Greek Myths: Pandora’s Box

The myth of Pandora’s box is considered one of the most descriptive myths of human behavior in Greek mythology. Ancient Greeks used this myth not only to instruct themselves about the weaknesses of humans, but also to explain several misfortunes of the human race.

Pandora, the first woman on Earth

Pandora was, according to the myth, the first woman on Earth. She was created by Gods; each one of them gave her a gift, thus, her name in Greek means “the one who bears all gifts”.

Pandora was created as a punishment to the mankind; Zeus wanted to punish people because Prometheus stole the fire to give it to them. Her gifts were beautifully evil, according to Hesiod. Hephaestus created her from clay, shaping her perfectly, Aphrodite gave her femininity and Athena taught her crafts. Hermes was ordered by Zeus to teach her to be deceitful, stubborn and curious.

Pandora’s box

Pandora was given a box or a jar, called “pithos” in Greek. Gods told her that the box contained special gifts from them but she was not allowed to open the box ever. Then Hermes took her to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus, to be his wife. Prometheus had advised Epimetheus not to accept anything from the Gods, but he saw Pandora and was astonished by her beauty, thus he accepted her right away.

Pandora was trying to tame her curiosity, but at the end she could not hold herself anymore; she opened the box and all the illnesses and hardships that gods had hidden in the box started coming out. Pandora was scared, because she saw all the evil spirits coming out and tried to close the box as fast as possible, closing Hope inside.

According to Hesiod Hope indeed stayed inside because that was Zeus’ will; he wanted to let people suffer in order to understand that they should not disobey their gods. Pandora was the right person to do it, because she was curious enough, but not malicious.

The myth of Pandora’s box has been fascinating people since ever, catching the imagination of countless artists, who created frescos, mosaics and sculptures depicting Pandora and the mythological elements. The myth itself though appears in
many different versions; the most distinctive difference is that in some myths Hope
does come out. The main purpose of the myth of Pandora though is to address the
question of why evil exists in the world.
The birth of Pandora was represented on the pedestal of the statue of Athena
situated at the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens.
http://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/pandoras-box-myth/

The Myth of Pandora’s Box (retold for children)

Zeus ordered Hephaestus (Aphrodite's husband) to make him a daughter. It was the first
woman made out of clay. Hephaestus made a beautiful woman and named her Pandora.

Zeus sent his new daughter, Pandora, down to earth so that she could marry Epimetheus, who
was a gentle but lonely man. Zeus was not being kind. He was getting even. Epimetheus and
Prometheus were brothers. Zeus was mad at one of the brothers, Prometheus, for giving
people fire without asking Zeus first.
Zeus was furious. Zeus had not planned to reward people with fire for a very long time yet.
Zeus did not even get the credit for the invention of fire. That went to Prometheus. If the
brothers wanted credit for new inventions, Zeus would be glad to help them get the credit
deserved.
Zeus gave Pandora a little box with a big heavy lock on it. He made her promise never to
open the box. He gave the key to Pandora’s husband and told him to never open the
box. Zeus was sure that Epimetheus' curiosity would get the better of him, and that either
Epimetheus or his brother would open the box.

Pandora was very curious. She wanted to see what was inside the box, but Epimetheus said
no. Better not. "You know your father," Epimetheus sighed, referring to Zeus. "He’s a tricky
one."

One day, when Epimetheus lay sleeping, Pandora stole the key and opened the box. Out flew
every kind of disease and sickness, hate and envy, and all the bad things that people had
never experienced before. Pandora slammed the lid closed, but it was too late. All the bad
things were already out of the box. They flew away, out into the world.

Epimetheus woke up at the sound of her sobbing. “I opened the box and all these ugly things
flew out,” she cried. “I tried to catch them, but they all got out.” Pandora opened the box to
show him how empty it was. But the box was not quite empty. One tiny bug flew quickly out
before Pandora could slam the lid shut again.

“Hello, Pandora,” said the bug, hovering just out of reach. “My name is Hope.” With a nod of
thanks for being set free, Hope flew out into the world, a world that now held Envy, Crime,
Hate, and Disease – and Hope.

http://greece.mrdonn.org/greekgods/pandora.html