

Class 11 Reading

I always love reading stories so when I found this extract from The Little Mermaid I couldn't wait to share it with you! Read through the text and answer the questions below.



The Little Mermaid - Extract by Gabbie Chant

Far, far away from here, there once was an ocean that was deeper than man can measure. Above the surface, the water looked as dark as ink and as cold as glass, and it seemed a lonely and dangerous place. But deep beneath the waves - ah, that was a different story. Right down in the depths of the water, a thousand times deeper than any living human had ever dived, there lay a castle.

The castle was hidden behind forests of tangled seaweed, and guarded by fish of such curious and startling colours that you and I would gasp to see them. Its walls and turrets were fashioned from shells and crab claws and coral, and within its halls there stood a throne carved from an enormous pearl - and on that throne there sat a sea-king. He was a good and wise ruler, but a great sadness lay heavy on his heart: his queen had died, many years before. All that he had left to remember her was their six lovely daughters - six sea-princesses, who, just like their father, had no legs. Each of their bodies ended in a fish's tail.

Now, it was a custom of the kingdom that when each of the sea-princesses had their fifteenth birthday, they were permitted to swim to the surface of the ocean, to look upon the world above the water for a single day. The five eldest sea-princesses had each already had this privilege. They had returned to the castle with stories of feathered fish that swam through the air, and of strange wooden whales that floated on the surface of the water, and of a huge round shell that burned in the sky as brightly as lava that bursts from underwater volcanoes.

The littlest sea-princess listened to her elder sisters' stories, and she longed for the day that she too would turn fifteen and be able to rise to the ocean's surface. She spent her days using stones and seaweed to make pictures on the seabed of all her sisters had told her, and at night she dreamed of feeling the warmth of that bright round shell on her skin.

At long last, the little mermaid's fifteenth birthday arrived. Up, up she swam through the water, as light as a bubble. The higher she rose, the brighter the blue of the ocean became, and the water grew less and less cold - until at last, the tips of her fingers broke the surface of the water and she emerged, glittering with salt water, into the mild sea air.

And - oh! - what was this gigantic dark shape before her? A huge floating creature made of wood, just as her sisters had described, with vast white fins! And what a great noise it was making! The creak of its bones as it moved towards her! And its voice - like a hundred different voices, all shouting at once!

Would it eat her?



The little sea-princess shrank back into the sea until just her eyes and the top of her head peeped out above the surface of the water. She looked as sleek as a seal, bobbing there in the waves, with her hair wet against her skull. She held her breath and watched with a fast-beating heart as the creature drew ever closer.

After reading the text carefully, answer the questions below. Remember to think about the type of question it is and use the techniques used in school to help you answer the questions. If you are given multiple choice, make sure you check all of the possible answers before selecting the best answer.

1. Name two items the sea-king's castle was made from.
2. Why was the sea-king sad?
3. Look at the paragraph which begins: '*Now, it was a custom in the kingdom ...*'
Find and copy a word that means **allowed**.
4. *Now, it was a custom in the kingdom ...*
Circle the word closest in meaning to **custom**.

tradition

punishment

shopper

curse

5. '*They had returned to the castle with stories of feathered fish that swam through the air ...*'
What were the 'feathered fish' that the sea-princesses saw?
6. Look at the paragraph which begins: '*The littlest sea-princess listened ...*'
Find and copy the word that tells you she wanted something very much.
7. '*A huge floating creature made of wood, just as her sisters had described, with vast white fins!*'
What is the 'creature' that the little mermaid is afraid of?
8. Put the following events in order. The first one has been done for you:

The little mermaid turns fifteen.

The sea-queen dies.

A strange creature frightens the youngest sea-princess.

The five older sea-princesses tell stories about the world above the surface.

The youngest sea-princess swims to the surface.

9. What is the main idea of paragraph 3 '*Now it was the custom of the kingdom...*'?
10. What happened after the mermaid's fingers broke the surface of the water?
11. The youngest mermaid is described as '**watching with a fast-beating heart**'. How do you think she was feeling? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
12. What do you think happened next? Use the clues in the text to help you.

Extension:

Within the text there are lots of similes. A **simile** is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things. The **simile** is usually in a phrase that begins with the words "as" or "like." For example: 'as dark as ink'. Can you find anymore similes in the text? Can you think of any of your own?