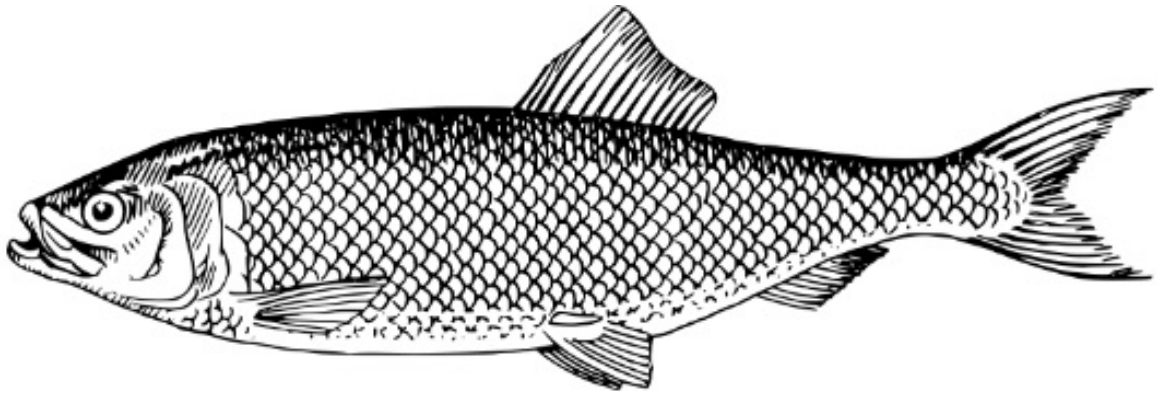


HERRING TALES

Good Stories for Home Schools



with activities

A free resource from www.herripedia.com

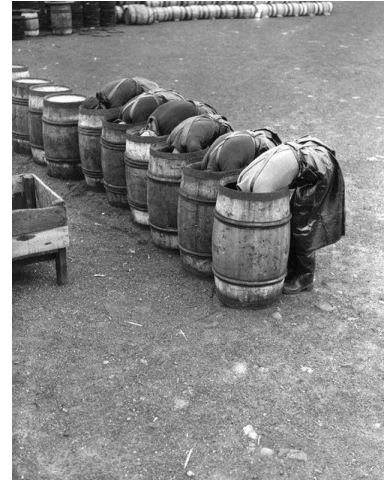
No 3: The Herring's Head

THE HERRING'S HEAD

The herring is the King of Fishes. The lion is King of the Jungle because it's big and strong and powerful - even though it doesn't live in jungles. The herring is king because it was the most important fish to fishing people.



The fishermen and the boat builders and the net makers and the basket makers and the barrel makers.



The women who slit the herring bellies open and took out their insides. The women who packed them and pickled them in salt.

The herring smokers making red herrings and kippers. The lorry drivers and the train drivers who took the herrings to be sold in other towns.

When there were lots of herrings, there was lots of work for everybody. When there was lots of work there was food on the table. That's why herring was the king.



The Herring's Head is a funny song about how everything we need is made from the herring. *What'll we do with the herring's head? We'll make it into loaves of bread.*

Each new verse comes up with a new thing and adds all the things from the verses before. It's called a *cumulative song* because the list of things accumulates.

There are lots of versions. In some versions the chorus goes, *The herring is the King of the Sea! The herring is the fish for me!* The chorus to this one goes, *Of all the fish that swim in the sea, the herring is the one for me!*

It comes from North East England. I like it because they also sing, *How are you today, my hinny-o?* When the singers sing this, they have to shake hands with everybody. Who needs kings when you've got good neighbours?

The Herring's Head

*What'll we do with the herring's head?
What'll we do with the herring's head?
We'll make it into loaves o' bread!
Herring's head, loaves of bread
And all manner o' things!*

*Of all the fish that swim in the sea
The herring is the one for me!
How are you today? How are you today?
How are you today, my hinny-o?*

*And what'll we do with the herring's eyes?
And what'll we do with the herrin's eyes?
We'll make them into puddings and pies
Herring's eyes, puddings and pies
Herring's head, loaves of bread
And all manner of things!*

*Of all the fish that swim in the sea
The herring is the one for me!
How are you today? How are you today?
How are you today, my hinny-o?*

There are lots of bits to a herring, so the song keeps adding new things.

*What'll we do with the herring's gills?
We'll make them into physical pills.*

Physical pills are pills you get from the doctor.

*What'll we do with the herring's scales?
We'll make them into a ship with sails.*

*What'll we do with the herring's back?
We'll make them into a fishing smack.*

A fishing smack is a kind of fishing boat.

*What'll we do with the herring's fins?
We'll make them into needles and pins.*

*What'll we do with the herring's guts?
We'll make them into a pair of boots.*

If you sing this like they do in North East England it rhymes better - *What'll we dee wi' the herrin's guts? We'll mak 'em intae a pair o' byuts.*

*What'll we do with the herring's tail?
We make it into a barrel of ale.*

*What'll we do with the herring's belly?
We'll make it into jams and jelly.*

In some newer versions they sing, *We'll make it into a colour telly*. In the North East they also sing it so it sounds like, *What'll we dee wi' the herrin's heed?* and they sing, *How are ye the day? How are ye the day? How are ye the day, me hinny-o?*

If you don't know the tune you can find some people singing it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrNqGE37CtY>

Activities

Sing the song. It's a great song!

Come up with other rhymes. In the video they sing, *What'll we do with the herring's bones? We'll make them into mobile phones...* But it could be *massed trombones...* or anything.

Make up new rhymes for all the verses and sing your song.

The painting of the fishermen, *The Herring Netters*, is by Winslow Homer. The photograph of kippers is by Andy Sewell.