

# Mermaid's cave

Take the plunge and discover a mysterious undersea cave of wonders



**Through the fronds**  
What lies beyond this seaweed curtain? Could it be another room – and if so, what might we find there?

**Anchors away!**  
A lack of a wardrobe means that this ship's anchor has been put to a different use. Perhaps those bikini tops could be a vital clue to our homeowner's identity...

**Mirror, mirror**  
This Hollywood-style mirror is certainly eye-catching – probably like the person who uses it. Could our homeowner be a local celebrity?

**Pop my cork!**  
What message could this floating bottle contain? Maybe it is a map to lost treasure, a plea for help, or simply someone's shopping list.

**Open wide**  
Sit down and make yourself comfortable. This giant clam, complete with cushions, shows that the occupant has a keen eye for interior design.

**Beachcombers**  
How many combs can you spot in this scene? Our homeowner obviously likes to ensure that her hair is salon beautiful – must be tough with all that salt water and seaweed!

**What big teeth...**  
Sharks don't have the best of reputations. Does this scary predator mean trouble for our mermaid, or is he just guarding her home while she is away?

**Wheel of fortune**  
When you live under the ocean you've got to make do with whatever you can find. This ship's wheel makes a great table – but what can we see on the cloth? Is that a treasure map?

**A girl must accessorise**  
This coral makes a great ring-holder – but, oh dear, one ring looks like it is floating away! Where might it end up?

## Discover more online...

As well as the A2 poster image, we also have an interactive version available online for free at [www.scholastic.co.uk/childedplus](http://www.scholastic.co.uk/childedplus) Best viewed full screen on an interactive whiteboard, children can point at different areas of the screen to move the keyhole around and reveal different sections of the picture. By examining what they see through the keyhole, children will build up a picture of the room and its owner, via the different objects and details.



# Treasures of the deep

Develop your theme with these fun cross-curricular activities

Visit [www.scholastic.co.uk/childedplus](http://www.scholastic.co.uk/childedplus) to access the free online version of the poster (type 'through the keyhole' into the resource finder to locate it quickly). With the children, explore the setting by moving the keyhole around the scene. Talk about the different objects and clues. When you have done exploring, repeatedly hit the space bar to reveal the entire scene.

The following activities can be used to develop the different aspects of the poster image:

## Here be treasure!

- Get the class to design a treasure map based on the school grounds. Locations can be renamed in pirate lingo to make them more mysterious (your pond could become the 'Forgotten Oasis', woods could be renamed the 'Whispering Forest').
- Encourage imaginative writing based on the treasure map. Who did it belong to? Where were they going? What was the treasure and who put it there?

## Not all that it seems

- Prepare a feely bag with items in it (a bottle opener, chopsticks, eyelash curlers, nut cracker, and so on). Invite children to

feel and explore the items, and to try and guess what they would be used for. Reveal the items, and think up a new name for each. What might a mermaid use it for?

## Time to reflect

- Design and make a mirror using natural objects such as shells, pebbles, dried seaweed and sand.
- Read story extracts or view film clips that feature magical mirrors. For example, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Snow White* and *The Snow Queen*. Explore the idea through drama before getting children to write their own poem based on an enchanted mirror.

## Clam cushions

- In groups, ask the children to design a cushion for the mermaid's chair. Encourage them to think about sea-themed patterns and objects, such as shells, waves, starfish, and so on. The designs can then be stitched onto plain cushions using fabric, sequins and beads.

## Classroom chest

- Make a treasure chest using shoeboxes, newspaper and Mod-Roc. Explore wood patterns and create this effect using combs on the paint. Keep a selection of 'wow

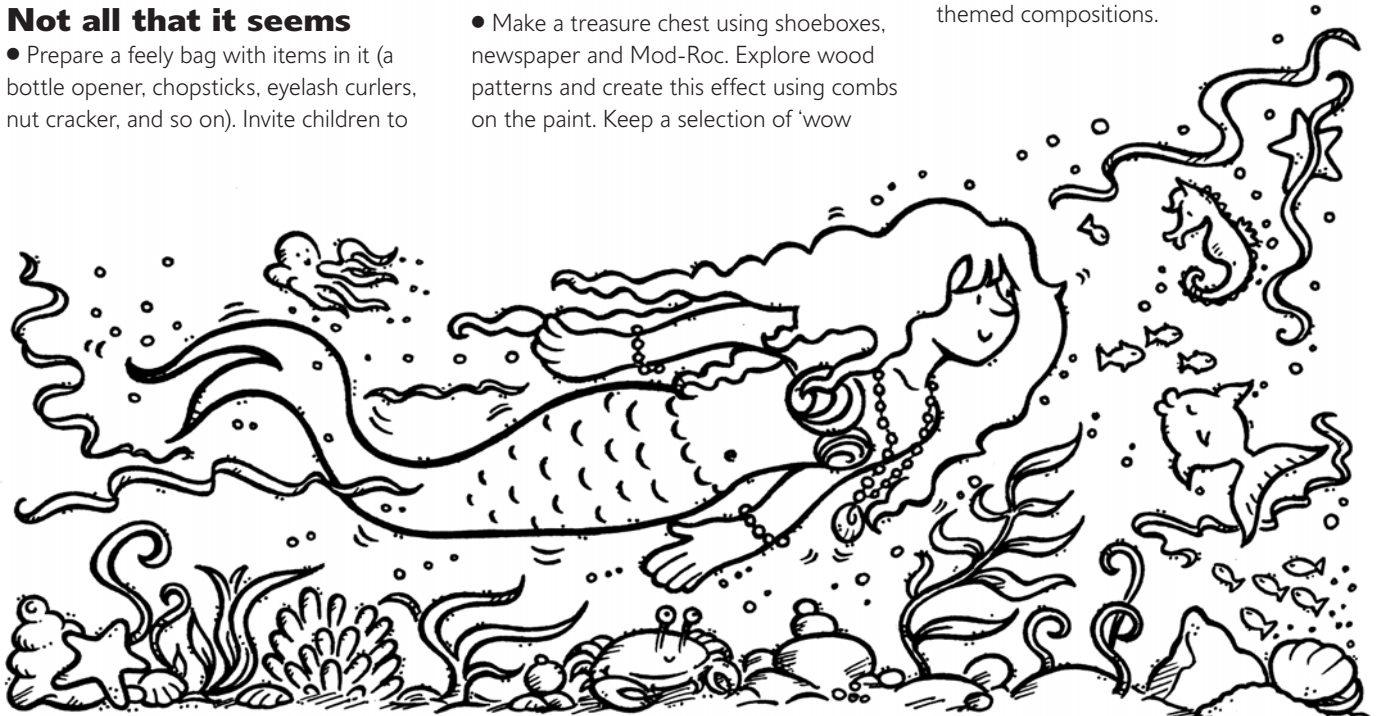
words' inside the finished chest, which children can use for their creative writing.

## Mermaid munchies

- Organise a seafood taster session. Promote the event with posters and adverts. Encourage children to search for recipes and be involved with the various preparations.
- Design your own underwater feast for a mermaid using salt dough or Plasticine to shape and make the different food items. Alternatively, give children a paper plate to draw their mermaid's dinner on.

## Wave dancers

- Use music to explore the different moods and movements of the ocean – from calm (*La Mer* by Debussy) to stormy (*Fingal's Cave* by Mendelssohn). Give children long strips of blue fabric to move through the air as they perform along to the music.
- Watch the 'Under the Sea' dance from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Using a variety of percussion instruments, invite groups to come up with their own sea-themed compositions.



# Message in a bottle

Unfold the parchment and launch your class on an exciting adventure

Messages in a bottle have an air of mystery and intrigue surrounding them – who sent it? What does the message say? Who found it? If you have already used the poster in class, children will have spotted the bottle floating in the mermaid's cave and, inevitably, speculation will be rife as to what is contained inside. Healthy curiosity is a great starting point for numerous creative activities...

## Start in style

If possible, start your activity by really capturing the children's interest and imaginations. The best way is to have a physical 'message in a bottle' that you can present to the class. Try and find an interesting-coloured/shaped bottle. Remove the label and place your message (based on the activity you have chosen to do) inside. You can then reveal this to the class, pretending to have found it washed up on a beach (or discovered among some old odds and ends in a loft!).

## Mermaid's shopping list

Create a list of seafood-inspired items. Ask the children to design a price list for

the various items and then work out/role play buying the items and handing over the correct money. Once the 'ingredients' have been bought, get children to design a recipe that the mermaid could cook.

## Treasure map

Present the children with a typical pirate's map, complete with named locations and a spot marked with a big red cross. Using drama, get the children to imagine they are going on a journey to find the treasure. Explore each of the locations in turn, before arriving at the mysterious treasure. What might it be? As a follow-up, invite the children to write up their journeys as a short story.

## A cry for help

Someone is stranded on an island and has sent the message calling for help. The message could give details about the person and how they ended up in their current predicament. Children can write a letter back explaining how the person will be rescued and what to do while they wait for rescue.

## Warning! Warning!

The message is a hastily written warning – it could be a strange sea creature, a pirate attacking ships in the area, a mysterious

island or shipwreck... the list is endless! Get children to write a newspaper report based on the warning message or, if it is a sea creature/pirate, they could design and make a wanted poster.

## Seeing is believing

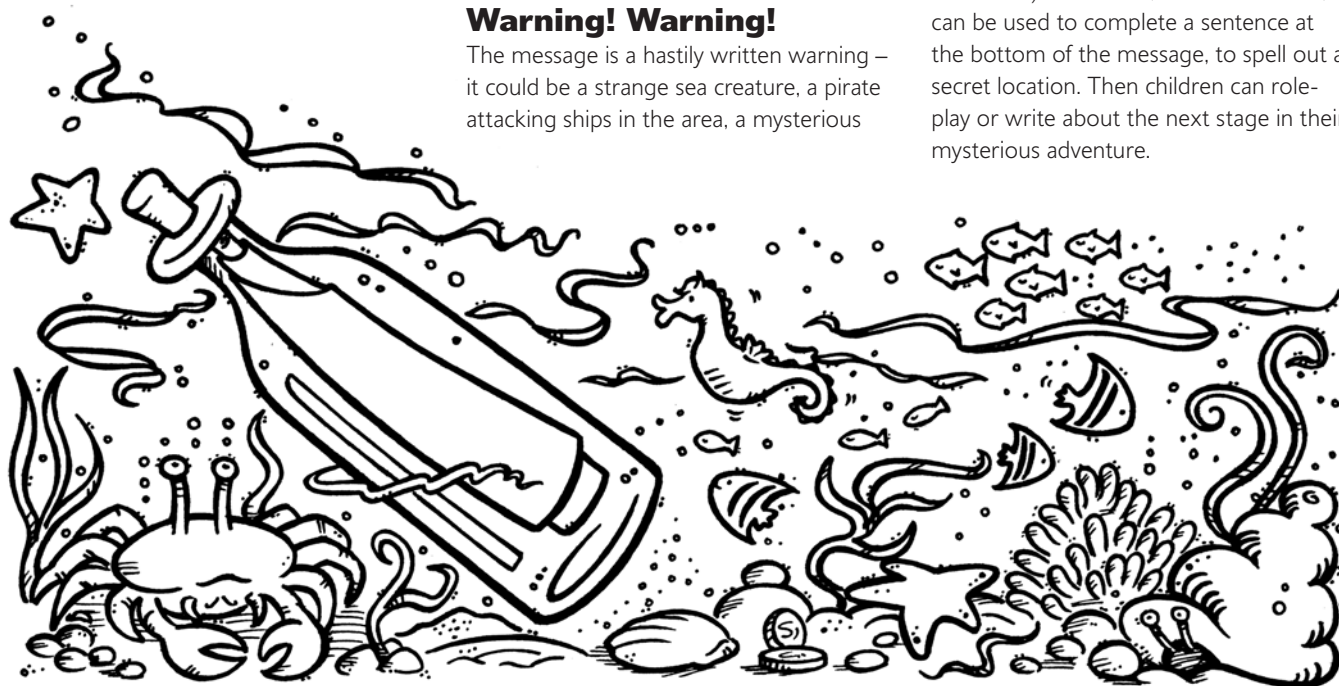
Instead of a message, the parchment might contain a drawing of a mysterious beast. If you visit [www.godecooking.com/clipart/fish/clfish.htm](http://www.godecooking.com/clipart/fish/clfish.htm) you can view early medieval woodcuts of fish that you could use to spark creativity. Get the children to use the image as inspiration for a story or poem.

## Captain's log

The message is a diary entry from a ship's captain, detailing the start of a terrible storm. What happens next? Let your class decide by writing the next diary entry.

## Riddle me this!

Give the children a series of riddles to solve. For example: *What can you catch but can't throw? (A cold.) It has roots that no one can see and is taller than any tree? (A mountain.)* Each word, once discovered, can be used to complete a sentence at the bottom of the message, to spell out a secret location. Then children can role-play or write about the next stage in their mysterious adventure.





# Portrait of a mermaid

In the deep dark depths  
of the ocean, beneath wild  
green waves, you'll find  
a cave.

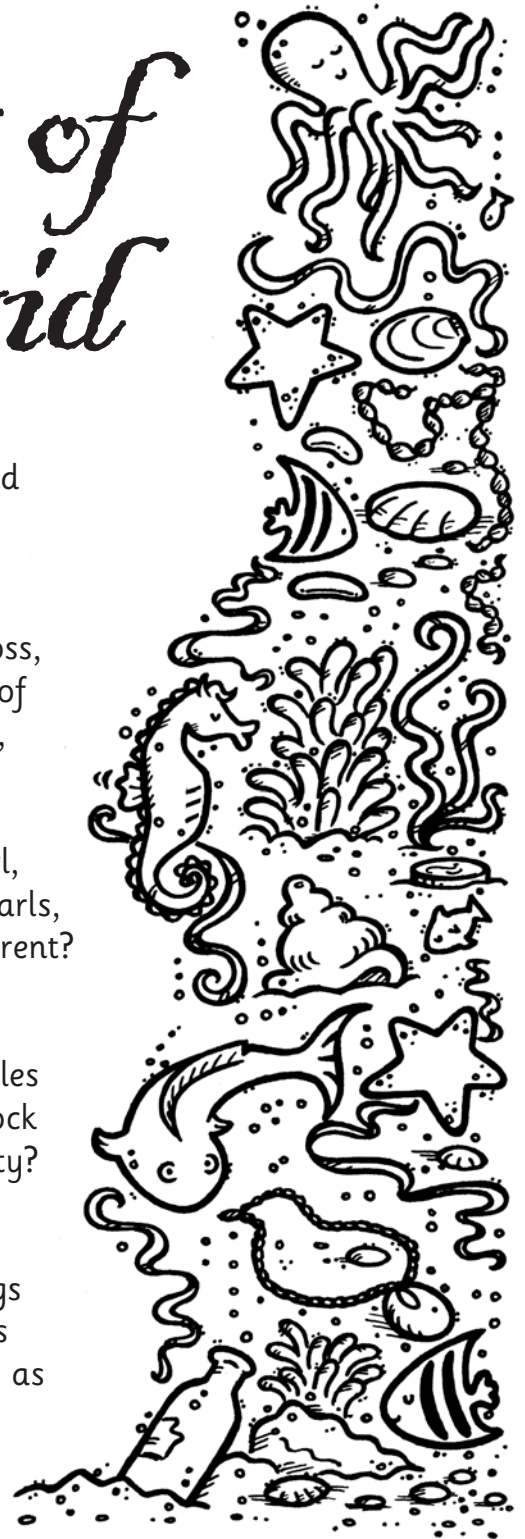
In the cave, a carpet of moss,  
rough rocky walls, a row of  
hooks and hanging high,  
a mirror.

In the mirror, a pretty girl,  
tumbling curls, teeth like pearls,  
glistening eyes – what's different?  
a fishtail.

On the fishtail, shining scales  
of purple and green, peacock  
colours – who is this beauty?  
a mermaid.

Listen – the mermaid sings  
her lonely song, sweet as  
a summer breeze, haunting as  
a lullaby.

Moira Andrew



## Teachers' notes

Portraits are usually drawn or painted, but this poem is a portrait in words. Encourage the children to describe the mermaid and her home just by reading or listening to the poem.

Look for colour words and phrases in the poem. For example, *wild green waves*, *peacock colours*, and so on. Invite the children to suggest new and different ideas, such as *angry blue waves* or *rainbow colours*.

Explore the pattern of the poem. There are five verses, each with three long lines and a very short last line – just two words long. From the children's previous suggestions, model a four-line poem based on the original. Keep to an ocean theme (instead of a mermaid you could do a portrait of a sea horse or a crab, perhaps even Poseidon or Neptune). Say something about where they live and what they look like.