

How did stories about mermaids start?

1 A mermaid is a beautiful woman with a fish's tail. Sometimes lonely sailors told stories about seeing a mermaid. They had probably seen a sea cow, or manatee.

2 A manatee might look like a mermaid if it were seen from far away. It has short front flippers that could be mistaken for arms. The mother manatee holds her baby in her "arms" just like a woman.

3 You couldn't mistake a manatee for a mermaid after a closer look, however. It would be hard to call a manatee beautiful. It has a square, hairy face and gray, wrinkled skin. The manatee's shapeless body ends in a flat tail. It can be over 12 feet long and weigh more than 1,200 pounds.

4 Some stories say that mermaids are harmful. The manatee harms no animal or person. It just eats plants. When it eats, you can hear the noise 200 yards away. Because the manatee is both friendly and slow, it is easy to catch. It is often killed for its meat, oil, and skin.

5 Mermaids are found only in stories. Manatees are real. But manatees are dying out. If they are not protected, manatees will be found only in stories, too.



Mark the circle (○) beside the right answer.

- A manatee is a _____.
 - mermaid
 - person
 - sea cow
 - woman
- Which word in paragraph 5 means kept safe?
 - found
 - real
 - dying
 - protected
- The story does not tell about the manatee's _____.
 - flippers
 - tail
 - skin
 - eyes
- Which paragraph tells what a mermaid is?
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
- BEAUTIFUL is to UGLY as far is to _____. Think how the first two words go together. Then mark the word that goes with far in the same way.
 - lonely
 - call
 - near
 - long
- Manatees do not make noise.
 - True
 - False
 Manatees harm animals and people.
 - True
 - False
 The manatee can be over 12 feet long.
 - True
 - False
- Yards can have the following meanings. Mark the meaning used in paragraph 4.
 - spaces 3 feet long
 - spaces around houses