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Thorsten Opper , Nick Saunders

Pandora’s Box

United Kingdom (2007)

TAGS: Epimetheus Hephaestus Hera Hermes Olympians Pandora Prometheus Pyrrha Zeus

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

General information	
Title of the work	Pandora’s Box
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2007
First Edition Details	Nick Saunders, *Pandora’s Box*, "Graphic Greek Myths and Legends". Kent: Ticktock Media, 2007, 48 pp.
ISBN	9781846960673
Genre	Comics (Graphic works)
Target Audience	Crossover (10 and up)
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Creators

Thorsten Opper

Consultant

Dr Thorsten Opper is the British Museum senior curator and head of the museum's Roman section.

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

Nick Saunders (Author, Illustrator)

Nick Saunders is an author and illustrator of various book for adolescents from the *Graphic Greek Myths and Legends*, including *The Twelve Labors of Hercules*, *Perseus and Medusa* as well as other books.

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

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Additional information

Summary

This comic book narrates the tale of Pandora. The illustration are colourful and can cover a page or at times there are several smaller pictures per page. There are titles caption which offers a shot narrative and the characters speak to each other. It opens with a brief explanation on the Olympian gods and the stealing of fire by Prometheus. The creation of Pandora follows, as the punishment of humankind is explained and then her life with Epimetheus and her opening of the box. The end continues the story with the flood and the rescue of Pyrrha and Deucalion.

The author continues the tale after the release of Hope with the aftermath of Pandora and Epimetheus' family. He describes the birth of their daughter and her union with Deucalion, as the only humans surviving after the flood.

In a final note, the author writes that Pandora was the first woman and through her daughter a mother to all other women, "wherever they lived, and whatever they looked like, they had her fine qualities…and endless curiosity!" (p. 45).

Analysis

This comic book provides ample information not just on the Pandora myth but also on the events leading to it as well as its aftermath.

The author makes it clear form the beginning that the ancient gods "liked to play tricks on humans" (p. 4) for various reasons. They are not described as affectionate towards humans or as benevolent. The author notes that the anger of Zeus, according to the ancient Greeks, was the cause for weaknesses of men and women, as well as their suffering but also happiness, they were all the gifts of the gods. Therefore the gods are undoubtedly responsible for the unfolding of the events. The gods are depicted as good looking, muscular (the goddesses as well) and relatively young. They all reside on Mt. Olympus.

Throughout the story, we have little bubbles depicting Hera and Zeus, who keep close watch on the happenings on earth and comment on them. This technique visualizes the involvement of the gods with human affairs and their reaction to humankind. A similar technique was employed in the TV miniseries *Jason and the Argonauts* from

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2000, in which Zeus and Hera appeared in the sky, watching the Argonauts' journey and interfering with it.

The creation of Pandora, while linked to the stealing of fire, is chronologically narrated in the story after Prometheus escapes his incarceration with the assistance of Hercules. His escape angers Zeus who decides to hurt those wham Prometheus cares for, namely humankind. The author hence chose to create levels of punishment: first Zeus directly punishes Prometheus and since Prometheus escapes, he turns to humankind. According to Hesiod's *Works & Days* 54ff , however, Pandora's creation was Zeus' revenge against the stealing of fire, regardless of Prometheus' personal punishment (which appears in Aeschylus' trilogy). The author probably tried to combine the two punishments into the tale.

Hephaestus then creates Pandora, who is gifted with many presents and traits by the other gods. Zeus is illustrated as making her "full of mischief and lazy" (p. 17) (it is noted in Zeus' thought bubble but there is not other depiction of lazy Pandora). In Hesiod, however, it is Hermes who contrives lies within her, on Zeus' order. The author seems to be following the ancient version of the myth when he emphasizes Pandora's negative traits apart from her curiosity, whereas in other similar works, for example, curiosity is Pandora's main and only folly. For example, Joan Holub's

Do Not Open! The Story of Pandora's Box from 2014, Kate McMullan's Myth-O-Mania: *Keep a Lid on it, Pandora!* From 2012. Also in Joan Holub , Suzanne Williams' *Goddess Girls* series, Pandora is exceptionally curious, yet not lazy or mean.

The "gift" of curiosity is given to Pandora by Hera, an addition which does not appear in Hesiod. The gods keep close watch on Pandora upon her arrival on earth and they are pleased to see their plan being carried out. The illustrations empathize the involvement of Hera in forcing Pandora to open the box, even when Pandora tries to bury and hide it.

In the end, Pandora opens the box and evil-looking creatures escape (they appear like grey, bald winged creature with a long tail). The fatal results of the curse are attested, with people becoming ill and dying. Furthermore, the curse harms Pandora and Epimetheus' former domestic bliss, they begin to fight and argue, with the illustrations emphasizing their angry and resentful facial expression. Zeus'

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punishment ruined not only the outside world, but also the safe haven of one's home and family.

Finally Pandora hears Hope calling form the box. Zeus is amazed and asks Hera "who dared to put Hope in Pandora's box" (p. 39). From Hera's response "Hope is all there is to fight the evil not on Earth" we can assume she was responsible for Hope. The author makes it explicit that Zeus did not try to elevate humankind's suffering and he did not wish for Hope to be included in the box at all. Zeus is not a caring king of the gods, but a spiteful gods, driven by revenge, whose only aim is to hurt humankind and obliterate it. This is in contrast with other retelling of the story, in which Hope is attributed to Zeus' doing. Hera, who is usually described as a petty and jealous goddess, mainly in Hercules-relates stories, is the one who cares more for humankind. For example in Ciara Lendino's, *The Box: The Story of a Girl Named Pandora* from 2011 also depicts Zeus as a benevolent character.

The final note is probably meant to be amusing, the connection of women and endless curiosity does not appear to be a compliment in this context and hints at what can be perceive a feminine bad trait. Yet we must remember that Pandora was not at fault for her curiosity or other traits, as they were the gifts (or punishments) of the gods. The fact that Hera, another woman, is responsible for the curiosity part almost seems to be cementing the connection between women and curiosity, although it is and will always be a universal trait, for men and women. The book may be intended for young boys and girls, yet the emphasis on the connection between women and uncontrolled curiosity could be less satisfying for young female readers.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Epimetheus Hephaestus Hera Hermes Olympians Pandora Prometheus Pyrrha Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Emotions Family Good vs evil Revenge

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