



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Peter Pan

J. M. Barrie



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Peter Pan

J. M. Barrie

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, research, critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking, compare/contrast

### Listening/Speaking

Oral presentation, discussion, acting/drama, interview

### Writing

Creative writing, poetry, blog entry, scene, chapter, essay

### Comprehension

Predicting, cause/effect, evaluating decisions

### Literary Elements

Genre, characterization, conflict, point of view, antagonist/protagonist, figurative language, allusion, setting, satire

### Vocabulary

Definitions, parts of speech, synonym/antonym, context, usage

### Across the Curriculum

Art—sculpture, diorama, caricature, painting, sketch, illustrated map; Fantasy—mermaids, fairies; History—pirates; Sports—fencing

**Genre:** fantasy

**Setting:** early 1900s London; the Darling family nursery; the Neverland (Peter Pan's island home)

**Point of View:** third-person omniscient; Note that the narrator often uses "we" when referring to characters within the story and also at times clearly dictates the course of the story.

**Themes:** growing up; adventure; life and death; love; family; good vs. evil

**Conflict:** person vs. person; person vs. society; person vs. self

**Tone:** descriptive and fanciful

**Date of First Publication:** 1904 (as a play); 1911 (as a novel entitled *Peter and Wendy*)

## Summary

The Darling children—Wendy, John, and Michael—fly away from their nursery to a fantastical place called the Neverland with Peter Pan, the little boy who never grows up, and Tinker Bell, a fairy. Peter brings the children to live with the lost boys—six boys that live in trees in the Neverland and obey Peter's every command. Barely able to remember their own mothers, the lost boys embrace Wendy as their mother, and the children have many adventures with natives, pirates, and mermaids on their unique island home. When Peter warns that Mrs. Darling may have forgotten about her children, Wendy decides it is time to go home. The lost boys choose to go with her, falsely assuming that Peter will join them. Before leaving, the children and the pirates endure a harsh battle where Peter Pan defeats Captain Hook. Back at home, the Darling parents are excited to have their children home and happily adopt the lost boys. Only Peter Pan and Tinker Bell return to the Neverland, though Peter agrees to come each year to bring Wendy back to the Neverland to help him with spring cleaning.

## About the Author

James Matthew Barrie was born in Kirriemuir, Scotland on May 9, 1860. When he was only eight years old, his 13-year-old brother, David, died in an ice-skating accident. David was the favorite child of his mother and was deeply mourned. Barrie once dressed in his older brother's clothes attempting to alleviate his beloved mother's inconsolable grief. In many ways, Barrie felt as though he lost his childhood *and* his mother after the death of his brother. He did not, however, lose his love for the stories his mother told him in happier times, and he later became a gifted storyteller himself.

Over time, Barrie became a well-known author and a very successful playwright. He is responsible for such plays as *Ibsen's Ghost*, a parody of *Hedda Gabler* and Barrie's first stage hit, as well as *The Little Minister*, which premiered in New York and broke all Broadway records in the fall of 1897. His works received positive reviews from the likes of Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson. In 1904, *Peter Pan* premiered in London and was a huge success. Barrie stated that the inspiration for the story and its characters came largely from his association with the young boys of the Davies family—George, Jack, Peter, Michael, and Nicholas. The book *Peter Pan* was first published in 1911. In 1913, Barrie became a baronet (the holder of a rank below a baron and above a knight), and in 1922, he received the Order of Merit for distinguished service in literature. Additionally, he was named the Chancellor of Edinburgh University in 1930.

## Foreword–Chapter 2

In the Foreword, author Susan Cooper gives background information about J. M. Barrie’s life and relates how parts of the novel were drawn from Barrie’s own experiences. The story begins by describing how Mr. and Mrs. Darling met, how Mrs. Darling dotes on her children, and how decisions are made in the slightly strange Darling household. The Darling children—Wendy, John, and Michael—are left in the care of an exceptional nanny, a Newfoundland dog named Nana. Peter Pan makes his way into the children’s thoughts, and Wendy tells her mother she believes Peter has been visiting at night by way of the window. One night, Mrs. Darling catches Peter trying to enter the nursery. Nana barks, and Peter leaps out the window, leaving his shadow behind. The Darlings leave for a dinner party on Friday, and Mr. Darling ties Nana up outside. Upon the adults’ departure, the stars signal Peter to return to the nursery window.

### Vocabulary

henceforth	conspicuous	simultaneously	totting	acquainted
perambulators	remedies	propriety	sedately	inferior
resented	pinafore	pirouette	coracles	delectable
tolerant	tranquilly	rent	entrancing	fiend
upbraided	placid	reprovingly	retorted	vindictive
entreatingly	reproachfully	vain	unwonted	perturbed
enchantments	firmament			

### Discussion Questions

1. What purpose does the novel’s Foreword serve? In what ways does it prepare the reader for the novel? *(Answers will vary. The Foreword reveals the novel’s origins as readers learn that the story was first a play and that incidents in the author’s life influenced his writing. This gives insight into the text and the author’s intentions. Note: Information in the Foreword provides an excellent opportunity for further discussion of Peter Pan as a work of symbolism and satire by a man whose personal experiences connected him closely with the novel’s subject matter.)*
2. What mystery does the author present with the story’s first sentence? Why do you think he doesn’t immediately address this issue? *(The author informs readers that there is only one child in the world who does not grow up. Rather than explain this statement, he discloses a conversation between Mrs. Darling and a two-year-old Wendy Darling. By not immediately identifying the child who doesn’t grow up, the author compels readers to continue reading the story.)*
3. What do you think is meant by Mrs. Darling’s unclaimed kiss? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Examine Barrie’s intentions in making the Darlings’ nanny a dog. What is the possible significance of Nana’s character? *(Answers will vary. Some students may believe Barrie simply wanted to add humor to the story; others may think it is a criticism of adults’ ability to take care of children. The concept of a dog as a servant could be a commentary on society’s propensity to treat servants as inferior.)*
5. When Mrs. Darling is “tidying up her children’s minds” (p. 6) at night, why might she move their unpleasant thoughts to the bottom of their minds? Why doesn’t she get rid of these thoughts completely? *(Answers will vary. Mrs. Darling wants her children to sleep peacefully and awaken happy. However, since she is unable to control her children’s minds she can only rearrange what exists there, not erase it. Some students may view this episode as an element of fantasy, while others will discern that it represents the universality of a mother’s desire to protect her children.)*

6. Discuss Wendy's and Mrs. Darling's thoughts on Peter Pan's existence. (*Wendy believes in Peter Pan and knows things about him without being certain how she knows these things. Mrs. Darling denies Peter's existence, even though Wendy gives support to refute her mother. Wendy's beliefs about Peter are rooted in her youth and innocence, while Mrs. Darling's opinions are the result of her maturation. However, Wendy's belief in Peter Pan and Mrs. Darling's denial of him are based on the same concept—Peter's fantastical characteristics. For example, Wendy knows he exists because he flies to her window at night and Mrs. Darling knows that he cannot exist because children do not fly. Wendy bases her knowledge on faith, and Mrs. Darling bases her knowledge on fact.*)
7. How does Peter lose his shadow? In what ways is this scene absurd? (*Peter flies through the nursery window, startling Mrs. Darling and Nana. Nana tries to catch Peter by closing the window, but she only manages to catch his shadow before he escapes. Absurdity: The event is not recognized by anyone as supernatural or unnatural. Mrs. Darling denies the existence of a boy who can fly, yet she deals rather nonchalantly with the shadow. The shadow is described as "quite the ordinary kind" [p. 14]. Also, Mrs. Darling refuses to hang the shadow from the window because it might make the house look shabby. Mrs. Darling is more concerned with the appearance of her home than with the fact that a boy's shadow has just been cut off. Mrs. Darling rolls up the shadow and places it in a drawer.*)
8. Analyze the gender roles in the Darling household. (*Answers will vary. Mr. Darling wants to be the respected and esteemed leader of the home, and he exerts control by commanding the finances and belittling Nana's role in the children's lives. At the same time, he acts somewhat childlike by throwing a fit about his tie and refusing to take his medicine if Michael doesn't. Mrs. Darling is the nurturer who ensures her children are happy, comforts and calms her husband, mends clothing, and gives baths. Wendy and John imitate these gender roles when playing house during Michael's bath time.*)
9. Examine the following sentence from the novel, and discuss what it might foreshadow: "They were the last words [Mrs. Darling] was to hear from [Michael] for a long time" (p. 27). (*Answers will vary. Students who are familiar with the story will know that the Darling children are about to fly away to the Neverland with Peter Pan.*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Art: Mr. Darling inspects Peter's shadow and says that it must belong to "a scoundrel." Draw a picture of your own shadow that depicts an element of your personality or an activity you enjoy.
2. Figurative Language: Create a list of figurative language found in the novel, including similes, metaphors, and personification. Continue adding to your list as you read the novel. Examples: **Similes**—"Her romantic mind was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the...East..." (p. 1); "pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten" (p. 7); "...I rushed in like a tornado..." (p. 18); **Metaphor**—night-lights: a mother's eyes (p. 26); **Personification**—" [Stars] were crowding round the house, as if curious to see what was to take place there..." (p. 26).
3. Literary Devices: Identify and record instances of satire in the novel. Continue this activity as you read the novel. Examples: "For a week or two after Wendy [was born] it was doubtful whether [the Darlings] would be able to keep her, as she was another mouth to feed" (p. 3); "...Nana is a treasure....I feel sure she knows [the children] have souls" (p. 20).

## Rainstorming

**Directions:** Use the graphic below to brainstorm about the characteristics of fantasies and fairy tales.

