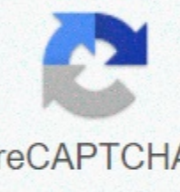


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The burning maze (the trials of apollo book 3)

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Every book in “The Trials of Apollo,” the ongoing series by brilliant writer Rick Riordan, seems better than the last. “The Trials of Apollo” differs from the other Riordan demigod adventure series that have captivated middle grade, young adult, and adult readers since the first one, “The Lightning Thief.” What sets this series apart is that the main character, the narrator, is Apollo. Apollo is a god who has lived for millennia, and as such his wisdom and experiences are far greater than that which any teenage demigod might have experienced. While kids will love the series because it’s filled with demigods, adventure, strange creatures, more adventures, and lots of magic, adults will really enjoy the humorous references to history — both recent and ancient — that are liberally sprinkled throughout the story. Will middle grade readers understand this? “I had not been so uncomfortable in a group hug since the Rolling Stones’ first 1969 show at Madison Square Garden. (Tip: As tempting as it might be, don’t throw your arms around Mick Jagger and Keith Richards during their encore set. Those men can sweat.)” No, young readers will not (probably) know who those musicians are. But historical and cultural references are a part of reading good literature, and this series has plenty of cultural and historical references in each and every book. And the adult readers will love the humor! Apollo continues as Lester Papadopoulos, a flabby and acne-ridden teenager, trying to save the world from three extremely evil emperors from ancient Rome. They are trying to control the world, and Apollo, in his horribly mortal form, must fight them. Apollo keeps hoping his father will forgive him and return him to his godly state, but alas, that does not happen in this book. He must rely on his unusual sidekicks to help him conquer a talking horse, fuzzy huge-eared creatures, dryads, satyrs, many cacti, and Meg. Meg is the nose-picking, often clueless demigod who he must obey. The readers find out a lot more of Meg’s backstory in this book. Demigods from other series make appearances, and more will appear in future books. This series, perhaps more than any other, will be beloved by teachers trying to teach inference to their students. Riordan makes Apollo’s voice one that is at the same time arrogant and self-centered but also self-deprecating. For example: “Meg and Grover had already lost interest in me, as if my feelings were not their primary concern. (I know, I couldn’t believe it either.)” Riordan fans are constantly amazed at the seemingly never-ending supply of creative and imaginative creatures, plots, situations, and humor that he uses in his writing. Each page is filled with clever and funny. Each book is a joy to read. That’s why every teachers feels fully comfortable recommending “The Lightning Thief” and the rest of its series to any middle grade readers — it’s a sure-fire hit no matter the reader. Start the Apollo series now and get in on the fun! Please note: This review is based on the final, hardcover book provided by Disney-Hyperion, the publisher, for review purposes. The following version of this novel was used to create this study guide: Riordan, Rick. The Trials of Apollo: Book Three: The Burning Maze. Disney Hyperion. 2018. Hardcover.While Apollo is reluctant to share this story, calling it the worst week of his life, he knows that Zeus expects him to write it down for the future. He says he, Meg, and their Satyr guide Grover have been lost in the Labyrinth for two days, Apollo is becoming weaker and his frequent visions are intense and disorienting. When Grover finds the path to Palm Springs, a flock of deadly birds called strixes attack, and Apollo is paralyzed. Meg duct tapes him to Grover’s back and the three climb as Meg uses packs of seeds to summon plants to slow the birds down. Apollo consults the arrow of Dodona, a magical artifact that speaks only to him, but entirely in Shakespearean English. It is angry at being ignored, but tells him that they need an abuteus plant. Grover and Meg figure out it is a tree that makes fruit similar to strawberries, and Meg grows the seeds into the wall. Vines grow and the fruit dissolves the rocks. The sunlight turns the strixes to ash, and Grover announces that they have made it to Palm Springs. Unfortunately, Apollo is consumed by two feverish dreams. The first is of a woman bound by chains of fire. She says that Apollo must save her, and finds a way to warn him of a trap even though she cannot say the word. She then sees a man speaking to a cruel Princeps about the assassination of another man (presumably the current emperor). The Princeps is thrilled, as this makes him the new ruler of Rome.When Apollo wakes up, Grover explains that Meg panicked when she saw where they were and he had to soothe her to sleep. Apollo guesses that she has lived here before, but is not certain. Grover tells him that the dryads are dormant during the day, as terrible forest fires have ravaged the state. However, he hopes that Meg will talk to those left in the greenhouses of his base. When Meg wakes up, Apollo calms her and she reluctantly agrees to go. Once there, however, she faints at the name of the place: Aeithales. As they take her to a separate building, Grover explains that they do not know who built the place as the older dryads are either dormant or dead. They then meet a cloud nymph named Millie who tells Grover that his friend, Gleeson, left for camping supplies and has yet to return. Despite his exhaustion, Grover agrees to track him down and asks Apollo to join him.On the way to the military-surplus store, Grover explains that they have sent many search parties into the Labyrinth before in search for the emperor. He believes this part of the maze is infected somehow as random fires surge out into Palm Springs. Apollo thinks the woman he saw is the Oracle trapped at the source of the fires. Grover was unaware of the Oracle, but thinks she is linked to the emperor. He says he has lost many friends, but stops short of saying that the gods do not care. However, Apollo tells the reader that Grover is right, as gods do not feel anything towards small losses (which is anything that is not a god). The longer he is human, however, the more these losses affect him. They reach the store, and Apollo is determined to save Gleeson so Grover does not lose another friend. Apollo and Grover find Gleeson in the gun aisle, and Apollo explains that modern weapons are unpredictable when used around ancient foes and magic. Then, the seven-foot tall supervisor approaches them, revealing himself to be Marco who assassinated King Tiberius for Neos Helios in Apollo’s vision. He says he must kill the satyrs and capture Apollo to escape his exile in Palm Springs. Gleeson throws a molotov cocktail and he and Apollo run while Grover goes missing. As they knock some robots out, Marco says he has plenty to keep fighting. When they are unable to escape through the front door, they are rescued by Grover who drops a raft on Marco. They make it to the back room where Gleeson sings the song of opening while Grover tries to override the automatons. Apollo awakens them accidentally when he says a code name from another battle’. Unfortunately, the robots rush Marco and explode just after the three heroes escape into a dumpster. They overhear a talking horse telling Caligula that Marco failed, but it does not find them. The three return to the base where they tell the rest of the dryads what happened. Now they are certain that the Sybil is at the center of the Labyrinth which is also the source of the flames. However, it is a trap for Apollo by an unknown sorceress. Apollo also reveals that the emperor is Caligula, the cruellest Roman tyrant in history. Apollo realizes he is also the best that Nero threatened Meg with. Grover, despite his fear, says that everyone can be killed they just have to find a weakness. They recall the prophecy where it mentioned Apollo walking in his enemy’s boots, but Apollo is convinced they must save the Sybil first. Millie says that a demigod named Piper once had a dream about the maze. She and her boyfriend went in and encountered something, but neither said what. Apollo wonders if the Oracle had been talking to one of them in his vision. Grover volunteers to take Grover and Meg to talk to Piper. Then, Meg reveals that the place they are living (Aeithales) used to be a giant house built by her father and the older dryads. She leaves without explanation, and Apollo follows her, concerned. Although she is initially unwilling to talk, she ends up pulling Apollo into her memories where he sees her father working on special seeds (that are later revealed to be thousands of years of research in the making), and Meg promises to help plant them. Unfortunately, someone burned the dryad-made home and greenhouse to the ground before they had the chance. Determined to learn what happened, Meg vows to find Jason and Piper, but Apollo worries about facing Caligula. On the way to Malibu, Apollo remembers the Sibil’s real name, Herophile, who was born singing prophecies. Apollo blessed her as an Oracle, and she sang for 900 years to anyone who would listen. However, she became discouraged when people could not understand her, and secluded herself to a cave. He thought she would fade like the others, and wonders if it was fair of Zeus to send him back to save the oracles he technically abandoned. At Piper’s house, Apollo learns that her actor father is bankrupt thanks to the Triumvirate (the trio of emperors that Caligula is a part of), and is preparing to move himself and Piper to Oklahoma. However, when Apollo shares their story, Piper agrees to help as she feels that Jason did not tell her the full truth of what happened in the maze. On the terrace, Piper explains that Caligula and the Triumvirate holdings (which he and the other emperors were building for thousands of years), used their wealth and all of her father’s employees to ruin him. Therefore, they had to sell all of their possessions and were moving to Oklahoma. Apollo tells Piper their story and says that they have to find the Sibil, and Grover thinks that Caligula was worried about whatever Meg’s father was working on. Piper agrees to take them to the entrance of the maze and gathers her weapons. She uses her charmspeak to procure a car from a neighbor and they head to Los Angeles. Piper refuses to get Jason, as she is confident that she can navigate the maze herself. They reach the Hall of Records, where Piper knocks out the lone guard with her blowgun. Apollo realizes the man’s headfress are actually massive human ears, and knows it is a Big Ear that Marco mentioned. While Piper is certain they are walking into a trap, the four head down the elevator anyway. Inside, they find a pair of dryads that Grove takes to the surface as Apollo, Piper, and Meg head into an underground parking garage. Piper says this is where she and Jason were separated by a mystical fire, and she wants to go the way that he did. However, a sorceress (and granddaughter of the former sun god, Helios) arrives on a chariot driven by two golden dragons and says she is thrilled to see them. She explains that she is going to drain Apollo’s essence and fuse it with her grandfather, Helios to turn Caligula into the new sun god. When Meg resists Medea’s charmspeak, she attacks them instead. However, Piper is able to confuse the dragons with her own charmspeak, and Meg kills them both, throwing Medea from the chariot. Furious, Medea knocks Meg out and traps her in a prison of wind, as Nero wants Meg, the descendant of Plennmaeus to live. Furthermore, Jason only reached the Sibil’s chambers because Medea wanted him to, as only someone wearing the emperor’s shoes can reach it on their own. When the Sibil told him how to find Caligula, something else she said broke him. Piper challenges Medea to a duel, both angry and buying time for Meg. Medea agrees, but chooses Helios’s essence - the flames contained within the maze– as her weapon. His summoning alone nearly burns everyone alive, but Apollo is able to break through the wind barrier and save Meg’s life.After explaining to the reader that Helios resents Apollo because he took his place as the sun god, Apollo asks the arrow of Dadona how to stop Medea. It says to use the blowgun, and Meg distracts Medea so Piper can land a shot. When Medea collapses, she says that her power was only holding Helios back, and the three barely escape the garage before the flames explode. They escape, though Apollo cannot remember how, and Grover uses a song to put them all to sleep. Apollo dreams of the day he attended a party Caligula was holding in Rome. The emperor entered on a chariot, pretending to be Apollo, and everyone there was terrified of him. When he saw Apollo, he asked if Apollo would be willing to fight for him, and was greatly amused when Apollo broke his sword striking one of Caligula’s guards. Then, the dream shifts to a nightmare of Apollo turning to ash in the Sibil’s prison, and he wakes up, determined to stop Caligula. During this meeting, he learns that Plennmaeus was a favorite of Demeter’s whose ancestors dedicated themselves to botany after Demeter helped free them from a curse. Meg wants to kill Caligula, but Apollo says they need Jason, the Sibil, and Caligula’s shoes to have a chance. Piper agrees to take them to Jason, but is uncertain if he will help.The next morning, after Apollo dreams of his archnemesis Python talking to Nero about their plans and Nero’s failures, he finds Meg with the seeds from her memories. She explains that she saw a dryad from her childhood bury them for safekeeping, and now it is time to plant. However, they do not sprout immediately, and Apollo, Meg, and Piper leave, hoping they will grow while they are gone. In Pasadena, they pull Jason out of his class and he leads them to his dorm room, unsurprised by their visit. Inside, they find multiple sketches and a diorama of Camp Jupiter, and learn that Jason made a promise that no minor deity would be forgotten. Therefore, he wants to build shrines for each one in Camp Jupiter. Then, Jason says that he did speak to the Sibil, but she told him that only Apollo could save her, and that Jason and Piper could not do anything on their own. He apologizes to Piper, as he just wanted to protect her, and agrees to accompany them back to the maze. When Piper and Meg leave, however, Apollo asks what the Sibil actually told Jason. He admits that the Sibil said either he or Piper would die if they pursued Caligula. Apollo tries to argue that she may not have meant actually death, but Jason disagrees, and says that he can not let Piper die. Jason asks for two promises: that Apollo deliver the diorama to Camp Jupiter if Jason dies, and that Apollo remembers what it is like to be human when he returns to godhood. Apollo says they will survive, even though he is wary at making more promises (as he has failed to keep many during his time as a human). The three head to Santa Barbara where they see a literal fleet of million dollar yachts in the distance that creates a bridge across the water; something Caligula did in Rome when he first became emperor. Piper charmspeaks a group of guards and the four head to the yachts.As Jason takes Piper onboard, Apollo talks to Meg about her anger, as he is worried she is projecting how she feels toward Nero onto Caligula. He worries that she will lash out and get hurt, as Caligula is even worse than Nero was. Meg says that Caligula hurt her family just as much, and deserves to die. But before they can discuss it any further, two big ears (which Apollo recalls are named Panda) arrive. When they carry them onto the yacht, they find that Jason and Piper have been tied up as Pandai are immune to charmspeak. However, the leader, Amax, is intrigued when Meg tells him she is the daughter of Nero there to kill Caligula, and takes them deeper into his boat to hear her story. After insulting Apollo for his lack of power and snapping at another Pandai, Crest, for his love of music, they demand he hear the story. Meg asks if they are alone, prompting Amax to say that the throne is in boat twelve, and Caligula’s shoes are on boat forty-three. Meg then kills him and the others, except for Crest who Apollo tells to flee. The group consults the arrow on what to do, and it tells them that they must split up to reach Caligula and obtain his shoes. Meg and Jason head toward the emperor while Piper and Apollo go for the shoes. On their journey through multiple ships filled with a ridiculous amount of items and services, they arrive at ship thirty-one where mercenaries and cyclops are all relaxing. When they go to attack, Piper sings the song Life of Illusion, and Apollo is enthralled by the emotion she puts into it. He realizes that she struggles with her feelings, especially toward Jason, and wishes to overcome them. This acts as a type of charmspeak, and when the two do escape to safety, Apollo demands that Piper rest. When Apollo asks about the song, Piper explains that she does not know who she is without the influence of the gods. Hero gave her false memories of a life with Jason, and her mother, Aphrodite, expects her children to both use and break men’s hearts. She also does not belong to her father’s Cherokee heritage, as that is passed through the mother. Apollo promises that Piper will find her way, and the two continue to the boat filled with shoes, using a loud note from Apollo’s ukulele to cripple the Pandai guards. Eventually, they find Caligula’s sandals on a pedestal. Crest arrives, begging them to run as Jason and Meg have been caught, but Incatius catches them first and knocks both Crest and Piper out. After using the guards to put Piper and Apollo on his back, Incatitus says that Medea is excited to flay Apollo for his essence. He also says that he and Caligula are using each other for their own gain. Once Caligula becomes a god, Incatitus will overthrow humans and replace the government with horses. When they arrive at a sickening throne room, Caligula is shocked by Apollo’s weakness and Incatius dumps them on the floor. After punishing the Pandai from the shoe boat, Caligula says that he takes people at their word, such as destroying Piper’s father so she could spend time with him, or letting Jason pursue priesthood. Medea says it is time to kill the others so she can extract Apollo’s essence, but Apollo threatens to kill himself if she does. Caligula is skeptical, not believing that Apollo would sacrifice himself in that way. He tells Apollo to come quietly and promises a painless death for the others. Apollo refuses, ignoring the fury of the arrow of Dadona which he accidentally pulled over the others. Then, Caligula learns that the attack on Camp Jupiter failed and says he will go himself. When he attacks Apollo, Apollo plunges the arrow into his chest, forcing Medea to use more magic to heal him. This weakens the barrier, which Jason destroys in a drastic explosion that throws Meg against the wall and destroys the entirety of the throne room. He calls Tempest as Caligula mounts Incatius, and the two fight. However, Jason is hit by multiple arrows before Caligula stabs Jason, killing him. Tempest takes Apollo and Piper away, and both are heartbroken by the loss. They land outside of Piper’s home where Crest and Meg already are. Piper is in denial, saying that there must be a way to save him. Apollo says that would be impossible, even if he were a god, and reminds her of everything she and Jason went through to close the doors of death. When Tempest returns with Jason’s body, Piper’s father arrives and tells Apollo to call 911. Piper, however, tells Apollo to go talk to the Oracle that got Jason killed and to never come back.On the way to Palm Springs, Meg says that Piper needs time to heal and that Jason did what any hero would by choosing to sacrifice himself. Apollo does not agree with that idea of a hero, but does not say it. Meg also admits that she was projecting her anger onto Caligula instead of Nero and is beginning to understand herself more. Once they reach the hideout, Gleeson and Millie leave to help Piper and Grover agrees to go with Apollo and Meg to save the Sibil. After a night of rest, Apollo learns that the seeds Meg planted are actually special ash trees known as Meliai, an ancient group of dryads known as the seven-sisters. Meg hopes they will continue to grow as they leave for the maze, and Apollo thinks of the promises he made to Jason as they go by Pasadena. Once they reach the second entrance, Grover plays a song of opening and Crest decides to stand watch while Meg, Apollo, and Grover head inside. They reach a room with four different tunnels and a riddle in ancient greek. The answer is Apollo, which lights up on the floor as they walk. The next room has a second riddle with the answer of faces. The third is death, and Apollo realizes it is the beginning of a prophecy. The next clue mentions the last king before the republic, Tarquin, which leads to an even larger chamber filled with mosaics. The next answer is a missing word from a poem by Walt Whitman which Grover says is tomb. In the next room, they find new lines in English about a flower named in love with. But instead of realizing that there is a word missing, Apollo gets upset and says the name of his love, which drops them all into a pit of fire. Grover grabs on to the ledge while Meg and Apollo hold on to him. However, Apollo feels Helios beneath him and asks Grover to drop him, thinking he might be able to stop the flames. He is taken back to the day he became the sun god and eventually speaks to Helios. Apollo promises to free the titan, and Helios tells him to kill Medea. The flames disperse and the group continues on to the Sibil’s prison. All four work together to build a bridge made of stones (a massive crossword puzzle) to reach her, but Medea arrives with a bound Crest before they can finish the prophecy. Meg breaks the Sibil’s chains, but they clamp onto Apollo instead. He suffers terrible agony as she begins to flay his human form, and Medea eventually traps Meg and Grover into prison of wind to stop them from helping. The Sibil tells Apollo to fight and he realizes he took her place as the Oracle and needs to finish the prophecy. He begins reciting random lines that do not make sense together and Crest distracts Medea long enough to save Meg and Grover, but is killed. Piper arrives with seven war-maiden dryads (the Meliai), and kills Medea. After the Meliai swear their loyalty to Meg, the group realizes that the end of the prophecy is the combination of the first letter of each line Apollo says, spelling out the words Bellona’s daughter who Piper believes is Reyna at Camp Jupiter. Apollo then sits by the ichor and tells Helios that Medea is dead. Apollo says Helios has every right to be angry, but Apollo promises to remember him even once he returns to Olympus. The ichor vanishes, and the Meliai escort the group out. They run into Incatius, but Meg uses the Meliai to kill him and they (with the exception of Piper) return to Palm Springs. Once there, Meg helps replant the Meliai’s seeds into the old pipe leading down into a lake that her father once built. The dryads are thrilled about the new protectors and even welcome the Sibil into their home. Grover leaves for Camp Half-Blood, and Apollo has a terrible dream about the goddess Stix swearing that more will die until he makes amends for the promise he broke with her. However, when Meg wakes him up, he is excited to see that Meg’s house has been rebuilt. She says she will come back once their quest is over.The two then head back to Santa Monica where they meet Piper, Gleeson, and Millie at a helicopter. Piper gives them Jason’s blueprints for the shrine as Jason’s body is loaded into the vehicle. When Leo arrives unexpectedly, she tells him what happened. Leo is shocked by the death, and tells them that Camp Jupiter survived the attack, but with heavy casualties. He escorts Piper to Oklahoma, as Meg and Apollo head to Camp Jupiter. Apollo tells the reader that he will be the god he is meant to be, and he will remember.

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