

The Little House

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

The book Peter Pan is about the magical flying boy Peter Pan who lives in an amazing place called Neverland. It is to Neverland that he has brought his new friends: Wendy, Michael, and John. Once there, Wendy becomes a pretend mother to the other children there, called the Lost Boys. Peter's fairy friend, Tinker Bell, has become jealous of Wendy and plots to get rid of her. In this passage, Tinker Bell has convinced the Lost Boys that Peter wants them to shoot Wendy with an arrow while he is gone. Poor Tootles shoots Wendy just as Peter returns. The arrow hits Wendy's button necklace that Peter had given her. Peter called it a "kiss."

It was at this tragic moment that they heard a sound which made the heart of every one of them rise to his mouth. They heard Peter crow.

"Peter!" they cried, for it was always thus that he signalled his return.

"Hide her," they whispered, and gathered hastily around Wendy. But Tootles stood aloof.

Again came that ringing crow, and Peter dropped in front of them. "Greetings, boys," he cried, and mechanically they saluted, and then again was silence.

He frowned.

"I am back," he said hotly, "why do you not cheer?"

They opened their mouths, but the cheers would not come. He overlooked it in his haste to tell the glorious tidings.

"Great news, boys," he cried, "I have brought at last a mother for you all."

Still no sound, except a little thud from Tootles as he dropped on his knees.

"Have you not seen her?" asked Peter, becoming troubled. "She flew this way."

"Ah me!" one voice said, and another said, "Oh, mournful day."

Tootles rose. "Peter," he said quietly, "I will show her to you," and when the others would still have hidden her he said, "Back, twins, let Peter see."

So they all stood back, and let him see, and after he had looked for a little time he did not know what to do next.

“She is dead,” he said uncomfortably. “Perhaps she is frightened at being dead.”

He thought of hopping off in a comic sort of way till he was out of sight of her, and then never going near the spot any more. They would all have been glad to follow if he had done this.

But there was the arrow. He took it from her heart and faced his band.

“Whose arrow?” he demanded sternly.

“Mine, Peter,” said Tootles on his knees.

“Oh, dastard hand,” Peter said, and he raised the arrow to use it as a dagger.

Tootles did not flinch. He bared his breast. “Strike, Peter,” he said firmly, “strike true.”

Twice did Peter raise the arrow, and twice did his hand fall. “I cannot strike,” he said with awe, “there is something stays my hand.”

All looked at him in wonder, save Nibs, who fortunately looked at Wendy.

“It is she,” he cried, “the Wendy lady, see, her arm!”

Wonderful to relate, Wendy had raised her arm. Nibs bent over her and listened reverently. “I think she said, ‘Poor Tootles,’” he whispered.

“She lives,” Peter said briefly.

Slightly cried instantly, “The Wendy lady lives.”

Then Peter knelt beside her and found his button. You remember she had put it on a chain that she wore round her neck.

“See,” he said, “the arrow struck against this. It is the kiss I gave her. It has saved her life.”

“I remember kisses,” Slightly interposed quickly, “let me see it. Ay, that’s a kiss.”

Questions

1. What did Peter do to tell the Lost Boys he had returned?
2. Why couldn't Peter strike Tootles with the arrow?
3. What did Peter first think of doing when he saw that Wendy might be dead?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. Tragic
2. Signaled
3. Hastily
4. Aloof
5. Mechanically
6. Glorious
7. Mournful
8. Comic
9. Flinch

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "It was at this **tragic** moment that they heard a sound which made the heart of every one of them rise to his mouth."

- a. crazy b. sad c. glorious d. confusing

2) "Peter!" they cried, for it was always thus that he **signaled** his return.

- a. gestured b. warned c. waved d. cried

3) "Hide her," they whispered, and gathered **hastily** around Wendy.

- a. tightly b. slowly c. snugly d. quickly

4) "...But Tootles stood **aloof**."

- a. too close b. motionless c. distant d. alone

5) Again came that ringing crow, and Peter dropped in front of them. "Greetings, boys," he cried, and **mechanically** they saluted, and then again was silence.

- a. majestically b. automatically c. happily d. perfectly

6) "He overlooked it in his haste to tell the **glorious** tidings."

- a. shiny b. sharp c. beautiful d. expensive

7) "Ah me!" one voice said, and another said, "Oh, **mournful** day."

- a. happy b. sad c. sunny d. rainy

8) "He thought of hopping off in a **comic** sort of way till he was out of sight of her, and then never going near the spot any more."

- a. funny b. talented c. skilled d. awkward

9) "Tootles did not **flinch**."

- a. attack b. draw back c. cry d. yell