

Peter Pan

By James M. Barrie

A Language-Illustrated Classic

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All children, except one, grow up.

We encounter one of the primary themes of *Peter Pan* in the first sentence of the book, “All children, except one, grow up.” The background of the theme is that J.M. Barrie’s older brother David tragically died at the age of thirteen, and both James and his heartbroken mother were acutely aware that he would never grow up. Barrie transforms the tragedy into a wonderful Neverland, full of beauty and adventure, where one can be a happy child forever.

The theme of not growing up resurfaces continually throughout the novel, but its primary expression is through the many examples of innocent childhood joy, the delight that children feel in their first explorations of the world. Barrie makes childhood joy even more explicit through references to the adults, who as grown-ups can no longer understand what the children are excited about.

Chapter 1 * Peter Breaks Through

All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this. One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, "Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!" This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end.

Of course they lived at 14, and until Wendy came her mother was the chief one. She was a lovely lady, with a romantic mind and such a sweet mocking mouth. Her romantic mind was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the puzzling East, however many you discover there is always one more; and her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in

henceforth: adv. from that time forward

14: a street address

conspicuous: adj. standing out, clearly visible

the right-hand corner.

The way Mr. Darling won her was this: the many gentlemen who had been boys when she was a girl discovered simultaneously that they loved her, and they all ran to her house to propose to her except Mr. Darling, who took a cab and nipped in first, and so he got her. He got all of her, except the innermost box and the kiss. He never knew about the box, and in time he gave up trying for the kiss. Wendy thought Napoleon could have got it, but I can picture him trying, and then going off in a passion, slamming the door.

The way Mr. Darling won her was this...

Barrie is a master of combining clauses. This sentence contains nine clauses, each with its own subject and verb. This allows Barrie to express complex relationships gracefully.

Mr. Darling used to boast to Wendy that her mother not only loved him but respected him. He was one of those deep ones who know about stocks and shares. Of course no one really knows, but he quite seemed to

nipped in: slipped in, stole in
stocks and shares: investments

and little Michael flung his arms round her

Barrie uses a series of sweet consonants to express the character of the little boy.

No. 27 was only a few yards distant, but there had been a slight fall of snow, and Father and Mother Darling picked their way over it deftly not to soil their shoes. They were already the only persons in the street, and all the stars were watching them. Stars are beautiful, but they may not take an active part in anything, they must just look on for ever. It is a punishment put on them for something they did so long ago that no star now knows what it was. So the older ones have become glassy-eyed and seldom speak (winking is the star language), but the little ones still wonder. They are not really friendly to Peter, who had a mischievous way of stealing up behind them and trying to blow them out; but they are so fond of fun that they were on his side to-night, and anxious to get the grown-ups out of the way. So as soon as the door of 27 closed on Mr. and Mrs. Darling there was a commotion in the firmament, and the smallest of all the

deftly: adv. skillfully

firmament: n. the heavens

stars in the Milky Way screamed out:

“Now, Peter!”

One characteristic of Barrie’s writing style is his frequent use of adverbs. Great writers often use few adverbs because adverbs tend to add wordy syllables to sentences, blunting their impact. Barrie is an adverb master; he uses few weak adverbs, but he uses many strong adverbs. In the first two chapters we have seen power adverbs such as *henceforth*, *imploringly*, *sedately*, *reprovingly*, *doggedly*, *entreatingly*, *reproachfully*, *beseechingly*, and *deftly*. The second paragraph of Chapter Three contains a beautiful adverb: “It was a girl called Tinker Bell exquisitely gowned in a skeleton leaf...” Later in the chapter we find *patronisingly*, *amiably*, *placidly*, and *imperiously*. Barrie succeeds with these adverbs because they are strong; they communicate specific information, unlike run-of-the-mill general adverbs such as *really* or *very*.

near each other, would join like drops of water, and when they did not he was appalled. He tried to stick it on with soap from the bathroom, but that also failed. A shudder passed through Peter, and he sat on the floor and cried.

His sobs woke Wendy, and she sat up in bed. She was not alarmed to see a stranger crying on the nursery floor; she was only pleasantly interested.

“Boy,” she said courteously, “why are you crying?”

Peter could be exceeding polite also, having learned the grand manner at fairy ceremonies, and he rose and bowed to her beautifully. She was much pleased, and bowed beautifully to him from the bed.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Wendy Moira Angela Darling,” she replied with some satisfaction. “What is your name?”

“Peter Pan.”

She was already sure that he must be Peter, but it did seem a comparatively short name.

“Is that all?”

“Yes,” he said rather sharply. He felt for the first time that it was a shortish name.

“I’m so sorry,” said Wendy Moira Angela.

appalled: adj. dismayed, horrified

“It doesn’t matter,” Peter gulped.

She asked where he lived.

“Second to the right,” said Peter, “and then straight on till morning.”

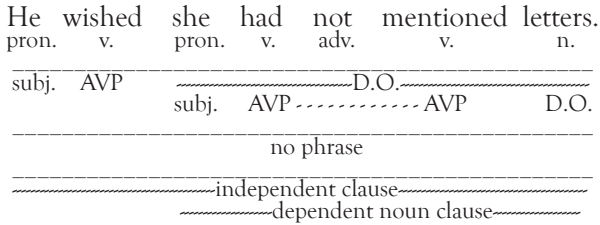
“What a funny address!”

Peter had a sinking. For the first time he felt that perhaps it was a funny address.

“No, it isn’t,” he said.

“I mean,” Wendy said nicely, remembering that she was hostess, “is that what they put on the letters?”

He wished she had not mentioned letters.



Barrie uses a dependent noun clause as the direct object of the main clause. This gives the sentence two layers of depth and increases the active substance of the idea.

“Don’t get any letters,” he said contemptuously.

“But your mother gets letters?”

“Don’t have a mother,” he said. Not only had he

they were very cold and again too warm. Did they really feel hungry at times, or were they merely pretending, because Peter had such a jolly new way of feeding them? His way was to pursue birds who had food in their mouths suitable for humans and snatch it from them; then the birds would follow and snatch it back; and they would all go chasing each other gaily for miles, parting at last with mutual expressions of good-will. But Wendy noticed with gentle concern that Peter did not seem to know that this was rather an odd way of getting your bread and butter, nor even that there are other ways.

His	way	was	to pursue	birds...
adj.	n.	v.	n.	n.
subj.		LVP	~~~~~S.C.~~~~~	
			~~~~~infinitive phrase~~~~~	
~~~~~independent clause~~~~~				
<p>Barrie uses an infinitive phrase as the subject complement. The noun <i>birds</i> is the object of the infinitive. The sentence is an equation. Notice that the infinitive <i>to pursue</i> is one word. <i>His</i> is an adjective here because it modifies a noun.</p>				

pleasant names for everything, and his cutlass was Johnny Corkscrew, because he wiggled it in the wound. One could mention many lovable traits in Smee. For instance, after killing, it was his spectacles he wiped instead of his weapon.

be cause / he wig / gled it in / the wound

Barrie uses a single anapest surrounded by iambs to capture the wiggle; it is all accomplished with one extra unstressed syllable, *gled*, to break the iambic pattern. Notice the alliteration of *wiggled-wound* and *wiped-weapon*.

“Johnny’s a silent fellow,” he reminded Hook.

“Not now, Smee,” Hook said darkly. “He is only one, and I want to mischief all the seven. Scatter and look for them.”

The pirates disappeared among the trees, and in a moment their Captain and Smee were alone. Hook

for there is but one chimney. The silly moles had not the sense to see that they did not need a door apiece. That shows they have no mother. We will leave the cake on the shore of the Mermaids' Lagoon. These boys are always swimming about there, playing with the mermaids. They will find the cake and they will gobble it up, because, having no mother, they don't know how dangerous 'tis to eat rich damp cake." He burst into laughter, not hollow laughter now, but honest laughter. "Aha, they will die."

Smee had listened with growing admiration.

"It's the wickedest, prettiest policy ever I heard of!" he cried, and in their exultation they danced and sang:

"Avast, belay, when I appear,
By fear they're overtook;
Nought's left upon your bones when you
Have shaken claws with Hook."

avast: interj. delay, cease

belay: v. stop

nought: n. a variation of naught, nothing

Avast, belay...

This is a traditional ballad stanza: a quatrain with lines one and three in iambic tetrameter, and lines two and four in iambic trimeter. Only lines two and four rhyme, so the stanza reaches perfection in its final syllable, *Hook*.

They began the verse, but they never finished it, for another sound broke in and stilled them. There was at first such a tiny sound that a leaf might have fallen on it and smothered it, but as it came nearer it was more distinct.

Tick tick tick tick!

Hook stood shuddering, one foot in the air.

“The crocodile!” he gasped, and bounded away, followed by his bo’sun.

It was indeed the crocodile. It had passed the redskins, who were now on the trail of the other pirates. It oozed on after Hook.

Once more the boys emerged into the open; but the

They were sorry for him, but sorrier for themselves, and when he took a step nearer them they turned from him.

Tootles' face was very white, but there was a dignity about him now that had never been there before.

...there	was	a	dignity	about	him	now...
adv.	v.	adj.	n.	prep.	pron.	adv.
BVP			subj.			
				~prep phrase~		
independent clause						

Here Barrie uses a being verb, a verb that asserts existence; the adverb *there* is often used in this case to allow the verb to precede the subject. The idea of the sentence is that *a dignity existed* now. BVP means being verb predicate. Note that the verb *was*, the past tense of *to be*, can serve either as a being or a linking verb.

“I did it,” he said, reflecting. “When ladies used to come to me in dreams, I said, ‘Pretty mother, pretty mother.’ But when at last she really came, I shot her.”

He moved slowly away.

“Don’t go,” they called in pity.

...he blew big breaths...

Barrie uses alliteration to provide the sound track for the moment.

“If only we knew,” said one, “the kind of house she likes best.”

“Peter,” shouted another, “she is moving in her sleep.”

“Her mouth opens,” cried a third, looking respectfully into it. “Oh, lovely!”

“Perhaps she is going to sing in her sleep,” said Peter. “Wendy, sing the kind of house you would like to have.”

Immediately, without opening her eyes, Wendy began to sing:

“I wish I had a pretty house,
The littlest ever seen,
With funny little red walls
And roof of mossy green.”

house.”

“Oh, say you’re pleased,” cried Nibs.

“Lovely, darling house,” Wendy said, and they were the very words they had hoped she would say.

“And we are your children,” cried the twins.

Then all went on their knees, and holding out their arms cried, “O Wendy lady, be our mother.”

“Ought I?” Wendy said, all shining. “Of course it’s frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience.”

I	have	no	real	experience.
pron.	v.	adj.	adj.	n.
subj.	AVP			D.O.
no phrase				
~~~~~independent clause~~~~~				

Notice that *have* is an action verb; it is not linking. To have a turtle is not to be a turtle. To have something is an action, but in this case the idea is negated by the adjective *no*, just as a minus sign reverses a value in mathematics.

“That doesn’t matter,” said Peter, as if he were the only person present who knew all about it, though he