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## A Perspective on Pandora's Box

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# CANE Student Writing Contest Winner

2020 Topic

## Re-Singing Myth

Ovid begins the *Metamorphoses* by explaining that his genre-breaking epic will be about “forms changed into new bodies”. In the 15 books that follow, the poet proceeds to reinvent a panoply of Greek myths, both well-known and obscure, using his signature wit and imagination. Some of the stories he recounts according to the traditional versions, but others he changes completely in the service of different aims. In the same way, in the centuries and millennia since the body of Greco-Roman mythology was first written down, poets, authors, and artists have engaged with these myths by re-inventing them for their own contexts. For example, Luciano Garbati’s sculpture of Medusa holding the head of Perseus imagines a post-#MeToo world where the “hero” may not actually be all that heroic and the victim of sexual assault and misogyny is empowered to change her destiny. In the words of the sculptor himself when asked about the rationale behind the piece: “There are lots of depictions of Medusa, and they are always describing the myth at its worst... What would it look like, her victory, not his? How should that sculpture look?”

As we strive to bring a more just and equitable approach to studying classics, how might we re-sing the ancient tales? Whose voices have been excluded from the stories and whose stories have never been told?

**For this writing contest:** provide your own short story, poem, essay, or dialogue re-singing a myth or myths from the classical tradition. Your project will be judged holistically, based on how successfully you address the given topic, how well you engage your reader, and how well you write as you present your idea. Deadline for submission: **December 15, 2021**.

Guidelines for Students (please note all these):

- Your project may be a short story, poem, drama, or essay.
- Maximum length: 700 words.
- Your project should not be hand-written. Please provide a typed document.
- If you use any source materials for this project, you must provide a bibliography with specific references.
- Your name should not appear on the project itself.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed this program on the 2021-2022 NASSP List of Approved Contests, Programs, and Activities for Students.

## A Perspective on Pandora's Box

MIA SCHENENGA

Tortured, forgotten,  
I am the writer of all myth;  
    ink of the pen,  
    meaning of the word,  
    inflection of the eloquent storyteller.

Imprisoned as I am,  
    Most don't know my name.  
I spread my always broken wings  
    confined within one frame.  
I fly to those who need me,  
    who don't want to need me.  
    They do.

My opportunity to escape was fleeting.  
A split second window; a vision of  
    flying past the cursed silhouette of Pandora,  
I was fast enough, but;  
    I decided to stay.

Good or evil, then they said,  
    as if hope could be an accursed thing  
    to the ill-fated humanity,  
    plaything of the divine world.  
    They need me most.

A young woman holding a floral bouquet,  
    the only way I'm known.  
Not worthy enough to be a goddess,  
    now a nameless spirit.  
Young, a reckless decision, that  
    I won't regret.  
I promise  
    to never admit defeat.

I am not ignorant or naive  
    as all those do expect; I am:  
the mortal life of the divine world,  
the presence of the mind,  
the intention of their existence  
    even if they ignore mine.

There is only one story you know of me,  
    although I wrote them all.  
I stayed in the cursed box of Pandora;  
    The lonely spirit of hope.

Some may call me Elpis,  
    While others call me Spes.  
You can try to defy me,  
But my decision has been made; I am:  
    the quiet strength inside your head,  
    the choice to change your life,  
    that selfless hope that never leaves,  
    the chance to keep moving on.

Forever I am haunted  
    by the vision of what could be.  
The epitome of potential,  
    that's who I am,  
    what I must live to be.  
There will be hope for you,  
    and so there can't be hope for me.

East Greenwich High School  
Teacher: Ben Revkin