



GIRL FROM THE SEA

WRITTEN BY MARGARET WILD ILLUSTRATED BY JANE TANNER

The Girl from the Sea's soft and largely monochromatic charcoal images create a sense of intrigue that captures the reader's interest from the very first illustration. There is a riddle here to be solved about the girl and the family to whom she is drawn but the book's creators never provide an easy solution: rather they ask the reader to look for clues that will help them come up with their own interpretation.

Margaret Wild's text, beautiful in its sparseness and subtlety, is matched by Jane Tanner's illustrations which blend the earthly and the aquatic, presenting a mysterious girl communing with the animals of the land and sea, distant from the humans she quietly observes and wishing to be part of their world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION:

Cover

Jane Tanner notes on the book's imprint page that her cover illustration was inspired by Caspar David Friedrich's *The Monk by the Sea* (1808-10). Search Google Images to find the Friedrich painting and discuss the similarities and differences between both images. After reading *Girl from the Sea*, discuss why you think Jane Tanner chose this particular painting as her inspiration for this story. Think about the themes that might be shared between both works of art and the visual techniques used to express these themes.

Comprehension

Read the story through once, lingering on every illustration to take in as many details as possible. Now answer the following questions:

- Who do you think the girl from the sea might be?
- When might she have lived and how do you think she may have died?
- Why do you think she is drawn to the family living in the cottage by the sea?
- Do you think the mother in this family is happy? Nothing in the text tells us how she is feeling so what did you see in the illustrations that made you think that? Can you think of what might have happened to make her feel this way? What visual clues has the illustrator included to give you a hint?
- Do you think the mother opened the door and asked the girl from the sea into her home? Why do you think this?
- Did this act make them both happy again? What in the final illustrations made you think this?

Literary Techniques

- The girl from the sea repeats several key lines throughout the story. Why might the book's author, Margaret Wild, have chosen to use repetition?
- Margaret Wild frames much of the story as questions asked by the girl from the sea. What effect did this device have on how you read the book?

- The girl from the sea wonders whether the mother can see her running, hear her singing and feel her curling around her waist. What do see, hear and feel have in common and why do you think Margaret Wild chose to use them here?

Visual Techniques

- Why do you think the illustrator chose to use charcoal as her main medium for this particular story?
- How and to what effect has she used colour in a story that is mainly shown in muted shades of black, white and brown?
- Why is the girl surrounded by sea creatures (dolphins, fish, shells, sea foam) as she approaches the cottage?
- How and to what effect are symbols of the sea presented later in the story?
- Look closely at the last double-page spread and explain how reflections in the wet sand tell us that the mother has accepted and found comfort in the girl from the sea?
- How does the final image make you feel about the story?

Themes

- Do you agree with the author that the story is 'full of yearning and longing'? Do you also think it might be one of acceptance, too? Discuss.