

The Jar of Evils

Long ago, only the gods on Mount Olympus had fire. Prometheus, one of the gods, saw that humans were always cold and felt sorry for them. He stole fire from Mount Olympus and gave it to humans. Zeus was angry when he discovered what Prometheus had done, and he punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock and causing vultures to peck at him each day. Then Zeus set out to punish humans for accepting the stolen fire.

Zeus devised a plan to punish humans by using Epimetheus, the mortal brother of Prometheus. Zeus sent the messenger god Hermes to Epimetheus with two gifts. One gift was a beautiful maiden for Epimetheus named Pandora. The other gift was a mysterious sealed jar. Hermes told Epimetheus he must never open the jar. Epimetheus was delighted with the gift of Pandora and immediately married her. He told Pandora never to open the strange jar.



Pandora was a curious woman and wanted desperately to know what was in the mysterious jar. One day, when Epimetheus was away, she examined the jar carefully. As she was looking at it, she heard a small voice call to her from the inside. "Pandora, don't be afraid. Open the jar and let us out!" Pandora was curious about the voice and wanted even more to know what the jar held. She decided to open it.

Just as Pandora took the lid off the jar, Epimetheus returned home. He stared in horror as the room became dark and all sorts of horrible, ugly demons sprang forth from the jar. The evil things bit at him and Pandora, and both of them cried in pain. Out of the jar came sickness, hatred, violence, jealousy, and all other evil things that would torture humans from that day forward. After all of these things had escaped, Pandora looked in the jar. The only thing that remained in there was hope. Hope emerged, spoke softly to Pandora and Epimetheus, and comforted them, as she would comfort every human in the future. That is how the world first received evil and hope.

1. When Pandora was created, the gods and goddesses gave her many gifts which made her very enchanting. What characteristic should they have given her in order to keep her from releasing evil into the world? Explain.

2. What evil that exists in our world today would you most like to lock away in Pandora's jar? Why?

Love Yourself, But Not Too Much

The many affairs of Zeus were no secret to his jealous wife, Hera. He particularly loved to frolic with forest nymphs. One day while Zeus was visiting a friendly nymph named Echo, Hera suddenly appeared. Discovering her husband with Echo, Hera flew into a rage. Speaking harshly to the nymph, she commanded, "From now on, you will have no voice of your own but will only be able to repeat the last words that others say!" Having given this punishment, Hera angrily stormed away with Zeus.

Echo, upset over the loss of her voice, wandered the forest alone. One day she came upon Narcissus, a young man whose extremely good looks caused anyone who gazed at him to fall in love. Although many young women pursued him, he refused to marry. In fact, he thought so highly of himself that he was quite snobbish.

When Echo saw Narcissus, she immediately fell in love with him. At first she felt shy and hid behind a tree. Narcissus heard her rustling and called out, "Who is behind that tree? Come here!"

Echo could only reply, "Come here!"

Hearing this, Narcissus was confused and hesitated. Echo, overcome with love, gathered her courage and ran toward him, threw her arms around him, and tried to kiss him. Narcissus was upset by her advances and struggled to get away, saying, "Stop! I'll never love you!"

Poor heartbroken Echo could only repeat his last words. "Love you! Love you!"



Narcissus ran away and gradually came to a large shimmering pool of water in the woods. Thirsty, he bent over to drink from the pool. Before he could take a sip, he spied his reflection in the water. Spellbound, he forgot about his thirst and stared into the water, in love with the person he saw. "What a beautiful image! I wonder who this person is." He tried to talk to the image, but it would not respond. Saddened, he began to cry, and he saw the image shed tears also. He soon realized that he was in

love with his own reflection, and he knew that he could never embrace or kiss his love. However, he would not leave his love, and eventually he died there at the edge of the pool. When Echo came upon the pool of water, she could find no trace of Narcissus. In the spot where he had died, a beautiful white flower had sprung up. This flower became known as Narcissus. Echo missed her love greatly and wasted away in sadness. Soon, all that was left of her was a thin voice that, even today, hides in caves and forests and repeats the last words of others.

1. This story explains how two things in nature originated. What are they?

2. People sometimes describe someone who is conceited as being *narcissistic*. Why is this adjective appropriate?

