***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 10***

***The Happy Home***

***Synopsis:***

In saving [Tiger Lily](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tiger_Lily)'s life [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) has won the gratitude and allegiance of her entire tribe. She and her people sit on guard every night while Peter Pan and [Wendy Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Wendy_Darling) and the lost boys sleep safely underground in their home, but everyone is on edge. They all know that eventually [Captain Hook](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Captain_Hook) and the pirates will attack.

One evening Wendy and the boys are having a noisy make-believe supper. Above ground Tiger Lily and her warriors are on guard, and Peter is out looking for the crocodile. That was the only way to discover the time. The clock ticks in the beast's stomach.

He returns with nuts for the boys, and he and Wendy talk and act like an old married couple with a large family. Peter Pan at first acts as if he likes being thought of as the father, but then he wants Wendy to clearly understand that this is just pretend. "It would make me seem so old to be their real father," he says.

This provokes a sigh and a strange question from Wendy. She asks Peter what his feelings are for her, and when he says, "Those of a devoted son," she walks away from him to sit by herself. He doesn't understand why his answer has upset her, but apparently he has had a similar conversation with Tiger Lily. He tells Wendy that both she and Tiger Lily seem to want something from him and he doesn't know what it is. "There is something she wants me to be, but she says it is not my mother," he says.

They all want a romantic relationship with Peter Pan, not a maternal or platonic one. Wendy's character doesn't use these words, but that is clearly what she means. Any doubt about that is erased when Peter suggests that maybe [Tinker Bell](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tinker_Bell) wants to be his mother. "You silly ass!" Tink responds in anger from her alcove.

Despite the tense moments, Peter and Wendy and the boys all sing and dance. They have one final "glad hour," in happy ignorance, the narrator states, of the dark fate which is about to befall them.

Now that [Tiger Lily](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tiger_Lily) and her tribe have turned from enemies to allies, they start to appear more often in the story, especially in this chapter, making it impossible to overlook the constant racist imagery. It is not just the casual use of the offensive terms "redskin" and "Piccaninny," it is the demeaning and inaccurate use of cultural stereotypes. Not all Native American tribes lived in wigwams. Smoking a peace pipe was and still is a sacred ritual. It is not something a tribe member would do to pass the time while loitering about a friend's home.

Also, the dialogue [Barrie](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/author/) creates for Tiger Lily is a condescending caricature of the way anyone might struggle with a language they are still trying to learn. Referring to her as a "lovely creature," Barrie writes, "Me Tiger Lily. [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) save me, me his velly nice friend. Me no let pirates hurt him."

But the most egregiously racist image occurs on the very first page, when the narrator says the warriors of the tribe had taken to calling Peter "the Great White Father." According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the first recorded use of the term "Great Father" was in 1806. It was supposedly the way members of Native American tribes referred to U.S. Presidents in communication with the government. It cannot be proven that Native Americans ever used the term great white father. That may have been a fanciful addition by white 19th-century authors. Either way use of the term suggests native tribes should be subservient, even worshipful, of whites who are deemed to be inherently superior.

Whether Barrie believed this cannot be documented, though it is safe to say that during this time, white superiority was an assumption so deeply ingrained in those of European descent it would have been accepted widely as truth. However, Barrie might have been using this particular reference to make a point about Peter's character rather than to denigrate Native Americans. Right after stating that Peter took pleasure in being called the Great White Father, the narrator says this "was not really good for him." He doesn't say why, and the reason might only have been that Peter's ego was big enough already without being inflated any further.

Later Barrie has Wendy object to being called a squaw, which is a problematic term for a Native American woman that still causes heated debate. Many consider it a pejorative term. It does seem clear that Barrie intends for this comment to show readers that Wendy feels she is superior to Tiger Lily. It is because of all the work Wendy does as mother/wife to Peter. But this line can also be read to indicate Wendy feels superior because she is a white English girl and Tiger Lily is not.

Looking for context in Barrie's own life, he did live during the heyday of the British Empire, when Great Britain ruled colonies and territories across the entire globe. There was an attitude at the time that it was the duty of white men to use their innate superiority to bring civilization to people presumed not to have it. Barrie's contemporary Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) wrote about this in an 1899 poem entitled "White Man's Burden." There are echoes of the first stanza in Peter Pan.

Take up the White Man's burden— / Send forth the best ye breed— / Go Bind your sons to exile / To serve your captives' need / To wait in heavy harness / On fluttered folk and wild— / Your new-caught, sullen peoples, / Half-devil and half-child.

***Critical Analysis:***

After Peter saves Tiger Lily’s life, the redskins unite with the lost boys. The redskins begin to refer to Peter as “Peter the Great White Father,” and Peter relishes their admiration of him. Together, the groups are awaiting the pirates’ inevitable attack. Wendy has grown frustrated with the lost boys and their mischievous behavior; however, because the boys respect her as their mother, they follow her rules. After Wendy refers to Peter as “father,” the boys have a discussion about who should be father; this boils over into an argument, with the boys complaining about each other. Peter and Wendy continue to embrace their roles as parents to the boys, and the two pretend to be an old married couple. Nevertheless, Peter expresses concern about being a father, because that would make him a man, though Wendy assures him it is make-believe. Wendy then asks him about his feelings toward her, and she is offended when he tells her, “those of a devoted son.” She insinuates to Peter that she has romantic feelings toward him, but Peter does not seem to understand, and Wendy snaps at him after Peter suggests that Tinker Bell could be his mother. Before the chapter ends, Peter surprisingly decides to sit and listen to a story of Wendy’s that he usually refuses to listen to.

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

***Summary part 1:***

Because [Peter Pan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) saved [Princess Tiger Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters), the boys are now friends with the tribe, who all keep watch outside the boys’ home. The boys don’t like the way the tribe idolizes Peter, but [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) doesn’t want to speak against him: “father knows best.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

Peter Pan ran away from home so that he’d never have to become an adult, and so that he could remain a child. But when he escapes adulthood he escapes childhood too, and becomes a strange ageless “father” by becoming a kind of uber-child.

***Summary Part 2:***

One night, which will come to be called the Night of Nights, the boys are eating dinner while [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) is out getting the time from the [crocodile](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/symbols/the-crocodile), whose clock regularly rings out the hour. The meal is a make-believe meal, and the boys are edgy. Peter comes home, and the boys crowd happily around him. They insist on dancing, despite [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) and Peter’s dignified protests, so the whole family sings and dances.

***Analysis part 2:***

Peter and Wendy pretend to be something other than children when the lost boys ask them to dance. It’s not because they dislike being children, but because they instinctively want to be something other than what they are, something strange and important. It’s a child’s desire, but it reaches beyond the boundaries of childhood.

***Summary part 3:***

Before the dance, though, [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) and [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) have an odd conversation. They talk about the boys exactly as though they were their children for a pleasant moment, but then Peter asks Wendy to confirm that he is not really their father: “it would make me seem so old,” he says nervously. Wendy confirms this coldly. She asks Peter what he feels for her, and he replies that his feelings are those of a son’s, which makes Wendy sit as far from him as possible. “Frankly puzzled,” Peter wonders what it is that Wendy and [Tinker Bell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/tinker-bell) and [Tiger Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) all want him to be.

***Analysis Part 3:***

In the human world, to follow that desire is to go willingly into adulthood. Wendy has linked her desire to adulthood (as she understands it), but Peter Pan has followed the desire elsewhere. In Neverland, the adulthood and the elsewhere seem briefly to become one thing: the way to both places is an adventurous way. But adulthood is a game one can’t stop playing, and Peter does not like to play any one game for too long.

***Summary part 4:***

Soon, though, they forget their differences and have a wonderful time. It is all the more lovely, says the narrator, because they don’t know that it is to be their last. [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) settles everyone into bed and begins to tell their favorite story. It is a story [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) hates, but he listens anyway.

***Analysis Part 4:***

The evening is lovely because it must end, and its brevity becomes its most significant quality in retrospect: its brevity becomes inextricable from its loveliness. The same could be said of childhood – for all children but Peter.