

J. M. Barrie and *Peter Pan*

James Barrie was born in 1860 in Scotland. When he was six his brother David died at thirteen in a skating accident, and his mother retired to her bedroom for months. It is commonly agreed that Barrie decided to comfort his mother by becoming his dead brother, using his clothes, mimicking his habits, and remaining always a boy. Besides, Barrie was very short and thin since childhood. At eighteen he didn't enjoy the company or the interests of the men of his age, which included women. In his notebooks, he wrote things like "Greatest horror, dream I am married, wake up shrieking ... Grow up and have to give up marbles, awful thought". He became a successful playwright in London, where he had literary friends like Conan Doyle and was acquainted with Milne, and married an actress, the protagonist of one of his plays, *Walker, London* (1892). The couple never had children. They bought a St. Bernard who was bigger than any of them and whom they called Porthos. Barrie used to take Porthos for a walk in Kensington Gardens, and it was there that he met the Llewelyn Davies's, the most glamorous and well-connected family in London, who had five sons. Barrie became a close friend of this family, adored Sylvia, the mother, and regularly took the boys out to play or to the theatre. He also played with them and his dog in Kensington Gardens, where the children spent afternoons with their nanny.



Barrie fictionalized his relationship with the Llewelyn children in a book called *The White Little Bird* (1902). This book was turned into a very successful play, *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904), first performed in Christmas time following the model of 19th century English pantomimes: holiday treats for children which included music, humour, magic, flying, and fantastic elements. In these performances, the most important boy characters were generally played by women rather than male children, partly because they could memorize the lines better and because they could look like little boys more easily. Barrie adapted the play into the 1911 novel *Peter and Wendy*, later published simply as *Peter Pan*. In the 1920s, Barrie decided to give the copyright of this work to the Great Ormond Street children's hospital. In the summer of 2009, the hospital will lose the rights in the work. A competition was set up to write a sequel to the work before that deadline, which has been won by Geraldine McCaughrean's *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (Imlah 2008).

The 1900s witnessed the publication of a number of children's classics such as Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Edith Nesbit's *The Railway Children* (1906), F.H.Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1909), *A Little Princess* (1905), and Beatrix Potter's tales.

Peter Pan is the story of a fairy/god/boy figure, Peter Pan, who enters the nursery of the Darling children, Wendy, John and Michael, and teaches them to fly. The Darling children have a loving mother, a cruel father and a nurse who is an English sheepdog. One night, when the dog is locked up, they fly away with Peter to his wild

island, Neverland. Wendy fulfils the role of mother in the group of lost boys and their adventures include battles with Indians, pirates led by the terrible Captain Hook, and a crocodile who ticks because he has swallowed a clock. They nearly die when Hook captures them, but Peter fights him and kicks him into the sea, where he is eaten by the crocodile. The children return home, the Darling parents adopt the lost boys, but Peter refuses to join them and remains always a boy in Neverland. The novel has a fantasy setting, the Neverland island with the Mermaid's Lagoon, the Marooner's Rock, the neverbirds.

Peter Pan symbolizes eternal youth. It is inspired in Pan, the Greek God of nature who was half-boy and half-beast, a playful, irresponsible creature that never ages. The Pan figure influenced other children's writers of this time, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame (*Wind in the Willows*) or Kipling (*Puck of Pook's Hill*). In contrast, the crocodile symbolizes the passage of Time. Traditionally, Mr Darling and Captain Hook are played by the same actor when the play is performed. These characters are mature villains over whom the child Peter and the Lost Boys win (Wullschläger 2001).

There is a Disney version of *Peter Pan* as well as two films, the sequel *Hook* (1991), and *Finding Neverland* (2004), which fictionalizes Barrie's life and his composition of *Peter Pan*.

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Learn more about the JM Barrie, the man who created Peter Pan and later gifted the rights to Great Ormond Street Hospital. The notion of the everlasting childhood stayed with Barrie and became one of the defining reasons for his lifelong love of children, as well as the inspiration for his most famous play, Peter Pan. It would be another 33 years before that inspiration emerged in the shape of Peter Pan, but here was the germ, rooted in his mind from the age of six. Arthur Llewelyn Davis and his sons. Llewelyn Davies boys. In Kensington Gardens in 1897, Barrie met the eldest three Llewelyn Davies boys, George, five, Jack, four, and Peter, who was still in his pram. Two more sons, Michael and Nico, joined the family. Sir J.M. Barrie was a Scottish dramatist, best known for writing Peter Pan in 1904, or The Boy Who Would Never Grow Up. The son of Scottish weavers, he moved to London to pursue his interest in becoming a playwright. There he met the Llewelyn Davies boys who inspired his masterpiece. Based on Barrie's enchanting characters, Disney created the animated classic, Peter Pan, in 1953.

Early Literary Work. James Matthew Barrie was born on May 9, 1860, in Kirriemuir, Angus, Scotland. After graduating from Edinburgh University in 1882, Barrie worked as a journalist. He published his first novel, The creator of the eternal magic of Peter Pan - J M Barrie - was born here in 1860. He was the ninth of ten children born to David Barrie, a handloom weaver, and his wife Margaret Ogilvy. The upper floor is furnished as they may have been when Barrie lived there. The adjacent house, No 11, houses an exhibition - The Genius of JM Barrie - about Barrie's literary and theatrical works. The outside wash-house is said to have been his first theatre. The Kirriemuir Camera Obscura. In 1930, J M Barrie was given the freedom of Kirriemuir. He subsequently presented the town with the cricket pavilion. Of the 10 Barrie children what number was JM? 10th. 9th. 3 / 20. When JM was 6 his elder brother died in a skating accident. To his grieving mother he became "the boy who never grew up" is this true or false? True. False. 4 / 20. Barrie's first success was a play that was a parody of another playwright's work - which playwright? Ibsen. Chekov. 5 / 20. Barrie married Mary Ansell in 1894, what was her profession? Actress. Sculptor. 6 / 20. Written in 1902 which highly successful stage play of Barrie's is about an aristocratic family and their servants being shipwrecked on a desert island? Quality... 12 / 20. Which London hospital did Barrie give the rights of Peter Pan to? Guy's Hospital. Great Ormond Street Hospital. Author J.M. Barrie Theme Unit. Literature Book Units by J.M. Barrie. Peter Pan Centennial Edition (Grades 6-8). Request a different book by J.M. Barrie. Enter Your Name: Enter Your E-Mail Address