



THE LITTLE MERMAID

Based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen

Adapted for the stage by Gayle Cornelison

A California Theatre Center Study Guide for Teachers and Students

SYNOPSIS

It is her fifteenth birthday and the Little Mermaid wants nothing more than to see the world above the sea. With her father's permission, she surfaces, getting her first glimpses of ships, fireworks, and human beings. She is especially taken with a young Prince she spies aboard one of the ships. Suddenly, a great storm approaches, and the Little Mermaid rescues the handsome Prince. She sings a lullaby to comfort him. She escapes to the mermaid world before he wakes, but she continues to think of him. Desperate to see him again, she decides to visit the mysterious Sea Witch, who gives the Little Mermaid a potion that will turn her tail into human legs – in exchange for her mermaid's voice. The Little Mermaid drinks the potion and is transformed. The now-human mermaid is found by the Prince, and though he marvels at her dancing, he is dismayed that she cannot speak. The Prince then overhears a Princess singing a lullaby and mistakes her for the one who rescued him from the storm. When the Little Mermaid hears the Prince and Princess are to be married, she is distraught. Her two sisters find her and hand her a knife from the Sea Witch; if the mermaid stabs the Prince, his blood will return her legs to mermaid fins. The Little Mermaid is so in love with the Prince, however, that she cannot hurt him. Realizing he will never love her in return, she jumps into the sea to spend eternity as foam along the water's surface.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. How was this version of *The Little Mermaid* different from others you have seen? Discuss how the differences affected your reaction to the play. How is it different from other fairy tales you have read?
2. The Little Mermaid faces a very difficult choice at the end of the play. Think of a choice that you or someone you know has had to make and what advice you would give them about making hard decisions.

CREATIVE WRITING

1. Write your own story about a mermaid or merman. What about their underwater life is different from your every-day life and routine? What things about the human world might confuse them?
2. Write a diary entry as a character from the play, and think about how the events of the play might have made them feel. Some good characters to think about might be the Little Mermaid, her sisters, or the Prince.

LITERATURE/LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Read the original Hans Christian Andersen version of the story. Compare and contrast the story and the play, as well as any other versions you may have read. Was anything left out of the play that was in other versions? Was anything in the play added? Why do you think certain changes were made?
2. What other books have you seen adapted into plays or movies? How different were they from the original material?

VISUAL ARTS

1. Create a classroom mural of the Little Mermaid's underwater kingdom. Use different techniques to try and make the water look realistic.
2. If you have time, also make a drawing of the Sea Witch's lair. How is it different than what you drew for the Little Mermaid's home?

DRAMATIC ARTS

1. Think of how the mermaids moved on stage. Did the movement make it clear that they were underwater? As a class, pretend you are moving through water and see what different ways of moving you can come up with. Once you've done that, try "moving" through other substances. Examples might include Jell-o, popcorn, cotton candy, lava, pudding, or bubble wrap.
2. How did the actor's movements change when they were in scenes that took place on land?

SCIENCE

1. Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting life underwater and life on land. Include what kinds of creatures live in each place.

2. How are seas different from oceans? From rivers? From lakes?

HISTORY

1. Discuss the history of the mermaid legend. Who thought they saw them and why? What other legends have you heard about ocean creatures?
2. Research Hans Christian Andersen and the period of time in which he lived.

GEOGRAPHY

1. Hans Christian Andersen lived in Denmark. Locate Denmark on a map or globe and trace a path from there to where you live.
2. Locate the oceans of the world and compare their locations and sizes.

VOCABULARY

1. Define and review the following terms that appeared in the play:

Amber	Lilies	Pearls	Sea	Mermaid
Somersault	Dolphins	Whales	Icebergs	Mortals
Seahorse	Tempest	Mast	Fireworks	Celebration
Potion	Trifle	Vision	Sea Foam	

WRITE TO CTC!

After watching the play, write us a letter about it. Tell what you liked or disliked about the story, the characters, costumes, set, or anything else you observed. Support your thoughts with examples and reasons. (*Teachers' comments are also appreciated!*)

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