



Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)

2026-2027 Set Pieces for Asia Division

Prose Reading

Born in 2013-2014

The Lightning Thief

by Rick Riordan (Adapted Version)

I sat at my desk, trying to focus on the words in front of me, but my attention kept slipping away. Lately, that had become more common. No matter how hard I tried, my thoughts would drift into places I couldn't fully control. It felt like I was constantly missing something important— something everyone else seemed to understand without effort.

People talked as if I was already supposed to know the answers, but I didn't. And no one ever really stopped to explain. At school, teachers expected quick responses.

At home, conversations often ended before anything meaningful was actually said.

It was starting to feel less like confusion and more like being slightly out of sync with everything around me. I leaned back in my chair and stared at the ceiling, thinking. "Why does everything feel like there's a set of rules I was never given?" I muttered quietly. Of course, no one answered. I let out a slow breath and rubbed my forehead. I wasn't trying to be difficult - I just wanted clarity, something solid to hold onto for once.

Most kids worried about normal things like homework, sports, or friends. I kept wondering why my world felt just a little off-balance, like I was always adjusting but never quite catching up. And deep down, I couldn't shake the feeling that this was only the beginning of something I didn't yet understand.