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Authorial Involvement and Adaptation Fidelity: A Comparative Analysis in Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief Novel and Disney+

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Abstract

Author involvement and adaptational fidelity are interrelated concepts, though they are rooted in different fields: the study of writing and the study of media. In the practice of adaptation, the writing process is collaborative, so fidelity to the source text is often at stake. However, maintaining full fidelity is frequently hindered by the limitations of the medium and the demands of the audience. This gap highlights the need for a more in-depth study of how author involvement influences the degree of fidelity in an adaptation. This study aims to analyze the relationship between author involvement and adaptation fidelity, specifically in the novel "Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" and its television series adaptation, as well as to assess the implications of these changes on audience reception. The research method employs a qualitative design with a narrative analysis approach. Data were collected from primary texts (the novel and the television series) as well as documentation from the television series. Analysis was conducted using thematic comparative techniques, assessing the alignment of adapted scenes with the source material. Fidelity was categorized into three levels: high, moderate, and low. The results show that despite direct control by the author, structural and narrative changes still predominate. The number of scenes with moderate (n = 82) and low (n = 64) fidelity was higher than that of scenes with high fidelity (n = 67). This research finds that the adaptation decisions regarding plot and character influence audience perceptions of fidelity and creativity in adaptations from literature to screen.

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INTRODUCTION

Adapting a literary work into a screen-based medium involves a complex process of textual negotiation, cultural reframing, and media remediation. In classical adaptation studies, the relationship between a source text and its cinematic output was often evaluated through a rigid lens of textual fidelity—a paradigm that treated modifications as secondary or inherently inferior to the original text.

As Hutcheon (2006) points out, an adaptation is a manifestation of an extended intertextual engagement where adjustments are not only inevitable but necessary to preserve the core essence of the narrative across different mediums. She argues that "there are many and varied motives behind adaptation and few involve faithfulness" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. xiii). Audiences experience adaptations as "palimpsests," where memories of the previous work "resonate through repetition with variation" as a referential framework (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 21). This medium-specific

remediation becomes particularly challenging when translating complex, first-person young adult fantasy epics, where abstract world-building must be converted into clear visual narratives while maintaining the emotional and thematic integrity of the original story.

The question of fidelity remains one of the most contentious concepts in adaptation studies (Johnson, 2017). Fidelity refers to the idea that a given aesthetic object—traditionally, in adaptation studies, a film—reflects a faithful understanding of its source, typically a literary text such as a novel, play, or short story (Johnson, 2017). In literature and screen adaptations, the relationship between engagement and fidelity persists. A debate closely linked to the determination of fidelity concerns the nature of an adaptation's success—and the opposing view (Witomo, 2023).

The critical importance of this translation process is clearly illustrated by the screen adaptations of Rick Riordan's 2005 novel, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*. The initial 2010 feature film adaptation by 20th Century Fox was widely criticized by both fans and the author for its severe departure from the source text, which included altering the characters' ages, changing the main antagonist, and cutting critical subplots. This extreme divergence was largely attributed to a complete lack of authorial involvement, as the original novelist had no creative control over the screenplays or production decisions. The author himself has described the film as a "mess" and compared the experience to having his "life's work going through a meat grinder" (Riordan, 2020), serving as a cautionary tale about what happens when an author's vision is disregarded in the adaptation process.

In contrast, the 2023 Disney+ television series adaptation presented a unique case in adaptation studies by directly involving Rick Riordan as a co-creator, executive producer, and screenwriter. Riordan co-wrote the pilot episode and created a series bible for the writing staff, serving as a "steward of the source material" alongside his wife Becky, who also served as an executive producer (White, 2023). As Riordan himself described their involvement, "we were involved in everything from the very earliest stages, from picking the team to casting to the writing room, developing the scripts. We were on set during filming for most of the time" (White, 2023). This dynamic shift provides an excellent opportunity to re-examine a central question in contemporary adaptation studies: to what extent does the direct involvement of an original author influence narrative fidelity when translating a text to the screen?

Within the context of EFL and literature in Indonesia, previous comparative research has largely focused on structural shifts in storylines between novels and films. Various studies have analyzed the transformation from novel to film adaptation to uncover underlying ideologies and motives (Yulianti, 2023). Other research has examined character adaptation, discussing the changes that occur when bringing protagonists from the novel to the big screen (Hakim & Zulfa, 2021). Researchers have also compared the storylines of novels and films sharing the same title, identifying similarities and differences in their narrative structures (Herawati, 2016). The present study focuses on the storyline, resulting in a broader and more complex discussion; it goes beyond mere character, plot, or setting, making the analysis more intricate. This research reveals that even minor details can lead to changes in the storyline—regardless of how small those changes may be—a factor not addressed in previous studies. However, there is still a significant research gap regarding how an author's creative control impacts an episodic, long-form television format. Traditional classrooms and literary analyses often treat these variations as structural errors rather than purposeful communication choices shaped by medium constraints, audience expectations, and collaborative production processes.

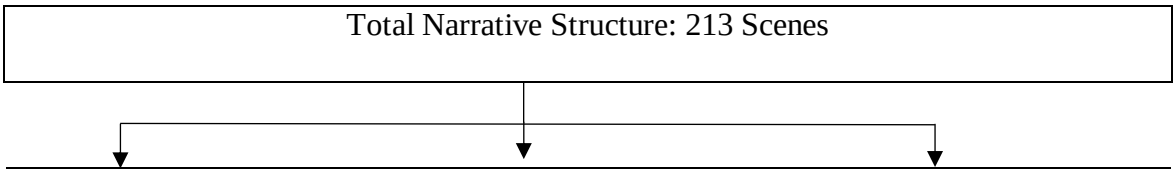
This study directly addresses this gap by conducting a rigorous comparative analysis of the 2005 novel and the 2023 Disney+ series. It explores the relationship between authorial involvement and narrative fidelity across the structural divisions of background, conflict, and resolution, as outlined by Bordwell and Thompson (2010). By examining the specific scene modifications, deletions, and additions between the two works, this research aims to determine whether Rick Riordan's direct participation resulted in a more faithful adaptation, or whether the inherent demands of the television medium necessitated creative changes that transcended simple fidelity to the source text. The findings contribute to the broader conversation in adaptation studies about the role of original authors in the adaptation process and the evolving definition of fidelity in transmedia storytelling.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to examine the structural and communicative shifts between Rick Riordan's novel *The Lightning Thief* (2005) and its 2023 episodic television adaptation on Disney+. A qualitative approach is uniquely suited for this study because it allows for a detailed exploration of meaning, context, and structural transformations within a bounded narrative system.

This research falls into the category of a case study because it focuses on the novel *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* and its television series adaptation; this focus aligns with the defining characteristics of a case study. A unique aspect of this context is the involvement of the author, Rick Riordan, in the adaptation process. The study employs a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the *Percy Jackson* adaptation; the key characteristics of the case lie in the author's involvement, the issue of fidelity, and the use of two distinct media. Although the research bears a closer resemblance to a textual analysis than a traditional case study, its focus on a specific object—and a specific pair of objects—renders the 'case study' classification relevant.

The primary data sources consist of the 22 chapters of the original novel and the 8 episodes of the first season of the television series. To ensure a systematic analysis, the narrative data was organized into three primary structural modules based on the formal narrative framework of Bordwell and Thompson (2010): Background, Conflict, and Resolution.



Background (Episodes 1 – 2)	Conflict (Episodes 3 – 7)	Resolution (Episode 8)
High Fidelity	High Fidelity	High Fidelity
Medium Fidelity	Medium Fidelity	Medium Fidelity
Low Fidelity	Low Fidelity	Low Fidelity

The analytical process involved a comparative textual-visual analysis. Each episode was matched with its corresponding chapters from the book (e.g., Episode 1 with Chapters 1–4; Episode 8 with Chapters 20–22). Scenes within these modules were coded into three clear fidelity cohorts based on their structural and communicative consistency with the source text:

1. High Fidelity: The screen adaptation maintains a close match with the source text's setting, character dynamics, and dialogue, showing minimal structural deviation.
2. Medium Fidelity: The scene retains the core narrative function of the book but introduces noticeable shifts in character presence, setting, or dialogue configuration.
3. Low Fidelity: The scene involves significant narrative changes, including the complete deletion of original book material or the addition of brand-new, screen-only subplots.

Data analysis followed the Interactive Model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), progressing through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Trustworthiness was established by cross-referencing the structural data tables with the author's official production notes and public statements. This process provided clear contextual insights into the pedagogical and production reasons behind the observed narrative shifts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The novel Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief and the TV Series Percy Jackson and the Olympians season 1 have several similar and different parts. There are also some additional scenes that are meant to only exist in the series and also deleted scenes that mean they are in the novel but do not appear in the series. In comparative research, the findings in the novel will be juxtaposed with both similar and different parts. The scenes that are added will be concluded. All episodes will be categorized based on Similarities, differences including deleted scenes and added scenes.

Figure 1 shows 5 categories in the form of similarities, differences, deleted and added scenes that are adjusted to the total scenes that have been categorized.

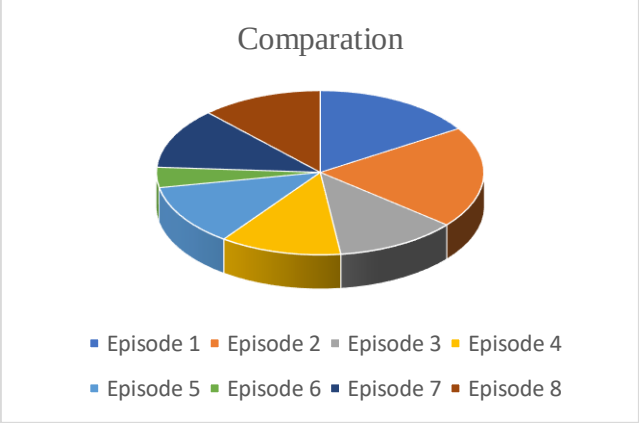


Figure 1. Comparation Storyline between Novel and TV series in Percy Jackson and the Olympian: the Lightning Thief.

From the results above, it shows the grouping of episodes with relevant chapters. Episode 1 (Chapter 1 – 4), Episode 2 (Chapter 5 – 9), Episode 3 (Chapter 9 – 11), Episode 4 (Chapter 12 – 14), Episode 5 (Chapter 14 – 16), Episode 6 (Chapter 16), Episode 7 (Chapter 17 – 19), and finally Episode 8 (Chapter 20 – 22).

To examine the influence of the writer's involvement and how faithful the adaptation was, the episodes were divided into three and each scene would be rated based on High, Medium and Low Fidelity. High means similar and minimal change, medium which has many changes but still has similarities, and low which means minimal similarity and dominant differences.

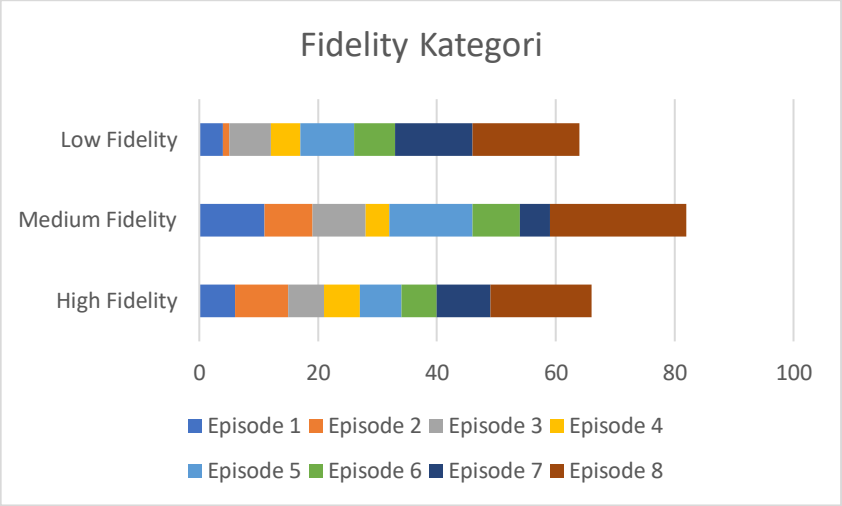


Figure 2. Fidelity Category

Based on figure 2, Medium Fidelity is more dominant than High Fidelity and almost comparable to Low Fidelity. The total number is high fidelity 67 scenes, medium fidelity 82, low fidelity 64. Of these, it can be ascertained that the medium fidelity is the most which means that many scenes have quite a lot of changes. The above results show that the author's involvement does not necessarily make the adaptation dominant in loyalty to the original novel.

To facilitate comparative analysis between a scene so that it falls into the high, medium and low categories, the results of the analysis use a table to juxtapose scenes from novels and series and then give a brief explanation. Especially for deleted and added scenes, it will use descriptive without a table. Examples will be categorized into background, conflict and resolution and then determined into three, namely high, medium and low fidelity.

Background

Episodes 1 and 2 are part of the background. Below are some examples of high, medium and low based on episodes 1 and 2.

High (Similarities)

The Percy School took a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is the setting explanation in novel and the setting pic in tv series:

Table 1. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Novel	Series
"… our sixth-grade class took a field trip to Manhattan—twenty-eight mental-case kids and two teachers on a yellow school bus, heading to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at ancient Greek and Roman stuff." (Chapter 1, page 2).	 *In that picture, Percy and Grover arrive at Metropolitan Museum of Art.* (Episode 1, 00:03:08).

Both have the same setting, which is located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a school trip destination. In the novel, the author does not explain the place in detail but mentions the name

of the location. The location is a place in real life and is the filming location for the scene of episode 1 so it is included in the category of high or similarities.

Medium (Differences)

Grover informs Percy that Mr. D is seeking him out. Thereafter, they proceed to the penitentiary to encounter Mr. D and Chiron. Upon Mr. D's arrival, he issues a limited number of warnings before departing for an emergency meeting at Olympus. In the context of the narrative, Chiron discloses to Percy the potential nature of the mission that Percy might encounter.

Table 1. Percy in Big House with Chiron and Mr. D

Novel	TV Series
""Grover and I walked up to the front porch of the Big House. Dionysus sat at the pinochle table in his tiger-striped Hawaiian shirt with his Diet Coke, just as he had on my first day. Chiron sat across the table in his fake wheelchair. They were playing against invisible opponents—two sets of cards hovering in the air. ""Oh, all right," Dionysus relented. "There's one more option. But it's deadly foolishness." Dionysus rose, and the invisible players' cards dropped to the table. "I'm off to Olympus for the emergency meeting. If the boy is still here when I get back, I'll turn him into an Atlantic bottlenose. Do you understand? And Perseus Jackson, if you're at all smart, you'll see that's a much more sensible choice than what Chiron feels you must do."" (Chapter 9, page 133).	 *Percy in Big House with Chiron and Mr. D.*
"Zeus's master bolt," Chiron said, getting worked up now. "The symbol of his power, from which all other lightning bolts are patterned. The first weapon made by the Cyclopes for the war against the Titans, the bolt that sheered the top off Mount Etna and hurled Kronos from his throne; the master bolt, which packs enough power to make mortal hydrogen bombs look like firecrackers." "And it's missing?" "Stolen," Chiron said. "By who?" "By whom," Chiron corrected. Once a teacher, always a teacher. "By you." (Chapter 9, 133 – 139).	""[Chiron] For months now, Zeus and Poseidon have been locked in a dispute over the master bolt. The symbol of Zeus's authority, and it has been stolen." "[Percy] Who stole it?" "[Mr. D] You did." "[Percy] What?" "[Mr. D] Zeus is looking for a thief, sees a forbidden child claimed by his jealous brother… It doesn't look good for you, kid." "[Percy] I didn't do anything." (Episode 2, 00:36:09 – 00:36:33).

The most striking difference between these two scenes is the presence of Mr. D. In the novel, the dialogue about the mission is explained entirely by Chiron while Mr. D has to go to Olympus for an emergency meeting when Percy just arrived.

Although the setting in this scene is the same and there are slight similarities in the dialogue, the difference of one character makes this scene fall into the medium category. Mr. D who remained there during the conversation changed the mood of the scene.

Low (Deleted/Added)

Percy falls into a small river while fighting Clarisse, and a hellhound attacks him, leaving him seriously injured. Annabeth tells him to get back in the water. When the trident, Poseidon's symbol, appears, everyone bows respectfully.

> ""Chiron trotted up next to us, a bow in his hand, his face grim. "Di immortales!" Annabeth said. "That's a hellhound from the Fields of Punishment. They don't…they're not supposed to…" "Someone summoned it," Chiron said. "Someone inside the camp." We watched the body of the hellhound melt into shadow, soaking into the ground until it disappeared. "It is determined," Chiron announced. All around me, campers started kneeling, even the Ares cabin, though they didn't look happy about it."" (Chapter 8, pages 124 – 126).

This is a deleted scene. In the TV series, Annabeth pushes Percy into the lake behind him. As his wounds heal, the sign of Poseidon appears, and Chiron announces who Percy's father is. The part that was removed was when Percy was attacked by hellhounds and the other campers knelt down because he was one of the Big Three.

Conflict

In Conflict there are 5 episodes, namely episodes 3 – 7. The conflict section is the scene where Percy has started his adventure. This category is the category with the most episodes. Here are some examples:

High (Similarities)

Percy achieved victory over Medusa by decapitating her, grappling with the dilemma of what to do with Medusa's head to avoid inflicting harm on others, given that the power from her eyes persisted even after her demise. Percy ultimately resolves to dispatch Medusa's head to Olympus.

Table 2. Percy Send Medusa's Head to Olympus

Novel	TV Series
"I went back to the picnic table, packed up Medusa's head, and filled out a delivery slip: The Gods Mount Olympus 600th Floor, Empire State Building New York, NY With best wishes, PERCY JACKSON "They're not going to like that," Grover warned. "They'll think you're impertinent." I poured some golden drachmas in the pouch. As soon as I closed it, there was a sound like a cash register. The package floated off the table and disappeared with a pop! "I am impertinent," I said." (Chapter 11, pages 186 – 187).	 *Percy wrapped and wrote the address of Olympus on the box containing Medusa's head.* "[Percy] I think I've got a better idea what to do with this." "[Grover] They will see this as impertinent." "[Percy] I am impertinent." (Episode 3, 00:37:26 – 00:38:41).

In the literary works of the novel and the television series, Percy is the character who decapitates Medusa and subsequently sends her to Olympus. A marginal distinction merits attention: in the original novel, opposition to the actions in question is expressed solely by Grover; in contrast, within the series, Annabeth also voices dissent. Dialogue that portrays Percy's character is also referenced in the series.

Medium (Differences)

Hades says that Percy tried to trick him into saying that they didn't take Zeus' Lightning Bolt when the Lighting Bolt was in the bag that Ares had given him that he had been using.

Table 3. Percy Find Zeus Lightning Bolt

Novel	TV Series
"But I don't have your helm. I came for the master bolt." "Which you already possess!" Hades shouted. "You came here with it, little fool, thinking you could threaten me!" "But I didn't!" "Open your pack, then." A horrible feeling struck me. The weight in my backpack, like a bowling ball. It couldn't be.… I slung it off my shoulder and unzipped it. Inside was a two-foot-long metal cylinder, spiked on both ends, humming with energy. "Percy," Annabeth said. "How—" "I—I don't know. I don't understand." "You heroes are always the same," Hades said. "Your pride makes you foolish, thinking you could bring such a weapon before me. I did not ask for Zeus's master bolt, but since it is here, you will yield it to me. I am sure it will make an excellent bargaining tool. And now…my helm. Where is it?" I was speechless. I had no helm. I had no idea how the master bolt had gotten into my backpack. I wanted to think Hades was pulling some kind of trick. Hades was the bad guy. But suddenly the world turned sideways. I realized I'd been played with. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades had been set at each other's throats by someone else. The master bolt had been in the backpack, and I'd gotten the backpack from…"" (Chapter 19, pages 303 – 307).	 *Percy finds Zeus' lightning bolt in Ares' gift bag.* "[Grover] Is this-- -No I mean, it looks like-- It absolutely is not" "[Percy] Okay. So, what is it then?" "[Grover] Yeah, that's the master bolt." "[Percy] I mean, I think so, right?" "[Grover] How is it in your bag?" "[Percy] Wait, this isn't my bag. This is the bag Ares gave me."" (Episode 7, 00:21:01,916 - 00:21:23,208)

There is a significant difference in this scene. In the series, Percy realizes that Zeus' lightning has been in the bag given to him by Ares. He finally concluded that Ares and Hades were working together to steal the lightning. In the novel, Percy learns of the Lightning's existence while

arguing with Hades because Hades accuses him of taking his helmet of darkness. When he realizes that Zeus's lightning bolt is in Ares's bag, Percy immediately realizes that Ares has deceived him. This change in the scene causes many changes to the scene when Percy meets Hades. In the novel, Percy thinks Hades stole Zeus' lightning but it turns out that Hades is a scapegoat and the culprit is Ares. In the series, Percy accuses Ares and Hades of cooperating.

Low (Deleted/Added)

Deleted

Grover flew through the gates of Waterland while Percy and Annabeth climbed in.

“““So how do we get in?” “Maia!” Grover’s shoes sprouted wings. He flew over the fence, did an unintended somersault in midair, then stumbled to a landing on the opposite side. He dusted off his jeans, as if he’d planned the whole thing. “You guys coming?” Annabeth and I had to climb the old-fashioned way, holding down the barbed wire for each other as we crawled over the top. (Scene from novel chapter 15, page 230 – 231. Deleted in series episode 5).

This episode was removed from the series. This scene was deleted due to a change in the previous scene. Grover was supposed to be with them in the Waterland scene, but in the series Grover accompanied Ares to the restaurant so only Annabeth and Percy went to Waterland to find Ares' shield.

Added

Percy and Annabeth Meet Hermes Inside the Lotus Casino. Hermes invited him to speak but it did not go smoothly. Annabeth steals Hermes car keys.

Hermes' encounter with Annabeth and Percy:



Figure 3. Percy and Annabeth meet Hermes at the Lotus Casino.

““Hey, demigods! Welcome! Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen.” “We were sent to find you.” “Well, you found me. Come join us.”” (Additional scenes on Episode 6, 00:13:46 – 00:18:16).



Figure 4. Annabeth Steals Hermes Car Keys.

““Then I feel a lot better about having stolen his keys. Exactly. Wait, what? [Annabeth] Got invisible. Picked his pocket. You picked Hermes's pocket? I'm multi-talented. Now, all we have to do is find his car and it'll instantly transport us anywhere we wanna go. We still have time to finish this quest before the solstice, if we hurry.”” (Additional scenes on Episode 6, 00:18:50 – 00:18:59).

This scene is included in the low fidelity category because of the addition of characters and significant changes to this scene. The similarity is only one thing, the setting scene. However, this whole scene can be said to be different from the novel, especially the appearance of other characters who should appear in the next series if they follow the novel. In addition to the appearance of Hermes in this scene, the addition of a new character named August also makes this scene very much in line with the characteristics of the low category. In addition to this scene, there is also the addition of another character, namely Hephaestus in episode 4, the Waterland scene.

Resolution

There is only one episode in this section, which is episode 8, but in research this episode is no. 1 in total similarities, differences and deleted/added scenes. Here are some examples;

High (Similarities)

Percy fought against Ares; there was a significant difference in strength so Percy bounced and was kicked by Ares.

Table 5. Percy vs Ares

Novel	TV Series
My body thought for me. The water seemed to push me into the air and I catapulted over him, slashing as I came down. But Ares was just as quick. He twisted, and the strike that should’ve caught him directly in the spine was deflected off the end of his sword hilt. He grinned. “Not bad, not bad.” He slashed again and I was forced to jump onto dry land. I tried to sidestep, to get back to the water, but Ares seemed to know what I wanted. He outmaneuvered me, pressing so hard I had to put all my concentration on not getting sliced into pieces. I kept backing away from the surf. I couldn’t find any openings to attack. His sword had a reach several feet longer than *Anaklusmos*. Get in close, Luke had told me once, back in our sword class. When you’ve got the shorter blade, get in close. I stepped inside with a thrust, but Ares was waiting for that. He knocked my blade out of my hands and kicked me in the chest. I went airborne— twenty, maybe thirty feet. I would’ve broken my back if I hadn’t crashed into the soft sand of a dune. (Chapter 20, pages 325 – 329)	 *Percy duels with Ares.* (Episode 8, 00:04:00 – 00:04:58).

The depiction of the fight between Ares and Percy can be said to be appropriate. In the series, it can be seen that Ares is ahead and kicks Percy several times until he is cornered.

Medium (Differences)

When Percy arrives, Zeus looks unhappy but Poseidon tries to calm him down.

Table 6. Poseidon Save Percy

Novel	TV Series
““To my left, Zeus spoke. “Should you not address the master of this house first, boy?” I kept my head down, and waited. “Peace, brother,” Poseidon finally said. His voice stirred my oldest memories: that warm glow I remembered as a baby, the sensation of this god’s hand on my forehead. “The boy defers to his father. This is only right.” “You still claim him then?” Zeus asked, menacingly. “You claim this child whom you sired against our sacred oath?” “I have admitted my wrongdoing,” Poseidon said. “Now I would hear him speak.” Wrongdoing. A lump welled up in my throat. Was that all I was? A wrongdoing? The result of a god’s mistake? “I have spared him once already,” Zeus grumbled. “Daring to fly through my domain…pah! I should have blasted him out of the sky for his impudence.” “And risk destroying your own master bolt?” Poseidon asked calmly. “Let us hear him out, brother.”” (Chapter 21, pages 340 – 341).	 *Zeus wants to attack Percy with a Lightning Bolt but Poseidon holds him back.* ””[Poseidon] I surrender.” “[Zeus] What? I surrender.” “[Poseidon] Take your victory. Just spare my son.” “[Zeus] Your forbidden son… who should have never been born.” “[Poseidon] The same as your Thalia… whose bravery still inspires all demigods. Perseus is one of those heroes and has shown a measure of that bravery today.”” (Episode 8, 00:16:53 – 00:17:35).

Like a continuation of the changes in the previous scene. In this scene that Poseidon should have been around since the beginning of Percy's coming (in the novel), Poseidon appears suddenly to save Percy who is almost on the verge of being enraged by Zeus. In the novel, Poseidon does try to calm Zeus down and make him listen to his son's story. In the series, Poseidon stops an angry Zeus and says he gave up on their war. He declared that Zeus had won.

Low (Deleted/Added)

Deleted

As Percy and Ares duel, the police come and think that Ares is carrying a gun. They also think that Ares is the perpetrator who kidnapped Percy who has been missing for a few weeks.

> ““There, officer!” somebody yelled. “See?” A gruff cop voice: “Looks like that kid on TV…what the heck…” “That guy’s armed,” another cop said. “Call for backup.” I rolled to one side as Ares’s blade slashed the sand. I ran for my sword, scooped it up, and launched a

swipe at Ares's face, only to find my blade deflected again."" (Scene from novel chapter 20, pages 327 – 328. Deleted in series episode 8).

This scene was removed from the series. In the series no one watches them fight, even from the beginning of this scene, there is no one at all around the beach. However, this seems more reasonable considering the weather around them is bad and disaster is hitting due to the fight between Zeus and Poseidon.

Added

Percy asks Luke and Annabeth why Clarisse hasn't been punished. Annabeth and Luke explain the camp situation and try to find another way.



Figure 5. Annabeth, Luke and Percy Talk about Clarisse in the Cabin of Hermes.

""[Percy] Clarisse stole the master bolt." "[Luke] It's complicated." "[Percy] How is it complicated?" "[Luke] Everyone was ready to join the war here. To start fighting each other. An accusation against Clarisse—" "[Annabeth] -Without proof." "[Luke] Exactly. Without proof, it would have lit this whole place on fire. But now you're back. You've stopped the war. You've saved the world. Now, it's safe to tell Chiron and finish cleaning up the mess. I told him we needed to meet him away from the celebration so we can talk without any of Clarisse's supporters noticing." "[Annabeth] I'll keep an eye on Clarisse while you're gone. Make sure she isn't going anywhere. Great. And we'll meet back here."" (Additional scenes on episode 8, 00:22:03 – 00:22:40).

This scene is an addition because some of the previous scenes are also additions. The change in the scene in episode 5 when they declare that Clarisse is the traitor in the camp also changes in episode 8. In the novel, they don't accuse anyone until the truth reveals itself. In this scene, they discuss how to detain Clarisse, who was a suspect at the time. Then when Percy and Luke are in the next setting, it is revealed that the traitor is not Clarisse but Luke.

Overall it can be seen that even quite important scenes like Waterland and Lotus Casino are undergoing changes. Rick Riordan as the writer of the script and the novel said that the script was upgraded according to the existing circumstances and corrected some of the writer's mistakes in writing the novel such as changes in the Gateway Arch scene.

DISCUSSION

The results show that direct author participation does not lead to a verbatim, line-by-line adaptation of a novel for film. Rather, as Vooght (2023) indicates, the author's participation in an adaptation includes the understanding of the adaptation process—particularly concerning the moral rights of the original author—and a fidelity standard that is open to negotiation and reliant on particular contexts. The prevalence of Medium Fidelity scenes (n = 82) indicates that the adaptation

process focused on safeguarding the essential communicative intent of the story rather than adhering to a rigid structural identity.

A clear example of a Medium Fidelity shift occurs in the background module (Episode 2), where the character of Dionysus (Mr. D) remains present during Chiron's mission briefing to Percy. In the novel, this dialogue is handled entirely by Chiron because Mr. D leaves immediately for an emergency meeting on Mount Olympus.

On screen, keeping Mr. D in the room alters the scene's emotional tone, using his sarcastic humor to counter Chiron's serious exposition. It shows how a scene can be structurally modified to establish character relationships more effectively for a viewing audience while keeping the core narrative plot intact.

The Low Fidelity cohort (n = 64) highlights the deliberate structural changes made to adapt the story for an episodic television format. Iconic sequences like the *Waterland* amusement park (Episode 5) and the *Lotus Casino* (Episode 6) were heavily altered. In the Lotus Casino sequence, the series cuts the book's subplot of eating enchanted lotus cookies. Instead, it introduces a new method of dynamic exposure—airborne lotus effects—and adds a brand-new interaction with the god Hermes.

According to Miller (2025), The merit of an original work should not be determined by the degree of fidelity an adaptation shows toward it. This issue remains a frequent topic of debate, centering on the formal concepts that drive cross-disciplinary discussion.. By introducing Hermes earlier in the casino scene, the series creates a logical narrative link for his later role in the story's resolution. This choice demonstrates how long-form television uses interconnected plot elements to create a more cohesive seasonal arc.

Additionally, these changes served a vital pedagogical and psychological purpose for the modern audience. In his production notes, Riordan stated that several screen changes were designed to update the 2005 source material and correct structural pacing issues from the book. For example, removing the sudden *Hellhound* attack at Camp Half-Blood allowed the screen narrative to focus more closely on Percy's emotional reaction to being claimed by Poseidon.

When adapting books into movies, questions about staying true to the original and who really owns the story are still important. The discussion is about whether an adaptation works because it stays close to the original or because it makes something completely new (Witomo, 2023). In the end, this comparison shows that when an author is involved, it really changes how the adaptation process works. An author who gets involved in writing the script can work together to find good solutions that balance the limits of the medium with what the audience wants. The final result shows that adapting a story works better when it keeps the main ideas, character development, and key messages, instead of trying to match the original text word for word.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that direct authorial involvement does not result in a completely literal text-to-screen translation. The comparative analysis of *The Lightning Thief* novel and its television series adaptation reveals that structural changes remain dominant, with medium and low fidelity scenes making up the majority of the screen time. This evidence confirms that long-form television production requires adaptation choices that prioritize thematic and emotional consistency over strict textual adherence. Rick Riordan's active role as a creator allowed the production to modify iconic scenes while successfully preserving the core themes and character arcs of the original fantasy narrative.

Theoretically, this study expands our understanding of adaptation theory by showing that an author's presence can guide creative remediation rather than just enforce textual accuracy. Pedagogically, this research provides a practical framework for literature and language instructors to teach adaptation not as a search for errors, but as a purposeful communicative process. Culturally and institutionally, these findings offer valuable insights for media producers and writers, demonstrating how strategic adjustments can successfully balance the unique demands of a new visual medium with the high expectations of an established fanbase.

The primary limitation of this study is its narrow scope, as it focuses exclusively on the first book of the Percy Jackson series and its corresponding eight-episode first season. Because the television series is designed as an ongoing multi-season project, these conclusions regarding narrative fidelity may not capture how long-term character development and complex subplots evolve in later seasons. Additionally, this study relies on a qualitative text-and-visual analysis, meaning it does not measure audience reception or use quantitative content metrics to track specific dialogue changes.

The research still has many shortcomings. Hopefully, the next researcher can expand the scope of the study so that it can cover more literary works and their adaptations so that they are more representative. In addition, it may be possible to engage readers or viewers to provide reviews through interviews or surveys to enrich the data. Then, in the next research, it is suggested to add other approaches such as combining literary analysis with psychology or cultural studies so that it can provide a new perspective on the phenomenon of adaptation.

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Conflict of Interest

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