Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Do Not Open! The Story of Pandora's Box by Joan Holub, Dani Jones ", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/289. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Joan Holub , Dani Jones

Do Not Open! The Story of Pandora's Box

United States (2014)

TAGS: Epimetheus Gods Greeks Hope Pandora Pandora's Box





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Do Not Open! The Story of Pandora's Box
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2014
First Edition Details	Joan Holub and Dani Jones, *Do Not Open!: The Story of Pandora's Box* (Ready-to-Read). New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014, 32 pp.
ISBN	9781442484979 (paperback) / 9781442484993 (e book)
Awards	The book won Kansas State Reading Circle List Primary Title award
Genre	Fiction, Mythological fiction, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (Young children from kindergarten to 2nd class, ages 5–7)
Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, mauril68@gmail.com Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Photo courtesy of Joan Holub.

Joan Holub , b. 1956
(Author)

Joan Holub is a prolific children's author from the USA. Graduated from college in Texas with a fine arts degree. Worked as an art director at Scholastic trade books in New York. She has written and/or illustrated over 150 children's books. She has developed a range of series for teenagers on mythological themes: *Goddess Girls*, set in Mount Olympus Academy, *Grimmtastic Tales* series, set in Grimm Academy, *Thunder Girls*, about Norse gods set in Asgard Academy, and *Heroes in Training*, in which the male Greek gods, as very young men, set out on a range of adventures. For pre-school children, Jan Holub has written on a range of topics including several works with religious and historical themes. These include: *This Little President*; *This Little Trailblazer*, *Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!*, and *Light the Candles: A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book*. Joan Holub trained in fine art and worked as an art director at a graphic design company before becoming a children's illustrator and then author.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the penguinrandomhouse.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Profile at the simonandschuster.com (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk and Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

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1. What drew you to writing / working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

I learned to love Greek and Norse mythology in elementary school. I'm very comfortable adapting the framework of an existing myth or fairy tale by pushing it into a different setting, adding humor, and/or building in a nonfiction component. Staying true to the essential core of each myth along the way is important to me. A young *Goddess Girls* reader once told me she enjoyed the series because she "learned something". In other words, while she liked being entertained, she appreciated that her familiarity and factual understanding of the original myths was broadened at the same time.

2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

Kids have questions about their world. So it's interesting to them to learn how ancient Greeks and other cultures answered questions about how their world worked in exciting tales of heroes and beasts. How did the sun cross the sky? In a chariot drawn by the god Helios. What caused night? The goddess Nyx's starry cape covered the sky. Thrilling stories of courage and danger, such as Heracles' twelve labors, the Trojan Horse, and the Argonauts never go out of style.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

I have an entire shelf of mythology resource books. Some of my favorite go-to sources are the *Scholastic Mythlopedia* series, Edith Hamilton's *Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, and www.theoi.com (accessed: May 28, 2018).

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its

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spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

Each book in the *Goddess Girls* series (ages 8–12, Simon and Schuster) and *Heroes in Training* series (ages 7–10, Simon and Schuster) is a retelling of one or two Greek myths, with a twist. We stay as true as possible to the core bones of an original myth in order to give young readers a good understanding, but we include kid situations and humor to entertain. As an example, in *Goddess Girls #1: Athena the Brain*, Athena is summoned to attend Mount Olympus Academy, where Zeus is the principal. MOA teachers include Mr. Cyclops, who teaches Hero-ology, a class where students are graded on their abilities to maneuver small hero figures such as Odysseus, around a gameboard to enact the Trojan War, etc. Meanwhile, Athena, who is the goddess of invention among other things, inadvertently turns mean-girl Medusa's hair to snakes and gives her the power to turn mortals to stone by means of a shampoo-like invention called Snakeypoo at the MOA invention fair.

5. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Suzanne Williams and I have written a new middle grade series called *Thunder Girls* (accessed: May 28, 2018), which is a twist on Norse mythology featuring strong girl characters. The first book Freya and the Magic Jewel releases May 2018 for ages 8–12, published by Simon and Schuster.

Prepared by Allison Rosenblum, Bar-Ilan University, allie.rose89@gmail.com and Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Dani Jones (Illustrator)

Dani Jones is an illustrator and writer form New England. She is an author and illustrator of numerous children's books. She has also produced and self-published several projects.

Source:

Official website (accessed: December 18, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

This is a retelling of Pandora's myth for kids as a picture book. The pronunciation of the names is also explained by breaking them to syllables. Before the story begins, at the left page containing the publication data, opposite the first page of the story, we have a short note from the author: "Dear kids, long ago, Greeks wrote stories called myths. These stories helped them to understand things that were happening in the world around them. Myths also taught lessons about right and wrong. Some characters in mythology do things that are impossibly amazing or flat-out wrong to help teach us what not to do in real life!" Then we have the simplified retelling of the Pandora myth, adapted to young children with illustrations depicting all the narrated events (Pandora's village and husband, her opening the box, the bugs coming out of it, the fairy hope etc.)

Analysis

In this book, the author obviously gives the young readers an additional value to the actual story, a deeper level of understanding of the origin of myths.

The story opens as follows: "long ago the Greeks wondered why their gods sometimes let bad things happen to them. They wrote this story to answer that question." (p. 4). The story is being set in a larger logical setting, within the frame work of Greek myths in general. It is a story within a story. The box is explained as a lesson the gods wanted to teach people who did not exhibit a proper gratitude to them. When finally Pandora manages to open the box (the box is very difficult to open so Pandora needs to open it using a tool), many "trouble bugs" fly out. It is a visual way to explain the concept of evils that resided in the box. The bugs cause mayhem, Pandora apologises and closes the box; but it is too late. But then she hears a tiny voice form the box and a fairy flies out. The fairy is Hope. By making the abstract concept of "Hope" into a lovely fairy, the author uses the visual to help children understand the concept; fairies are usually regarded as benevolent and helpful therefore it is becoming for one to represent hope. When Hope flies away, Pandora asks "'Wait! [...] What if we need you again?' 'I will always come back when you need me,' promised Hope." (p. 17).

The moral of the story is as follows:

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	"Sometimes bad things happen. But we hope things will get better. And we hope for good things to happen. What do you hope for?" (p. 19). The story focuses on hope and not on Pandora's curiosity which is a refreshing take on the myth; it is an empowering little story for children, to help them overcome bad times with the power of hope.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Epimetheus Gods Greeks Hope Pandora Pandora's Box
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Character traits
Addenda	This review refers to the Kindle edition.

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