English: Class 7 summer vacation task

PANDORA'S BOX

Featured Patron God: Zeus

Background: Has your curiosity ever got you into trouble? Have you ever been so desperate to know a secret that you took no notice of a warning? All through history there are stories of people being told not to open doors, caskets, cupboards, gates and all sorts of other things and, in so many of the stories, the people just did not listen. One person who did not listen was Pandora. Her story comes from Ancient Greece and her curiosity brought a whole heap of trouble!

In ancient Greece there were two brothers named Epimetheus and Prometheus. They upset the gods and annoyed the most powerful of all Gods, Zeus, in particular. This was not the first time humans had upset Zeus, and once before, as punishment, he had taken from humans the ability to make fire. This meant they could no longer cook their meat and could not keep themselves warm.

However, Prometheus was clever and he knew that, on the Isle of Lemnos, lived Hephaestus, the god. who was a blacksmith. He had a fire burning to keep his forge hot. Prometheus travelled to Lemnos and stole fire from the blacksmith. Zeus was furious and decided that humans had to be punished once and for all for their lack of respect.

Zeus came up with a very cunning plan to punish the two brothers. With the help of Hephaestus, he

created a woman from clay. The goddess Athena then breathed life into the clay, Aphrodite made her very beautiful and Hermes taught her how to be both charming and deceitful. Zeus called her Pandora and sent her as a gift to Epimetheus.

His brother Prometheus had warned him not to accept any gifts from the gods but Epimetheus was completely charmed by the woman and thought Pandora was so beautiful that she could never cause any harm, so he agreed to marry her.

Zeus, pleased that his trap was working, gave Pandora a wedding gift of a beautiful box. There was one very, very important condition however, that she must never opened the box. Pandora was very curious about the contents of the box but she had promised that she would never open it.

All she could think about was; what could be in the box? She could not understand why someone would send her a box if she could not see what was in it. It seemed to make no sense at all to her and she could think of nothing else but of opening the box and unlocking its secrets. This was just what Zeus had planned.

Finally, Pandora could stand it no longer. When she knew Epimetheus was out of sight, she crept up to the box, took the huge key off the high shelf, fitted it carefully into the lock and turned it. But, at the last moment,

she felt a pang of guilt, imagined how angry her husband would be and quickly locked the box again without opening the lid and put the key back where she had found it. Three more times she did this until, at last, she knew she had to look inside or she would go completely mad!
She took the key, slid it into the lock and turned it. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes and slowly lifted the lid of the box. She opened her eyes and looked into the box, expecting to see fine silks, gowns or gold bracelets and necklaces or even piles of gold coins.

But there was no gleam of gold or treasure. There were no shining bracelets and not one beautiful dress! The look of excitement on her face quickly turned to one of disappointment and then horror. For Zeus had packed the box full of all the terrible evils he could think of. Out of the box poured disease and poverty. Out came misery, out came death, out came sadness - all shaped like tiny buzzing moths.

The creatures stung Pandora over and over again and she slammed the lid shut. Epimetheus ran into the room to see why she was crying in pain. Pandora could still hear a voice calling to her from the box, pleading with her to be let out. Epimetheus agreed that nothing inside the box could be worse than the horrors that had already been released, so they opened the lid once more.

All that remained in the box was Hope. It fluttered from the box like a beautiful dragonfly, touching the wounds created by the evil creatures, and healing them. Even though Pandora had released pain and suffering upon the world, she had also allowed Hope to follow them.

The Story of Medusa and Athena

Once upon a time, a long time ago there lived a beautiful maiden named Medusa. Medusa lived in the city of Athens in a country named Greece -- and although there were many pretty girls in the city, Medusa was considered the most lovely.

Unfortunately, Medusa was very proud of her beauty and thought or spoke of little else. Each day she boasted of how pretty she was and each day her boasts became more outrageous.

On Sunday, Medusa bragged to the miller that her skin was more beautiful than fresh fallen snow. On Monday, she told the cobbler that her hair glowed brighter than the sun. On Tuesday, she commented to the blacksmith's son that her eyes were greener than the Aegean Sea. On Wednesday, she boasted to everyone at the public gardens that her lips were redder than the reddest rose.

When she wasn't busy sharing her thoughts about her beauty with all who passed by, Medusa would gaze lovingly at her reflection in the mirror. She admired herself in her hand mirror for an hour each morning as she brushed her hair. She admired herself in her darkened window for an hour each evening as she got ready for bed. She even stopped to admire herself in the well each afternoon as she drew water for her father's horses -- often forgetting to fetch the water in her distraction.

On and on Medusa went about her beauty to anyone and everyone who stopped long enough to hear her -- until one day when she made her first visit to the Parthenon with her friends. The Parthenon was the largest temple to the goddess Athena in all the land. It was decorated with amazing sculptures and paintings. Everyone who entered was awed by the beauty of the place and couldn't help but think of how grateful they were to Athena, goddess of wisdom, for inspiring them and for watching over their city of Athens. Everyone, that is, except Medusa

When Medusa saw the sculptures, she whispered that she would have made a much better subject for the sculptor than Athena had. When Medusa saw the artwork, she commented that the artist had done a fine job considering the goddess's thick eyebrows -- but imagine how much more wonderful the painting would be if it was of someone as delicate as Medusa.

And when Medusa reached the altar she sighed happily and said, "My this is a beautiful temple. It is a shame it was wasted on Athena for I am so much prettier than she is - perhaps some day people will build an even grander temple to my beauty."

Medusa's friends grew pale. The priestesses who overheard Medusa gasped. Whispers ran through all the people in the temple who quickly began to leave -- for everyone knew that Athena enjoyed watching over the people of Athens and feared what might happen if the goddess had overheard Medusa's rash remarks.

Before long the temple was empty of everyone except Medusa, who was so busy gazing proudly at her reflection in the large bronze doors that she hadn't noticed the swift departure of everyone else. The image she was gazing at wavered and suddenly, instead of her own features, it was the face of Athena that Medusa saw reflected back at her.

"Vain and foolish girl," Athena said angrily, "You think you are prettier than I am! I doubt it to be true, but even if it were -- there is more to life than beauty alone. While others work and play and learn, you do little but boast and admire yourself."

Medusa tried to point out that her beauty was an inspiration to those around her and that she made their lives better by simply looking so lovely, but Athena silenced her with a frustrated wave.

"Nonsense," Athena retorted, "Beauty fades swiftly in all mortals. It does not comfort the sick, teach the unskilled or feed the hungry. And by my powers, your loveliness shall be stripped away completely. Your fate shall serve as a reminder to others to control their pride."

And with those words Medusa's face changed to that of a hideous monster. Her hair twisted and thickened into horrible snakes that hissed and fought each other atop her head.

"Medusa, for your pride this has been done. Your face is now so terrible to behold that the mere sight of it will turn a man to stone," proclaimed the goddess, "Even you, Medusa, should you seek your reflection, shall turn to rock the instant you see your face."

And with that, Athena sent Medusa with her hair of snakes to live with the blind monsters - - the gorgon sisters -- at the ends of the earth, so that no innocents would be accidentally turned to stone at the sight of her.

THE MYTH OF HERACLES (Hercules)

Heracles (Heir-uh-cleez) was the greatest of the mythological Greek heroes. He was famous for his incredible strength, courage, and intelligence. Hercules is his Roman name. The Greeks called him Heracles (Heir-uh-cleez).

Birth of Heracles

Heracles was a demigod. This means that he was half god, half human. His father was Zeus, king of the gods, and his mother was Alcmene (Alc-may-nay), a beautiful human princess. Even as a baby Heracles was very strong. When the goddess Hera, Zeus' wife, found out about Heracles, she wanted to kill him. She snuck two large snakes into his crib. However, baby Heracles grabbed the snakes by the neck and strangled them with his bare hands!

Growing Up

Zeus loved his little son. He figured that sooner or later Hera might actually find a way to kill little Heracles. Heracles mother, Alcmene, tried to raise him like a regular kid. He went to school like mortal children, learning subject like math, reading, and writing. Heracles went to live in the hills where he worked as a cattle herder. He enjoyed the outdoors. One day, when Heracles was eighteen years old, a massive lion attacked his herd. Heracles killed the lion with his bare hands.

Heracles is Tricked

Heracles married a princess named Megara. They had a family and were living a happy life. This made the goddess Hera angry. She tricked Heracles into thinking his family was a bunch of snakes. Heracles killed the snakes only to realize they were his wife and kids. He was very sad and riddled with guilt.

Oracle of Delphi

Heracles wanted to get rid of his guilt. He went to get advice from the Oracle of Delphi. The Oracle told Heracles that he must serve King Eurystheus-Heracles cousin for 10 years and do any task the king asked of him. If he did this, he would be forgiven and wouldn't feel guilty any more & he would become immortal, the Oracle did not explain what "immortal" meant would he live forever or be known forever? The tasks the king gave him are called the Twelve Labors of Heracles.

The Twelve Labors of Heracles

Eurystheus was an evil man. He thought everyone wanted to steal his crown, especially Heracles. Hera helped Eurystheus design 12 Labors (missions or tasks) that Heracles had to complete. The king did not like Heracles and wanted him to fail. Each time he made the tasks more and more difficult.

1.Slay (kill) the Lion of Nemea – The lion was more of a monster than an ordinary lion. Spears or arrows could not penetrate its skin. Heracles blocked off the entrances to the lion's cave and throttled it to death with his bare hands. He wore the lion's skin as a cloak.

2.Slay the Lernean Hydra – Heracles was to seek out and destroy the many-headed Hydra. Some said that the Hydra had eight or nine heads, while others claimed as many as ten thousand.

3. Capture the Golden Hind of Artemis – A hind is a female deer, but this one was special because it had Golden horns. It was sacred to Artemis, goddess of hunting, so Heracles dared not wound it.

4.Capture the Boar of Erymanthia – Heracles located the boar after a year and managed to drive it into a snowbank, immobilizing it. Flinging it up onto his shoulder, he carried it back.

5.Clean the entire Augean stables in one day- Instead of using a shovel and a basket as Eurystheus imagined, Heracles diverted two rivers through the stable yard and got the job done-cleaning up manure & filth-without getting dirty.

6.Slay the Stymphalian Birds – These birds either feasted on human flesh, killed men by shooting them with feathers of brass or were just annoying because of the great number of them.

7.Capture the Bull of Crete – Although the beast belched flames, the hero overpowered it and shipped it back.To the mainland.

8.Steal the Mares of Diomedes – These horses dined on the flesh of travelers.

9.Get the belt from the Queen of the Amazons, Hippolyta – The Amazons were warrior women, great archers, & invented the art of fighting from horseback. As it turned out, the Amazon queen, Hippolyte, gave Heracles her belt. Hera was not about to let him get off so easily so she told the Amazons that the Greeks had captured their queen, and a great battle ensued.

10.Take the cattle from the monster Geryon – Geryon, the owner of famous cattle, had three heads. His Watchdog. Orthrus, had two heads. Orthrus rushed at Heracles as he was making off with the cattle,

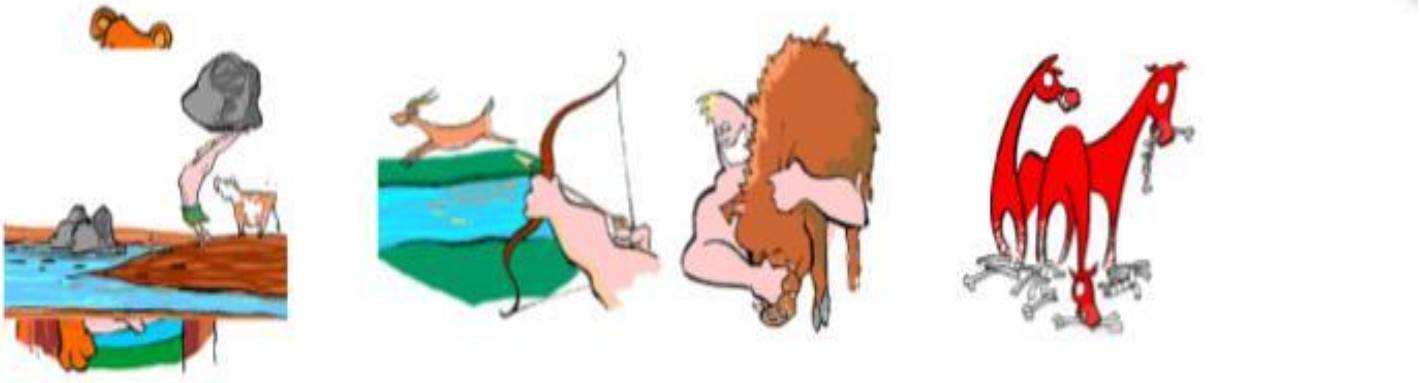
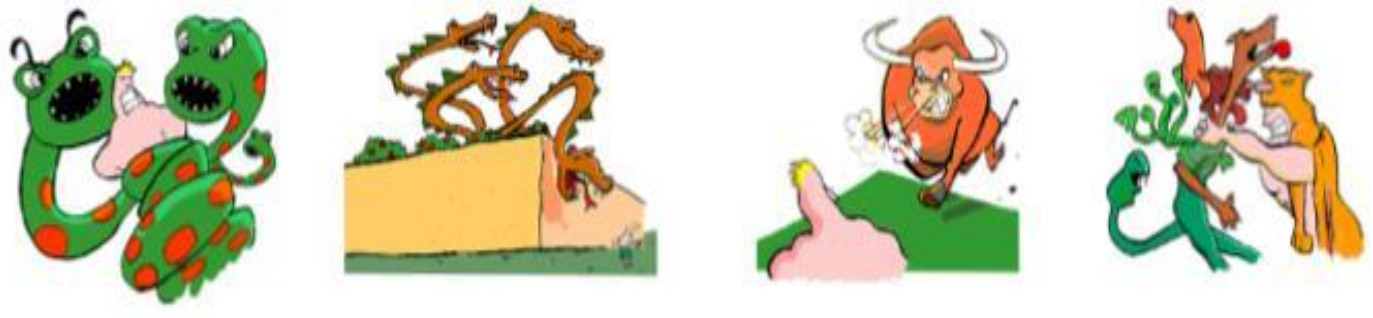
And the hero killed him with a single blow from the wooden club.

11 Steal apples from the Hesperides – The Hesperides were trusted by Hera with certain apples which She had received as a wedding present. These were kept in a grove surrounded by a high wall and Guarded by a many-headed dragon. Heracles had to kill the dragon by means of an arrow over the Garden wall.

12. Bring back the three-headed dog Cerberus from the Underworld – Cerberus had razor teeth, three heads, a venomous snake for a tail and another swarm of snakes growing out of his back. He was wearing his trusty lion's skin. Heracles eventually choked Cerberus into surrender.

Other Adventures
Hercules went on a number of other adventures throughout Greek mythology. He was a hero who helped people and fought monsters. He continuously had to deal with the goddess Hera trying to trick him and get him into trouble.

His Death
In the end, Hercules died when his new wife, Deianira (die-uh-near-a), was tricked into poisoning him.

However, Zeus saved him and his immortal half went to Olympus to become a god. But part of him had come

Not from his father Zeus but from his mortal mother Alcmene, and that part was sent to the Underworld.