

Essential Question: In what way is *Frankenstein* a “Modern Prometheus” as indicated in Shelley’s sub-title?

The Story of Prometheus

A Titan, in **Greek** mythology, is any of the children of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaea (Earth) and their descendants.

Prometheus was the wisest Titan. His name means "forethought" and he was able to foretell the future. He was the son of Iapetus. When Zeus revolted against Cronus, Prometheus deserted the other Titans and fought on Zeus’ side. #wingman

Zeus then entrusted Prometheus with the task of forming man from water and earth (or clay), which Prometheus did. In the process, he became fonder of men than Zeus had anticipated.

Later, Zeus and Prometheus were developing ceremonial forms for animal sacrifice. Prometheus divided the slaughtered animal parts into two packets. In one was the ox-meat and innards wrapped up in the stomach lining. In the other packet were the ox-bones wrapped up in its own rich fat. One would go to the gods and the other to the humans making the sacrifice. Prometheus presented Zeus with a choice between the two, and Zeus took the deceptively richer appearing: the fat-encased, but inedible bones.

As a result of Prometheus' trick, for ever after, whenever man sacrificed to the gods, he would be able to feast on the meat, so long as he burned the bones as an offering for the gods.

Zeus didn't share Prometheus' feelings and wanted to prevent men from having power, especially over fire. Prometheus stole fire from Mount Olympus, concealed it in a hollow stalk of fennel, and brought it to man. Prometheus also stole skills from Hephaestus and Athena to give to man.

Zeus reacted to these tricks by presenting man with a "gift," Pandora, the first woman. While Prometheus may have crafted man, woman was a different sort of creature. She came from the forge of Hephaestus, beautiful as a goddess and beguiling. Zeus presented her as a bride to Prometheus' brother Epimetheus. Prometheus had the gift of thinking ahead, but Epimetheus was only capable of afterthought, so Prometheus, expecting retribution for his audacity, had warned his brother against accepting gifts from Zeus.

Zeus gave the gods-crafted Pandora as bride to Epimetheus, along with a box that they were instructed to keep closed. Epimetheus was dazzled by Pandora and forgot the advice of his smarter brother.

Unfortunately, one day while her husband Epimetheus was away, Pandora opened the box Zeus had given them along with the warning never to open it. When she opened it, Pandora unleashed all the evils now known to man. No longer could man loll about all day, but he would have to work and would succumb to illnesses.

Prometheus was still not awed by the might of Zeus and continued to defy him, refusing to warn him of the dangers of the nymph Thetis (future mother of Achilles). Zeus had tried punishing Prometheus through his loved ones, but this time he decided to punish him more directly. He bade Hephaestus (or Hermes) chain Prometheus to Mount Caucasus where an eagle/vulture ate his ever-regenerating liver each day.

Eventually Hercules rescued Prometheus.

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