

MTC FAMILY SERIES

# The Little Mermaid

by Hans Christian  
Anderson

Adapted by Mike Kenny

## Resource Guide

This performance guide  
was developed by the  
Education Department  
of MTC to help young  
audience members enjoy  
*The Little Mermaid*.



MARIN  
THEATRE  
COMPANY

Feb 27 – Mar 6

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# Before the Performance

## About MTC

At MTC, we believe that theatre offers our community the chance to share in the act of imaginative storytelling – live, in person, in the moment. For audiences and performers alike, theatre is a creative act, and we believe that sharing in a creative act inspires personal growth and brings people together. MTC's Expanded Programs open up opportunities for people of all ages and all communities to participate in the joyous and inspiring process of theatre.

**Family Series:** This series provides family-oriented performances appropriate for children, families, and educators.

**The Drama Conservatory:** The Drama Conservatory provides the best classes, camps, workshops, and performance opportunities for Bay Area children and teens. The Conservatory's programming

consists of a variety of sequential acting classes, year-round drama camps, and opportunities for students to perform in their own full-scale productions. The Drama Conservatory's mission is to introduce students to a professional quality theatrical experience in a friendly, comfortable educational setting. We strive to help students tap into their inner confidence and creativity to inspire them to reach their fullest potential in the arts and beyond.

**Mainstage Series:** Marin Theatre Company produces world-class theater for the Marin County and Bay Area communities. We strive to set a national standard for

intimate theater experiences of the highest quality, featuring provocative plays by passionate playwrights. We pursue a dialogue with our community that addresses our national and local concerns and interests and assists us in finding a new understanding of our lives.



This image marks an activity that correlates to the Content Standards adopted by the California State Board of Education.



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## Who's Who in our Production



*Staging a play is a big job! Not only does it include the people you see on stage but also a great number of people behind the scenes.*

### The Playwright

- Funnels the vision of his/her storytelling into a written script. Scripts can be either original or adapted from other sources, like published books.

### The Director

- Determines the overall look of the stage production.
- Rehearses the actors in character development and stage movement.
- Collaborates with designers to plan the lights, scenery, costumes, and sound to enhance the look and feel of the show.

### The Designers

- Imagine and plan the lights, scenery, costumes, props, and sound to help bring the play and director's ideas to life.
- Oversee crews in applying their designs to the stage.

### The Stage Manager

- Coordinates the actors, directors, stage crew, scenery, set, lights, props, and sound.
- Runs the performance by calling cues over a headset to the light and sound board operators and backstage crew.

### The Stage Crew

- Builds and operates scenery, props, lights, spotlights, and sound before and during performances.

### The Cast

- Performs the story using their bodies and voices.
- Interprets the playwright's words and meaning.
- Fulfills the director and designers' vision of the play's meaning.

### The Audience

- Watches and experiences the play's story, themes, and imagery.
- Actively participates in sharing human emotion with the playwright, actors, director, designers, stage manager, and stage crew.



## Your Role in the Production!



*Seeing a live stage play is much different from watching TV, going to a sporting event or going to the movies!*

When you watch television you can talk, eat, drink, talk on the phone, text, listen to your iPod, and leave the room at any time. At sporting events you can shout, cheer, talk, eat and drink or leave the event at any time. When you go to the movies you can eat, drink, and leave the theatre at anytime.

***A live stage play is different. Here are some wonderful tips for being a good audience member:***

### Listen closely

A lot of action is packed into each play and if you're not listening, you might miss something!

### Watch silently

The actors on stage can hear and see you just as much as you can hear and see them!

### Sit still

Wiggling in your seat can be distracting to your fellow audience members!

### Turn it off

Cell phone rings and light from personal electronics devices put the spotlight where it doesn't belong!

### Plan ahead

Try to go to the restroom before the show or during intermission to avoid interrupting the performance!

# Raise the Curtain Challenge



*Try this audience challenge to determine your audience skills.*

*Check off the boxes that are appropriate behavior at a live stage play.*

- ☐ Remain in your seat during the performance.
- ☐ Talk loudly to others around you.
- ☐ Wave and yell at the actors.
- ☐ Stand and kneel on your seat.
- ☐ Reward the cast and crew with applause at the end of a scene, song or dance number.
- ☐ Chew gum or eat snacks during the show.
- ☐ Show your appreciation for the actor, director, and designers at the end of the show with applause.

## The Little Mermaid: Synopsis



The Little Mermaid begins with the two narrators Flotsam and Jetsam recounting the story of a young mermaid who yearns to join the world above. Flotsam and Jetsam tell of a kingdom deep deep below the ocean ruled by the Sea King full of merfolk.

The Sea King has six daughters who are one year apart in age, and of his six daughters the youngest is the most beautiful. The little mermaid longs for the day when she turns fifteen and can finally surface the waters to see what is in the human world. As each of her sisters turn fifteen they swim to the surface and return to the kingdom to tell of all they see in the human realm. The little mermaid longs to know everything about the human world, she even has a statue of a

man in her garden that she plants flowers and a willow tree around. Her grandmother tells her all she knows of humans, and the little mermaid wants even more to become one. Her grandmother tells her that she cannot become human because merfolk do not have souls and that the only way to get a soul would be to have a man fall in love with her despite her tail.

Finally, on her fifteenth birthday she surfaces from the ocean and sees a ship full of men, one of them being as beautiful as her statue in the garden. She discovers they are celebrating the prince's sixteenth birthday on the ship. She sees fireworks and celebration and wishes even more she had legs so she could dance with the prince. Suddenly a storm breaks and the ship is overturned and the prince is thrown from the ship. The little mermaid rescues him from the depths and brings him to the shore. She then leaves him there until he is found by a group of girls at a school. The little mermaid watches as the prince smiles at the girl he believes rescued him. The mermaid returns home heartbroken that her prince will not know who she is. She makes a decision to see the sea witch and beg for legs.

At this point, our narrators Flotsam and Jetsam do



### Big Ideas in The Little Mermaid:

*Life/Death, Acceptance, Family, Sadness, Pain/Suffering, Love, Perseverance*

not want to continue the story because of its scary nature, but they continue for the audience's sake. The sea witch concocts a potion for the little mermaid to drink to give her legs but she warns that having legs will feel as if she is stepping on knives and walking on a razor's edge. The mermaid takes the potion but first pays the witch by cutting out her tongue.

Flotsam, who is playing the little mermaid remains silent while Jetsam continues to recount the story. The mermaid swims to the shore and drinks the potion. She faints and awakens with legs. The prince's castle is on the shore and the prince comes to her rescue. He loves her as a sister and even allows her to sleep on a cushion outside of his room in case he needs to talk to her in the night. The little mermaid falls deeply in love him but the prince tells her he will only love the girl who rescued him on the shore. The little mermaid's heart breaks again knowing he will never know it was her. In time the prince becomes betrothed to a princess from another kingdom. He promises he will not marry her, but then he discovers she is the girl who found him on the beach. His heart is filled with love and he decides to marry her that night. The little mermaid now knows that all hope is lost and that she will turn into seafoam by morning. After the wedding celebration, the mermaid sees her sisters in the water. They have cut off all of their hair for a dagger they got from the sea witch. If the little mermaid kills the prince before morning she can once again return to the sea as a mermaid. As the little mermaid goes to kill the prince she sees how peaceful he is and she cannot find it in herself to kill him. She flings the dagger from the ship and as dawn breaks she jumps into the ocean and turns into sea foam.

Flotsam and Jetsam conclude the story in tears as a dagger floats down from the ocean surface. They dry their tears, hug, and continue about their lives.





## Who's Who Meet the Author and the Playwright

**HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN** (April 2, 1805-August 4, 1875) was born in Odense, Denmark to Hans Andersen and Anne Marie Andersdatter. He was an only child and at the age of fourteen, Andersen moved to Copenhagen to pursue acting. While there he was accepted into the Royal Danish Theatre because of his excellent soprano voice. His voice soon changed and a colleague at the theatre suggested he become a poet, so that is exactly what Andersen did. He was sent to a grammar school by Jonas Collin, who was able to convince King Frederick VI to pay for some of the tuition. In 1822 Andersen wrote and published his first story "The Ghost at Palnatoke's Grave." Andersen later admitted that school was a dark time in his life as he was abused by his school master in order to improve his character, and claimed he was also discouraged from writing altogether. Much of Andersen's life is reflected in his stories, his abusive school teacher can be seen in the headmaster troll in *The Snow Queen*.



Between 1835 and 1837 Andersen published two volumes of eventyr which included *Thumbelina*, *The Tinderbox*, *Princess and the Pea*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and *The Little Mermaid*. In 1847 Andersen had the pleasure of meeting his favorite living writer Charles Dickens. Ten years later when Andersen returned to England he visited Dickens again and overstayed his welcome five weeks. The Dickens asked him to leave and in his private journals Andersen wonders why they never invited him back or responded to his correspondence again. Andersen was shy around women and had trouble pursuing relationships. He never married. He died in 1875 of liver cancer. Before his death Andersen consulted a

composer for his funeral saying, "Most of the people who will walk after me will be children, so make the beat keep time with little steps." At the time of his death Andersen was considered a national treasure and was paid an annual stipend from the Danish government.

Andersen wrote plays, travelogues, novels, and poems but is most well known for his stories, eventyr, or fairytales. Some of his most famous works include *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Snow Queen*, *The Nightingale*, and of course *The Little Mermaid*. His work inspired other authors such as Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*), and A.A. Milne (*Winnie the Pooh*), and his choice of making toys and objects come to life would later inspire Lewis Carroll (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), and Beatrix Potter (*Peter Rabbit*).

**MIKE KENNY** (playwright) is one of England's leading playwrights. He specializes in theatre for young audiences. He has won numerous awards for his plays including being the first ever recipient of The Children's Award for playwriting for children in 2000, as well as an Olivier Award for his adaptation of *The Railway Children*.



His plays are still widely performed throughout England and the world. Kenny began experimenting with story adaptation when he worked at the Leeds Playhouse in Education. He worked with government and education authorities to provide access to plays for children of all backgrounds. He enjoys adapting fairytales because they provide a root problem that the children must solve. He believes that theatre for young audiences should take them seriously as audience members and should present them with situations they may or may not encounter.

# Are Mermaids Real?

Mermaid folklore is prevalent in many countries around the world. There have been accounts of mermaid sightings as far back as Greek mythology. Even Christopher Columbus and the pirate Blackbeard have sea journals recording mermaid sightings

## What do you think? Could mermaids be real?

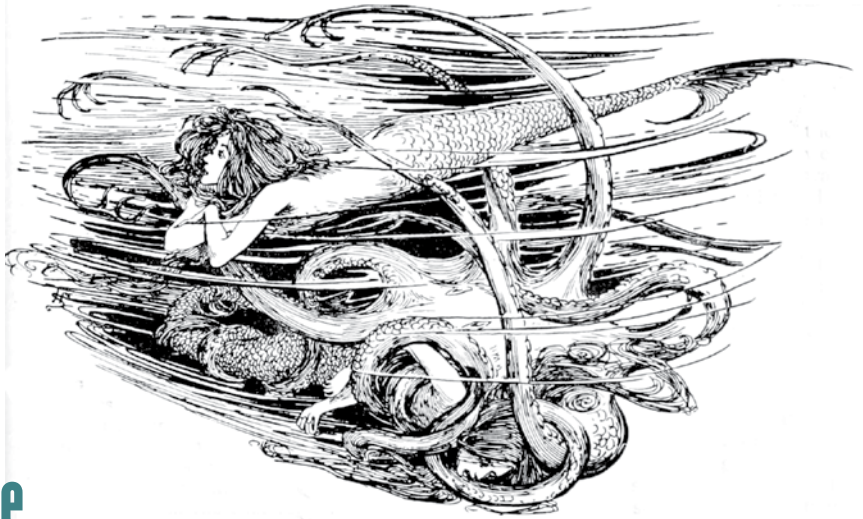
The first mermaid stories began appearing in Assyria around 1000 B.C. when the goddess Atargatis fell in love with a shepherd. She accidentally kills him and in her grief flees to the ocean to become a fish, but she is so beautiful the waters could not conceal her goddess form. It was said she appeared with the upper body of a woman, and the lower body of a fish. And so the legends of mermaids were born. It is said that Alexander the Great's sister was turned into a mermaid after her death and that she would attack sailors if they did not tell her Alexander was the emperor. It is said that mermaids or sirens would sing and lure sailors to the rocky shores shipwrecking them and eating their flesh. Other mermaids, like the little mermaid and her sisters, take drowning sailors to their watery grave. Mermaids are not always bad omens though. Sometimes they were said to bring healing potions to humans, or to lead fishermen to treasure if they were helped in some way. In Chinese legends mermaids were said to weep tears of pearls and classic 15th century literature contains many quotes and drawings of mermaids. In the Hindu text the Ramayana, there is a mermaid called the golden mermaid. She tries to keep Hanuman from building a bridge but in turn falls in love with him.

Today, videos, photos, and other evidence has arisen to the existence of mermaids. Most of it has been uncovered to be a hoax. Many so called home videos are edited with CGI to make it appear as if a mermaid was caught in a net, or seen underwater. Most famously Animal Planet came out with a docu-fiction about mermaids in which they showed CGI footage of mermaids under the sea, this riled up such attention that the National Ocean Service issued a statement saying "no evidence of aquatic humanoids has ever been found." Many people such as P.T. Barnum have fabricated real live mermaids by sewing



together body parts of different animals or paper mache. Today in many places with large water tanks, a mermaid show is put on with women in mermaid tails who are scuba certified. They perform mermaid ballets underwater and entertain families. When asked if they are real the Weeki Wachee PR Director says, "Just like with Santa Claus or any other mythical creature we say yes..."

After many so called eye witness accounts what do you believe? Could mermaids be real, or are they just a topic of mythology and legend?



## After the performance



***The following are suggested post-show discussion topics to extend and broaden your theatregoing experience.***

1. What did you notice when you first entered the theatre? What was the first thing you noticed about the stage?
2. What did you notice about the set: color, shape, and texture? Did it move? Did you notice anything special about the set that you thought was unique? How did the scenery help establish the time, place, or atmosphere of the play?
3. What did you notice about the stage lights? How did the lights change when the show began? How did the stage lights help the story? Did you notice moving lights? Did you notice specific colors, shapes, textures or in the lighting?
4. What details did you notice about the costumes? Did something in the costumes help tie all the characters together? Did you notice if characters changed costumes during the play? What did the costumes teach you about the characters? Consider aspects such as age, time period, personality, and job, just to name a few!
5. Did the performance have music or sound in it? Did the characters sing or was music in the background? If there was music, do you think it was played by live musicians or do you think that it was recorded? How did the sound help to tell the story? Why?
6. How many actors were in the show? What did the actors do to make you believe they were their characters? How many days or weeks do you think they had to rehearse? How do you think the actors memorized their lines? How was their acting different from someone reading a story?



***The following are suggested activities for the classroom.***

1. Draw a picture of what the actors see from the stage during a performance. What do you think the audience looks like to the actors? What do you think the backstage area looks like?
2. How do you think an actor feels before, during, and after the performance? Write about those feelings.
3. Which job would you like to have in this production: performer, director or designer? What skills would you need in order to do this job?
4. Create a poster design for the performance. Use elements from what you saw to help inspire your design.





*“Who is telling this story?” – Flotsam*

## Activities History and Social Science

Sometimes the only way to know what really happened is by talking to people. Find out how the little mermaid got the idea to go to the prince.

**Read the interview below.** Put the events of the story in order according to when they happened. Then write about how you knew they happened in this order. Did you use primary or secondary sources? Summarize the key events in the story.

**Reporter:** So you are the oldest of the Sea King's daughters and therefore the first to go and see what's up above the waters. What was your first impression of the other side?

**First Daughter:** Well, I first began swimming as fast as I could to the surface, I was so excited. When I broke the surface of the water and immediately starting swimming for the land. All I wanted to do was bask in the moonlight and look down on the city. My third sister claimed she wanted to do the same but I know for a fact that she stayed in the ocean and bobbed like a buoy all night.

**Reporter:** Thank you, now for your youngest sister, I have heard rumors that you are thinking about joining the land of the humans, how do you plan to grow legs? Is it even possible?

**Little Mermaid:** I do know a guy, well I don't know him, but I rescued him and he doesn't know it. I am hoping I might win his love. If I do I can become human and get an immortal

soul. There is just one problem, I don't know who he is or who to find him.

**Third Daughter:** We totally know where the prince lives!!! Oh my gosh, we can totally take you to him!!

**Reporter:** Wow, how do you know where the prince lives?

**Second Daughter:** The third oldest of us knows where his castle is because she swam up river and tried to talk to a bunch of kids. She got scared by a dog, though I hear it was pretty hilarious.

**Third Daughter:** It was not funny, it was totally terrifying!

**Little Mermaid:** Please take me to the prince. I'm dying to know who he is.

**Reporter:** What will you do if you find him?

**Little Mermaid:** I will make him fall in love with me.

**Create a timeline based on the facts you know from the interview.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| A. The Little Mermaid saves the Prince       | D. The Little Mermaid wants an immortal soul        |
| B. The first daughter basks in the moonlight | E. The Little Mermaid decides to go find the Prince |
| C. The third daughter gets scared by a dog   | F. The daughters know where the Prince lives        |

**Beginning**

**Ending**

**Summarize how you knew what key points were in the story. How did you know if a fact was true or not? Did you use primary or secondary sources?**

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*"But how will I make him love me without my voice?" – Mermaid*



## Activities World Languages

The Little Mermaid gives up her voice for legs. If you couldn't speak, would you try communicating with your hands?

**Look at the American Sign Language (ASL) chart below and have a conversation with a friend using only ASL.**



### Questions to ask

How is your day?

What do you have for lunch?

What do you like to do?

Where do you live?

What makes you sad?

How do you get to school?

How do you spell your name?

When is your birthday?

When is your favorite time of day?



“You must give me something in return.” – *Sea Witch*

“What?” – *Mermaid*

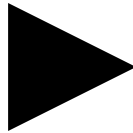
“Your most precious possession. Your voice.” – *Sea Witch*

## Activities Writing and Language Arts

**Directions:** *Imagine you are at a meeting with the witch to ask for legs. What argument would you use to persuade her to let you have legs free of charge? Write your speech and draw pictures, then give your speech to a partner. Let your partner decide if they will allow you to have legs or if they will charge you your voice.*

**Brainstorm ideas for your argument here.**

**Organize your thoughts into paragraph topics here.**



**Write your argument:**

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*“Small ones and large ones that glide in  
and out like birds in the branches of the  
trees in the world above.” – Flotsam*



## Activities Science

**Directions:** Just like the little mermaid goes through a transformation, so do animals in the ocean though maybe a little differently. Match the baby to its parents then compare and contrast them.



**What are the differences between the adolescents and the adults? How can you tell?**

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## Additional Resources

### Other stories by Hans Christian Andersen:

*The Snow Queen*, (1844)  
*The Emperor's New Clothes*, (1837)  
*The Nightingale*, (1843)  
*Thumbelina*, (1835)  
*The Little Match Girl*, (1845)  
*The Princess and the Pea*, (1835)  
*The Tinderbox*, (1835)  
 ...and many many more

### Other Plays by Mike Kenny

*Beauty and the Beast*  
*The Snow Queen*  
*Treasure Island*  
*Electric Darkness*  
*The Wind in the Willows*  
*Rumpelstiltskin*  
*Sleeping Beauty*  
*The Railway Children*  
 ... and many many more

### Purchase his plays here

<https://playsforyoungaudiences.org/playwrights/mike-kenny>

### Websites and Activity Resources:

ASL Resources and Online Sign Dictionary  
<http://www.handspeak.com/word/>

Complete biography of Hans Christian Andersen along with all books written to read for  
[http://hca.gilead.org.il/li\\_merma.html](http://hca.gilead.org.il/li_merma.html)





## California Core Standards

Contents Standards adopted by the California State Board of Education satisfied by using this guide and attending MTC's production of: *The Little Mermaid*

### Theatre Standards K-5

- 1.0 Artistic Perception: Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre
  - 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as actor, character, cooperation, setting, the five senses, and audience, to describe theatrical experiences.
- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing: Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences
  - 4.2 Identify and discuss emotional reactions to a theatrical experience.
- 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications: Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theatre, Film/ Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers.

### History-Social Science K-2

- K.6 Students understand that history relates to events, people, and places of other times
- 1.4 Students compare and contrast everyday life in different times and places around the world and recognize that some aspects of people, places, and things change over time while others stay the same.
- 2.1 Students differentiate between things that happened long ago and things that happened yesterday.

### World Languages K - 12

#### Stage I:

- 1.0 Students acquire information, recognize distinctive viewpoints, and further their knowledge of other disciplines.
- 1.1 Students address discrete elements of daily life, including: Greetings and Introductions

#### Stage II:

- 2.0 Students acquire information, recognize distinctive viewpoints, and further their knowledge of other disciplines.
- 2.1 Students address topics related to self and the immediate environment, including: Social Relationships

### Writing- Language Arts K-5

#### Conventions of Standard English

- 1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- 2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### Science K-3

#### Inheritance of Traits

- 1-LS3-1. Make observations to construct an evidence based account that young plants and animals are like but not exactly like their parents
  - 2-LS4-1. Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats
  - 3-LS3-1. Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence that plants and animals have traits inherited from parents and that variation of these traits exists in a group of similar organisms.
- how each period of settlement left its mark on the land.

