***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 1***

***Synopsis:***

The book opens with the proclamation: "All children, except one, grow up." The narrator does not specify who this lone exception is, and it isn't until the end of the chapter that readers finally meet him. [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) breaks through the "film" that hides his home of Neverland from London. He blows in through the Darling family's third-story window, shedding leaves all over the nursery carpet.

Before that, however, the chapter flashes back through all the key stages in the formation of the Darling family, from [Mr. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mr._Darling)'s proposal of marriage to the births of the three children. In the process, both adults are mocked. Mr. Darling values money highly. Although he is "frightfully proud" of [Wendy Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Wendy_Darling) when she is born, he has to convince himself they can afford to keep her by totaling up every shilling she will cost him in terms of food to doctor's visits. He goes through the same process when his sons John and Michael are born, but it gets harder and harder to justify each additional child's expense. The last-born, Michael, barely squeaks through. Because of the exorbitant amount of milk the children drink, the Darlings are even forced to economize on the cost of keeping a nanny. The children are tended not by a human nurse but by a Newfoundland dog named Nana.

Despite Mr. Darling's exaggerated fears of poverty, the family is thriving—until the title character of the book shows up. "There never was a simpler, happier family until the coming of Peter Pan," the narrator comments.

The narrator states that [Mrs. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mrs._Darling) first hears of Peter Pan when she was "tidying up her children's minds," a nightly process that the book satirically claims all mothers do. She asks Wendy about him, and Wendy insists that Peter perches at the end of her bed at night and plays to her on his pipes.

One night Mrs. Darling is sitting in the nursery watching her children and falls asleep, dreaming of what she believes is the imaginary world of Neverland. She awakes to find a boy dropping through the window, accompanied by a strange darting light. He is dressed in skeleton leaves. Although he appears to be the same age as Wendy, he still has all his baby teeth.

***Analysis brief:***

Readers acquainted with [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) from Disney cartoons and modern movies may be surprised by the tone of the book. It is sardonic rather than cutesy or sentimental. Peter Pan is not the same sunny figure depicted in popular culture either. The story about him that [Mrs. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mrs._Darling) recalls from her childhood is that he is a kind of psychopomp, a pediatric version of the Grim Reaper who acts as a guide for the souls of dead children. In readers' first glimpse of him, the narrator notes the unusual fact that Peter still has all his baby teeth. He makes a feral gnash of those teeth, provoked to anger when he sees that Mrs. Darling is grown up. That anger is unsettling, too.

However, Peter is also described as being friendly, and even when the chapter is mocking the responsible characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Darling, it does so without any sense of malice. An example of this is the financial panic [Mr. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mr._Darling) experiences after the birth of his children. He doesn't hate them or want to harm them. He dithers only about whether he can afford to keep them, as if a father has the option of returning his children for a refund.

The one thing that both the Peter Pan of [Barrie](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/author/)'s book and the Peter Pan of popular culture *do* share is not wanting to grow up. The narrator repeatedly intimates that being a child is superior to being an adult. The depiction of Mr. Darling reveals this. He is ridiculed for placing as high a value on money and respectability as he does the love of his wife and children.

Although the chapter treats her more gently, Mrs. Darling is also used as an example of how limited adults are. Although initially she says she has no idea who Peter Pan is, later she comes to recall stories she had heard him about him as a girl. With the innocent, open, unbiased mind of a child, she had believed that Peter was real. "But now that she was married and quite full of sense she quite doubted whether there was any such person," the narrator relates. The catch is that the sensible adult is wrong and the child she used to be was right. Peter Pan is quite real.

***Critical Study:***

The first chapter of Peter Pan opens with the iconic line “All children, except one, grow up.” The narrator first introduces young Wendy—the oldest child of the Darling family—as she watches a flower bloom. Mr. and Mrs. Darling are Wendy’s parents. Recounting their love story, the narrator explains that while many other men desired Mrs. Darling, Mr. Darling won her affection. They married and had three children: Wendy, John, and Michael. Additionally, the Darlings have a Newfoundland named Nana, whom they refer to as “quite treasure of a nurse.” The narrator then claims that “there never was a simpler happier family until the coming of Peter Pan.” In their dreams, the children visit an imaginary land, the Neverlands. As Mrs. Darling embarks on “travels of her children’s minds,” Wendy describes Peter Pan to her mother. Mrs. Darling thinks he is a make-believe character that she vaguely remembers from her childhood and tells the children it is nonsense put in their heads by Nana. Wendy explains to her mother that Peter Pan visits the nursery at night; while her mother thinks she is just imagining things, the rustling leaves on Wendy’s bedside puzzle her. The chapter ends with Mrs. Darling dreaming of Peter Pan’s arrival in England from Neverland, and when she awakes, she recognizes his figure in the window.

***Summary and analysis part by part:***

***Summary part 1:***

When [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) is a little girl of two, she understands from a wistful comment of her mother’s that she will not stay a child her entire life. Like all children she will one day become an adult.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Wendy’s mother is troubled, if only a little, by the way her child will disappear into an adult, but two-year-old Wendy accepts the inevitability peacefully.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy)’s mother, [Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling), is pretty and imaginative, with some mystery about her. The mystery seems to reside especially in one corner of her mouth, where a “[kiss](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/symbols/the-kiss)” – a sort of dimple –seems to hide itself even from loved ones, including [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling). Mr. Darling does not mind that he can never have the kiss in the corner of her mouth. Instead he is satisfied to know that his wife respects him – for his knowledge of economics, among other things.

***Analysis part 2:***

Mrs. Darling’s “kiss” is not an ordinary kiss. The term seems to be an invention of Barrie’s, and it indicates both something visible, the elusive charm of a smile, and something invisible, a kind of childlike freedom from ordinary life. In one corner of her mouth, at least, Mrs. Darling remains free and wild. She kisses her husband—an action of a grownup—with the other corner.

***Summary Part 3:***

Some time after the two are married, they have three children: [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy), [John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/john), and [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters). They can just barely afford the children on [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling)’s salary. Even so, they want everything to be proper, so they hire a nanny – a large Newfoundland dog called [Nana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters). She is an excellent caretaker in all respects, but other children’s nurses gossip meanly about her, and Mr. Darling worries that such an employee (i.e. a dog) might affect his reputation. He also worries that Nana does not respect him sufficiently, but [Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) always assures him otherwise. They are, in general, a happy, jolly family.

***Analysis Part 3:***

As the Neverland world of the children is unsettled sometimes by the unmagical behaviors of adults, the world of Mr. and Mrs. Darling is unsettled by the fantastical winds of Neverland. Tedious concerns about respectability go hand in hand with magical dogs. The Neverland island sometimes comes very close to the adult world, and the adults have grown quite used to its influence, though they would not admit it.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) first learns of Peter Pan late one night in the nursery, where she is performing the daily task of putting her children’s minds in order. Like all mothers, she sorts through her children's’ feelings of the day, putting the meaner ones at the bottom and the nicer ones at the top.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Mrs. Darling’s motherly chores are a delightful mixture of tedium and sorcery. Like all mothers, she is always cleaning and sorting, a very dull sort of activity. But she is also delicately altering and nurturing her children’s minds.

***Summary Part 5:***

The map of a child’s mind is the map of that child’s private Neverland, a colorful, magical place full of dangers and joys, and also ordinary everyday things. [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy), [John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/john), and [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) each have their own Neverlands, but as they are siblings their Neverlands have “a family resemblance.” Most of the time Neverland is very delightful, but just before bed it becomes too real and very frightening. Children travel there often, but adults can never return there.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Mrs. Darling has several windows into Neverland, a place where adults are generally forbidden. But then Mrs. Darling is not quite fully adult, owing to the “kiss” at the corner of her mouth. She is not afraid of Neverland, though the children are afraid sometimes, when fantasy’s incursion on reality feels like an attack.

***Summary Part 6:***

One day [Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) asks [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) to explain [Peter Pan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan), a person she has noticed in the children’s minds. Mrs. Darling vaguely remembers Peter from her own childhood as a little boy who lived among the fairies. She thinks he must be grown by now, but Wendy insists that he is a child just like her. Not long afterwards, Mrs. Darling finds some very unusual leaves on the nursery floor. Wendy explains that Peter must have been visiting them while they were asleep.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Like many adults, Mrs. Darling seems to have impressions and memories from childhood that now seem impossible to her. Though they are her own memories, her adultness requires that she write them off as fantasy. She is forced to narrow her scope of the possible, to bring it into line with an insistent, overwhelming realism.

***Summary Part 7:***

The next night, [Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) falls asleep over her sewing in the nursery after the three children have gone to bed. She dreams that a boy has “broken through” from Neverland and come very close to the real world. While she is dreaming, a boy enters the nursery through the window. A light flickering around him wakes Mrs. Darling, who looks at [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) with surprise. He looks just like her mysterious “[kiss](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/symbols/the-kiss)”, and still has all his baby teeth.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Mrs. Darling can dream of Neverland just as well as the children. Her dreams are not ‘merely’ fantasy, as she believes, because in this case they come true. The phrase “broken through” suggests that some force or violence is involved in crossing from the imagined world to the real world, and that few can make the journey.