# THE NEXT BIG THING IN HOLLYWOOD WAS CREATED

by a middle school teacher from Texas. To his fans, he's Uncle Rick.

In the crowd of a Los Angeles theater, where Uncle Rick has stopped on his most recent book tour, two teenage sisters gush that they drove for nearly two hours to make it here tonight — longer, when you account for parking — but it was worth it. Like Percy Jackson, the character that made Uncle Rick famous, the older sister has ADHD, while the younger sister never liked reading. And Percy also landed in Los Angeles on his very first quest. So by the logic set out in Uncle Rick's books, these girls were born to be heroes.

"Here's what I think is gonna happen," the 15-year-old whispers. "He's gonna pull me out of the audience and say, 'I want you in my show.'" Her sister scans the room and takes stock of all the adult fans present; they grew up on Uncle Rick's work, too, and their excitement to see him rivals that of the pubescents they're sandwiched between. "He's still alive," the 17-year-old reasons, though Rick is only 59, "and people will still pay $60 a ticket to come see him."

**Rick Riordan published** "Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" in 2005. The book introduces 12-year-old Percy, who discovers that the monsters and demon-eyed teachers who have plagued him his whole life aren't figments of his imagination: He's a demigod, it turns out — the child of a human woman and the water god Poseidon — and the Greek myths he grew up

**Leah Sava Jeffries**

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Age 14

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Hometown Detroit, Mich.

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Among Jeffries' credits are a six-episode run on "Empire" and a role in the Idris Elba-led thriller "Beast."

Jeffries loved living in Vancouver while shooting "Percy Jackson and the Olympians," but struggled with Canada's lack of Target, Taco Bell and Funyuns. "When you travel from country to country, at the airport they're like, 'Did you bring any food over here?' And I'm like, 'Nah.' Then I open my suitcase for a bag of chips," she says. "Thankfully, McDonald's is in Canada, because I would have cried."

*Peter Yang*

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