

Mermaid or Pirate Bookmark Making Activity

Program: Legends of the Sea

Participants can make a bookmark using pre-cut pieces. A few example bookmarks will be available, as well as showing how the pieces should be glue together in order to create bookmark that will sit on the book page in a dynamic way.

Objectives:

- Fine motor skills are engaged for younger participants when piecing together the bookmarks.
- The bookmarks will encourage more reading throughout the summer.

Materials needed:

- Pre-cut bodies, hair, tails, hook hands, tails, peg legs
- Glue
- Scissors
- Coloring pencils or crayons
- Any other materials to glue to the bookmarks

Allow participants to choose their tails or legs, bodies, hair, etc.. Show the best method of attaching the hair over the heads and layering the body onto the tail to create a bookmark that sits on top of the book page. The arms should not be glued down; these will sit on the edge of the page.

Pirates and Mermaids in Florida

- St. Augustine was attacked on May 28, 1586, by English privateer Sir Francis Drake.¹ A *privateer* is an armed ship commissioned by a government to be used in wartime, often attacking enemy merchant ships. Spain had settled Florida at this time, so the English and other Europeans would be stealing from the Spanish.
- Robert Searle along with other English buccaneers raided St. Augustine in 1668. He was a pirate from Jamaica of British descent.
- Jose Gaspar, known as Gasparilla, is a famous pirate in the Gulf of Mexico but was probably not a real historical figure, as no archival records mention him. He was first mentioned in a promotional brochure for the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway in 1900 as the brother-in-law of Juan Gomez.²
- The Work Projects Administration also took down an extensive oral history featuring Jose Gaspar in 1940.³
- Mythological mermaids have been in literature and the arts for thousands of years, usually described as having a fish's tail and the upper body of a woman.
- Christopher Columbus reported seeing mermaids while his expedition took him through the Caribbean.⁴ He most likely was seeing manatees, which are native to the West Indies and can live in both salt and fresh water.
- Florida's manatees gather around power plants in winter for the warm water. Although they rarely go more northward than Georgia's coasts, they have been found as north as New York and Rhode Island.⁵
- Weeki Wachi Springs features actresses and actors wearing tails that perform underwater for visitors to the park. The park has had mermaids in residence since their debut in 1947.⁶

¹ The Florida Memory Blog, "Francis Drake Attacks St. Augustine," <<https://www.floridamemory.com/blog/2012/05/29/francis-drake-attacks-st-augustine/>>

² "The Story of Gasparilla, booklet, 1946," <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/324361?id=1>>; Corinne White Lamme, "The Story of Juan Gomez," <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.12040514/?sp=1&st=text>>

³ Federal Works Agency, "Stories of Florida: Gasparilla," <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/181522?id=1>>

⁴ History.com Editors, "This Day In History: 01/09/1493 - Columbus Sees Mermaids," <<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/9-831-video>>

⁵ Jennifer Lee, "Massive Manatee Is Spotted in Hudson River," <<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/nyregion/07manatee.html>>

⁶ "The Magnificent History of Weeki Wachee Springs State Park," <<https://weekiwachee.com/about-us/history/>>