FINDING NEVERLAND

THE STORY OF HOW PETER BECAME PAN

Study Guide

Adapted from the ***Finding Neverland*** Toolkit, a publication of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University's Education & Community Programs Department. *Editor: Brendan Shea.*

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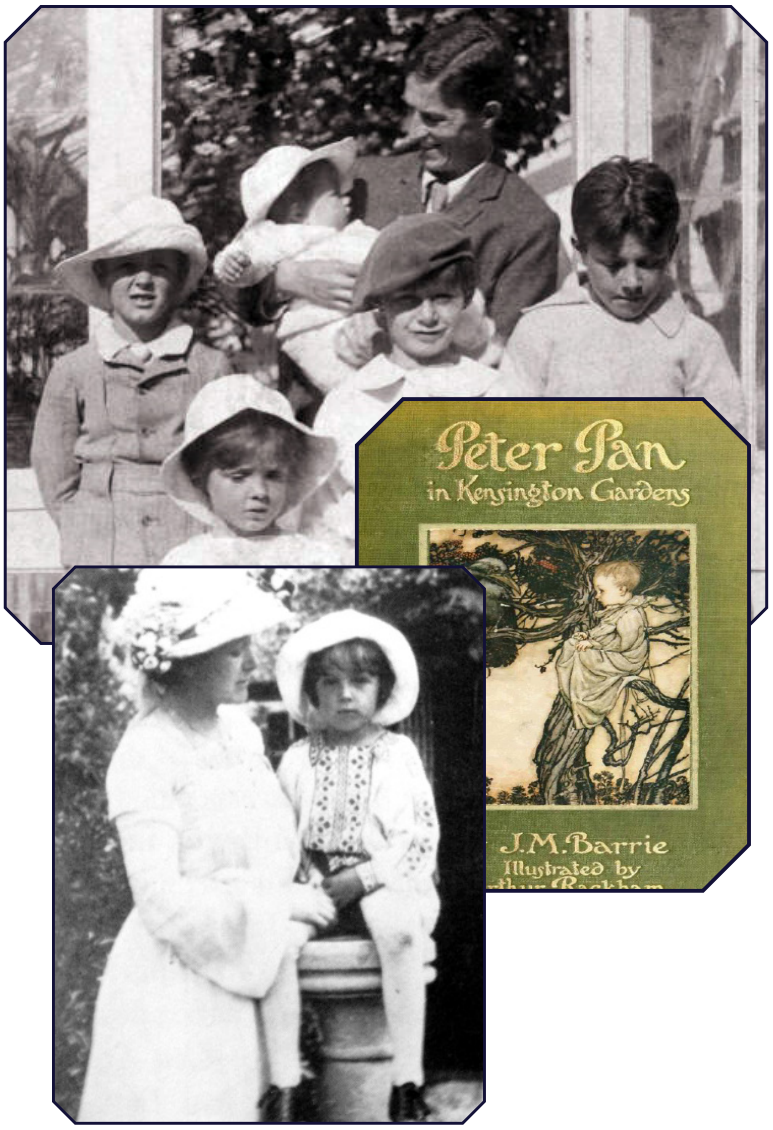
"THE FIVE"

"What I want to do first is to give Peter [Pan] to the Five without whom he never would have existed..."

So begins J.M. Barrie's introduction to the published version of *Peter Pan*. The introduction also includes Barrie's fond memories of Kensington Garden: dressing up his dog Porthos as a tiger, telling fairy tales to the Llewelyn Davies boys, and inventing the character of a young fairy boy, who would not grow up. Barrie credits the five Llewelyn Davis boys as the true authors of his most famous play.



Though it was written twenty years after their mother Sylvia's death, the Llewelyn Davies boys were not far from Barrie's thoughts when he concluded his introduction to *Peter Pan*. He ends with a word of gratitude to have had the chance to witness the boys grow into fine, yet still imaginative, young men.

Did you say the FIVE?

You'll probably notice there are exactly four Llewelyn Davies boys in ***Finding Neverland***...no, we didn't forget about the fifth one! George, Jack, Peter and Michael actually had a younger brother Nicholas, or Nico for short. Nico was born in 1903– still a baby during the events of the show.

A BOY'S BEST FRIEND:
PORTHOS THE ST. BERNARD

Barrie bought Porthos the St. Bernard in Switzerland in 1894, as a honeymoon present for his wife Mary.

Porthos became Barrie's companion on his walks through Kensington Gardens, and the giant dog always attracted visitors, including George, Jack, Peter, and Michael Llewelyn Davies.

Porthos was named after the St. Bernard in a novel by George du Maurier (no, not after one of the Three Musketeers); Barrie admired du Maurier greatly as a writer. By complete coincidence, he would later come to admire du Maurier's daughter even more…her name was Sylvia Llewelyn Davies.

AWFULLY BIG (AND SMALL) ADVENTURES

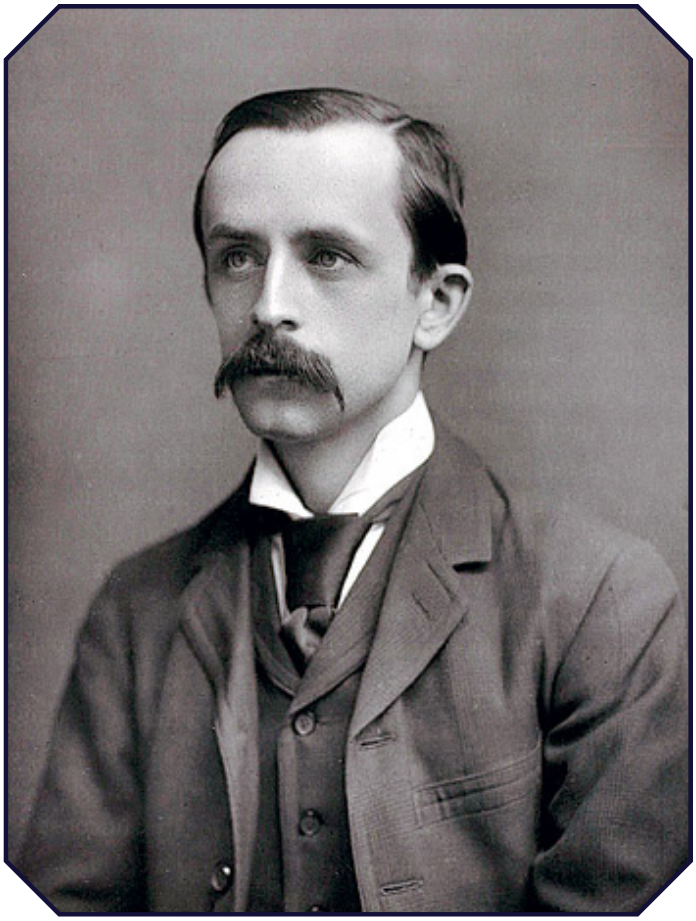
From an early age, J.M. Barrie loved games and was an avid sportsman. He ran an amateur cricket team, with a roster like a British literary supergroup: Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*), H.G. Wells (*The War of the Worlds*), A.A. Milne (*Winnie-the-Pooh*) and Arthur Conan Doyle (*Sherlock Holmes*) were among Barrie's teammates. Even George Llewelyn Davies played for a time. Their team name? The "Allahakbarries," a play on "Allah akbar" ("God is great" in Arabic)…though Barrie thought it translated to "Heaven help us." Needless to say, the Allahakbarries were not a very good team.

During his visits, Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies boys would compete for hours at cricket, croquet, badminton, tennis, billiards…even made-up games.

Of course, Barrie enjoyed playing with words, too. He would invent riddles, silly poems, and fantastical stories for Sylvia and the boys to enjoy.

George, Jack, Michael, Peter became voracious readers as well as stellar students of literature. One might guess that Barrie's view of words as pieces in a grand game inspired the boys' enthusiasm for the written language.

KINDRED SPIRITS:
SYLVIA & JAMES



Sylvia Jocelyn Llewelyn Davies and J.M. Barrie became very close friends as Barrie spent more and more time with her sons. In Sylvia, Barrie found a kindred spirit: they loved children and had the utmost respect for fun and adventure.

Sylvia dedicated her life to protecting the happiness of her sons and entrusted their care to her mother, their nanny, and Barrie himself after her death in 1910.

On February 20, 1906, Barrie organized a house performance called "Peter Pan in Michael's Nursery," for the benefit of Michael who was sick in bed and couldn't come to London to see ***Peter Pan***. This show brought the cast members and part of the set from the Duke of York's Theatre right into the Llewelyn Davies home.

This story serves as the inspiration for Barrie's special performance for Sylvia in ***Finding Neverland***, demonstrating the lengths to which Barrie was willing to go for the Llewellyn Davies family.

PETER PAN, OR THE GIRL WHO WOULD NOT GROW UP

Though film adaptations of Peter Pan overwhelmingly cast boys (or even men) as the title character, the history of the stage version mainly features extraordinary young women in the role of the eternally youthful Lost Boy.

Why do you think that women were favored to play Peter Pan onstage? Can you think of other examples of roles, throughout theater history, traditionally "cross-cast" like Peter?

Nina Bouciault, 1904

Maude Adams, 1905

Cathy Rigby, 1974.

A celebrated Olympic gymnast, Rigby was cast as Peter Pan because of her physical talent and national fame– she had never been on stage before. Rigby was a success, and continued to play Peter in many productions over an extraordinary 40-year career, retiring from the role at the age of 60! Rigby's incredible run brings new meaning to Peter's nickname, the Boy Who Would Not Grow Up.

Sandy Duncan, 1979

Mary Martin, 1954

Mary Martin won a Tony Award for her performance in Jerome Robbins' 1955 musical adaptation of *Peter Pan*.

MEET THE DIRECTOR

Diane Paulus is a director of theater and opera. She is also the Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theater (or A.R.T.) at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA.

Paulus is known as a champion of the American musical, especially new musical theater. She often debuts the work of young composers. She also encourages well-known artists in other fields (like Gary Barlow and Mia Michaels) to try their hand at making theater.

"I have two beautiful young girls who are 7 and 10... I watched the movie with both my daughters, when I was thinking about taking on the show... I saw their eyes light up. It's such a sensitive story about childhood, and about growing up, and about the role of imagination in your life."

With choreographer Mia Michaels

In 2014, Paulus was selected as one of *TIME Magazine*'s 100 most influential people in the world.

FAITH, TRUST, AND PIXIE DUST

J.M. Barrie was taking a massive artistic risk by writing ***Peter Pan.*** At that time, London audiences were used to melodramas dealing with adult issues, not stories about fairies and pirates. And they were especially unfamiliar with plays families could see together, plays written for children and adult audiences alike.

Fortunately, producer Charles Frohman loved Barrie's "Fairy Play," and became a passionate supporter—even going so far as acting out his favorite scenes for potential investors.

Not everyone was so convinced, however…

> ***"Barrie has gone out of his mind, Frohman. I am sorry to say it; but you ought to know it. He has written four acts all about fairies, children, and Indians running through the most incoherent story you ever listened to; and what do you suppose? The last act is to be set on top of trees."***
>
> Actor Beerbohm Tree, A Letter to Charles Frohman during ***Peter Pan***

Audiences disagreed with Tree.

Peter Pan opened to an ecstatic audience at the Duke of York's Theatre in London on December 27, 1904.

It became an instant classic, and within 10 years of his birth, the boy who wouldn't grow up became a British national treasure.

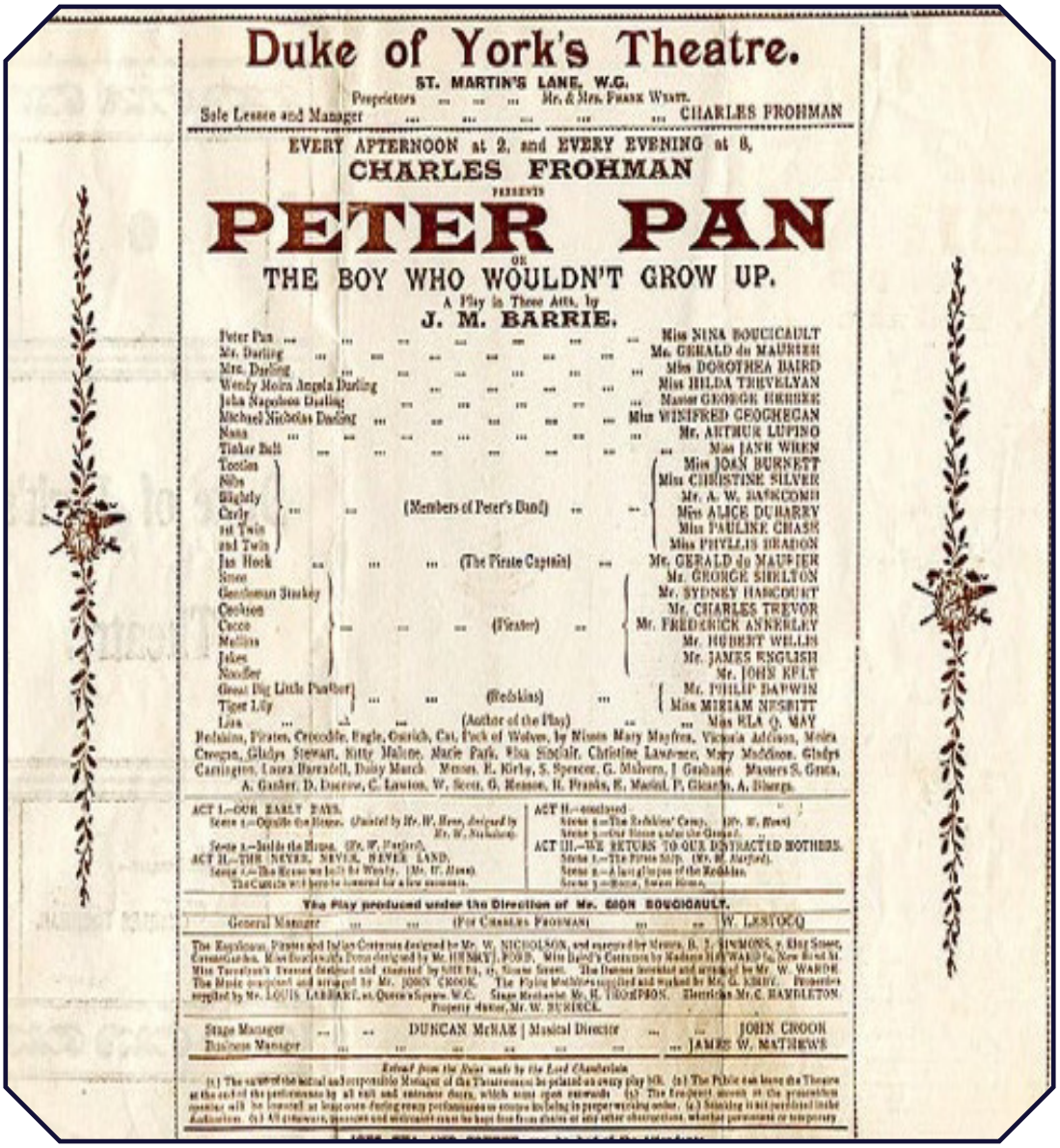
Nina Boucicault, first actress to play Peter Pan, remembers the opening night:

> ***"I shall never forget waiting to make my entrance on the first night… I remember that I had been rather anxious about the scene where Peter appeals to the audience to clap if they believe in fairies. "Suppose they don't clap?" I had asked. "What do I do then?"***
>
> ***But… clap! I think everyone in the house believed in fairies!"***

SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PLAY...

For over a century, ***Peter Pan*** has captivated audiences all over the world. It has inspired new stories for each generation, including plays like *Peter and the Starcatcher* and films like *Hook* and ***Finding Neverland***. Born out of J.M. Barrie's boundless imagination, inspired by his adventures with the Llewelyn Davies family, and realized by a fearless company of actors and artists, ***Peter Pan*** was a truly collaborative effort from start to finish.

In ***Finding Neverland***, how did Frohman and Barrie work together to realize the first production of Peter Pan? How did their company of actors feel about this radical new "fairy play?" Did their attitude change?



Duke of York's Theatre.

ST. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.

Proprietors ... ... Mr. & Mrs. FRANK WYATT.

Sole Lessee and Manager ... ... CHARLES FROHMAN

EVERY AFTERNOON at 2, and EVERY EVENING at 8,

CHARLES FROHMAN

PRESENTS

PETER PAN

OR

THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T GROW UP.

A Play in Three Acts, by

J. M. BARRIE.

Peter Pan ... Miss NINA BOUCICAULT
Mr. Darling ... Mr. GERALD du MAURIER
Mrs. Darling ... Miss DOROTHEA BAIRD
Wendy Moira Angela Darling ... Miss HILDA TREVELYAN
John Napoleon Darling ... Master GEORGE HERBERT
Michael Nicholas Darling ... Miss WINIFRED GEOGHEGAN
Nana ... Mr. ARTHUR LUPINO
Tinker Bell ... Miss JANE WREN
Tootles, Nibs, Slightly, Curly, 1st Twin, 2nd Twin (Members of Peter's Band) ... Miss JOAN BURNETT, Miss CHRISTINE SILVER, Mr. A. W. BANKCOMB, Miss ALICE DUHARRY, Miss PAULINE CHASE, Miss PHYLLIS HEADON
Jas Hook ... (The Pirate Captain) ... Mr. GERALD du MAURIER
Smee, Gentleman Starkey, Cookson, Cecco, Mullins, Jukes, Noodler (Pirates) ... Mr. GEORGE SHELTON, Mr. SYDNEY HARCOURT, Mr. CHARLES TREVOR, Mr. FREDERICK ANNERLEY, Mr. HUBERT WILLIS, Mr. JAMES ENGLISH, Mr. JOHN EPLT
Great Big Little Panther, Tiger Lily (Redskins) ... Mr. PHILIP DARWIN, Miss MIRIAM NESBITT
Liza ... (Author of the Play) ... Miss ELA Q. MAY

Redskins, Pirates, Crocodile, Eagle, Ostrich, Cat, Pack of Wolves, by Misses Mary Mayfren, Victoria Addison, Moira Cregan, Gladys Stewart, Kitty Malone, Marie Park, Ena Sinclair, Christine Lawrence, Mary Maddison, Gladys Carrington, Laura Barnsdell, Daisy March. Misses E. Kirby, S. Spencer, G. Mulhern, I. Grahame. Masters S. Gnea, A. Gaster, D. Darrow, C. Lawton, W. Scott, G. Reason, R. Francis, E. Martel, P. Gleason, A. Bisogno.

ACT I.—OUR EARLY DAYS.
Scene 1.—Opposite the House. (Painted by Mr. W. Hann, designed by Mr. W. Nicholson.)
Scene 2.—Inside the House. (Mr. W. Harford).
ACT II.—THE NEVER, NEVER, NEVER LAND.
Scene 1.—The House on Hook's Ship. (Mr. W. Hann).
The Curtain will here be lowered for a few moments.
ACT II.—continued.
Scene 2.—The Redskins' Camp. (Mr. W. Hann)
Scene 3.—Hook's Ship and the Ocean.
ACT III.—THE RETURN TO OUR DISTRACTED MOTHERS.
Scene 1.—The Pirate Ship. (Mr. W. Harford).
Scene 2.—A large Cupboard in the Darlings' Home.
Scene 3.—Mrs. Darling's Home.

The Play produced under the Direction of Mr. DION BOUCICAULT.

General Manager ... (For CHARLES FROHMAN) ... W. LESTOCQ

The Engagements, Pirates and Indian Costumes designed by Mr. W. NICHOLSON, and executed by Messrs. R. J. SIMMONS, 9, Shaftesbury Street, Great Queen Street. Miss Dorothea Baird's Dresses designed by Mr. HERBERT FORD. Miss Hilda Trevelyan's Costumes by Madame HAYWARD & Co., New Bond St. Miss Trevelyan's Dresses designed and executed by SISLEY, 27, Sloane Street. The Dances invented and arranged by Mr. W. WARDE. The Music composed and arranged by Mr. JOHN CROOK. The Flying Machines supplied and worked by Mr. G. KIRBY. Properties supplied by Mr. LOUIS LARRAKT, 21, Queen's Square, W.C. Stage Mechanist Mr. H. THOMPSON. Electrician Mr. C. HAMBLETON. Property Master, Mr. W. BURRICK.

Stage Manager ... DUNCAN McRAE | Musical Director ... JOHN CROOK
Business Manager ... JAMES W. MATHEWS

Extract from the Rules made by the Lord Chamberlain

(1.) The name of the actual and responsible Manager of the Theatre must be placed on every play bill. (2.) The Public can leave the Theatre at the end of the performance by all exit and entrance doors, which must open outwards. (3.) The Exit next streets of the promenades must be covered at least once during every performance in order to bring it into perfect working order. (4.) Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium. (5.) All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept free from chairs or any other obstructions, whether permanent or temporary.

TRIVIA!

The original cast of ***Peter Pan*** had to take out life insurance policies in order to use the flying equipment constructed specially for the production.

The play was so popular in Britain that it was revived on London's West End every year from 1904-1962. Peter Pan only paused for two consecutive years, and for good reason. It was World War II.

PETER PAN:
BETWIXT AND BETWEEN

Excerpted from *The Annotated Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, edited with an introduction and notes by Maria Tatar. Copyright (c) 2011 by Maria Tatar. All rights reserved.

What follows is an excerpt of an essay by Maria Tatar, a leading scholar of children's literature and chair of the Program in Folklore and Mythology at Harvard University. You can find the full text of Tatar's essay in **The Annotated Peter Pan.**

As you read: why do <u>you</u> think the story of Peter Pan is still told and retold, over a century after it was written? What is Tatar's take on the subject? Do you agree?

How do we explain ***Peter Pan***'s enduring hold on our imagination? Why do we get hooked (and I use the term with all due deliberation) when we are children and continue to remain under the spell as adults? J. M. Barrie once observed that Huck Finn was "the greatest boy in fiction," and Huck, who would rather go to hell than become civilized, may have inspired the rebellious streak found in Peter Pan. Like Dorothy, who does not want to return to Kansas in The Emerald City of Oz, Huck and Peter have won us over with their love of adventure, their streaks of poetry, their wide-eyed and wise innocence, and their deep appreciation of what it means to be alive. They all refuse to grow up and tarnish their sense of wonder and openness to new experiences. …

The expansive energy of Peter and Wendy is not easy to define, but it has something to do with the book's power to inspire faith in the aesthetic, cognitive, and emotional gains of imaginative play. As sensation seekers, children delight in the novel's playful possibilities and its exploration of what it means to be on your own. In Neverland, they move past a sense of giddy disorientation to explore how children cope when they are transplanted from the nursery into a world of conflict, desire, pathos, and horror. Adults may not be able to land on that island, but they have the chance to go back vicariously and to repair their own damaged sense of wonder.

Like Lewis Carroll, who developed and refined his storytelling skills by co-narrating (telling stories with children rather than to them), Barrie did not just sit at his desk and compose adventures. He spent time with young boys — above all, the five he adopted — playing cricket, fishing, staging pirate games, and, most important, improvising tales. …

"If you believe," Peter shouts, "clap your hands; don't let Tink die." In urging the suspension of disbelief, Peter not only exhorts readers young and old to have faith in fairies (and fiction) but also urges them to join hands as they enter a story world in a visceral, almost kinetic manner. Whether entering Neverland for the first time or returning to it, we clap for Tink and, before long, begin to breathe the very air of the island as we read the words describing it.