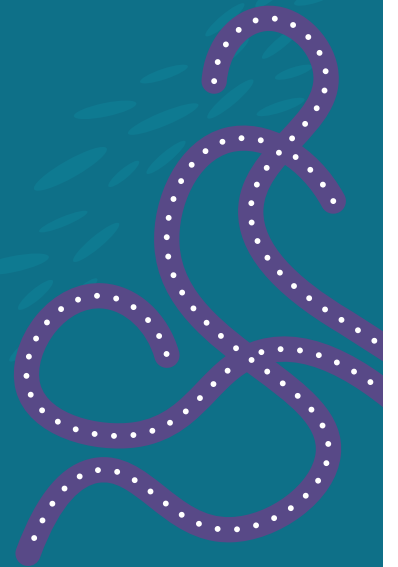
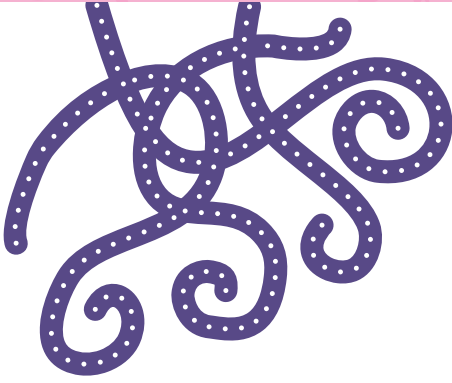


DISNEY'S *The* **LITTLE**  
*Mermaid*

STUDY GUIDE | 5-7TH GRADE



COLORADO SPRINGS  
**Fine Arts Center**  
at COLORADO COLLEGE



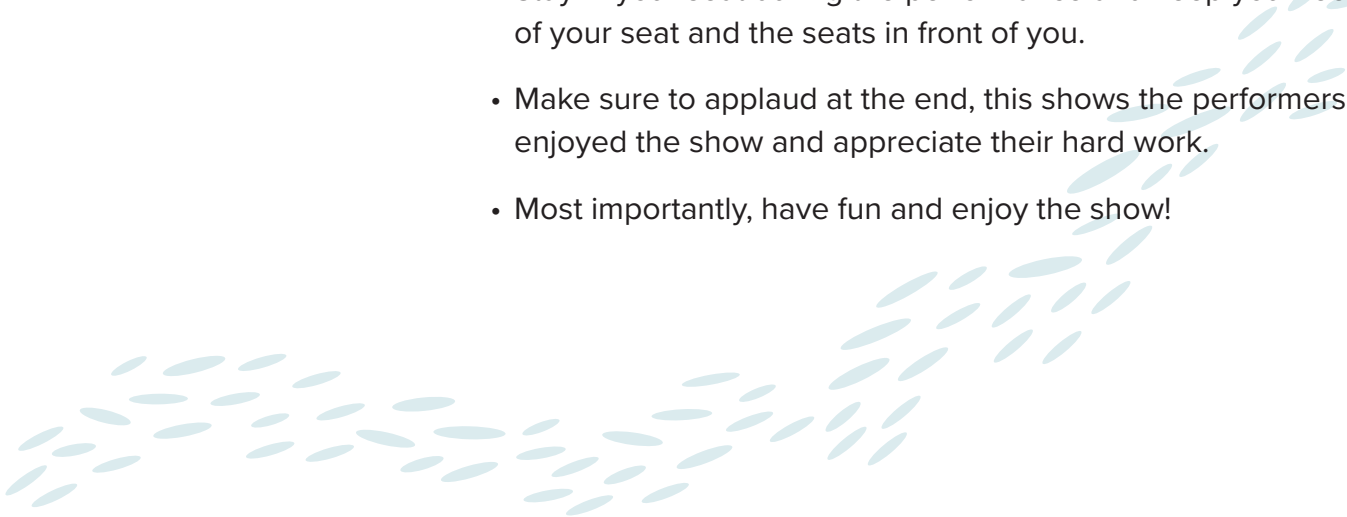
## HELLO!

We are so excited to welcome you to the FAC for our production of “The Little Mermaid”. We can’t wait for you to enjoy every moment of this fantastic show. Please use the following to help prepare for your time with us.

Enjoy the show!

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

- Make sure you go to the bathroom before the show starts.
- Show your respect to the actors by giving them your complete attention and refrain from talking during the performance. Remember that the actors can see and hear you, even if you speak quietly or whisper to your neighbor.
- Make sure that all electronic devices are turned off completely and put away. Recording and photography is not allowed.
- The actors welcome and even crave appropriate responses to their performance. Laugh when it’s funny, cry when it’s sad, and listen to the actors tell their story.
- Pay attention to the lighting, scenery, costumes and music as all of these elements help provide more details to tell the story in an interesting way.
- Stay in your seat during the performance and keep your feet off of your seat and the seats in front of you.
- Make sure to applaud at the end, this shows the performers you enjoyed the show and appreciate their hard work.
- Most importantly, have fun and enjoy the show!



## SYNOPSIS

In a magical kingdom beneath the sea, the beautiful young mermaid, Ariel, longs to leave her ocean home to live in the world above. Ariel, King Triton's seventh and youngest daughter, wishes to pursue the human Prince Eric in the world above, bargaining with the evil sea witch, Ursula, to trade her tail for legs. But the bargain is not what it seems, and Ariel needs the help of her colorful friends, Flounder the fish, Scuttle the seagull and Sebastian the crab to restore order under the sea.

## LEADING CHARACTERS

**Ariel:** a strong willed teenage mermaid who longs to be human. She possesses a keen curiosity for the world both under and above the sea - much to the chagrin of her father, King Triton. Big-hearted, she's more accepting of and delighted by others' differences than most of her fellow merfolk. But she also has a rebellious streak that can get her into trouble.

**Prince Eric:** an adventurous human monarch who captures Ariel's heart. Charming and sensitive in nature, he has a warm voice and demeanor that evokes his flair for romance. There is also a stubborn side to the Prince, who is determined to do whatever it takes to get what he wants - including the girl with the mysterious voice.

**Ursula:** a tentacled and manipulative Sea Witch who is sister to King Triton. Cunning and calculating, she will stop at nothing to get what she wants - and what she wants is Triton's throne. To gain the upper-hand, she utilizes her slick sense of humor, a flash of glamour, and larger-than-life confidence.

**Sebastian:** The choirmaster of King Triton's court who has a flair for the dramatic. A meticulous and uptight crab, Sebastian

is ever-anxious, whether he's conducting a concert premiere or protecting Ariel from Ursula. When he's performing—which is almost always—he's undeniably charismatic.

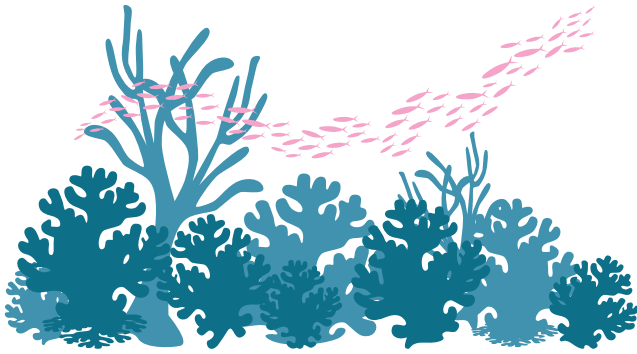
## SUPPORTING CHARACTERS/ENSEMBLE

Supporting Characters are important characters that are not the main character, but still contribute to moving the plot forward in some way. They often have their own character arcs and can help set things into motion inside of the story.

Some of the supporting characters you will see in the production are: Flounder, Scuttle, King Triton, Grimsby, Flotsam and Jetsam, Chef Louis, and Ariel's Mersisters

Ensemble members are the group of actors, dancers and singers who support the main characters and storyline in a production. Often considered triple threats, they may play multiple roles in a show all of which may include singing, dancing and acting.

You will see the ensemble work together in this production in numbers like: Under the Sea, Kiss the Girl, Positootivity and She's in Love



## SETTING

### *Under the Sea*

Ariel and her family and friends live under water. This will be created with lighting effects, movement and imagination.

### *The Water's Surface*

Ariel ventures to the water's surface many times. Scuttle meets Ariel and Flounder here as they talk about the human world and meet Eric for the first time.

### *On Land*

Prince Eric's world, we find ourselves in the palace of his kingdom.

## GENRE: MYTHS

Myths are stories used to explain life's mysteries. Before science, civilizations interpreted the world around them through myths. Each culture has had their own myths to explain natural phenomena, provide inspiration, and teach lessons about ourselves and the world around us.

Characters in myths are often gods, goddesses, warriors and heroes and are often responsible for the creation and maintenance of elements of nature and human life - like King Triton and the oceans in our story.

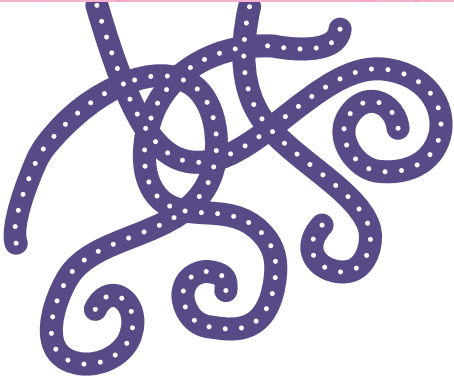
Human beings are always curious; we want to have the answers, even to impossible questions: Why does the sun come up every morning? How were stars created? What lies beneath the waves? Myths can be used to answer timeless questions and provide explanations for what is.

## THEMES: MERMAIDS, MAGIC AND POSEIDON... OH, MY!

Having much of this story take place under the sea, there are references to characters from Greek Mythology and European Folklore. Characters like King Triton, Mermaids, the Sea Witch and Poseidon are all rooted in these tales.

Humans have always been in awe of the sea—but we have always feared it.. We have always needed the sea—for navigation, trade and food. Traveling on the ocean is quite safe today, but in ancient times, a sudden storm or lack of wind could mean a death sentence. Because the sea was so vast yet so necessary, many myths and legends sprung up around its watery mysteries. Here are a few that are talked about in our story:

**Triton:** Triton was a Greek god of the sea. The son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, god and goddess of the ocean. Triton was usually shown with a powerful upper body of a human and the tail of a fish. Triton's weapon of choice was his trident, a three-pronged spear. The sound of his twisted conch shell could calm the waves or raise mighty storms.



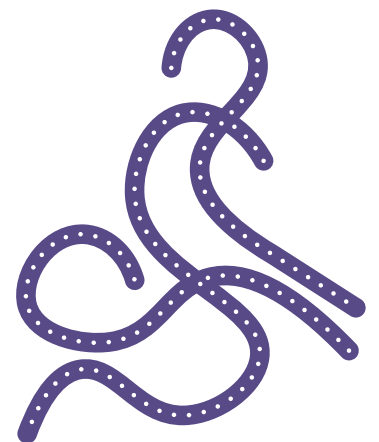
**Mermaids:** Throughout history, sailors have spoken of mysterious creatures—with the head and torso of a human and the tail of a fish—who live in beautiful cities beneath the waves. Mermaids were known for their great beauty and their love of song. Sailors told of mermaids sunning themselves on rocks, while ships passing by would hear their sweet-sounding melodies. Their songs could make men fall in love, or drive them mad. Over the centuries, many countries and cultures have created their own mermaid myths.

**Poseidon:** While not a character in our play, he is mentioned many times in the dialogue. King Triton's (and in our story Ursula's) father, one of the twelve Olympians in Greek mythology. He was god of the sea, earthquakes, storms and horses. Poseidon's trident (like Zeus's thunderbolt and Hades' helmet) was fashioned by the three Cyclopes and was passed down to Triton.

**Sea Monsters:** In the story, Ursula is a monster octopus that manipulates the merpeople for her own gain. For ancient sailors, the sea could be a deadly place. Myths of horrific sea monsters were formed to explain shipwrecks and disappearances. If you want to learn more about some of these myths, look up Scylla and Charybdis, The Kraken and Sirens.

## TYPES OF THEATRE— WHAT IS A MUSICAL?

There are many different types of live shows you may see on stage: Opera (the story is told through singing only), Dance (the story is told through movement only), and Plays (the story is told through talking only). A musical is where the performers use singing, dancing and acting to tell the story (sometimes all at the same time). You will see scenes where they talk to each other, singing in solos and groups and dance numbers with dancing and singing. Each of these help to move the plot and story along. To be a musical theatre performer, you have to be skilled in all of these areas, it's certainly fun, but also a lot of hard work.



## PRODUCTION TEAM

Shows like this don't come together overnight. The company has been in rehearsal for over a month before opening. There is a huge team in the background and backstage to make everything come together. Here's a few of the jobs that help to bring everything to the stage:

It starts with the Playwright/Composer/Lyricist, they dream up and write the script and songs for us to perform.

### *Then our creative team starts to dream:*

- **Director, Choreographer, Music Director** – help create and teach the blocking (movement in a scene), dance steps and music during the rehearsal process.
- **Designers for Costumes/Set/Lights/Sound/Wigs and Props**

### *Once they dream up their amazing ideas we get to work creating what is needed for the show:*

- **Carpenters and Scenic Painters** – create and build the set and set pieces
- **Wardrobe/Wigs** – make our costumes and wigs and keep us looking great

### *Then the Actors and Crew come in to bring it all to life:*

- **Performers**, perform the songs and scenes for the show
- **Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager and Deck Crew** – all of these people ensure our safety, keep everything organized, and get us from scene to scene moving sets, props and even walls.
- **Sound and Light board operators** – make sure lights and sounds happen when they should during the show
- **Orchestra** – the musicians that bring the music to life during each show; for this show we have about 10 musicians in the pit.
- **Front of House Staff** – sell tickets and make sure everyone finds their seats
- **YOU** – the audience—we wouldn't have a show if you were not here!

All of these people come together to create a show, and if one piece is missing, it won't work as it should. Every single person is integral to the show whether you see them on stage or not.





## PLAYWRIGHT/COMPOSER/LYRICISTS



**Playwright** (*The person that writes the text and script for the musical*)

**Doug Wright (Book)** Is an American Playwright, librettist and screenwriter. Known for his extensive work in the American theatre in both plays and musicals, he has received numerous accolades including the Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award

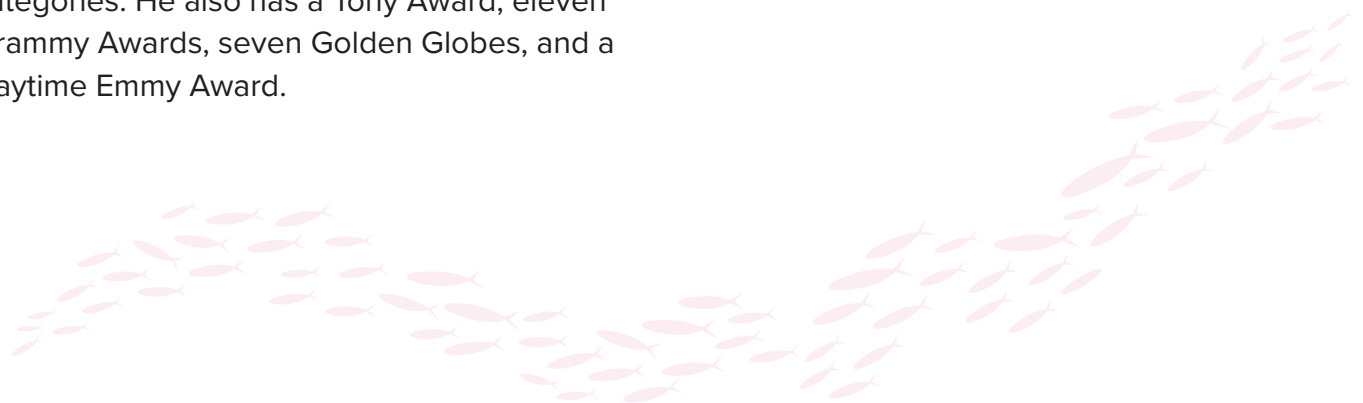
**Composer** (*The person that writes the music and melodies heard throughout the show*)

**Alan Menken (Music)** is an American composer and conductor, best known for his scores and songs for films produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and Skydance Animation. Menken's contributions to *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *Pocahontas* won him two Academy Awards for each film. He also composed numerous scores and songs for musicals like *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Newsies*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules* and *Tangled*. His accolades include winning eight Academy Awards—becoming the second most prolific Oscar winner in the music categories. He also has a Tony Award, eleven Grammy Awards, seven Golden Globes, and a Daytime Emmy Award.

**Lyricists** (*The people that writes the words for the songs*)

**Howard Ashman (Lyrics)** was an American playwright, lyricist and stage director. He is most widely known for his work on feature films for Walt Disney Animation Studios, for which Ashman wrote the lyrics and Alan Menken composed the music. Ashman has been credited as being a main driving force behind the Disney Renaissance. His work included songs for *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*.

**Glenn Slater (Lyrics)** is an American lyricist for musical theatre. He was nominated for three Tony Awards for Best Original Score for the Broadway version of *The Little Mermaid*, *Sister Act* and *School of Rock*. He has also worked on film shows like *Tangled* for which he won a Grammy award and ABC's *Galavant*. He has also won a Daytime Emmy Award for Original song in *Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure*.





## ADAPTATIONS

### *Original Story | 1836*

You may have seen the original Disney animated feature of the Little Mermaid, but did you know the story goes back much farther than that? Hans Christian Andersen (a Danish writer best remembered for his 156 literary fairy tales) wrote the original story in 1836. His story was much darker than the versions we know and love, and it was one of his most popular stories. It has been published in almost 150 languages and has inspired many books and films since its first publication.

### *Disney Animated Film | 1989*

In 1989, Disney released their uplifting adaptation of Andersen's famed tale in animated form. This was Disney's 28th animated feature and helped to pave the way for future films like Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin and The Lion King. The success of the film created two sequel movies, a TV show, video games and even this musical.

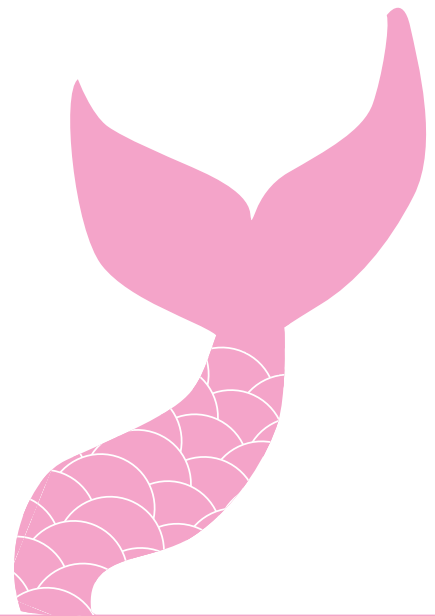
### *Disney's Stage Musical | 2008*

Since the animated version was initially structured like a Broadway show, it was a perfect candidate for the next big Disney Stage Musical. Disney Theatrical group came together to create an undersea world onstage, adding new songs to augment the film's score. The Broadway production opened on January 10, 2008, running for 685 performances before closing on August 30, 2009. The Little Mermaid continues to charm audiences around the globe in performances just like this one.

### *Disney's Live Action Film | 2023*

A live-action reimagining of the beloved 1989 animated film. Updates to the original lyrics and three new songs were written for the show. Alan Menken returned for the score and music alongside Lin-Manuel Miranda.

***\*There are countless stories, books, plays and films that are based on the original story by Hans Christian Andersen. These are just a few of the most well known adaptations.***





## PUPPETS

Our production of the Little Mermaid will be using over 50 puppets to tell the story. Keep your eyes peeled to see if you can catch them all. We use puppets in this show to allow us to show the different sizes and varieties of under sea creatures that we can't show with just a person in a costume. They also help to show a better representation of how that animal might actually move inside of their world.

WYNOT Productions fabricated all of the puppets you will see. Each character is individually designed and created by hand. The puppets feature 3D printing, fabric work and foam work, and materials of all kinds. Each puppet is unique just like each actor in our production.

The enclosed pages are direct renderings from the WYNOT team of the actual puppets you will see on the stage. Please print them off and color or create with them to your heart's content.

## SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

As part of our show takes place in a kingdom underwater, this practice will be used throughout the show. So what is it, and why is it useful in this situation?

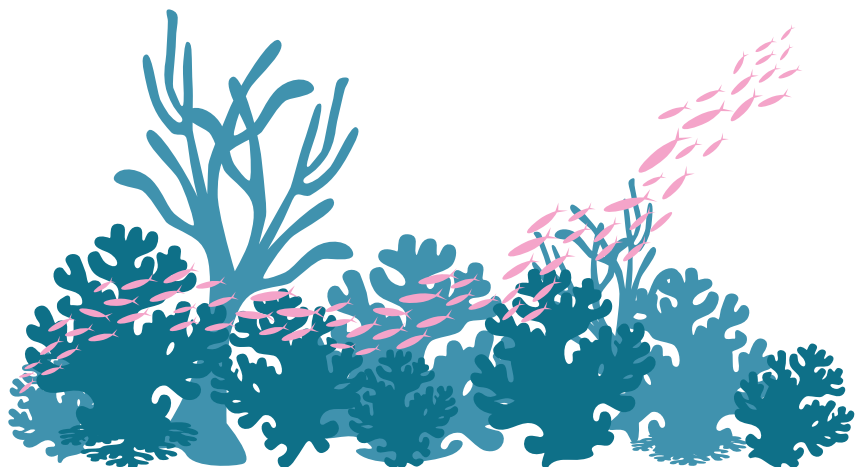
### *Suspension of disbelief:*

Suspension of disbelief is the process by which an audience temporarily accepts the fantastical elements of a story in order to engage with it emotionally and intellectually. The concept allows viewers to overlook the implausibilities of a story, immersing themselves in the experience rather than critically analyzing its realism. By doing so, we can fully appreciate the emotional depth and artistic expression from the story. Suspension of disbelief allows audiences to enjoy genres like myths where extraordinary events occur (like merpeople living underwater).

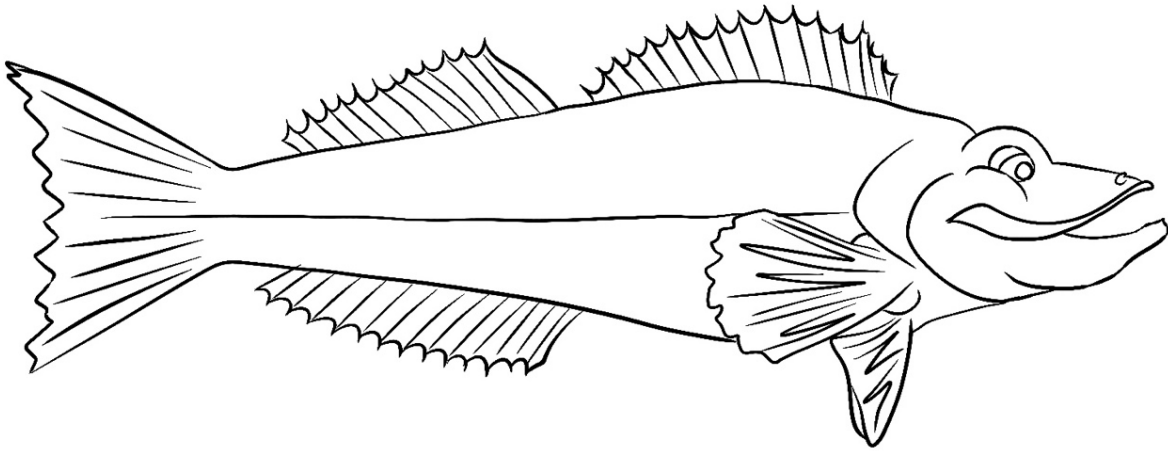
Strong performances by actors combined with the elements of design can help an audience to suspend their disbelief, making the story feel more real.

### *How is it used in our show:*

There are many scenes that take place underwater, obviously we cannot actually fill the stage with water nor breath or sing underwater, so the actors and creative team must show this through their movements, the lighting, sets and costumes. In our case, the use of puppets can also help to immerse the actors and audience in this underwater world. As you watch the show, notice moments where this happens and what elements were used to make it effective.

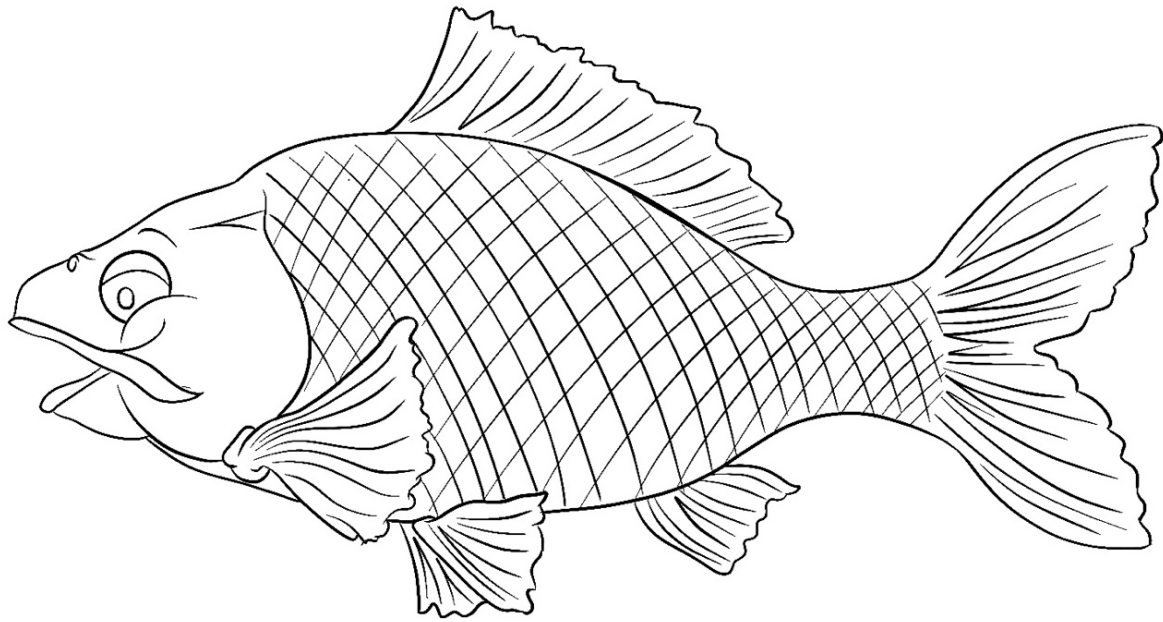


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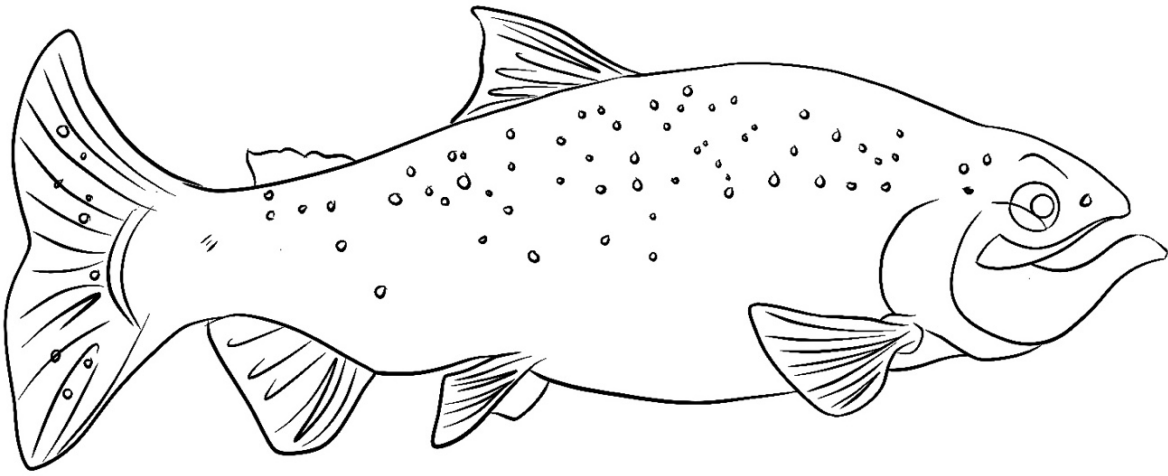
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**CARP**



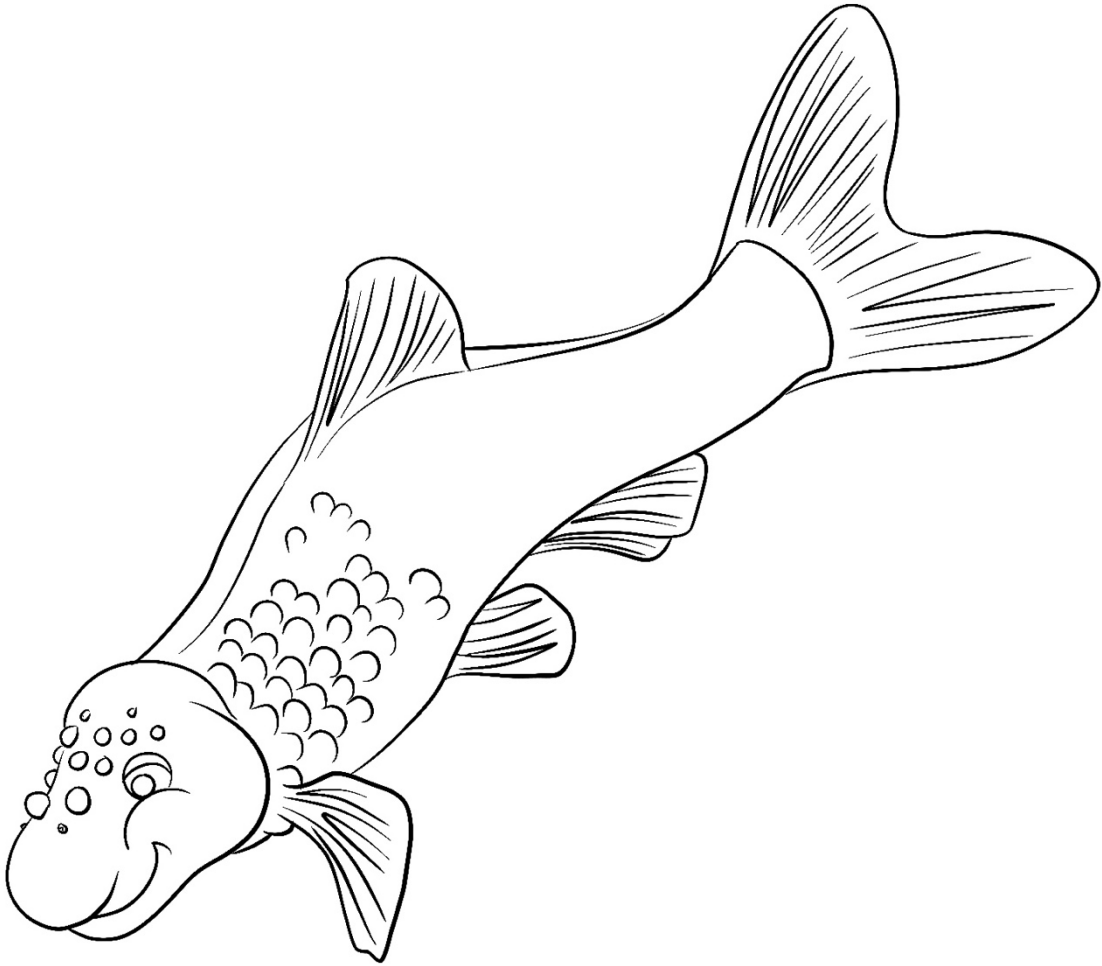
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# TROUT



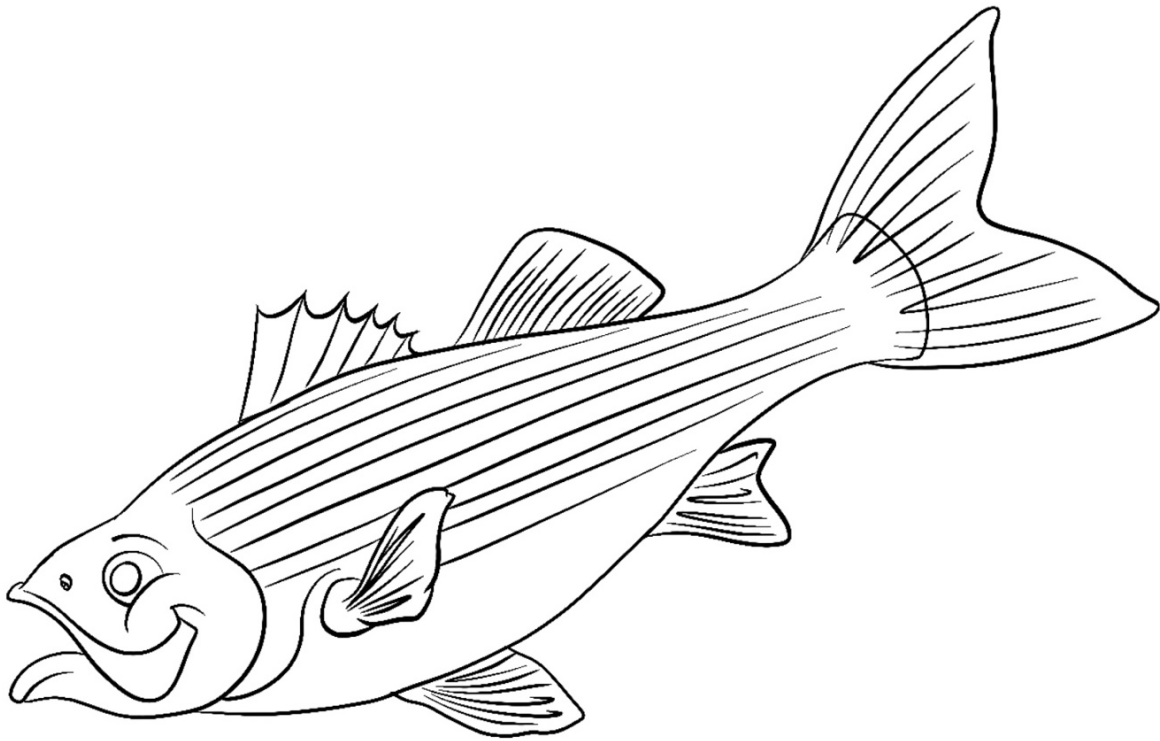
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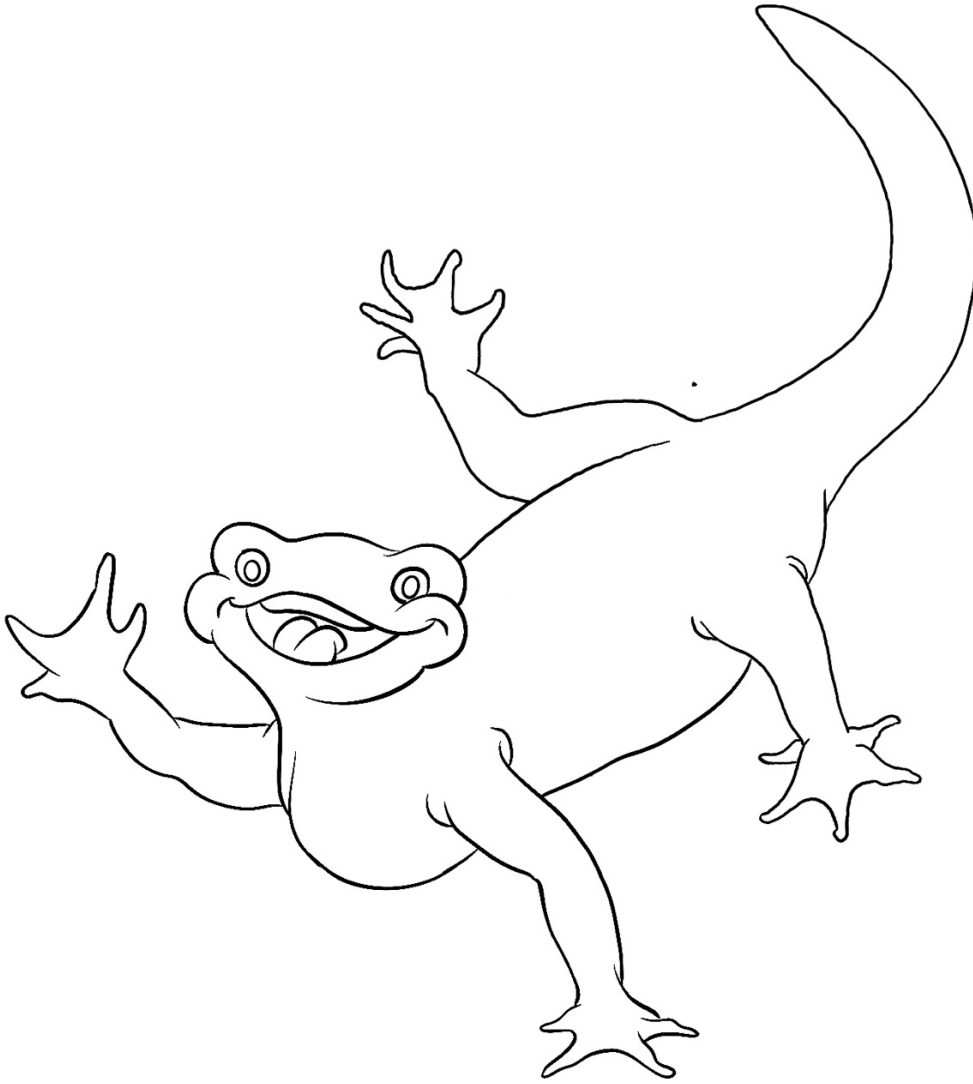
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**BASS**



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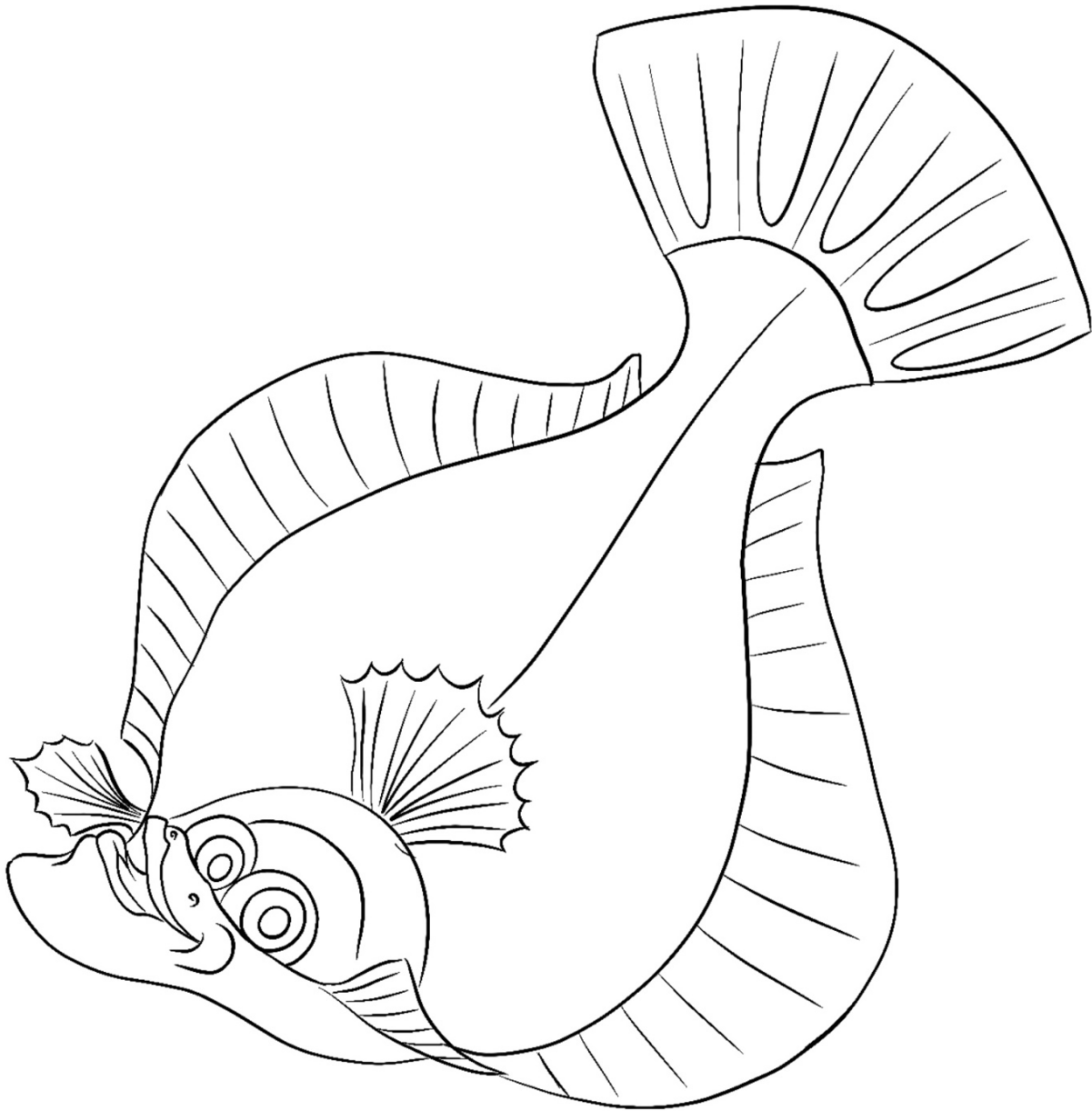
**NEWT**



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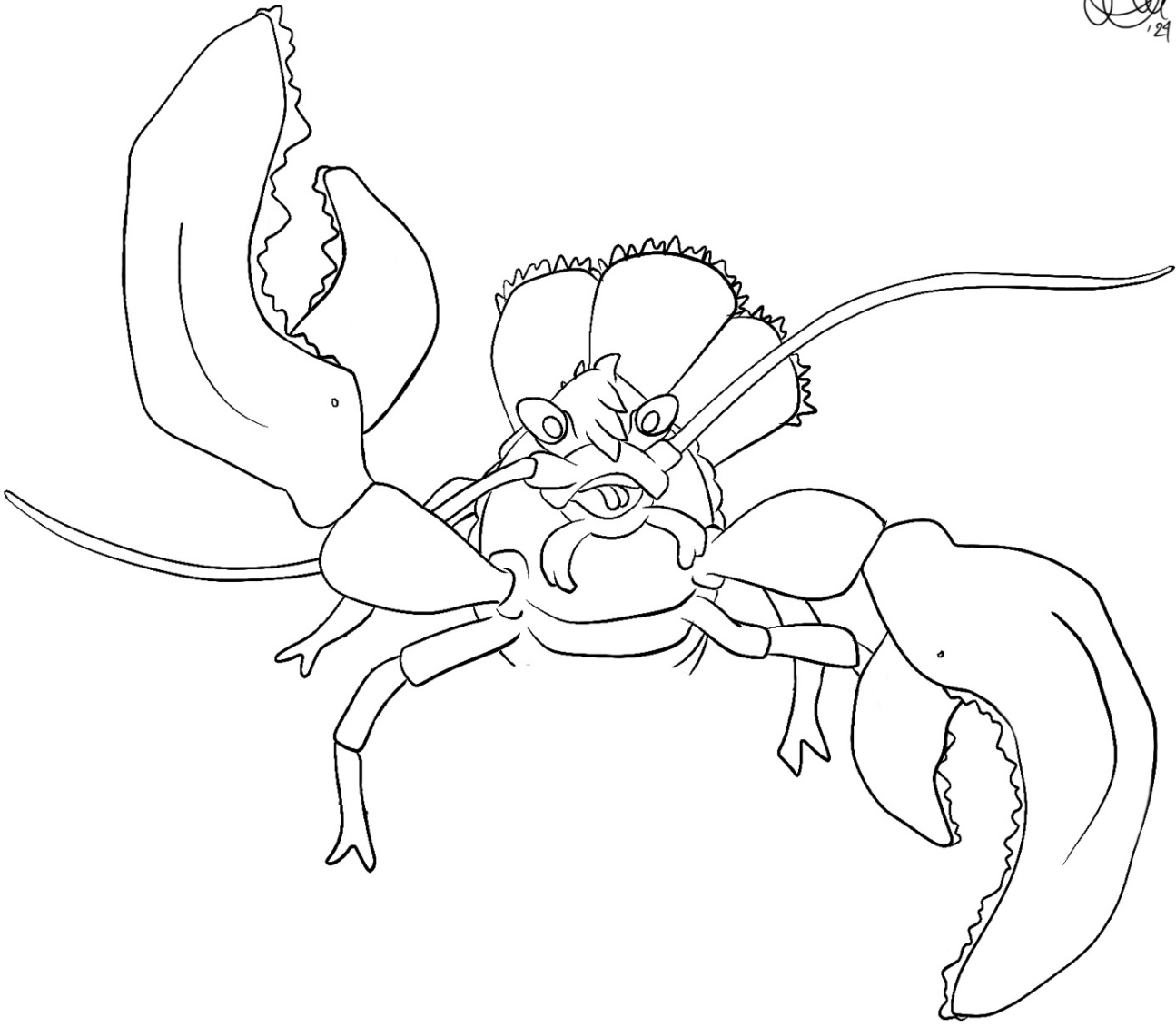


**FLUKE**



Sammy  
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Sammy  
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**CRUSTACEAN BAND LOBSTER**

## PRE/POST QUESTIONS

### Pre:

- What is something you are looking forward to at the show?
- How do you think the actors/design team will portray being under water?
- What are things that movies can do that live stage shows can not? What about the other way around?
- What do you think will be the same/different than other versions you have seen?
- Are you excited about the use of puppets or skeptical?
- What types of dancing and styles of songs do you think you will see in the production?

### Post:

- What did you like about the show? What didn't you like about the show? Did anything surprise you?
- What do you think the moral(s) of the story is?
- What character did you relate to the most and why?
- What was your favorite moment in the show?
- When did you see suspension of disbelief and how did the actors facilitate that during the performance?
- What do you think Ursula's villain origin story is? Was she born evil, or did it come about through circumstance?
- Ariel and Prince Eric fall in love very quickly—almost at first sight. What do they have in

common that might have helped bring them together so quickly?

- How would you describe Ariel's relationship with King Triton at the beginning of the show? What has changed by the end? How might this mirror some of your own relationships?
- What do you think might happen next for each of the characters? What lessons did they learn (or not)?
- Ariel trades her beautiful voice for legs. Is there anything you can imagine trading your most precious asset for? What circumstances would convince you the trade would be worth it?
- After seeing the show and studying the different jobs in theatre, if you could do one of the jobs that was mentioned, what would it be?

## UPCOMING FAC THEATRE

- **City Dog, Prairie Dog:** Now through November 24th
- **In Her Bones:** February 13th–March 2nd
- **Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience** February 28th–March 30th
- **Sister Act:** May 1st–May 25th

If you enjoy the show and your time at the FAC, please let us know, send letters and communication to the FAC at:

30 West Dale St.  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

***Don't forget to look at our Summer Theatre Camps—Registration Open NOW!***

## RESOURCES:

### **MTI Production Handbook**

[https://www.mtishows.com/sites/default/files/littlemermaid\\_production\\_handbook\\_0.pdf](https://www.mtishows.com/sites/default/files/littlemermaid_production_handbook_0.pdf)

### **Disney Theatricals Study Guide**

<https://www.browardcenter.org/assets/doc/CC-Disneys-The-Little-Mermaid-028d7feb63.pdf>

### **5th Avenue Study Guide**

[https://www.5thavenue.org/media/f33hi2tn/lm\\_itm\\_guide.pdf](https://www.5thavenue.org/media/f33hi2tn/lm_itm_guide.pdf)

### **Alan Menken**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan\\_Menken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Menken)

### **Doug Wright**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug\\_Wright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Wright)

### **Howard Ashman**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard\\_Ashman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Ashman)

### **Glenn Slater**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn\\_Slater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn_Slater)

### **Live Action Adaptation**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Little\\_Mermaid\\_\(2023\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Little_Mermaid_(2023_film))

<https://movies.disney.com/the-little-mermaid-2023>

### **Myths/Folktales**

<https://literaryterms.net/myth/>

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/folktale/399460>

### **Suspension of Disbelief**

<https://fiveable.me/key-terms/introduction-acting/suspension-of-disbelief>

