

Mermaids

A mermaid is a legendary aquatic creature with the upper body of a woman and the tail of a fish. Mermaids appear in the folklore of many cultures worldwide, including the Near East, Europe, and Asia. The first stories appeared in ancient Assyria, in which the goddess Atargatis transforms herself into a mermaid out of shame for accidentally killing her human lover. Mermaids are sometimes depicted as perilous creatures associated with floods, storms, shipwrecks, and drowning. In other folk traditions (or sometimes within the same tradition) they can be benevolent, bestowing boons or falling in love with humans. The US National Ocean Service stated in 2012 that no evidence of mermaids has ever been found.

Mermaids have been a popular subject of art and literature in recent centuries. Danish author Hans Christian Andersen wrote his popular fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" in 1836. They have subsequently been depicted in opera, paintings, books, films, and comics.

In 1493, while sailing off the coast of Hispaniola, Christopher Columbus reported seeing three "female forms" which "rose high out of the sea, but were not as beautiful as they are represented". The logbook of Blackbeard, an English pirate, records that he instructed his crew on several voyages to steer away from charted waters which he called "enchanted" for fear of merfolk or mermaids, which Blackbeard and members of his crew reported seeing. These sightings were often recounted and shared by sailors and pirates who believed that mermaids were bad luck and would bewitch them into giving up their gold and dragging them to the bottom of the sea. Two sightings were reported in Canada near Vancouver and Victoria—one from sometime between 1870 and 1890, the other from 1967.

A number of collectors seek Mermaid covers—they're picturesque, colorful, and fanciful

