

Pandora's box: what the myth means today essay sample

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Imagine a life with no pain, worries, or misery in which to speak all evils held secure by a sacred beast or mythological container. This is the life described in many fantasies of the days before man, woman, and hardship. With any myth, however, unlocking and explaining the gift of knowledge and becoming aware seems to account for all evils that have been imparted upon humankind. This is a very similar beginning to the story of Adam and Eve in that a woman is blamed for all; thus, the story of Pandora's Box becomes relevant. This type of awareness comes at a price, usually a type of punishment received for deceit to account for humanity's inquisitiveness. In seeking to uncover the truth in things, the pitfalls of curiosity are impossible to avoid. The story's meaning has bearing on many of today's idioms as well as even affecting the views of some that look to interpret its meaning to fit certain principles. Today, this story and its message, rooted in the origins of Greek mythology, still have widespread significance and may be the most pervasive lesson of its kind. Knowledge of the myth and its relation to modern-day culture can give insight to America's ideals.

Summary and Description of MythThe tale of Pandora's Box originated as a story from Hesiod but has been retold over the years with slight variations in the details. Pandora was the first woman created in Greek mythology (Daly, 2004). The Greeks viewed Pandora as beautiful young girl that evokes strong desire in all who see her. Pandora was considered deceitful, but this was how she was created. Symbolically, Pandora is known as the releaser or mother of troubles. The myth of Pandora's Box explains how evil came into the world and tells us that hope is always present. The moral of how dangerous curiosity can be is also covered in this myth. Pandora's Box myth and the

story of Adam and Eve resemble one another. One resemblance that feminists like to mention is an underlying commonality of blaming a woman for the evils that were let loose on the world. One of the popular versions of Pandora's Box is that Zeus had Aphrodite pose for Hephaestus so he could mold a female likeness using clay. Zeus brought the clay statue to life.

Zeus had each of the gods grant Pandora with a gift. In this way, Pandora was created with beauty, charm, cunning, wit, eloquence, deceit, skill, and curiosity. When Zeus became angry with Prometheus for giving humans fire, Zeus offered Pandora to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus. In the beginning of time, Adam and Eve would serve to be an example of Epimetheus and Pandora. Prometheus, meaning Forethought, warned his brother of Zeus's trickery and asked him to be wary of him (Daly, 2004). In one story, Epimetheus, meaning Afterthought, took note of his brother's warning but was forced to marry Pandora to free Prometheus's chains in the Caucasian mountains (Baase, n. d.). Zeus gave Pandora a box as a wedding present and told her to never open it.

In biblical times, the box represents the tree that Eve was asked not to disturb. Epimetheus took Pandora as a bride and asked her to avoid the box. In comparison, Adam had warned Eve not to pick the apple from the tree to avoid unleashing the wrath of God. He and Pandora lived happily for a while but one day, Pandora could not control her curiosity any longer and opened the box. Temptation had also urged Eve to take from the apple tree. As soon as she opened the lid of the box, many evil things flew out, including

disease, despair, hunger, poverty, war, sickness, death, old age, greed, and violence. Pandora quickly closed the box with one thing left in the box hope.

Relation to Similar Myth Occurring in Modern Day Culture
The myth of Pandoras Box is related to modern culture in several ways. Humankind has the trait of curiosity which has led to incredible discoveries and advancements, but this curiosity has also created some modern day evils. One such comparison has been made between Prometheus fire and our modern day fossil fuel energy. Zeus became angry at Prometheus for teaching useful skills to humankind. In retribution for being tricked, Zeus took the fire of the gods away from men. Continuing his quest to teach men these skills, Prometheus snuck up to Mount Olympus and stole fire for humankind (Baase, n. d.). Our technological inventiveness has allowed us to create the tools necessary to extract a large amount of the worlds fossil fuels from the Earth.

Though the knowledge weve learned has become valuable, the process of attaining this knowledge has been harmful to the planet. This ability is causing greenhouse gases and causing severe damage to the worlds environment. Another comparison has been made between Pandoras Box and the Internet because of the good that can come from the Internet, including shared knowledge, increased communication, and the breaking down of cultural barriers. Birnie (2004) states that those who fail to realize the profound effect of the Internet on all our lives are condemned to life in the cyberspace equivalent of a cave (¶2). The entire world is affected by the electronic environment that has been constructed. The good that has come

from the Internet includes instant communication with friends and family, ease of commerce for big and small companies, stock trading, increased visibility and recognition for artists and those looking to share information, and simplicity of investigative and scientific research.

With the creation and use of the Internet come Pandoras Box and the opening of many evils such as those found in identity theft, child pornography, electronic stalking, and an assortment of viruses meant to destroy and steal data. In those things that are undoubtedly good for society in the Internet, a negative aspect is most always associated. With the ease of communication, most Americans find it easier to speak via electronic wire rather than hold a conversation with the person standing next to them (Birnie, 2004). Although making travel arrangements is more accessible over the Internet, this simplicity has drastically affected travel agents commissions and jobs. These examples alone prove that Pandoras Box has an application for nearly everything. In exchange for societys curiosity, the terrible truth is that society will also reap the unpleasant contents of this mythological box.

Perspective of Myth to Society Today the story of Pandoras Box can be interpreted in so many ways. The saying that best fits this story is curiosity killed the cat, for it was the curiousness of Pandora that brought all the evil into the world. Pandoras Box is an example of how early Greeks imagined woman to be created by the Gods; evil on the inside and beautiful on the outside with the purpose of making men miserable. In some perspective, it has similarities to the story of Adam and Eve. Although today's associations

with Pandora are negative, remember that her name means “ all-giver” or “ sender of gifts.”

When evil is upon us and the world is threaten, Pandora's Box still, and always, holds hope. Feminist scholars believe that in early myths, Pandora was a Great Goddess who provided gifts and made life and culture possible (flickr. com, 2009). Hesoids version was thought to be false and made up only to demote Pandora from her high status. Other stories state that Pandora opened a jar and not a box. Women are portrayed in ancient art as being tidy by putting objects away in boxes. François Lissarague discussed the idea that the box is symbolic of womens life in Athens. Women are comparable to a box for the sperm, for the child, and spending her life in containment or also known as a house.

Perspective in Which the Myth OccursA modern-day example of opening Pandoras Box occurs when a new appliance, household device, or vehicle is introduced into the market. In the case of a vehicle, advertisements and special deals swallow television channels and radio stations. They tell of immense savings, credit deals, and how well the automobile performs compared to others. Vehicles come with GPS tracking signals, auto-start capabilities, heated seats, rear-view cameras, and an astounding miles-per-gallon rating. Consumers are even goaded into taking a test drive of what seems to be the best automobile on the market. As quickly as the car is bought, however, the buyer finds out that the cars amenities were not worth the price. If this misfortune is somehow avoided, the consumer could also see this happening after the last months car payment is made. Many

examples of Pandoras Box exist today; nearly everything can be associated with this myth.

ConclusionThe story of Pandoras Box is an example of a modernized myth enduring the translation through generations of readers, philosophers, and critics. Pandoras Box is a gift that, at first, seems valuable but turns out to be a source of all troubles (Daly, 2004). To some, these stories of giants and gods lend themselves to be unbelievable compared to what weve come to know. Yet, expressions and terms continue to be lifted from these myths to fit modern-day culture. The perils of gloom and despair upon opening Pandoras Box have been thoroughly discussed. In spite of this, the hope remaining at the bottom of the jar remained.

This hope represented the optimism that even the most doubtful of individuals should carry with them through the trials of any adversity. One should remember that though misfortune may flow from being innocently curious, relief can be found in the reassurance that there exists a glimmer of encouraging hope; things will get better. Though myths may not give accurate accounts of the origins of life or mankinds coming of knowledge, they are vital in their ability to give insight on those things society believes to be lasting and important. In the quest for knowledge and hope, unwelcome side effects abound; for this reason, absolute care must be taken, for it is well-known what killed the cat.

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