***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 8***

***The Mermaid’s Lagoon***

***Synopsis:***

One day at a nearby lagoon, the children are sunning themselves on a rock after lunch. [Wendy Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Wendy_Darling) has brought her endless pile of mending and is busily stitching away. It is an unwise place to sit, however, since the rock is submerged when the tide rises. Suddenly Wendy hears the muffled sound of oars, and [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) sniffs danger. "Pirates!" he shouts, and they all dive into the lagoon to hide.

The pirates Smee and Starkey row into view, with [Tiger Lily](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Tiger_Lily) tied up so she can be marooned on the rock and left to drown in the rising tide. What was her crime? She had boarded the pirate ship with a knife in her mouth.

Peter is angry that the pirates are not playing fair by ganging up on one person. "It was the two against one that angered him, and he meant to save her," the narrator says. He disguises his voice and pretends to be Hook, telling Smee and Starkey to set Tiger Lily free. This they do as the real [Captain Hook](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Captain_Hook) shows up.

Hook is depressed because he has just learned that Peter and the lost boys now have a mother. To cheer him up, Smee suggests that they kidnap Wendy and make her their own mother. "It is a princely scheme," Hook says. They will make all the boys walk the plank but keep Wendy alive so she can take care of them.

It isn't until that moment that Hook remembers Tiger Lily. Smee says they let her go on his command, which makes Hook fear there is some kind of ghost in the lagoon. He addresses the spirit, and because Peter is so cocky, he can't keep himself from responding. Eventually, this leads to a battle between the pirates and the lost boys. Peter grabs a knife from Hook's own belt and is about to kill him with it, but decides it's not fair since Hook isn't at the same level on the rock as he is. Peter gives Hook his hand to help him up and Hook bites him. It is not the pain that fazes Peter—it is anger at the unfairness of it. The only thing that saves Peter is that the crocodile suddenly swims into the lagoon, seeking her favorite prey. Terrified, Hook abandons the fight and heads back to his ship.

Hook has injured Peter so badly that he can neither swim nor fly. Wendy is too exhausted to do either. So the two of them lie on the rock, waiting for death as the tide rises. A kite that Michael had lost a few days before makes a convenient appearance, but it will carry only one of them. In a rare moment of unselfishness, Peter insists that Wendy escape and he is left alone to die. Finally he is afraid. He shudders, just once—and then he boldly announces the most famous line in the entire book: "To die will be an awfully big adventure."

Readers see a different side to Peter here. Although his cockiness is what got Wendy and him into this fix, for one moment as he faces death Peter is the most human he has ever been. Apparently, the magic that keeps him eternally young isn't sufficient to make him immortal. Peter is able to die, and as he faces his imminent death by drowning he is for one moment truly afraid.

Barely a heartbeat later, however, he has bounced back. Is it because Peter has found some inner wellspring of courage that he is able to stand up and shout the line about dying being a big adventure? It is a line so famous, years later it echoes in the pages of another British fantasy classic. Readers may be reminded strongly of Albus Dumbledore telling Harry in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, "To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."

But the impulsive young Peter could not be more different than the wise elderly wizard. So is it bravery that sparks Peter's *cri de coeur*—or passionate appeal—as he watches the waves of the lagoon rise higher and higher? Or is it denial? Has Peter once again slipped into that state where he believes that everything in Neverland is just a game, and thus death—at least for him—cannot be real? Perhaps in this moment Peter thinks that dying is no different than any of the other make-believe adventures he has. Since he believes that whatever he pretends can become real, then perhaps he also thinks that he can work the magic in reverse. Maybe he can evade the reality of death by simply wishing it away.

***Critical Analysis:***

The boys often go to the mermaids’ lagoon to play, but they do not necessarily get along with the mermaids; however, the mermaids do get along with Peter. The boys always stay away from the lagoon in moonlight, and the narrator suggests that the lagoon becomes an ominous and dangerous place during the night. The children often sunbathe on Marooner’s Rock in the mermaids’ lagoon. On this day, as they lie on the rock, the lagoon “that had always been hitherto such a laughing place” mysteriously turns cold and dark. Wendy, afraid, does not wake up the children, but Peter’s ability to sense danger wakes him up, and he warns the others that pirates are coming. The boys dive into the water, and a pirate dinghy approaches, carrying Smee, Starkey, and Tiger Lily, whom the pirates have taken captive. The dinghy crashes into a rock, where they plan to leave Tiger Lily to die. Wendy and Peter watch while floating in the water nearby. To save Tiger Lily, Peter decides to imitate Hook’s voice and tells Smee and Starkey to set her free; they are fooled by his imitation and cut off her cords. However, shortly after, the real Hook’s voice can be heard, and Wendy and Peter realize he is also in the water. They see him get into the boat with Smee and Starkey, solemnly telling them that “the game is over” because the boys have found a mother. Smee does not know what a mother is, which surprises Wendy; she makes a noise, and the pirates hear. Accordingly, Smee suggests to Hook that they kidnap Wendy and make her the pirates’ mother. Hook agrees to the plan and asks the two pirates where Tiger Lily is. Angry and shocked when Smee and Starkey tell Hook that they heard Hook give the order to let her go, Hook tells them it was not him. Suspecting that someone is tricking them, Hook calls out to ask whose “spirit . . . haunts this dark lagoon tonight.” Peter foolishly responds but says that he is Captain Hook, and when Hook questions this, Peter claims that Hook himself is a codfish. The other pirates believe this. Hook decides to play a guessing game with Peter, asking him questions about his identity; finally, when Hook asks him if he is a “wonderful boy,” he answers yes. Peter eventually reveals to the pirates that he is indeed Peter Pan. Peter calls out to the other boys, who come out of their hiding places. As a fight ensues between the pirates and the lost boys, Peter is determined to confront Captain Hook. When the two approach one another, Peter steals one of Hook’s knives, but when Peter notices that Hook is below him—giving Peter an unfair advantage—he assists Hook up the rock. Nevertheless, Hook bites Peter’s hand, which makes Peter feel “quite helpless,” and Hook swipes him again with his hook. The boys then see Hook swim frantically toward his boat with the alligator in pursuit; rather than celebrate, the boys become worried when they realize Peter and Wendy are missing. Knowing that Peter always returns, they go back to their home underground. Soon after, Peter and Wendy appear out of the water, with Wendy in Peter’s arms. Seeing the water rising, Peter becomes anxious and tells Wendy that they are stuck on a rock that will soon be submerged in water. When Wendy asks Peter if they should swim or fly, Peter tells her he can do neither because of his wounds. Seeing Michael’s kite drifting over the lagoon, Peter suggests that Wendy use the kite to fly away. Wendy wants Peter to come with her, but he knows the kite cannot carry two, so he ties the kite’s tail 9 around her and lets her go. At first, Peter is afraid, but after some thought, he says that “To die will be an awfully big adventure.”

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

***Summary part 1:***

The lagoon, begins the narrator, is a little like the colors you see if you close your eyes very tightly. [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy), [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan), and the lost boys spend many warm days swimming there, and listening to the mermaids singing. The mermaids don’t speak to anyone except Peter, but they sun themselves and comb their hair. At midnight the lagoon becomes a very dangerous place and the mermaids start to howl, but by then Wendy and the boys are always in bed.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The narrator is being slightly coy here – the lagoon is, in fact, the colors inside children’s eyes. The island and the lagoon are products of children's' imagination, and just as certain parts of the imagination are inaccessible to its possessors, certain parts of the island are inaccessible to the children. Peter, though, can travel to its most remote areas.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) always makes sure the boys take a half an hour’s rest after lunch, and on this afternoon the boys are napping on Marooners’ Rock. [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) senses that pirates are nearby and wakes the others. Everyone dives underwater. Approaching is a boat carrying two pirates and [Princess Tiger Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters). The pirates caught Tiger Lily snooping on their ship, so they leave the princess on Marooners’ Rock to drown. Peter might have let the pirates leave Tiger Lily and rescued her once they were gone, “but he was never one to choose the easy way”. Instead, he addresses the pirates in [Hook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/captain-jas-hook)’s voice and orders them to let the princess go. The confused pirates obey fearfully and set the princess down on land.

***Analysis part 2:***

What does it mean, Peter’s aversion to “the easy way”? We know that Peter is very arrogant, and therefore likes performing difficult and impressive feats. But Peter is also always strictly fair, and allergic to any form of sneaking or deceit. Deceit, for him, is distinct from a trick the way a lie is distinct from a game. Does Peter sometimes risk others’ lives to fuel his arrogance, or out of loyalty to his idea of noble fairness?

***Summary Part 3:***

But in a moment [Hook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/captain-jas-hook)’s actual voice sounds over the water. Hook swims to the boat and climbs in. He sighs sadly and tells the other pirates that the lost boys have found a mother. [Smee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters) does not know the meaning of the word, and [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) exclaims in surprise and compassion. Hook points to a Never bird sitting on top of a nest that has fallen into the water, and explains a little wistfully that a mother never abandons her children. Smee wonders whether they might kidnap the boys’ mother and make her the pirates’ mother, and Hook agrees that it is a good plan.

***Analysis Part 3:***

We have said that in Neverland violence is free of hatred almost as a rule, and Hook is the ‘almost.’ Hook wants to kill Peter because he hates him, and perhaps it is his hatred – unique on the island – that renders him its one true villain. But even Hook is not a villain through and through; or, rather, a villain in Neverland need not be exclusively hateful. Hook is sentimental, and wants a mother like any other boy.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Hook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/captain-jas-hook) asks about [Princess Tiger Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters), and he is enraged to hear that the others let her go by his own orders. He thinks nervously that the order must have come from a ghost. Hook addresses the ghost, and [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) responds in Hook’s own voice and manner. Peter asserts that he is Hook, and that Hook is a “codfish,” which makes the other pirates look at Hook with some suspicion. But Hook and company ask Peter many questions, and since he can’t resist talking about himself he admits that he is Peter Pan.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Peter attempts to switch places with Hook the way that the boys switch places with the indians. But neither Peter nor Hook are really willing to play the game. The little boys lose nothing by being other people, but Peter and Hook temporarily lose something they both cherish dearly – their egos. Hook does not play the game because loss of ego is too frightening, and Peter does not persist because recovery of ego is too appealing.

***Summary Part 5:***

The boys and the pirates engage in a short and bloody fight. [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) and [Hook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/captain-jas-hook) meet at the top of Marooners’ Rock. Peter is about to stab the pirate, but when he notices that he (Peter) is higher up and therefore has an unfair advantage, he gives a hand to Hook to help him up. Hook uses the lull to claw Peter twice with his hook. Peter is stunned by the unfairness, as all children are the first time they encounter it. After the first unfairness, a child is never the same – except for Peter, who always forgets it.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Fairness is the child’s version of justice, which is meant to ensure that all people are treated equally and without undue bias. Peter’s preoccupation with fairness means that he is concerned in every encounter to ensure that he and his opponent are equally matched. Yet Peter is quicker than Hook, and Hook is less scrupulous, so it is impossible to create equivalence between them.

***Summary Part 6:***

In a minute [Hook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/captain-jas-hook) swims rapidly back to his boat: he is fleeing from the ticking [crocodile](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/symbols/the-crocodile). When the boys see Hook’s frightened retreat, but cannot find [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) or Peter, they assume the two have left already and happily fly home. But Peter and Wendy are still on the rock: Wendy has fainted from fear and exhaustion, and Peter is badly injured. The water is rising all around them. Wendy wakes up, and they discover that neither of them is in a condition to fly or swim to shore.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Nevertheless, Peter’s movement toward equivalence is just as significant as Hook’s movement away from it. The author writes that a child does not recover from his first unfairness; Peter recovers from unfairness instantly—he is always a child; he never learns that the world isn't fair.

***Summary Part 7:***

Suddenly, they feel something small touch them: [Michael](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters)’s kite. [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) ties it around [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy)’s waist and it carries her off to safety. Soon he is alone, and the mermaids begin to sing. For a moment he is afraid. But it passes: he believes that “to die will be an awfully big adventure.”

***Analysis Part 7:***

Peter’s life is an inscrutable series of adventures. He has had so many, and for so long, it seems he must be having at least several at a time. His time moves in leaps and jolts. So he has no reason to believe that the adventure of death will be his last.