters, character types and the sphere of action of those characters each performing a particular group of functions (Finlayson, 2012; Simpson, 2004; Sveinsdóttir, 2015). Identifying the afore-mentioned items in a story will give enough information to the researcher to determine the sequence of functions, the overall pattern and the conflicts in a story which contain the themes and values intended to be grasped by the readers. By understanding the narrative structure of a story the readers can realise what mythical concepts are echoed by each function in the story and what type of actions are related to each character type.

Therefore, to address the above mentioned problems, the present research attempts to analyse the narrative structure of *The Sea of Monsters* by Riordan (2013), with reference to *The Odyssey*, to determine the functions and sphere of action of the characters and common values of the story based on Propp's theory of narratology (1968) and to highlight the role of modern mythological texts on conveying the values of classical mythology to young readers. Doing a detailed analysis of the narrative structure of the story at hand will facilitate the comparison of the stories to decide whether the text is adequate in terms of complexity of structure and delivery of themes and values to the new generations.

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the discussion in the statement of the problem (section 1.3) the following objectives will be pursued:

1. To identify Propp's narrative functions in *The Sea of Monsters*.
2. Based on the identified functions in *The Sea of Monsters*:
 - a) To examine the sequence of functions in *The Sea of Monsters*.
 - b) To explain move schemes observed in *The Sea of Monsters*.
 - c) To illustrate the overall pattern of *The Sea of Monsters*.
3. To describe the sphere of action of the main characters in *The Sea of Monsters* in relation to *The Odyssey*.
4. To explain the themes and values in relation to the episodes and functions in *The Sea of Monsters*.

1.5 Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What narrative functions can be identified in *The Sea of Monsters* according to the narratology of Propp (1968)?
2. Based on the identified functions in *The Sea of Monsters*:
 - a) What is the sequence of functions in *The Sea of Monsters*?
 - b) What move schemes can be observed in *The Sea of Monsters*?
 - c) How can the overall pattern of *The Sea of Monsters* be illustrated?
3. How can the sphere of action of the main characters in *The Sea of Monsters* be described in relation to *The Odyssey*?
4. How can themes and values be explained in relation to the episodes and functions in *The Sea of Monsters*?

1.6 Significance of the Study

By recounting the effect of literature in different aspects, stated by various scholars and researchers, this section tries to emphasise the significance and vitality of reading literature and mythology with the help of their narrative structure. The study of the narrative structure of the texts facilitates comparison of the stories with the texts they originate from, and provides an instrument to test the level of complexity of the texts to determine their literary value and closeness to the classics.

By choosing and introducing appropriate literary texts, instructors can provide authentic texts for EFL/ESL learners, and increase language learners' motivation, (Ghosn, 2002 & Shrestha, 2008 as cited in Khatib, Rezaei, & Derakhshan, 2011), and according to Maley's study in 1989 (as cited in Khatib, Derakhshan, & Rezaei, 2011) literature can open its readers' view of the world through universal issues such as nature, death, love, hatred, and so on, and help in flourishing learners' competence. These concepts and values can be observed in the discussion of themes and values extracted from the text *SOM* and also the comparison of the characters.

Propp (1968/2009) in his *Morphology of the Folktale* deals with short Russian fairy tales and states that the same method can be applied to the fairy tales of other cultures and countries as well. He also mentions myths as the basis of fairy tales and it is suggested that myths can also be analysed through the same method. However, the present study which considers retold version of myths is an attempt to investigate the applicability of this method on modern versions of myth in novels which are different and more complicated due to being longer than fairy tales. The study aims to test the text of *SOM* based on Propp's framework to determine the complexity of the text compared to the classics.

The applicability of universal and timeless values of myths to today's literature may aid researchers, authors, academicians and those dealing with YA in selecting proper YAL texts with similar values and level of complexity of plot and structure to the classics. The result of this study can also motivate Iranian novelists and authors who write for YA to write stories based on Persian mythology and heroes to make YA familiar with the values and morals that exist in Persian mythology.

Emphasising the grandeur and value of myths and attempting to return the declining position of myths in contemporary literature is another significance of this study. Considering the difference between traditional and modern views, worldviews and lifestyles, the treatment of values and character roles in ancient mythology versus contemporary literature would allow the study to define the nature and extent of change between the source, i.e. *The Odyssey*, and its contemporary derivation, *The Sea of Monsters*.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The present study will focus on narrative structure including plot, character types and themes and values embedded in their conflicts, in *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters* (2013) from Rick Riordan's *PJOP*. The justification for this selection is as follows: first, as mentioned earlier, *PJOP* is chosen over other YAL because it represents a great number of myths in a way that appeals to YA. Second, although myths occur in all five works of *PJOP*, only *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters* representing the myth of Homer's *The Odyssey* (Noorvitasari, 2015) is selected because *TO* is widely considered as embodying Greek myths and hence, representing a wide variety of mythic literature. Finally, the literary elements of plot,

characters, themes and values that form the focus of analysis are the concern of the present study because only these elements are dealt with in the narratology of Propp (1968/2009). The other literary elements, just to mention, are setting and point of view, and in *PJOP* setting is contemporary setting of America and point of view is first person narrator. The elements which are dealt with provide the variety and type required for in-depth analysis.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Any kind of systematic and objective study in literature is related to stylistics having intertextuality as one of its sub-branches and classifications. However, this study does not aim to investigate the discipline of stylistics or intertextuality due to the scope of the study explained in 1.7 and the limitations of the study. However, the text selected, *SOM*, has intertextual connection with the classical mythology, *TO*. With regard to limitations, the present study is limited firstly to only Greek myths in Homer's *TO* that are found in Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*, (Noorvitasari, 2015) because most of his novels have a similar selection of mythic elements. Furthermore, only plot, characters, themes and values are selected from the pentalogy since the theory of narratology selected for achieving the aim of this study considers these elements for textual analysis, and the other elements do not help the researcher in achieving this aim.

1.9 Definition of Important Terms

In this section the definition of the key terms used in the current study is given for more clarification and they will be discussed more precisely in the next

chapters. Some terms are defined differently by Propp (1968/2009) which are provided below.

Myth: Myth is defined as a kind of story, about gods and goddesses, heroes, monsters and other supernatural creatures, transmitted orally before being written. Due to the wide range of meanings, it is usually divided into 'rationalist' and 'romantic' versions: "in the first, a myth is a false or unreliable story or belief (*adjective: mythical*), while in the second, 'myth' is a superior intuitive mode of cosmic understanding (*adjective: mythic*) (Baldick, 2008, p. 217)". In literary contexts, "myths are regarded as fictional stories containing deeper truths, expressing collective attitudes to fundamental matters of life, death, divinity, and existence (sometimes deemed to be 'universal')" (Baldick, 2008, pp. 217, 218).

Mythology: "A mythology is a body of related myths shared by members of a given people or religion, ... the term has sometimes also been used to denote the study of myths" (Baldick, 2008, p. 218). In the present study both meanings are being used and also modern mythology refers to the retold versions of classical mythology, particularly Greek mythology.

Folktale: "The folktale, strictly defined, is a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally; many of these tales eventually achieve written form" (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p. 136).

Fairy Tale: "The Fairy tale is a widespread form of fiction for children" (Cuddon, 2013, p. 120). It is also said that fairy tales are written form of folk tales. Propp (1968/2009) studied Russian fairy tales and proved that all fairy tales share the same rudimentary structures.

Young Adult (YA): The study adopts the range of the term Young Adult specified by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) which is a division of the American Library Association, as pertaining to teens, aged 12-18.

Young Adult Literature (YAL): Also assigned other names such as Literature for Adolescence, Adolescent Fiction, and Teen Novels, refers to the recently established genre defined as literature that is written for, published and marketed to young adults (YALSA, 2011).

Intertextuality: When one text and its meaning is influenced by another text through use of allusion, quotation, translation, etc., like retelling a traditional story in a new form, there is an intertextual connection between the two texts. This sophisticated literary device is called intertextuality. Authors not only select words, phrases and sentences from another literary work, but also use structures, characters, themes and other elements to create their new text (Allen, 2011).

Narrative Structure: It refers to the systematic study of a narrative text to elicit the values which are embedded in its actions, characters and conflicts (Fisher 1987). In the present study, narrative structure refers to plot (31 functions of *dramatis personae*) and character types (*dramatis personae*) functioning in seven spheres of action defined by Propp (1968/2009). He maintained that these functions keep recurring in all fairy tales and heroic types of story.

Dramatis Personae: “The characters in a play” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 235). In Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) *dramatis personae* or character types include villain, donor (provider), helper, princess (a sought-for person) and her father, dispatcher, hero, false hero (Propp, 1968/2009).

Sphere of Action of Dramatis Personae: The narrative functions in a tale are distributed among characters. The group of functions that combine logically and

form spheres, each correspond to their respective performers which are called spheres of action. Propp (1968/2009) identifies seven spheres of actions for the seven types of character in his classification. They refer to certain groups of functions performed by each character type that determine their roles in the story. Some of these functions can be shared among some character types, but most of them are specific to certain types of character. “[M]any functions logically join together into certain *spheres*. These spheres in toto correspond to their respective performers. They are spheres of action” (Propp, 1968/2009, p. 79) .

Character “is a person portrayed in a narrative or dramatic work” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 116). In this study this word is used interchangeably with *dramatis personae*.

Function: “In structuralist literary theory, one meaning of function is “an action contributing towards the development of a narrative.”... ‘function’ is used in narratology, denoting a fundamental component of a tale: an action performed by a character that is significant in the unfolding of the story. Vladimir Propp, in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), described 31 such narrative functions in Russian fairy tales, claiming that their order of appearance is invariable, although not every function will appear in one tale. Thus the 11th function (‘the hero leaves home’) necessarily precedes the 18th (‘the villain is defeated’) and the 20th (‘the hero returns’)” (Baldick, 2008, pp. 136, 137). Sequence of functions denotes plot in folktales and myths and texts of the like.

Plot, “the pattern of events and situations in a narrative or dramatic work, as selected and arranged both to emphasise relationships—usually of cause and effect—between incidents and to elicit a particular kind of interest in the reader or audience, such as surprise or suspense.... (according to Aristotle) a plot should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and that its events should form a coherent whole.

Plots vary in form from the fully integrated or 'tightly knit' to the loosely episodic. In general, though, most plots will trace some process of change in which characters are caught up in a developing conflict that is finally resolved" (Baldick, 2001, pp. 195-196).

Theme is "a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter; or a topic recurring in a number of literary works. While the subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action (e.g. 'the adventures of a newcomer in the big city') its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms (e.g. love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate, etc.). The theme of a work may be announced explicitly, but more often it emerges indirectly through the recurrence of motifs. *Adjective: thematic*" (Baldick, 2001, p. 258).

Values are principles and standards of behaviour in the form of moral and social values presented in a literary text. In the present study the values are elicited mostly from the struggles among the characters.

Motif, "a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type that is found in many different literary works, folktales, or myths; or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme" (Baldick, 2001, p. 162).

Protagonist: "the chief character in a play or story, who may also be opposed by an antagonist. Originally, in ancient Greek theatre, the protagonist was the principal actor in a drama" (Baldick, 2001, p. 207).

Hero or heroine: "the main character in a narrative or dramatic work.... When our expectations of heroic qualities are strikingly disappointed, the central character may be known as an anti-hero or anti-heroine" (Baldick, 2008, p. 152).

The hero of a fairy tale is that character who either directly suffers from the action of the villain in the complication (the one who senses some kind of lack), or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or lack of another person. In the course of the action the hero is the person

who is supplied with a magical agent (a magical helper), and who makes use of it or is served by it (Propp, 1968/2009, p. 50).

Villain: “The wicked character in a story, and, in an important and special sense, the evil machinator or plotter in a play” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 762). In the present study the villain acts in a certain sphere of action and each act of villainy starts a new episode.

Move: A combination of narrative functions forming episodes in a story that start with a new villainous act or a lack and end in a terminal function including marriage, liquidation of a misfortune, escape etc. A tale can be made up of either one move or a combination of several moves. (Propp, 1968/2009)

1.10 Organisation of the Study

The present study comprises a total of five chapters, divided as follows. Chapter One, which is the present chapter, constitutes the introduction of the thesis, background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, the research questions, significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, a brief definition of the operational terms of the study followed by the organisation of the study.

Chapter Two presents the review of the previous academic and scholarly studies, and old and modern theories and views of myth, significance of YAL, *PJOP* and the author of the pentalogy, the importance of literature and the pros and cons of each item and their functions, and the theoretical framework of the present study.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology selected and the theories applied, to analyse *SOM* to achieve the objectives of the study, and also the means of comparison and method of analysis of the elements.

Chapter Four will present a summary of the novel at hand and the necessary terms and introduction of the characters followed by the analysis of the narrative structure of *SOM* to identify the functions of the characters and a summary of the analysis presented in the form of table. It also contains the main findings of the study.

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, consists of the discussion of the findings through which the research questions of the study are answered. The discussion includes the identified functions and their sequence and combinations to form the story as well as the themes and values elicited from the analysis of the structure and conflicts in the story. It also presents the principal findings and implications, as well as suggesting directions for future research.

1.11 Conclusion

The preceding discussion illustrates the role and importance of reading literature and mythology particularly for YA as well as the general perceptions and the devalued status of myth. Therefore, the present research attempts to analyse the narrative structure of *The Sea of Monsters* by Riordan (2013), with reference to *The Odyssey*, to determine the functions of the story based on Propp's theory of narratology (1968) and to highlight the values conveyed through a modern version of mythology. In the next chapter the discussions about mythology, the relevant literature and the areas related to it and YAL as well as the theoretical framework of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In the present study, a combination of antiquity and modernity is utilised. Antiquity literature refers to the classical myths and also the elements and concepts which are repeated and retold by great poets and authors in the classics. Modernity on the other hand, includes contemporary literature, especially YAL in which the same elements and concepts are utilised but presented in a new way. For this reason the present chapter will be divided into two main sections of antiquity and modernity. This chapter reviews the past studies on myth and folktales as well as contemporary concern of literature about young adult literature and the way myths are presented in contemporary literature, and the past studies in these areas as well as the values which are going to be emphasised through the present study, and at last the theoretical framework of the study will be introduced and illustrated for more clarification.

2.2 Section One: Antiquity (Mythology)

Classical antiquity in the Mediterranean region dates back to the eighth century B.C., around the time of Homer. Although classical mythology basically refers to Greek myths, and Roman myths are the modified versions of Greek myths, Romans' contribution to the field cannot be neglected. For instance the Roman poet, Ovid collected more than two hundred Greco-Roman tales about transformation of shape of gods and heroes in a handbook called *Metamorphoses* in the year 8 A.D. (Harris & Platzner, 2012; Powell, 2007).

Harris and Platzner (2012, pp. 31-32) described Homer's Iliad and Odyssey as a "possession of all the Greek peoples", that "crystallized ancient oral tradition that helped give the politically fragmented Greeks their collective identity". Davis (2013) believes that one of the most important functions of creation myths and mythology is identity creation and identity reinforcement. He explains an example of identity-generating myths can be those myths used by rulers and kings in many cultures to obtain legitimacy by defining family ties to mythical ancestors. Patterson (2010) who fully studied ancient Greece kinship myths gives detailed explanation of them. He mentions politicians, statesmen and kings among more literate Greeks who used, or even created, kinship myths, being aware of the fictiveness of myths but knowing its efficacy in their negotiations. The reason why Greek myth is known as classical source and inspiration of the West's creativity is that it is retained in works of literature such as epics, lyric poetry, and dramas as their models of artistic achievement (Harris & Platzner, 2012). The use and retelling of myths and the strong ties between myth and literature has been affirmed by many scholars such as Segal (2004) who mentions the use of myth in literary works as one of the most prominent forms of this relationship. He contends that:

A standard theme in literature courses has been the tracing of classical figures, events, and themes in Western literature thereafter – beginning with the Church Fathers, who utilized classical mythology even while warring on paganism, and proceeding through Petrarch, Boccaccio, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Byron, Keats, and Shelley, and then down to Joyce, Eliot, Gide, Cocteau, Anouilh, and Eugene O'Neill. (Segal, 2004, p. 79)

Myths originated from the stories told by anonymous storytellers about gods and heroes, and were handed down orally to other generations before being written. The first written Greek myth was The Iliad by Homer around the eighth century B.C., which was written in a rich and beautiful language (Hamilton, 1998; Harris &