



UNIVERSITAT  
POLITÈCNICA  
DE VALÈNCIA



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Faculty of Fine Arts

Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream: Concept Art for an  
Animated Adaptation

End of Degree Project

Bachelor's Degree in Design and Creative Technologies

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ACADEMIC YEAR: 2023/2024

## RESUMEN

En este proyecto ejecutamos parte del desarrollo visual de un cortometraje de animación que conmemora el vigésimo aniversario de Percy Jackson y los dioses del Olimpo, una serie de Rick Riordan que entrelaza la mitología griega con la vida moderna. El trabajo consiste en el desarrollo de los personajes y los *props*, adaptándolos a la animación mediante la visión personal del *concept artist*. El arte final se centra en Annabeth Chase y pone a prueba su potencial como protagonista a la hora de explorar el trauma de la postguerra y la salud mental. Los resultados finales incluyen el arte conceptual de personajes, la exploración de *props* e ilustraciones conceptuales que guían al espectador por el arco narrativo.

**Palabras clave:** Desarrollo visual, diseño de personajes, props, mitología, animación, libro, preproducción.

## SUMMARY

In this project we execute part of the visual development of an animated short film commemorating the 20th anniversary of Percy Jackson and the Olympians, a series by Rick Riordan that intertwines Greek mythology with modern life. The focus is on the development of characters and props, tailoring them to animation through the concept artist's distinctive view of the story. The final artwork draws attention to Annabeth Chase and tests her potential as a focal point for exploring post-war trauma and mental health. The deliverables include character concept art, prop exploration, and conceptual illustrations that guide the audience through the narrative arc.

**Key Words:** Visual development, character design, props, mythology, animation, book, pre-production.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First, a big thanks to all the storytellers and visionaries who fuel my imagination and allow me to temporarily escape reality.

Secondly, to the demigods of my inner circle, thank you for existing and making this messed up world a little easier to live in.

Lastly, thank you to my tutor, Sara, for encouraging me and doing her best to guide me towards the finish line.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This final undergraduate project involves the visual development of characters for a 2D animated short story. *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* is a narrative expansion of the series developed by us to celebrate *Percy Jackson and the Olympians'* 20th anniversary. This idea presents a unique opportunity to reconnect with older fans who grew up reading the books and have matured beyond the typical target audience.

*Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* deviates from the traditional action-packed quests to explore themes of psychological conflict and mental health within the Percy Jackson universe, the weight of Annabeth Chase's experiences manifesting in dreams and hallucinations. Through her, we provide a relatable yet mythological experience that addresses emotional repression and the difficulty of seeking help, even from those you should trust.

This project is ongoing, and for my undergraduate thesis it exclusively undertakes the process of character concept, accompanied by a key prop and a few illustrations that provide context and atmosphere. The resulting artwork of this project is presented as a conceptual exploration, intended as a possible stylistic direction if this concept's production were to be considered further.

## 1.1 JUSTIFICATION

The origins of this story lie with Rick Riordan's son, who harboured a deep interest in Greek mythology and faced difficulties in school due to ADHD and Dyslexia. To comfort him and recognize the struggles of other children with learning disabilities, Riordan crafted a protagonist that mirrored his son's experiences. We spent most of our youth with undiagnosed ADHD and inexplicably lonely, despite the number of friends we had. When we were introduced to *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* saga through Book Club, it became a source of comfort and fixation for many years.

2023 officially marked ten years of reading *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. To celebrate the occasion and express our love for the series we incorporated it into our final undergraduate project. Beyond personal sentiment, we sought to grow as artists by challenging our weakness, perfectionism. Unlike character design, which tends to be more technical and polished, concept art prioritizes the idea and embraces a less constrained approach. As perfectionists, we tend to be detail-oriented, making drawing loosely and quickly sound like a nightmare and a jab at our self-esteem. By focusing on the broader strokes and essence of the artwork, we wanted to develop a more flexible and creative mindset, which is crucial to thrive in the animation/video game industry.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

### *General objectives*

- Apply the knowledge learned during our studies to this self-commissioned project
- Create visually compelling artwork (concept art) that contributes to the foundation for the look and feel of an animated production, through the exploration of characters and their key features.

### *Specific objectives*

- Apply your creative vision while maintaining essential aspects of the original series intact.
- Produce at least two illustrations that effectively communicate the story's mood and genre.
- Develop a story that extends the Percy Jackson saga.
- Carry out the necessary research and documentation based on the analysis of the books and other references.
- Create characters with memorable features that reflect their role or personality.
- Choose one or more props, design them and illustrate their function
- Design a narrative concept and character presentation dossier.

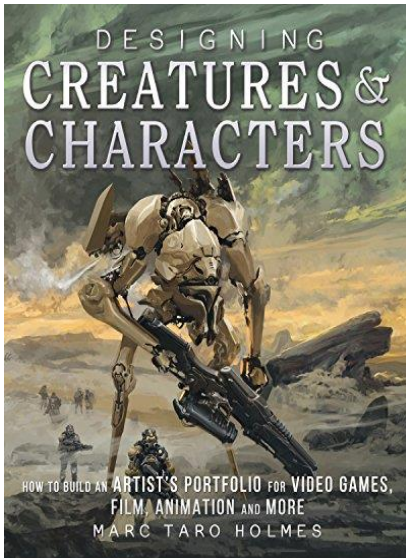


Figure 1 Front cover of the book *Designing Creatures and Characters* by Marc Taro Holmes

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this project we mainly employed a methodology based on the knowledge we have acquired during our studies and the book *Designing Creatures & Characters: How to Build an Artist's Portfolio for Video Games, Film, Animation, and More* by Marc Taro Holmes. Our methodology is divided into the following five steps:

- **Investigation:** Ensure you have a solid grasp of the idea behind the project. Determine the setting, time and take note of the narrative elements you need to portray in your artwork and their key attributes. Collect a diverse range of references related to your subject matter before moving forward; these references can be photographic, artistic, cultural, or historical.
- **Ideation:** Brainstorm and sketch as many ideas as possible so that you can determine the best approach. (Holmes, 2016, p.16). Don't change the original idea but do your best to improve any aspects of the story you feel are lacking. (Holmes, 2016, p.30).
- **Definition:** Create clear and descriptive drawings of your characters and props. You can provide any additional information using supplementary sketches such as callouts or exploded views. If relevant, you can include variations of the same design, such as a character sporting different hairstyles or a different set of armor. (Holmes, 2016, pp.74-76).
- **Motion:** Draw your characters and how they behave. Pose sheets, expression sheets and sequential images are the key to portraying a character's personality (Holmes, 2016, pp.106-111). Additionally, as Taro Holmes mentioned in his book: "We can also use storyboards and pose sheets to preempt future problems that nobody has yet anticipated." (2016, p.104).
- **Illustration:** After providing a series of concepts, presentation drawings and informative sketches, you need to wrap up your presentation with a finished piece that will sell your vision to the producers (Holmes, 2016, p.146). Marc Taro Holmes encourages us to "Think in terms of solid forms and lighting, rather than the valuable-but-obsessive focus on intricate detail in a drawing." This last step will set the scene with finished illustrations that use the basic principles of composition, shapes, and lighting to bring the emotions of your story to life (Holmes, 2016, pp.146-153).

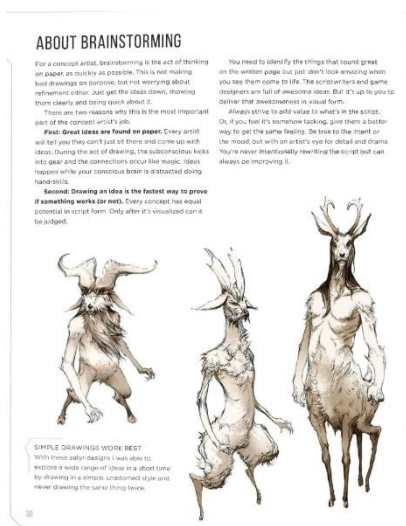


Figure 2 Chapter 1 (Ideation) from *Designing Creatures & Characters* by Marc Taro Holmes



## 4. THEORETICAL CONTEXT

### 3.1 VISUAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPT ART

Visual development is the process of exploring and defining the look and feel of an animated film (Walt Disney Animation Studios, n.d.). The outcome of this stage is an array of conceptual artwork which will either be discarded or used as a blueprint for production (Holmes, 2016, p.8). A Visual Development Artist is specific to the animation or television industry, while a Concept Artist is more general.



Figure 3 Early concept art for *Raya and the Last Dragon* by Armand Serrano.



Figure 4 Concept Art by Shiyoon Kim for *Raya and The Last Dragon*

An important aspect of this phase is answering questions about characters, the objects that relate to them or the aspects of their world. For example, do they have magical abilities? How do they behave? It is important to consider things like their clothing and how it reflects the character's personality, profession or environment. (Walt Disney Animation Studios, n.d.). Concept art can range from character sketches to descriptive functional drawings to fully rendered art, as we can see in some examples in the visual development of Disney's *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

### 3.2 PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS

#### 3.2.1 Plot

*Percy Jackson and the Olympians* is a five-book fantasy series created by Rick Riordan that presents a setting in which Greek mythology and modern society



Figure 5 *Percy Jackson*. Art by Viktoria Ridzel.



Figure 6 Percy Jackson leaving Olympus by John Rocco

coexist. The series commences with the introduction of Percy Jackson, who discovers he is a demigod after facing a mythological monster during a classroom field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Riordan, 2005). Over the saga, Percy Jackson and his friends embark on a series of quests, all leading up to a final battle to protect New York City from a powerful titan and his army (Riordan, 2009).

### 3.2.2 World

For those who are unaware, "Greek mythology" refers to a collection of myths originating in ancient Greece. These stories provided insight into the origins of humanity and the natural world. Greek mythology was intimately connected to the lives of the Ancient Greeks, serving as a foundation for their art, drama, religious practices, and social customs (Cartwright, 2012).

*Percy Jackson and the Olympians* takes place in contemporary New York but operates under the premise that the Gods and Creatures of Greek Mythology are real and exist alongside the human world. Many aspects of this magical world are concealed from most mortals with an invisible veil known as "the Mist." This magical force allows things to pass undetected by hiding their true nature in a manner familiar to mortals, such as disguising a chimera as a chihuahua (Riordan, 2005, pp. 205-208).

The Greek gods and their home, Mount Olympus, follow the centre of power in western civilization. Currently they are situated above the Empire State Building in New York City. This place is accessible through an elevator that takes you to the 600<sup>th</sup> floor. The Gods often mingle with mortals, establishing relationships and eventually procreating with them. These relationships result in the birth of demigods, the protagonists of these books.



Figure 7 Camp Half-Blood from the Graphic Novel of *The Lightning Thief*

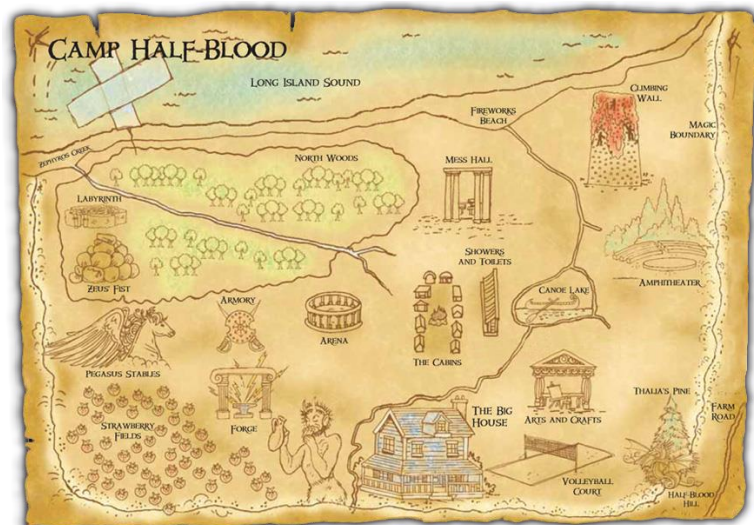


Figure 8 Map of Camp Half-Blood from Rick Riordan's official website



Figure 9 Annabeth Chase. Art by Viktoria Ridzel.



Figure 10 Annabeth Chase Poster from the live action series of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*

Monsters can track demigods by their scent, which means they are always in danger. Before reaching adolescence, these children experience a moment of discovery, usually through confrontations with these monsters (Riordan, 2005, pp.86-96). Once they are aware of their identity, they either run away or are taken to a facility known as Camp Half-Blood, a place where they can live and train their abilities. Demigods tend to have short lifespans. They are often sent on quests to resolve conflicts or retrieve magical objects, whether they want to or not. Only some of them stay at Camp Half-Blood full time, while others remain for the summer and then return to their “normal” lives (Riordan, 2005, pp. 96-97).

### 3.2.3 Annabeth Chase

Annabeth Chase is a character that plays a significant role throughout *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, as one of the main characters, Percy Jackson’s close friend and as of the last book, his girlfriend. She is introduced as the demigod daughter of Athena, Goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare. Annabeth is portrayed as incredibly intelligent and strong. Throughout the series, she proves to be an efficient problem solver and an outstanding leader. She tends to be guarded and cautious due to her past but is fiercely loyal to those who earn her trust. She is very ambitious and has a strong desire to prove herself, both as an intelligent young woman and as someone worthy of her mother’s approval (Riordan, 2005). Due to her strained relationship with her mortal family, Annabeth has become incredibly self-reliant and independent. She ran away from home at the age of 7 and spent most of her life in Camp Half-Blood. (Riordan, 2009)

In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, every major character is stated to have a fatal flaw, which is defined as a characteristic that could lead to their downfall. Annabeth’s fatal flaw is hubris, an excessive pride in her intelligence and her abilities. Due to this, she is often blinded to potential risks and alternative options when it comes to strategy. Although she is not as impulsive as Percy, she has occasional moments where her emotions cloud her judgement (Riordan, 2007). Beneath the tough exterior is a teenage girl who has a fear of failure and believes she can fix anything if she tries hard enough (Riordan, 2009).

### 3.2.4 Adaptations

*Percy Jackson and the Olympians* has been adapted into three different formats: Two live action films, graphic novels, a musical and a live action animation. One might think four adaptations are more than enough, but based on pure observation, many fans don’t seem to agree.



## 5. DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 BRIEFING

#### 4.1.1 Project Overview

**Title:** *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream*

**Genre:** Fantasy and Mild psychological horror<sup>i</sup>

**Target:** PG-13. Directed to older teens/young adult fans of the books.

**Theme:** Mental health challenges of being a demigod.

**Synopsis:** After surviving the war with Kronos<sup>ii</sup>, Annabeth Chase struggles to adjust to life at boarding school. She throws herself into her studies, hoping to push away her unease regarding the end of the war and the new prophecy. However, as her emotions infiltrate her daily life, she finds herself unable to ignore the past. Caught between slipping grades and inner turmoil, Annabeth must make the daunting choice to let her repressed feelings come to light.

**Purpose:** An animated short for the 20th anniversary of Percy Jackson and the Olympians. An introspective view of the demigod experience that explores the manifestation of trauma in their lives.

**Setting:** New York City, Annabeth's Boarding School.

**Protagonist:** Annabeth Chase

#### 4.1.2 Task Overview

**Description:** *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* is a standalone animated film set after the events of *The Last Olympian*. It is currently in its early development phase, which you will be contributing to. You are tasked with Character Development. Your primary objective is to explore and conceptualize both the protagonist and antagonist of this story.

**Your task:** Explore and conceptualize Annabeth Chase's character, illustrate the personification of Annabeth's emotions and trauma in the form of either nightmares, or hallucinations.

**Task Objectives:**

- Character Concept: Create a series of conceptual drawings of Annabeth Chase that highlight her key attributes—physical, emotional, stylistic or otherwise.
- Conceptual Illustrations: Create at least one conceptual illustration that establishes the film’s atmosphere and tone.
- Extra: Include any extra artwork you consider essential for us to understand your interpretation of the story.

**Art Direction:**

- Tone: Serious and intense, with moments of lightness and comedy.
- Style: Create artwork that blends realistic and stylized elements, providing a hand-crafted and expressive style.
- Color: Utilize color strategically to reflect and contrast Annabeth's emotions in the antagonist.
- References: It is essential you research the books to acquire knowledge of the original books. Using existing artwork or adaptations of the books as a reference is optional.

**Deliverables:**

- A series of digital illustrations of Annabeth Chase highlighting her key attributes (physical, emotional, and stylistic).
- At least one digital illustration establishing the film’s atmosphere and tone.
- Extra digital artwork of essential elements and their relevance in the story.
- Along with art you will need to provide notes and sketches that document your creative process and the rationale behind key decisions.

**Deadlines:** All tasks must be completed within 6 months, with the following feedback milestones:

- February 1st, 2024
- April 1st, 2024
- June 1st, 2024
- July 1st, 2024



Figure 11 Screenshot of *The Spider-Verse*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

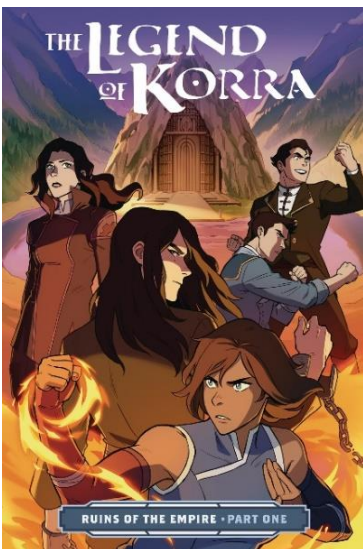


Figure 12 *The Legend of Korra: Ruins of the Empire Part One*, Comic Cover



Figure 13 Fanart by Mary Kirkland

## 4.2 PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

### 4.2.1 *Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse*

*Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse* is an animated superhero film produced by Sony Pictures Animation and Columbia Pictures in partnership with Marvel Entertainment. The plot follows Miles Morales, a teenager from Brooklyn, as he navigates being the new Spider-Man (Sony Pictures, 2019). It is a fact that both this film and the Percy Jackson books are set in New York City, but there are other notable parallels between Miles' life and that of a demigod. In both cases, one must balance two conflicting lifestyles and exist under the constant threat of danger, which can seriously impact mental health. This can be seen in *The Spider Within: A Spider-verse Story*, a film that outlines the weight of Miles' responsibilities and their effect on his mental health.

Besides narrative similarities, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse* and *Across the Spider-verse* also proved to be a useful for studying color and composition. We investigated the art books<sup>iii</sup> of the films and took note of their approach to concept art, especially the early development sketches.

### 4.2.2 *Avatar the Last Airbender and The Legend of Korra*

*The Avatar: The Last Airbender* series and its sequel, *The Legend of Korra*, are two action-fantasy narratives set in a shared universe and part of a multimedia franchise created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan. In our project, the overall visuals of this franchise served as a stylistic reference, especially *The Legend of Korra* since it has a clearer depiction of mature themes, directed at the fans who matured past the target audience of its predecessor. The comic books as well as the art books were used to study the art style and to gain insight into the creative process.

### 4.2.3 *Independent Artists: Ami Thompson and Mary Kirkland*

Ami Thompson is an art director, animator and visual development artist who has participated in *Spiderman: Across the Spider-verse*, *Ponyo*, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, and more. She has made conceptual art for the visual development of Disney's *Raya and The Last Dragon*, which we have used as an inspiration for this project. Mary Kirkland, or Miithers on Instagram, is a visual development and freelance artist we have followed for a few years. Though not as

experienced as Ami Thompson, their eye for colour and the flow of their lines is incredible. Both artists have influenced our line work and coloring techniques.



Figure 14 Art by Ami Thompson

#### 4.2.4 The Line Animation Studio

The Line Animation Studio is a London-based studio specializing in 2D animation. They have released both branded and original content, each one with its own unique visuals, but all characterized by the studio's dynamic animation. We were particularly captivated by *Die for You*, an animated music video they produced for Riot Games. In this production, The Line uses visual metaphors to dive into the psyche of each character and how their minds portray their greatest fears (The Line Animation Studio, n.d.), which inspired our take on Annabeth's trauma being the main antagonist of the story. Other works such as *Delivery at Dawn*, and *Azuki Elementals* are also stylistic references worthy of mention.

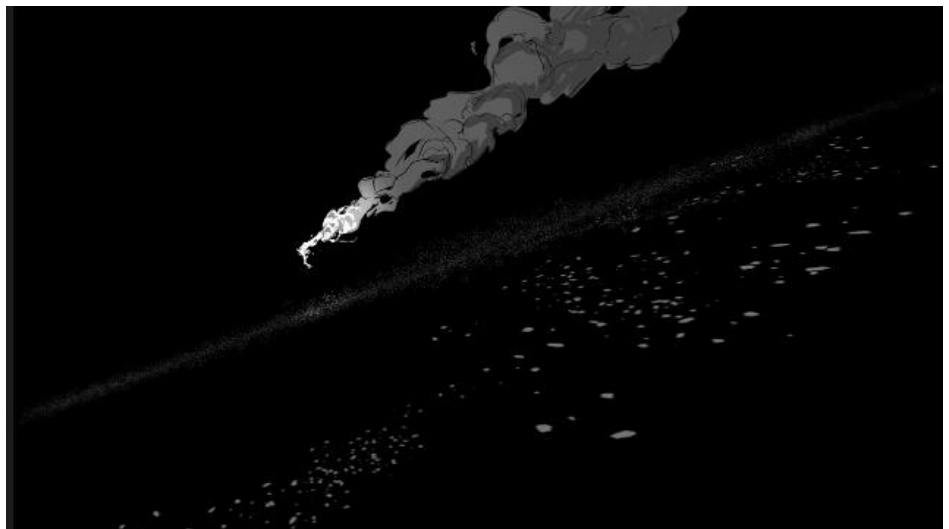


Figure 15 Artwork from the development of "Die for you" by The Line Animation



Figure 16 Screenshot of the film "Crimson Peak" by Guillermo del Toro



Figure 17 Screenshot of the film "Pan's Labyrinth" by Guillermo del Toro.



Figure 18 Screenshots of the series "Arcane: League of Legends" by Fortiche and Riot Games

#### 4.2.5 Guillermo del Toro

Guillermo del Toro is an award-winning Mexican filmmaker and author responsible for renowned films such as *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Shape of Water*. Del Toro's cinematography is known for using contrasting concepts in his work; Life vs Death, Monstrous vs Humane (*The Museum of Modern Art*, 2022), etc. What initially drew us to Del Toro was how he depicted themes of psychology and fantasy, focusing on imperfection and religious motifs. In an interview for *Sci-Fi Weekly*, Del Toro (2006) said the following about one of his films:

*"I think The Devil's Backbone was trying to say that anything pending, including the civil war, which has never completely healed in Spain, is a ghost, anything pending is a ghost. And what better way to say that than with what the movie says, "What is a ghost?" Is it something that seems alive, or a tragedy doomed to repeat itself over and over again, like the war, and so forth?"*

His perception of the word "ghost" as well as the unique atmosphere and look of films like *Pan's Labyrinth*, greatly affected our decisions in visualizing the antagonist of this story as well as the parallelism of monstrous vs. humane in one of our illustrations.

#### 4.2.6 Arcane: League of Legends

*Arcane: League of Legends* is an animated series created by Christian Linke and Alex Yee. The series was produced by Fortiche, in collaboration with Riot Games, and premiered on Netflix on November 6, 2021. It is an adaptation of *League of Legends*, a video game developed and published by Riot Games. The plot surrounds Vi and Jinx, two sisters who find themselves on opposite sides of a conflict after the theft of a powerful magical artifact.

In *Arcane*, Jinx and Vi's inner conflicts are depicted in both a captivating and disturbing manner. Jinx sees her siblings Vi, Mylo, and Claggor taunt her and follow her. They appear sporadically, which means often she is unable to think without her emotions getting in the way. This causes her to make a wrong decision at every turn. Vi on the other hand, hallucinates her sister and her adoptive father in moments of extreme pain. Our concept of repressed emotions coming alive through a visible image/hallucination can be seen heavily inspired by this show.



## 4.3 DEVELOPMENT

### 4.3.1 Prompt

The title *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* comes from the ancient Greek term “Melas Oneiros” meaning Black Dream, or Nightmare. This prompt was inspired by the phrase “living in a waking nightmare”, which typically means being stuck in a real situation that feels as unsettling as a nightmare. The story is set in New York City, mainly Annabeth’s Boarding school, a few weeks after the start of the school year. Annabeth is a character that uses logic and reasoning as a coping mechanism to deal with most things. In this storyline she faces an enemy she cannot defeat with logic or weapons, her trauma. Trauma can be messy and irrational, to heal it you must look beyond why you think it is there. According to trauma therapist Jessica Trainor (2024):

*“Trauma resides in the deepest corners of our psyche, where emotions run wild and unchecked. It’s not something you can neatly package into a logical framework and expect to resolve with a simple equation. Healing from trauma requires us to navigate the murky waters of our emotions – the fear, the anger, the sadness – without the safety net of logic to guide us.”*

*Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* sets the main character on a journey to feel her emotions rather than avoid or intellectualize them. Unfortunately, it takes a bit of psychological horror to get her there. Our main antagonist is a hallucination that embodies Annabeth’s repressed trauma. The plot ultimately leads our protagonist to a critical realization: Healing is a process that cannot be achieved by logic alone. To start brainstorming the concept art for this, we had to write down key aspects of the story and its characters. We conducted a literary analysis of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* to attain valuable information on Annabeth’s characterization<sup>iv</sup> and background. We also watched media with similar themes, to observe different portrayals of psychological topics in animation and live action. Using notes from our analysis, we collected references and composed mood boards to have a clear artistic direction.

### 4.3.1 Annabeth Chase

#### 4.3.1.1. Investigation and ideation

Annabeth in the books has a slender, athletic body accompanied by tanned skin and long blonde hair, set in “princess curls”. She has been at camp since the age of seven and is currently 16, so we can safely assume that after



Figure 19 Actress Leah Sava Jeffries

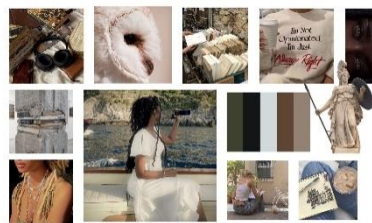


Figure 20 Annabeth mood board

approximately 9 years of physical training and her proficiency in multiple fighting techniques, she would be physically strong.

When thinking about her anatomy, we wanted to incorporate the rules of shape language. In character design, squares represent strength and reliability, while circles represent friendliness and femininity. We liked the idea of an overall rectangular shape since she is a grounded character, by adding in circles as well, we managed to strike a balance between her strength and curious intellectuality. It was at this stage that we made a crucial decision for Annabeth's overall design. We wanted to combine Annabeth's official art from the books with the actress who portrays Annabeth in the live-action television series of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*.

In the books, Annabeth grew up underestimated because she was a blonde, and in the 2000s there was a stereotype that all blondes were dumb. Even though Annabeth in the live-action series is portrayed by a black actress, black women are also severely underestimated in our society. By combining these two facts, we bring another level of relatability to her character.

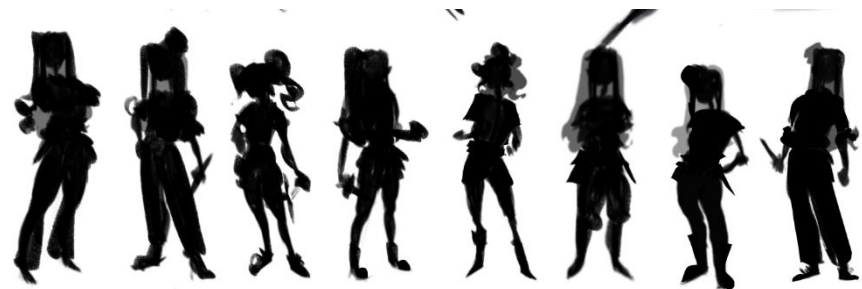


Figure 21 Annabeth Chase silhouettes

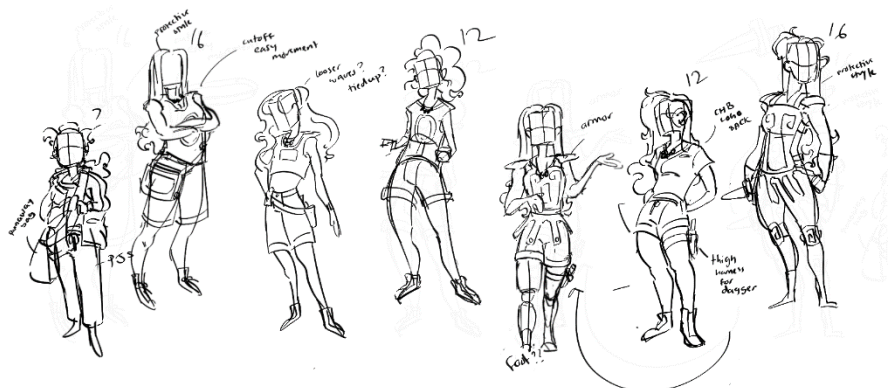


Figure 22 Annabeth Chase ideation sketches

Her features proved to be both a challenge and an area for more creative freedom. Although her official art can be considered book-accurate to some degree, it lacks individuality and expressiveness. Animation is a dynamic and fun medium of entertainment, to adapt her to this format we needed to stylize her



Figure 23 Annabeth Chase face exploration

further. A new technique we had been experimenting with was using animals as a tool for the stylization of human characters. It was imperative to make Annabeth recognizable, but we needed something to help us make her design unique and symbolic. Annabeth is the daughter of Athena, so using an owl as a reference seemed like an obvious choice. The owl is one of Athena's sacred animals, it represents wisdom and independence. There are many species of owls with a diverse set of characteristics, both physical and behavioral. To choose the correct one as a reference for Annabeth, we investigated and narrowed down our choice to the barn owl.

The barn owl is a species of owl that lives in almost all the regions of the world, except the polar and the desert. This owl is a highly efficient predator due to its near-silent flight, keen eyesight, and exceptional hearing. It hovers slowly with minimal effort, giving it time to listen and observe its prey. Barn owls have a unique heart-shaped facial disc that redirects sound to their ears, making them apex predators even in total darkness. Barn Owls tend to be solitary and secretive, according to Regan and McClure (2018): "They can be difficult to survey".

Our protagonist, Annabeth, is a tactical fighter. Like the Barn owl, she is organized and cautious, preferring to observe before attacking. Similarly to the owl, Annabeth Chase can be secretive, hiding her true feelings behind annoyance and anger. Physically, you can pinpoint a few similarities between this bird and our main character. They both have tan and sandy blonde in their overall complexion and a gaze that can often frighten humans. The gaze of an owl can seem both curious and intimidating at the same time. In *The Lightning Thief*, Percy Jackson described Annabeth's gaze as "Pretty, but intimidating, too, as if she were analyzing the best way to take me down in a fight." (Riordan, 2005, pp.63-64). Before drawing more versions of her, we conducted an artistic study



Figure 24 Barn owl art study and exploration

on the Barn owl's appearance and behavior. Art studies of real-life subjects can widen your mental library. We considered it would be the best way to be able to freely apply the owl's features to Annabeth's design later.

#### 4.3.1.2. Definition and Motion

To define and decide her final features, we drew cleaner sketches. In these, we try to incorporate different call outs of clothing, hairstyles, and facial features and poses.

Expressions and poses are essential to the conceptualization of a character. In visual development, artists use them to explore how your character's personality shines through their design and their behavior. This stage can be considered a test of the concept art's dynamism and functionality. After all, you don't know how well your art will work until you animate it. (Holmes, 2016, p.104). We did some explorations of her personality through poses and studies of her facial features before moving on to the final concept.



Figure 25 Annabeth attitude and pose sketches

#### 4.3.1.3. Final Concept

Considering Annabeth's logical nature, it would only make sense for her long hair to be tied up and out of the way, but for individuality and style, we left one or two strands of hair to form a heart-shaped silhouette on her forehead. Annabeth's nose is long, flat, and pointed, simulating the Barn Owl's side profile. Her lips often jut out like a beak and her eyes are round, accompanied

by a pair of eyebrows that easily morph her gaze from friendly to serious. We conducted an in-depth exploration of these features in a series of different angles, placed logically to resemble both an expression sheet and a turnaround.



Figure 26 Annabeth Expression sheet with head turnaround

In addition, we illustrated a page of Annabeth's final concept, wearing her school uniform and her hair in different ways. These drawings also have a bit of her life incorporated. We can see her in class correcting someone, in her school uniform getting dressed, and directing a judgmental look, probably to her boyfriend.



Figure 27 Annabeth Final Concept



### 4.3.2 Miasma: Personification of Annabeth's trauma

#### 4.3.2.1 Investigation and Ideation

The deuteragonist and antagonist of our story is a ghost-like character that represents Annabeth Chase's repressed trauma. This character is a parasitic hallucination called Miasma, which is an ancient Greek word meaning "stain" or "pollution". Among demigods, emotional avoidance can be dangerous and inadvertently lead to spiritual pollution. A Miasma latches on to those with high amounts of unaddressed emotions like a parasite and appears as a hallucination or in nightmares. To Annabeth, Miasma appears as a hallucination, a nightmarish image of herself, leaving her face to face with an unyielding reminder of her flaws.

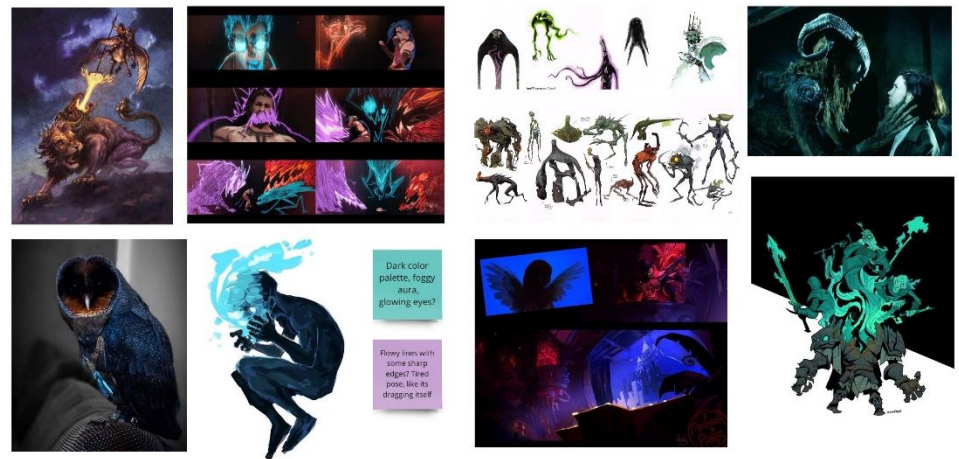


Figure 28 Miasma Moodboard

Miasma is not an enemy she can permanently hurt or kill, and the longer she takes to address why it is there, the more aggressively it affects her. The only way for a demigod to get rid of Miasma is to navigate their emotions, seek human connection, and make peace with it. Although it may seem simple, some people are too stubborn to try or may not even know how they truly feel.



Figure 29 Miasma Silhouettes



Figure 30 Ancient Greek Pottery Art



Figure 31 Miasma Rough Sketches

Given that Miasma mirrors Annabeth's psyche, we wanted it to look like a disproportionate and obscure version of her. We drew influence from the Druun from *Raya and the Last Dragon* and Jinx's hallucinations from *Arcane*. After creating a mood board, we began rough sketching. As you can observe, the figures are slightly disproportionate in comparison to Annabeth's body, come more than others. We came up with the idea of it being armed and dressed like an ancient Greek warrior to parallel Annabeth's guarded nature. Since trauma is chaotic, irrational, and ever-changing we wanted to explore a variety of forms this hallucination could take.

All these forms followed our original idea of Annabeth as a warrior, but we experimented with the design by drawing her at different ages or with different proportions. It was interesting to see how we could combine the barn owl and the serpent, two of Athena's sacred animals, into the Miasma. Some variations have talons instead of hands or feet, while others have feathers protruding from their body or their helmet. As a form of embellishment, we used the style of Ancient Greek pottery and added swirls to the character's articulations.

#### 4.3.2.2 Definition

Although the idea of a monstrous hybrid between the animals and Annabeth seemed appealing at first, we ultimately decided its shape would remain human-

like. We wanted this character to feel unsettling, a character haunted by the memories of the past. Out of all our explorations we liked one with a more triangular silhouette. In shape language, it is common to associate triangles with villains, but in this case, I wanted to use it for Miasma's overall body type. When a character is drawn in a triangular shape with a flat base at the bottom, it signifies stability. On the other hand, an upside-down triangle that stands on one of its points communicates instability. When emotions are unaddressed over the years problems start to pile up. This can affect the way you behave towards yourself and others. Similarly to Jinx's hallucinations, we wanted Miasma to interfere in our protagonist's life sporadically. It is like an intrusive thought, unwanted and uncontrollable.



Figure 32 Miasma Conceptual Exploration

#### 4.3.2.3 Final Concepts



Figure 33 Miasma form exploration





Figure 34 Miasma final concept: Line



Figure 35 Miasma final concept: Color

Contrary to its form, we wanted its color palette to symbolize something more otherworldly and monstrous. We started with a base of mostly monotone colors, then proceeded to pile up different stains of other colors, each with its psychological contribution. We took different events from Annabeth's past and the possible trauma they could have inflicted upon her, assigning a color to each one and then attempting multiple combinations. Through this exploration of color, we attained a conceptual design of miasma that resembled a corpse, hidden away and rotten. Miasma has a dark blue base with patches of an unsaturated light green, black, and a wine red. The location of each color on the body was fully intentional.

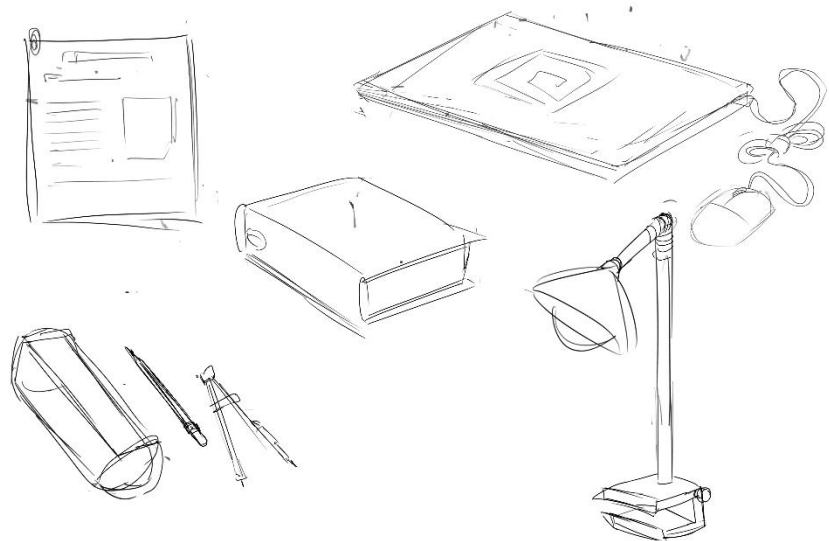
The splashes of green surrounding Miasma's face represent Annabeth's personality type. Green is often associated with knowledge seekers and strategic thinkers. By using an unsaturated green, and lightly staining Miasma's body with it, we wanted to communicate how this entity is intolerant to reason and strategy. Logic can be used to deal with it temporarily, but it does not always work on its own. Miasma's hands are stained with a deep red color from the middle of its bicep to the tips of its fingers. As mentioned previously, red tends to symbolize violence and war. It evokes strong emotions in people, ranging from aggression and danger to love and passion. We decided to use this color on miasma's arms and hands to symbolize "the responsibility of one's actions" or "the power in one's hands". In the past, Annabeth has put others and herself in danger due to decisions motivated by her love for others rather than her logic. One example is when she is tricked by Luke, someone she loved who betrayed her, into holding the weight of the sky. (Riordan, 2007). It serves as a cruel reminder of her past mistakes but also a reminder of the sacrifices she made for those she loved. Finally, the blue foundation of miasma's body symbolizes truth and spirituality. A character that embodies Annabeth's emotions and gives us a visual example of the suffering that comes with being a demigod.



Figure 36 Miasma Color Variation

### 4.3.3 Props

In the world of Percy Jackson, there are a myriad of mythological props. Nevertheless, the story is located outside of that world and centered on Annabeth's mortal life. Throughout the film, we see more of her room and school, which means more ordinary props and less magical ones. However, we wanted to find a way to connect a prop from Percy Jackson and the Olympians to the themes of the story. Since the message of the story is "Feel your emotions and talk to other people about them", we wanted to bring to life a prop that symbolizes communication and human connection.



*Figure 37 Daily prop exploration: rough sketches*

#### 4.3.3.1 The Drachma

Historically, the ancient drachma was a coin from ancient Greece, it was made mostly of silver, with the occasional use of gold, electrum, copper alloy, and bronze. In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, the Drachma is a golden coin used as the main unit of currency in the mythological world. In chapter 10 of *The Lightning Thief*, Rick Riordan (2005) states that they are "as big as Girl Scout cookies" with "images of various Greek Gods stamped on one side, and the



Figure 38 The Ancient Greek Drachma from Knossos

Empire State Building on the other”. Every city in ancient Greece would create its version of the drachma (Cartwright, 2016). To determine the most common characteristics of these ancient Greek coins we collected images and conducted a study of coinage from Athens, Aegina, Massalia, Knossos, Delos, and more. Subsequently, these became our main references for our prop exploration of the Drachma in this story.



Figure 39 Ancient Greek Drachma Reference Study

First, we designed two direct and literal concepts of the front of the Drachma. One with the Empire State Building’s uppermost part, embraced by a laurel wreath, and another with the Empire State Building from afar, with two elevator buttons on the sides. Our third and favorite version of the frontal stamp of the drachma is an abstract take on the door to the Empire State Building, joined by two circles that represent the up-and-down buttons of the elevator that takes you to Mount Olympus. To create the symbol, we took shapes from the main entrance to the Empire State and rearranged them to form a square in the center of the coin. This design is not only simpler but also more similar the traditional designs of original drachmas from ancient Greece. The fact that it’s not so explicitly referencing the Empire State, unlike the version from the books, is more visually appealing and would be easier to animate.

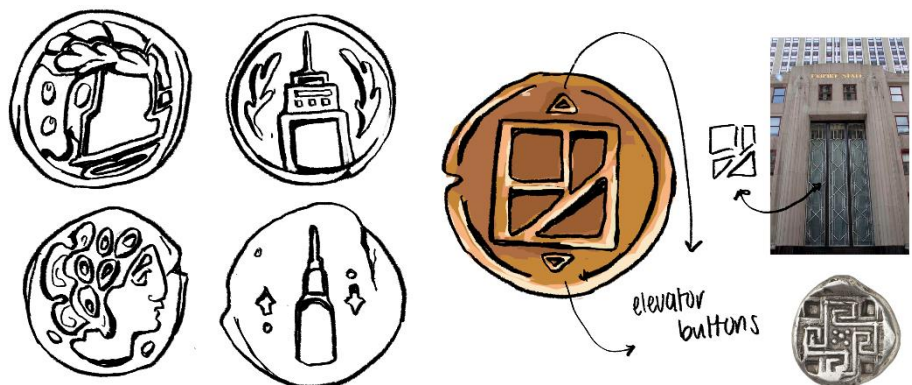


Figure 40 Percy Jackson Drachma Concept

Maintaining the look, we drew a matching back side depicting one of the Olympian Goddesses, Hera. Our reason for drawing Hera is simple. During the final book of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, there is a prophecy referencing the events of the second saga, *Heroes of Olympus*. During the start of the saga, Percy is taken away by Hera, who wipes his memories. In a way, putting Hera on the coin is foreshadowing.

#### 4.3.3.2 The Iris Message

This coin is not only used as currency or as an offering to the gods, but it can also let demigods Iris message each other. In Greek mythology, Iris is the Goddess of the rainbow. In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, this Goddess has created a service called Iris messaging, a type of video communication used by gods and demigods alike to communicate with others.

To visualize the magical functions of this coin, we illustrated the series of steps you must complete to call someone through Iris messaging. The steps below are like those in the books, with a few tweaks, to adapt it visually for an Animation.

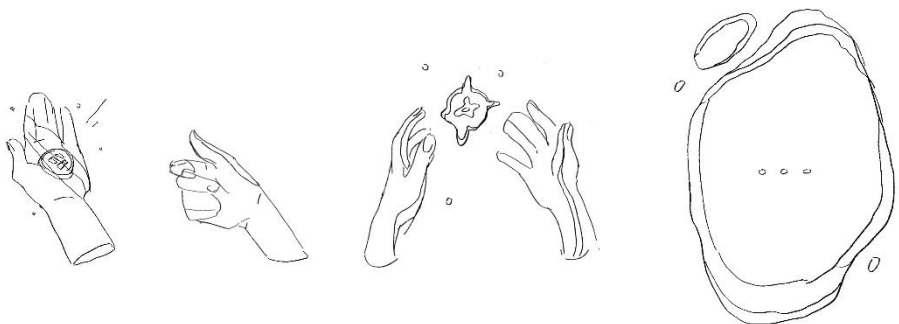


Figure 41 Drachma Function

**Step 1.** Find or create a rainbow and place the drachma under its light while thinking:

*“Oh Iris, goddess of the rainbow. Please accept my offering.”*

**Step 2.** Throw it into the air.

**Step 3.** Request the person or location you would like to call.

**Step 4.** Let the call connect.

Our choice to conceptualize the Drachma and the iris message was because it is a form of connection and communication between two beings. A prominent theme in the resolution of this story is the need for human connection and communication, to avoid repression and avoidance of trauma. We consider that in *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream*, the Drachma could have a mostly



symbolic purpose, and be seen in specific moments where the protagonist considers reaching out for help.

#### 4.3.4 Illustrations

After creating a series of conceptual sketches and drawings regarding the key elements of *Annabeth Chase in the Black Dream*, we needed at least one or two illustrative pieces that focused solely on the interaction between characters. In the first illustration, we stay loyal to the genre of the original books, fantasy with a touch of comedy, while, in the second illustration, we apply the genre of psychological horror and depict the story in a more mature light. In essence, psychological horror focuses on the exploration of the character’s psyche as well as moments of dread, tension, unpredictability, and the emotional overwhelm that comes along with them. This phase is composed of explorations and two final pieces.

In our first attempt to illustrate an interaction between both characters, we



Figure 42 Illustration Moodboard



Figure 43 Narrative and composition explorations

created a slightly comical approach centered around the first few times

Annabeth realizes she is polluted with Miasma. The idea behind this is that during the first act of the short film, the Miasma is mostly docile and appears not too frequently. At the start it does not overwhelm her, it only distracts her from her studies. This sequence of images explores the interaction between Annabeth and the Miasma during Act One (Introduction) by visualizing how it manifests, and how Annabeth reacts to it. In this case, we see the Miasma appearing in Annabeth's bedroom as she is trying to study.

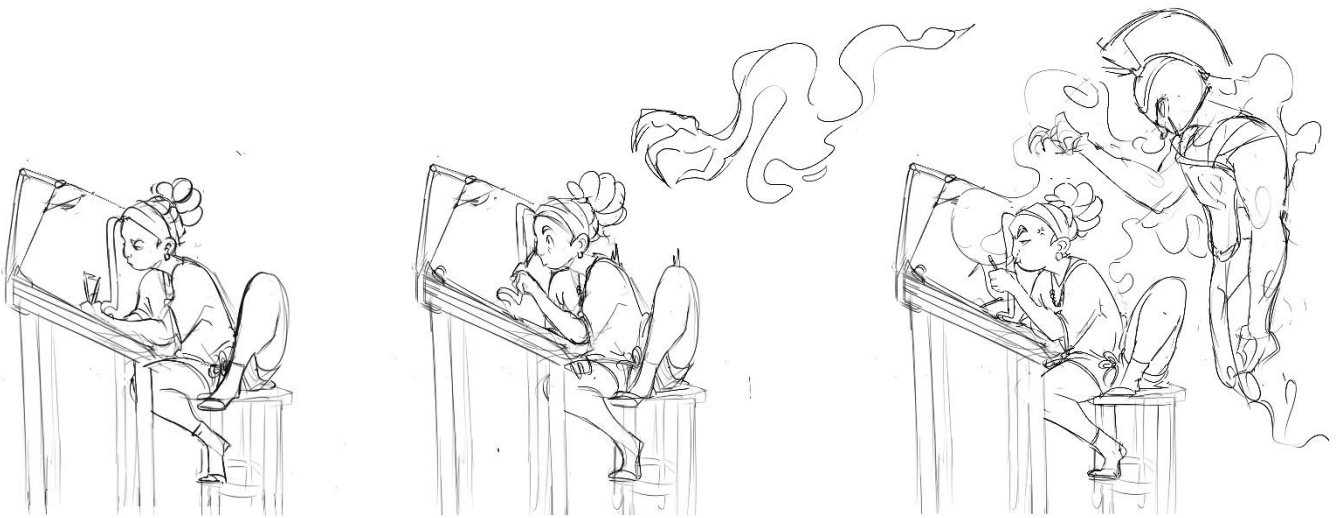


Figure 44 Miasma and Annabeth interaction: Act One

Our second illustration is an atmospheric piece made in grayscale, primarily focused on the encounter of both characters towards Act Two (Rising action), when the miasma's presence begins to get more hostile, chaotic, and overwhelming to Annabeth. Annabeth Chase is positioned centrally, above the staircase to the left, while the hallucination is positioned at the top of the stairs on the right. We wanted the hallucination to be either exaggeratedly, bigger than Annabeth, or positioned above her to create a sense of impending threat. The Miasma's position and silhouette in combination with the darkness of the stairs accentuates its height and makes it seem even taller.

The atmosphere is one of tension and fear. We used empty, shadow-filled spaces behind Annabeth to contribute to a sense of unease. At the same time, we wanted to add the presence of a few other figures, supposedly Annabeth's friends, who populate the environment without removing focus from the main characters. Annabeth is illuminated with directional light, attracting the eye immediately. The thin thread of light, starting at her eyes, directs our gaze upwards toward the second focal point of the illustration, her hallucination. The Miasma's figure is lit from the back to make it appear more obscure. Despite the

subtle presence of other figures, we managed to use the light and shadow in a way that makes the character appear isolated from the world.



*Figure 45 Atmospheric illustration in grayscale*

#### **4.4 RESULTS**

The result of this project is dossier containing a compilation of conceptual art (characters, interactions and props) for *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream*, a short, 2D animated film based on *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. The following link will direct you to the dossier:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAGJPYV8hUI/Z5vr9flrFsyIChNCZqzCrQ/edit?utm\\_content=DAGJPYV8hUI&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link2&utm\\_source=sharebutton](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGJPYV8hUI/Z5vr9flrFsyIChNCZqzCrQ/edit?utm_content=DAGJPYV8hUI&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)

#### **4.5 EXPECTED IMPACT**

The concept art created for *Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream* will serve as an addition to our professional portfolio, showcasing a diverse set of skills tailored to the animation industry. This project demonstrates our ability to develop intricate narratives, or adapt to existing ones, and portray them through compelling characters. By not limiting ourselves to character design, we position ourselves as versatile artists capable of contributing to multiple parts of visual development. Unlike projects we have completed before, this one underscores our ability to bring an emotionally rich theme to life.

## 4.6 BUDGET

In the following spreadsheet, we have noted the budget of the project.

TASK DESCRIPTION			BUDGET			
NAME	START DATE	END DATE	WEEKLY HOURS	HOURLY RATE	WEEKLY BUDGET	FINAL COST
Narrative Analysis and Investigation	1/1/24	1/30/24	20	10	200	800
Character Concept: Annabeth Chase	2/1/24	3/15/24	20	12	240	1500
Character Concept: Miasma	3/16/24	4/30/24	20	12	240	1500
Prop Concept: Drachma	5/1/24	5/15/24	20	12	240	480
Conceptual Illustrations	5/16/24	6/15/24	20	12	240	960
<b>TOTAL COST</b>						3,740

*Figure 46 Budget table*

## 5. CONCLUSION

All in all, the knowledge and skills acquired during our academic career have been applied to our undergraduate project. The results serve as a substantial contribution to the artistic development of Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream. We have met our goal of using extensive resources to effectively develop artwork for a complex narrative. Although there is room for further refinement, the ongoing project has demonstrated our capacity to translate theory into a tangible, creative outcome. Specifically, we were able to create compelling drawings with an expressive art style that merges psychological horror with the storyline of Percy Jackson and the Olympians. The core ideas of Percy Jackson and the Olympians were kept intact, only making changes to enrich the narrative or make it more suitable for animation. Lastly, we have produced a dossier that collects all our artistic and narrative contributions to Annabeth Chase and the Black Dream.

This project will be added to our character concept and design portfolio. This story will be a unique addition as it adds a new genre to the projects we have completed so far. Moving forward, we plan to continue refining and expanding this with other personal projects until it is fully cohesive and ready to be presented to potential employers in the animation industry.



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# 8. ANNEXES/APPENDICES

## 8.1.1 Sustainable Development Goals



**ANEXO I.  
RELACIÓN DEL TRABAJO CON LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE  
DE LA AGENDA 2030**

Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster: Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030.

Grado de relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).

Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible	Alto	Medio	Bajo	No procede
ODS 1. Fin de la pobreza.				✓
ODS 2. Hambre cero.				✓
ODS 3. Salud y bienestar.	✓			
ODS 4. Educación de calidad.				✓
ODS 5. Igualdad de género.		✓		
ODS 6. Agua limpia y saneamiento.				✓
ODS 7. Energía asequible y no contaminante.				✓
ODS 8. Trabajo decente y crecimiento económico.				✓
ODS 9. Industria, innovación e infraestructuras.				✓
ODS 10. Reducción de las desigualdades.				✓
ODS 11. Ciudades y comunidades sostenibles.				✓
ODS 12. Producción y consumo responsables.				✓
ODS 13. Acción por el clima.				✓
ODS 14. Vida submarina.				✓
ODS 15. Vida de ecosistemas terrestres.				✓
ODS 16. Paz, justicia e instituciones sólidas.				✓
ODS 17. Alianzas para lograr objetivos.				✓

Descripción de la alineación del TFG/TFM con los ODS con un grado de relación más alto.

Our final project is closely related to two Sustainable Development Goals. It is connected to SDG 3: Health and Well-being due to the representation of psychological aspects such as trauma, survivor's guilt and emotional repression. To emphasize this topic, our antagonist represents the main character's mental health in the format of a physical, supernatural being called Miasma. SDG 5: Gender Equality is also highlighted since the protagonist is a young woman of color



**Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster:  
Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030.**

8. 2. 1 Artwork



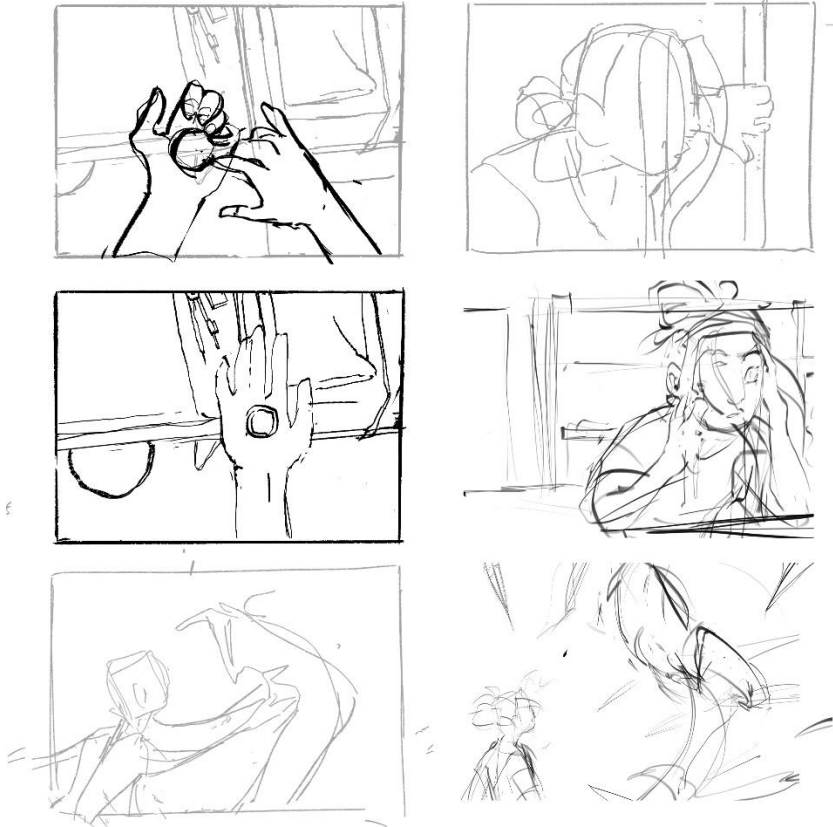












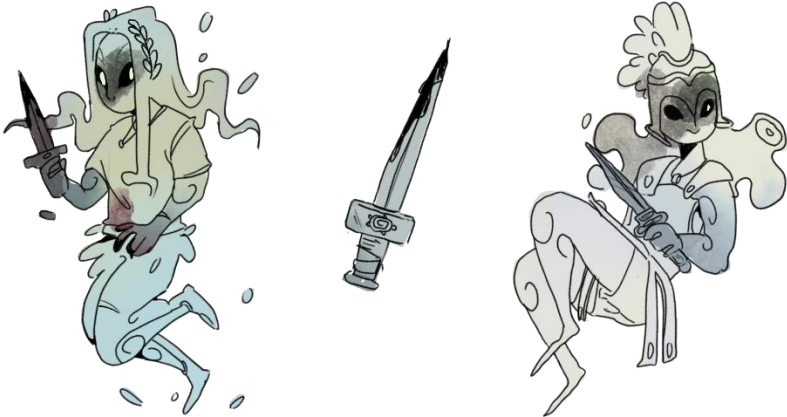




Annabeth Chase

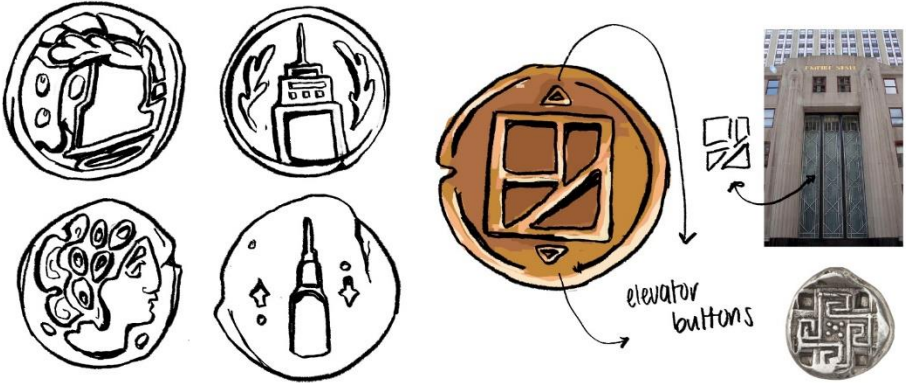
- Intelligent
- Independent
- Stubborn
- Guarded
- Brave
- Loyal







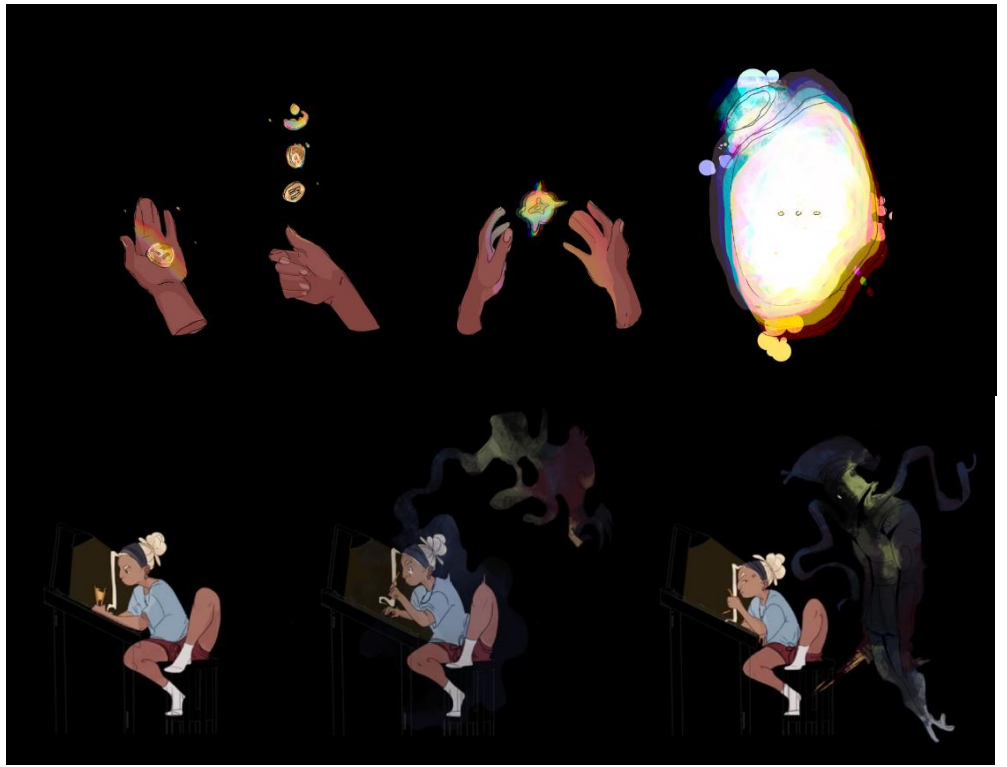












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<sup>i</sup> Psychological Horror is a sub-genre of horror centred on the dark side of the human mind, often causing discomfort or dread among it's viewers by exposing common vulnerabilities or fears that people repress or deny.

<sup>ii</sup> Kronos is a prominent figure in Greek Mythology. He is a titan and the son of Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky), overthrown by his children in the first Titanomachy.

<sup>iii</sup> An Art Book is a book containing a collection of unedited art recording the development of a film, videogame, etc.

<sup>iv</sup> Characterization means the construction of a fictional character.