



## Ringlet and the day the oceans stopped

An eleven-year-old mergirl has better things to do than save the oceans from deadly stagnation. Except there's no one else.

And worse still, something monstrous is hellbent on stopping her.

It's Ringlet against time and tides ... and there's not much left of either.

### About the author

Felicity Williams was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, where she still lives today. She grew up in a house full of music and books – her mother was a classical singer and her father was a scientist – and she has written hundreds of plays and operettas for children. She owns Canvas Bag Drama School and when she's not working there, she writes.

Felicity has spent considerable time researching the habitats and species of merfolk. She discovered that merfolk live anywhere that there is water – in lakes and lochs, wells and waterfalls, ponds and rivers, inside clouds and at the polar ice caps. There are also some who live in muddy puddles, although if you ever meet one, Felicity's advice is to walk quickly past the puddle and pretend you haven't noticed a thing.

## Catch the current and see where it takes you ...

Felicity Williams presents 'The ten-sentence story' – a multi-level teaching resource where children can enjoy learning the bare bones of mythic story structure, and use improvisation, props, costumes, literacy and art to craft a unique story.

- *Construct a hero or heroine*
- *Create supporting characters; the wise-woman, the comic sidekick, the helper*
- *Conjure up a fantasy landscape to put them in*
- *Brainstorm a villain.*

There you are. You're practically, nearly, just about, a novelist!

I'd love to see what you create from this resource, so do email me at [felicity@constanze.nz](mailto:felicity@constanze.nz) ! I might even post some of the characters, villains, pictures and stories on my writer's web page. (This is called publishing. It's every writer's dream to be published!)

## The Catastrophe

*You'd have had to have done something pretty naughty to be expelled from the school choir, right? In chapter one, Ringlet has just been expelled from the Great Choir of Mermelodia. You can read the chapter in the book and then –*

### HAVE SOME FUN!

Divide yourselves into groups of four. Take five minutes to read through and practice the drama segment. For 'The Catastrophe' you'll need:

- Mer Spirulina
- Ringlet
- Voices One and Two
- Assorted merkids

### SHOW OFF – COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

Choose two or three groups. After a group has performed, ask the following questions to the audience.

Firstly, the appreciation – because it does take courage to stand up and 'perform'. What was one thing that you liked about this group's performance?

Secondly, the suggestion – because there's always room to be better. What would be a single thing that this group could do to improve the performance?

**Hint:** With both questions you could talk about clear diction, good facial expression, use of body movement, being audience-aware and anything else that contributed to your enjoyment.

## REPLAY!

Try doing it again. It's always fun to add some props. What props could you add? *Hint: a twig, a handful of green slime ...*

You could add elements of dress-up as well. A floaty scarf might be a tail, or you could wear some fish fin gloves. Mer Spirulina is bald, and Ringlet has green hair, so how might you show that? Try videoing one or two of the performances and watch it. What does it take to be believable?

## CLEVER CLOGS! YOU BE THE WRITER!

In the drama extract we met the main character for the first time. List three things that you know about her already, from just the first few pages. Compile a list on the whiteboard from the whole class. We also met a minor character, Mer Spirulina. Can you draw a picture of her? Your picture should show emotions as well as physical appearance.

The first thing a writer needs to do is to create believable characters. We're going to create a character using descriptive words. Start by writing down three words that tell about your character. Okay, you can cheat and use four. No more than five!

The first word should be related to appearance, the second word relates to background, the third is something they do, and the fourth is something they want. There's some gaps below. Have fun filling them in and be as inventive as you like! The fifth row is for YOU!

Looks like	Comes from	Does this	Wants
black frizzy hair	The Planet Vorg	chews gum all the time	more gum
very old		travelling	to find the amethyst
robot	escaped from the laboratory		
burglar		hiccoughs all the time	a cure for the hiccoughs

Try writing a ten sentence story using your character. Okay, you can do eleven. But no more than twelve! Your stories should be little crazy. Change things, and replace words and sentences as you go. This is called editing. Share and enjoy them.

# The Catastrophe

**Mer Spirulina:** (*waving around bits of broken baton*) I blame you for this! Never in my twenty years of conducting the Great Choir of Mermelodia has anyone ever managed to break all of the rules, all at once. You must leave, and leave immediately! And take that wretched creature with you – what’s he doing here anyway? Look what you’ve done to my choir! Euphonious to cacophonous in one fell swoop!

**Ringlet:** (*argumentative*) No, no! It wasn’t my fault, not really. I was just being friendly, at least, trying to. The squid ...

**Voice One:** Who did this?

**Voice Two:** It’s a catastrophe!

**Voice One:** What a mean trick.

**Voice Two:** Wait till I find out ...

**Voice One:** You’ll be sorry ...

**Voice Two:** You up the front, it’s your fault.

**All Voices:** Your fault your fault your fault!

**Mer Spirulina:** And by *Stella*, do not return until you’ve found another baton. To replace this ... irreplaceable ...

**Ringlet:** Twig. It’s just a twig, isn’t it? It can’t be that hard to replace.

**Mer Spirulina:** Priceless antique! Passed down through generations of grandmothers!

**Ringlet:** I was trying to help ... and anyway, whoever made the rule that says squids can’t be in the choir?

**Mer Spirulina:** (*sobs and collapses*)

# Ninky's Boutique

*So Ringleet leaves her home and at first it's all fine, but then it gets dark ... and she's relieved when she sees a little pink boutique in the distance.*

*Here she meets Ninky, an old merwoman, who tells her that the oceans are lapsing into a deadly stagnation and that this can only be averted if someone – she stares hard at Ringleet – finds a fiercely guarded scrap of flame in the Upworlds and delivers it to the rightful owner, thus fulfilling the prophecy 'She who sleeps must wake.'*

## HAVE SOME FUN!

Divide yourselves into groups of three or four. Take five minutes to read through and practice the drama segment below. For 'Ninky's Boutique' you'll need:

- Ninky
- Ringleet
- A chest of drawers – *Yes, that's right, drawers. Two actors have to freeze frame as a set of drawers that open and shut. See if you can figure out a way to do this. Acting isn't just about saying lines!*

## SHOW OFF – COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

Choose two or three groups. After a group has performed return to the 'appreciation' and 'suggestion' questions we used in the first role-play.

Firstly, the appreciation – What was one thing that you liked about this group's performance?

Secondly, the suggestion – What would be a single thing that this group could do to improve the performance?

**Something more to think about:** Ninky's an old woman. Ringleet thinks she might be magical. How does an actor show old? How does an actor show magical? Who did it well? Figure out why and copy the technique.

## REPLAY!

Try doing it again. What props could you add? *Hint: a tiny glass bottle with a dropper, a soft toy dog ...*

You could add elements of dress-up as well. Mer Spirulina is bald, and Ringleet has green hair, so how might you show either of those?

## YOU CLEVER CLOGS! BE THE WRITER!

In this drama extract we met another minor character. Minor does not mean unimportant, since every character must serve a purpose. Ninky is what is known as the 'wise-woman' in the craft of storytelling. Many stories have a 'wise-woman' character that helps the main character achieve what they have to do. What are some of the qualities that a wise-woman like Ninky might have?

Let's create our own 'wise-person' character. Last time we used descriptive words to create a character. This time we're going to create the 'wise-person' character using images. Start by sketching three pictures or symbols that tell about your character. Okay, you can cheat and use four. *No more than five!*

The first image should be related to appearance, the second picture could relate to species, and the third is their magical power. The fourth column can be anything you fancy. Here are some suggestions. Fill in the gaps, then do your own from scratch. The fifth row is for YOU! If you get stuck, use some of the ideas below. That's what they're there for. Soon you won't need to do that because the more you work your imagination, the quicker and better it gets.

Looks like	Species	Magical power	Something else
wears a long flowing cloak		can sing spells	forgetful
	beetle	enchantment of stones	
transparent	moonlight queen		talons for hands
magician		can shape the clouds into anything	but the cloud shapes only last for a very short time

Use what you've drawn to complete a whole image of your character. Your pictures should be unique! Share and enjoy them. Once again, you can change and replace as you go. Don't want the wizard to wear a cloak? Try putting him board shorts and a crash helmet riding a scooter. This is called editing. It's also called creative licence!

# Ninky's Boutique

**Ringlet:** Do you have a baton by any chance? Cos I can't return home until I find one.

**Ninky:** Listen to me mergirl. Look at this dog. He's drooping — his ears, his tail, his wings.

**Ringlet:** A baton? A stick thing. Any kind of stick would do.

**Ninky:** Are you The One?

**Ringlet:** The one what? I'm Ringlet, mergirl from the Kelplands.

**Ninky:** The Great Eternal Restlessness is fading. She who sleeps must wake.

**Ringlet:** I don't know what you're talking about. What's fading?

**Ninky:** Everything. The currents are slowing. Some have even stopped. The Daisychain is clogged with small stagnant ponds. The Pick-You-Up-and-Toss-You-Out is duller than a dimwit fish, and now ... the merdogs.

**Ringlet:** What about them?

**Ninky:** Take a look, inside this drawer. (*Ninky goes to drawer and pulls it open*). They all have the flops. And so does your merdog. It's just not so advanced. Here, my last bottle of anti-flop elixir. One drop per day for your dog as a preventative. It'll be just enough.

**Ringlet:** Enough for what? (*She shakes her merdog's wings*) See, his wings work fine — he was napping. I need to stop molly-coddling him.

**Ninky:** Enough to take on the task. Time is running out, Ringlet of the Kelplands. The merdogs will only recover if someone takes on the task. Are you The One?

**Ringlet:** I guess I *could* be (*shrugging*) if there's no one else.

# The Sea of Forgetfulness

*Do you know what your name is? Can you remember what you had for breakfast? Can you remember your phone number?*

*Ringlet, somewhat carelessly, takes on the task, but before she gets very far she is pushed into the Sea of Forgetfulness – where each successive wave strips her of her memories. There's only one other mer-person in the Sea of Forgetfulness, an elderly geographer called Cumulus Allweather. He's swallowed a fish eye so he's protected against memory loss. Ringlet however, gradually starts to forget everything ...*

## HAVE SOME FUN!

Divide yourselves into groups of four or five. Take five minutes to read through and practice the drama segment below. For 'The Sea of Forgetfulness' you'll need:

- Cumulus Allweather
- Ringlet
- A shoal of forgetful fish. *The fish don't have many words. That's because they've forgotten most of them. The challenge for the actors is how to show that with body postures, movement and facial expression.*

## SHOW OFF – COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

Choose two or three groups. After a group has performed return to the 'appreciation' and 'suggestion' questions we used in the first and second role-play.

Firstly, the appreciation – What was one thing that you liked about this group's performance?

Secondly, the suggestion – What would be a single thing that this group could do to improve the performance?

**Something more to think about:** Comedy is important in acting. Those fish are ditzy, they do nothing except swim in circles all day long. Experiment with fish language. Glubbling, blubbing, popping and plotting noises. Now experiment with forgetful-fish type movement. Who's the funniest fish? Why?

## REPLAY!

Try doing it again. What props could you add? *Hint: A throne. Take a chair and throw some fabric over it.*

You could add elements of dress-up as well. Cumulus Allweather is a scientist. What might he be holding? A clipboard? Ringlet is wearing a flowery bathing cap to hid her stinky hair. See what you can up with.

## YOU CLEVER CLOGS! BE THE WRITER!

In this drama extract Ringlet gets trapped in a hostile environment. This is a way of adding tension to a story because the main character then has to figure a way out so that the story can continue.

Let's create a landscape or an environment for a story scene. To do this we'll start with a landscape that already exists, and alter it. *That's how you create fantasy!*





Previously we've used words and pictures to create a character. This time we're going to become geographers, like Cumulus Allweather.

Try keying 'unusual landscapes' into a search engine and see what you come up with. Pictures are a great starting point. Choose two types of landscapes that appeal to you and after filling in the table below, use the fifth line to develop your own ideas.

Habitat	Material	Personality	Something else
desert	sandy	scary	traps you inside a tornado of sand
garden	plants	plants can talk	
cloudland	rubbery	bouncy	
forest		maze	

Is your landscape dangerous? Or is it friendly?

Write a few sentences describing your landscape. Too much description can become boring. You can avoid this by putting one of your invented characters into the landscape and telling what happens to them. This is called building the world!

- *What does the plant talk about?*
- *What's it feel like to bounce on rubbery clouds?*
- *How do you find your way out of the forest maze?*

Make a huge imaginary map on the classroom wall and draw landforms of various shapes and sizes. Now, add all your imaginary landscapes, just like cities on a map of our world. Give the places names.

- *The Plant Lands of Yabber Yabber*
- *Rubber Jump Valley*
- *A Maze Mountain*

# The Sea of Forgetfulness

**Fish 1:** All hail your highness, Princess Thingaling. You called me?

**Ringlet:** How do you know I'm a princess?

**Fish 2:** You're wearing a crown.

**Ringlet:** A crown? This isn't a crown. Although that doesn't mean I'm not a princess.

**Fish 3:** All hail your highness, Princess Thingaling.

**Fish 4:** It's not every day a princess drops in.

**Ringlet:** Don't suppose you know where my jewels are?

**Fish 1:** Wouldn't have a clue. It seems you have been chosen, Thingaling.

**Ringlet:** Chosen for what?

**Fish 2:** To sit on the throne.

**Ringlet:** What throne?

**Fish 3:** Behind you, Thingaling.

**Ringlet:** How do you sit on that? It's just a bunch of bubbles.

**Cumulus Allweather:** Excuse me. A smidgeon more gap ... yes, I can squeeze if you can. Allow me to introduce myself: Cumulus Allweather. Researcher and scientist.

**Ringlet:** Princess Thingaling. From the kingdom of ... Ling. What's this thing?

**Cumulus Allweather:** This is the Temporal Throne of Happenstance, It's rare and ... temporary. You appear to have unlocked a code. In my opinion, thrones are for sitting on. In view of your situation, it would seem advisable to ... erm ... take a *chance* and ... erm ... sit on it and ... see what *happens*.

# Plaitita, Sixth of the Seven Stella Mermaids

*Ringlet escapes on the throne, plunging into another ocean. And this is where the real fun starts.*

*Here she meets Plaitita, Sixth of the Stella mermaids and her bunch of scuttling, red-eyed slave crabs, who spend all their time fluffing out the grand mermaid's magnificent orange tail.*

## HAVE SOME FUN!

Divide yourselves into groups of five or six. Take five minutes to read through and practice the drama segment below. For 'Plaitita, Sixth of the Seven Stella Mermaids' you'll need:

- Plaitita
- Ringlet
- A cluster of slave crabs. *Yes that's slave crabs. Unpleasant and nippy, annoying and hyperactive. That shouldn't be too difficult should it?*

## SHOW OFF – COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

Choose two or three groups. After a group has performed return to the 'appreciation' and 'suggestion' questions we used in the first role-play.

Firstly, the appreciation – What was one thing that you liked about this group's performance?

Secondly, the suggestion – What would be a single thing that this group could do to improve the performance?

**Something more to think about:** The slave crabs have to work as a group. Because they're slaves, they don't have much of a mind of their own. Hence, in the role-play they repeat the last word of the line last spoken. This is harder than it looks!

## REPLAY!

Try doing it again. What elements could you add? *Hint: black gloves for the crabs. Make some red cellophane glasses for the crab-eyes.*

## YOU CLEVER CLOGS! BE THE WRITER!

In this drama extract we meet the villain! The villain is equally important to the main character and always works against the main character although at first it may appear the opposite.

There are lots of villains in literature. Can you name some?

- *The Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz.*
- *Voldemort from Harry Potter*
- *The Queen of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland*

Let's add our own villain to that list. But first, we have to create them! You can use a combination of words and images. Playing a scary musical extract can also help stimulate ideas. See what kind of villain emerges when you listen to:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLp\\_Hh6DKWc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLp_Hh6DKWc) (Edvard Grieg, 'In the Hall of the Mountain King')

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=P73Z6291Pt8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P73Z6291Pt8) (Richard Wagner, 'Ride of the Valkyries')

A good way to develop ideas is to write free flow, also called 'stream of consciousness', and see what happens. Take three minutes to scribble and don't lift the pen from the paper until the dinger rings! If you get stuck describe the landscape, but no more than one sentence until you get back on track.

Here are some clue words. Pick one of them when you get stuck.

*Colour*            *type of life form*            *noise*            *fingers*            *clothing*            *what do they carry?*  
*how do they move*            *what sort of voice*            *Who's with them?*  
*male or female*            *animal or bug*            *weather habitat*            *jewellery*            *wands*  
*book*            *magic*

This is called brainstorming. You might think you've written rubbish, but this is how many great stories begin. Try collaborating in groups and sharing ideas. Pick two of the best ideas from each group member and build your villain! Once you're happy, share the results.

# Plaitita, Sixth of the Seven Stella Mermaids

**Large Crab:** Plaitita, Sixth of the Seven Stella Mermaids!

**Cluster-Crabs:** maids, maids, maids ...

**Plaitita:** How marvellous to see you, dearest! Ringlet from the Kelplands, isn't it?

**Ringlet:** Huh? My name is Ringlet ... I was missing ... but now I'm found!

**Cluster-Crabs:** missing, found, missing, sing, sing, sinnnnnng.

**Plaitita:** Sweetie-pie-winks, we've been inconsolable. We thought you were lost ... forever! (*circles her looking her up and down*)

**Cluster-Crabs:** Forever!

**Plaitita:** And maybe you were, by the looksee of you! (*laughs loudly, crabs join in*) But be reassured, Pie-sweetie-winkles, that despite the crushing immensity of my schedule, a schedule that would topple anyone not possessing my extraordinary stamina, that not only have I tirelessly searched the entire oceans to find you — but I also have for you, a wonderful gift —

**Cluster-Crabs:** A gift! A gift! A gift!

**Ringlet:** A present?

**Plaitita:** For you, my dearest-kins, the most perfect of steeds for this year's derby.

**Cluster-Crabs:** Derby? Derby?

**Ringlet:** Wait, what?

**Plaitita:** (*meshes her fingers together and squeezed them tightly.*) Not an easy task either, given the circumstances. You're lost for words, aren't you, my little sea cucumber.

**Ringlet:** I'm lost all right. I need a shampoo ... something to eat ... and someone who speaks in shorter sentences.

**Plaitita:** A horse that is nibbling at its leash to take you to — But why spoil the lovely surprise! Follow me, darlinka! Time is of the essence! No time to lose. Time, in fact, is a game! Who said that? Me? Or my old friend Heraclitus? Me, I believe! (*chortles, leans forward*)

**Cluster-Crabs:** Me, me, me ...

**Plaitita:** Yes, time is a game. And games, sweetie-pie-winks, must be played —

**Ringlet:** Until somebody wins. I like games.



**Large Crab:** Games!

**Plaitita:** Exactly right, my little sea slug.

**Cluster-Crabs:** Games ... games ... games ...

**Ringlet:** She's a bit of a yakker, but she is a Stella Mermaid. A real life Stella Mermaid. And she knows who I am! I'm Ringlet! Ringlet from the Kelplands. Not a princess after all, but never mind. And she's going to find a horse for me ... Unexpected but useful ... And games ... that could be fun. I wonder what she's got in mind ...

# Starfish

*What indeed does she have in mind. Who thinks it's going to be something wonderful? Who thinks ... not so good?*

*Except to say, there's a chase, a journey, there's danger and there's people who arrive out of nowhere to help you when you need it the most. And one of these helpers, right at the end is a starfish. Actually he's been in Ringle's handbag ever since the Sea of Forgetfulness, it's just that she didn't know it.*

## HAVE SOME FUN!

Divide yourselves into groups of three. Take five minutes to read through and practice the drama segment. For 'Starfish' you'll need:

- Ringle
- Starfish (2 actors). *Yes that's right, one character, two actors. Sometimes it's fun to share a part. So divide up the lines and share them.*

## SHOW OFF – COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

Choose two or three groups. After a group has performed let's ask the following questions to the audience.

Firstly, the appreciation – What was one thing that you liked about this group's performance?

Secondly, the suggestion – What would be a single thing that this group could do to improve the performance?

## REPLAY!

Try doing it again. It's always fun to add some props. What props could you add? *Hint: some bags of trash ... a handbag.*

You could add elements of dress-up as well. *A pair of sunglasses for the starfish. After all, the Upworld sun is very bright, and he's been hibernating.*

## CLEVER CLOGS! YOU BE THE WRITER!

In the drama extract we met a minor character for the second time. The starfish got picked up and placed in Ringle's handbag in chapter three and then doesn't appear until near the end. Nonetheless, as previously stated, minor characters must have an important part to play, otherwise there's no point in having them. In storytelling lingo, the starfish is a shape shifter. That means he can change shape. This proves to be very useful, but in this extract he's introduced as a psychic – although a fake one!

Let's discuss a little more how to make a comic character.

Start by taking something ordinary and add something that doesn't match. At all! Here's some comic pairings you already know:

- *a carpet that flies*
- *a puss wearing boots*

To demonstrate what I mean, here's a chart to get you started.

Item	Wacky Thing	Result
a shoe	talks	a talking shoe. Now that could be hilarious! Maybe it's a pair of talking shoes that can never agree which way to go.
a pot plant	walks	a pot plant that jumps out of the pot and walks around the street. Does it give people nightmares?
	invisible	

Brainstorm as many crazy pairings as you can. Become a pair of talking shoes and see what they get up to. Act your own pairings out. Improvisation is a great tool because it takes place in a relaxed environment and hopefully generates more and more craziness! This is called development.

Once you've developed your comic character, write a short story using your ideas. Edit, delete, rewrite!



# Starfish

**Starfish:** Oh boy! I think I smell breakfast. Ah, the Upworld sun, there is nothing so restorative.

**Ringlet:** There's no breakfast. Only mouldy Upworlder food scraps. And the Upworld sun is blinding me. I totally thought you were — um — I nearly threw you out —

**Starfish:** I was in a deep trance, Replenishing my psychic powers ...

**Ringlet:** Psychic powers? Can you tell the future? Because that could be use —

**Starfish:** Uh ... no. But I'm reasonably good with dreams. Shortish dreams. Nothing with sub-plots.

**Ringlet:** I don't need any dreams explained.

**Starfish:** You will soon. The jasper eyelashes.

**Ringlet:** Useless. I've shut my eyes loads of times and nothing happened. Nothing at all.

**Starfish:** Creative visualisation.

**Ringlet:** What?

**Starfish:** Guided imagery. Meditation ... *mindfulness*, if you want to be modern.

**Ringlet:** I don't have time for that. I have to find a flame and I don't even know what it looks like. Do you?

**Starfish:** Irrelevant. What does it *feel* like? You're forgetting that the species *Asteroidea* is blind. Although I don't like to think of myself as disabled. There are other ways of seeing, you know. I learned that early on and made a very successful career out of it.

**Ringlet:** You're a fake. You said so. More or less.

**Starfish:** I tell people what they want to hear. And they are usually grateful. But enough about me. It's nearly high tide and the rock pool you want only fills up for the shortest of times. You've got until the Upworld sun sets. Maybe a bit longer. Not much time. But enough.

**Ringlet:** Wow. Where did all that come from?

**Starfish:** Who knows. I surprise myself at times. But like I said, you've not much time.

**Ringlet:** To save the entire oceans and everything in them? Yeah right.

**Starfish:** Take me with you. Put me back in that handbag and prepare for splashdown.

# The Ten-Sentence Story!

## IT'S A WRAP! PUT IT ALL TOGETHER!

See if you can write a story with a hero, a villain, some fun minor characters all set in your specially created landscape. You've already done most of the work. Remember, the hero has to want something, and the villain has to try and stop them!

(I was kidding about the ten sentences. You can make it eleven. Or even twelve. *Ringlet and the Day the Oceans Stopped* is 55,000 words. That's a lot of sentences. It makes me feel tired just thinking about it.)

And of course, when you've finished your masterpiece, send it to me and I might post some of them on my web page. Because you have to start somewhere!

Felicity Williams  
felicity@constanze.nz

PS: It helps to have a few pictures!