

An Educator's Guide for How to Catch a Mermaid



Written by Adam Wallace and Illustrated by Andy Elkerton

A Common Core State Standards Aligned Activity Guide for Grades Kindergarten, 1 and 2

Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for Grades Kindergarten, 1 and 2, but standards for other grades may also apply.

Prepared by We Love Children's Books

About the Book

Many claim to have caught a mermaid, but can YOU?

How do you catch a mermaid?

You must be very clever.

With mirrors, crowns, and pearls galore,

This quest can't last forever!

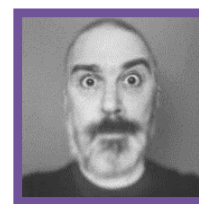


About the Author and Illustrator

Adam Wallace is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the "How to Catch a..." series. He says that he loves writing stories that make children laugh and get excited about reading and drawing and writing. Visit him at: <https://www.adam-wallace-books.com/>



Andy Elkerton is *New York Times* bestselling illustrator of the "How to Catch a..." series. He is based in the village of Taynuilt, on the West coast of Scotland. He worked in the field of computer games, but now is finally doing what he always wanted to do...draw children's books! Visit him at: <https://www.facebook.com/Andy-Elkerton-Childrens-Illustrator-187820837936476/>



Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

What do students know about mermaids? Where do mermaids live? Can they think of other stories that feature mermaids?

What sorts of bait would students use to lure a mermaid to a trap? Why do they think it would work?

What would happen if someone really caught a mermaid?



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Vocabulary

While you read the book aloud to the class, have students identify unfamiliar words and create a vocabulary list to go along with the book. Define the words as a class using an array of strategies to determine meaning, including context, accompanying illustrations in the story and the dictionary if needed. Provide real-life connections to these new words by discussing other situations where they could be used. Have students practice using these new words in a sentence. Can students think of other words that could be used that have similar meanings?

RL K.4

L K.4, K.5, 1.4, 1.5, 2.4, 2.5

Post-Reading Questions and Activities

It's a trap!

Break students into small groups and assign each group one of the traps from the book for closer study. In this book, no matter what the children do, the mermaid escapes them every time. Work with students to explore the following questions: How was the trap supposed to work? What happened instead? Why did the trap fail? What do the words on the page tell us? How do the illustrations show readers what is happening? How do they work together to tell the story? Have each group present their findings to the class, being sure to point out details about the scene that others might have missed (for example, the mermaid covering her ears when the chest creaks, or the way the dog uses the submarine to discourage the sharks.) After all the traps have been discussed, review them as a class. How are they similar? What sort of bait does the girl use?

RL K.1, K.3, K.6, K.7, 1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7

SL K.1, K.4, K.5, 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5

Why?

Why do the girl and her friend try to catch the mermaid? Do students think that catching someone in a trap is the best way to make a friend? What other approaches could she take to make friends with the mermaid? By the end of the book, have they become friends? *How to Catch a Unicorn* also has friendship as one of its themes. How do the zoo animals express that theme? How is that similar to the mermaid in this tale?

RL K.1, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7

SL K.1, K.2, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

Picture This Word

In picture books, the words and the illustrations combine to tell the story. And in this book, some words become illustrations themselves! Review the book as a class to find the fancy, illustrated words on each page. How does the appearance of the word relate to its meaning and help to tell the story? Have each student select a different word from the book and draw that word in a stylized way that highlights its meaning. Have volunteers share their word with the class and read it aloud in a way that accentuates its meaning.

RL K.1, K.7, 1.1, 1.7, 2.1, 2.7

SL K.1, K.4, K.5, 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5



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Compare and Contrast

One of the fun things about the How to Catch... series is that each book is a little different. The kids have different reasons for wanting to catch each creature and each creature has its own reason for not wanting to be caught. Take one of the other books and compare it to *How to Catch a Mermaid*. It might be interesting to compare *How to Catch a Monster* to this book. In both stories, one of the main characters wants to have the other as a friend. How does the Monster go about trying to make a friend? What does the girl do to try to make the mermaid her friend? How does each story conclude? When comparing the stories, consider the following questions:

- Who are the characters?
- Who is telling the story?
- Where and when do the stories take place?
- What are the main conflicts and how do they get resolved?
- What are the big ideas or themes of these stories?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, K.9, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7

SL K.1, K.2, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

Under the Sea

Now that students have read the book, they are experts on the mermaid and on underwater traps! What would students do to catch the mermaid? Have students design and draw their own trap. Working with an adult, write a rhyme in the style of the book that tells what the trap should do and what happens when the mermaid encounters it. Does their design actually capture the mermaid? Or does she escape? Have volunteers share their creations with the class.

W K.3, 1.3, 2.3

SL K.5, 1.5, 2.5

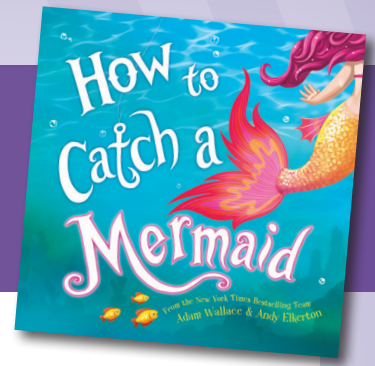
Diving Deeper

During this story, the children and the dog chase the mermaid through the ocean as they try to catch her. Come together as a class and, using clues from the text and illustrations, follow where the chase takes the children. Do they stay by the shore? Or do they go deeper and deeper? How do their traps change? How does what they are wearing change? Do things get more or less dangerous as the story progresses? Have students identify the beginning, middle, and end of the book. Would the story make sense if the events happened in a different order?

RL K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7

SL K.1, K.2, 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

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Friends at Last

Come together as a class and review the end of the story. The mermaid has saved the children from the sharks, returns them home, and then leaves. Have each student make up a new last page for the book. Using a combination of drawing, dictating and writing, have each student write a brief story telling how the girl reunites with the mermaid and an adventure they have now that they are friends. Have volunteers share their story and illustration.

RL K.1, K.3, K.7, 1.1, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5

W K.3, 1.3, 2.3

SL K.5, 1.5, 2.5

Visit the Common Core State Standards website to read about the individual standards listed in this guide: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>

For Reference

Common Core State Standards Used

Reading Standards for Literature KINDERGARTEN (RL)

Key Ideas and Details

K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

K.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings and major events in a story.

Craft and Structure

K.4. Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

K.6. With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K.7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

K.9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories

Writing Standards KINDERGARTEN (W)

Text Types and Purposes

K.3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

K.7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).

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K.8. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening Standards KINDERGARTEN (SL)

Comprehension and Collaboration

- K.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
 - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges
- K.2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- K.4. Describe familiar people, places, things and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.
- K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

Language Standards KINDERGARTEN (L)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

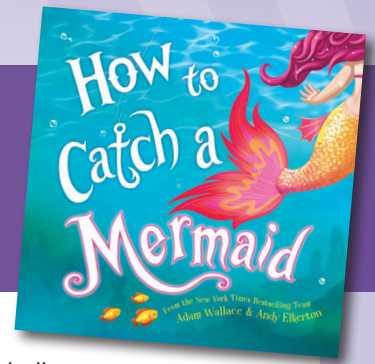
- K.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.
 - a. Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb *to duck*).
 - b. Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.
- K.5. With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
 - a. Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
 - b. Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).
 - c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are colorful).
 - d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., walk, march, strut, prance) by acting out the meanings

Reading Standards for Literature Grade 1 (RL)

Key Ideas and Details

- 1.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- 1.2. Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

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1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- 1.7. Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.
- 1.9. Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

Writing Standards Grade 1 (W)

Text Types and Purposes

- 1.3. Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- 1.7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of “how-to” books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).
- 1.8. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Speaking and Listening Standards Grade 1 (SL)

Comprehension and Collaboration

- 1.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
 - b. Build on others’ talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
 - c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.
- 1.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- 1.3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- 1.4. Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
- 1.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

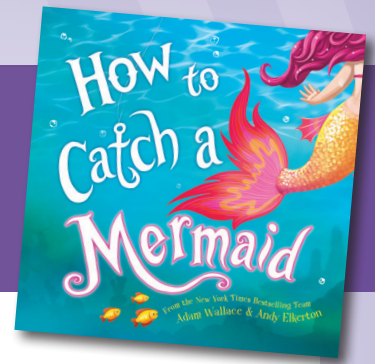
Language Standards Grade 1 (L)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- 1.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
 - a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.



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- b. Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
- c. Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).
- 1.5. With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
 - a. Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
 - b. Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
 - c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
 - d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.

Reading Standards for Literature Grade 2 (RL)

Key Ideas and Details

- 2.1. Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- 2.2. Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- 2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Craft and Structure

- 2.5. Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- 2.7. Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

Writing Standards Grade 2 (W)

Text Types and Purposes

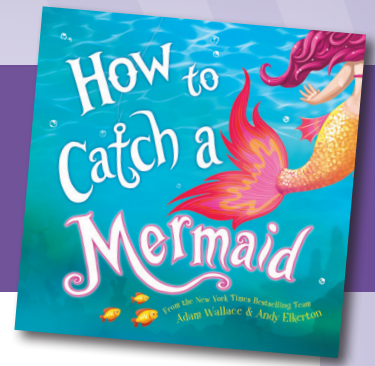
- 2.3. Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- 2.7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).
- 2.8. Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.



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Speaking and Listening Standards Grade 2 (SL)

Comprehension and Collaboration

- 2.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
 - b. Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.
 - c. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.
- 2.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media
- 2.3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- 2.4. Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.
- 2.5. Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Language Standards Grade 2 (L)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- 2.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
 - a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
 - b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell).
 - c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional).
 - d. Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark).
 - e. Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases.
- 2.5. Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
 - a. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).
 - b. Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., toss, throw, hurl) and closely related adjectives (e.g., thin, slender, skinny, scrawny).



How to Catch to Club



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