Ms. Frizzle and Pandora

By Grace Zhu

Ms. Frizzle rides again on the magic school bus. Not with her enthusiastic and inquisitive Smith students this time, but with Pandora. Yes, that Pandora from Greek mythology. There are only two of them on the bus, heading on an exciting and breathtaking trip.

Ms. Frizzle loves her students, but she also cherishes the rare opportunity to talk to the first woman on Earth. Ever since Pandora opened that evil cask, she has been feeling so guilty that she didn’t tell anyone about her story. Yet, here is Ms. Frizzie, ready to hear and learn.

Pandora began her story.

“Too often the myth’s focus is on the evil that is let loose, and not the hope that remains. But what an omission! The endurance of hope embodies just what we have left when all else has gone wrong. And it is simply brilliant.”

Ms. Frizzie could not agree more. While she acknowledged the fact that Pandora should have resisted the temptation to open the lid, she was grateful that her ‘fault’ led to a humane discovery of a gem - hope.

Pandora continued her narrative, as if she spoke of the contemporary time.

“Regardless of the ‘thousands of troubles, wandering the earth,’ whether it is a lost job, an endured abuse, a worry over a wayward child, or a lapse into addiction—whatever cross we are bearing—we need only slide back the lid and peer into the bottom of the jar. There is always hope.”

Convinced of her argument, Pandora smiled to herself and started to make tea for both of them. Pandora still possessed some divine powers. When she made tea, she didn’t just make tea. Pandora wanted to have tea and scones in a tea-house, so she gently crossed her fingers toward the windows. In the next thirty seconds, magic followed. An owl and a crow flew past the bus, but it seemed that they didn’t like the scones - there was too much sugar in the scone. Although the texture was nearly perfect, sweetness level was where bakers failed. Flour, butter, and sugar were only platforms for other flavors - spices and extracts, fruit and cream and chocolate. A pastry never needed to be overly sweet. It only needed to be memorable.

Tea time, like all other sweet time, felt short for Ms. Frizzle and Pandora. When they finished their last bite of scones, the tea-house setting faded and was transformed into a cool shade under a huge catalpa tree in Northampton. Why? Weird as it might sound, Pandora could turn what was in her mind to reality. Well, right now her mind wandered in the *World of Wonders* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil, a book she had read in the summer. Ms. Frizzle was wonderstruck at how the bus suddenly turned into a forest. The catalpa offered up its creamy blossoms to the morning, already sultry and humid at nine o’clock in the morning. It still stood, even through the two or three tornado warnings this first windy year in Northampton.

Even Pandora herself was amazed. As she and Ms. Frizzle passed the enormous tree, they made note of which leaves could cover their face entire if ever necessary again. Pandora thought to herself, If I ever needed to be anonymous and shield myself from questions of what are you? And where are you from? Why did you open the cask?

Ms. Frizzle kept walking. Her students were waiting. Her sweet Smithies, who insist on calling her ma’am no matter how much she gently protests. And she couldn’t wait to see their beautiful faces.

As Mountain Day approached, Ms. Frizzle could not stop thinking about cara cara oranges. When daily news seems to bring forth another fresh grief - more children killed, the Amazon rainforest ablaze for weeks - Ms. Frizzle thought of this orange, its sweetness and the smiles it brought to so many families. For the daily tragedies, she tried to do what she can to help - donate money, gather bathroom supplies - but her heart longed for a place of tenderness.

When Pandora and Ms. Frizzle were both back to reality from their imaginary world, they sat down at the tea table. Despite being whimsical from time to time, Pandora worked very hard to become a physician. And now she had become a prominent endocrinologist at Mayo Clinic, studying past cases of rheumatoid arthritis to search for alternatives.

As she browsed through medical records in the 1950s, she found this:

“Mrs. G’s first dose of compound E was, as noted earlier, the culmination of eighteen years of work for Dr. Kendall and possibly the defining moment of his career.[...] At that time, there were an estimated three million patients in the US with rheumatoid arthritis, but she was certainly one of the most severely afflicted. Young, pretty, and at first glance healthy appearing, the petite woman was completely debilitated by her disease.[...] For Mrs. G, day-to-day living was little more than an intolerable, subhuman existence.

September 22 came and went. Mrs. G noted no effect from her injection. On September 23 the patient awoke feeling a little better. Amazingly over the course of the day she seemed to improve even more. She reported feeling less stiff, although on physical examination her joints were still inflamed.[...] The following morning, it was apparent that something quite extraordinary was happening at the hospital.[...] Reaching the appropriate floor, Dr. Hench began to appreciate the magnitude of Mrs. G’s clinical evolution. [...] The woman in front of him now was an entirely different person. She stood, walked, and lifted her arms with ease. Hench was flabbergasted.

Within one week of the initiation of therapy, she was virtually pain free. The next afternoon, she shopped for three hours downtown, feeling tired but not sore or stiff. She noted a sense of well-being.”

People now knew that compound E was actually a sub-type of steroid, but back in the 50s, the quest for cortisone was filled with uncertainty. Pandora truly admired Drs. Hench and Kendall’s resilience, and as a young physician, she often worried about how she might make a contribution.

Yet, no worries today. That’s what Ms. Frizzle told Pandora, and that she deserved a field trip on weekends. The bus stopped for a refill.

**Keys:**

1. <https://www.netflix.com>

Ms. Frizzle...magic school bus...enthusiastic and inquisitive...exciting and cliff-hanging

1. <https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/fellows/the-hope-at-the-bottom-of-pandoras-box/>

The first woman on earth...too often the myth’s focus is on the evil that is let loose, and not the hope that remains. But what an omission! The endurance of hope embodies just what we have left when all else has gone wrong. And it is simply brilliant.

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1. *A Cuban Girl’s Guide to Tea and Tomorrow* by Laura Taylor Namey

I can see why Owl and Crow guests rave about the afternoon tea served in the parlor, but there’s too much sugar in this scone. Although the texture is nearly perfect, sweetness level is where bakers fail. Flour, butter, and sugar are only platforms for other flavors-spices and extracts, fruit and cream and chocolate. A pastry never needs to be overly sweet. It only needs to be memorable.

1. World of Wonders in praise of fireflies, whale sharks, and other astonishments by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Chapter 1 Catalpa tree (excerpt)

The campus catalpa offers up its creamy blossoms to the morning, already sultry and humid at nine o’clock in the morning. It still stands, even through the two or three tornado warnings we’ve had just this first windy year in Mississippi. As I pass the enormous tree, I make note of which leaves could cover my face entire if I ever needed them again. If I ever needed to be anonymous and shield myself from questions of what are you? And where are you from? I keep walking. My students are waiting. My sweet southern students, who insist on calling me ma’am no matter how much I gently protest. And I can’t wait to see their beautiful faces.

Chapter 2 Cara cara orange

When daily news seems to bring forth another fresh grief - more children killed, the Amazon rainforest ablaze for weeks - I think of this orange, its sweetness and the smiles it brings to so many families. For the daily tragedies, I try to do what I can to help - donate money, gather bathroom supplies - but my heart longs for a place of tenderness.

1. The Quest for Cortisone by Thom Rooke

Chapter 20 The amazing Mrs. G. (excerpt)

Mrs. G’s first dose of compound E was, as noted earlier, the culmination of eighteen years of work for Dr. Kendall and possibly the defining moment of his career.[...] At that time, there were an estimated three million patients in the US with rheumatoid arthritis, but she was certainly one of the most severely afflicted. Young, pretty, and at first glance healthy appearing, the petite woman was completely debilitated by her disease.[...] For Mrs. G, day-to-day living was little more than an intolerable, subhuman existence.

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**Reflection**

Overall, I would not call my project a plagiarism because I try to bring in a fresh perspective of how we might interpret hope in both a historical and contemporary context. I accomplished that by finding connections between different pieces of work that I really resonate with. My thought process is as the following.

I started to look for sources on Mon (09/16), and Pandora is the first figure coming to me. When I first read the version of Pandora’s box with hope left in it last summer, I found it truly inspirational. And this fall, I am taking BIO 132, where Professor Derr introduced us to the Cell Theory with the idea of Ms. Frizzle’s bus visiting a cell. I know I love that too. When I was very small, I read the magic school bus series, but in Nanjing China, I have never been on a school bus. On a hiking trip during orientation, I finally got the chance to be on a school bus, as if I were still in middle school. It felt true, and for some reason, I wanted to write a mini-story about these elements.

As we are supposed to do an original remix, I tried to refer to more sources. The reason I chose the book titled *A Cuban girl’s guide to tea and tomorrow*, is that I see hope in it, and hope is the thread of my story here. Also, I have been learning Spanish for 7 years, and since I arrived here, I haven’t got the time to practice it. I really miss speaking Spanish in class, so I tried to read whatever I find in Spanish. This is a book written partly in Spanish.

The Smith Reads this summer is a gem for my last sultry summer back in China. *World of Wonders* makes me wonder about how feminism can really make girls feel empowered.

The last source I refer to is a scientific or medical narrative I borrowed almost a month ago from Neilson Library. I finished reading it just before I started this remix project, and luckily I found what I need in the book. *A quest for cortisone* is a quest for a cure, a cure for rheumatoid arthritis, Addison’s disease, and so many other hormone-related syndromes yet to be addressed. It aroused in me a solid faith in pursuing what I always dream of.