

Pandora's Box



When Prometheus stole fire from heaven and gave it to humans, he angered Zeus, king of all the gods. Zeus wanted to punish people for what Prometheus had done. He ordered the god Hephaestus to create a woman from water and earth. The gods gave her many talents and gifts. Her name was Pandora, which means “the one who bears all gifts.”

Zeus presented Pandora to Prometheus’s brother, Epimetheus. “Here is a lovely woman to keep you company,” explained Zeus. Epimetheus’s eyes widened with delight. Never before had he seen someone so beautiful.

“Before I leave, I have a gift for you, Pandora,” Zeus explained. He handed Pandora a box and said, “This is for you alone. Keep it safe, but you must never, under any circumstance, open the box.”

Pandora smiled, excited to receive a gift from Zeus. She was curious about what could possibly be inside the beautiful container. She nodded her understanding and held the box close to her to show that she would keep it safe.

Prometheus had warned his brother about accepting gifts from Zeus, but Epimetheus was happy to welcome Pandora into his home and eventually he married her.

Pandora kept the box on a high shelf, but she couldn’t stop herself from glancing up at the box every time she passed the shelf. *What could it possibly contain?* she wondered.



It must be something truly marvelous or valuable if it came from the gods, she thought.

One day, Epimetheus left Pandora alone for a few hours. Slowly but surely, Pandora's thoughts turned to Zeus's gift. "What good is a gift if you cannot open it and use it?" Pandora said aloud. "Why would Zeus tell me not to open my own gift? Perhaps there is a surprise for me inside the box." Surely, she reasoned, a quick peek inside the box could do no harm, especially since she was all alone.

Pandora quietly crept to the shelf and carefully took down the box. Her curiosity had finally gotten the better of her.

She looked around to make sure no one was watching. Then she opened the lid, just a crack. Without warning, all the evil contained inside the box flew out and spread over the earth. Pandora was horrified and immediately clamped the lid back down, but it was too late.

The one thing left in the box was hope.

DID YOU KNOW?

This **myth** appears in many different versions. In some retellings, hope escapes from the box along with all the evil. The purpose of the story is to explain why evil exists in the world.



Zeus got his revenge by introducing suffering into the world. He hoped this would teach people not to disobey the gods as Prometheus had done.

Today, you might hear the phrase *open Pandora's box*. The phrase means "to start something that causes many new and unexpected problems." It is used to describe an action that appears simple and harmless but has unforeseen and negative consequences. For example, someone might say, "I didn't realize I would open Pandora's box when I asked Jaden about his family vacation."