

## House of Hades Book Review by Sarina

"The House of Hades," the fourth book in Rick Riordan's "Heroes of Olympus" series, continues the thrilling saga of seven demigods on their scary quest to prevent the awakening of Gaea, the first Earth goddess. This installment picks up right where the previous book left off, saving everyone from that cliffhanger of an ending in "The Mark of Athena."

The story opens with Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase plummeting into the depths of Tartarus, the most treacherous region of the Underworld (couple goals!). Percy and Annabeth find an unlikely source of strength in the River Phlegethon, a stream of fire that, paradoxically, possesses healing properties for mortals.

Their journey through this nightmarish realm is fraught with constant danger. They meet lots of creatures, allying with an unexpected companion: Bob. Bob is a Titan whose memories Percy had previously erased. Initially reluctant due to this past betrayal, Bob eventually becomes an ally, guiding them through the treacherous terrain of Tartarus. Bob's pet skeleton cat, named Small Bob, is a needed source of happiness.

Their path leads them to the house of Damasen, a peaceful giant who provides them with much-needed healing but initially refuses to join their cause. As they press on, they meet with Akhlys, the goddess of misery. This meeting, while terrifying, proves beneficial as Akhlys bestows upon them the Death Mist, a substance that allows them to move undetected among the monsters of Tartarus.

Meanwhile, aboard the Argo II, the remaining heroes--Jason, Piper, Leo, Frank, and Hazel-- embark on their own perilous journey to reach the mortal side of the Doors of Death in the House of Hades. Their mission is twofold: to rescue their friends and to prevent monsters from easily accessing the mortal world.

Hazel's character development takes center stage when she encounters Hecate, the goddess of magic. Hecate reveals a safe passage to their destination and charges Hazel with mastering the Mist, a powerful form of magic that can alter perceptions of reality. This newfound skill becomes crucial in their later encounters.

In Bologna, they face off against the mischievous Kerkopes brothers. This encounter, while challenging, allows them to recover stolen items of great importance, including an astrolabe and a book intended for Triptolemus, the god of farming. Their time in Venice proves to be a turning point for Frank. He demonstrates his growing prowess by single-handedly defeating a horde of cow monsters. This act of bravery earns him his father's blessing and marks his evolution into a more confident leader. Throughout their journey, Leo's engineering expertise is constantly put to the test. His ability to navigate and repair the Argo II in the face of numerous challenges proves invaluable to the group's survival. What a trip!

As the crew finally reaches the House of Hades, they strategically divide into two groups to tackle the challenges ahead. Jason, Nico, Frank, and Piper confront an army of monsters, while Leo and Hazel face off against the sorceress Pasiphaë and the imposing giant Clytius at the Doors of Death. Nico summons an army of ghostly Roman legions using Diocletian's scepter. This spectral force falls under Frank's command after Jason, recognizing Frank's leadership potential, promotes him to

the rank of praetor. Meanwhile, Hazel puts her newly acquired mastery of the Mist to the test, using it to outwit Pasiphaë and navigate through her deceptive Labyrinth.

Both groups meet at the Doors of Death. Percy and Annabeth, having survived a terrifying encounter with the physical manifestation of Tartarus himself, arrive at the Underworld side of the doors. In a moment of supreme sacrifice, Bob and Damasen stay behind to hold off Tartarus, allowing Percy and Annabeth to make their escape. On the mortal side of the doors, Hazel and her companions engage in a fierce battle with Clytius. Hecate arrives, enabling them to defeat the giant. With their combined efforts, the team successfully closes the Doors of Death, severing the easy passage monsters had used to enter the mortal world.

With Percy and Annabeth safely rescued, the group emerges from the House of Hades to find Reyna and Coach Hedge awaiting them. In a surprising turn of events, Nico volunteers for a dangerous mission. He offers to shadow-travel with Reyna and Coach Hedge to return the Athena Parthenos statue to Camp Half-Blood, hoping to prevent an impending war between the Greek and Roman demigods.

The seven principal heroes - Percy, Annabeth, Jason, Piper, Leo, Frank, and Hazel - now set their sights on Athens. They prepare to sail the Argo II to this ancient city, where they must face the ultimate battle against the giants and thwart Gaea's awakening. This story had a lot of not just plot development, but also character development. I liked seeing the characters learn more about themselves and their capabilities. I rate this book a 7/10.