

**TEJAL PENDEKANTI (6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Cleveland, Birchwood School )**  
**Level I Semifinalist**  
***Letter to Rick Riordan concerning his book, *Battle of the Labyrinth****

Dear Mr. Riordin:

Decisions. The world circles around it. It follows us around, lurks at every corner and haunts our every dream. It can shape our lives and destinies, including those who we love. In the *Battle of the Labyrinth* all of the heroes decided to face their problems and not run away. Everyone made the best decision possible, even if it killed him inside, thus became a hero.

Through your book I learned to make important decisions about letting things go. When Nico finally saw Bianca, she told him not to do anything else. He was crushed. He had to muster every bit of willpower to let her go. The same thing happened with Grover. He couldn't believe that Pan was actually gone, even though it happened right before her eyes. This made me learn that it is hard to let go, especially if people mean the world to you.

This reality helped me get through my grandfather's death. No one in my family was willing to tell me of his death until my brother broke the news. I was in complete shock and became an emotional wreck. I stayed in my bedroom, curled up underneath the covers, crying softly to myself. In the middle of my sobbing, I remembered how Annabeth pulled herself together after Luke betrayed her to connect with Kronos. Remembering the lesson of letting go but never forgetting, I forced myself to slowly uncurl and get off my bed; I pulled out your book and skipped to the page where that scene took place. I read it over again until I felt better.

From the start, everything was about trying to defeat Kronos. Over the different quests Percy's will to fight for the gods weakened. Their deceit and two-facedness caused him to slowly lose trust in them. This mirrored the inner conflict inside me; the question of what is right or wrong. Through your book, I learned that I should find more evidence and dig deeper to make the right decision using both my mind and heart.

The truth can really hurt. It can burn, sting and bruise. Evidence may be right in front of me but it is hard to give in easily. When Annabeth heard what Percy said about Luke connecting with Kronos, she could not believe it for the world. She soon saw the truth when she thought about the situation. The day after I read that chapter, I left my "friends" who had been obnoxious, saying nasty things about me behind my back. When I confronted them, they denied everything, though I heard everything with my own ears. Annabeth never gave up on Luke, and I never completely left them.

Though a pure work of fiction, your book comforted me when my tears were flying down my cheeks, consoled me when friends left me and relaxed me when I was so mad I couldn't think. Reading your book was a decision that changed the whole world around me.

Sincerely,

**Tejal Pendekanti**