

THE REPRESENTATION OF TRUST VALUES IN RICK RIORDAN'S *THE SEA OF MONSTERS*

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Abstract

Trust is a fundamental value that shapes human interactions and relationships, providing the foundation for cooperation, loyalty, and moral responsibility. This study analyzes the representation of trust values in Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Sea of Monsters* (2006), focusing on three dimensions identified by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995): ability, kindness, and integrity. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research examines how these values are embedded in the characters' relationships, particularly between Percy Jackson and Tyson. Primary data were collected through close reading of the novel, while secondary data were drawn from relevant scholarly literature on trust, psychology, and young adult fiction. The findings reveal that trust through ability is demonstrated by Tyson's physical strength and Annabeth's intelligence, which establish credibility and reliability. Trust through kindness is represented in Tyson's loyalty and sacrifice, which transform prejudice into acceptance and deepen emotional bonds. Finally, trust through integrity distinguishes loyal characters such as Tyson and Annabeth from betrayers like Luke, highlighting the fragility of moral consistency. These representations show that trust in young adult literature serves narrative and pedagogical functions, encouraging readers to reflect on empathy, inclusivity, and ethical responsibility. The study concludes that Riordan's novel not only entertains but also provides moral education, reinforcing the importance of trust as a transformative value in both literature and life.

Keywords: *ability; integrity; kindness; trust; young adult literature*

1. Introduction

Trust is a fundamental value in human relationships, shaping the way individuals interact, collaborate, and sustain meaningful connections. In both real life and literary works, trust provides a foundation for cooperation, loyalty, and mutual respect. Literature, as a mirror of human experience, often represents the challenges and complexities of building and maintaining trust in personal, social, and even political contexts. Among the many contemporary works of young adult fiction, Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Sea of Monsters* (2006) is particularly significant because it integrates mythological adventures with profound human values such as courage, friendship, and trust.

Rick Riordan, one of the most influential writers of modern children's and young adult fantasy literature, has captivated global readers by blending classical Greek mythology with contemporary teenage struggles. His works, which include the *Percy Jackson* series, *The Heroes of Olympus*, and *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard*, not only provide entertainment but also function as educational narratives that explore universal values. In *The Sea of Monsters*, the second installment of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, the concept of trust emerges as a central theme. The novel narrates the journey of Percy Jackson and his companions as they embark on a dangerous quest to save Camp Half-Blood. Throughout their struggles, the characters—particularly Percy and Tyson—face moments of doubt, betrayal, forgiveness, and loyalty, all of which highlight the importance of trust as a moral and psychological foundation.

The significance of studying trust in literature lies in its capacity to humanize characters and resonate with readers' lived experiences. Trust, as Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) argue, is shaped by three essential factors: ability, kindness, and integrity. These dimensions are not only relevant in organizational studies but also apply to interpersonal relationships in fiction. In Riordan's novel, trust is tested in various forms: Percy's reluctance to accept Tyson as a brother, Annabeth's skepticism towards Cyclopes, Grover's reliance on Percy, and the betrayal of Luke, who shifts allegiance to Kronos. Each of these interactions illustrates how trust can be earned, broken, and repaired, reflecting broader questions about human nature and ethical responsibility.

Moreover, the relevance of this topic extends beyond literary criticism into the domains of psychology and education. Trust is vital in adolescent development, where friendships, family bonds, and social inclusion play a formative role in shaping identity (Moordiningsih, 2015). Young adult readers, who are the primary audience of Riordan's novels, encounter similar dilemmas of loyalty, prejudice, and acceptance in their own social lives. By analyzing how trust is represented in *The Sea of Monsters*, this study provides insights into the moral lessons embedded in literature and their implications for character education.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the role of literature in shaping trust, moral development, and social capital among young readers. For instance, Sandström (2025) demonstrates how young adult sports fiction provides narratives of mentorship that foster moral integrity and trust. Similarly, Lindo (2024) shows how participation in young adult book clubs helps adolescents—particularly marginalized groups—develop mutual trust and cultural understanding through shared reading experiences. Beyond literary settings, studies on youth education also highlight the importance of trust and values in building social capital (Ibrahim & Azizan, 2025), civic engagement (Genova & Tazzara, 2024), and resilience in school environments (Harte, 2023). These recent contributions confirm that trust is not only a psychological construct but also a cultural and educational force, underscoring the significance of analyzing its representation in Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters*.

Another reason this study is relevant is the cultural impact of Riordan's work. The adaptation of *The Sea of Monsters* into a Hollywood film in 2013 expanded its audience and highlighted the growing importance of fantasy literature in popular culture. The popularity of the Percy Jackson franchise shows that stories rooted in ancient mythology can still address modern social and moral issues. Trust, as one of those issues, is increasingly important in today's globalized world, where intercultural

communication, teamwork, and digital interactions depend heavily on credibility and reliability (Yousafzai, Pallister, & Foxall, 2003).

Thus, this article aims to analyze how trust values are represented in Rick Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters* by focusing on three major factors: ability, kindness, and integrity. The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the forms of trust values depicted in the novel.
2. To analyze how these trust values are reflected in the relationships between the characters, especially in the friendship between Percy and Tyson.

The scope of the research is limited to textual analysis of Riordan's novel, supported by theoretical frameworks on trust and selected studies from psychology, literature, and cultural studies. This research contributes to both literary scholarship and interdisciplinary discussions about values in young adult fiction, highlighting how narratives can cultivate moral reflection and empathy among readers.

By situating the analysis of trust within Riordan's novel, this study underscores the inseparability of literature and life: just as Percy learns to trust Tyson, readers are reminded of the essential role of trust in building inclusive, ethical, and resilient communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Trust in Human Relationships

Trust is widely regarded as one of the most essential components of interpersonal and social relationships. Yousafzai, Pallister, and Foxall (2003) argue that trust is a foundational principle for cooperation, whether in personal interactions or organizational contexts. In psychology, trust is often defined as a willingness to rely on another party under conditions of vulnerability and uncertainty (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trust involves not only confidence in another's reliability but also belief in their moral intentions and ethical conduct.

Moordiningsih (2015) emphasizes that trust is not merely an individual construct but rather a relational one, emerging through continuous interactions and mutual experiences. Trust develops in familial settings, is reinforced in friendships, and expands into community life, contributing to both individual well-being and collective harmony. This perspective is consistent with broader sociological research, which frames trust as a cornerstone of social capital (Ibrahim & Azizan, 2025). In both real and fictional contexts, trust operates as a cultural and emotional resource that enables collaboration, resilience, and identity formation.

2.2 Factors of Trust: Ability, Kindness, and Integrity

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) integrative model identifies three key dimensions of trust: ability, kindness (benevolence), and integrity. Ability refers to competence, skills, and knowledge that make an individual reliable in task performance. Benevolence concerns the extent to which a trustee is perceived to have genuine goodwill toward the trustor, while integrity relates to adherence to moral principles, honesty, and consistency between words and actions.

These three factors are crucial not only in organizational and interpersonal psychology but also in literature, where characters' trustworthiness often determines the dynamics of relationships. In *The Sea of Monsters*, for example, Percy's trust in Tyson is initially questioned due to Tyson's clumsiness and Cyclopean identity but gradually affirmed

through Tyson's demonstrated ability, acts of kindness, and moral integrity. This transformation illustrates the literary embodiment of Mayer et al.'s theoretical framework.

Recent studies have expanded on these concepts in youth and literary contexts. Sandström (2025) highlights how young adult sports fiction presents mentors who either affirm or undermine trust through their moral integrity, thereby shaping adolescents' ethical development. Similarly, Harte (2023) notes that in educational contexts, students' trust in teachers emerges not only from ability but also from fairness and moral consistency, echoing the integrity dimension. These findings strengthen the applicability of Mayer et al.'s model beyond psychology into narrative studies of young adult literature.

2.3 Trust in Young Adult Literature

Young adult literature (YAL) often engages directly with themes of trust, betrayal, and reconciliation as adolescents navigate identity, belonging, and moral development. According to Lindo (2024), participation in young adult book clubs allows marginalized students, particularly Asian American and Pacific Islander girls, to build trust and self-confidence through shared literary experiences. This demonstrates that YAL is not only a site of storytelling but also a medium of social and cultural trust-building.

Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters* is a prime example of how trust values are embedded in narrative form. Characters such as Percy, Tyson, Annabeth, and Luke embody different trust dynamics: from the betrayal of Luke to the loyalty of Tyson, the novel dramatizes how trust can be gained, broken, and restored. This aligns with earlier research that emphasizes the role of literature in promoting moral education (Hakim, Thontowi, Yuniarti, & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, contemporary scholarship on youth activism suggests that trust values in fiction can encourage real-life civic engagement and ethical participation among young readers (Genova & Tazzara, 2024).

2.4 Trust as Social Capital and Moral Education

Trust in literature is also inseparable from its role in cultivating social capital and moral education. As Ibrahim and Azizan (2025) argue, trust functions as a bridge that connects family, school, and community, contributing to the educational success of young people. This insight reinforces the pedagogical potential of young adult novels like Riordan's, which not only entertain but also model the social dynamics of trust.

In educational psychology, trust is linked to resilience, emotional intelligence, and well-being (Harte, 2023). For adolescent readers, encountering narratives where characters navigate issues of prejudice, loyalty, and reconciliation provides opportunities for reflection on their own social relationships. Riordan's portrayal of Percy's eventual acceptance of Tyson as his brother offers a powerful allegory for overcoming stereotypes and building inclusive friendships.

Taken together, earlier theories (Mayer et al., 1995; Yousafzai et al., 2003; Moordiningsih, 2015) and recent research (Sandström, 2025; Lindo, 2024; Ibrahim & Azizan, 2025; Harte, 2023; Genova & Tazzara, 2024) demonstrate that trust is both a psychological dimension and a cultural phenomenon with broad implications. In the context of young adult literature, trust values such as ability, kindness, and integrity are not only narrative devices but also moral lessons for readers. By analyzing how these values are represented in *The Sea of Monsters*, this study contributes to an

interdisciplinary understanding of literature as a site for cultivating empathy, resilience, and ethical responsibility.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design, which is widely used in literary analysis to interpret and explain the meanings embedded in texts. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), qualitative research is an inquiry process that explores social or human problems based on distinct methodological traditions. In the context of literature, this involves interpreting the text not only for its aesthetic qualities but also for its moral and social dimensions.

Descriptive qualitative research was chosen because it enables the researcher to describe and interpret the representation of trust values—ability, kindness, and integrity—as reflected in the characters of Rick Riordan’s *The Sea of Monsters*. Sukmadinata (2006) notes that descriptive research seeks to portray phenomena systematically, factually, and accurately. Thus, rather than quantifying data, the study seeks to uncover the richness of narrative elements that illustrate the dynamics of trust among the characters.

3.2 Data Source

The primary data source of this research is Rick Riordan’s novel *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Sea of Monsters* (2006). Passages, dialogues, and narrative descriptions were selected as textual evidence to illustrate how trust values are represented. The choice of this novel is justified by its wide readership among adolescents and its emphasis on themes of friendship, loyalty, and trust.

Secondary data were drawn from scholarly works on trust, values, and young adult literature. These include classical theories such as Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman’s (1995) integrative model of organizational trust, Yousafzai, Pallister, and Foxall’s (2003) perspectives on strategies of trust-building, and Moordiningsih’s (2015) psychological insights into relational trust. To strengthen the contemporary relevance of the study, recent works on moral development and trust in young adult literature and education (Sandström, 2025; Lindo, 2024; Ibrahim & Azizan, 2025; Harte, 2023; Genova & Tazzara, 2024) were also integrated.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through close reading and textual analysis of the novel. The process consisted of several steps:

1. Identification: Carefully reading the novel to identify passages where trust values are explicitly or implicitly demonstrated.
2. Classification: Organizing textual evidence into three categories based on Mayer et al.’s (1995) framework—ability, kindness, and integrity.
3. Theoretical Mapping: Relating textual evidence to the theoretical perspectives on trust from both classical and contemporary scholarship.
4. Triangulation: Supporting interpretations with insights from secondary literature to ensure the analysis is academically grounded and credible.

This methodological approach ensures that the study remains faithful to the original text while situating it within broader theoretical discourses on trust.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis approach, which (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006) describe as identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. In this research, themes were derived from the theoretical framework of trust values. Each textual excerpt was analyzed to determine how it exemplifies one or more dimensions of trust (ability, kindness, integrity).

The analysis proceeded in three steps:

1. Coding: Annotating the selected passages with preliminary codes (e.g., “ability—combat skill,” “kindness—sacrifice,” “integrity—promise keeping”).
2. Thematic Categorization: Grouping codes under the three overarching dimensions of trust.
3. Interpretation: Explaining how each instance of trust contributes to the narrative and what moral lessons it conveys to readers.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity of findings, this study employed theoretical triangulation by drawing from multiple perspectives on trust (psychological, sociological, and literary). The reliability of interpretation was ensured by consistent application of Mayer et al.'s (1995) framework and by grounding all claims in direct textual evidence.

Additionally, the use of recent scholarship (e.g., Sandström, 2025; Lindo, 2024) serves as a form of contemporary triangulation, situating the analysis within current debates on trust, morality, and youth development.

4. Discussion

The theme of trust in Rick Riordan's *The Sea of Monsters* is central to both the narrative structure and character development. Trust is represented through three dimensions proposed by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995): ability, kindness, and integrity. These values are embedded in the relationships between Percy, Tyson, Annabeth, Grover, and Luke, creating moments of loyalty, betrayal, and reconciliation that resonate with adolescent readers.

4.1 Trust through Ability

Ability, as defined by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), encompasses the competencies and skills that allow an individual to be perceived as trustworthy. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Tyson's physical power and bravery provide a dramatic example of this dimension. Initially marginalized because of his Cyclopean identity and clumsiness, Tyson is dismissed as a burden rather than an asset. Percy himself admits reluctance in acknowledging Tyson as a brother, reflecting the prejudices that often prevent recognition of others' abilities. Yet Riordan subverts this assumption by portraying Tyson's unexpected heroism.

When the bronze bulls attack Camp Half-Blood, Tyson intervenes:

“Tyson threw his hands in the air and yelled, ‘BAD COW!’ He grabbed the bull's horns as it charged and stopped it cold. He pushed with all his might, and the bull slid backward.” (Riordan, 2006, p. 52)

This episode highlights two critical dimensions of ability: unexpected competence and relational validation. Tyson's act is not simply about defeating a monster; it is a turning point that redefines his social standing among peers who had

dismissed him. As Sandström (2025) argues, the demonstration of skill in youth fiction often functions as a foundation for moral recognition, allowing marginalized characters to be reevaluated on the basis of competence rather than prejudice. Thus, Tyson's ability is both a narrative device and a moral lesson in the dismantling of stereotypes.

Riordan also complicates the concept of ability by extending it beyond physical strength. Annabeth embodies intellectual and strategic competence, qualities equally vital for survival. Her leadership is evident when she interprets the map and identifies the perilous route through the Sea of Monsters:

“Annabeth pointed at the map. ‘We have to sail through the Sea of Monsters. It’s the only way to find the Golden Fleece.’” (Riordan, 2006, p. 108)

Here, Annabeth's analytical ability inspires trust among her companions, demonstrating that intellectual competence is as essential as brute force. This balance between Tyson's physicality and Annabeth's intellect reflects Riordan's broader message: trust is established not through uniformity of ability but through complementary strengths that sustain collective survival.

Furthermore, the portrayal of ability in *The Sea of Monsters* resonates with educational psychology. Harte (2023) emphasizes that young people's trust in mentors or peers often hinges on demonstrated competence, whether in physical or intellectual domains. In the novel, Percy's reliance on Annabeth's wisdom and his eventual recognition of Tyson's bravery mirror how adolescents navigate trust in real-life contexts—testing, doubting, and ultimately affirming others' capacities.

Finally, ability in Riordan's narrative serves an identity-forming function. For Percy, recognizing Tyson's ability is part of his own maturation: learning to accept difference, value hidden strengths, and revise prejudiced assumptions. For Annabeth, ability reinforces her identity as a strategist and leader, qualities that earn her companions' respect. Thus, Riordan portrays ability as a multidimensional trust factor that both validates the individual and strengthens the collective.

4.2 Trust through Kindness

Kindness, or benevolence, is central to the development of trust because it reflects genuine goodwill and selfless concern for others. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Tyson embodies this dimension of trust most vividly. Despite being marginalized and ridiculed for his Cyclopean identity, Tyson consistently demonstrates unwavering loyalty and compassion toward Percy and his companions. His kindness culminates in one of the novel's most dramatic moments: “Tyson pushed me out of the way. He took the full force of the explosion and disappeared into the fire.” (Riordan, 2006, p. 146)

This sacrificial act transcends mere bravery—it represents benevolence in its purest form. Tyson willingly risks his life without hesitation, affirming that kindness is not passive sympathy but active self-giving. Importantly, this act also transforms Percy's perception of him. Percy's grief following Tyson's apparent death reveals the depth of his changed attitude: “I sobbed, realizing I had lost my brother. All the times I had wished Tyson wasn't my brother... now I wanted him back more than anything.” (Riordan, 2006, p. 148)

Here, kindness functions as a catalyst for relational transformation. Percy's earlier skepticism—rooted in social prejudice against Cyclopes—evolves into profound emotional trust, illustrating how acts of benevolence can dismantle stereotypes and

cultivate authentic connection. This aligns with Lindo's (2024) findings that narratives of empathy and loyalty in young adult literature encourage readers to reflect critically on their own capacity for kindness in interpersonal relationships.

Grover also demonstrates benevolence through his loyalty to Percy during his captivity by Polyphemus. Despite being in a position of vulnerability, Grover continues to send telepathic messages to Percy for help, a sign of trust rooted in selfless commitment. His endurance reinforces Moordiningsih's (2015) view that trust emerges through continuous, relational interactions rather than singular moments. In both Tyson and Grover, kindness is framed not as weakness but as strength that sustains bonds under adversity.

Moreover, kindness in Riordan's narrative resonates with broader discussions of youth moral development. Ibrahim and Azizan (2025) argue that social capital in communities is sustained by trust and benevolence, which mirror the microcosmic dynamics of Percy's friendships. Harte (2023) similarly emphasizes that adolescents learn to trust when they perceive genuine care and fairness in relationships. By embedding acts of benevolence in characters like Tyson and Grover, Riordan offers readers a moral pedagogy of kindness—a reminder that trust is built not only through competence but through compassion that bridges difference.

Finally, kindness in the novel serves as a corrective to power-driven models of trust. While ability (strength or intellect) can generate respect, it is benevolence that humanizes relationships and forges lasting bonds. Riordan suggests that in a world marked by betrayal and prejudice, kindness becomes the most radical form of resistance, enabling trust to flourish even where suspicion once prevailed.

4.3 Trust through Integrity

Integrity, defined as honesty, consistency, and adherence to moral principle, forms a cornerstone of trust. In *The Sea of Monsters*, Riordan highlights integrity not merely as an abstract virtue but as a practical determinant of whether relationships hold or fracture. Characters such as Tyson and Annabeth embody integrity through truthfulness and loyalty, whereas Luke demonstrates the corrosive effects of its absence.

Luke's betrayal remains one of the most striking illustrations of broken trust in the novel. As a respected counselor and mentor figure, Luke initially commands both authority and admiration. His decision to align with Kronos represents not only a personal shift but also a communal rupture, destabilizing the trust that bound him to Camp Half-Blood. His words—"‘The gods are so arrogant,’ Luke said. ‘They never should have left us with this mess. I’m taking Kronos’s side. Together we’ll overthrow Olympus’" (Riordan, 2006, p. 198)—reveal how personal grievances and ambition override shared ethical commitments. Luke's disavowal epitomizes what Ibrahim and Azizan (2025) describe as the erosion of social capital: when individuals abandon collective norms, the trust network underpinning communities collapses. In this way, Riordan situates integrity not as an individual trait alone but as a social glue, binding members of a community to mutual responsibility.

In contrast, Tyson's unwavering integrity becomes a touchstone for resilience and reconciliation. Despite being marginalized and ridiculed for his identity as a Cyclops, Tyson embodies Mayer et al.'s (1995) conception of integrity as the alignment of actions with declared values. He refuses to mask his identity or manipulate others for acceptance, choosing instead to act with honesty and loyalty even in the face of prejudice. This persistent transparency creates the conditions for renewed trust.

Annabeth's gradual change of heart—"Annabeth's voice was shaky. 'Maybe I was wrong about Cyclopes. Maybe... Tyson is different'" (Riordan, 2006, p. 216)—underscores the transformative power of integrity to disrupt bias and foster genuine respect. Her acknowledgment suggests that integrity, when consistently enacted, can bridge divides and rebuild fractured trust.

The juxtaposition of Luke and Tyson also highlights integrity's double role: its absence accelerates betrayal and disintegration, while its presence cultivates forgiveness and community cohesion. Harte's (2023) findings that trust in educational contexts depends on fairness and honesty resonate here, as young readers witness characters navigating trust through these very principles. Integrity thus becomes more than a moral theme—it emerges as a relational force that shapes how characters, and by extension readers, understand loyalty, fairness, and belonging.

By exploring integrity through both its collapse and affirmation, Riordan invites readers to reflect on the fragility and resilience of trust. Luke's fall warns of the devastating consequences when ambition eclipses shared values, while Tyson's steadfastness illustrates how integrity, even from the margins, has the power to restore confidence and bind communities together.

4.4 The Interplay of Trust Values in Character Development

Riordan weaves ability, kindness, and integrity into a cohesive moral fabric where trust becomes the foundation of both heroism and friendship. The thesis findings highlight that Tyson embodies all three factors: his ability to protect Percy in battle earns admiration, his kindness manifests in sacrificial acts, and his integrity shines through promises kept and honest conduct. These values operate together, shaping not only Percy's evolving perception of Tyson but also the broader dynamics of character development.

For instance, Percy's initial reluctance to trust Tyson shifts after repeated demonstrations of ability in moments of peril:

"Tyson!" I screamed, but it was too late. Both balls slammed into him ... but no ... he'd caught them. Somehow Tyson, who was so clumsy... had caught two fiery metal balls speeding towards him at a zillion miles an hour. He sent them hurtling back towards their surprised owners" (Riordan, 2007, p. 25).

This moment reframes Tyson from an object of doubt to a figure of reliability, demonstrating how trust can grow through competence in action.

Kindness deepens this bond. Tyson persistently sacrifices himself for Percy, even enduring severe harm:

"I knew we were dead. Tyson couldn't deflect all those balls at once. His hands had to be seriously burned from blocking the first volley" (Riordan, 2007, p. 27).

Such willingness to suffer for another embodies what Mayer et al. (1995) describe as benevolence—a crucial trust factor. Percy's growing faith in Tyson is not merely pragmatic but emotional, rooted in recognition of loyalty and selflessness.

Finally, integrity solidifies this transformation. When mocked, Tyson refrains from retaliation, insisting: "'It's okay. I'll be a good monster. So you don't have to feel angry'" (Riordan, 2007, p. 90). Here, his consistency between words and actions

establishes a moral authority that transcends prejudice. Annabeth's eventual shift—admitting she may have been “wrong about Cyclopes”—reflects how integrity can dismantle bias and rebuild fractured trust.

These dynamics mirror what Genova and Tazzara (2024) describe as the civic function of trust: it sustains collective action and moral community. By embedding these trust values in his narrative, Riordan not only entertains but also educates, offering young readers a model of resilience, fairness, and empathy as essential components of character growth.

4.5 Implications for Young Adult Readers

For adolescent readers, *The Sea of Monsters* provides both identification and instruction, illustrating the formative power of trust in navigating friendship, prejudice, and betrayal. The thesis concludes that the value of trust is the most important thing in friendship, forming emotional bonds that endure despite conflict or distance.

Through Tyson's story, readers witness that trust can be built despite differences. His ability, kindness, and integrity work in concert to transform how others perceive him, offering a lesson in perseverance against stereotypes. His resilience embodies Ibrahim and Azizan's (2025) argument that trust fosters social capital and personal growth, teaching adolescents that relationships flourish when rooted in fairness and honesty.

Conversely, Luke's betrayal dramatizes the consequences of broken trust. As the thesis notes, once trust is lost, “it will be very difficult to restore”. This cautionary arc underscores that ambition without integrity corrodes relationships, leaving betrayal in its wake.

Ultimately, Riordan demonstrates that trust is not merely a narrative device but a vital human value. For young adult readers—who themselves are negotiating loyalty, fairness, and prejudice—these portrayals serve as both mirrors and guides. By showing how trust can be earned, tested, and lost, the novel cultivates not only empathy but also a deeper awareness of the responsibilities inherent in friendship.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Sea of Monsters* reveals that trust values are central to the novel's narrative and moral framework. Drawing on Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model, the study demonstrates how trust is represented through three interrelated dimensions: ability, kindness, and integrity. First, trust through ability is reflected in Tyson's physical strength and Annabeth's strategic intelligence, both of which establish credibility and reliability within the group. These qualities enable characters to earn the confidence of others despite initial skepticism or prejudice. Second, trust through kindness is powerfully illustrated in Tyson's loyalty and sacrificial care for Percy and his companions. His acts of benevolence transform Percy's initial rejection into acceptance, underscoring the role of empathy in overcoming stereotypes. Grover's unwavering support further demonstrates that kindness nurtures trust in friendship, even under conditions of vulnerability. Third, trust through integrity distinguishes characters who remain faithful to their values, such as Tyson and Annabeth, from those who betray communal principles, like Luke. Integrity emerges as the most critical foundation of lasting trust, as honesty and moral consistency allow characters to repair broken relationships and foster reconciliation.

These findings affirm that Riordan's novel is more than a fantasy adventure—it is a moral narrative that encourages young adult readers to reflect on the importance of trust in their own lives. As Sandström (2025) and Lindo (2024) highlight, youth literature plays a formative role in shaping moral reasoning and social empathy. The representation of trust in *The Sea of Monsters* aligns with broader educational and cultural insights (Ibrahim & Azizan, 2025; Genova & Tazzara, 2024; Harte, 2023) that emphasize trust as both a psychological construct and a social capital necessary for resilience, cooperation, and civic participation.

The significance of this study lies in showing how literature can cultivate ethical awareness. By tracing Percy's journey from prejudice to acceptance, readers are reminded that trust is not static but must be earned, nurtured, and sustained through ability, kindness, and integrity. Luke's betrayal, conversely, serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive consequences of abandoning trust.

Taken as a whole, the representation of trust in *The Sea of Monsters* demonstrates that young adult literature has a vital pedagogical role in moral education. For readers, especially adolescents navigating their own social identities, Riordan's narrative offers lessons in empathy, inclusivity, and ethical responsibility. Future research may extend this study by examining how trust values operate in Riordan's other novels or comparing representations of trust across different young adult authors. Such comparative studies would deepen our understanding of how literature continues to serve as a moral compass in a rapidly changing world.

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