



Book Talk Grid: Nen and the Lonely Fisherman

What do you like about the story?

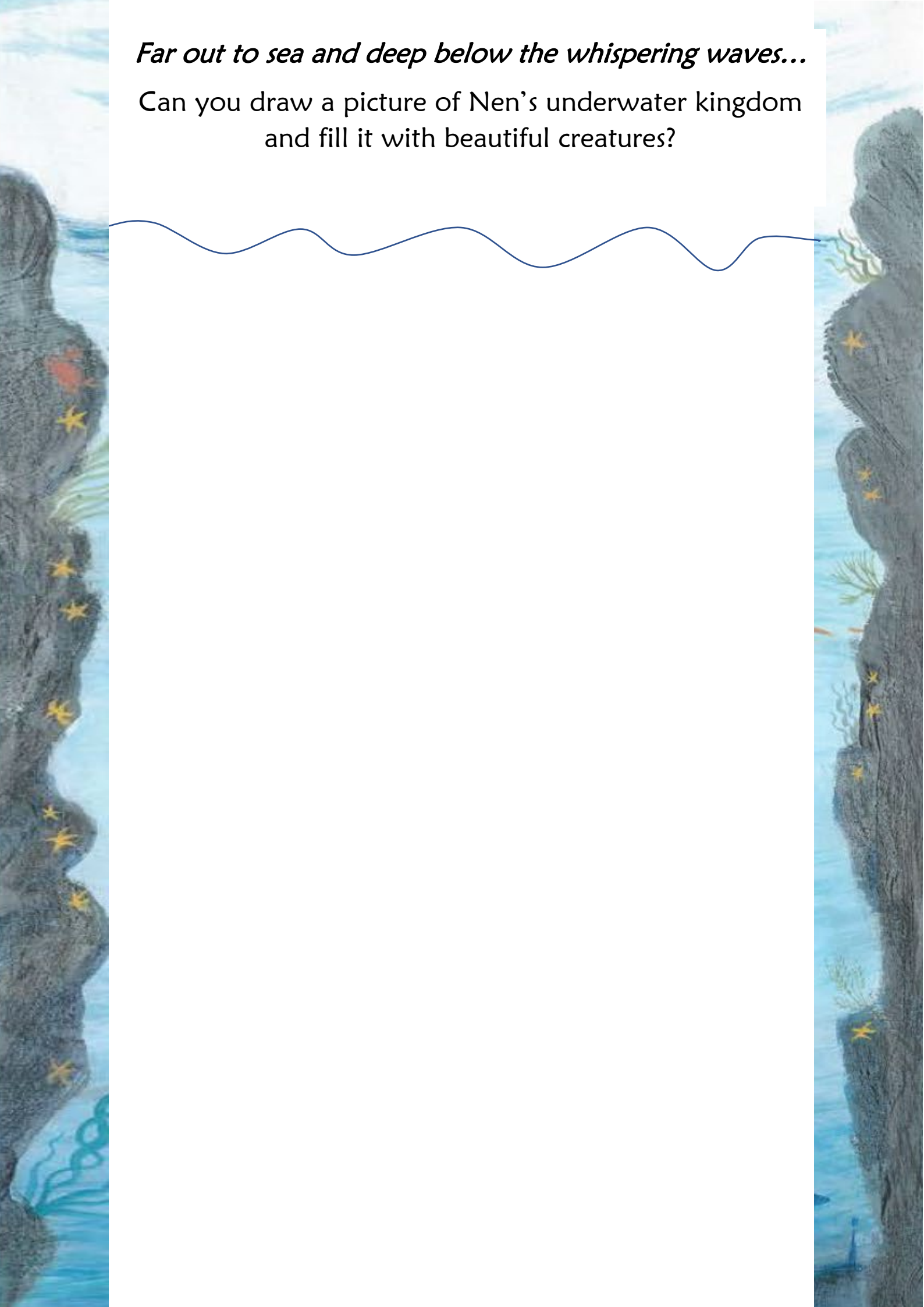
What do you dislike about it?

Is there anything puzzling or confusing?

What does it remind you of?

*Far out to sea and deep below the whispering waves...*

Can you draw a picture of Nen's underwater kingdom  
and fill it with beautiful creatures?



*They both felt their hope turn to happiness...*

What might Nen and Ernest be saying to each other? Fill out the speech bubbles and then write their conversation below!



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*They were destroying his precious oceans!*



What can you see?  
How are the humans in this illustration spoiling the ocean?

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Can you think of three ways we can look after our oceans?

1)

2)

3)

*Nen struggled upwards through the violet waves...*

What might Nen be thinking and feeling at this point in the story?



## *Nen and the Lonely Fisherman Discussion Guide*

### **Before sharing**

The title of this book is NEN AND THE LONELY FISHERMAN.

What do you think the story will be about?

Can you think of any words which are similar in meaning to 'lonely'?

Have you ever felt lonely before? Why?

Do you know any other stories with mermaids or merman in them?

### **Cover image**

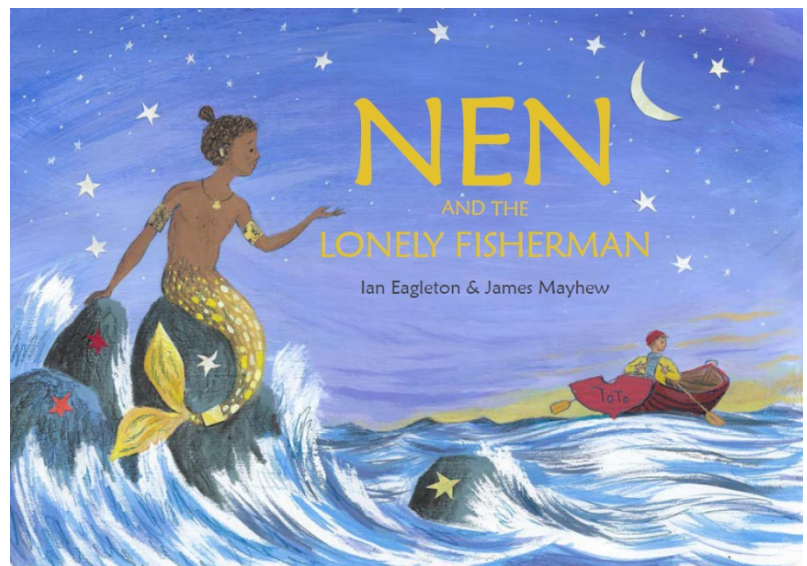
Based on the cover, what do you think NEN AND THE LONELY FISHERMAN

is about? Has your prediction changed? Who is the author? Who is the illustrator?

What colours can you see on the front cover? What do these colours usually symbolise?

How are the two characters on the cover similar? How are they different?

Where and when do you think the story might be set?



### **The blurb**

*As Nen sends a song of hope across the sea, a lonely young fisherman longs to find warmth in his heart.*

*One star-filled night, the two find each other. But their special connection is met with dismay by Nen's father, the mighty Pelagios, who creates a wild sea storm to protect his son and his oceans. Can Nen save Ernest?*

How does the blurb change your predictions about the story?

Who are the main characters in the story?

What do you think is meant by 'true love'?

What does the word 'dismay' mean? Why might Pelagios feel like this?

Does the blurb intrigue you? Does it make you want to read on?

## Pages 1 and 2

Is there anything unusual about the layout of these pages? Why do you think this might be? What impact does it have?

Can you describe Nen's underwater kingdom? What sea creatures can you see? Does it look welcoming or menacing? Why?

How might waves 'whisper'? What other sounds might they make?

Why might the depths of the ocean be described as 'ancient and wild'?

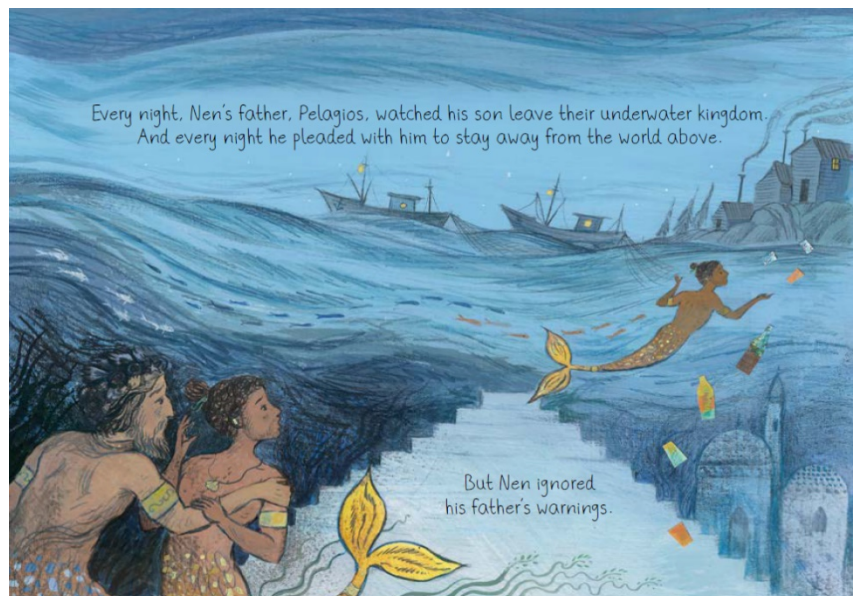
Why might Nen's heart feel empty?

## Pages 3 and 4

Why might Nen be singing?

What might Nen be singing about?

How has the illustrator shown Nen's song? What colours has he used? What does the verb 'smothered' suggest about the clouds?



Where does your eye travel to first when you look at page 4?

Why might this be?

Why do you think Pelagios warns Nen to stay away from the world above? Are there any clues on the page?

How is the word 'pleaded' similar to the word 'asked'? How is it different?

Why do you think Nen ignores his father's warnings?

Have you ever ignored an adult? Why? What happened?

## Pages 5 and 6

Is there anything interesting about how the words on these pages are set out? Why might this be?

What impression do you get of Ernest? Do you like him? Why? Why not?

Why do you think Ernest is lonely? Where do you think his friends and family are?

What do you think Ernest hears?

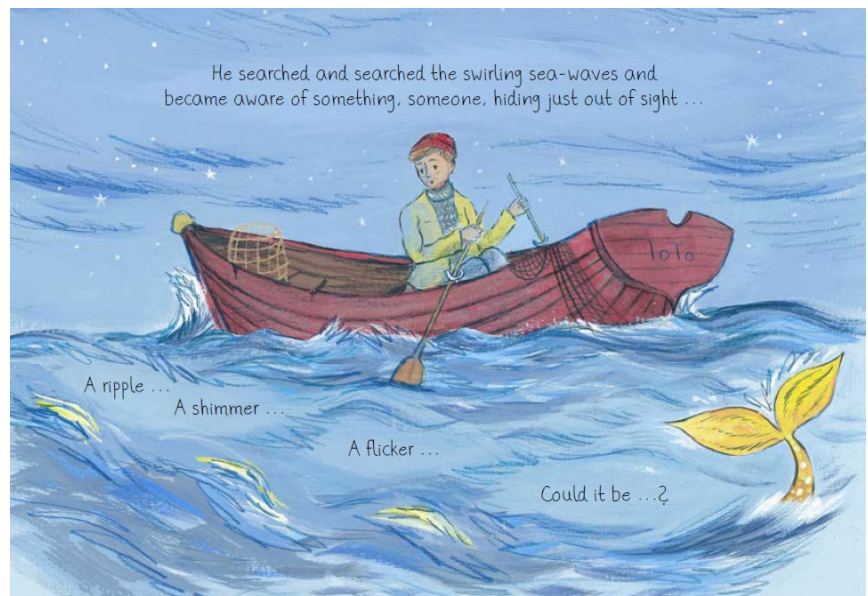
## Pages 7 and 8

What might Ernest be thinking and feeling when he hears the song?

How can a song be 'brimming with such courage'?

What 'long-forgotten' feeling do you think has stirred in Ernest's heart?

How does the author build a sense of tension and excitement on page 10? Does it make you want to read on?



## Pages 9 and 10

Why do you think 'A MERMAN!' is written in capital letters?

How should this be read?

What techniques do you think the illustrator has used to show the pattern on Nen's tail?

Do you notice anything interesting about the colours of Nen's tail and Ernest's coat? Why might this be?

What do you think Ernest and Nen are saying to each other?

How would you feel if you saw a merman or mermaid in the ocean? What would you do?

### **Pages 11 and 12**

Pelagios's face is 'etched with worry'. Why? Can you show a partner what his facial expression might look like?

In pairs, role-play a conversation between Pelagios and Nen. What might Pelagios say to Nen to persuade him to stay away from the humans?

Do you notice anything interesting about the colour of the sky in these illustrations? What might the colours represent?

What do you think Pelagios is going to do on the next page?

How do you think he is feeling and why?

### **Pages 13 and 14**

How does this double page spread make you feel? Why?

What do you notice about the colours used?

Why do you think the illustrator has made Pelagios so big?

What does the adjective 'rickety' suggest about the boat?

Imagine you are Ernest. What can you see, hear, taste, touch and smell during the storm? Make a list.

### **Pages 15 and 16**

What do you notice about the layout of the illustration on these pages? Why might this be? How do the illustrator's brushstrokes lead your eye around the page?

Compare this illustration with the illustration on pages 1 and 2.

How are they similar? How are they different?

Why do you think the word 'down' is repeated three times and set out like this? What impact does it have?

### **Pages 17 and 18**

What might Nen be thinking and feeling here?

How is the word 'violent' similar to the word 'angry'? How is it different?

Who do you think Nen has spotted? Why do you think this?

What do you notice about how the words have been set out on page 20? Has this been done anywhere else in the book?

## Pages 19 and 20

Why do you think 'ERNEST!' is written like this? How should this be read?

Is there anything interesting about how the words on these pages are set out? Has this been done anywhere before in the book?

Why do you think the author has described the sun as peeking through the clouds? Why not 'blazed' or 'shone'?

Do you think Ernest is going to be OK?

What piece of punctuation does the author use at the end of page 22? What impact does it have?

## Pages 21 and 22



How did you feel when Ernest woke up?

Why do you think the illustrator has made Nene and Ernest so large on these pages?

How might Pelagios be feeling? Do you think he has learnt anything over the course of the story?

How do you think Ernest is different to the other humans we have seen before in the story?

## Pages 23 and 24

Why might the sea now be calm?

What do you think Nen and Ernest are doing on the rock?

Do you think Pelagios will get angry and frustrated again?

What plans about their future might they be making?

*Can you write a new story featuring Nen and Ernest? Perhaps they will go on a trip together or meet some new animal friends!*

## After reading

Spend some time exploring the endpapers – how do they develop the story?

How would you describe Nen's character?

Do you think this story has a message? If so, what?

What was your favourite page? Why?

Who do you think the main character(s) in the story is? Why?

Do you know anyone like the characters in real life?

What do you think might happen next?

Which character do you think has changed the most over the course of the story?

Summarise the story in six sentences, picking out the main events.

## Key topics

*How important do you think these themes in the story are? Can you order them from least to most important?*

Fairy tales

Loneliness

Bravery

Curiosity

Fathers and sons

Change

Love

Looking after our oceans

## **Discussion**

During a class reading of the story, use the Book Talk Grid to discuss what you like and dislike about it, anything that puzzles you and what the story reminds you of. It might remind you of a song, a film, a painting or even another book!

## **FURTHER QUESTIONS:**

Is it ever right to ignore your parents?

Nen is irresponsible. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?

The author thinks our oceans are unimportant. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?

Use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast this story with a traditional version of 'The Little Mermaid'. How are the stories similar? How are they different?

Can you think of any other fairy tales where love is important?

## **Cross-curricular activities**

### **Creative Writing**

Spend some time exploring some other fairy tales. Can you find any common themes and characters?

What might a modern fairy tale look like now? Perhaps you can write an exciting story about a princess saving a prince, or a kind witch and a dragon, or maybe even a fairy tale where a princess saves herself!

### **Music and Art**

Spend some time listening to Vivaldi's composition called 'Storm'. What instruments can you hear? How would you describe the music? How does it make you feel? Close your eyes and listen! Now, work together in small groups to create a soundscape to accompany the storm in NEN AND THE LONELY

**FISHERMAN.** You could use your voices, body percussion and a range of musical instruments!

Afterwards, explore some stormy artwork, like Claude Monet's 'Storm at Bell-III' (1886). Can you create your own stormy painting using a variety of materials?

### **History**

James Mayhew's illustration of Pelagios looks a lot like a Greek or Roman God. Would you agree? Spend some time researching the Greek and Roman gods of the sea. Who were they? What special powers did they have? Can you find out about any myths or legends featuring them?

### **Science**

How are humans affecting the oceans? How is climate change affecting them? Create a poster or persuasive leaflet encouraging people to look after their local beaches.

Choose a sea creature from the story to carry out some research into. Create a report about your sea creature, including information about their habitat, appearance, diet and adaptations.

### **Useful websites and other books you could read**

**Authors4Oceans**

<https://www.authors4oceans.org/#>

**'Storm' Interlude from 'Peter Grimes' by Benjamin Britten**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/nbGMVskcL8FqFqxcHxgsd5/storm-interlude-from-peter-grimes-by-benjamin-britten>

**The Sound of Fairy Tales by James Mayhew**

<https://www.jamesmayhew.co.uk/2012/06/the-sound-of-fairy-tales-the-magical-world-of-rimsky-korsakov.html>

**Other types of fairy tales you could read...**

Rapunzel by Bethany Woollvin

The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch and Michael Martchenko

The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

Once Upon A Wild Wood by Chris Riddell

The Mermaid And The Shoe by Keith Campbell

The Princess And The Pea by Mini Grey

Prince Cinders by Babette Cole

The Knight Who Took All Day by James Mayhew

We're Off To Meet A Mermaid by Eloise White And Cory Reid

**For older children...**

Koshka's Tales: Stories from Russia by James Mayhew

Into the Forest by Anthony Browne

The Surface Breaks: a reimagining of The Little Mermaid by Louise O'Neill

Blackberry Blue: And Other Fairy Tales by Jamila Gavin and Richard Collingridge

The House With Chicken Legs by Sophie Anderson

The Sleeper And The Spindle by Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell