PANDO

B

## Characters

Circle the character you will play.

*Chorus Members 1, 2, 3: help tell the action of the play

Greek Chorus: a large group of people who speak in unison

*Zeus [zooss]**:** ruler of all the gods

*Prometheus [proh-MEE-thee-us]**:** creator of all living creatures

*Epimetheus [ep-ih-MEE-thee-us]**:** Prometheus' brother

*Pandora [pan-DOR-uh]**:** the first woman, Epimetheus' wife

Deceit, Sickness, Jealousy, Hope: creatures in the box

*indicates large speaking role

RA'S OX

An ancient Greek myth, retold by Jennifer Dignan
Art by Russ Wilms
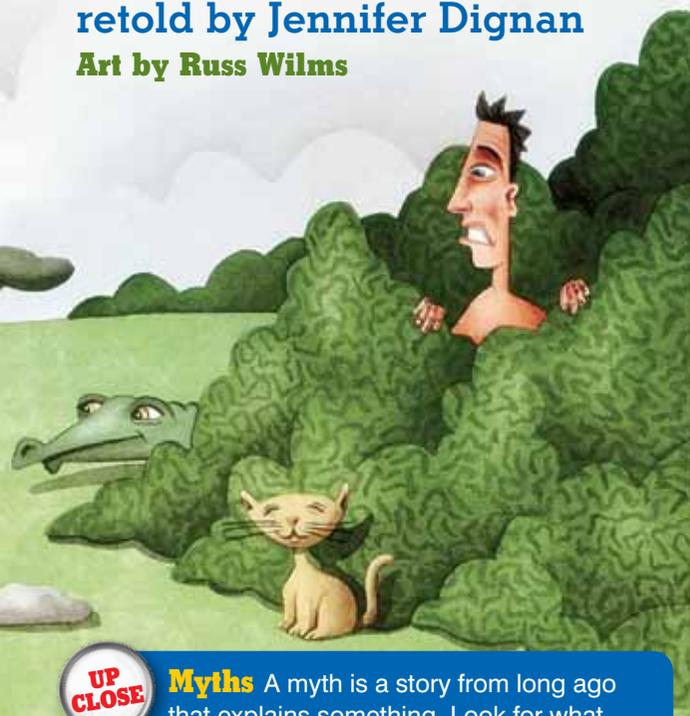
UP CLOSE

Myths A myth is a story from long ago that explains something. Look for what *Pandora's Box* explains about humans.

LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 8 TERMS IN BOLD

Prologue

Chorus Member 1: Long, long ago, says Greek mythology, Zeus gave the task of making all the creatures on Earth to a god named Prometheus.

Greek Chorus:
Snakes that slither, cats that creep,
Pigs that wallow, birds that peep,
Fish that swim, and dogs that howl,
Prometheus made one and all.

Chorus Member 2: Prometheus shows his work to Zeus.

Zeus: Terrific work here. Really terrific. But what are those scrawny-looking things shivering behind those bushes?

Prometheus: Ah, yes, my latest creation. I call them humans. What do you think?

Zeus: They look a little sorry over there. Couldn't they use a little fur, like that lion? Or how about some real teeth, like those alligators? I'm really not impressed with these humans.

Prometheus: Well, if you must know, I let Epimetheus help me . . .

Zeus: You did *what*? What were you thinking?

Chorus Member 3: Epimetheus is . . . how can we say this?

Chorus Member 1 (*whispers*)**:** A little slow.

Zeus: I'll tell you what. Get rid of the humans, and we'll call it a day. We could replace them with more of those furry barking things. I like those!

Prometheus: We can't just get rid of the humans! I'm very attached to them. How about we give them something to help them out a little? Something hot . . . smoky . . .

Zeus: Don't say it . . .

Greek Chorus:
Zeus certainly had no desire
To even think of sharing fire.

Prometheus: Oh, come on! You are so stingy with your precious fire.

Zeus: Fire belongs to the gods and only the gods. I forbid you to give it to those silly-looking creatures.

Prometheus (*sighing*)**:** Well, you're the boss.

Zeus: And don't forget it.

Chorus Member 2: But Prometheus disobeys. He steals fire from **Mount Olympus** and shows the people on Earth how to use it.

Prometheus: Just rub the sticks together like

so, and there you are! Now you can roast your lamb to crispy perfection!

Chorus Member 3: Humankind is thrilled. But Zeus is furious.

Zeus: How dare you **defy** me! It's off to the mountainside for you, where birds will peck at your liver forever!

Prometheus: Wouldn't a simple time-out work?

Chorus Member 1: Prometheus is doomed to an **eternity** of suffering.

Zeus: That takes care of Prometheus. But how should I punish the humans?

Greek Chorus:
The easy life that men enjoyed
Would soon by Zeus be destroyed.

Scene 1

Chorus Member 2: Zeus creates a beautiful woman named Pandora. She is clever, charming, and—most important—curious.

Chorus Member 3: Zeus then introduces Pandora to Epimetheus, who falls madly in love with her.

Chorus Member 1: Remember what we told you about Epimetheus . . .

Chorus Member 2 *(whispers)***:** He's a little slow.

Chorus Member 3: One day, soon after their wedding, Pandora and Epimetheus hear a knock at their door.

Epimetheus: Hey, it must be Prometheus, back from his vacation.

Chorus Member 1: Epimetheus opens the door.

Epimetheus: Oh, Zeus! What an honor! Have you heard from my brother? He's still not back from that vacation you sent him on.

Zeus: Vacation? Uh, yes, his bird-watching tour. I just got a postcard from him today. But enough about him. I've come

with a wedding present, something special for my favorite couple.

Greek Chorus:
As he wished them all the best
He handed them a padlocked chest.

Pandora: Oh, Zeus! You shouldn't have.

Zeus: But it's the least that I could do. And exactly what you deserve!

Epimetheus: Is it an **urn**? A torch?

Zeus: No, no, nothing like that. Just a little something special that could change your lives forever.

Pandora: I can't wait any longer! Let's open it!

Zeus: Hold on a moment! There is just one condition with this gift. You must never open it.

Epimetheus: Huh?

Pandora: What's inside?

Zeus: It's something **exceptional**. That's all you need to know.

Pandora: I need to know more than that!

Zeus: I'm not surprised that you're curious, but remember: You must never, ever, under any circumstances, open this chest.

Epimetheus: Don't worry, Zeus. I've got everything under control.

Greek Chorus:
With a grin great Zeus departed,
Knowing well what he had started.

Chorus Member 2: The minute he is gone, Pandora runs over to the chest.

Epimetheus: Zeus told us to leave it alone, so forget about it!

Pandora: You're right. I promise never to think about it again.

**Epimetheus:** Good. Let's go downtown and watch the **chariot** races.

Scene 2
A few weeks later

Epimetheus: I'm going shopping for new sandals. Want to come?

Pandora: No thanks. I've got some
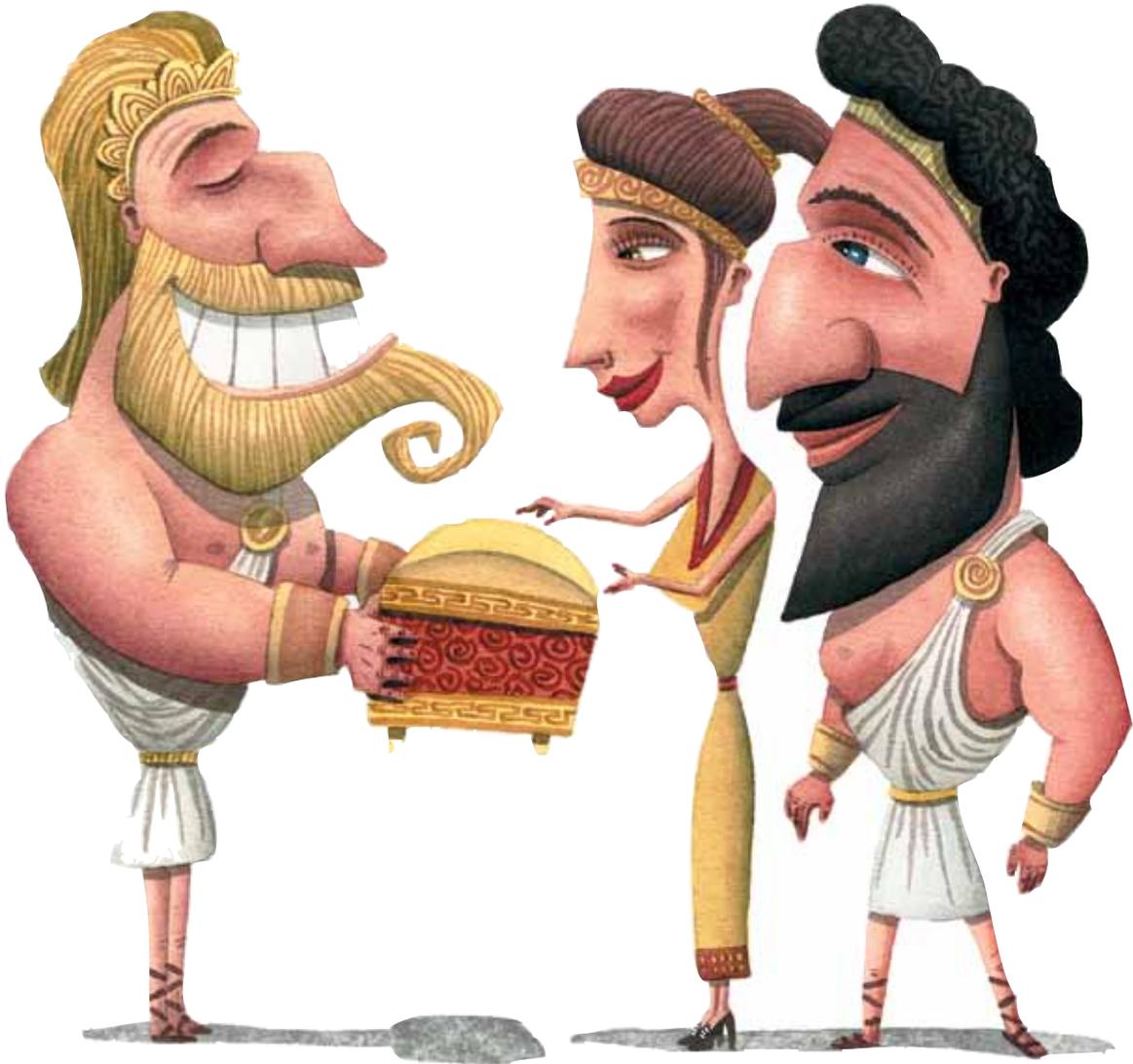
things to do at home.

Epimetheus: All right. Just remember . . .

Pandora: I know. Don't open the chest.

Greek Chorus:

Pandora really tried her best
To forget about the chest.
But buzzing in her like a bee
Was her curiosity.

Chorus Member 3: Pandora soon finds herself standing right in front of the chest.

Pandora: It can't hurt just to look at it.

Chorus Member 1: Soon, her hands are on it.

Pandora: It can't hurt just to touch it.

Chorus Member 2: Before long, her ear is pressed to the chest. She shakes it gently.

Pandora: It can't hurt just to listen to it.

Chorus Member 3: Suddenly she hears sweet little voices coming from the chest.

Deceit: We really want to come out and play with you.

Sickness: I'm not getting any younger in here!

Pandora: Who said that?

Jealousy: Alexandros, the man up the block, was allowed to open his present from Zeus!

Pandora: No, no! I'm not supposed to open it!

Jealousy: You wouldn't believe what was in Alexandros' chest!

Deceit: Zeus really won't mind! He wants you to open it!

Jealousy: If you don't open it soon, we'll go ask Alexandros to do it.

Sickness: Come on! My back is killing me!

Pandora: I don't know. Besides, it's locked.

Jealousy: The key is in the lock.

Pandora: So it is.

Deceit: Go ahead. Nothing bad will happen!

Sickness: Pleeease?

Pandora: Well . . .

Chorus Member 1: The chest flies open. A foul-smelling wind rushes from the box and knocks Pandora back.

Greek Chorus:
When Pandora turned the key,
Sickness, deceit, and jealousy
Flew out with other kinds of evil,
Bringing pain to all Earth's people.

Chorus Member 2: A swarm of **hideous** creatures fly wildly around the room.

Jealousy: Woo-hoo!

Deceit: Freedom!

Sickness: ¡Hasta la vista, Pandora!

Pandora: Oh no! What have I done?

Jealousy: Looks like you've just let evil into the world, my friend! See ya!

Chorus Member 3: The horrible creatures jump out an open window and start to make their way across the earth.

Chorus Member 1: Pandora slams the window shut, but it is too late. All but one of the creatures have escaped.

Greek Chorus:
Before that moment, life was great.
There was no anger, grief, or hate.
No one argued, no one cried,
No one aged, and no one lied.

Pandora: This is terrible! I've ruined everything.

Chorus Member 2: Down on the floor, one creature remains.

Hope: But remember, every cloud has a silver lining, and tomorrow is a new day. Things can only get better!

Pandora: What are you talking about? Get back in the chest!

Hope: That would be a big mistake. I'm not like the others. My name is Hope, and I'm the one thing that will make life **bearable** with all of those nasty creatures roaming around.

Pandora: How do I know you're not just another one of them?

Hope: You must believe me, Pandora. I've got to get out there, and you've got to help me!

Pandora: Well, you do seem different from the others. Somehow, I feel better just knowing you're here.

Chorus Member 3: Pandora scoops up Hope and helps her out the window to fly off into the world.

Greek Chorus:
When Pandora turned that key,
She set all kinds of horrors free.
We're just happy that she knew
To let Hope out the window too. 🌿

Myth Talk

From books and movies (think Percy Jackson) to video games and more, Greek mythology shows up everywhere—even in our language!
Check out these common figures of speech that come from Greek myths:
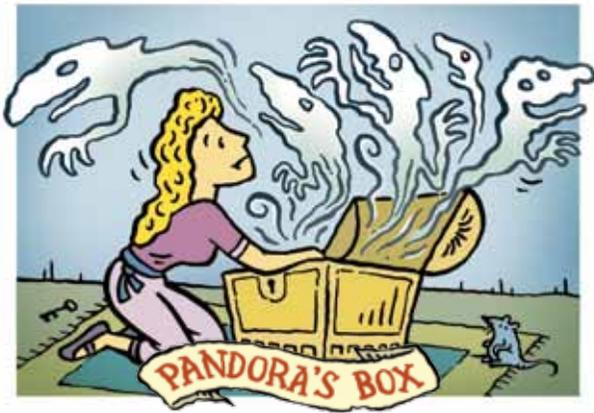
PANDORA'S BOX

The myth: Pandora was told she must not open a box. But because she was curious, she couldn't resist. When she opened it, to her horror, many evils escaped.

What it means: To "open a Pandora's box" means to start unexpected trouble.

MIDAS TOUCH

The myth: Greedy King Midas wanted everything he touched to turn to gold. His wish came true, and soon all he put his hands on—including food, drinks, and his daughter—became solid gold.

What it means: To "have the Midas touch" means to be successful at making money.
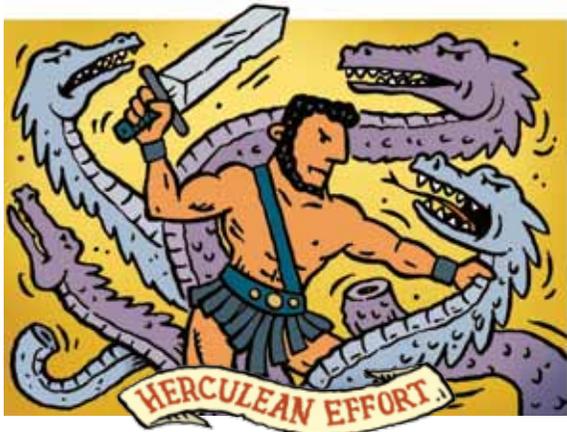
HERCULEAN EFFORT

The myth: To become a god, Hercules had to complete 12 nearly impossible tasks—like fighting multiheaded beasts. It took enormous strength to face these challenges.

What does "to make a Herculean effort" mean?
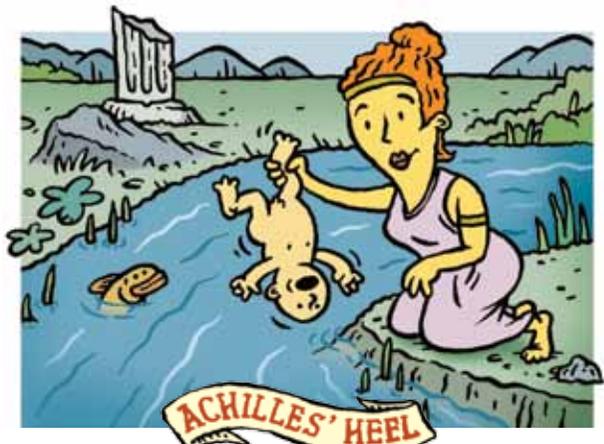
ACHILLES' HEEL

The myth: Achilles' mom dipped him into the River Styx to protect him. His heel, untouched by the river, was his only weak spot. Years later, an arrow pierced his heel, killing him.

What does "to have an Achilles' heel" mean?