***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 7***

***The Home Under the Ground***

***Synopsis:***

The next day [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) wastes no time measuring [Wendy Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Wendy_Darling) and her brothers for their own hollow trees. Each child has their own tree, but they all open up into one common room below where they eat and sleep. Despite the animosity between Wendy and [Tinker Bell](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tinker_Bell), there is even an alcove in the wall no bigger than a bird cage where Tink lives.

Wendy Darling works constantly to sew and clean and cook for everyone. Despite her desire to be a mother, the constant work does get on her nerves at times. "I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied!" she complains. And yet she smiles when she says this, as if deep down she is happy to be needed so much by Peter and the boys. The one thing that worries her is that she and her brothers are forgetting their parents.

The chapter ends with a tantalizing list of Peter Pan's adventures—which oddly, include a phase when his adventures consist of refusing to have any at all. He mentions several adventures which include the native tribe, including saving [Tiger Lily](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tiger_Lily)'s life at the mermaid lagoon. He also mentions that Tinker Bell tries to get rid of Wendy again. This time Tink has convinced some "street fairies" to help her return Wendy on a floating leaf to the mainland. The leaf sinks, but instead of drowning, Wendy swims back to Neverland, apparently under the impression that it is bath time. Clearly, Peter's inability to tell fact from fantasy is rubbing off on her.

This chapter lays out a puzzling list of the oddities of Peter's behavior.

**1**–Peter not only doesn't know the difference between reality and fantasy, his body doesn't seem to know it either. His stomach looks physically larger to others even when he is eating imaginary food. "Make-believe was so real to him that during a meal of it you could seem him getting rounder," the narrator says. The merging of reality and fantasy may also be affecting Wendy. When Wendy swims back to Neverland, she is under the impression that it is bath time.

**2**–Peter is deeply ambivalent about mothers. On the one hand, he travels all the way to London to get one. Yet the narrator tells us that "he despised all mothers except Wendy."

**3**–Peter is illiterate. "He was the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell ... He was above all that sort of thing," the narrator says. Ashamed of that, he tries to cover it up by boasting that reading is beneath him. Or perhaps Peter thinks a real boy like him doesn't need anything that education can provide.

**4**–Peter lies about having adventures, or forgets them after he does. He might simply be a trickster who tells these stories for the fun of seeing the confusion they create in Wendy and the boys. But this isn't the first time that the book has told readers Peter forgets things right after they happen. In the real world that is a sign of physical damage to the brain.

**5**–Peter is bloodthirsty. Many of his adventures involve Peter killing someone. In fact, finding a corpse is often the only way the children can verify his tall tales. In the real world this homicidal behavior would be cause for alarm. But as the book has emphasized repeatedly, Peter thinks Neverland is all a giant game of make-believe. Although the other children might trip over actual bodies afterwards, Peter apparently doesn't see death as permanent or real.

Taken all together, this adds up to a mystery. Peter is a fascinating character, one who resists armchair diagnosis. The more readers learn about Peter, the farther they seem to get from understanding him. He doesn't fit any of the labels that modern psychology might supply.

***Critical Analysis:***

Wendy, John, and Michael are being fitted for the hollow holes of their trees that allow them access to the underground. The underground home consists of mushrooms for seats, a huge tree that grows rapidly through the middle—which they have to cut down every day in order to have enough room to play—Tinker Bell’s fancy “private apartment,” and a large bed that everybody shares, except for Michael, who, as the baby of the family, sleeps in a 8 crib. Wendy has been working hard to take care of the boys by cooking their meals, sewing their clothes, and doing their laundry. Her pet wolf from her prior dreams of Neverland has found her and has followed her everywhere since. However, she becomes concerned about her parents, especially because sometimes John and Michael cannot remember them. Wendy thus gives her brothers exams about their parents’ features so they will not forget them, and the other boys excitedly join in, despite not knowing Mr. and Mrs. Darling. Peter refuses, however, because “he despised all mothers except Wendy.” While in their home underground, Wendy and the boys narrate make-believe adventures, often taking on the roles of redskins and pirates in their games. While choosing which adventure to go on next, the group decides to go to the mermaids’ lagoon.

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

***Summary part 1:***

The next day, [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) measures [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters), [John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/john), and [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) and makes tree holes to fit their figures. The underground home is one large room. There is a tree growing in the middle that serves as a table, though it has to be cut to size every day; there is also a fireplace, a bed, and a little hole in the wall for [Tinker Bell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/tinker-bell), which is very beautifully decorated. Wendy works hard cooking the boys’ meals, though these are sometimes only make-believe meals - as Peter wishes. Wendy also spends a lot of time fixing the boys’ clothes. She complains about all the work, but she takes a lot of pleasure in it. In her imaginary Neverland she had a pet wolf, but in the real Neverland she has a real one, and he keeps her company.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Make-believe food on an island of make-believe is not so different from real food on a real planet. At least it is not different for Peter, who is almost entirely make-believe himself. Perhaps make-believe on an island of make-believe is just a step down into the depths of make-believe: perhaps levels of make-believe continue infinitely there, a Neverland at each step. Peter, then, might travel easily between them. It would explain his seemingly endless adventures, his forgetfulness, and his strange sense of time.

***Summary Part 2:***

Wendy does not think too much about her parents, because she is sure they will always keep the window open for her and her brothers if they decide to return. But she is worried that John and Michael seem to be forgetting them, so she gives the boys quizzes on their old home to try to stir their memories. All the boys take the quizzes except for Peter, who can’t read or write.

***Analysis part 2:***

The lesson here is that parents always remember children, and that children always forget them. All that parents give, children take away. The selflessness of parents is just proportionate to the selfishness of children.

***Summary Part 3:***

For a little while, [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) becomes very absorbed in a new game. It “consisted in pretending not to have adventures,” and in doing ordinary everyday things that all children do, like going on walks or just sitting around. All the while, though, he sometimes leaves to go on mysterious, violent adventures. He often does not remember them, though, and he sometimes makes up adventures that did not really happen. The narrator wants to describe one, but he is not sure which to choose, and begins to list several.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Peter enjoys pretending to be an ordinary child, perhaps because he feels the real adventure of being a child with parents and a home is forbidden to him. The question is: does he need Wendy to help him with the game of ordinariness, or does he need her in some simpler way? And is there truly a difference between the two? The game of ordinariness is tinged with real longing.

***Summary Part 4:***

Once, in the middle of a battle with the tribe, the boys all decide to be indians, and the indians all decide to be boys. After switching sides, they continue the battle. There is also the story of [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) and the cake: Wendy never lets the boys eat the overly rich cake, no matter how many times the pirates tempt them with it, and finally it just gets hard and old. There is also the story in which a Never bird saves [Peter Pan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) from drowning in the lagoon, or the story of [Tink](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/tinker-bell)’s attempt to get rid of Wendy, or Peter’s attempt to battle with some disinterested lions. The narrator tosses a coin to choose among them, and begins to tell the story of the Never bird and the lagoon.

***Analysis Part 4:***

The first story in the list shows us very clearly that a very large share of the violence that takes place on the island is free of hatred. It is fighting for fighting’s sake, an extreme version of the many gallant violent arts (like boxing and other combat sports). A similar lesson may be derived from the story of Peter and the lions. The story is a direct reference to a chapter in Cervantes’ Don Quixote, in which Quixote challenges two sated and lazy lions who refuse to fight.