

CREATION 3 – PANDORA

Length

13 min 15 sec

Story summary

The first people on earth struggle to survive until Prometheus and Epimetheus teach them basic survival skills. But they continue to suffer from the cold until Prometheus gives them fire, which he steals from the gods. Prometheus' 'children' flourish once they have the gift of fire and Prometheus helps them further by taking all the evils of the world and storing them in a stone jar.

To punish Prometheus for stealing fire Zeus has Hephaistos make a beautiful woman out of clay. He asks all the gods to give her a gift and names her Pandora, the bringer of gifts. Hermes brings her to Epimetheus, who, forgetting his brother's advice not to accept gifts from anyone, especially Zeus, falls in love with her. One day Pandora notices the stone jar in which Prometheus has locked away disease, violence, hatred and all bad things to keep them from his children. She is curious and despite Epimetheus previously warning her not to cannot resist opening it, thereby releasing all the evils of the world. But along with the evils, she also releases Hope, Prometheus' last gift to his children.

There is further punishment for Prometheus. Zeus has him shackled to a cliff where, every night, a vulture pecks out his liver and, every day, his liver grows back.

Starting-points

- What would life have been like for Prometheus' first humans? What basic things would have they needed in order to survive? (*Food, shelter, clothing, tools.*)
- Is life easier today than it was for Prometheus' 'children'? What are the most important inventions made by humans? What are the greatest evils in the world today?

Note: this story recounts how the first woman Pandora is responsible for all the ills in the world. This may provide an opportunity to discuss how previous cultures had different ideas about men and women, and their position was not equal. The story should be handled in such a way that emphasises that our beliefs now are very different and promotes equality.

Pause points

1 min 1 sec: *Prometheus would have to bury it in the ground. He knew something was wrong.*

- How do Prometheus' 'children' survive at first? (*They eat roots and grubs and leaves.*)
- What three skills do Prometheus and Epimetheus teach them? (*They teach them how to make weapons for hunting, how to grow crops, and how to make shelters.*)
- Why do Prometheus' 'children' still find life hard even after they have been given the skills needed to survive? (*They suffered from the cold because they did not have fire.*)

2 min 44 sec: *He gathered together all the things that might bring them harm and put them into a stone jar?*

- What sort of things do you think Prometheus puts into the jar?
- Prometheus knows the gods will not let him have fire so why does he steal the lump of charcoal? Is he wrong to do so, if the gift of fire will make life so much better for humans?

4 min 41 sec: *Epimetheus nodded. 'Of course.'*

- This is the second time that Epimetheus has answered Prometheus with these words (the first time was after Prometheus tells him that all will be well as long as the jar holding all the ills of the world stays shut). Do you think Epimetheus has really taken heed of Prometheus' instructions? Is the fact that his name means 'Afterthought' significant?

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8 min 18 sec: *When the Titan opened his eyes, Hermes had vanished.*

- What did Prometheus tell Epimetheus about gifts from Zeus? (*Don't accept them!*) Why has Zeus sent this gift, Pandora? (*To punish Prometheus for stealing fire from the gods.*) What does the storyteller tell us her name means? (*Bringer of gifts.*) Thinking back to Prometheus' other warning to Epimetheus (not to open the jar), how do you think the story is going to unfold?

Questions for discussion

- In what two ways does Zeus punish Prometheus for stealing fire? (*He has Hephaistos create Pandora (Bringer of Gifts) and she releases all the evils of the world; he has Prometheus chained to a rock to have his liver pecked out by a vulture.*) Which of the punishments do you think is worse and why? (*Prometheus was eventually rescued from his punishment by Heracles.*)
- Why has the discovery of fire been so important to humans?
- How much sympathy do you feel towards Prometheus?
- Is Epimetheus or Pandora more to blame for the escape of all the ills of the world?
- How would you describe Pandora: nosy, curious or inquisitive? What is the difference between these three adjectives?
- To what extent are Epimetheus and King Midas similar? (*They don't think ahead; they act impulsively; they don't mean harm to anyone.*)

Suggested activities

- Write your own Greek myth to explain how humans discovered fire. Think about natural events (e.g. volcanic eruptions, lightning strikes) that can trigger fires and link them if possible to particular Greek gods or goddesses (e.g. **Zeus**, whose symbol was the thunderbolt; **Apollo**, god of the sun; **Hephaistos**, the blacksmith, whose forge was underneath Mount Etna) to suggest how the gods 'gave' humans fire.
- Make your own jar or box containing all the evils of the world. Don't forget to include Hope as well!