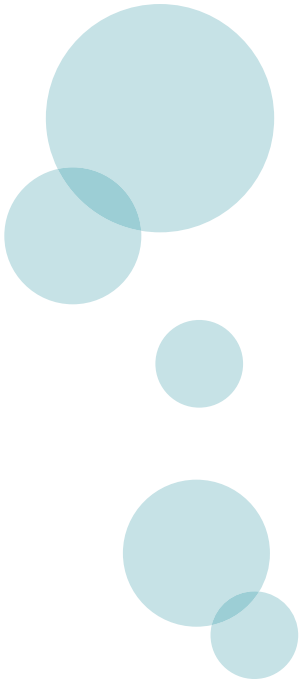
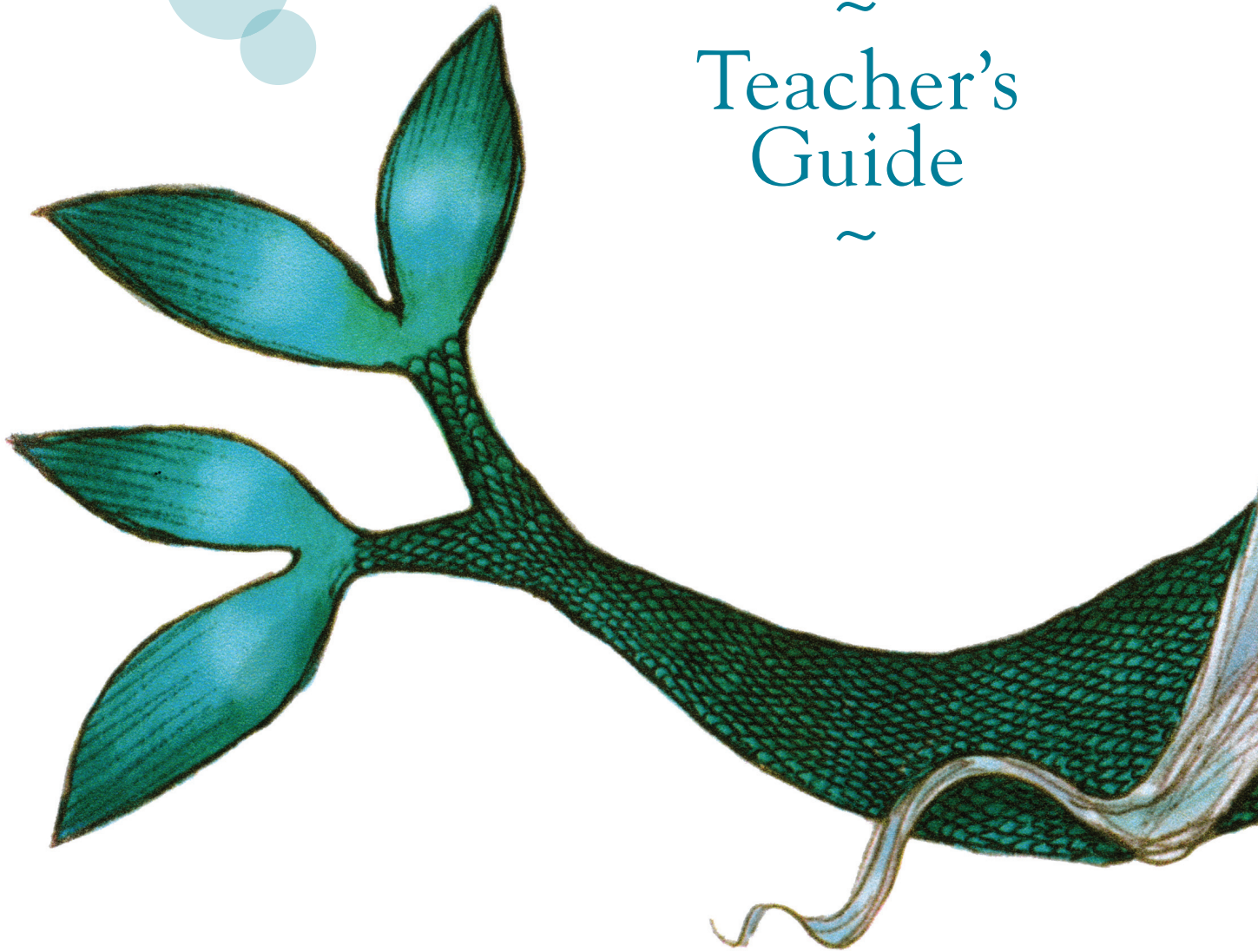


THE *Melancholic*
MERMAID

~
Teacher's
Guide
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The Story

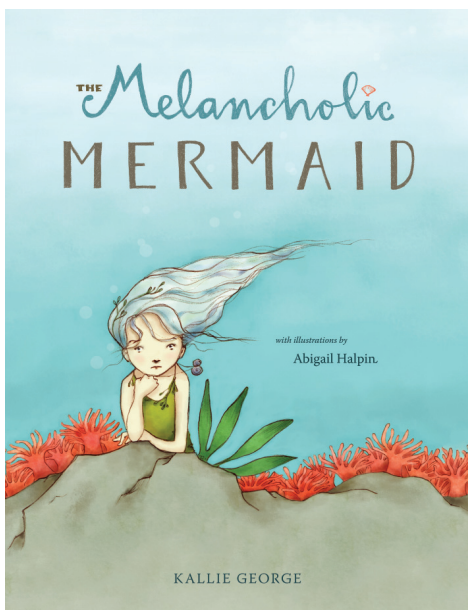
Most students at one point or another struggle with feeling different in some way from their friends, and perhaps even feeling left out. *The Melancholic Mermaid* is that story. Maude likes her two tails, until the other merchildren begin teasing her for being different.

She doesn't think things can get worse. But then she is captured by a fisherman. Meanwhile, on land, Tony, a human boy, faces difficulties of his own.

Born with webbed fingers, he too is an outcast. Hoping to find acceptance, he joins a circus. But the Ring Mistress is cruel and life there is unbearable. Until the circus purchases the mermaid. Slowly Tony and Maude become friends, and learn that their differences are what make them so special.

About this Guide

These discussion questions and activities are designed to support the goal of helping students relish their differences and especially their creativity. Tap into the adventure of this tale with language arts lessons in creative writing, characters studies, and more.



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Book Talk: Questions for thoughtful discussion

1. Why won't the other merchildren play with Maude? Why does she feel left out? Have you ever felt left out, or know someone who has felt left out? Describe your experience.
2. Tony prefers the sea and seashore rather than the circus. What does he like about the sea? What doesn't he like about the circus? Describe, using all your senses, one place that you LIKE. Then describe, using all your senses, one place that you DON'T like.
3. What does Tony think of the Ring Mistress when he FIRST meets her? What does he think of her later? What do you think of the Ring Mistress? Does she have good reason for keeping Maude or not?
4. Maude and Tony become friends right away. They find similarities in each other—they both have webbed hands and they both like the sea. They are also both unhappy in the circus. Think about YOUR friends. Do you share things in common with them? Or are you opposites?
5. Describe what you think the Ring Mistress does after Maude and Tony get away.
6. What does Maude do that makes her mighty? What is something that you have done that you consider a “mighty” act?
7. Read or watch a segment of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. Compare and contrast the tale of *The Little Mermaid* and *The Melancholic Mermaid*. Do the two mermaids have anything in common? What is different about them?



Activities for creative nourishment

Practicing Point of View

Point of view plays a big role in this story. The tale is told from the perspective of Maude, then Tony, then both Maude and Tony.

Activity A

Have students write from another character's perspective, such as the merchildren or Maude's parents who are missing Maude. Or perhaps from the Ring Mistress's perspective or the Strong Man. Or even the little red fish that seems to accompany Maude in many of the undersea illustrations!

Activity B

For a good portion of the book, Maude is trapped in the tank. Have students write a story or poem from the perspective of being an animal locked in a cage or tank. It doesn't have to be a magical animal. It could be an animal at the zoo, or in an SPCA. Have them write it in first person perspective!

Scribe your own sea shanty

In real life, sea shanties helped make work easier. They raise morale and encourage teamwork. In *The Melancholic Mermaid*, Tony sings a sea shanty to raise Maude's moral when they are escaping. Singing the shanty shows that he is a compassionate character. Have students listen to a few sea shanties. Then have them create a few lines of what they think Tony might be singing. One easy way of making up a new song is to take an old song students know the tune to and writing new lyrics for it.



Activities for creative nourishment

Make up some Merhistory

Three other famous two-tailed mermaids are mentioned at the beginning of the book.

- A) Atlante the Speed Champion who outraced a bluefin tuna.
- B) Powerful Celune who, with his two tails, saved a school of merchildren from a great white shark.
- C) Twin-Tailed Trista who used her tails to stand upright so she could rescue a merbaby stranded on a rock shelf in a storm.

Have students pick one or create a new two-tailed mermaid creature and write out the legend. Make sure that they use the language of legends and myths in constructing this tale.

Tell another tearful tale

In *The Melancholic Mermaid*, mermaids' tears are described as bubbles. Mermaids are the only ones with special tears. In myth, phoenixes have tears, which can heal wounds. But what about dragons? What do their tears look like? Or unicorns? Have students write about or draw a magical creature and its magical tears. What do the tears look like? What do they do?

My Circus Poster

DIRECTIONS: Using the template on the provided worksheet, create a poster of a character or creature that could be in your own circus. You can either draw directly on the template, or trace it to add your own design elements.

Your poster can feature a real creature that does amazing tricks, such as a bubble-gum-blowing elephant. It could be a mythical animal, such as a dragon, unicorn, a phoenix, or even a hippocampus!

Or it could be a made-up animal from your own imagination. You may even want to include more than one character.



Use bright, bold colors and fanciful designs to catch the eye. In the circle in the top left think of words you might want to add:

- Coming Soon!
- Bearded Ladies!
- Come See the Two-Tailed Mermaid!



