

**Selected and annotated by Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, CCB volunteer and BCCB Reviewer
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Far away out at sea, the water is as blue as the petals of the most beautiful cornflower and as clear as the purest glass, but it is very deep, deeper than any anchor chain will reach...

From Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" to the waters of Vietnam, Nigeria, and South Carolina, from mermaids, selkies, and magical fish to wondrous voyages across perilous, beautiful waters: these are stories of the sea. They reflect a vast curiosity about worlds beyond human reach, a longing for radical connection with other beings, and the power—and limitations—of love.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *The Little Mermaid*; translated by Anthea Bell, illus. by Lisbeth Zwerger. Minedition, 2004. 48p. Gr. 4-6.

A young mermaid's curiosity about the world above the waves leads her to make a dangerous bargain. A new translation by Bell brings Andersen's classic fairy tale to life, while Zwerger's trademark watercolors, delicate pencil lines, and flawless compositions emphasize the tale's melancholy mood, the small expressive figures made poignant by contrast with the glowing washes of color delineating sea and sky.

Maggi, María Elena, ad. *The Great Canoe: A Kariña Legend*; tr. from the Spanish by Elisa Amado; illus. by Gloria Calderón. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2001. 34p. 5-8 yrs.

Kaputano the Sky Dweller warns the Kariña people that a great rain will soon cover the world in water, but only four couples believe him. Together, they build a great canoe and carry two of each kind of animal and a cache of plant seeds to the new world Kaputano creates for his children. Maggi retells this indigenous South American flood narrative with spare, simple text, while Calderón's hand-colored scratchboard illustrations carry the story with drama and texture. An afterword details the extensive research conducted by the author and illustrator, including a visit to the modern-day Kariña people.

Matsutani, Miyoko. *The Fisherman Under the Sea*; tr. from the Japanese by Alvin Tresselt; illus. by Chihiro Iwasaki. Parents' Magazine Press, 1969. 32p. 4-8 yrs.

In return for rescuing a marvelous sea turtle, a fisherman named Taro Urashima is invited to the underwater Dragon Palace of the King of the Sea. Taro marries the king's daughter and lives happily under the waves, until he begins to long for the land and his village. This Japanese tale is beautifully illustrated, Iwasaki's use of white space for both air and water creating a fluidity between the worlds and highlighting the colorful sumptuousness of the underwater palace.

McCaughrean, Geraldine, ad. *The Crystal Pool: Myths and Legends of the World*; illus. by Bee Willey. McElderry, 1999. 138p. 7-10 yrs.

McCaughrean retells an eclectic mix of folktales from around the world, including brief annotations with cultural context. Seafaring standouts include “The Call of the Sea,” in which a mermaid helps a fisherman save the survivors of a historically factual shipwreck; a music-loving dolphin in the Greek myth of “Arion and the Dolphins”; a Melanesian story of how the sea came to be in “The Crystal Pool”; an unlikely (and comically ill-fated) seagoing duo in the Congolese tale “Cat v. Rat”; and the eponymous ghost ship of “The Flying Dutchman.”

Oliver, Narelle. *Mermaids Most Amazing*; written and illus. by Narelle Oliver. Putnam, 2005. 32p. Gr. 2-4.

Oliver provides a lively history of global mermaid sightings, folklore, and fakery, followed by five humorous mermaid tales from Australia, New Zealand, North America, India, and Ireland. The illustrations combine full spreads and spot art for an engaging viewing experience. A note on Oliver’s sources and welcome suggestions for further reading conclude this fun volume.

Osborne, Mary Pope, ad. *Mermaid Tales from Around the World*; illus. by Troy Howell. Scholastic, 1993. 84p. Gr. 4-6.

A fish becomes a princess, a heartbroken wife transforms into an *onijegi*, a sea nymph taunts a Cyclops, a mermaid guardian exacts vengeance upon a thoughtless soldier, and more in Osborne’s adaptations of twelve tales from around the world. Osborne finds the mermaid to be a strong and complex figure, noting, “the water maid was a force to be reckoned with. Self-assured, independent and self-contained, she determined her own fate and could wreak havoc as well as bliss.” Viewers will especially enjoy the stylistic variety in Howell’s lush illustrations, which reflect traditional art styles of each tale’s source culture, emphasizing the global appeal of the mermaid.

San Souci, Robert D. *Nicholas Pipe*; illus. by David Shannon. Dial, 1997. 32p. Gr. 4-8.

Margaret’s love for Nicholas Pipe, a merman who can live on land thanks to a magic spell, is forbidden by her mistrustful father and his hostile sisters. But when Nicholas is kidnapped to be exhibited before the king as a marvel, only Margaret can save him. Will love prevail? Or are the differences between them too broad a gulf for love to bridge? San Souci’s text is based on a twelfth-century folk tale, and Shannon’s acrylic paintings give a robust feel to the inhabitants of land and water.

San Souci, Robert D. *Sukey and the Mermaid*; illus. by Brian Pinkney. Four Winds, 1992. 32p. 5-8 yrs.

“Thee, thee, down below,/ Come to me, Mama Jo!”

Overworked and persecuted by her cruel stepfather, Sukey inadvertently summons a mermaid named Mama Jo, who becomes her friend and benefactor. San Souci’s tale is based on African-American and West African water spirit traditions, and emphasizes the power of caring and cooperation between women against greed and exploitation. Pinkney’s nimble, fluid scratchboard-and-oil-pastel illustrations bring to life the textures of the humble cabin and the

fantastic undersea grotto, depicting sweeping scenery and tender facial expressions with equal facility.

Vuong, Lynette Dyer. *The Golden Carp and Other Tales from Vietnam*; illus. by Manabu Saito. Lothrop, 1993. 128p. Gr. 4-7.

Vuong retells six traditional Vietnamese folk tales filled with disguise, deception, and bittersweet longing. In the title story, a shapeshifting carp fairy falls in love with a poor young scholar and impersonates his haughty betrothed. In "Tears of Pearl," a merchant harbors a banished sea fairy, but their growing love is doomed by a summons from the sea. Full-page color illustrations with decorative white borders and botanical motifs capture the tales' most heightened moments of poignancy and drama. The volume concludes with notes on cultural context and a Vietnamese pronunciation guide.