***Peter Pan and Wendy***

***Chapter 9***

***The Never Bird***

***Synopsis:***

As the rock becomes further submerged, Peter sees a piece of paper floating in the water. This piece of paper turns out to be the Never bird, who is there to save Peter. She tells him to get into her nest, but because Peter doesn’t understand her language, they get in an argument. The Never bird, still determined to save him, clears some of the eggs out of her nest so that Peter can sit in it. As they depart, Peter observes a stave on the rock—filled with the pirates’ treasures—that the children found and henceforth puts the remaining eggs inside his hat. Peter then places the eggs carefully in the lagoon, where they float to shore. Further, he uses the stave as a mast and creates a sail with his shirt. Peter henceforth finds his way back to the underground home, where Wendy has already returned.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan) sees what at first looks like a piece of paper floating on the lagoon. It takes a while before he realizes it is in fact the Never bird fighting to save him. She is pushing her egg-filled nest to the rock for Peter to use as a raft. This surprises the narrator, because he says Peter tormented the bird as often as he was nice to her.

Indeed, the two of them are not very nice to each other in the following comedic scene. Although the Never bird can speak, Peter cannot understand her language and she cannot understand his. So she is frustrated when he doesn't do as she says and swim out to get the nest. "What—are—you—quacking—about?" Peter demands rudely. Although she doesn't understand the meaning of his words, Peter's rudeness comes through clearly in his tone of voice, so the bird responds in kind. "You dunderheaded little jay," she screams. "Why don't you do as I tell you?"

She shoves her nest against the rock and then flies up in the air. Finally Peter figures out what she wants him to do and steps inside the nest. She hovers in the air, watching to see what he will do about her eggs. He takes a hat that the pirate Starkey has left on the rock and turns it into a boat, carefully placing the eggs in it. The Never bird settles back down on the new nest Peter has made for her and floats off in one direction while he drifts off in another. Eventually Peter returns safely home.

The Never bird's sacrificial determination to save Peter's life is inexplicable to the narrator and to readers. Why would a bird whom Peter had "tormented" do this, risking not only her own safety but the lives of her two unhatched eggs? The narrator concludes that Peter's boyish charm—especially his adorable baby teeth—wins the Never bird over in the same way he charms every other woman, from [Mrs. Darling](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Mrs._Darling) to Wendy. The thought of a 10-year-old boy with the teeth of a preschooler seems more creepy than cute to modern readers. They do make Peter look younger, however. They allegedly trigger the maternal instinct [Barrie](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/author/) assumes lies in the heart of every female, no matter what her age.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say Barrie hoped such nurturing instincts beat in the heart of every woman, since in his own life, he felt deprived of such motherly love. After his brother's death, when Barrie was six, his mother retreated into grief, leaving Barrie's care to his elder sister. Barrie's biographers and literary critics have all drawn the conclusion that his painful relationship with his mother cast a long shadow over the character of [Peter Pan](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Peter_Pan). Six chapters from Barrie's novel *The Little White Bird* were later republished as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. In this book Peter flees from his parents when he is just seven days old. Later when he tries to return home to get a glimpse of his sleeping mother, he finds he is locked out. "When we reach the window it is Lock-out Time. The iron bars are up for life," Barrie writes. No wonder Barrie originally considered naming his 1904 play about Peter *The Boy Who Hated Mothers*.

Does Peter hate mothers? The narrator wants readers to think so, telling them in a prior chapter Peter "despises" all mothers except Wendy. On the contrary it seems Peter doesn't hate mothers at all. Rather, he is desperate to find a woman—or better yet, a girl—who is willing to wash his clothes, mend his shadow, and cook him meals. The girl could be real or make-believe. And not just Peter but all the characters in the book yearn for mothers: including the lost boys and even the pirates and their grown-up leader, [Captain Hook](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Peter-Pan/character-analysis/#Captain_Hook).

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) listens to the mermaids going to their homes and feels the water rising at his feet. Then he sees something small moving toward him through the water: it is the Never bird sitting on its nest. She wants to save Peter by giving him the nest, even though her eggs are still inside. Her motivations are a mystery, but perhaps “she was melted because he had all his first teeth.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

The Never bird and Mrs. Darling both love Peter for his baby teeth. Peter is unalterable because he forgets everything, or perhaps it is the other way around. He is like the cloud made up of all children, whose ranks change but who go on existing forever. He is as incorruptible as an idea, and as changeable as the sea.

***Summary Part 2:***

The bird tries hard to tell [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/peter-pan) to swim to the nest, which she can’t bring any closer to his rock. But he can’t understand her, and they become quite irritated with each other. The bird works very hard to bring the nest right to Peter’s rock and then flies up. Finally Peter understands her. Nearby, a pirate’s hat is hanging from a wooden pole in the water; the hat floats well, and Peter places the Never bird’s eggs carefully inside the hat and sets it adrift. The grateful bird immediately lands on her eggs, and Peter uses the nest to float to shore. Soon, Peter and [Wendy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/peter-pan/characters/wendy) are home with the other boys.

***Analysis part 2:***

Peter’s devotion to the idea of fairness is a cipher for his emotions, an inscrutable quality that could indicate either kindness or heartlessness. Perhaps Peter saves the Never bird’s eggs because he can see her care and anxiety, and because he can imagine how she would suffer if the eggs drowned. But perhaps he helps her simply because she helped him, because the rules of fairness require it. It is not necessary to feel anything in order to follow a rule.