



# MerTales

The BEST FRIEND PROMISE

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**Recommended for 6 to 9 year olds**

### Summary

Today is Pearl's ninth birthday, and she is planning a sea-sational day with her best friends. But when Pearl takes a shortcut on the way to merschool and sees a shooting star fall into the ocean, things begin to drift off course...

Suddenly, her mermaid tail begins to shimmer and sparkle. What could it mean? Well for a start, Pearl discovers she can now talk to animals, which comes in very handy when one of her friends is cornered by a hungry reef dragon!

### Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

#### Before reading *MerTales*

Ask your class to look at the book's front cover [with you reading aloud the book and series title: *The Best Friend Promise: MerTales*] and encourage them to make some guesses about the coming story. Ask them questions such as:

- Where do you think these characters might live and what were the clues on the cover that helped you guess?
- What name do we give to characters like this? [Hint: the series title is a clue.]
- How can you tell these girls are all friends?
- What sort of things do you think they might do together?

## Comprehension Questions.

### Chapter 1

- What sort of house does Pearl Periwinkle live in? (p 1)
- Why is Pearl very excited about the day ahead? (p 2)
- What sort of school does Pearl attend? (p 3)
- Why aren't mermaids supposed to swim over the reef? (p 6)
- What does Pearl see when she is sitting on the rock in the ocean? (p 6)
- How does Pearl change after seeing it? (p 9)
- How is Coral described in the story? (p 10)

### Chapter 2

- What is the name of the sparkling underwater village? (p 11)
- How is Shell described in the story? (p15)
- Why does Luna call Sandy Starfish a 'know-it-all'? (p 19-20)
- How does Pearl first realise she has a special ability? (pp 25-28)

### Chapter 3

- Which creature talks to Pearl in the merschool playground? (pp 36-37)
- Which creatures don't talk to Pearl and why? (p 38)
- Do the mermaids decide to tell their classmates about Pearl's 'magic'? (p 40)
- Why do Pearl and her friends think they are being watched? (p 41)

### Chapter 4

- Which mermaid was hiding in the seaweed? (p 44)
- What language do Pearl and her friends study at school? (p 44)
- Which seahorse is Pearl's favourite and why? (p 46)
- What sports do Pearl and Silverdust play in the last lesson of the day? (pp 48-49)
- How many goals do they score? (p 50)

### Chapter 5

- Why does Pearl think Sandy is acting 'super fishy'? (p 52-53)
- What did Pearl pull out of her bag? (p 56)
- How do Coral and Shell's reactions to the talking sea-sponge show one is smart and one is a bit of a scaredy fish? (p 60)
- What does Sandy think the shooting star really is? (p 59)
- How does Pearl lose the sparkling green rock? (p 63-64)

## Chapter 6

- Who upsets Sandy and how? (p 66-67)
- What is dangerous about the Weeded Wood? (p 69)
- Who directs Pearl and her friends to find Sandy? (p 74)
- What do Pearl and her friends hear...and see? (page 76-77)

## Chapter 7.

- Why are reef dragons scary? (p 78)
- Why does Pearl feel it is her job to save Sandy? (p 79)
- Sandy knows the reef dragon is scared because... (p 84)
- Why is the reef dragon scared? (pp 86)
- What does the reef dragon do to help Pearl and her friends? (p 90)

## Chapters 8 & 9.

- Why doesn't Sandy like merschool as much as Pearl and her friends? (p 98)
- Why did Sandy really want to examine the meteorite? (p 100)
- What is the perfect present that Sandy gives to Pearl? (pp 107-108)
- Who helped Sandy find the meteorite? (p 109)
- What is 'the best-friend' promise that Pearl and her friends make? (pp 110-111)

## Chapter 10.

- Who do you think the human version of Taylor Swish and Justin Seaber might be?
- What does Pearl see outside her window after the party? (p 117)

## Fantastic language

Pearl and her friends speak Mermish.

- Use the text to find the English word for the following Mermish words:
  - sea-licious
  - fin-tastic
  - mer-mazing
  - sea-tacular
  - horse-some
  - sea-sational
  - un-mer-lievable.
- Come up with some of your own words in Mermish.

## About the author

Rebecca Timmis is an author-illustrator from the sunny Gold Coast.

Before she started writing magical and adventurous stories, Rebecca wrote code for websites (which is not nearly as exciting). She's had lots of real-life adventures like almost falling off the Great Wall of China, hiding from grizzly bears in Canada and being chased by giant pigs in outback Queensland. When Rebecca isn't writing or drawing, she's working hard to turn her rambunctious three boys into polite members of society or watching superhero movies with her husband.

## In the author's own words

'As I grew up, I kept writing stories and drawing pictures to go with them. Sometimes I wrote about exciting adventures, sometimes it was thrilling mysteries, but my stories always had an element of magic to them. Apart from writing and drawing, I also spent a LOT of time in our above-ground pool. No one had air conditioning back then, and summer in Queensland is HOT! From September to May I would dive into our pool and hover below the surface, listening to that special underwater silence. As I watched the sunlight dance on the blue lino, I would dream about mermaids. Once my fingertips looked like sultanas I would climb out of the pool and sit at the kitchen table drawing mermaids for hours.'



'When I was older, I also loved having adventures in real life. I travelled through China, Vietnam, the USA and Canada, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In 2009 I was lucky enough to visit Cambodia and during that trip I had an amazing day snorkelling off the coast of Sihanoukville in the Gulf of Thailand. It was a day of pure magic! I had never been snorkelling before, and on the bus ride back to our hostel, I couldn't stop thinking about the stunning coral reef teeming with fish (we even saw a sea-snake!). I knew I just had to write and illustrate a story set in the ocean. And of course, if I was going to write a story about my special snorkelling adventure, it *had* to include one of my other favourite things – mermaids!

'During the bus ride I worked out all the characters in my head. There would be four of them, and they would be based on my three best friends and me. Pearl was based on my friend Kate, who is kind and popular and loves plants and animals. Coral was based on my friend Shauna, who is smart and head-strong. Shell was based on my friend Rochelle, who is sweet and loyal, and much braver than she realises. And Sandy was based on me – quiet and bookish (and maybe just a teensy bit of a know-it-all).'

**– Rebecca Timmis**