

Whale Song

A whale's fluke goes up and down as it swims,
A fish's fin moves from side to side.
But there are more differences between these two,
Though they both in the sea reside.

Did you know that once, a long time ago,
In the depths of an ancient sea,
The fish and the *not-quite-yet-whale* were alike
As much as two creatures could be?

At that time, they both had fins used to swim
And gills to breathe watery air;
But then one fine day, the *would-be-whales* found
They were no longer happy there.

So, they crawled from the water out onto the land,
Perhaps wanting some new thing to be;
While the fish would not even think such strange thoughts
And stayed happily at home in the sea.

Then, a great deal of time went by slowly on earth—
Some millions of years or so—
And the *would-be* whales changed: their fins became legs,
And their gills into lungs did grow.

They could walk on the land and breathe air from above,
With lungs, they could even make sounds,
So, why they went back to the sea from the land
Is a mystery, still, that confounds.

Perhaps they ran out of a good source of food;
Or, perhaps, it was dangerous to stay on the land;
But, for whatever reason, the fact still remains:
They went back to the place they began.

But nothing can ever really go back
To the way that things used to be;
Their back legs became flukes that went up and down,
Not the side-to-side fins of the sea.

And they had to come up to breathe air from above,
For their lungs couldn't change back to gills, anymore;
Which is why we see whales breaching the waves
As we watch far away on the shore.

But all was not lost from a choice that seemed wrong,
When the whales chose the land, then back to the sea;
For they brought from the land *Whale Song* to be heard,
Where, before, only silence could be.

A whale's fluke may go up and down as it swims
While a fish's fin moves side to side,
But, even with all their differences,
The two in the sea now abide.

And the Song that is sung by the whales 'neath the waves,
Though its meaning we don't understand,
Would ne're have been heard unless once, long ago,
The whales walked about on the land.