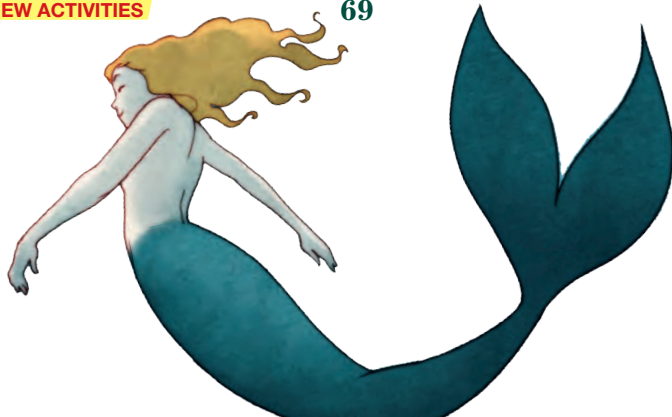


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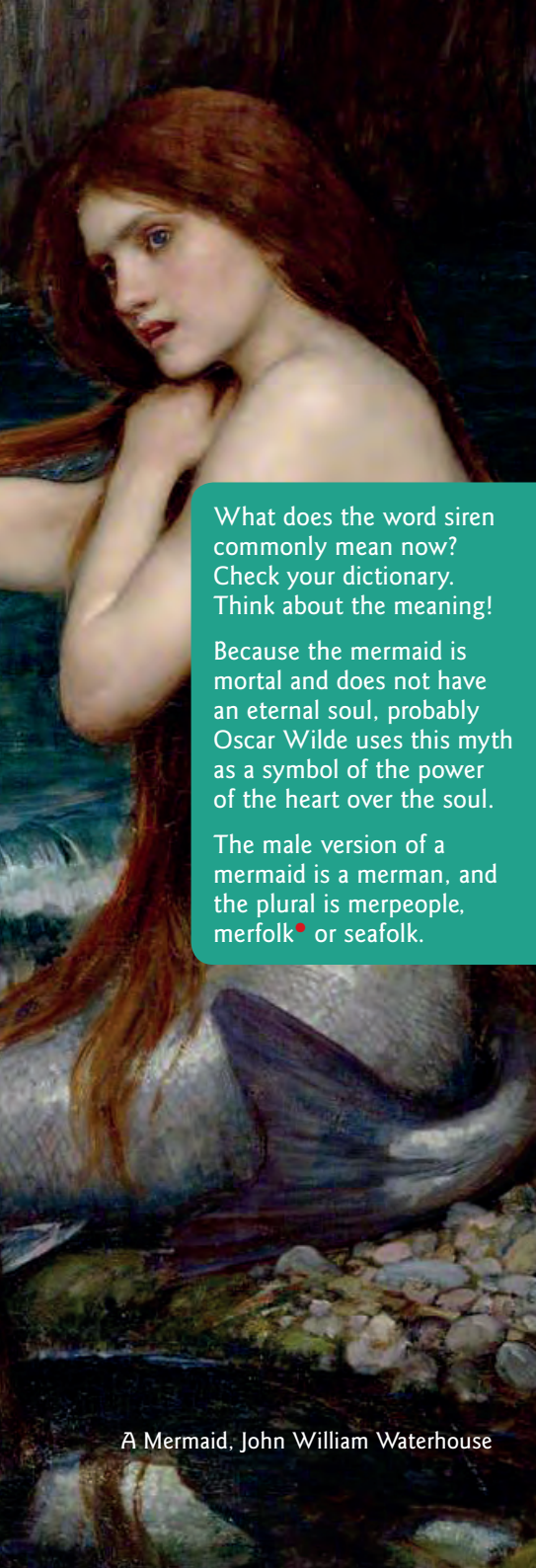
Both mermaids and sirens are very popular mythological creatures that live in or by the sea. They appear in Greek mythology and in many folktales and legends around the world, but also in religious writings, children's books and, more recently, in films. The most famous example in literature is Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale *The Little Mermaid*. Mermaids and sirens are often confused or seen as the same creature: young, beautiful and mysterious, with the head and body of a woman and the tail of a fish. They are both mortal, but live longer than humans. And although both of them have a heart, neither has a soul. But there are differences between mermaids and sirens.

MERMAIDS AND SIRENS

Merpeople also appear in two of the Harry Potter books, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

The word mermaid comes from the Middle English 'mere' meaning 'sea' and 'maid', meaning 'girl'. The word siren comes from the Greek 'serein', which means 'sea girl'.





What does the word siren commonly mean now? Check your dictionary. Think about the meaning!

Because the mermaid is mortal and does not have an eternal soul, probably Oscar Wilde uses this myth as a symbol of the power of the heart over the soul.

The male version of a mermaid is a merman, and the plural is merpeople, merfolk or seafolk.

A Mermaid, John William Waterhouse

Mermaids and sirens both look in part like humans, but a mermaid is half-woman and half-fish, while a siren is half-woman and half-bird. While mermaids are always beautiful and have long golden hair, sirens can be ugly and scary (as in Irish legends). Plus mermaids are humble, kind and helpful towards humans, while sirens can have evil intentions. Sirens, but not mermaids, have tempting and dangerous voices. They sing to attract and hypnotize sailors and navigators, often causing them to drown in the sea. When the sirens sing, the sailors simply stop to listen, and they cannot do anything else, and their ships break on the rocks.



GLOSSARY

- **drown:** die in water
- **folk:** people
- **hypnotize:** when someone is hypnotized they seem to be asleep but they can hear and see and do things
- **intentions:** what they want to do
- **mysterious:** strange and unknown
- **mythological:** that you find in myths
- **neither:** not one or the other
- **scary:** frightening; that make you afraid
- **tempting:** that make you want to do something

The Fisherman and his Soul



The Fisherman



The Priest



The Merchant



The Mermaid

The Soul



The Witch



The Emperor

1 The Mermaid

1 Every evening the young Fisherman goes out on the sea. He throws his nets into the water. When the wind blows from the land he doesn't catch many fish. But when the wind blows from the sea he catches lots of fish and he can sell them at the market.




One evening the Fisherman's net is very heavy. He thinks, 'Are all the fish in the sea in my net? Or is there a monster in my net?' He pulls and he pulls his net.

There are no fish or monsters in his net. But there is a little Mermaid and she is sleeping.

The Mermaid's hair is golden. Her body is white. Her tail is silver and pearl. Her ears are like sea-shells and her lips are like sea-coral.

Her beauty makes the Fisherman very happy. He leans out of the boat. He takes the Mermaid in his arms. She wakes up when he touches her. She cries like a seagull and she wants to escape. But the Fisherman holds the Mermaid in his arms.

GLOSSARY

- **leans:** moves his body
- **net:** 
- **sea-coral:** 
- **sea-shells:** 

- **seagull:** 
- **silver and pearl:** (here) light colours
- **tail:** 

‘Please free me,’ the Mermaid cries. ‘I am the only daughter of the King. My father is old and alone•.’

‘Make me a promise,’ says the Fisherman. ‘I can free you. But please come when I call you. You can sing to me and to the fish. Then my nets can always be full of fish.’

‘I promise,’ cries the Mermaid.

The Fisherman opens his arms and frees the frightened Mermaid. She swims down under the water.

Promises

What promises do you make?

Who do you make promises to?



Every evening the Fisherman goes out on the sea. He calls the Mermaid. She comes out of the water and sings to him. The dolphins swim round and round the Mermaid. The seagulls fly round and round the Mermaid.

The Mermaid sings a beautiful song. She sings of the Sea-folk• and of the palace of the King. She sings of the gardens of the sea full of coral and fish. She sings of whales•, sea lions• and seahorses•. She sings of sunken• ships and of Mermaids holding out their arms to the sailors•, calling them into the sea.

The Mermaid sings and sings. All the fish come from the bottom of the sea to listen to her. The Fisherman throws his nets into the sea. His nets and boat are full of fish. Then the Mermaid stops singing. She smiles at the Fisherman and she swims back under the sea.

GLOSSARY

- **alone:** without other people
- **folk:** people
- **sailors:** people working on a ship

- **seahorses:**
- **sea lions:**
- **sunken:** at the bottom of the sea
- **whales:**





Every evening the Fisherman calls the Mermaid. And every evening she sings for him. But she does not come near him. The Fisherman tries to touch her. But she swims back under the sea. Every evening the Fisherman listens to the Mermaid. Her song and her voice are sweet to his ears. And the Fisherman forgets his nets and the fish. His eyes are full of love.

One evening the Fisherman calls to the Mermaid.

‘Little Mermaid, little Mermaid, I love you. Can I be your husband?’ he says.

But the Mermaid shakes her head.

‘No,’ she says. ‘You have a human soul. I cannot love you with your human soul. Send away your human soul and I can love you.’

The Fisherman thinks, ‘I have a soul. But I cannot see it. I cannot touch it. I do not need it. I can send it away. Then I can be happy with my little Mermaid.’

The Fisherman is full of joy. He stands in his boat. He opens his arms to the Mermaid.

‘I can send my soul away,’ he cries. ‘You can be my wife and I can be your husband. We can live together at the bottom of the sea. You can show me your kingdom. We can be together.’

The little Mermaid is very happy. She laughs and hides her face in her hands.

‘How can I send my soul away?’ cries the Fisherman.

‘I do not know,’ says the little Mermaid sadly. ‘The Sea-folk have no souls.’

Then she swims back down under the sea. She is sad now.

GLOSSARY

- **husband:** a man when he is married
- **I do not need it:** it is not necessary to me
- **joy:** happiness
- **shakes:** moves (to say no)
- **wife:** a woman when she is married



1  Three words are related to each other, but one is not. Which one? Find the odd one out. Explain why to a partner.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| a oils | horns | perfumes | spices |
| b carpet | tent | caravan | mermaid |
| c bamboo | sword | ebony | ivory |
| d rubies | sapphires | emeralds | turbans |
| e seashore | seagull | seashell | seahorse |
| f slave | archer | monk | pearl |
| g spell | cloak | robe | veil |
| h peacock | gong | snake | gryphon |
| i temple | altar | mule | statue |
| j grapes | apples | bracelets | lemons |

2 Use five of the words in the box to complete the phrases.

ignores	rises	bazaar	wish
deep	bare	cry	laughter

- a** for joy
- b** she dances in her feet
- c** the moon in the sky
- d** as you
- e** rise from the water

K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 1

1 Imagine you are in the Palace in the city of Illel and you see a series of notices. Which notice (A - H) says this (1 – 5)?



- 1 You can't take your dog with you.
- 2 Be careful where you put your feet.
- 3 You cannot use your phone.
- 4 You must walk here.
- 5 You can look at a drawing of the palace if you want.