Ayelet Peer, "Entry on: Pandora’s Lunch Box: Don’t Open! by Richard Clark, Rich Murray", peer-reviewed by Lisa Maurice and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/840. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Richard Clark , Rich Murray

Pandora’s Lunch Box: Don’t Open!

Canada, United States of America (2017)

TAGS: Pandora





Cover courtesy of the Author.

General information	
Title of the work	Pandora’s Lunch Box: Don’t Open!
Country of the First Edition	Canada, United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Richard Clark, *Pandora’s Lunch Box: Don’t Open!* Richard Clark (self-publishing), 2017, 49 pp. (E-book)
ISBN	ASIN B06XGKNTMX
Genre	Adaptations, Myths
Target Audience	Children (8–12 years)
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Creators



Richard Clark (Author)

From the book's cover:

Clark is a Canadian children's author. He worked as a screenwriter and story editor in the USA and Canada. He graduated from UCLA and AFI. He also used to develop children's shows for various broadcasters. Clark taught screenwriting at Humber College and Sheridan College in Toronto. His book *Pandora's Lunch Box* won the Wishing Shelf Book Awards Bronze Award in 2017.

Prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com



Rich Murray (Illustrator)

Murray has more than 25 years of experience in digital illustration, animation and game design. He has also illustrated interactive book apps for children.

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

This book tells the story of 12 year old Pandora Little. Pandora is a curious girl who "always wanted to know everything about everything". In this modern twist of the myth, Pandora is curious to know for example what is inside a big sandwich which was brought by one of her classmates, Randy. She sneakily replaces his sandwich with her own and takes the boy's sandwich to the lab, to check its content. Afterwards, she finds out a mysterious old lunch box in the woods. When she opens it, strange heads appear, all in different shapes (similar to genies) and refer to her as their master. These lunch-box genies promise to fulfil her wishes. She asks them to punish Lexy, a bullying classmate of hers, who keeps offending her. As a result, Lexy's head becomes the size of a basketball and all the other children at school laugh at her. Pandora repents her wish and tries to help Lexy and get things back to the way they were, learning something about her own feelings in the process.

Analysis

In this adaptation of the ancient myth to a modern setting, Pandora is a curious 12 year old. Her curiosity is presented as both good and bad. On the one hand, it makes her life more interesting, but on the other, it can also cause her trouble. Therefore the author does not make curiosity a bad trait, but indicates its advantages and disadvantages. Pandora's daring nature is even more emphasized in contrast to her best friend, Lyle Mertz, who is characterized as being scared of everything. Thus the two friends seem to be on the opposite ends, one too daring and one too scared. They complement each other. Another character who is used as Pandora's opposite is her brother Jesse, a 7 year old, who Pandora thinks, "acted so good just to make her look bad". This story raises the question whether Pandora is truly an-out-of-control child, or whether parents and society should cultivate children's natural curiously yet also teach them about boundaries. Pandora is not bad, but she does get into trouble due to her curious nature; yet instead of guiding her, her parents seem to prefer her well-behaved brother. The story does not focus on her family too much though and they are not aware of Pandora's secret box.

While Pandora does open a mysterious lunch box she finds in the woods (although "do not open" was written on it), the "evils" that are

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set free are quite different. Similarly, where in ancient versions of the myth Pandora is a tool in the hand of the gods, since Zeus made her curious in order to punish mankind, (for example, in Hesiod, *Works & Days* 54 ff; *Theogony* 560 ff), she now becomes the mistress of her own destiny. She makes the decision to open the box, albeit with some hesitation, before she rationalizes her curiosity, by arguing to herself that if she does not open it then someone else will.

It is striking that the genies that pop out of the box serve *her*; she is the only one who can see them and correspond with them. While there are no evils which fly away from the box, these genies can be also be negative, since she can use them to carry her wishes, good or bad. These genies do not correlate, therefore, to the original evils released from the box, since they are also not acting on their own volition. The genies are still locked in the box, yet they follow her wishes (there is no limit to the number of wishes). In place of the evils, the genies represent evil emotions that Pandora may be feeling towards others, such as revenge on a classmate who upset her. Yet after executing her revenge on the girl, Pandora soon finds out that revenge is a powerful and dangerous emotion and she needs to try hard to correct things. Trying to solve matters, Pandora starts to think about Lexy's character and why she is being mean to her. This gives the author the opportunity to deal with the issue of bullying and why and how someone can become a bully. From being the bullied girl, Pandora suddenly becomes a bully herself when she executes her revenge on Lexy and makes her head grow. The genies take her wishes literally; when Pandora tells them about Lexy "She thinks she's so big! If I could just get back at her somehow…" then the genie Furio (note his name as denoting fury) actually makes Lexy's head grow disproportionally bigger. This incident shows that words can truly hurt and that words carry a heavy weight. After seeing Lexy's deformed shape, Pandora starts to think harder about Lexy's behavior and she realizes that maybe Lexy also feels insecure but tries to hide it by acting haughtily.

The character of Lexy seems to be developing yet in the end she does not change her ways. She is the class queen who treats most children badly until she faces hardship herself and loses her status in class. Only one other boy cares for her. Yet as soon as Pandora fixes the problem she caused Lexy (by shrinking her head back to normal), Lexy resumes her former bad behavior. Unlike Pandora, she did not learn anything from this experience. As before, Pandora's character is being compared with others to show the change in her, and how she became

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	more responsible. This is another change from the original story. In the myth, Pandora opens the box and her only redemption is freeing hope in the end as well. Yet hope was also inserted to the box by the gods, therefore Pandora does not do anything active to make amends for her act. In contrast, the Pandora in our story actively repents opening the box and tries to fix the problem she caused. She will not become less curious in the future, but will learn to weight the results of her actions; this is the moral the author wishes to convey, curiosity is not bad in itself, as long as it is limited.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Pandora
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Friendship Magic Revenge

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