



Gardens of the Sea

¹ Megan had been told: "Never swim when the sea is rough." But it was the last day of her holidays. The waves promised excitement. She could feel them calling her. She licked the salt spray from her lips, and ran into the crashing waters.

Immediately she was bowled over. She was rolled and dragged, battered and pummelled. She was as helpless as a mouse in a washing machine.

² Out of the blue, a mermaid appeared. She

gathered Megan in her arms, and held her tight.

"Everything is going to be all right," the mermaid said. "I'll take care of you."

The mermaid carried her to an underwater world. It was a world more beautiful than Megan had imagined any place could ever be.

Suddenly there was a whirlpool up ahead. The water boiled and frothed. "Oh no!" cried the mermaid. "Cling on to me."

"What's happening?" Megan asked.

The mermaid said, "Here comes Neptune, King of the Sea."

³ The King, in all his ugliness, appeared from among his attendants. His fierce eyes bulged like those of some great fish.

"A girl!" he bellowed. "A human child! I'll have her! She'll be my servant."

"We need to escape. Can you ride?" whispered the mermaid.

"Ride?" echoed Megan.

⁴ The mermaid suddenly turned and whistled. A huge seahorse came at her call. Megan grabbed at the scaly mane and hauled herself onto the seaweed saddle on its back.

"Hold on tight! Don't fall!" the mermaid cried.

And what a ride it was! They plunged through the gardens of the sea. Megan laughed, she had never been so happy. The mermaid turned to Megan, smiling with her beautiful pearly teeth.

"Come, stay down here with me forever. You will love it here."

Megan nodded. It would be lovely to stay under the ocean forever.

⁵ "NO!" came a whistling cry. It was a dolphin, slicing swiftly through the water. "She's too young. Humans who love her are crying on the shore," the dolphin whistled.

"I want her," the mermaid said. "She's mine!"

"No!" said the dolphin. "Come, human child. We may be just in time."

⁶ The dolphin swam straight for Megan and knocked her off the seahorse. Megan heard the mermaid shrieking behind her. Foamy sea bubbles raced around Megan's eyes as the dolphin pushed her up. The dolphin whispered in her ear, "They are beautiful, the sea folk, but they are jealous of anyone with legs. She would have kept you as a trophy."

The bubbles turned to black as Megan was flipped up before a king wave. She was unaware of being carried on its crest and hurled onto shore.

7 "Megan! Megan!" her father called. Then

he saw her. He ran and fell onto his knees, gave her the kiss of life, pumped the salt water from her lungs and made her breathe.

Megan felt the salt of his tears on her face, and smiled.



Questions

1 "Never swim when the sea

- a is rough."
- b promises excitement."
- c calls to you."

2 Who saved Megan when she was first dragged into the ocean?

- a a dolphin
- b King Neptune
- c a mermaid

3 King Neptune was

- a beautiful.
- b ugly.
- c kind.

4 What did Megan ride on to escape from Neptune?

- a She rode on the mermaid's back.
- b She rode on a dolphin.
- c She rode on a seahorse.

5 What did the mermaid want with Megan?

- a She wanted to save her.
- b She wanted to keep her.
- c She wanted to eat her.

6 How did Megan finally get back to the shore?

- a on a seahorse
- b the mermaid returned her
- c the surf swept her in

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues.

The brackets show the text sections ().

plunged jealous mouse servant cling

- 7 Small animal with short fur (1)
- 8 To hang on tightly to something (2)
- 9 A person who serves another (3)
- 10 Moved through with a great force (4)
- 11 To feel envious of someone (6)

Grammar

Some words can be joined with an apostrophe and these are called **contractions**. E.g. **it is** becomes **it's**.

Match the **contractions** from the text.

- | | |
|-----------|---------|
| 12 I'll | she is |
| 13 don't | what is |
| 14 she's | I will |
| 15 what's | do not |

Back To The Text...

16 In section 4 the word *huge* is used as

- a a noun.
- b an adjective.

17 The purpose of this text is

- a to entertain the reader.
- b to inform the reader.

18 Prediction: What is likely to happen in the future?

- a Megan will not go swimming in rough seas again.
- b Megan will go swimming in rough seas again.

Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

19 a The water suddenly boiled and frothed.
b She was bowled over by the waves.

20 a The King of the Sea appeared.
b She heard a whistling cry.

21 a The mermaid said "You will love it here."
b She climbed onto the seaweed saddle.

Think About This

22 The illustration on the front page is described in section

- a one.
- b two.
- c three.
- d four.

23 Who had Megan's best interests at heart?

- a the mermaid
- b the dolphin

Challenge Option

Vocabulary: How many words can you make from the word MERMAID?