

easy english readers

# The Little Mermaid

By Hans Christian Andersen

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# The Little Mermaid

## in 'Easy English'

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# About the Story

Mermaids are not real. But love is. And this is a story about true love.

The little mermaid had true love for the young man in the story, but it was not easy for her to show this love.

When we love another person we must often leave things, lose things, and go through much pain to show how strong our love is. The little mermaid did this in the story.

But in this story, the little mermaid's love for God was stronger than her love for the young man. What she wanted most was to be with God.

And what God wanted most was for her to show love for others. She did this with her whole life.



# The Little Mermaid

Far out in the ocean the water is dark blue and as clear as glass. But it is very deep... deeper than any person can go. If you put the tallest buildings on top of each other, they would not go from the ocean floor to the top of the water. It is in this part of the ocean where the mer-people live.

Do not think that there is nothing but sand on this part of the ocean floor. No, no! The best trees and plants grow there. They all bend easily, and the slightest movement of the water makes them move like living animals. There are many different fish – big and little – and they swim between the branches of the ocean trees in the way that birds fly up here in the air.

*In the deepest place of all  
is the mer-king's house.*

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In the deepest place of all is the mer-king's house. Its walls are made from red and white coral. In the walls are tall windows. And the roof is covered with shells that open and close with the movement of the water. In each shell is a pearl. Any woman would be happy to have one of them, but there are *hundreds* of them in the roof of the mer-king's house.

The mer-king had six beautiful mermaid daughters. His wife died many years before, and now his mother lives in the house with him and his daughters. Important mer-women wear six pearls on their tails, but the king's mother wears 12. She was a good mer-woman, and she loved the king's daughters very much.

*The mermaids played  
in their father's house.*

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The youngest mermaid was the most beautiful of the six sisters. Her skin was as smooth as the smoothest flower, and her eyes were as blue as the deepest ocean. But, like her sisters, she had no feet. Her body was half fish tail.

Each day the mermaids played in their father's house, where flowers grow out of the walls. When the big windows were open, fish would swim through them as birds fly in the air. The fish would swim up to the little mermaids and eat out of their hands, staying to be softly touched by them.

Near the house was a beautiful place with blue and red trees. The branches of the trees move softly, and their flowers are like burning fires. They give off light like the very best glass.

The ground around the red and blue trees was blue sand. This beautiful blue colour was over all that was there. You would think that you were not on the bottom of the ocean, but high above the ocean with nothing but blue sky around you. In clear weather you could see the sun at the top of the ocean, looking like a purple flower with all that light coming from its middle.

Each of the mermaids had her own special place near the trees, where she would dig and plant what she wanted. One sister made her flower bed in the shape of a big fish. Another made her special place in the shape of a mermaid. But the youngest sister made her flower bed in the shape of a circle, and filled it with red flowers.

*She made her flower bed  
in the shape of a circle.*

The littlest mermaid was a quiet child, always thinking. The sisters would bring things from broken ships on the ocean floor and put them in their flower beds. The others put many beautiful things in their flower beds, but she put one thing with her flowers – a statue of a beautiful boy made out of white stone. The white statue was in the middle of a circle of red flowers, under a red tree, with blue sand all around it. The light made the tree's shape on the ground look purple, and the long thin branches of the tree dropped down to the ground like they were playing with the red flowers.

The little mermaid was happiest when other mermaids talked about the people who lived on land in the "top earth". She asked her grandmother many questions about ships

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and towns and people and animals. She liked to hear her grandmother talk about the top earth. What she liked best was that on land flowers have beautiful smells – for flowers do not have smells on the ocean floor – and that trees are green and the fish in the branches of the trees can sing beautiful songs. (Grandmother said the birds were fish, because mermaids do not have a word for birds.)

"When you are 15," said Grandmother, "you can go up to the top of the water and sit on big stones in the moonlight and see the big ships go by. And you can see trees and towns too!"

That same year the oldest sister was 15. And each year after that another sister would be 15 (for there was one year between each of them).

But it would be five years before the littlest mermaid could see the top earth.

Each sister said that she would tell the others about the things she learned when it was time for her to see the top earth... because Grandmother did not tell them enough, and there was always more that they wanted to know.

The mermaid who wanted to know most was the youngest, and she was the one who had to wait the longest. But she waited very quietly, always thinking.

Many nights she looked out the open window and up through the dark blue water where fish were moving. She could see the moon and the stars above her. They look much bigger through the water than they do to our eyes.

*She looked out the open window  
and up through the blue water.*

At times a ship would move by like a dark cloud above her. On the ship were many people – people who did not know that there was a beautiful mermaid down under them holding her soft hands up toward them.

When the oldest sister turned 15, she travelled to the top of the ocean. And she had hundreds of things to tell the others when she returned.

What she liked best was to rest against the beach by the quiet ocean and see the big town near it. At night the lights of the town looked like hundreds of stars. She listened to music and the sounds of the movements of animals, people, and other things. Above the town she could see the tops of temples and hear the sound of their bells.

*She liked to rest against the  
beach and see the town*

How happy the youngest sister was to hear what the oldest sister was saying! After that, when she looked through the window after dark, she would think of the big town with all of its sounds and movement. She could almost hear the sound of the bells coming down to her.

The following year sister number two was able to swim to the top, and when she returned she could not find words to say how beautiful the sun was as it was going down. The whole sky was like gold; and red and purple clouds sailed over her head. A line of wild swans, flying more quickly than the clouds, moved over the water to where the sun was going down. She tried to swim toward the sun, but it dropped quickly under the water, taking the beautiful colours with it.

Sister number three had more confidence when it was her time to see the top earth. She followed a wide river through the town and into beautiful green mountains that were covered with trees and bushes. She could see houses looking out at her between the trees. Birds were singing and the sun was hot – too hot for her. She put her face under the water from time to time to cool it.

In one place a group of children were playing in the water. She wanted to play with them, but they were afraid of her and were running away. A little black animal – it was a dog, but she did not know it – made a loud sound, making her return to the ocean.

Sister number four did not go as far as the others. Because she liked the ocean, she stayed in the middle looking all around her. She said that the sky above her was like a big glass bell covering the earth. Ships looked like ocean birds when they were far away from her. She liked to look at fish jumping out of the water; and the best part for her was seeing very big fish push water up out of their heads like big fountains. They did not do this at the bottom of the ocean.

It was the coldest time of the year when sister number five was able to go to the top, and her stories were very different from the others. Her ocean was green, with big mountains of ice swimming in it. Each one looked like a pearl, but they were bigger than any building people could make.

*Her ocean was green,  
with big mountains of ice.*

Each mountain had a different shape, and their many sides returned the light falling on them like little suns.

She rested on the biggest mountain, with her long hair flying in the wind like a flag. The big ships travelled wide around her, thinking she was a spirit.

Late in the day dark clouds filled the sky. The angry ocean lifted the mountains of ice high above the ships. On all the ships people were afraid. They were taking down their sails to stop the wind from pushing them over. But she rested quietly on her ice mountain. She looked on as lightning from the clouds would shoot down on the beautiful water.

Each sister was most interested in her first look at the top earth.

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After they were 15, they were able to go up at any time. But their interest quickly dropped after the first look, and in the end, they each said that the bottom of the ocean was the most beautiful place and the one they liked most.

Some nights the five sisters would swim hand in hand in a line up to the top of the water. They could sing beautifully – more beautifully than any person on earth.

When the wind was strong and ships were in danger, they would swim in front of the ships and sing songs about how beautiful it is at the bottom of the ocean. But the people in the ships would think it was the wind they were hearing, because the words were not clear to them. And people on the ships could not

understand that it is beautiful at the bottom of the ocean, because when a ship goes to the bottom of the ocean, the people on it die.

On nights when the older sisters would go to the top of the water together, their little sister had to stay behind. She would look up to them almost crying; but a mermaid cannot cry to take the pain away. When a mermaid is sad it hurts more than it does when a person is sad.

"I want to be 15!" she would say to herself. "I know I will grow to love the top earth and all the people who live there."

At last the little mermaid turned 15.

"Now you can stop asking us all your questions," said her grandmother. "Now you will see for yourself."

*"Now you can stop asking questions  
and you will see for yourself."*

"Come now. I will dress you beautifully like your sisters," said the old mer-woman. She put a circle of white flowers made from pearls on the little mermaid's hair, and six big shells on her tail, each with a pearl in it, to show how important she was.

"But it hurts, Grandmother!" said the little mermaid.

"We must all hurt a little to look beautiful," said the mer-woman.

She wanted to shake off the shells and put down the big pearl flowers. She would have liked to wear her red flowers much more. But it was time to leave for the top and she did not want to take time now. She smiled at her grandmother and, without thinking, moved quickly up through the water.

The sun was going down when she put her head up above the water, and the clouds were purple. In the middle of the sky was the night star. Its light was strong and beautiful. There was no wind, and the water was as smooth as glass.

The sound of music and singing were coming from inside a big ship near the little mermaid. As the night was growing darker, hundreds of coloured lights started showing on the ship. Many flags were moving softly in the wind.

The little mermaid moved up closer to a window on the side of the ship. Each time the water lifted her, she could see through the clear glass. Many well dressed people were in the room, but the most beautiful person of them all was

sitting in a special place in front of all the others.

He was very young and he had deep black eyes. It was a special day for him too, because he was now 16 years old. The coloured lights were for him!

People moved to the top floor of the ship to dance, and when the boy stepped out on the top floor with them, guns started shooting beautiful fountains of colour into the sky. At first the mermaid was afraid, and she put her head under the water. But she returned quickly to see the colours and to see the young man shaking people by the hand, smiling, and laughing as music filled the night.

"He must be the son of a king!" the little mermaid said to herself.

*"He must be the son of a king!"*

It was getting late, but she could not turn her eyes away from the ship and the young man.

At last the music stopped. People were leaving the dance floor. The coloured lights were turned off. The guns stopped shooting. And one by one the sails on the ship were put up.

Deep down in the water was the sound of movement. She stayed on the top of the water, going up and down with the movements, and looking through the window when she was high enough, to see if she could find the boy. She followed the ship as it moved faster through the water.

The waves were growing taller now. Black clouds were moving in. The wind was growing stronger.

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People on the ship could see that bad weather was coming. They were taking the sails down, but they could not stop the wild ocean from pushing the ship almost over on its side. The ship moved up and down on the waves like a swan looking for food, and the little mermaid followed it.

She liked to swim quickly like this; but the people in the ship did not. Pieces of the ship were breaking, and a big hole in it made it fall over on one side. Water quickly filled the bottom parts of it. Timber dropped from the ship and the little mermaid had to move quickly to stop it from falling on her. Now she could understand that the people on the ship were in danger.

At times it was too dark to see the ship, but when lightning would come she could see people on the ship

doing their best to hold on. Before long the whole ship started to break into pieces, and she could see the beautiful young man falling into the ocean.

At first the little mermaid was happy, because she was thinking that he was coming to her. But she remembered that people cannot live in water. The one way he could come to her father's house would be as a dead man; and this must not happen. Without thinking about the danger of falling timber she started swimming through the water to help him.

By the time she touched the boy his eyes were closed and he was not able to swim. He would have died if she had not come. She moved with the waves, holding his head above the water.

*She moved with the waves,  
holding his head above the water.*

Through the night she carried the young man. By morning the bad weather had stopped, and the little mermaid could not see any part of the broken ship. The strong red colour of the morning sun put life into the young man's face, but his eyes stayed closed. The mermaid softly touched his black hair, thinking he looked like the white stone statue in her flower bed under the red tree. She prayed that he would live.

In the morning light she could see land in front of them. She could see high blue mountains with white snow on their tops like many swans resting there. Down by the beach were many beautiful green trees. In front of the trees was a building like a temple. And plants were growing in front of the temple.

Near the temple was a place with big stones and white sand. The water was quiet and deep all the way up to the stones. The little mermaid put the man on the sand, with his beautiful head on a stone where it would be safe in the warm sun.

Music was coming from the bells in the temple and young girls were running out under the trees. The little mermaid moved to hide behind some high stones as she looked to see who would come to help the young man.

Before long a young girl walked down to the beach where the man was. At first the girl was afraid, thinking he was dead. But when she learned that he was not, she quickly returned to the temple to bring more people.

*She moved to hide  
behind some high stones.*

Together the people were able to get the young man awake. He smiled at the people around him, but he did not turn and smile at the mermaid, because he did not know she was there, or that she had helped him.

When they carried him to the temple, the little mermaid was very sad to see him go. But it was time for her to return to her father's house, and she moved slowly down through the water, away from the land and the temple, and the beautiful young man.

The little mermaid had always been a quiet child, but now as she remembered the young man she was quieter than before. Her sisters asked about her travels to the top earth, but she did not say a thing.

*She did not dig or work  
in her flower bed.*

She returned many times after that to the temple on the beach. Through the year she could see the plants growing in front of the temple. When the plants finished growing, she could see the workers cutting them to eat. She looked at the snow on the high mountains. And she could see the young girls playing under the trees. But she did not see the young man.

Each time she returned to her father's house she was sadder than before. She would sit quietly under her red tree and put her arms around the beautiful stone statue that looked like the young man. But she did not dig or work in her flower bed. The plants were growing wild over the sand and up into the trees, making it a very sad and dark place.

When she could hold her sadness no longer, she at last talked to her sisters, telling them the story of the young man. Now the sisters could understand the reason for the little mermaid's sadness. One sister had been to the top many times and she believed she could show them where the young man lived.

"Come, little sister," they said. And with their arms around each other, they quietly travelled to the top, to a place where they could see a big house. A road made of flat white stones was coming from it, down to the ocean. The roof was gold, with many round glass windows in it. Around the house were tall stones holding up the roof. And between the stones were white stone statues of many different animals.

*They travelled to a place  
where they could see a big house.*

Through the windows they could see into the house. In the middle of the biggest room was a fountain. Water from the fountain was shooting high up toward the glass on the roof where the sun was coming through. Many plants were growing around the bottom of the fountain.

After learning where the young man lived, the little mermaid returned many times to the house, going closer to it each time. She would swim up a little branch of the river that goes close enough that the shape of the house shows on the water in the moonlight. There she waited to look at the young man, who liked to come there to think.

Some nights he would sail in a little ship, with flags flying and music playing, and she would look out at

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him through the green water grass. If he did see her snow-white scarf flying in the wind, he would think it was a swan opening its wings.

When people fished at night with lights on the water, she listened to them. They said the young man was very kind. That made her happy that she had helped him when he was almost dead in the ocean. She remembered how his head had rested on her and how she had softly touched his hair. But he did not know a thing about it. He could not think of her at all.

She was learning to like people more and more, and she wanted to be able to live with them. Their life looked much better than her own, for they could sail over the ocean in ships, and walk on the tall mountains

high above the clouds. The land where the people lived was covered with grass and green trees for as far as her eyes could see.

There was much that she wanted to know, but her sisters could not give her all the answers. When she had questions she asked her grandmother.

"I know that people die if they fall to the bottom of the ocean. But on the land do they live for all time?" she asked.

"They die on land as we do down here in the ocean," her grandmother answered. "And their life is not as long as our life. We live for 300 years, but when we die, we become foam on top of the water. When people die they have a spirit that lives for all time with God. After the body is dead and returns to the

earth, the spirit goes up through the sky to the stars! In the way that we go up to look at the top earth, the spirits of people go to live in a much more beautiful place that we cannot see, where God lives."

"I would give all the hundreds of years that I have to live as a mermaid to be able to live one day as a person before going to this beautiful place of God," said the little mermaid.

"You must not think about things like that," answered the old merwoman. "We are happy and we have a better life here than people have there."

"Must I die and become foam on the waves... foam that cannot hear its own music or see the beautiful flowers or the red sun?" asked the little mermaid.

*"If a man loves you,  
part of his spirit will go into you."*

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"Is there no way that I can receive a spirit that lives for all time with God?" she asked her grandmother one day.

"There is one way," said Grandmother. "If a man loves you with the deepest love – if he loves you more than his father and mother, if he thinks of you day and night, and if he marries you – part of his spirit will go into your body and you will become a person like him. By his love he can give you a spirit.

"But that cannot happen, child," she said sadly, "because you do not have legs. Your fish tail is very beautiful to us here in the ocean, but up there on earth, they think it is ugly. To travel on land you must have two legs where your tail is now."

The little mermaid breathed out slowly, making a sad sound as she looked at her fish tail.

"Come and be happy with me!" said Grandmother. "We will swim and dance through our 300 years. It is a very long time, and when it is finished, we will be happy to become foam on the top of the water. Come and we will have a dance for all the mer-people this night!"

The walls and roof of the dance room were of clear glass. Around the walls were hundreds of big red and green shells with blue fires in them, to light up the whole room. Hundreds and hundreds of fish of all shapes and sizes were swimming near the wall. In the light some looked red and others looked like they were made of gold.

*"We will have a dance  
for all the mer-people this night!"*

Mer-men and mer-women dance and sing more beautifully than what you hear on earth, and the little mermaid's singing was the best of them all.

For a time she was happy to sing for the others, because she could see that they liked it. But before long she was thinking of the earth above her again, and of the beautiful young man. Her sadness returned when she remembered that she could not have a living spirit. When most of the singing and dancing was happening, she was sitting sadly in her special place under the red tree.

The sound of a ship made her think he was sailing up above her that same night. She said to herself, "I love him more than my father and sisters.

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I think of him day and night. I would be happy all my life if I could live it with him. I would give all that I have to win his love and to have a spirit that lives for all time.

"I know what to do! I will go to the ocean witch. I have always been afraid of her; but now she can help."

The little mermaid started swimming away from her special place and toward the place where the water moves very quickly in circles. The witch lives behind this angry water, where no flowers grow, and where the sand is an ugly grey. At the angry water, the little mermaid could see it turning around and around, pulling into it all that moved close to it. She moved through the middle of this angry water and over soft, grey mud on the far side of it. There in the middle of a group of ugly

trees was the witch's house. Plants here were part animal and part plant, like snakes with hundreds of heads growing out of the grey mud. Tree branches had long arms with fingers like very little snakes, always moving as they tried to hold things close to them to take the life from them.

The little mermaid was very much afraid of the plants. Her heart hit against her ribs, and she almost returned to her sisters. But when she remembered the young man and the spirit that lives for all time, she was filled with confidence to move on. She pulled her hair behind her to stop the trees from getting it; she put her hands together in front of her; and moved forward as quickly as she was able to swim, through the opening in the ugly arms and fingers of the trees.

*She could see the white bones of  
dead people and animals.*

Hanging in the arms of the trees she could see the white bones of dead people and animals, and parts of broken ships. She could see that another little mermaid had been killed by the branches too, and that made her most afraid.

On the far side of the trees was an open place with big fat water snakes playing around a house made from the bones of people. The ocean witch was giving a frog food from her lips in the way a mother bird would give food to her young birds. The ugly snakes (her "children") moved about her soft, fat body.

"I know what you want," said the ocean witch. "And you will have what you want. But it will bring you much sadness, my beautiful little daughter of the king."

*The ugly snakes moved about her  
soft, fat body.*

"You want to give away your beautiful fish tail and have two ugly legs in its place, to make you walk like people. You think that will make your young man love you and give you a spirit."

At that, the witch laughed a long, ugly laugh, making the snakes and frog fall to the ground.

"I will make you a drink. Before the sun comes up again you must swim to the land with it, sit on the beach, and drink it. It will make your tail change to two beautiful legs.

"But it will hurt! It will feel like sharp knives going into you. All who see you will say you are the most beautiful person they know. No dancer will move as smoothly as you do on your beautiful legs. But

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each step you take will be like stepping on a knife that cuts you and makes your blood run. Now tell me, do you want to go through with this?"

"I do," said the little mermaid. Her voice was shaking, but she remembered again the young man and the spirit that lives on with God.

"Remember," said the witch, "After you become a person, you cannot become a mermaid again! You will not be able to swim down to see your father and sisters. And if the young man does not love you more than his father and mother... if he does not think of you day and night... if he does not marry you, you will NOT receive a spirit that lives on. The morning after he marries another person, your heart will break, and you will become foam on the waves."

"I understand," said the little mermaid. But her face was white and she was afraid.

"And you must give me much," said the witch, "or I will not make the drink. You have the most beautiful voice of all the mermaids in the ocean, and with it you could easily make your young man fall in love with you. But you must give that voice to me. I will take the best thing you have in return for my drink."

"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what will I do?"

"You will have your beautiful body," said the witch. "And your smooth walk, and your dancing eyes. With them you will be able to make any man love you... do not be afraid! Where is your confidence?"

"When I have finished making the drink, I will cut out your voice, and you can have your drink."

The little mermaid agreed, and the witch put a big black container on the fire to make her special drink. She cut herself, and her black blood dropped into the container. Ugly cloud-like shapes started coming up out of the container. The witch put other things in, and as it was becoming hot it made the sound of an animal crying. When, at last, the drink was finished, it looked like clear water.

"Here it is," said the witch, giving the drink to the little mermaid in a little glass container.

After that she cut out the little mermaid's voice, making her not able to sing or talk.

"If the trees hold you as you leave," said the witch, "put one drop of this drink on them and their arms and fingers will break into a hundred little pieces."

But the trees did not hold her. They moved their arms away from her because they could smell the drink she had in her hands. The drink looked like many little stars giving off light.

The little mermaid quickly returned through the trees, over the ugly mud, and through the angry, turning water.

The lights were off at her father's house. All of her sisters were sleeping. Her heart was filled with sadness because of the love she had for them, but she must not see them before leaving or they would try to stop her.

She stopped at the special place by the trees to take one flower from each of her sisters' flower beds, to carry with her. After doing this, she turned one last time to look at her father's house before starting the long swim to her new life as a person.

The sun was not up when the little mermaid lifted herself up on the stone steps by the young man's house. The moonlight was clear and strong. She put the witch's drink to her lips and it burned as she was drinking it. But she did not stop. When she finished, she could feel it cutting into her like a sharp knife, making her fall to the ground like she was dead. A short time later, she opened her eyes. The beautiful young man was standing in front of her. His deep black eyes looked at her, making her feel afraid.

*The beautiful young man  
was standing in front of her.*

When she moved, she had a sharp pain. She looked down to see that two beautiful legs were in the place where her fish tail was before. She covered her body with her long hair, and with her scarf.

The young man smiled, and asked who she was and how she had come there. She looked softly, but sadly, at him because she could not talk. The man showed her the way into the house. Each step was as the witch said it would be... like stepping on sharp knives. But she was happy to be near the young man.

All the people in the house loved her smooth way of walking. She was easily the most beautiful girl in the king's house. But she could not sing or talk.

Other girls would sing for the young man and his father and mother, the king and queen. The voice of one singer was more beautiful than the others, and the young man smiled at her. The mermaid was sad that she did not have her voice, because her voice was more beautiful than that of the girl he smiled at. She wanted him to know that she loved him enough to give away her voice to be with him, but she could not tell him.

The girls started to dance to the music. The little mermaid lifted her arms up and danced softly across the floor on the ends of her toes as no dancer had danced before. With each movement she looked more beautiful. Her eyes talked more deeply to the heart than the songs of the other girl.

*The little mermaid  
danced softly across the floor.*

All the people loved her. The young man was very happy about finding her. He said she was his little "sister".

She danced on and on, but each time her feet touched the ground it was like stepping on sharp stones. The young man asked her to stay at the house, and he put a soft red bed near his room for her to sleep on.

Each morning they would ride horses together through beautiful smelling trees. The birds would sing for them. She would walk with him up the high mountains. The walks often made blood come from her soft feet, but she would laugh and not stop before coming to the top. From there, they could see clouds sailing under them like big birds flying away across the sky.

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At night in the king's house, when all were sleeping, she would go out on the big stone steps and stand in the ocean water to cool her burning feet, and to think about the people she loved down in the ocean.

She was there one night when her sisters were swimming across the water, singing sadly. On seeing her, they quickly made their way to her.

"You have made us all very sad," they said to her. After that, they returned to see her each night. One night both her grandmother and the mer-king, who had not been to the top for many years, were far out in the water, putting their hands out toward her. They were too afraid to come up to the land as her sisters did.

Day by day she loved the young man more. And he loved her like a brother would love a very good sister. But he did not think of making her his queen.

"Do you love me more than the others?" the little mermaid's eyes said to him one day.

"I love you very much," said the young man. "You have the best heart of them all. You are very much like the young girl who helped me when my ship was destroyed in the ocean. The waves pushed me to a beach near a temple where some girls worked. I was almost dead, but one of the girls helped me to start breathing again. She is the one person I could love more than you, but she cannot leave the temple, and I will not be able to see her again."

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"You are very much like her, and you have almost filled her place in my heart. You have come to me from God, and I want you to live with me and with my mother and father."

"He does not know I carried him to the beach," the little mermaid said to herself. "He thinks the girl from the temple is the one who helped him; and now he loves her more than me." She breathed sadly, but she could not cry.

After that she talked to herself about how good it was to be with the young man. "This girl cannot leave the temple," she was thinking. "I do not need to be sad. They will not see each other again, and I am here with him each day. I will be his sister if that is what he wants, and I will give my life to him."

People wanted the young man to be married, but he did not want to marry. Another king had a beautiful daughter and the young man's father made a special ship for him to sail in to see the other king's daughter.

"He is going to see the king's land," the people said. But there was an understanding that it was the daughter of the other king he was going to see, and not the land. The little mermaid laughed, knowing his heart better than them all.

"I must see this girl," he said to her. "It is what my father and mother want. But I will not marry her. I cannot love her. She cannot take the place of the girl in the temple. Come with me, and if they say I must marry, I will marry you, little sister with the eyes that talk."

*"I must see this girl,  
but I will not marry her."*

This made her very happy, and she started thinking again about having a spirit that lives on after dying.

"You do not look like you are afraid of the ocean at all, my little child," the young man said as they were standing on the ship, sailing to the land of the other king. He talked about bad weather and good weather when sailing, of special fish deep in the ocean, and the stories of people who had been deep down in the ocean. She smiled at him, because she had much better understanding of life under the water than any people had.

One quiet night when the others were sleeping, the little mermaid looked down over the side of the ship, through the clear water. In the moonlight she could see her father's house.

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At the top of it, her grandmother was standing, looking up through the water toward the bottom of the ship. Before long, her sisters were on top of the water, looking at her with sad eyes. She wanted to tell them how happy she was, but a worker walked up to her and the sisters dropped under the water, leaving the worker to think that she was looking at nothing more than the foam on the top of the water.

In the morning, the ship sailed into the other king's town. The music of bells was coming from the town. The king's men were standing tall with guns at their sides. For many days there was special food and dancing for them and for others in the town. But the king's daughter was not there.

*The king's daughter  
was very beautiful.*

The king said that his daughter had been learning how to follow God and live a good life. She had travelled to a far away temple to learn to do this. But after many days the daughter was returning to the town.

The little mermaid wanted to see this daughter. When she did, she could see for herself that the girl was very beautiful. Her skin was very clear, and her eyes were deep blue.

"It is you!" said the young man. "You are the one who stopped the ocean from killing me when I was like a dead man on the beach."

The young man and the little mermaid were surprised to learn that the girl on the beach was the daughter of the king.

Later, the young man said to the little mermaid, "You must know how happy I am. The best thing on earth has happened to me. You will understand my happiness, because you love me more than the others." She smiled, but her heart was breaking. The morning after the young man married she would be dead. She would be foam on the waves.

\* \* \*

All the bells were making music. The king's men were going through the town on horses, telling all the people that this was the day that the young man was going to marry the king's daughter. A special fire burned in the temple, filling it with a beautiful smell. The young man and woman were walking into the temple to be married.

*They were walking into the temple  
to be married.*

The little mermaid, dressed in white, was holding the long tail of the other girl's dress. But she did not hear the music, and her eyes did not see the people praying for their happiness. She was thinking about dying, and about how little time she had with her young man.

After they were married, the king's men were shooting big guns on the ship for the young man and his wife. People from the town followed them into the ship for a night of dancing and happiness. The sails were lifted, and the ship quietly moved away.

When it was dark, many coloured lights were turned on, and all the people danced to show their happiness. The little mermaid remembered the first time she had

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put her head through the top of the water to see the same dancing and happiness on the ship.

This time she danced with the others, moving as smoothly as a bird flying across the sky. She had not danced as beautifully before. She did not feel the pain in her feet, because the pain in her heart was more. This was the last time that she would see him.

She had no father or grandmother to turn to now, and no life under the water. She had finished with that before coming to be with the young man. She had no voice, because that, too, she had walked away from to be with him. For him she had happily received pain with each step of her feet. But he did not know about any of this.

This was the last night she would feel the wind on her face, or look at the ocean or the stars. A sleep for all time was waiting for her because she did not have a spirit.

There was dancing and happiness on the ship long into the night. She laughed and danced with them too, but in her heart all that she was thinking about was dying. At last, the man and woman walked, arm in arm, to their beautiful room.

One by one people stopped dancing to go to their beds. The ship was quiet, with all of the people asleep now. The little mermaid put her arms on the side of the ship and looked toward the place where the first red light of the morning sun would kill her.

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As she looked, her sisters pushed up out of the water. Their faces were sad. She looked again, to see that their hair did not fly in the wind. It had been cut off!

"The witch has cut off our hair," they said. "In return we have received this knife. See how sharp it is? Before the sun comes up you must push it into the young man's heart. As his blood falls on your feet, they will grow together as a fish tail and you will be a mermaid as before. You can return to us and live your 300 years before becoming foam on the waves. One of you must die before the sun is up! Kill the young man and return to us. Quickly! See the red line in the sky? Move before the sun comes up, or you will die!" They breathed deeply and sadly, and dropped under the water.

*"One of you must die  
before the sun is up."*

The little mermaid walked quietly into the young man's room. The beautiful woman was sleeping with her head on his arm. Bending down, she touched his face. She looked at the sky where the red light was growing stronger. She looked at the sharp knife and at the sleeping man, who was smiling in his sleep. Her hand was shaking. She could not do it. She looked one last time at the young man before dropping the knife in the red waves, and jumping into the water, where her beautiful body quickly turned to white foam on the top of the waves.

As the sun lifted higher in the sky, it touched the dead, cold foam. The little mermaid had no feeling of pain as she looked at the sun. Above were many beautiful shapes flying toward her.

Through them she could see the ship and its sails and the red clouds in the sky. The shapes had voices, and their voices were like music.

Because they were from God, no one but she could hear them, and no one but she could see them. They were able to fly without wings. And the little mermaid looked to see that she too had a body like their bodies. She was lifting higher and higher out of the foam.

"Where am I going?" she asked, and her voice sounded like their voices.

"To the daughters of the wind!" answered the others.

One of them said: "As a mermaid you have no spirit, and you cannot receive one without the love of a man. We, too, do not have a spirit.

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But we can receive one if we show love for others. We are flying to a hot place where sickness in the wind is killing people. There we will bring a cool, soft wind. It will stop the sickness. When we have finished what good we can do, we will have a spirit that lives for all time.

"You, little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to show love all your life. Because of your love and pain God is lifting you from the foam to be with us. We are the daughters of the wind. You, too, can be one of us. You will have a living spirit after many years of doing good."

The little mermaid lifted her hands up toward God, and for the first time in her life she could feel herself crying.

*The little mermaid lifted her hands  
up toward God.*

The ship was coming to life again. The young man and his wife were looking for the little mermaid. They looked sadly into the foam, almost knowing that she had been there. They could not see her, but she softly touched the woman's face and smiled on the young man. After this, with the other daughters of the wind, she was lifted up on a red cloud and quickly sailed across the sky.

Her heart was filled with happiness. To the young man she said softly through the wind. "Do not be sad for me. After many years I will sail like this to be with my loving God for all time, and that is what I wanted most of all!"

## QUESTIONS

1. Where the mer-people live, fish are able to swim through the branches of ocean trees in the same way that \_\_\_\_\_ are able to \_\_\_\_\_ through the branches of trees on land. (p. 5)

2. The mer-king has them on his house, and the mer-king's mother has them on her tail. They are \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 7)

3. Each mermaid made a \_\_\_\_\_ bed in her own special place near the trees. (p. 10)

4. What did the littlest mermaid take from the broken ship for her flower bed? (p. 12)

5. Trees and flowers on land are different because the trees are \_\_\_\_\_ and you can \_\_\_\_\_ the flowers. (p. 13)

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6. When each mermaid turned 15, she was able to go see the \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 13)

7. When the oldest sister was 15, what she liked best about the top earth were the lights and sounds of the \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 16)

8. What the second sister liked most about the top earth was the gold \_\_\_\_\_ and red and purple \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 18)

9. One sister was able to get close to the green mountains by following a \_\_\_\_\_ from the ocean to the mountains. (p. 19)

10. Sister number three wanted to play with some \_\_\_\_\_ but they were afraid of her. (p. 19)

11. Sister number four stayed in the ocean, looking at \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the water. (p. 21)

12. Sister number five rested on a big mountain made of \_\_\_\_\_ when she was at the top of the water for the first time. (p. 21-22)

13. When \_\_\_\_\_ were in danger, the mermaids would sing songs about how beautiful it is at the bottom of the ocean. (p. 23)

14. It hurts more when a mermaid is sad than when a person is sad, because a mermaid cannot \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 24)

15. When the littlest mermaid turned 15, her grandmother put six \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ in them on her tail. (p. 26)

16. The little mermaid could hear the sound of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ coming from inside a ship when she first put her head above the water. (p. 27)

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17. The little mermaid was able to see many \_\_\_\_\_ through the window on the side of the ship. (p. 27)

18. The day the little mermaid turned 15 was special for the boy on the ship because it was the day when he \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 28)

19. When the boy walked out on the top floor of the ship, guns started to shoot \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ into the sky. (p. 28)

20. Bad \_\_\_\_\_ made the people on the ship take the sails down. (p. 31)

21. When the whole ship started to break into pieces, the little mermaid could see the \_\_\_\_\_ falling into the ocean. (p. 32)

22. The young man would have \_\_\_\_\_ in the water if the little mermaid had not come to him. (p. 32)

23. The little mermaid put the young man on the sand near a building like a \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 34-35)

24. A young \_\_\_\_\_ was the first person to find the man on the beach. (p. 35)

25. When the young man was awake on the beach, he did not smile at the \_\_\_\_\_ because he did not know that she was there. (p. 37)

26. When the little mermaid was said, she would put her arms around the \_\_\_\_\_ in her flower bed. (p.39)

27. One \_\_\_\_\_ showed the little mermaid where the young man lived. (p. 40)

28. The young man liked to go to a branch of the \_\_\_\_\_ near his house when he wanted to think. (p. 42)

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29. The little mermaid learned that the young man was kind, by listening to people who \_\_\_\_\_ on the river at night. (p. 43)

30. The little mermaid learned from her \_\_\_\_\_ that people do not live as long as mermaids. (p. 44)

31. Mermaids do not have a \_\_\_\_\_ that goes to live with God after they die. (p. 44)

32. By his \_\_\_\_\_ a man can give a mermaid a spirit. (p. 47)

33. To travel on land, a mermaid must have \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 47)

34. The little mermaid said that she loved the young man more than her \_\_\_\_\_ and her \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 50)

35. The ocean \_\_\_\_\_ was able to help the little mermaid. (p. 51)

36. Plants near the ocean witch's house are part plant and part \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 52)

37. The ocean witch's "children" were ugly \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 54)

38. The ocean witch made a \_\_\_\_\_ that would give the mermaid \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 56)

39. If the young man did not marry the little mermaid, she would become \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ after she died. (p. 57)

40. The little mermaid agreed to give her \_\_\_\_\_ to the ocean witch. (p. 58-59)

41. The little mermaid carried \_\_\_\_\_ with her to help her remember her sisters. (p. 61)

42. When the young man asked the little mermaid who she was, she was not able to \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 63)

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43. Other girls were able to sing songs for the young man, but the little mermaid talked to him with her \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 64)

44. The mermaid was not able to see the \_\_\_\_\_ and her \_\_\_\_\_ up close because they were afraid to swim to the land where she lived. (p. 67)

45. The young man did not know that the girl who helped him when his ship was destroyed was the \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 68-69)

46. Did the young man plan to marry the daughter of the other king that he was going to see? (p. 70)

47. The king's men were waiting for the young man when his ship sailed into the other king's town; but the king's \_\_\_\_\_ was not there. (p. 73)

48. The young man was surprised to see that the king's daughter was the girl on the \_\_\_\_\_, who had \_\_\_\_\_ him. (p. 75)

49. The morning after the young man was \_\_\_\_\_, the little mermaid would be changed to \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 76)

50. After he was married, the young man and his new wife danced on the floor of a \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 78)

51. The young man did not know about the little mermaid leaving her father, and giving her \_\_\_\_\_ to the witch for him. (p. 79)

52. The little mermaid's sisters were bringing her a \_\_\_\_\_ that they received from the \_\_\_\_\_. With it the little mermaid could stop having legs and grow a fish tail again. (p. 81)

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53. The little mermaid was not able to use the knife to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 83)

54. The daughters of the wind were able to receive a \_\_\_\_\_ by showing love for others. (p. 84-85)

55. God made the little mermaid a daughter of the wind because all her life she had \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. (p.85)

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