



Read the myth. Then answer the questions that follow.

Gift from the Heavens

by Flora Diaz

1 At one time, the gods lived in the heavens while the mortals toiled on the earth. Zeus, king of all gods, did not look kindly on the mortals. Zeus believed that all heavenly powers belonged only to the gods and goddesses. Prometheus believed that these powers should be shared with the mortals.

2 Prometheus and Zeus were constantly getting into disputes. Once, Prometheus was asked to solve a conflict between the gods and mortal men. The men were going to sacrifice a bull during a festival and they had to decide which parts of the bull should be offered to the gods and which parts should be reserved for the men. Prometheus saw this as an opportunity to play a trick on Zeus. He butchered the bull and put the lean, tasty parts of the meat into a small serving bowl and then placed the gristle, bones, and fat into a much larger serving bowl. When Prometheus asked Zeus to select his meal, naturally he chose the larger portion.

3 When Zeus realized how he had been deceived, he was furious and immediately sought revenge. To punish both Prometheus and the mortals he cared about, Zeus snatched fire away from the men of earth, and kept it only for the gods.

4 During one bitterly cold winter, Prometheus watched the mortals huddle together like a pack of animals to keep warm. "They need to have fire returned to earth," he thought. So he decided to ignore Zeus' decree, no matter the risk. Prometheus lit a torch with the fire from the wheels of the chariot that carried the sun across the sky. He brought the flaming torch to earth and delivered fire to the mortals. As a result, life on earth was transformed. Not only did fire keep people warm, it also enabled them to cook food for the first time, as well as smoke the food and preserve it for later use. With the heat of the fire, they could even smelt metals and turn them into tools to use for farming.

5 The king of the gods was furious when he learned what Prometheus had done. He wanted to punish Prometheus and return the mortals to a life of pain and hardship. So Zeus came up with a plan. He asked the other goddesses to help him create a beautiful, mortal woman. His daughter Athena offered her assistance, and when the lovely creature was fully formed, Athena breathed life into her. Zeus named the woman Pandora, and she possessed unequalled beauty and charm. Zeus gave Pandora an ornate lidded box and sent her to Prometheus as a gift. He told Prometheus that Pandora would make a perfect bride.

6 Prometheus was suspicious of any gift from Zeus, despite the woman's incredible beauty. He suggested to his brother Epimetheus that he marry Pandora instead, which he willingly did. After they were wed, Epimetheus asked his bride what was inside the sealed box.

7 "I don't know," she replied. "I only know that Zeus gave me strict instructions never to open it."

8 "That is most unusual, but I would not trust Zeus. Perhaps we should bury the box," her husband responded.

9 Pandora had never given a thought to what was inside the box until her husband asked her about it. Now she was consumed with curiosity and she could think of nothing else. She wondered what it could be and



why Zeus was so determined to keep her from glancing inside. One night, while her husband was sleeping, Pandora pulled the box from its hiding place and cautiously opened the lid.

10 Immediately all manner of dreadful things were released from the box—disease, despair, malice, greed, death, hatred, violence, cruelty, and war. These torments traveled to earth, creating extreme discord and chaos for the mortals.

11 However, without Zeus’ knowledge, his daughter Athena had put something else into the box, something that could help the mortals cope with all these miseries—hope. So hope also traveled to earth to serve as a balance to the woes that burden all mortals.

Answer the questions. Mark your answers to questions 1–3 on the Answer Form to the right.

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number
Correct**

3

1 Which of these is the **best** summary of paragraph 1?

- A** Zeus cared only about the gods and had no compassion for mortals. Prometheus believed that the powers of the gods should be shared.
- B** Zeus decreed that mortals would toil as his slaves on earth.
- C** Prometheus thought that power should be shared among all the gods equally. Zeus wanted all of the power for himself.
- D** Prometheus did not get along with Zeus. He turned all of his attention to taking care of the mortals.

2 Which sentence should be included in a summary of the story?

- A** Epimetheus trusted Zeus more than he trusted his brother.
- B** Prometheus made humans as powerful as gods.
- C** Zeus gave Pandora the box but told her not to open it.
- D** Pandora opened the box to rebel against Zeus.



- 3 Which is the **best** summary of the key events of the story?
- A Prometheus helped humans trick Zeus, so the king of all gods took fire away from humans. Prometheus lit a torch from the chariot that carries the sun and brought fire back to humans. Zeus saw how humans thrived with fire, so he had a beautiful woman created. She went to earth, married Prometheus' brother, and then released evil into the world.
 - B Prometheus helped humans trick Zeus by keeping the best part of a bull sacrifice for themselves. Zeus punished Prometheus and the humans by taking fire away from them. Prometheus felt pity for the suffering humans and brought fire back to them. Zeus took revenge by creating a woman who brought all the evil things to the world in a box.
 - C Zeus thought heavenly powers should not be shared with humans. Prometheus disagreed, so he showed humans how to trick Zeus. Zeus became angry and took fire away from humans. Prometheus saw how cold humans were, so he brought them back their fire. Humans began to cook, smoke food, and make farm equipment.
 - D Prometheus helped humans trick Zeus, so Zeus took fire away from humans. Prometheus, seeing how humans suffered, brought the fire back. Zeus then sent Pandora to Prometheus with a box she was not supposed to open. Prometheus' brother married Pandora. The curious Pandora then opened the box, letting out both evil and hope into the world.

- 4 Summarize in your own words how Prometheus helps humans. Support your answer with at least **three** details from the passage.

**Self Check**

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 43.