

# Peter Pan Reading Guide



## Questions and Ideas for Consideration

- **Family Dynamics:** What kind of dynamics are demonstrated in the Darling household? What do you think Barrie is saying about parents and their relationships with children, as well as the ideal British family?
- **Tick-Tock:** What does the clock in the crocodile symbolize?
- **Won't Grow Up:** What is Peter's greatest pretend? Is he truly the eternal child? How does this book portray childhood?
- **Pan and Hook:** HOOK: "Proud and insolent youth, prepare to meet thy doom." PETER: "Dark and sinister man, have at thee." What does this say about the dichotomy of adult and child as a theme of the text?
- **Hook:** In what ways is Hook distinctly a villain, and how does he sometimes get away from this persona? What is it about Peter that Hook so despises?
- **Wendy's Weakness:** How does Peter win Wendy over... What is Barrie implying? Who has the power in this moment, and how is it established?
- **Domesticity:** The Neverland allows each child to live his/her fantasy, creating a unique personal make-believe. What does it say of Barrie's view of women that Wendy's fantasy is so domestic?
- **The "Redskins":** How are the Native American tribes portrayed in this text?

## Daybook Possibilities

- Create a map of Neverland (either from the book or your vision of the island).
- Look at a few illustrated versions of *Peter Pan* and comment on how pictures impact understanding.
- Watch Disney's *Peter Pan*, Steven Spielberg's *Hook*, Miramax's *Finding Neverland*, or PJ Hogan's *Peter Pan*. Compare/contrast to the book.
- Do a character sketch of one or more main characters...what motivates them, and what ideologies do they represent?
- Ask a friend or family member to tell you what they know about *Peter Pan*. Did this person read the book or see another version?
- Originally, *Peter Pan* was a stageplay. Look for clips of the production or the screenplay and compare the effect of performing the story live on stage.
- Research JM Barrie and record what you find.
- Learn a little about pirates as portrayed in children's fiction. What role do they play?
- Plan a new production of *Peter Pan*. Who would you cast, and how would you change the story?
- Use google to gather facts about the time period *Peter Pan* was produced and describe context.

## Suggested Critical Reading

"A Hundred Years of Peter Pan" by Peter Hollindale

"Man for the Sword and for the Needle She": Illustrations of Wendy's Role in J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* by Chris Routh

"J. M. Barrie Gets the Miramax Treatment: Finding (and Marketing) Neverland" by Jennifer Geer

*Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination* edited by Lester Friedman, Allison Kavey (ask me for a copy of one or more chapters)

## Background and Context

Originally produced as a stage play, JM Barrie's *Peter Pan* was adapted to a novel in 1911. Inspired to write about childhood because of his relationship with the Llewelyn Davies family, Peter's story first appears in *The Little White Bird*, which was later published in the book *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. It has since been adapted to film many times, and is considered a children's classic.