***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 2***

***Synopsis:***

As soon as Peter arrives, Nana attacks him. Fearful he has died, Mrs. Darling goes to look for him, and when she returns, she sees Nana with a shadow in her mouth. The narrator then provides flashbacks to Wendy’s birth, then John’s, and then Michael’s. When Mr. and Mrs. Darling talk about the children, they address each other as Mother and Father. As they reminisce about Michael’s resistance to taking medicine, Michael calls his father “a cowardly custard,” because Mr. Darling hides his own medicine behind his back while Michael takes his. He then puts the medicine in Nana’s bowl, which makes Nana feel sad and Mr. Darling ashamed. He expresses jealousy toward Nana for receiving more affection from the children, drags her outside, and ties her up in the backyard. While Mr. and Mrs. Darling are on the street looking at the stars, they hear “the smallest of all the stars in the Milky Way” exclaim, “Now, Peter!”

***Critical Analysis:***

Nana charges into the nursery, lunging at [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan). To escape, he jumps out the window. Nana has managed to capture one piece of Peter—his shadow. [Mrs. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mrs._Darling) tucks it away in a drawer and awaits the right moment to tell her husband about the incident.

The right opportunity doesn't arise until a week later. While the couple are getting ready to attend a dinner party, Mrs. Darling produces Peter's shadow, but [Mr. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mr._Darling) doesn't make much of it. There follows a lengthy scene when Mr. Darling chides Michael Darling for not taking his medicine like a man, but then refuses to take his own. Instead, in what will prove to be a life-changing error, Mr. Darling pours his medicine into Nana's water bowl. Then, because he is upset that the family is angry at him for doing this to the dog, he drags Nana outside and ties her up in the back yard. This will prove to be his second grave mistake.

Nana starts barking, but only [Wendy Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Wendy_Darling) realizes she isn't upset about being tied up. "That is her bark when she smells danger," Wendy says. Mrs. Darling locks the window and she and Mr. Darling leave. That is when the stars—who are "so fond of fun that they were on his side tonight"—signal to Peter Pan than the grown-ups are finally gone.

***Critical Study:***

Despite [Mr. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mr._Darling)'s many protestations that they are poor, it is clear from the description of their household that the Darlings belong to a privileged class. They live in their own three-story home in London. Although they can't afford a human nanny, they are able to afford a maid named Liza.

Mr. Darling is in business as a kind of banker, or what today would be called a stockbroker. In the early 1900s when [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) is set, being in business was considered respectable and this career places the Darlings solidly in the middle class. They are far superior to the status of their maid but still inferior to that of the British aristocracy. Perhaps his middling status outside the home is why Mr. Darling is so intent on being treated with deference within his family. At this he fails utterly, with results that are often ridiculous. When [Mrs. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mrs._Darling) initially decides not to tell her husband about Peter's shadow, it's not because she fears Mr. Darling's anger. Rather, it's to avoid upsetting him. He is already so flummoxed by the thought of how much his sons' winter coats are going to cost that he is wearing a wet towel around his head.

The narrator spends the majority of this chapter making fun of Mr. Darling in other ways. After 20 attempts, he still can't manage to knot his own tie. However, Mrs. Darling takes over and manages it beautifully on her first attempt. Then he is brought to tears when Nana brushes up against his trousers and sheds hair all over them.

It is clear that Mr. Darling is overly anxious, nearly to the point of paranoia, about everything from how much money he makes to how his family feels about him. This leads him to a disastrous error. When his youngest son Michael refuses to take his medicine, Mr. Darling accuses his wife of pampering him. "When I was your age I took my medicine without a murmur," he says. Wendy runs to get his medicine, thinking he will want to provide a good example for Michael. In fact, Mr. Darling hates his medicine every bit as much as his five-year-old son and tries to hide that by pouring it into Nana's dog bowl instead. This backfires on him spectacularly. In trying to assert his fatherly authority and command the mingled love and respect of his children, he ends up looking like a fool instead. Worse yet, his misguided actions will lead directly in the next chapter to the loss of his children.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) gives a startled shout when she sees the boy, and [Nana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) runs into the room and growls. [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) quickly jumps out the window, but Nana traps his shadow by closing the window on it. Mrs. Darling folds it carefully into a drawer in the nursery in case he ever comes back for it.

***Analysis Part 1:***

An old superstition tells us that demons have no shadows. Peter Pan has a shadow, but it is detachable. The other characters do not seem to have detachable shadows, yet nobody is surprised to see one come off.

***Summary Part 2:***

She doesn’t tell [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling) about the shadow until the following Friday. The ill-fated evening begins in an ordinary way. [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) is refusing to take a bath, and [Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) is dressing for her evening out. [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) and [John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/john) are pretending to be Mr. and Mrs. Darling on the day of John’s birth. Mr. Darling comes in complaining about his tie, which he can’t get to tie properly, and Mrs. Darling ties it for him soothingly. Then they all dance around.

***Analysis part 2:***

Children and childhood are the most important topics in this book, but the adults on the sidelines also seem to have a wonderful time. Is it the adultness of their daily life that is enjoyable, or the traces of childhood that remain in it? Similarly, do Wendy and John enjoy playing adult, or do they enjoy bringing childhood into adulthood?

***Summary Part 3:***

[Nana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) bumps into [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling) and gets some hair on his pants, and he begins to criticize her capacities as a nurse. Nana has come in to give [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) his medicine. To encourage Michael to take it without complaint, Mr. Darling brags that he has always taken his medicine very bravely. [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) helpfully suggests that Mr. Darling take his medicine along with Michael. Mr. Darling had hidden the medicine, because he hates it, but Wendy had found it and put it back in its place. He is unhappy to see Wendy bring it into the room. He promises to take it at the same time as Michael takes his; but when Michael swallows his spoonful, Mr. Darling hides his behind his back. Everyone is very disappointed.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Though Mr. Darling is balding, financially savvy, and a father of three, he sometimes has trouble acting properly adult. He is often silly, and he doubts that his family respects him. As an adult, he is meant to be extremely honorable and brave – braver than the toddler Michael. But his aversion to foul-tasting medicine is identical to Michael’s. He is supposed to pretend otherwise, but he can’t manage it. He and the children both dislike watching the child/adult distinction break down.

***Summary Part 4:***

To distract from his embarrassment, [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling) tries to play a clever trick. He pours his creamy-colored medicine into [Nana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters)’s bowl. Nana drinks a little and then gives Mr. Darling a very reproachful look. Everyone is angry with him, and he is angrily embarrassed, and finally he demands that Nana be tied up in the yard. He takes her out and ties her up himself, despite her anxious barking – she is afraid to leave the children unguarded, with a person like [Peter Pan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) lurking around.

***Analysis Part 4:***

The difficult task of acting like an adult, and therefore ignoring the natural impulses of a child, leaves Mr. Darling with a very mixed-up sense of self-worth. Because he can never quite believe himself to be fully adult – and neither, he suspects, can the others – he has a chronic pain in his ego. Sometimes it becomes acute and he does mean and foolish things.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Mrs. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mrs-darling) sadly puts the children to bed. [Nana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) is barking loudly outside, and [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) explains that the dog senses danger. Mrs. Darling is anxious, but she gathers herself, says goodnight, and leaves with [Mr. Darling](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/mr-darling) to a nearby party. When they are safely out of the way, the stars signal to [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) to come indoors.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Adult realism blinds the Darlings. The dog and the stars and the child know something the adults don’t know, or choose not to know, or are forced by their own adulthood not to know.