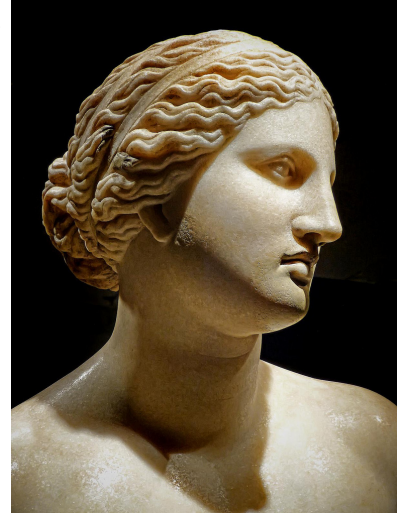


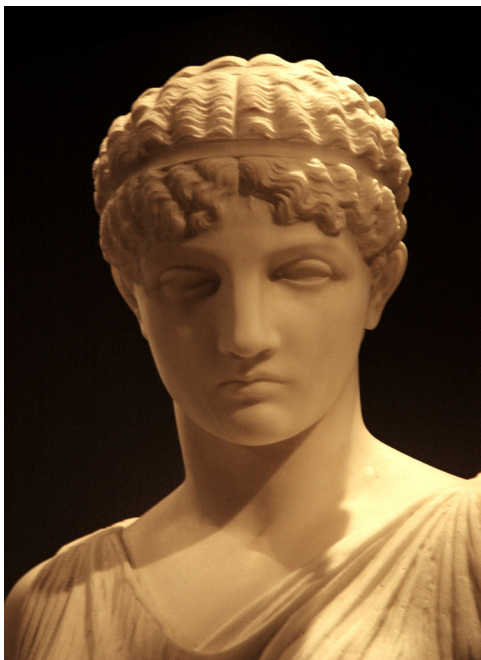
# PANDORA

## INTRODUCTION

In ancient Athenian society, women lived very difficult lives. They had no economic or political independence, and even in the home, women were treated as inferior and often lived in or were sent to a special part of the house when other male visitors arrived. Girls were not formally educated like their brothers, except on occasion if extremely wealthy. Females typically lived in their father's house until they married as young teenagers, at which time they moved to their husband's home. Women were not permitted to speak to men outside the intimate circle of family members. When the city of Athens became a democracy at the start of the fifth century B.C., women could not vote. Despite the fact that Athenian women were not offered equal opportunities in their society, women often play important, and sometimes menacing, roles in Greek mythology.



## ORIGINS OF WOMAN



In mythology, Pandora was the first woman. Hephaestus, the god of fire and the forge, created Pandora at Zeus's command. He intended the box she carried to be the ultimate punishment for the humans. Zeus and some of the other gods wanted to put the humans back in their place after their powers had been so greatly enhanced by Prometheus. To achieve that goal, Pandora was endowed with many gifts, among them great beauty and charm. The gods also gave her a gift that will ultimately set free all the evils in the world—an ornate

box, or a jar, depending on the version of the tale. Despite her own good intentions, the first female causes much grief and pain for mankind.

The story of Pandora and her intriguing but destructive box appears in many different cultures and has many different versions; the most distinctive difference is that in some myths the spirit of Hope does not stay in the box, but grows wings as Pandora opens the box a second time and flies forth spreading goodness. No matter which version is read, it is clear that the main purposes of the myth of Pandora are to explain the human condition of curiosity and its consequences and to address the question of why evil exists in the world.

## ZEUS GETS REVENGE

Even though Prometheus had been chained to the rock, Zeus remained furious with the human population for growing too powerful. He also held onto his anger over the many ways Prometheus had tricked him and the other gods. Zeus wanted revenge. He also wanted to remind the humans that they would never be as powerful as the gods. So far, there were only men in the human population. Women did not yet exist, although certainly there were female goddesses. Introducing women to the human race was part of Zeus's plan for revenge. First, Zeus went to the forge of Hephaestus and asked him to design a human being that would be female. Carefully, Zeus explained that she should be like the men on earth, yet somehow slightly different. Hephaestus was happy to do Zeus a favor,



and he went right to work. The god of fire and the forge was a very talented blacksmith. Everything he made was beautiful, and his new creation was no different. When he was finished with the creature he showed his work to Zeus, who was very pleased with the results.

The new creature was named Pandora, meaning all-gifted, since each of the gods had a say in forming her and giving her gifts to present her to the humans. She was human, but she was clearly a woman. She was very beautiful and looked like a goddess. She had long flowing hair, flawless skin, and bright shining eyes. She was as graceful as a soft breeze, and she had a smile precious to see. Zeus hoped that her beauty would make the male humans accept and trust her. After Hephaestus had put the finishing touches on the first human woman, the gods showered her with many gifts. Aphrodite gave her beauty, Athena gave her golden-threaded clothes, shining jewelry, and fragrant smelling flowers. Hermes gave her curiosity.

## Pandora's Box

The last gift given to Pandora was a box, but she was instructed by the gods that she may never open it. This box was covered with jewels, intricate carvings, and decorations.

The box was very extraordinarily beautiful, and Pandora was certain that such an ornate object must surely contain something

of equal magnificence. However, when the gods had given Pandora the instructions that she may look at it as much as she liked, but she was never to open it - it only appealed to the curiosity given to her from Hermes. Pandora did not understand the reasoning behind this rule, but because the box was so pretty, she agreed to follow the warning of the gods.

Pandora was sent to live on earth with the other humans. As part of his plan, Zeus had





Pandora meet Epimetheus who was living among the humans with his brother Prometheus. As Zeus had hoped, Epimetheus was overwhelmed by Pandora's dazzling beauty, and instantly fell in love with her. Prometheus, aware of his brother's infatuation with Pandora, became suspicious that Zeus and the other Olympians were planning a trick. Prometheus warned his brother to be wary of any gift sent to earth by the Olympian gods. As usual, Epimetheus did not listen

to his brother. Epimetheus believed that the gods had given him Pandora as a reward for making the humans. He was very much in love with Pandora, and despite his brother's warning, he married the wonderful new creature and brought her to his home.

## CURIOSITY

The couple lived very happily after their marriage. Every day, Pandora would lovingly admire her beautiful box, but she had always obeyed the order of the gods and never opened it. Soon, however, looking at the box was not enough. Her curiosity became stronger and stronger. She started to wonder why the gods had told her not to open the box. She became consumed by thoughts about what could possibly be inside the box. Finally one day she could no longer resist the urge to open it, regardless of the consequences. She went into a quiet and secluded room, and slowly lifted the lid. When Pandora opened the box and discovered what was hidden inside its beautiful exterior, she gasped in horror and slammed the lid shut at once.

However, she was too late. She knew at once that



Zeus's revenge had been accomplished. Inside the magnificent box were all the evil spirits known to the gods. As soon as the lid was open, they all flew out. The troubles of sorrow, hunger, anger, disease, aging, madness, pain, jealousy, war, greed, suffering, and a hundred other horrible conditions filled Pandora's room and, like smoke, they escaped out into the world to plague mankind for the rest of time. Pandora was immediately filled with regret upon realizing what she had done. Zeus' revenge on the humans was final. Pandora held

the box in her hands full of despair and regret.



### HOPE REMAINS

Pandora heard something fluttering in the box, and despite her regret, she re-opened the lid. She was surprised to see one tiny winged creature who did not fly out of the box - Hope. Pandora vowed to keep this creature safe in the box away from the other evil winged creatures that had escaped. So even though Pandora let evil and trouble escape into the world, we must not forget that Hope is kept safe.

Soon, when they felt the effects of the various plagues and evil spirits that had flown out from Pandora's box, the people on earth understood that their time of peace had ended. The people recognized the power of the gods' revenge, and understood that forces existed that were stronger than their own modest powers. From that time on, the people vowed to do their best to keep from angering the gods any further and were comforted by the fact that hope was safe in Pandora's box. The knowledge that hope had not been destroyed gave the people faith that peace would return some day.