


Relationships in Pop Culture

Since childhood, I have been involved in many fandoms: Star Wars, Harry Potter, Marvel, Stranger Things, The Umbrella Academy, JoJo's Bizarre Adventure, and more. All of them have depicted at least one strong relationship. Choosing just one to discuss is no easy task. However, if I had to choose one pop culture relationship that exemplifies the ideal romantic relationship, it would have to be Hades and Persephone from the webcomic Lore Olympus by Rachel Smythe.

A modern retelling of the story of Hades and Persephone, Lore Olympus features a beautiful art style and covers essential themes such as sexual assault, emotional abuse, domestic abuse, and child neglect. Each of the three seasons that are out so far (Season 3 is ongoing) features a unique, interlocking plot between all of the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology. Season 1 ends with Minthe, Thetis, and Thanatos revealing Persephone's act of wrath. Season 2 ends with Persephone battling and defeating the revived Kronos. Season 3 is coming up on Hades and Persephone's wedding.

Hades and Persephone's romantic relationship challenges several of the other characters' expectations for each of them. On the one hand, Hades is a lonely, introverted insomniac who dates Minthe, a manipulative and emotionally abusive river nymph. He believes that being the god of the dead, he has no chance of experiencing genuine love. However, unlike Zeus, Hades is a true gentleman and a sweetheart. He protects Persephone and doesn't take advantage of her after first meeting her drunk at a party. All of these things completely contrast with how most of the other characters in the story treat him. On the other hand, Persephone is a shy, sweet, adorable little cinnamon roll who lives in Olympus with Artemis. Although she ordinarily presents herself as friendly and soft-hearted, she carries a deep-rooted wrath that comes out when

her eyes turn red. Most characters in the story tend to underestimate her and try to control her, especially her mother, Demeter.

Over time, Hades and Persephone's love for each other blossoms despite horrific events. Hades is the first person Persephone calls after Apollo  her. When Hera sends her to work in the Underworld, Minthe tries to get rid of her by sending her to the resting places of the deadliest shades, but Hades rescues her and comforts her. When Persephone is put on trial for the murder of dozens of mortals, Hades defends her instead of siding with his own brother. He encourages her to start therapy to work through her trauma and she talks him through his breakup with Minthe and his history with Kronos. Now that he has proposed to her, they are closer than ever. All in all, Hades and Persephone demonstrate a strong, healthy, and honestly perfect relationship built on trust, consent, communication, and genuine interest in each other. Much like in chapter five of the textbook, they express intimacy, passion, and commitment.

I find that the most crucial message Lore Olympus sends is how a healthy relationship should look and feel. Compared to other couples in the story, Hades and Persephone openly communicate with each other about what they want in their relationship as well as any problems they face. Always in the honeymoon phase, they are committed to each other and want the best for each other. I believe that this story's message can apply to anyone, whether they are in a romantic relationship or not. After all, Hades and Persephone became close friends before falling in love with each other. By creating this webcomic, I believe that Smythe's readers will be able to understand their own relationships more (romantic or otherwise) and find the strength to figure out what they want in a relationship with someone else and strive to attain the best connections they can.