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origin for many their first introduction to mermaids comes from the famous disney film the little mermaid based on a myth or fairy tale by hans christian andersen featuring a half woman half fish but mermaids appear in the folklore of many countries most prominent in asia africa and europe 1 japan ningyo vastly different than the western version of a beautiful mermaid this monster found in japanese folklore is described as a giant fish with a human face and a monkey s mouth in european folklore mermaids sometimes called sirens and mermen were natural beings who like fairies had magical and prophetic powers they loved music and often sang though very long lived they were mortal and had no souls many folktales record marriages between mermaids who might assume human form and men her name was atargatis and she was known to be the fertility goddess and the chief goddess of northern assyria atargatis the first mermaid atargatis was known to be closely connected to the sky and the sea her sacred animals were doves and fish melusine is a mermaid like character from european folklore cursed to take the form of a serpent from the waist down later depictions sometimes changed this to a fish tail 181 at some point possibly in the late nineteenth century her name became attached to the two tailed mermaid of heraldry kristen m stanton july 22 2023 mermaids and mermaid like water spirits appear in the myths and stories of cultures around the world in fact they are so ubiquitous that it begs the question are mermaids real in this guide you ll learn all about mermaids mermen and water spirits in 1493 near the rio del oro on what is present day haiti christopher columbus recorded a disappointing encounter with three sirens describing them as not so beautiful as they are painted though to some extent they have the form of a human face according to legend sirens haunt haitian waters to this very day many ancient greek myths equate sirens with mermaids however while they share many characteristics they are now seen as two different entities a famous greek folktale claimed that alexander the great s sister thessalonike was transformed into a mermaid upon her death in 295 bc and lived in the aegean sea published may 28 2023 4 04pm edt mermaids are multicultural mythical figures reflecting the continuing human fascination with the sea in stories echoing thousands of years into the past the origin of the mermaid legend is often traced to the manatee or dugong large aquatic mammals that can sometimes have human like characteristics contents 1 mermaids and mermen in myth and legend 2 manatees as mermaids 3 mermaid hoaxes 4 the little mermaid 5 merfolk music 6 mermaids in the arts and heraldry 7 notes 8 references in the voyage of the argo written by apollonius of rhodes in the third century b c e we get our first glimpse of mermaids as we know them today as naiads or water spirits when the argo s crew temporarily disembarks hylas a young boy adopted by hercules sets off in search for water as wired explains the earliest known mermaid like figure from mythology is the syrian goddess atargatis who was a goddess of fertility but also more generally a protector responsible for the well being of her people thessaloniki sister of alexander the great in ottoman greece a legend about thessaloniki alexander the great s sister began to emerge according to the story thessaloniki did not die but rather transformed into a mermaid at the moment of her death and lived in the aegean sea the bayblonians had their fish god oannes dating back to 5000 b c e while the philistines assyrians and israelites created the female prototype for the mermaid with atargatis a fertility goddess who was the male counterpart to oannes this inspired more mermaid like figures in greek and roman cultures image via shutterstock tales from antiquity assyria the first known mermaid folklore came from assyria an ancient civilization that existed in what is now northern iraq the story which dates from around 1 000 bc states that the first mermaid was the goddess atargatis mami water refers to many water creatures from african mythology and legend usually portrayed as a woman but sometimes a man some tales show her bringing people to her underwater home and granting them spiritual enlightenment they appear in greek and latin myths there are many types of nymphs water nymphs are sometimes considered as mermaids oshun is one of the many mythical creatures from african stories and

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